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Bible Numerics - Introduction to this Paper

Some people have tried to use what is known as "Bible Numerics" to prove their point of view about the meaning of certain Scriptures.

Any "truth" which relies on this as one of its foundations is highly questionable, as we shall see.

This paper examines serious flaws in the whole concept of Bible Numerics.

My initial view on numerics was that although it was a powerful means of proving that God had inspired the Bible, it had potential for misuse in the hands of people trying to prove something contrary to the general revelation of Scripture. Certainly, we should not be using it for anything that formed the basis of any doctrine. Such doctrine should be based on what the Bible actually says, not on the interpretation of numerical patterns. My view now, as expounded in this paper, is that Bible Numerics, as used in this way is meaningless. In fact, it is worse than meaningless; it is dangerous.

I allow that the numbers mentioned in the plain text of the Bible are capable of analysis at an "interest" level. The regular use of seven, the eight people on board the ark, the forty years in the wilderness are all examples of plainly available numbers in the Bible that are available for analysis by those so disposed.

But the use of "hidden" numbers "underlying the text" is not a powerful proof of the Bible and not useful for gaining any information whatsoever about the meaning of any part of its text. It is in fact a natural phenomenon that is exhibited for any piece of text you examine, and worse for those who try to imply meaning, for any number for which you care to look.

This is proved in the following paper.

I would like to acknowledge the key contribution made in my understanding of this subject made possible by Brendan MacKay of the Australian National University, and his computer program: "Panin's Panic". This is also acknowledged in the text of this paper.

Pr Geoff Beggs
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Contents

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine Bible Numerics.

Bible Numerics can be categorised into several streams:

- Gemiatra - values of letters, words, sentences and passages of the Bible based on Hebrew and Greek letter values;
- Place values - values of letters, words, sentences and passages of the Bible based on a value given by a letter's position in its alphabet; and
- Meanings assigned to certain numbers, some with biblical authority (or at least consistent usage in the Bible), others on no particular authority that can be determined.

Combinations of the above methods are sometimes used to draw conclusions from the text of the Bible that cannot be drawn from any other source.

The main use of Bible Numerics within the RCI had been as a means of demonstrating that the Bible is inspired. We relied heavily on the work done by Ivan Panin, and sold his books in our bookshops. From time to time talks were given on the subject. We had never been particularly overboard on promoting numerics, although some had got very involved with it.

I have given a few talks on numerics over the years, have most of Panin's books and, until recently, have accepted numerics as an interesting "proof" of the Bible, a sign particularly designed by God for our technological age.

I will present evidence in this paper which shows that the mathematical patterns found in the Bible can, in fact, be found in any text that is sufficiently analysed. Part of that discussion will centre on analysis done on a paragraph from the "Voice of Revival" and another analysis done on some Shakespeare.

I will then discuss the flaw in the probability normally used to calculate the odds of this happening and answer some objections that may be raised.

Numerics Outside of the Bible?

If it can be shown that a system of numerics can be found in any text, it shows that the numeric pattern found in the Bible is the result of natural mathematical principles and is not divine.

A computer program was used to analyse texts and look for patterns of various numbers. This program[1] was developed by a mathematician named Brendan Mackay, working at the Australian National University in Canberra. It has only been used to find the patterns. I have personally verified, by undertaking spot checks, that any patterns so found are indeed true patterns. I did this using a spreadsheet that referenced the tables of letter values and letter place values. I did this to allay any fears that Mr Mackay's program (which is complex to understand) was in some way manipulating the results.

If his program found a pattern, and my computer spreadsheet checked it for accuracy, then it can be considered to be really there. They are.

The Letter-Value Scheme

I have mostly used English to test for patterns. As the 26 letters of the English alphabet have no values associated with them, I will use a scheme similar to that used by Panin for Hebrew and Greek (see *Figure 1*). This scheme was chosen before I commenced looking for patterns and therefore has not been manipulated to give any particular result. Any student of Bible Numerics will recognise the values as similar to that of Panin.

a	**1**	**n**	**50**
b	**2**	**o**	**60**
c	**3**	**p**	**70**
d	**4**	**q**	**80**
e	**5**	**r**	**90**
f	**6**	**s**	**100**
g	**7**	**t**	**200**
h	**8**	**u**	**300**
I	**9**	**v**	**400**
j	**10**	**w**	**500**
k	**20**	**x**	**600**
l	**30**	**y**	**700**
m	**40**	**z**	**800**

Figure 1 *- Letter-value scheme used for looking for numeric patterns.*

The above table sets out the gemiatra of the letters. This gemiatra I will refer to as the "value" of a letter, word, sentence or passage.

In addition to its gemiatra, each letter has a value associated with its place in the alphabet - its "Place Value": a=1, b = 2 … y = 25, z=26).

The number of letters in certain categories was also counted.

Numerics in RCI Publications

First I would like to undertake an analysis of a paragraph out of the editorial of the "Voice of Revival" (December 1995 - Pr Lloyd Longfield).

This paragraph was chosen because it did not itself quote any scriptures. No other testing was undertaken on this essentially random paragraph before the numerical testing was undertaken.

RCI Paragraph Chosen

> *The Bible instructs that the oversight of the Church does not have the authority to remit the sins of its members, but should administer the scriptural standards by which saints are expected to live. The attitude of forgiveness is called for, but in some instances expulsion of the malefactor from fellowship is scriptural.*
>
> *53 words, 267 letters*

An examination of some of the numerical features of this passage reveals the following features of seven:

Features of seven

Value of the last words in all sentences: 1337 or **7** x 191 (Feature 1).

Number of letters in the last words of all sentences: 14 or **7** x 2 (Feature 2).

Number of letters in an even position in the passage: 133 or **7** x 19 (Feature 3).

Value of all words with an even position in the passage: 13286 or **7** x 1898 (Feature 4).

Value of the first sentence: 14462 or **7** x 2066 (Feature 5).

Number of letters in nouns in whole passage: 112 or **7** x 16 (Feature 6).

Value of all nouns in whole passage: 9205 or **7** x 1315 (Feature 7).

Value of all consonants in whole passage: 17626 or **7** x 2518 (Feature 8).

Value of the consonants in the first word: 28 or **7** x 4 (Feature 9).

Place value of the consonants of the first and last words of each sentence: 196 or **7** x **7** x 4, a feature not just of seven, but of seven sevens (Features 10 and 11).

Value of the first and last words of whole passage: 1106 or **7** x 158 (Feature 12).

The value of the first and last words can be further divided into

> Value of the consonants: 791 or **7** x 113, and
>
> Value of the vowels: 315 or **7** x 45 (Feature 13).

Value of first and last words in last sentence: 1106 or **7** x 158 (Feature 14).

Value of vowels in all words starting with vowels: 1778 or **7** x 254 (Feature 15).

Place value of consonants in first word: 28 or **7** x 4 (Feature 16).

Place value of consonants in first word of all sentences: 56 or **7** x 8 (Feature 17).

Place value of consonants in last words of all sentences: 140 or **7** x 20 (Feature 18).

Place value of consonants in the first sentence: 1533 or **7** x 219 (Feature 19).

Value of consonants in all words that have an odd number of consonants: 9359 or **7** x **7** x 191, a feature not just of seven, but of seven sevens (Features 20 and 21).

Place value of consonants in all words that have an odd number of consonants: 1232 or **7** x 176 (Feature 22).

Value of consonants in all words that have an even number of consonants: 8267 or **7** x 1181 (Feature 23).

Number of vowels in an odd position in the passage: 49 or **7** x **7**, a feature not just of seven, but of seven sevens (Features 24 and 25).

Value of vowels in an odd position in the passage: 2121 or **7** x 303 (Feature 26).

Number of vowels in the first sentence: 56 or **7** x 8 (Feature 27).

Value of even letters in a word, in words that are in the second sentence: 4606 or **7** x **7** x 94, a feature not just of seven, but of seven sevens (Features 28 and 29).

Value of odd letters in words in words starting with a vowel: 3087=**7** x **7** x **7** x 9, a feature not just of seven, but of seven seven sevens (Features 30, 31 and 32). In addition, the number of letters in this group is 49 or **7** x **7** (Features 33 and 34).

Value of letters in an even position in the word, in the last sentence: 4606 or **7** x **7** x 94 (Features 35 and 36).

Value of odd words starting with consonants in whole passage: 6685 or **7** x 955 (Feature 37).

Place value of odd words starting with consonants in whole passage: 1078 or **7** x **7** x 22 (Features 37 and 38).

Number of letters in odd words starting with consonants in whole passage: 91 or **7** x 13 (Feature 39).

Place value of the first and last letters of the words that end with a vowel: 343 or **7** x **7** x **7** (Features 40, 41 and 42).

Value of words ending with a vowel in the first sentence: 2800 or **7** x 400 (Feature 43). These words also have a place value of 406 or **7** x 58 (Feature 44).

Value of all words that start and end with vowels in whole passage: 1015 or **7** x 45 (Feature 45).

Value of all words that end with a consonant in the first sentence: 11662 or **7** x **7** x **7** x 34 (Features 46, 47, and 48).

Number of letters in all words that end with a consonant in the first sentence: 126 or **7** x 18 (Feature 49).

Analysis

I could go on, but 49 features seems a good place to stop. In fact, setting my computer to not search for all possibilities (as it takes too long) still produced thousands of features. This may seem hard to believe, but the reason for this will be discussed later under the section "Probability Problem".

However, at this point, let's assume that the 49 features were all we found. Using Panin's logic, the odds for this happening by chance would by 7 x 7 x 7 x … x 7 (49 times). This is normally written as 7^{49} and is a huge number.

At this point, I see the solution as being one of two things:

1. The passage itself has been given divine authority; or
2. Some other mathematical force is at play.

If option 1, then we could say God's seal in the use of sevens is certainly on this paragraph. Unfortunately, the passage also displays a huge number of features of 13, suggesting that God's seal may be there, but was against its message.

Features of 13

Number of letters in words in even places in the whole passage: 143 or **13** x 11 (Feature 1). Value of these words 13286 or **13** x 1022 (Feature 2).

Place value of the first sentence: 2015 or **13** x 155 (Feature 3).

Number of letters in the first and last words of the whole passage: **13** (Feature 4).

Number of letters in all words starting with a vowel: 91 or **13** x 7 (Feature 5).

Place value of all words that end with a vowel: 624 or **13** x 48 (Feature 6).

Value of all words that end with a consonant: 17719 or **13** x 1363 (Feature 7), and if you add the digits of the number of 13s (1 + 3 + 6 + 3) you also get **13** (Feature 8).

Place value of all words with an odd number of letters: 1612 or **13** x 124 Feature 9).

Place value of all consonants in an odd position in the passage: 1222 or **13** x 94 (Feature 10), and if you add the digits of the number of 13s (9 + 4) you also get **13** (Feature 11).

Number of consonants in the first and last words of all sentences: **13** (Feature 12).

Value of the first and last letters of the last word in the passage: 130 or **13** x 10 (Feature 13).

Value of the first letter of all words in the first sentence: 3237 or **13** x 249 (Feature 14).

Value of all the vowels in the first sentence: 2561 or **13** x 197 (Feature 15).

Value of nouns in an odd position in the passage: 3016 or **13** x 232 (Feature 16), the same nouns have a place value of 559 or **13** x 43 (Feature 17).

Place value of letters in an even position in a word, that are vowels, in the last sentence: 169 or **13** x **13** (Features 18 and 19).

Value of even letters in the passage in words starting with vowels in the first sentence: 3211 or **13** x **13** x 19 (Features 20 and 21)

… and so on. Again, there are a vast number of features, but this is about as long as the sets of features you read in Panin's books.

You Get Whatever You Look For

The above two sets of features leads us to a worrying conclusion.

That is, you get whatever you look for. If you want to prove something (anything!), then Bible Numerics will do it for you. Or, as we have been analysing a passage that is NOT in the Bible, we should now just call it: "Numerics".

This leads us to a further conclusion: **not only is Bible Numerics wrong, it is dangerous.**

If you want to prove the first verse of the Bible is not about creation, but about rebellion, look for the thirteens.

The following **thirteens** are found in the **Hebrew** text of the first verse of the Bible:

> Value of all even letters in the whole passage: 2353 or **13** x 181 (Feature 1). Total of the digits of this number (2 + 3 + 5 + 3) is **13** (Feature 2).
>
> Value of the first and last words: 1209 or **13** x 93 (Feature 3).
>
> Value of the odd words: 1690 or **13** x **13** x 10 (Features 4 and 5).
>
> Value of all even letters: 2353 or **13** x 181 (Feature 6).
>
> Panin lists three nouns. The value of all words that are not nouns is 1924 or **13** x 148 (Feature 7). The digits of the largest factor besides 13 (1 + 4 + 8) add up to **13** (Feature 8).
>
> Value of the first letter of odd words: **13** (Feature 9). Place value of same letters: **13** (Feature 10).
>
> Value of letters in an even position in the verse that are in even words in the verse: 1391 or **13** x 107 (Feature 11). Place value of same letters: 104 or **13** x 8 (Feature 12).
>
> Place value of the first and last letters of all words that are not a verb: 130 or **13** x 10 (Feature 13).

Features in Hamlet

If you want to prove that Shakespeare was inspired of God, let's look at a famous quote from Hamlet:

To be, or not to be, that is the question
Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them?

Some of the values of seven in this passage are:

Place value of letters in an even position in the whole passage: 952 or **7** x 136 (Feature 1).

Value of all the odd lines: 7329 or **7** x 1047 (Feature 2).

Value of all lines with an even number of words: 5033 or **7** x 719 (Feature 3) with a total number of letters of 63 or **7** x 9 (Feature 4).

Number of letters in words with an odd number of letters: 49 or **7** x **7** (Features 5 and 6).

Value of words starting with a vowel: 3759 or **7** x 537 (Feature 7).

Value of words ending with a vowel: 2737 or **7** x 391 (Feature 8).

Number of consonants in words in an even position in the whole passage: 49 or **7** x **7** (Features 9 and 10).

Value of letters that are in an odd position in a word but in an even position in each line: 2058 or **7** x **7** x **7** x 6 (Features 11, 12 and 13)

Place value of words starting with vowels in odd lines: 490 or **7** x **7** x 5 x 2 (Features 14 and 15). The sum of this number's prime factors (7 + 7 + 5 + 2) = 21 or **7** x 3 (Feature 16). The value of these vowels: 2884 or **7** x 412 (Feature 17), the sum of the digits of the largest factor other than 7 (4 + 1 + 2) is **7** (Feature 18).

Place value of words starting with a consonant in lines starting with a consonant: 931 or **7** x **7** x 19 (Features 19 and 20).

… and so on.

The probability, according to Panin, of these 20 features of seven occurring by chance is 7^{20}, or 1 in 79,792,266,297,612,000.

Again, hard as is it is to believe, there are thousands of features that have been produced. These are available for the inquirer.

Probability Problem

Why is this happening? Why does any text of more than a few letters in length exhibit these characteristics, which according to the generally accepted view of how the probability should be counted should represent extremely small probabilities (1 in several billion)?

There is a flaw in the way Panin and others have worked out the probability. Lets look at the probability from another angle.

Let us say, that instead of looking for sevens, we were looking for ones. Every combination, in a passage, of letters and words in every conceivable way would add up to a number that was divisible by one (all whole numbers are divisible by one). We would therefore have 100% success. Everywhere we looked we would find values that were divisible by one. This is not particularly exciting; it is what we would have expected.

However, let us now say we are looking for values of two. Again if we looked at every conceivable way that the letter values could be added together, each number we arrive at would either be an odd or an even number. All of the even numbers would be divisible by two. That is, there is a 1 in 2 chance that whatever we add together would be divisible by two. If we come up with 100 combinations, 50 of them should be divisible by two.

Finally, let's look at finding values for seven. Again we look at every conceivable way that the letter values could be added together. We end up with a list of numbers. By probability, every number would be divisible by one, 1 out of 2 numbers would be divisible by two, and 1 out of 7 of these numbers would be divisible by seven.

So if we came up with 100 numbers, arrived at by combining letters in different ways and adding up their values, 1 in 7, or around 14 of them would be divisible by seven. That is, there would be 14 features of seven in the text.

How many combinations can there be in a text? Let's look at a small one, say the first verse of the Bible. In the Hebrew it has 28 letters.

How many combinations of letters can there be in such a passage?

Let's do some maths on smaller numbers to demonstrate how many combinations there are. We will delete combinations that repeat themselves in another order (ie AB and BA are counted once only).

Firstly, one letter (say A)	A	1
Two letters, A and B	A, B, AB	3
Three letters, A, B and C	A, B, C, AB, AC, BC, ABC	7
Four letters, A, B, C and D	A, B, C, D, AB, AC, AD, BC, BD, CD, ABC, ABD, ACD, BCD, ABCD	15

Rather than doing all this by hand (very time consuming!) there is a formula that works this out.

$$\text{Total} = \sum_{r=1}^{n} \frac{n!}{r!(n-r)!}$$

where n is the number of letters for which we are searching and r is the current number in the arithmetic series between 1 and n. In a programming sense you would write this as "For r = 1 to n, n! / (r!(n-r)!), loop".

In the case of a block of text having 28 letters (Genesis 1:1 in Hebrew) this high-school formula tells us there are 268,435,455 non-repeating combinations.

When the numerical values for the letters in all of these combinations are added together you therefore have 268 million numbers. When the place values are added together you have a further 268 million numbers. By probability, one in seven of these numbers will be divisible by seven. This gives us two lots of 38,347,922 of these combinations that will have seven as a factor. If one in a million of these is "*interesting"* (eg words 1 and 3, first and last letters of each word etc), then the chances are that you will have 76 features of seven in this verse. (If, say, one in 10,000 is interesting, you should expect 7,600 features of seven!).

Based on the above, and just using the letter values and not place values, we could reasonably expect there to be say, 38 features of seven in the verse. This is in marked contrast to the way Panin calculated the odds. If he found 38 features of seven he would calculate the odds as 7^{38} (129 million million million million million).

However, 38 features is what you would expect from a text of this size, and this is after applying the very generous "only one in a million is interesting enough to be a feature" concession, and only working on the values, not also the place values.

Objections

What about Mark 16

The use of Numerics to prove the last verses of Mark 16 is now easily disprovable. If we continue to promote this as one of the important proofs of Mark 16 (I don't think we do this now, anyway) we will disappoint those for whom it is an important proof when they find out it is not.

The best arguments for Mark 16 are: 1) it came to pass in the church of the Bible (ie it is internally consistent with the rest of the Bible); 2) it comes to pass in our lives; 3) manuscript evidence; and 4) the unlikelihood of a "trembled and afraid" ending if it ends at verse 8.

But it may be different in the original Hebrew and Greek

The principles demonstrated here will work with any text using any numbering scheme that starts from 1. The previous section explains why this is so. Being able to find 13's in the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1 (see above) is also a difficulty for this objection. In fact, I can find in the original Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 features of **any** number I choose.

In any case, if such features as I have found exist using a numbering scheme for English, how can we promote that the Hebrew and Greek are somehow different, and that this proves that God set a numeric seal in the Bible. The argument for this cannot be sustained in light of the information shown here.

What about the meanings of numbers

The Bible does seem to give us insight into the use of certain numbers. Seven does seem to speak of completeness, and appears a lot throughout the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation. Thirteen does seem to appear as the number of rebellion (eg "in the thirteenth year they rebelled"). Forty does seem to be the time of trial and testing. Twelve does seem to relate to God's government.

All of these meanings are arrived at by use of the number as mentioned in Scripture in relation to the *plain* context of the verses. That is, there is no hidden meaning. This is reasonable.

But Bible Numerics has assigned many numbers in a more arbitrary way. Bullinger[2] (whose book promotes the "rapture", by the way) says eleven is the number of disorder, disorganisation, imperfection and disintegration. His argument runs along the lines that if 12 means perfect Government then 11 (12 - 1) is something that falls short of it. Panin, on the other hand, gives a big exposition in his book[3] telling us that eleven is one of the integral numbers bound up with the Bible as a whole, and with its arrangement of books and its authors. This is certainly confusing if it means disorder and imperfection.

Some numbers may indeed have meaning. But these should only be inferred where it is clear from the **plain text** of the Bible. As numeric patterns hidden in a text can be found for **any** number you care to look into, **any patterns so found give no clue** as to the **meaning** of those numbers.

Conclusion

Bible Numerics is readily disproved, not by debateable argument, but by cold hard mathematics.

Nevertheless, God is a consummate mathematician. The mathematical principles underlying creation are astounding.

Some may be disappointed that a long-held view can no longer be sustained in the light of new knowledge. Remember, God has not changed. It is just that our understanding has increased.

For those that have propounded doctrine on the basis of numerical gemiatra please let me point you gently but firmly back to the actual plain meaning of the words of the Bible itself:

> *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*
>
> *(2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

References

1 Mackay, 1997, *Panin's Panic*, http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/

2 Bullinger, (circa 1900), *Number in Scripture*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids Michigan, Edition 19 (1991), p251.

3 Panin, (circa 1934?), *The Shorter Works of Ivan Panin*, Association of the Covenant People, Vancouver, British Columbia, pp37-44.