

HANDOUT – “ELEVEN” and “SEVEN” in Scripture

Numbers should be first interpreted literally, such as references in the New Testament to the eleven disciples after the loss of Judas and references to distances, eleventh month, eleventh year, etc.:

Deuteronomy 1:1 - Deuteronomy 1:2 (NASB)

²It is eleven days' *journey* from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea.

But there is also often a pattern to the use of certain numbers in Scripture...a significance that should not be overlooked. This significance should be considered **in addition to** understanding the numbers literally, especially when working with prophecy.

Let's do a quick comparative examination of the use of the numbers “eleven” and “seven” in Scripture. As we go through the scriptures, look for the relative significance of the numbers seven and eleven. (I've excluded Daniel and Revelation, since those are the passages we're trying to interpret).

Do you see a pattern or a similarity in their usage? What are these numbers associated with in Scripture? Good? Evil?

The Hebrew word for “seven” is “sheba' (sheh' bah)”. In Strong's Hebrew Dictionary it is defined as “seven (as the **sacred full** one)”. Per Strong's it comes from the root word “shaba' (shaw bah'”) which means “be complete”.

In Hebrew, “eleven” is represented by a combination of root words with a variety of meanings, but the root most frequently used has a root meaning of “united”. The root can also mean “one”, “any”, “man”, “some”, “together” and various other meanings.

Note: I excluded places where numbers seemed to be used without any significance attached, as in **Gen 5:6 - Gen 5:7 (NASB)** ⁷Then Seth lived eight hundred and **SEVEN** years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

ELEVEN:

Joseph's eleven brothers who were plotting his murder

Genesis 37:9 (NASB)

⁹Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and **ELEVEN** stars were bowing down to me.”

Delilah's price for betraying Samson

Judges 16:5 (NASB)

⁵The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and see where his great strength *lies* and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you **ELEVEN** hundred *pieces* of silver.”

Cursed silver used to make an idol

Judges 17:1 - Judges 17:3 (NASB)

¹Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. ²He said to his mother, “The **ELEVEN** hundred *pieces* of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.” ³He then returned the **ELEVEN** hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image and a molten image; now therefore, I will return them to you.”

Reign of kings who did evil in the sight of the Lord (coincidence?)

2 Kings 23:36 - 2 Kings 23:37 (NASB) (and in Chronicles)

³⁶Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned **ELEVEN** years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. ³⁷He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

2 Kings 24:18 - 2 Kings 24:19 (NASB) (and in Chronicles and Jeremiah)

¹⁸Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned **ELEVEN** years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

SEVEN:

Blessed day, day of completion

Genesis 2:1 - Genesis 2:3 (NASB)

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ²By the **SEVENTH** day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the **SEVENTH** day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the **SEVENTH** day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

The measure required to complete God's vengeance

Genesis 4:14 - Genesis 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him **SEVEN**fold."

The number of each "clean" animal necessary and to allow sufficient time to load the ark.

Genesis 7:2 - Genesis 7:4 (NASB)

²"You shall take with you of every clean animal by **SEVEN**s, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; ³also of the birds of the sky, by **SEVEN**s, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴"For after **SEVEN** more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

Abraham's pledge of his honesty

Genesis 21:22 - Genesis 21:30 (NASB)

²²Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do; ²³now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned." ²⁴Abraham said, "I swear it." ²⁵But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. ²⁶And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today." ²⁷Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. ²⁸Then Abraham set **SEVEN** ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. ²⁹Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these **SEVEN** ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?" ³⁰He said, "You shall take these **SEVEN** ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well."

Time to complete mourning

Genesis 50:9 - Genesis 50:10 (NASB)

¹⁰When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed **SEVEN** days mourning for his father.

Time to complete the observance of the Passover

Exodus 12:15, 16 - Exodus 12:19 (NASB)

¹⁵**SEVEN** days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the **SEVENTH** day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the **SEVENTH** day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. ... ¹⁹**SEVEN** days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* an alien or a native of the land.

Holy day on which no manna was to be gathered

Exodus 16:26 (NASB)

²⁶“Six days you shall gather it, but on the **SEVENTH** day, *the sabbath*, there will be none.”

Day to be kept holy unto the Lord

Exodus 20:8 - Exodus 20:11 (NASB)

⁸“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the **SEVENTH** day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the **SEVENTH** day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Number of lamps in the Tabernacle

Exodus 25:37 - Exodus 25:38 (NASB) Instructions for the lampstand in the Tabernacle

³⁷“Then you shall make its lamps **SEVEN** *in number*; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it. ³⁸“Its snuffers and their trays *shall be* of pure gold.

Number of days required to make the altar holy

Exodus 29:37 (NASB)

³⁷“For **SEVEN** days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, *and* whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

Number of times blood to be sprinkled before the Lord in atonement for the sin of the priest

Leviticus 4:3 - Leviticus 4:6 (NASB)

³if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. ⁴He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull and slay the bull before the LORD. ⁵Then the anointed priest is to take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting, ⁶and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood **SEVEN** times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary.

Number of times the altar and utensils of worship were to be anointed with oil to consecrate them

Leviticus 8:11 (NASB)

¹¹He sprinkled some of it on the altar **SEVEN** times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.

Number of times the leper was to wash in order to be cleansed

2 Kings 5:10 (NASB)

¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan **SEVEN** times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will be clean*.”

Number of times silver is refined to become pure

Psalms 12:6 (NASB)

⁶ The words of the LORD are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined **SEVEN** times.

Number of pillars upon which the house of Wisdom rests

Proverbs 9:1 (NASB)

¹ Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her **SEVEN** pillars;

Magnification of light on the day the Lord heals his people

Isaiah 30:26 (NASB)

²⁶The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be **SEVEN** times *brighter*, like the light of **SEVEN** days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

This is a prophecy. The stone is Christ Jesus. The seven eyes are the eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth (see the following passage from Zech 4) – the number of eyes required to see everything

Zechariah 3:8 - Zechariah 3:10 (NASB)

⁸Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. ⁹“For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are **SEVEN** eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. ¹⁰“In that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “every one of you will invite his neighbor to *sit* under *his* vine and under *his* fig tree.””

(Zerubbabel was sent to oversee the rebuilding of the Temple after the Babylonian exile)

Zechariah 4:1-3 - Zechariah 4:8-10 (NASB)

¹Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. ²He said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its **SEVEN** lamps on it with **SEVEN** spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; ³also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.” ... ⁸Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish *it*. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. ¹⁰“For who has despised the day of small things? But these **SEVEN** will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—*these are* the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

The remnant who remained true to God

Romans 11:2 - Romans 11:5 (NASB)

²God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³“Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.” ⁴But what is the divine response to him? “I have kept for Myself **SEVEN** thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God’s* gracious choice.

Seven, then, has a connotation of holiness and completeness. Groups of seven are usually associated with the completion of a work of God and the quantity of seven is used to describe a whole population required to complete some holy purpose.