

As to the alleged numeric value of Hebrew letters, no trace of such an idea is to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. Wherever its text contains a number, it is spelled out. A misunderstanding on the point might easily arise from the use of a modern copy of the Hebrew Bible, because it numbers chapters and verses by means of Hebrew letters. However, even the division into chapters and into verses is a late addition to the text, and is not original. Originally the Bible read continuously, like any book written today. Division into chapters and verses is useful for reference, but is often misleading, and is well known to be not a part of the original Scripture. Our earliest evidence of the use of Hebrew letters to express number is not until two centuries after the writing of the last book of the Old Testament. Then someone would seem to have hit on the idea of using the first letter of the alphabet to express the figure one, the second for two, and so on. In the following centuries Hebrew letters were thus used frequently to express figures. The Arabs developed the idea into a series of separate signs for numerals and thus our Arabic numerals arose. To say that the fact that the Jews long after the close of the Old Testament began to use Hebrew letters as substitutes for numerals justifies us in supposing that every letter of a continuous Biblical text written centuries earlier has a numerical value in addition to its value as a letter, is surely a strange assumption. So the very foundation of these alleged "Astounding New Discoveries", that the words of the Old Testament have also a numerical meaning, is without warrant.

The book contains some very queer reasoning. For instance it is stated on pp.51-56 that there is only one chance in many quintillion that a given passage would contain as many as twenty-four different numerical features. This is based upon the assumption that the chance of finding one number divisible by 7 is one in seven, that of finding two one in forty-nine, that of finding three one in seven times seven, etc. A little reflection will show that this is entirely wrong. If you take any number in the telephone book, the chances that it will be divisible by seven are about one in seven.

The chance that two numbers can be found in the telephone book which are divisible by seven is not only one in forty-nine, for one can be quite certain that for more than two -- in fact about one seventh of the entire book -- will be found to be divisible by seven. So far from having difficulty in finding twenty four numbers in the telephone book divisible by seven, one can be quite sure that thousands of numbers will be divisible by seven. Now