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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NUMBER SEVEN IN THE LIFE AND LITERATURE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

A

THESIS

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April, 1927.

C O N T E N T S

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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NUMBER SEVEN

IN THE LIFE AND LITERATURE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

I. INTRODUCTION

In ancient Israel, as among other ancient peoples, a peculiar significance seems to have been attached to certain numbers. The words used to designate these particular numbers were not always to be taken literally. At times they meant something beyond the exact numerals for which they stood. At other times they were employed in an exact sense numerically but their use was dictated by the fact that the numbers had acquired a special meaning. Thus, for example, the number three appears to have signified a small, well-rounded total[1]. In Amos 1:3, three is used in such a sense. On the other hand, when the text of Daniel says that Daniel prayed three times a day (Dan. 6:11), it may actually mean that he prayed the number of times stated, but he did so because to do a thing three times had a certain significance. So it was also with other numbers. The numbers three, four, seven, twelve, forty, and seventy were used most often with some such special meaning.

Of these numbers, the number seven played a very prominent role. It was used again and again throughout Biblical literature. In a very few cases it was used simply in a literal manner, as, for example, when it says that Jehoash began to rule in the seventh year of Jehu (2K. 12:2). With these cases we are not concerned. In the vast majority of cases, however, the number seven was chosen deliberately. It was either an exact number, as the seven days of a holiday, where the fact that the holiday lasted for seven days indicates a peculiar significance which the number had, or it was a concept, as the sevenfold vengeance to be taken on the slayer of Cain (Gen. 4:15), signifying something beyond the actual numeral seven. It is with these uses of the number that we are to deal, and we shall

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1. Farbridge, Maurice H.: Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism, p. 99.

designate these uses of seven as symbolic. When we say, then, that there is some symbolism involved in the number seven we mean either that there was some peculiar reason for doing a thing seven times or for seven days or the like, or that the number itself was a symbol.

Several questions arise. What are the connections in which the number was used? What meaning or meanings did the number have? What was the reason for the use of this particular number in this particular way? It is with these questions ~~which~~ that this study will concern itself. We shall point out in what various groups of references the number is found, we shall show how it was used, and in dealing with the reason for the symbolism we shall investigate the original character of the number, suggest a reason for this original nature and indicate the course of its development into the number with the significance which attaches to it as we find it in the Bible.

II. THE CONNECTIONS IN WHICH SEVEN WAS USED AS A SYMBOLIC NUMBER

The number seven occurs in the Bible in a wide variety of instances. It is to be found in references dealing with periods of time, with magical ceremonies, with ritualistic observances, and in various other connections. Before we can enter into a study of the symbolism involved in the number we must know something about thse connections in which it appears. We propose, therefore, to group the significant references under appropriate heads.

A. SEVEN IN PERIODS OF TIME

We deal first with those references pertaining to periods of time. We find here a great many instances and we shall subdivide them under subordinate heads. Our first group under periods of time deals with festivals. In the holiday calendar we find that the number seven plays a very prominent part. At the end of every period of seven days a holiday, the Sabbath, occurs. Two festivals, the Mazoth Festival and the Feast of Booths, last for seven days each. A seven weeks' interval elapses between the Mazoth Festival and the Feast of Weeks. The seventh month is a rather important month. The first day is a holiday, the tenth is a holiday, as are also the fifteenth to twenty-first (Booths), and the twenty-second. Then, as an extension of the idea of the Sabbath as the concluding day of a seven-day period, we have the Sabbatical year, and after seven times seven years the jubilee year.

But it is not only in the fixed calendar that seven plays such an important role. The seven-day period is to be found also in connection with occasional festivals. Thus, in connection with the dedication of the Temple, we find that a seven-day festival was held, a double seven-day feast, according to 1K. 8:65 and a seven-day feast, according to 2Ch. 7:8. We find also that the feast observed by Ahasuerus as described in Esther 1:5 lasted seven days. A seven-day feast was also held when Samson took a wife (Judges 14:12).

Parallels of the use of seven in the fixed calendar as well as in special festivals may be observed in other Semitic and related practice. A Babylonian cuneiform text shows that the Babylonians attached a peculiar significance to the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th days of the month[1]. We find, too, in Babylonian literature a seven day period of festivity corresponding to that observed at the dedication of the Temple in the seven days of rejoicing at the completion of the Temple Ē-ninnū by Gudēa[2]. Even to the present day seven-day festivals are observed. Curtiss records a seven-day festival held at the shrine Nebi Musa, near the Dead Sea, which occurs each year[3]. Westermarck has found such festivals in Morocco. At the expiration of the fast of Ramadān the l-'Īd ṣ-ṣgēr ("the Little Feast") occurs, lasting seven days[4]. From the 27th of April to the 3rd of May (Old Style) there is also a seven-day period[5]. To this day the seventh month is important in Mecca, the seventh month having been already a holy month in pre-Islamitic times[6].

Another group of references to seven-day periods is composed of those references connected with periods of uncleanliness. A man who has an issue goes through a purification period of seven days before he is clean. (Lev. 15:13). If he lies with a woman in her period of impurity he is also unclean for seven days. (Lev. 15:24). So also a woman, when she has an issue of blood, in her menstrual period is unclean for seven days (Lev. 15:19), as is also the case when she has an issue of blood at times other than at this period. (Lev. 15:28). When a woman bears a son she is unclean for seven days. (Lev. 12:2). Contact with the dead also renders one unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11, 14-19). In the war with

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1. Hehn, Johannes: Siebenzahl und Sabbat Bei Den Babylonieren und im Alten Testament, p. 106.
   Jastrow, Morris, Jr.: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 135.
2. Hehn, p. 40; Farbridge, p. 125.
3. Curtiss, S. I.: Primitive Semitic Religion Today, p. 163.
4. Westermarck, Edward: Ritual and Belief in Morocco. II, 103.
5. Ibid. II, 117.
6. C. Snouck-Hurgronje: Mekka. II, 69.

Midian those who had had contact with the dead were actually segregated for such a period outside the camp (Num. 31:19). If a man dies beside a Nazarite and the Nazarite defiles his head, he must shave it on the seventh day (Num. 6:9). In accordance with the legislation of Ezekiel a priest who comes in contact with the dead body of a relative counts seven days after his purification before he is absolutely clean. (Ezekiel 44:26). In connection with leprosy, too, a period of uncleanness for seven days is to be found. Thus Miriam was secluded outside the camp for seven days. (Num. 12:14, 15). The legislation regarding the leprous person specifies periods of seven days for observation (Lev. 13:1-46), as is also the case with regard to the leprous house. (Lev. 14:38-39).

Periods of Mourning form another group of references to seven-day periods. Joseph mourns for his father seven days. (Gen. 50:10). At the burial of Saul and his sons there is a seven-days' fast. (1Sam. 31:13 and 1Ch. 10:12). The friends sit with Job seven days and seven nights presumably as a period observed at times of grief, being here a period of mourning as well as of grief for Job's other afflictions. (Job 2:13). In Daniel a period of three times seven days of mourning is recorded. (Dan. 10:2-3). In Babylonian literature also we find seven in connection with mourning, when Gilgames weeps for his friend six days and seven nights[1]. In present Semitic practice, too, we find seven in connection with the period after burial. Here, the custom as found among the Nusairiyeh at Behammra is to have a feast on the evening of the sixth day after the funeral and a sacrifice in the house of the dead the next morning[2].

We find also a large number of miscellaneous references to seven in periods of time. The seven days following the birth of a child are important days. According to Biblical practice, the eighth day is the day of circumcision. (Lev. 12:3).

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1. Hehn, p. 42.
2. Curtiss, p. 208.

In primitive Semitic practice today, when a boy is seven days old, they offer a sacrifice[1]. Westermarck records that in Morocco the seventh day after birth is often the day on which the child is named[2]. We find seven in connection with years of famine, in the Joseph story (Gen. 41), in Elisha's prediction (2K. 8:1-3), and in the prophecy of Gad, David's seer (2Sam. 24:13). Babylonian literature has a period of unfruitful years in the Gilgames Epic[3]. We find periods of seven days in the flood stories of the Bible (Gen. 7:4 and 8:10,12), as well as in the Babylonian flood story[4]. In the story of Jacob's marriages with Leah and Rachel there are periods of seven years (Gen. 29:18-21, 27, 28, 30). There are references to a seven-days' journey in Gen. 31:23 and 2K. 3:9. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses on Mt. Sinai. When Samuel anoints Saul he tells him to wait for him for seven days in Gilgal (1S. 10:8 cf. also 13:8). Offerings are accepted after seven days (Ex. 22:29, and Lev. 22:27). In the Gog and Magog references there are periods of seven years and seven months (Ezek. 39:9, 12, 14). In Daniel's prediction there are references to seven in connection with periods of time (Dan. 9:24-27). Thus seven is used a great many times in connection with periods--days, months, and years.

B. SEVEN IN MAGICAL CEREMONIES

We may now record a group of references in which seven occurs in practices of a magical nature. To cleanse from leprosy blood is to be sprinkled seven times upon the person afflicted (Lev. 14:7). Naaman is cured of leprosy by Elisha by washing seven times in the Jordan (2K. 5:10, 14). Elijah, in bringing rain, sends his servant out seven times, a procedure which may be connected with the magical ceremony of producing the rain (1K. 18:43-44). In reviving the child,

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1. Curtiss, p. 178.
2. Westermarck. I, 311; II, 385; II, 386; II, 391; II, 394; II, 407.
3. Hehn, p. 42.
4. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 360; Farbridge, p. 123.

Elisha stretches himself upon the child and the child sneezes seven times and opens its eyes (2K. 4:35).

The use of seven in connection with magical ceremonies is to be found also in other literature. Purification by sprinkling seven times is to be found in Babylonian and Assyrian practice[1]. Farbridge[2] records a number of cases in which seven is used by the Assyrians in practices of a magical character. The Assyrian sorcerer is advised to make seven little winged figures to set before Nergal. To remove a taboo seven loaves of pure dough should be applied. For the laying of ghosts, among other things seven small loaves of roast corn are required. Farbridge also records the use of seven or seven times two knots in sympathetic magic[3]. Seven knots in magic may also be found among other peoples. Pliny says that diseases of the groin were cured by tying seven or nine knots on a thread from a web and fastening it on the groin of the patient[4], and a modern Arab cure for fever is to tie a cotton thread, with seven knots around the patient's wrist, to be worn seven or eight days or until the fever passes[5]. The seven bonfires which are to be seen if the village is to be safe from conflagrations or in order to get a good husband or to be free from the fear of sorcerers[6] are also instances of the use of seven in connection with magic. Thus we find that seven has played a part in magic among various peoples, and instances of such a use are to be observed in the life of ancient Israel. It is to be noted that no clear-cut line of distinction can be made between magical ceremonies and purification or other ritualistic ceremonies. Thus, for example, the washing in the seven days of purification rites mentioned above[7] may well have something of a magical nature about it.

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1. Hehn, p. 36; Farbridge, p. 125.
2. Ibid, p. 125.
3. Ibid, p. 126; cf. also Frazer, James G.: Taboo and the Perils of the Soul, p. 303 (The Golden Bough III).
4. Frazer: Taboo and the Perils of the Soul, p. 303.
5. Ibid, p. 304.
6. Frazer: Balder the Beautiful. I, pp. 107, 108 (The Golden Bough X).
7. p. 4.

C. SEVEN IN RITUAL

We turn now to the use of seven in connection with ritual. In the Bible we find seven in connection with sacrifices (Job 42:8, 1Chr. 15:26, 2Chr. 13:9, 2Chr. 29:21, Num. 23:1, 29), in connection with the number of altars (Num. 23:1, 4, 14, 29), in connection with the consecration and purification of altars (Ex. 29:37, Ezek. 43:25, 26), in connection with the consecration of priests (Ex. 29:30, 35; Lev. 8:11, 33, 35), in connection with the lamps on the candlestick (Ex. 25:37, Ex. 37:23, Num. 8:2, Zach. 4:2, 10), in connection with the steps in Ezekiel's Temple (Ezek. 40:22, 26), in connection with sprinkling the blood of the red heifer (Num. 19:4), in connection with the Day of Atonement ceremonies (Lev. 16:14, 19), in connection with sprinkling the blood of the sin offering (Lev. 4:6; 4:17). Similar references to seven in ritualistic connections are to be found among other peoples. The Babylonians and Assyrians had in the Aš̌ipu ritual seven altars, seven vessels of incense, seven cups of wine[1]. In many of his temples, seven altars burned continually before the God Mithras[2]. Among the Bedouins at the present time we find that seven sheep may be substituted for a camel in sacrifices on the day of korban on Mt. Arafat, when each family kills as many camels as there has been deaths of adult persons in that family during the past year[3]. In primitive Semitic practice today a bullock or camel is considered a sufficient offering for seven persons[4]. Thus seven is a familiar number in instances concerned with ritual and ritualistic observance.

D. SEVEN IN MISCELLANEOUS CONNECTIONS

We find also a large group of references to the number seven in miscellaneous connections. In the flood story, in addition to the seven in connection

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1. Hehn, p. 38; Farbridge, p. 124.
2. Farbridge, p. 130.
3. Burckhardt, John Lewis: Notes on the Bedouins and the Wahaby, p. 57.
4. Curtiss, p. 174.

with days, noted above[1], we find also seven of each clean animal (Gen. 7:2). We find seven in the story of Abimelech and Abraham at Beer-Sheba (Gen. 21:27-34). We find it in the attacking of Jericho where in addition to seven in periods of time there are seven priests with seven trumpets (Josh. 6:4, 8, 13). We find a number of references in which something is sevenfold, as the sevenfold vengeance to be taken on the slayer of Cain (Gen. 4:15), the sevenfold chastisement as punishment for sin (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28), the sevenfold light of the sun (Isaiah 30:26), the rendering unto neighbors sevenfold their reproach (Ps. 79:12), the restoration sevenfold by a thief (Prov. 6:31). We find seven pillars of wisdom (Prov. 9:1), seven things which are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 6:16), the righteous falling seven times and rising (Prov. 24:16), the woman bearing seven (1S. 2:5, Jer. 15:9), fleeing seven ways before an enemy (Deut. 28:7, 25), the seven bowstrings and the seven locks of Samson (Jud. 16:7-8, 13, 19), Jacob bowing seven times when approaching Esau (Gen. 33:3), and many other references of a similar nature. Parallels of such uses of seven in miscellaneous connections may also be found in Babylonian, Assyrian and other literatures. They are so numerous and varied that we need not quote them here. It is sufficient to know that seven is used in a great variety of such connections.

Seven, as we have shown, then, is found in Biblical literature as well as in the literature of other peoples of Semitic as well as of non-Semitic natures in a great number of instances. Among the ancient Hebrews it was used in periods of time, in magical ceremonies, in objects of ritual and ritualistic practice, and in many other miscellaneous connections. Having illustrated the wide use of the number, we shall endeavor to find what meaning attached to it. It is clear from the frequent use of seven that it is not merely a number taken at random. It had

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1. p. 6.

a significance and there must have been some reason for the fact that it impressed itself so profoundly on the mind and the life of the ancient Semites. We shall proceed now to an investigation of the meaning which the number seems to have had in the references we have recorded, that is, the senses in which it seems to have been employed.

III. THE SENSES IN WHICH SEVEN WAS USED

An examination of the cases in which the number seven was used shows that seven was employed many times in an inexact sense, so far as definite number is concerned. Sometimes it appears to be simply a round number. Hehn suggests that in cases such as Gen. 7:2, 3, it is used in this sense[1]. The reference in Prov. 6:16 to seven things which are an abomination to the Lord may also represent such a use. Jastrow interprets the use of seven in various references in Babylonian and Assyrian literature in this way. He states that when the 'Igigi' are designated as the seven gods the number simply indicates that they constitute a large group, seven being a round number which marked a large quantity[2]. He also interprets the use of seven in the story of Adapa breaking the wings of the south wind so that for seven days no wind blew in the same manner[3]. Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible records a large number of references as cases in which seven is merely a round expression for a moderately large number[4].

A closer investigation, however, will show that, while in a few cases seven may be simply a round number, in the great majority of cases in which it is not used in an exact sense as well as in many cases where the exact number seven is chosen deliberately, it is used as a number indicating completeness, perfection or totality. Hehn points this out very clearly[5]. When the Bible speaks of sevenfold vengeance, as in Gen. 4:15 and 4:24, there seems to be little doubt of the fact that complete vengeance is meant. When it is said that the light of the sun shall be sevenfold (Is. 30:26) the meaning is clearly that the sun shall then shine with perfect brightness. The words of the Lord as silver refined seven times (Ps. 12:7)

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1. Hehn, p. 78.
2. Jastrow, Morris Jr.: The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, p. 185.
3. Ibid, p. 546. cf. also Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 48, note 4.
4. Hastings, James: A Dictionary of the Bible. Article Number vol. III, pp. 562-3.
5. Hehn, p. 77ff. cf. also p. 16ff.

means as silver thoroughly refined. The statement that the thief must restore seven times (Prov. 6:37) seems to indicate that he must restore completely. The house of wisdom is significantly conceived of as having seven pillars. It has a sure foundation. A woman who has borne seven (1S. 2:5, Jer. 15:9) is simply a woman who has borne enough children so that she can be contrasted with the barren woman. She is the perfect type of the prolific woman. When Jacob bows seven times in approaching Esau he shows complete obeissance[1]. Six steps lead up to the king's throne, which is the seventh (1K. 10:18-20), and is thus completely raised from the ground. When in the taking of Jericho, the city is surrounded for seven days and seven priests carry seven trumpets and on the seventh day the city is surrounded seven times (Joshua 6), all these things are done for the sake of completeness, seven being the number which indicates that a thing is done completely. Thus in these cases mentioned as well as in many others, things are actually done seven times because seven is the number for completeness or perfection, or the number seven is used in no exact numerical sense simply because it is a symbol for these ideas.

In the references to periods of time this idea is also evident. Hehn also brings this out[2]. As periods of small complete duration he points to the seven-day periods in the flood story (Gen. 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12), in the fulfillment of the seven days after the Lord had turned the rivers of Egypt into blood (Ex. 7:25), in the seven-day period in the taking of Jericho (Jos. 6:4, 15), and in the seven days that Saul waited for Samuel (1Sam. 10:8; 13:8). Periods of seven days where the reason for the seven days' duration of the period may have been an entirely different one may in time have come to be looked upon as complete periods.

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1. With this may be compared the words to be found at the beginning of the Amarna letters where the statement often occurs--I fall before the feet of the King, my Lord, seven and seven times--Hehn, p. 17, Farbridge, p. 126.
2. Hehn, p. 86ff.

Purification periods as well as holiday periods are of such a nature. The idea of completeness did not dictate originally the length of these periods. Nevertheless, as we see them in the Bible, they are short periods of time complete in themselves.

As an indication of the idea of totality, we may cite the Babylonian expression "seven gods", which Hehn interprets to mean not a group of gods but the entire Babylonian godhead[1]. So, too, Farbridge says that the Babylonians usually referred to the evil spirits in a group and since seven was a complete number, reference was made to them as a group of seven[2].

In Arabic literature, too, seven is associated with perfection. The expression occurs "I completed to him the days by making them seven"[3], and seven is called one of the perfect numbers[4].

Other evidence also indicates that seven was a number standing for perfection, completeness or totality. A tablet coming from the Sumerian period contains several equations, among them being one which reads VII = kiš-ša-tu (Totality or completeness)[5]. A philological examination of the word for seven also points to a connection between seven and this idea. Several scholars are agreed that there is a connection between the root שׂבע and שׁבע [6]. It is pointed out that the Vulgate translates שִׂבְעָה of בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע in Gen. 21:33 by the word abundantia and it is suggested that the well was originally called בְּאֵר שִׂבְעָה or בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע [7]. It may be, of course, that the Vulgate simply confused the two words, the word with a š and the word with a s, or it may be that the confusion existed previously due to the fact that originally

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1. Hehn, p. 20.
2. Farbridge, p. 126ff.
3. Lane, Edward William: An Arabic-English Lexicon, p. 1296.
4. Ibid, p. 1297.
5. Hehn, p. 1; Farbridge, p. 137.
6. Hehn, following Delitzsch, pp. 55, 56, 86; Farbridge, 138.
7. Hehn, pp. 85, 86. cf. also Farbridge, p. 138.

the word for seven came from the same root as the word for satiety, seven having had the idea of completeness. That seven was not originally a numeral is pointed out by Lagarde[1]. It may very well be then that the word used for seven was the same as the word used for satiety and that later the word for satiety came to be written with a s and the one for seven with a š.

Whether this philological connection can be established or not, however, it can be asserted that seven did actually stand for the ideas of completeness, perfection, and totality. The Biblical references quoted undoubtedly involve such meanings. Seven was not merely a numeral. It indicated these ideas.

In some connections in which seven was used it seems also to have acquired a sacred significance. We have pointed out above[2] that seven is to be found in matters of ritual. It occurs in ritualistic ceremonies, as in Lev. 4:6, 17; 8:11; 16:14; Num. 19:4; in fitting up the place of worship as in 1K. 7:17; Ez. 40:22, 26; 41:3; in the specification of cult objects as in Num. 28:11ff; Ez. 45:23; 2Chr. 29:21; and similar references. A number bound up so intimately with sacred practices and sacred objects must itself have a sacred significance. In these connections seven may also have been a round number or a perfect number, but its use in these particular cases gives it some mystical character aside from the fact that it was used in these other senses. Associated with ritual, seven was a holy number.

We have seen, then, that seven is at times a round number, that it is a number expressing completion, perfection and totality, and that in some connections it is also a sacred number. All these meanings it had already acquired when we find it in the Bible. The problem now confronts us as to why it came to have such meanings. This problem involves an inquiry into the reason for the symbolism,

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1. Paul de Lagarde: Uebersicht über die im Aramäischen, Arabischen und Hebräischen übliche Bildung der Nomina, p. 38.

2. p. 8.

which in turn requires an investigation into the original character of the number. But, before proceeding to these points, we must take up the question of the influence of other peoples upon the use of seven as found among the Hebrews. We turn our attention now to this question.

IV. THE QUESTION OF BABYLONIAN INFLUENCE ON THE HEBREW USE OF THE NUMBER SEVEN

That the Hebrews were not the only people in ancient times to use seven in a significant sense is evident from the parallels in other literature noted in the first chapter of this study. Among the Babylonians especially seven enjoyed a very wide use. Seven is to be found in the Babylonian creation story[1], in the deluge story[2], in various places in the Gilgameš Epic[3], in artistic representations[4], in the names of goddesses, as the names of Labartu and Ištar[5], in various inscriptions as the number of gods and of evil deities[6], in incantation texts[7], in penitential psalms[8], in the recitation of prayers[9], and in numerous other connections. As a symbolic number, it also had great importance among the Greeks and the Hindus from very earliest times[10]. In the Odyssey, periods of seven days and seven years are frequent. Hesiod included the seventh day of the month in the list of holy days. In the Rig-Veda there are many references to seven, but there, unlike the use among Semitic peoples, it is of less importance than the number three. The Arabs had seven heavens and seven hells; they used the number in alchemy and in other connection[11]. The Aryans also used it in a significant sense, although this use is late, having superceded an older nine, and was probably due to the influence of the Jewish and later the Christian week[12]. Indicating a primitive use of the number, we find it in present-day Semitic practice

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1. Jastrow, Morris: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 132.
2. Ibid, p. 360. cf. also Farbridge, pp. 123, 124.
3. Hehn, pp. 18, 41, 42; Farbridge, p. 124.
4. Hehn, p. 17; Farbridge, p. 126.
5. Hehn, p. 19; Farbridge, pp.124, 125.
6. Hehn, p. 22ff. 4, 5; Farbridge, p. 126ff; Jastrow: The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, pp. 264, 265, 276.
7. Farbridge, pp.124, 126.
8. Hehn, p. 35.
9. Hehn, p. 37.
10. Webster, Hutton: Rest Days, pp. 208, 211.
11. Farbridge, p. 122.
12. Hastings, James: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Art. Numbers. IX, p. 413.

as observed by travellers in the Arabian desert[1].

The use of seven in a symbolic way, it is obvious, was not confined to the Hebrews. It was used by other peoples, especially those in the Semitic area, particularly the Babylonians. It is evident that if we are to look for the influence of the use of seven among other peoples upon its use among the Hebrews, we must look for that influence among the Babylonians. With this, of course, is bound up the whole problem of Babylonian influence in general. We cannot go into that problem here. However, we may point out that the similarities between Hebrew and Babylonian traditions point to the following possibilities, as regards explanation. Either the Hebrews took over Babylonian conceptions, which may have happened at that very remote period of contact with the Babylonians long before the entrance into Palestine which the tradition connected with Ur and Haran suggests, indirectly through the taking over of Canaanitish customs which were influenced by the Babylonians, or, what is less likely, during the later period of the Kings and during the exile; or, on the other hand, the Hebrews may not have actually taken over these traditions, but may have had common traditions with the Babylonians. A thorough investigation of the entire problem is impossible here. The fact that despite the similarities there is such a contrast between the traditions of the two peoples[2] suggests that the traditions were held together at a very early date. The points of resemblance point to a common stock of traditions. The differences point to the different courses of development which these common traditions took.

With regard to the symbolic use of seven, the question is one which cannot be absolutely decided. There are those who look upon Babylonia as the place where seven as a mystic number originated[3], or if the use of seven by the

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1. Curtiss, S. I.: Primitive Semitic Religion Today, pp. 81, 150, 163, 174, 178; C. Snouck-Hurgronje, II, 69; II, 97; II, 137; Burckhardt, p. 57.
2. cf. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 2 ff.
3. Schrader, E.: Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament, by Zimmern and Winckler, 3rd ed., p. 622; cf. also Hastings: A Dictionary of the Bible, III, 565, and Westermarck: Ritual and Belief in Morocco, I, 143.

Hebrews is not to be explained altogether by borrowing from the Babylonians, there are those who believe that it may reasonably be assumed to have been much influenced by Babylonian conceptions[1]. The fact that the use of seven as a sacred number is especially noticeable in the P code and in other post-exilic products may point to Babylonian influence, although on the other hand, this may very well be the result of development among the Hebrews themselves[2].

It may be pointed out that the use of seven in a significant way is to be found in the earliest code, K., where we find Sabbath legislation (Ex. 34:21). Its use here, as well as its use in the other pre-exilic codes, shows that seven was already a symbolic number among the Hebrews long before the exile. The fact that K. looks upon the desert period as the ideal period of Israelitish history also points to the fact that the Sabbath, which presupposes the recognition of the symbolic nature of seven, was brought into Canaan by the Hebrews, and hence seven was significant for them before their settlement in Palestine. If they got the conception of the sacred seven from the Babylonians, it must have been in the remote period of their history when they came in contact with the Babylonians in their sojourn in Ur and Haran. But then there is the possibility, as in the whole problem of Babylonian influence, of the use of the symbolic seven as a usage which both peoples had in common. Whatever the facts as to the origin may be, and we have no direct evidence to bear them out, it seems certain that seven was a symbolic number at a very early period in Israel's history and that during the exile, due possibly to the fact that seven was also a significant number for the Babylonians, the use of seven was greatly extended, although by that time in Israel itself its use was definitely established.

The fact that seven was a significant number for the Babylonians as well

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1. Webster, Hutton: Rest Days, p. 212, note 3; cf. also Hehn, p. 77.
2. Hastings: Dictionary of the Bible, III, 565.

as for the Hebrews and that among the Babylonians its symbolic nature was similar to the nature of the symbolism in Israel, whether pointing to Babylonian origin or to common traditions, makes it essential, however, that in looking for the reason for the symbolism, we make use of Babylonian remains as well as Hebrew records. Whatever the facts as to borrowing or common origin may be, the fact is fairly certain that the reason for the symbolism is the same. In either case, the use among both peoples must be taken into account.

V. THEORIES AS TO THE REASON FOR THE SYMBOLIC CHARACTER OF THE NUMBER SEVEN

Why seven was used in a symbolic sense is a question which does not admit of an easy answer. In all the records we have, whether Babylonian or Hebrew, seven has already assumed its mystic character. Not even the earliest records find any need for explaining why it had acquired this special significance, if indeed the writers of these records still knew the reason. All we can do under such conditions is to formulate theories, using whatever suggestions the use of the number as we find it affords and testing our theories by noting whether the facts can be fitted therein. Scholars have put forward a number of theories concerning the origin of the symbolism. We shall present those theories here together with a critical examination of each.

The first theory we shall consider is that which connects seven with the planets. Philo, who recognizes seven as a mystical number, suggests such a theory by his interpretation, as adopted by Josephus, of the seven-branched candlestick in Ex. 25:31, which he takes to refer to the seven planets[1]. Several modern scholars have adopted such an explanation as the reason for the use of the number in a symbolic significance. Among the supporters of this theory may be included Winckler, Jeremias, and Hommel[2]. Winckler sets forth this theory, for example, in connection with the seven-day week, the origin of which he considers to be the division of time by the planets[3]. Jeremias in discussing the sacred numbers makes seven the number of the planets, which he also believes has led to the introduction of the seven-day week[4]. This view as to the origin of the symbolism of seven is connected with what is known as the astral-mythological theory of Winckler, which

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1. Josephus: Antiquities, Bk. III, ch. VII, 7.
2. Hehn, p. 44. Also Farbridge, p. 132.
3. Winckler, Hugo: Religionsgeschichter und geschichtlicher Orient, pp. 59, 60.
4. Jeremias, Alfred: The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East. English Translation, Vol. I, p. 66.

was supported by Jeremias and others[1]. According to this theory, myths, legends and symbolisms originated in personifications of heavenly bodies. From the point of view of the ancients, what is important in heaven is important on earth. The seven planets, thus, an important group in the celestial sphere, have their counterpart here in the terrestrial. Thus the seven-day week arises and thus seven becomes a sacred number.

Jeremias is certain of the connection between the seven-day week and the planets and he believes the connection to be primeval[2]. He does not believe that in Babylonian civilization any age is imaginable when the seven days would not have been connected with the planets[3], and he believes that what is said in the Nabataean writing Dimeshqi, ch. X, applies to the whole ancient East as known from the records: "The seven planets govern the world"[4]. He also claims that the seven planets are met with in many cases in the Bible, pointing to the ecclesiastical council of the 'ohel mo'ed, the seven messengers of God in Ezek. 9:2, where the seventh with the writer's inkhorn he believes is reminiscent of Nebo--Mercury, the seven eyes and seven lamps, Zech. 3:9; 4:2, and the seven pillars of wisdom[5].

It should be explained that by the seven planets are meant the five larger planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, together with the sun and the moon. Apparently, according to this theory, these seven large heavenly bodies were grouped together by the ancients to make a unit of seven members. Jeremias quotes the planet list of Asurbanipal's library, which includes seven bodies interpreted to mean the seven heavenly bodies mentioned. The list runs as

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1. Farbridge, p. 132.
2. Jeremias, I, p. 43.
3. Ibid, I, p. 199.
4. Ibid, I, p. 199.
5. Ibid, I, p. 199.

follows:

Sin (Moon)

Shamash (Sun)

Dunpauddua (Mercury or Jupiter)

Dilbat (Venus)

Sagush-Kaiwan (Mars or Saturn)

Gudud (Jupiter or Mercury)

Zalbatanu (Saturn or Mars)[1]

This theory connecting the origin of the symbolism of seven with the planets is rejected, however, by a number of scholars[2], and is open to serious objections. We know that the Babylonians were interested in the study of the heavenly bodies and that they knew the five planets. We know too that the use of the symbolic seven is very early. Now, to connect the planets with the sun and moon requires several things not to be expected of primitive astronomy. Schiaparelli points out that to associate the sun and the moon, which give so much light and are so large, with the five planets which appear to be so much smaller, is not what might be expected of early systems of cosmography, while to perceive their common characteristic, namely, periodic movement within the zodiacal belt, requires an accurate and prolonged study[3]. We cannot look for such reflection and accurate observation at such an early time as the period when seven became a sacred number.

We may also consider the fact that if the seven planets are to account for the holy character of seven, the seven planets in ancient times would have had the central position in the Sumerian-Babylonian Pantheon. This is, however, not the case. In the Babylonian religion the sun is the central feature and the

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1. Jeremias, I, p. 18.
2. Zimmern, Schiaparelli, Hehn, Webster, and others.
3. Schiaparelli, G.: Astronomy in the Old Testament, p. 134. cf. also Schrader: KAT 3rd ed. by Z. & W., p. 621; Webster, pp. 213, 214.

planets are simply local gods[1].

As for the Hebrews, it should be noted that the planets play practically no part in their life. Only two planets are made out in the Old Testament and even these are not altogether certain[2]. Isaiah 14:12 speaks of helel, child of the morning, and speaks of it as fallen from heaven. This may very well be Venus, the morning star, and the Septuagint and the Vulgate have both taken it so[3]. Another planet seems to be referred to in Amos 5:26. Here the word Kiyun appears and the proposal is to point the word to read Kaivan, as the Syriac translators have done. This was the name of Saturn among the ancient Arabs and Syrians, and in all probability the planet Saturn is here referred to[4]. These are the only planets traced in the Old Testament with any degree of certainty. Such an imperfect knowledge of the planets on the part of the Hebrews would not fit in very well with the theory that the seven planets account for the origin of the symbolic seven. Even if the symbolism was borrowed entirely from the Babylonians, the borrowing must have been done at a very early time and the facts behind the symbolism would also have been brought over. If the symbolism was based on a planet cult, it is hardly likely that the Hebrews, if they adopted the symbolism, would have left behind the knowledge of the planets themselves. Such would be a possibility only if the borrowing was done at a late period when the background was already forgotten, and that the borrowing was so late, if there was borrowing at all, it has been shown is not very likely.

The fact that the days of the week are named after the planets, is, of course, no argument for the planet theory. It was only after the people had the seven-day period that they began to call the days after the planets[5]. In fact, the

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1. Hehn, pp. 46-47.
2. Ibid, p. 45.
3. Schiaparelli, p. 48.
4. Ibid, p. 49.
5. Wellhausen, Julius: Prolegomena to the History of Israel, p. 113.

first references we have of arrangements of the planets as used in the names of the days of the week do not go back much further than the first or second centuries B. C.[1] The entire planet cult, although it may have originated in Babylonia, was first fully developed in Alexandria about the first century B. C.[2] It may safely be said that seven was a symbolic number long before the planets were grouped together in a unit of seven. Webster suggests even that the symbolic significance of the number so imposed itself on Babylonian astronomers and astrologers as to compel them to include in it all the principal stars[3].

We may add to what we have thus far said two facts, namely, that in the references to seven in the Bible there are none which suggest the planets and also that the planet theory cannot possibly account for the wide variety of references in which seven is used. There is no ground for believing that the seven-branched candlestick refers to the planets, aside from the fact that Philo says so, and Philo lived too late to know the original significance, and at a time when the planet cult had already grown up. Neither is there any ground for believing that the seven eyes and seven lamps of Zech. 3:9 and 4:2 suggest seven planets. To make the seven messengers of God in Ezek. 9:2 point to seven planets seems highly imaginative, and why the seven pillars of wisdom should refer to planets is hard to see. It can be said without hesitation that none of the references to seven suggest planets. Further, if we were to accept the planet theory it would be difficult to explain on the basis of this theory alone all the references to the number seven. Even if we could understand why the week should have seven days, we would find difficulty in finding how seven came to be connected with purification, with magic, with objects and rites in the cults, and the like. To say that after seven

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1. Schiaparelli, p. 137.
2. Hehn, pp. 51-52. cf. also Farbridge, p. 134.
3. Webster, p. 214.

was a symbolic number it was connected with these things is not satisfactory. The primitive mind does not work in such an abstract manner. It is not very likely that primitive man should have believed, for whatever reason, that a number is sacred and then have used it in connection with sacred acts. The connection between the number and the act must have been primitive, the number itself having become sacred because of its association with the act. No theory can be accepted which cannot explain immediately the use of seven in primitive rites of a magical and ritualistic nature.

We turn now to another astral theory, the theory which connects seven with the Pleides. In associating seven with the Pleiades, it is noted by some that seven evil demons are found frequently in Babylonian literature, and are looked upon as originators of evils against man. In some cases, it is pointed out that this seven appears as the personification of nature's powers, the storms which lead the way for the new year in the spring. Since these spring storms come at the time when the seven stars of the Pleiades are invisible, it appears that the original source of seven in connection with these evil demons lies in the seven stars of the Pleiades[1]. Grimme develops a very elaborate theory to show the influence of Pleiades cults on the symbolism of seven. Examining the myth of the seven evil deities who are finally conquered by Marduk, he concludes that these seven evil deities of the Babylonians are to be connected with the seven stars of the Pleiades[2]. This connection of the idea of seven gods with the Pleiades, which he claims is found in Babylonian and Assyrian civilization, he then traces in Mesopotamia and in the Syrian-Canaanitish remains. As for the Syrian-Canaanitish world, for example, he brings as evidence the proper name Schabi-il, found in the Tell-Amarna Letters (No. 126, 26), which he translates, "The Pleiades are God"[3]. He then proceeds to find the same idea in the Bible, In three places

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1. Schrader: KAT 3rd ed. by Z. & W., p. 459.
2. Grimme, Hubert: Das israelitische Pfingstfest und der Plejadenkult, p. 30ff.
3. Ibid, p. 43.

in the Bible the Pleiades are mentioned, the word כִּימָה being the term meaning Pleiades, namely, Amos 5:8, Job 9:9, Job 38:31. In these passages the Pleiades are simply a natural phenomenon of the heavens. This does not mean, however, claims Grimme, that the Bible knows nothing of the Pleiades-god idea. Having explained Schabi-il as "The Pleiades are God", he believes that אֱלִישֶׁבַע Ex. 6:23, Aaron's wife, is to be interpreted in like manner as "The Pleiades are my God"[1]. In the name בַּת־שֶׁבַע (2Sam. 11, 3, etc.) he also finds the idea of the Pleiades and he believes the phrase "Daughter of the Pleiades" may also be taken to mean "Beautiful as the Pleiades"[2].

Following H. Winckler, who has already interpreted בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע as "Well of the Pleiades", Grimme connects this place, namely, Beer-sheba, with the Pleiades[3]. The offerings brought to Beer-sheba are not meant for Yahweh but for one of the various gods. Amos in 8:14 refers to the cult (דֶּרֶךְ) of Beer-sheba or the demon (reading דּוֹד instead of דֶּרֶךְ as Winckler does) of Beer-sheba as just as much an abomination as the god of Dan. Turning to Amos 5:4ff., we find references to Beth-el, Gilgal, and Beer-sheba. The verses read "For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel:

Seek ye Me, and live;
But seek not Beth-el,
Nor enter into Gilgal,
And pass not to Beer-sheba;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
And Beth-el shall come to nought.
Seek the Lord, and live--

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1. Grimme, p. 62.
2. Ibid, p. 62.
3. Ibid, p. 63ff.

Lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph,
And it devour, and there be none to quench it in
Beth-el."

What will happen to Beth-el and Gilgal is mentioned but nothing further is said about Beer-sheba. In verse 8, however, reference is made to the one "who maketh Pleiades and Orion.....Yahweh is his name." Grimme finds it significant that this reference to Yahweh the maker of the Pleiades should appear in such a close connection with Beer-sheba, which he interprets as the "Well of the Pleiades". Here is the reference to Beer-sheba paralleling the references as to what shall happen to Beth-el and Gilgal. The meaning is: What claim can a being have on the cultus which has first come into existence through the creative power of Yahweh![1]

Grimme then points to a number of passages in the Bible where he interprets the word כימה as meaning Pleiades[2], and finally concludes that חג שבעות was the Festival of the Pleiades[3]. This festival of the Pleiades was simply a survival of the old myth in which Marduk conquers the seven deities represented by the Pleiades. In the monotheistic Yahweh religion there was naturally no place for such a worship and the Pleiades festival then was dedicated to Yahweh. This is indicated, Grimme says, by Ex. 34:22, for example, where he reads, "The festival of the Pleiades you shall celebrate to me (i.e., Yahweh)"[4]. This festival, occuring as it did when the Pleiades came up in the morning heaven, marked the time of the corn and barley harvest in Canaan, so that the Pleiades festival (חג שבעות) was also the festival of the first fruits (חג הבכורים)[5].

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1. Grimme, pp. 63-64.
2. Ibid, p. 70ff.
3. Ibid, p. 75.
4. Ibid, p. 97.
5. Ibid, p. 106.

Grimme thus works out an ingenious theory in which Pleiades cults influence the symbolism of seven, as that symbolism is found in Pentacost. There are several objections to the theory. It is not altogether certain in the first place that the seven evil deities of Babylonia are to be connected with the seven stars of the Pleiades. Further, the entire argument for the connection of the root שבע with the Pleiades rests on flimsy evidence. The interpretation of אל שבע as "The Pleiades are God" rests simply on an analogy with the word Schabi-il found in the Tell-Amarna Letters. As for באר שבע, there are other explanations more satisfactory than that which interprets it "Well of the Pleiades". Seven lambs are sacrificed there, also an oath was taken there and it may be the Well of the Oath, or, following Robertson Smith, it may have consisted of seven wells[1]. At any rate, the references to Amos are not conclusive. The cult or demon of Beer-sheba need not necessarily refer to Pleiades deities and the proximity of the reference to God as maker of the Pleiades with Beer-sheba in Amos 5:4ff. proves nothing. If the reference had anything to do with Beer-sheba, we would expect it immediately after verse 5, while it occurs in verse 8, and also we would expect something much more direct than the verse which has to be interpreted first before it has any meaning in connection with Beer-sheba. It is to be noted further that modern scholars reject the verse altogether as a later addition[2]. The evidence making the Festival of Shavuoth a Pleiades festival is purely circumstantial. Nothing in the festival itself really suggests such an explanation. We might expect something to remain of the old cult. We have nothing but the name, the connection of which with Pleiades is highly doubtful, its explanation as the Feast of Weeks being more plausible.

Even if it were possible to find the influence of the Pleiades on the

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1. W. Robertson Smith: Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, p. 181.
2. Cf. Buttenweiser, Moses: The Prophets of Israel, p. 213, note 2.

symbolic character of seven in some instances, it would be impossible to regard this as an adequate explanation of the origin of the symbolism. There would still be countless cases unexplained, more even than we would find in the planet theory. The symbolism must have been based on something else, and the fact that the ancients counted seven stars in the Pleiades group may have confirmed the impression of the sacredness on their minds, just as the recognition of seven stars in the constellations Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, and Orion may have done the same thing[1]. All these astral groups have seven stars, which the ancients undoubtedly knew, but none of them adequately explain the symbolism of seven. The fact that the number of stars they had is the number which is sacred is simply a peculiar coincidence.

We turn now to the lunar theory advanced by most of the present day scholars. According to this theory, the symbolism of seven may be traced to the fact that seven days is the approximate period of each of the phases of the moon. The length of lunation is 29½ days. A quarter of this is 7 3/8 days, roughly seven. The seven-day periods arise out of this, i.e., out of the period which represents a quarter of lunation or the duration of each lunar phase. From this seven-day period develops the week, and thus arises the symbolic nature of the number seven. This theory, then, accounts for the seven-day week. It also accounts for the symbolism of the number[2].

The scholars who adhere to this theory point to the important part played by the moon among the ancient Semites. Among primitive peoples the two larger bodies of the firmament were both of great significance. In Gen. 1:14 the sun and moon are מְאֹרֹת . In Ps. 104:19 the same thing is said of the moon. These heavenly phenomena regulate the times and seasons.

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1. Webster, p. 225.
2. Hehn, p. 17ff.; Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 170ff.; Hastings: A Dictionary of the Bible, III, p. 563; Farbridge, p. 135ff.

Under agricultural conditions it was the sun which was of especial significance since the community depended upon the sun for vegetation, while in a period earlier than an agricultural one the moon was the important body[1]. The moon is a guide by night, especially for nomadic peoples, whose wanderings during much of the year occur at night[2]. By its regular phases, seasons are measured[3]. The changes of the moon were thought to have a connection with human activity[4]. The moon and its phases were believed to have an influence on all growth and decline, on menstruation and delivery, on health and disease[5]. It influenced likewise the wind and storms[6]. Even in modern times in the deserts of Arabia the moon is looked upon with great reverence, and awe. It is welcomed with devout exclamations, it is the watch light of the night, and the appearance of the virgin moon is greeted with religious emotions[7]. In all, the moon among the Semites, in ancient Israel as among other primtive peoples, was regarded as being of unusual importance.

Jastrow points out that in the observation of the moon there were three periods to which special significance was attached, namely, the appearance of the new moon, the full moon, and the disappearance of the moon for a few days at the end of the month[8]. Periods of transition were always fraught with great uncertainty and the period when the moon had become full was especially important as a time when pacification of the deity was essential for the people's welfare. This day coming in the middle of the month was the shabattum, "A day of rest of the heart"[9]. The shabattum then became the general name for a day of pacification and the Sabbath

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1. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 142.
2. Ibid, p. 142.
3. Farbridge, p. 135.
4. Westermarck, Edward: The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas, II, pp. 286-7.
5. Hehn, p. 61.
6. Farbridge, p. 135.
7. Doughty, Charles M.: Travels in Arabia Deserta, I, 366; II, 225, 305-306.
8. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 145.
9. Ibid, p. 149.

was the distinctly Hebrew name given to a particular shabaṭtum or šabbāthôn, the Hebrew equivalent[1]. This theory presupposes the view that every seventh day was a day when pacification of the deity was necessary, a day such as the shabaṭtum at the middle of the month was.

That certain days had a peculiar significance is pointed out by scholars from the evidence of a calendar found among certain cuneiform tablets which Sir Henry Rawlinson published, and which are now in the British Museum[2]. This calendar, so Webster says, appears to be a transcript of a more ancient Babylonian original, possibly from the age of Hammurabi, which had been made by Aŝurbanipal's order and placed in the royal library of Nineveh. The calendar is complete for two months, the intercalary month Elul II and Marḫeshwan. The days of the month are recorded with the deity to which the day is sacred, the sacrifices, and the precautionary measures to be taken. Each day is called favorable, but in addition certain days are followed by the phrase ud-khul-gal or ûmu limnu ("the evil day"). The days so marked are the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th. The 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th were evil days, so it is explained, because they corresponded to phases of the moon, and it is explained that the 19th day was the 49th day, 7 x 7, from the new moon of the previous month[3]. To these evil days, the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th, interpreted as being the days of lunar phases, is traced the origin of the Hebrew Sabbath. The week, then, was originally bound up with lunar phases and the Sabbath was the day marking the quarters of lunation[4]. The week bound up with lunar phases, however, was subject to the irregularities and uncertainties accompanying the determination of the new moon, and it was natural to solve the difficulty by making the week a uniform period of seven days, free from any dependence

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1. Jastrow: The Original Character of the Hebrew Sabbath, in The American Journal of Theology, Vol. II, pp. 349, 350.
2. cf. Webster, p. 223ff. Also Hehn, p. 106; Farbridge, pp. 135-136, et.
3. Farbridge, p. 136.
4. cf. Wellhausen: Prolegomena to the History of Israel, p. 112.

on the moon[1]. The Sabbath then became separated from the moon's phases and was observed every seventh day[2].

Out of this, these scholars assert, arose the symbolism involved in the number seven. The number was sacred because of its original association with the moon's phases. Here, as Hehn declares, lies not only the root of the seven-day period, the week, but also the entire peculiar significance of the number seven[3]. This theory explains how seven originally came to be a sacred number. The number sacred in heaven as the time of the phases of the moon, that important heavenly body, was also sacred on earth. It also explains an original evil character of the number seven, to which we shall allude later. The time of the moon's phases were critical periods when certain precautions were to be taken. It accounts, too, for the character of seven as a perfect or complete number. The week was a complete period of time.

A closer examination, however, will show that this theory is not altogether adequate. Again we may point out what we pointed out in connection with the planet theory, namely, that the theory does not explain enough. It does not explain the use of seven in magic and ritual, a connection which we take to be primitive. According to the lunar theory, seven arises first in connection with the seven-day period, representing a quarter of lunation and becoming the week. Then seven, having thus a sacred significance, is used in other associations. As used in magic and ritual, however, seven is an essential factor. It must have been an integral part of such ceremonies. No explanation can be adequate which does not account for the use of seven in these practices just as easily as it does for its use in the seven-day week. There is a common feature in the origin of its use in

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1. Schiaparelli, pp. 132-133.
2. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 173.
3. Hehn, p. 59.

all these connections--the fact, as will be indicated later, that seven was originally an evil number. If we assume that the four phases of the moon were critical periods, we might explain an evil day at the end of the seven-day period. An adequate theory, however, would have to show how seven as an originally evil number would apply to all these cases.

Another difficulty may be pointed out. According to the lunar theory, the days of the month which came to be called the Sabbath were originally the days of, or probably preceding, the first quarter, the full moon, the last quarter, and finally the new moon of the following month. The fact that Sabbath is often associated in the Bible with the new moon is taken to indicate an original connection of the Sabbath with the lunar movement[1]. The theory is that when the week bound up with the moon became a free week independent of the moon and one of the Sabbaths was no longer necessarily the day of the new moon, this festival of the new moon still remained. Under such conditions, however, the new moon festival as such an important holiday would not seem natural. Just as the other phases were absorbed in the Sabbath, so we would expect this to be similarly absorbed, leaving possibly a few remains, such as Jastrow claims are the remains of the early shabaṭtum, or 15th day of the month[2]. Further, the very fact that certain passages in the Bible speak of Sabbath and new moon suggests that they are two separate holidays, not that one was originally connected with the other.

If, however, the seven day periods are to be connected with lunar phases, what Webster suggests may be pointed out here. In speaking of the possible connection between the cycles of seven days' duration found in the Rawlinson calendar, he says that this conclusion does not require us to hold that these cycles originated in the quartering of lunation. Their choice, he says, may have been

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1. cf. 2K. 4:23, Is. 1:13; 66:23, Amos 8:5.
2. cf. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 155ff.

dictated in the first instance by the desire to apply the prevailing symbolism of seven to periods of time; while only later, as a secondary development, were they brought into connection with phases of the moon[1]. Thus, while in the course of time the seven-day period may have been connected with the lunar phases, it is not necessary to assume that this was the original reason for the symbolic use of seven.

It may safely be assumed then that the lunar theory is not at all a necessary one in the explanation of the seven-day period and the Babylonian evil days. It is also apparent that this theory does not explain satisfactorily all the facts. We must look, therefore, for some other theory which will explain more completely the universal significance which attached to the number.

We may mention here two other theories of a minor character. Some find the origin of the sacredness of the number in its factors 3 and 4[2]. Seven is a direct development of the number four, four representing the cardinal directions or horizontal space, to which is added three, representing the conceptionsof vertical space, Above, Below and Here, giving the sacred seven the type of completeness and perfection[3]. Such a theory may explain the use of the sacred seven in some places. It cannot be regarded as a universal explanation and certainly does not apply to the Semitic area. It may possibly be the reason for the symbolic character of seven among the American Indians, as is claimed by scholars in this field, but we may probably conclude with Webster that it cannot be safely applied outside the American area[4].

Some say that seven arose out of a sacred six, by addition of one[5]. One would first have to find a sacred six in Semitic thought. Six may have been

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1. Webster, pp. 229-230.
2. cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, article Numbers, vol. 9, p. 349.
3. Brinton, D. G.: The Origin of Sacred Numbers, in the American Anthropologist, 1894, VII, p. 171.
4. Webster, pp. 210-211.
5. cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, article Numbers, vol. 9, p. 349.

sacred among other peoples. It was not one of the sacred numbers among the Semites. That seven was originally sacred is indicated by all the evidence, and it may readily be assumed without further discussion that it did not arise out of any mathematical processes.

We have taken up now the various theories advanced as to the origin of the symbolism of the number seven. None of the theories thus far put forward is altogether satisfactory. Webster's view may be true when he says: "It must be admitted, however, that in the present state of our knowledge we cannot obtain any satisfactory explanation of the origin of a symbolic number"[1]. It may be possible, however, to offer some suggestions as to the type of theory which would satisfy all the requirements. We shall proceed, therefore, to an inquiry which may give us such suggestions. Our first task is that of discovering what original character the number possessed. This will be the next point in our investigation.

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1. Webster, p. 225.

VI. THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER OF THE NUMBER SEVEN

In order to determine what circumstances led the ancient Semites to regard seven in a symbolic way, we must first discover what original characteristic the number had. The nature of seven as used in the Bible has already been pointed out in this study. We know that seven as a symbolic number was a round number, a complete number, and a sacred number. We now try to find out what the number was before it assumed these characteristics. We may do this by noting survivals of what must have been its original nature in the number as used by the Hebrews and the Babylonians and also as used among primitive Semitic peoples in general.

Among present day primitive Semites and among peoples where Semitic influence is seen, as well as among the ancient Semites, we find at times a desire to avoid a direct reference to the number seven. The report is referred to of an observer of Oriental life in Palestine who records that many Mohammedans avoid the number seven either by passing over it in silence or by using the word "a blessing" instead[1]. Westermarck reports the use of "easy" for seven in counting in Morocco[2]. He also quotes the saying séb'a s'aiba, "seven is difficult" and reports that in some parts of Morocco it would be unlucky for the buyer of a thing to pay for it seven muizunat or seven blâin or seven dollars exactly[3]. This avoidance of the number seven in counting or the use of another word, especially a euphemistic one, in its place is an indication, of course, of an unlucky feature which the number apparently has in the eyes of these people. A similar avoidance of using seven may be seen among the ancient Babylonians, who spoke of the evil spirits as being "The Seven", but who mentioned only six of them by name[4]. In a like manner the Bible refers to the seven pre-Israelite nations of Palestine, but

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1. Morgenstern, Julian: Ms. chap. on "The Number Seven".
2. Westermarck: Ritual and Belief in Morocco, II, pp. 239, 240.
3. Ibid, I, p. 143.
4. Morgenstern, Julian: The Doctrine of Sin in the Babylonian Religion, p. 11

except in three passages (Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; 24:11) never mentions more than 6 altogether[1]. Among the Babylonians the Anunnaki were indicated as being seven, as were also the Igigi, the usual ideogram for the Igigi designating them as "The Seven", but the Igigi were generally said to be eight in number and the Anunnaki were said to be nine[2]. Apparently these discrepancies are to be explained by the fact that a direct reference to the number seven was avoided and although the ideogram indicated that the Igigi were seven they were said to be eight, and it is suggested that probably to distinguish the Anunnaki from them, the Anunnaki were said to be nine[3].

There is various other evidence also to show an unlucky characteristic connected with the number seven. We may point, for example, to the ill luck associated with the seventh day. Among various peoples today there is such a characteristic associated with this day. In the Andjra Mts. in Northern Morocco, Westermarck found it said that clothes will not remain clean if they are washed on a Saturday[4]. Among the Akikuyu in Africa a herdsman will not herd his flocks for more than six days. On the seventh he is relieved by someone else. A person who has been on a journey for six days does not return to his village on the seventh, but he goes to the house of a neighbor and sleeps there[5]. Among the modern Egyptians Saturday is an unfortunate day[6]. Missionaries in the New Hebrides found that the natives there recognized the seventh day as an evil day and marked that day by certain taboos. They would not engage in warfare the seventh day after the declaration of war and they would not execute vengeance the seventh day after receiving an insult[7].

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1. Morgenstern: The Doctrine of Sin in the Babylonian Religion, p. 11, note 2.
2. Ibid, p. 90,
3. Ibid, p. 91.
4. Westermarck: The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas, II, p. 286.
5. Webster, p. 210
6. Westermarck, II, p. 286.
7. Webster, p. 209.

Among the Babylonians we have come across the seventh day as an evil day in the Rawlinson calendar. Connected with the evil days were a number of taboos. The king was not to ride in his chariot, he was not to change his clothes, he was not to bring an offering, he was not to hold court, and the priest was not to give a decision in the secret place. Apparently the day was inauspicious for such things. It was a day when evil might come and the king especially had to take precautions on that day.

In the Hebrew Sabbath we may also find remains of such an evil characteristic. Ex. 16:29 indicates that on the Sabbath people were not permitted to leave their houses. The day was apparently a dangerous one and it was best to keep indoors. Ex. 35:3 contains a regulation against kindling fires on that day, the natural inference being that the day was originally unfavorable for such a thing, fire being a sacred element and requiring proper and favorable conditions[1]. The entire prohibition of work on Sabbath also points to an earlier unlucky aspect of the day. In the course of time the prohibition of work on the Sabbath was reinterpreted as being for the purpose of rest. Originally, however, the prohibition was undoubtedly enacted because of the inauspicious character of the day. The day was an evil one. Work done on it might not succeed. It was best, therefore, to do nothing.

From superstitious customs connected with medicine in modern Palestine as well as among the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians we also find evil associated with the number seven. Canaan reports that the 7th, 14th, and 21st day of a sickness, especially the seventh, are days full of far-reaching importance. On these days, especially the seventh, prohibitions followed today as well as those found in Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions forbid the sick person from receiving

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1. cf. Jastrow: Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 169.

visitors[1]. The seventh day of a sickness is thus a very important one. It is more than important, it is critical. It is a day fraught with evil forboding.

All this evidence seems to indicate that seven was originally an unlucky number. Evil was connected with it. To this Webster objects, claiming that the unlucky quality did not attach to seven itself, seven being simply a symbolic number, neither lucky nor unlucky. He says that seven to the Babylonians bore no unlucky character, but that it stood, rather, for the idea of completeness or totality, used in a great variety of references, where it is a symbolic, but not a portentous, number[2]. It is true, of course, that seven is the number standing for completeness and totality, but this does not mean that seven could not have been originally an evil number which was later reinterpreted and which developed into a number representing these ideas. The fact remains that seven is often connected with evil. It was also a number used in sacred ritual and as such its use was primitive. For a number which was used in sacred ritual, a number which had no original evil connotation, to be used in evil connections would be most unnatural. For an evil number to become a sacred number is entirely natural. It follows the general rule of taboo things becoming sacred. Only an explanation of seven as originally an evil number would account for its use in sacred ritual when at the same time it is to be found in various connections with unlucky associations or the survivals of such associations.

We may conclude then that seven was originally an evil number. It was a number for which a euphemism was substituted in counting. It is a number avoided in various ways. The seventh day was, and among primitive peoples today still is, an evil day, a day on which it is inauspicious to work. The seventh day of a disease was, and in Palestine today still is, a critical day, a day which suggests

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1. Canaan, T.: Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel, p. 95.
2. Webster, p. 230.

something of an unlucky nature. In all, the evidence points to an evil quality in the number. Seven originally was unlucky.

VII. WHY SEVEN WAS ORIGINALLY AN UNLUCKY NUMBER

The question now before us is why seven originally possessed this unlucky characteristic. In suggesting an answer, we must first point to the ideas associated with evil among primitive peoples. To the primitive mind supernatural forces were everywhere present in the universe. Deities were present in various natural objects, in animals, in trees, in stones. They were the cause of natural happenings. They brought the rain and the storms. They produced fertility. They were also the cause of evil. Those that brought evil were looked upon as the evil spirits. We have referred to the evil spirits among the Babylonians. We may refer also to the Jinn among the Arabs[1], demons who were not altogether pure spirits but who had some supernatural characteristics, and counterparts of which may be seen in the Biblical seirim and lilith (Is. 13:21; 34:14).

To the primitive mind, which looked upon all natural phenomena as the product of the gods, evil was naturally regarded as being caused by these spirits. Whatever of a disastrous nature befell man was traced to the demons. They could produce madness and disease. They could bring on misfortunes of various sorts. They were present in all the ills to which flesh is heir.

There were certain occasions upon which the evil spirits were especially present. They were of course present during sickness, of which they were the cause. They seemed particularly active also at birth, at marriage, at death, and on other such occasions. And it is significant to note that their power on these occasions seems to last for seven days. That evil spirits were present at these various occasions is evident from the ceremonies performed at these times, in which may be seen survivals of the old superstition. We find traces of this in the seven days immediately after birth. Westermarck records that in various places in

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1. cf. W. Robertson Smith: Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, p. 119ff.

Morocco during these first seven days precautions are taken against the evil spirits. We may quote a few examples. Among the Ait Saddĕn, on the evening of the seventh day after birth, the house or tent as well as the mother and child are fumigated with various kinds of incense as something effective against the jnūn[1]. Among the Ait Yúsi the knife with which the navel string was cut is put under the head of the child as a protection against the jnūn and it is taken away on the seventh day by the mother, who uses it to cut the meat of the animal sacrificed then[2]. In Fez and in the Hiáina the mother and child remain behind a curtain for seven days and during this time a candle is kept burning or at least is lighted every evening before sunset probably as a safeguard against the jnūn, and in Andjra it is said that the candle which burns for a week in the room where the mother and her child are, causes the angels to remain there, whereas if it were dark jnūn would take their place[3]. Rites practiced in connection with Jewish circumcision point to a similar notion. The custom, for example, of observing the night before the ceremony as a special watch night when the child was carefully guarded and Psalms were read indicates that the occasion was a critical one. Undoubtedly, this is a means of warding off the demons which on this last day are making a redoubled effort to attack the child. All of this is clear indication of the fact that after the birth of a child evil spirits were believed to be about. These spirits remained around the child for seven days during which time the child had to be carefully guarded and precautions had to be taken to keep the child from the powers threatening it. As the time for the withdrawal of these deities was approaching, special measures had to be taken against a last attempt of the demons to exert their influence. Then after the evil spirits had been defeated in their attempts

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1. Westermarck, Edward: Ritual and Belief in Morocco, I, p. 311.
2. Ibid, II, p. 373.
3. Ibid, II, p. 385.

the child was finally circumcised. Up to the time of circumcision his life was in imminent danger. When the seventh day was over he was safe.

At the time of marriage, too, demons were supposed to be present. That the idea of evil spirits, jealous of human happiness and trying to mar it, underlies wedding ceremonies is pointed out by Dr. Lauterbach in an article on the ceremony of breaking a glass at wedding[1] and we may quote some of the evidence presented in that article here. It seems that the bridegroom was especially in danger. During the week of the wedding the bridegroom would not go out alone. He was guarded carefully by friends. The custom of covering the bride's head and in some countries of covering the heads of both bride and groom as well as that of having the ceremony under a canopy were originally means of hiding them to protect them from the demons. Noises, torches and candles were used to drive away the evil spirits. The custom of putting ashes on the head of the bridegroom or black cloth on the heads of both bride and groom was for the purpose of making them appear as mourners and thus fooling the demons. The custom for bride and groom to fast on the wedding day may also have originally served the same purpose. The breaking of the glass was also connected with the idea of fighting the demons--it would deceive the demons by stopping the hilarity for a moment and making the people appear sad, it was a sort of offering to the demons, and the breaking would also frighten the demons. These and other facts pointed out by Dr. Lauterbach in the article mentioned indicate clearly that evil spirits were present on this occasion and the fact that the entire week of the wedding the bridegroom was to stay indoors and be especially watched points to the fact that these evil spirits were about for the usual period of seven days.

The same idea is to be found in mourning rites. Self-mutilation,

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1. Lauterbach, Jacob Z.: The Ceremony of Breaking a Glass at Weddings in Hebrew Union College Annual, vol. II, p. 355ff.

unattractive dress, and the like prevent the demons from recognizing the mourners. Black dress may likewise be interpreted as a means of fooling the demons since by wearing their garb one may deceive them into believing that he is one of them, and will be unmolested. The custom of returning home from the cemetery over a different route may fool the evil spirits, who have followed to the ceremony, into believing that the mourners are not going back to the place from which they came, and may thus prevent the evil spirits from finding them. Keeping indoors for seven days may protect one from the demons. Since demons are believed to be present, this whole idea of a seven-day mourning period points to a belief that the evil deities are about for the same length of time we have found them to be present in other connections.

In sickness, as has been pointed out above[1], the 7th, 14th, and 21st days, especially the 7th, are critical ones. The primitive belief is that evil spirits cause sickness. Apparently their power extends over seven days and the seventh day is critical because, since it is their last day with the patient, they make special efforts to work their will. Then, if they do remain with the patient, they stay for another seven days, when again there is a critical day.

In the observation of the one with an eruption on his skin we find periods of seven days' duration[2]. Obviously, originally when demons were considered the cause of all maladies, the thought was that the evil spirits would be present for seven days. At the end of that time either they would leave or they would work their will. If they left, the skin would be clean again. If they succeeded in working their will, the man would have leprosy. One could tell only after periods of seven days, the period during which the demons usually stayed.

In purification ceremonies we may observe survivals of the same thing. Originally

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1. pp. 38-39.
2. Lev. 13.

perhaps uncleanness for whatever reason, whether from an issue, from a birth, from contact with the dead, was connected with evil spirits, and it took seven days for them to depart. Hence, the seven-day purification periods.

The consecration of altar and priests can of course be explained along similar lines. When the altar and the priests are to be consecrated, they must be pure. It may possibly happen that evil spirits be with them. Only after a seven-day purification can it be certain that these spirits are gone, for such is the length of time they might stay. A similar notion may be connected with the ceremony of dedication of the Temple.

We may now inquire as to whether we may advance an explanation along these same lines of the Sabbath and the seven-day holiday period. It has been shown that the seventh day had an evil aspect. Those who connect the Sabbath originally with the lunar phases account for this characteristic of the original Sabbath by maintaining that the changing phases of the moon were critical periods and so affected conditions on earth. Can we now connect the Sabbath with this idea of demons and the seven-day duration of their influence? It will be noticed that not only are the evil spirits supposed to remain for seven days but the seventh day itself was a critical day. The seventh day of an illness was a critical one. The end of the seventh day after birth was a period when special precautions had to be taken and the night of the seventh day was a watch night. For a week preceding the wedding the groom had to be careful, but especially the last of these seven days. The idea obviously was that the demons remained for seven days and on the last day before being expelled they made special efforts to effect their purpose. It was their last chance and they made the most of it. The seventh day thus becomes an especially important one. It is a critical day. If then when demons are present they are especially active the seventh day, may it not be that

on every seventh day it was feared that the demons might be active? If the evil spirits make the most of the seventh day of a sickness or a period after birth or death, may they not make the most of the seventh day of every week? Is not every seventh day, then, a day when they might be abroad? On the seventh day, then, people will take no chances. They will do no work, for the demons may interfere. They will remain indoors to keep away from the evil spirits. It may be that out of this belief in the seven-day duration of the activity of the demons and the idea connected with it of their special activity on the seventh day that the Sabbath may have come. The fact that seven days marked approximately a quarter of lunation may have been just as accidental as the fact that there were seven large heavenly bodies grouped together as planets, that seven stars were discernible in the Pleiades group, that Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, and Orion also had seven stars each. The belief in a seven-day duration of demons certainly is a more primitive idea and accounts for the use of seven in primitive connections where the lunar theory, for example, does not. That seven, which had come to be a symbolic number, fits in with these astral observations, may be purely an accident, an accident which, of course, may have strengthened the idea of the symbolic seven, which had originally arisen out of another cause.

The same idea of demons may have been connected, then, with all the other seven-day holidays. On these holidays rest is enjoined on the first and last days. Just as the Sabbath was a day of rest originally because it was a day of ill omen, so in primitive religion all rest days may have had the same nature. We have no evidence to support the view that evil spirits were present during the holidays, but we may offer as a suggestion that if the agricultural festivals were connected with the death and rebirth of Adonis or Tammuz, the assumption that demons were present is not altogether unjustifiable. If evil spirits were present, the first day on which they appeared would be one of ill omen and the last day, the

day on which they would be likely to redouble their efforts. The intermediate days would not be quite as fateful as these two.

The idea of the seventh year as the year of release may be an extension of this idea. The land is to lie fallow on the seventh year because it, just as the seventh day, is a year when work done might not be successful. The demons are probably abroad. The work of slaves, too, might be interfered with and they are therefore freed. This, of course, is but conjecture and is an argument only by analogy.

The question now remains as to why evil spirits were supposed to be present for periods of seven days' duration. We cannot be certain of an answer. However, a suggestion may be offered[1]. That evil spirits were believed to be present in sickness has been pointed out as well as the fact that the seventh day was the critical one. The evil spirits then attacked the patient and were either expelled the seventh day, in which case the patient recovered, or triumphed, in which case the patient died. It may have been that actual observation among the primitive Semites showed that the seventh day was a critical one. In the Arabian desert even today fevers are among the most common of illnesses[2]. It may have been that in such sicknesses the crisis commonly took place in about seven days and since the evil spirits were believed to cause these illnesses, it was imagined that after seven days, when a decided change for the better or worse took place, the power of the spirits ended. Having connected the evil spirits with seven in this way, it was natural for the primitive Semite to believe that whenever he imagined evil spirits were present on such occasions as birth, marriage, and death, for example, they also exerted their influence for seven days. Evil spirits were abroad at all

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1. For this suggestion acknowledgement must be made to Dr. Morgenstern, who offered it in conferences the writer of this thesis had with him.
2. Doughty: Travels in Arabia Deserts, II, p. 348.
   Musil, Alois: Arabia Petraea, III, p. 412.

these occasions. Here in sickness the actual duration of their influence was observable. Their influence at the other occasions would, of course, last a similar period.

We have no definite proof for this view. If we could find that the common diseases did last for about seven days, and that the primitive Semite noted this, we might have some evidence for the theory. That the seventh day of a sickness was believed to be a critical one may point to this. It may, though, simply be an application to sickness of the idea of evil spirits working for seven days, the idea itself haven arisen in another way. We have no way at present of knowing. The theory, however, sounds logical, and we offer it simply as a suggestion.

Of this much, though, we may be more or less certain, namely, that seven was originally an unlucky number and that it was connected with supernatural beings of an evil nature. Any theory that may be advanced must take these facts into consideration. All we can do is to record these observations, suggest an explanation as we have done, and then show how the number developed into what we find it in the Bible. We now proceed to the story of that development.

VIII. HOW THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NUMBER SEVEN DEVELOPED

In the course of time what happened with regard to other conceptions happened also with regard to the number seven. Originally an evil number, its significance changed to that of a good number. Whereas formerly seven was unlucky due to its connection with evil spirits, it became transformed into a number that was favorable and even holy. Yahweh religion thus shows its influence on the nature of this number, as it does upon other elements in the life of ancient Israel. That the Yahweh religion wrought changes in various concepts and institutions is a well attested fact. It took up the concept of Baal and made Yahweh the baal of the land of Israel. It transformed agricultural festivals originally celebrated in honor of Adonis or Tammuz into festivals sacred to Yahweh. So also it took a number originally connected with demons and thus unfavorable, and changed it into a number sacred to Yahweh and hence of an auspicious character.

We cannot tell exactly when this change took place. As we find the number used in the Bible, even in the earliest references, it is no longer simply an evil number but has undergone considerable development. There is evidence to support the view, however, that, while seven was more than an evil number before, the transformation to a sacred number was more or less completely effected by the time of Deuteronomy and at the time of P the sacredness of the number was fully accepted.

As evidence in favor of this contention we may point to the development of the Sabbath. It is not until D that the Sabbath is definitely a day sacred to Yahweh. In K (Ex. 34:21) it is simply a day on which no work is to be done, even in plowing and in harvest. In C, too, (Ex. 23:10-12) it is a day when no work is to be done. The original of Ex. 20:8-11 also probably had no definite reference to the Sabbath as a שבת ליהוה . The whole passage was revised by the

Hrevisionist and also shows the influence of D[1]. The original undoubtedly simply commanded a remembrance of the Sabbath. In D^g (Deut. 5:14), however, it is already definitely called a שבת ליהוה, and from D on the references to the Sabbath connect it specificially with Yahweh. In P the idea that it is קדש ליהוה is emphasized (Ex. 31:15) and throughout P the Sabbath is a holy day and a day sacred to Yahweh. It is true, of course, that P contains references that point to the original unlucky character of the day (Ex. 16:29; Ex. 35:3), but these are simply survivals of its ancient character and are already, no doubt, reinterpreted. The entire character of the day is already pervaded with the spirit of Yahweh. It seems then that it was at the time of D that the transformation of the Sabbath from an evil day to a day for Yahweh is first to be clearly noticed. The process of transformation may have been going on before that but not until D do we find a reference definitely connecting it with Yahweh. After D the connection is invariably made and by the time of P the Sabbath is shot through and through with the idea of sacredness. With this change in the character of the Sabbath there must have been a corresponding change in the nature of the number seven. The seventh day had changed from an evil day to a sacred day. The number itself itself must have undergone a like transformation, and at the time of D could not have been other than a sacred number. The number seven could not have remained an unlucky number when the seventh day was a sacred day. It, too, must have taken on the character of a holy number.

Another piece of evidence also points to the fact that by the time of D, while there were survivals of an evil character of seven, the number was already reinterpreted. It was pointed out above[2] that in all but three places in the Bible where the seven pre-Israelitic nations of Palestine are referred to no more than six

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1. Carpenter and Harford: The Composition of the Hexateuch, p. 224 note.
2. pp. 36-37.

are mentioned together. The three passages where the seven are mentioned are Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10 and 24:11. The Deut. passage is D^{s}[1]. Josh. 3:10 is deuteronomic[2], and Josh. 24:11 is E^{3} with the seven nations as a later intrusion[4], showing undoubtedly the influence of D. We have pointed out that the fact that when the seven nations are referred to and only six are mentioned together, it seems to indicate a desire to avoid seven, the evil number. The fact, however, that in these three cases the seven are mentioned together, seems to show that at the time these passages were written seven was no longer such a number. There is one difficulty, however, namely, that other passages occur in D where the seven are referred to but the mention of all seven is avoided. Whether under these circumstances any conclusions can be drawn is a question. The only possible conclusion would be that since these three passages in D or under the influence of D mentioned the seven, the number was no longer an evil one at the time of D, and the lists of six instead of seven in D are simply survivals pointing to an original evil character of the number.

This slight bit of evidence seems to point to the view that by the time of D the change from an evil to a sacred number had taken place, but with survivals showing an original evil character. The evidence, of course, is very meager and is not altogether certain. On the basis of evidence of such a negative nature we cannot conclude with any degree of surety that seven had not already become a sacred number before D. On the other hand, the survivals of an evil character which we have spoken of and which we have assumed no longer suggested an evil nature of the number after D but were only remains, pointing to an earlier view, may indicate that the superstition regarding the evil seven still lingered on. It is impossible

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1. Carpenter and Harford, p. 520.
2. Ibid, p. 522.
3. Ibid, p. 523.
4. Ibid, p. 355, note b.

to state in any positive way exactly when the transformation took place. Our information is very scarce and is capable of varying interpretations. We simply record the evidence here for what it may be worth. That the change in significance of the number took place is certain. The fact that other changes, to be noted immediately, had already taken place may indicate that this change, too, was much earlier than any of our records indicate.

The change from an evil to a sacred number was not the only transformation which the number seven underwent. It also became a number standing for completeness, perfection, and totality, as well as a round number. By the time of J at least it was already being used in this way. In the reference to Jacob's bowing seven times (Gen. 33:3) it is clearly a number indicating completeness. Throughout J, E, D, and P it was used in these senses, as the references mentioned in the third chapter of this study show. In prophetical literature, in Proverbs and in Psalms we meet with this use frequently. Our evidence does not shed any light on the question as to how or when this use of seven arose. In the Babylonian myths, as for example, in the deluge story, it also had such a significance. As far as time is concerned, we shall venture no guesses. We may conjecture though as to how it developed.

As an evil number, seven was connected with the period during which demons were supposed to be present. At the end of such a period they were either expelled or they gained mastery. Naturally such a period would be looked upon as a complete period as far as demons were concerned. As the connection with demons receded into the past, the idea of the period as a complete one remained and came more and more to stand out. The change from the evil to sacred character of the number would affect this significance of the number only in one way, namely, in strengthening the idea of completeness or perfection, such ideas being naturally

associated with sacredness. Then, with the original idea of seven as the duration of the evil spirits' presence gone, not only was the period a complete or perfect one, but the number itself was a complete or perfect number, as well as a round number, no longer to be used merely in connection with periods of time but also in connection with such references as seven pillars of wisdom, the seven abominations, and the like, and also as a sacred number to be used in such connections as that of the seven lamps on the candlestick, the seven steps in Ezekiel's Temple, etc. The number had developed into what we find it in the Bible.

There remains one fact to point out, namely, that the number seven is used more extensively in P than in any other part of the Bible, and that while references are to be found, such as those concerning purification rites and the like, which indicate, as we have interpreted them, an original connection of the number with demons, in P as well as in the post-exilic literature, the number is used in its most fully developed sense. This extensive use of the number in its completely developed connotations may be due to Babylonian influence. To the Babylonians the number was also one representing totality. Contact with the same idea in Babylonia as Israel already had may have strengthened and furthered its use in Israel. On the other hand, the number was already a number representing totality in Israel before the exile and may for all we know have had such a connotation at a much earlier time, so that the increased use in exilic and post-exilic literature may have very well been a natural thing. We can simply, then, note the fact of its use in these writings, and we cay say that in these writings it shows its highest development as a number which is sacred, as a number which is a round number and as a number signifying completeness, perfection, and totality.

We have noted in this study how the number seven was used in the Bible. We have found indications in the use of the number in the Bible as well as in its use among other primitive peoples that point to the conclusion that seven was

originally an evil number, and we have found that in all probability seven as an evil number was connected with demons. We have suggested a theory to account for the use of seven in this way, and we have traced the transformation of the number. We have also suggested when one of the elements of this transformation was probably completed. The information we now have allows us nothing more than these suggestions. We know how the number is used in the Bible. We may be reasonably certain as to its original character as an evil number. Beyond that we have no way of going at present. We can simply speculate. For a complete solution to the problems connected with the symbolism of the number seven, if indeed such a solution is at all possible, we must await further knowledge of the most primitive Semitic conditions.