Genesis’ Numerology

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Abstract
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Introduction

Forward to Numerology

In a brief forward the meaning of Numerology is discussed, its history from Antiquity to the present day with all sorts of examples. Numerology was part of understanding nature and God – science and theology combined.

Chapter 1
Significance of the Numbers in Genesis: Pythagorean and Numerological Interpretation

The aim of this opening chapter is to propose a new explanation in the understanding of the use and significance of numbers in Genesis and indirectly in other Scriptures (and also non-Scriptural books). The explanation is based on a systematic investigation of the symbolic significance of numbers which serve as esoteric messages in the text. Significance can be found in the overwhelming majority of the numbers in Genesis, even though at first glance (and even second and third) they may have been considered “incidental”. It is made clear that Genesis has hardly any incidental numbers. Some explanations are cited for numbers elsewhere in the Scriptures. An explanation is provided for the difference between a random (“normal”) number and a typological number (symbolic if not also archetypic) and how to distinguish between the different types of numbers.

This treatment explains the difficult methodological aspects of this problem: what can and cannot be said about a Scriptural text in its numerological context. There is a difference between interpretation within the text dealing with explicit numbers, that is numerological interpretation, and interpretation beyond the text, dealing with numbers that are not an integral part of the text, that is, interpretation based on Gematria.
It is proposed that all the numbers in Genesis (excluding those of the first 19 generations) can be seen as a systematic array in which the number advances its literary subject by placing extra emphasis on the numbers associated with the hero. The distinction between various proposed explanations is clarified in order to assist in the understanding of the Scriptural text.

The end of the chapter suggests a distinction between typological numbers and “true” numbers. The emphasis is on the difference between them from the point of view of the narrator who is counting and the object being counted. Numerology is described as a “male” phenomenon in contrast to “feminine” literature in the book of Genesis.

The following numbers are mentioned or explained:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 22, 27, 28, 30, 33, 40, 45, 49, 50, 52, 60, 65, 66, 74, 75, 77, 80, 86, 99, 100, 110, 111, 120, 127, 130, 137, 147, 158, 175, 180, 200, 300, 318, 330, 343, 400, 613, 653, 666, 753, 777, 888, 999, 1000, 1001, 1360, 3624, 10,000, 14,700, 22,000, 70,000, 120,000.

The following dates are mentioned or explained:
17/2, 27/2.

Chapter 2

On the Problem of the Random Numbers: 127 and 31

The aim of this chapter is to clarify a basic question: how can random numbers be distinguished from non-random numbers. The basic question is discussed in general terms and specifically through illustrations from the Scriptures. The distinction between a random number and a “directed” number is first treated through numbers in isolation (from the theoretical view) and then through numbers as they appear in the Biblical text.

We then deal with the numbers 6 and 28, designated “perfect” in Pythagorean mathematics. The theoretical treatment of these two numbers leads to the central subject: the numbers 127 and 31 as they appear in the
Bible. Various criteria are proposed for distinguishing between a random number and a number with special significance in the Pythagorean world, on the assumption that the use of these numbers in the Bible was consistent with this way of thinking.

A final appendix examines the distinction between numerology and gematria. The distinction is manifested in three ways: 1) numerology deals with a number written in the text; 2) gematria deals with the conversion of one idea into another (through misleading logic); 3) gematria emphasizes the random nature of numbers in contrast to numerology which deals with non-random numbers. Later three numbers are discussed to exemplify these distinctions.

The following numbers are mentioned or explained: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 27, 28, 30, 31, 36, 39, 40, 42, 49, 52, 67, 70, 75, 83, 100, 120, 127, 175, 248, 252, 318, 496, 500, 666, 667, 903, 1000, 1080, 8128, 10,000, 12,000, 144,000, 600,000.

**Chapter 3**

**Description of the Creation and the Flood:**

*Numerology, Antonymic and Formulaic Language*

The intent of the following discussion is to examine the numerological character of the text of the first chapter of Genesis, applying, among other means, comparison with the second chapter.

The numerological character of the first chapter is seen the diverse forms of numerology in this chapter: a) the number 7 is close to the idea of blessing and holiness, and so the symbolic character of one of the most important numbers in the Bible can be explained; b) the first chapter has a relative abundance (and diversity) of number words, approximately twice as many as the second chapter, a chapter dealing with the same subject but constructed without numerology; c) it becomes clear that numerology forms a text from a quantitative view, since the first chapter is recognized for its unique literary structure, a structure constructed of seven “paragraphs” with each paragraph containing the number “appropriate” to it.
The second part of the discussion clarifies the difference between the first and second chapters of Genesis from an antonymic point of view, that is to say, the extent of the use of words and their opposites. The first chapter is not only much more numerological but also much more antonymic, a fact that led to its being seen as representing a system of binary thinking. In addition, the first chapter differs in that approximately 20% of the text is formulaic language repeating itself, whereas hardly any formulas appear in the second chapter.

The discussion continues with a description of the four types of ‘time’ reflected in the first chapter of Genesis: a day, a week, Shabbat and Holidays. Each of these times has a different character and an assumption is made concerning an addition in Gen. 1:14b-15a that reflects a new luni-solar calendar. After the discussion continues in linking the text with ancient science and pre-Socratic philosophy, the numerological and calendrical character of the Flood is discussed as well as ancient linguistics and its impact on Genesis.

A special appendix summarizes the Jewish precedents of numerological interpretation in various generations, starting with the Tannaim and Amoraim and ending with our generation. This survey clarifies what is distinctive in each system and shows that even though the previous systems dealt with numbers, they are not numerological in the sense presented here, which is language non-conditional, based on a number in the text and on the interpretation of the number as a symbol.

The following numbers are mentioned or explained:
4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 32, 33, 40, 60, 66, 70, 71, 72, 75, 85, 147, 150, 176, 180, 220, 247, 248, 284, 354, 364, 365, 532, 600, 613, 17,296, 18,416, 600,000.

The following dates are mentioned or explained:
1/1, 27/1, 17/2, 18/2, 27/2, 28/2, 1/4, 17/4, 1/7, 17/7, 1/10, 17/10, 10/11, 17/12.

Index to Numbers discussed

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