

Shlom Bayyit



Let Us Count The Ways

Which number is the most significant to Judaism? Is it 10? Torah assigns the count of 10 to the Commandments Moses received at Mt. Sinai. Is it 18? The Hebrew word *Chai* - Life has a numerical value of 18. Is it 40? It is the most frequently occurring number in Torah. All worthy contenders - yet it is the number 7 - the general symbol for all associations with God and that which is holy – that is our most significant number.

It has not gone unnoticed that the first verse of Torah has 7 words and 28 letters. Although solar or lunar events determine our days, nights, months, seasons, and years, the 7 day week is the one period of time ordained, in Genesis, by God....and so we begin to unfold this fascinating tapestry of the Judaic associations with the number 7.

1. Shabbat is the 7th day of the week.
2. There are 7 weeks in the counting of the Omer before Shavuot. (Leviticus 23:15)
3. In Israel, there are 7 days of Passover and Sukkot. (Leviticus 23:6, 34)
4. Every 7th year, the land lays fallow during Shmita (Sabbatical year). (Leviticus 25:4)
5. After 7 cycles of Shmita, we have a Jubilee year (Yovel). (Leviticus 25:8)
6. When a close relative dies, we sit Shiva for 7 days.
7. Moses was born and died on the same day – the 7th of Adar.
8. The Jewish calendar has a 19 year cycle that contains 7 leap years.
9. A Jewish servant regains freedom in the 7th year. (Exodus 21:2)
10. In addition to the 613 Commandments, the Sages added 7 more.
11. There are 7 Noachide Laws pertaining to all humanity.
12. At every Jewish wedding, 7 blessings are recited. (Sheva Brachot).
13. Each Shabbat, 7 people are called to the Torah reading (Aliyot)..
14. There were 7 days of preparation for the construction of the Tabernacle in the desert. (Leviticus 8:35)
15. We wind the Tefillin straps around the arm 7 times.
16. Moses was the 7th generation after Abraham.
17. Each plague in Egypt lasted 7 days.
18. God created 7 levels of heaven. (Hence the expression, "I'm in 7th heaven!")
19. On Shabbat and holidays, we recite 7 blessings in the silent Amidah.
20. There are 7 special species of produce by which the Land of Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives, and dates. (Deut. 8:8)
21. 7 nations warred with Israel: Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites & Girgashites.
22. The Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashanah occurs in the 7th month -- Tishrei. (Leviticus 23:24)
22. The smallest allowable dimension of a Sukkah is 7 by 7 handbreadths.
24. Joshua led the Jewish People around the walls of Jericho 7 times before the walls fell. (Joshua 6:15)
25. Jacob worked for Laban for 7 years (twice) in order to marry his daughters. (Genesis 29:27)
26. The Holy Temple contained 7 gates of entry.
27. The Talmud lists 7 female prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Avigail, Chuldah, Esther.
28. The Menorah in the Temple had 7 branches.

Source: www.aish.com

.....and the associations go on. Can you and your family add to this list? To find 21 more examples, go to www.templebethrison.org/observance/customs/html