

THE MYSTERY OF THE NUMBER 40

in Nature, Religious Traditions, and in Life

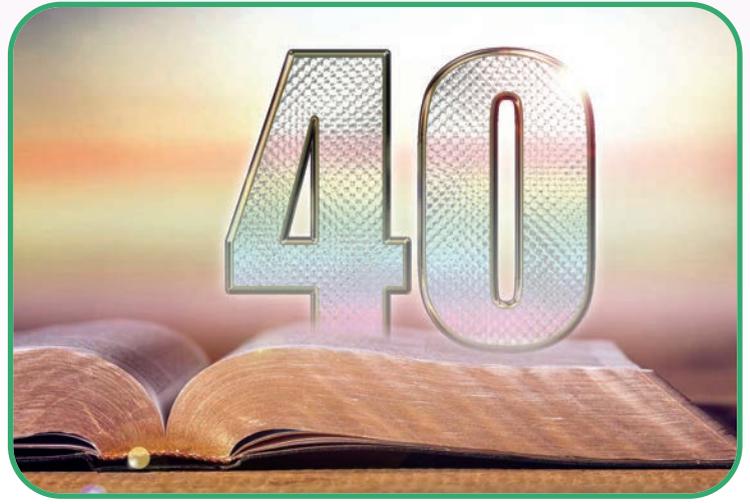
David Christopher Lewis

Just before Easter this year, Patricia DeWitt, a fellow Capricorn, friend, and one-time personal assistant in my work for The Hearts Center, passed on at the age of 78. She lived in Paradise Valley and then in Bozeman for over 33 years. As I communed with her radiant and joyful spirit, I distinctly heard that she desires to move on beyond this plane of existence on Ascension Thursday, May 13th, which is 40 days after Easter Sunday, and shortly after this magazine is printed and distributed. Later this summer, we will celebrate her life in a special memorial service in Bozeman.

Although she didn't quite make it to the ripe age of "four score," her enthusiasm on many issues and her infectious laugh and beautiful smile will be an inspiration to many of us for years to come. If you knew Patricia and would like to attend her memorial, or share a brief testimony or anecdote, please let Kathleen Karlsen know at kathleenkarlsen@msn.com. We can email you details on the service once they are firmed up.

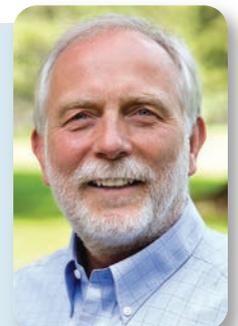
For years, I have contemplated the mysteries surrounding the ascension and the number 40 as it is found and highlighted in nature, the Holy Bible, Christianity and other religions. Here are a few examples of when and where 40 appears in these traditions:

1. Siddhartha who became Gautama Buddha meditated under the Bodhi tree for 40 days.
2. The number 40 is mentioned 146 times in the Bible. Here are the most notable examples:
 - a. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights during the Great Flood while Noah and his family were in the ark—saved to re-establish a new generation after alighting on Mt. Ararat in what is now Turkey.
 - b. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years.
 - c. Moses, Elijah and Jesus each fasted in the desert for 40 days and Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days.
 - d. The Hebrew Kings Saul, David and Solomon, as well as Eli, each reigned for 40 years.
 - e. The giant Philistine Goliath challenged and taunted the Israelites for 40 days before a young shepherd named David slayed him through his prowess with a sling and a small stone.
 - f. Ezekiel, the prophet, laid on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquities of Israel and Juda respectively. Apparently these days exactly corresponded to the number of years that each of these kingdoms were surfeited in rebellion and wickedness while insulting the name of God given unto them.



- g. Elijah walked 40 days and nights before arriving at Mount Horeb.
 - h. Jesus ascended 40 days after his resurrection. In Catholicism Ascension Thursday is celebrated 40 days after Easter each year.
3. A generation in the Bible is considered by many scholars to be 40 years, though today it is somewhere between 20 and 30 years.
 4. According to the Talmud, it takes 40 days for an embryo to be formed in its mother's womb.
 5. In Kabbalistic teaching, 40 represents the 4 sides of the world with each side containing 10 Sefirot, each representing a specific divine virtue/energy or esoteric power. A man must be at least 40 years old to study Kabbalah.
 6. In Judaism there are 40 days between the first day of Elul, when Jews begin to blow the Shofar to prepare for Rosh Hashana, until Yom Kippur, the end of the annual teshuva or repentance period. This time is considered to be very auspicious for spiritual renewal and personal growth.
 7. At age 40, according to the Talmud, we transition from one level of understanding to the next, reaching the

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level of *binah*, representing higher wisdom and deeper insight into life.

8. In Islam, Muhammad prayed and fasted in a cave for 40 days, was 40 years old when Gabriel dictated his teaching to him, had 40 followers to spread his teaching. He says that the prayers of someone who gossips or who drinks wine will not be accepted for forty days. Believers are encouraged to devote themselves to God for 40 days in order to experience a greater connection with him to be able to speak the truth and share the wisdom of their teaching.
9. In Hinduism, many popular prayers consist of forty stanzas or couplets, including the *Hanuman Chalisa*. (*Chalis* is the Hindu term for 40.)
10. Forty is the number of thieves that Ali Baba clashed with in *Arabian Nights*.
11. Some Russians, Bulgarians and Serbs believe that spirits of the dead often remain at the place of their demise for 40 days. They pray special prayers at their graves to release the souls to

rise to heaven.

12. Forty hours considered a standard work week in the United States.
13. Minus 40 degrees is the only temperature that is the same in both Fahrenheit and Celsius.
14. During the bubonic plague in Europe in the Middle Ages, ships would harbor for 40 days before passengers disembarked. The Italian word for 40 is *quaranta*, thus quarantine.
15. It took 40 attempts for chemists to develop the multi-purpose (yet toxic) spray WD-40!
16. I remember as a teenager counting the number of spaces on our Monopoly board—forty!
17. Lastly, to honor a major prayer focus of Patricia's, a child develops in its mother's womb in 40 weeks. 40 Days

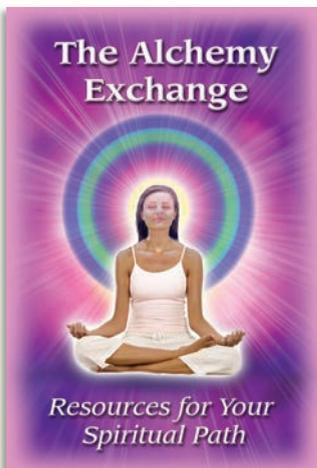


Patricia DeWitt

for Life is a 501c3 dedicated to saving the lives of unborn children by ending abortion on demand through promoting 40-day, 24-hour prayer vigils twice a year outside abortion centers in at least 64 nations throughout the world. It has documented the saving of over 1800 lives, in helping close over 100 abortion centers and inspiring over 200 abortion workers to quit. The first of two annual vigils begin on Ash Wednesday

and ends 40 days later on Palm Sunday and the second typically begins on September 23 and ends on November 1st, All Saints' Day in the Catholic faith.

May the ascension currents, empowered within the number 40, bring you many spring blessings as we are all raised up in divine glory through spiritual renewal and joy! ■



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