

# 40 Miles

*...I will go to the distance of 40 miles barefooted and on frozen ground, to save the life or relieve the distress of a worthy Sir Knight...*

So why is it forty miles? I have heard a lot of different opinions and some *interesting* views as to why the number 40 was chosen and why we should travel upon those forty miles.

I know some of you are asking why do I always “go too in depth” or try to look at or try to explain something that isn’t there. Well I believe that our ancient brothers were very particular in the words that they used in our rituals. I am also of the belief that we should do more than just regurgitate these words; that we should have a deeper understanding in what we are saying.

Why would our ritualist choose the number 40? The Number 40 is a fundamental structural number found throughout Scripture. It appears in both the text and the geometric arrangement of the Bible. According to Saint Augustine, 40 expresses the perfection "because the Law was given in ten commandments, then it is through the whole world that the Law has been preached, and the whole world is composed of four parts, Orient(East) and Occident(West), South and North; therefore, by multiplying ten by four, we obtain 40. Or well, it is by the four books of the Gospel that the Law is accomplished."

The number 40 has profound meanings in religion, mathematics and astrology among other various subjects. To establish my point further the number 40 is a very effective method of measuring and metering out each passing solar year (which can be recognized from a number of early sources). Ancient writings and artifacts (including certain memorials) make it clear that a cycle of 40 days was once carefully time tracked. Also, according to the Egyptians, it is the number of days necessary in order that the soul becomes definitively delivered of his body. Indeed, following the death of the physical body, the etheric body spends globally 40 days to be dissolved in the universe.

So as to not drag this out *too far* I will focus my efforts on what we can glean from scripture. So what does Scripture have on the number 40?

- The rains (in Noah's day) fell for 40 days and nights (Genesis 7:4).
- Israel ate Manna for 40 years (Exodus 16:35).
- Moses was with God in the mount, 40 days and nights (Exodus 24:18).
- Moses was again with God 40 days and 40 nights (Exodus 34:28).

- Moses led Israel from Egypt at age 80 (2 times 40), and after 40 years in the wilderness, died at 120 (3 times 40); Deuteronomy 34:7).
- The spies searched the land of Canaan for 40 days (Numbers 13:25).
- Therefore, God made Israel wander for 40 years (Numbers 14:33-34).
- 40 stripes was the maximum whipping penalty (Deuteronomy 25:3).
- God allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 3:11).
- God again allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 5:31).
- God again allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 8:28).
- Abdon (a judge in Israel) had 40 sons (Judges 12:14).
- Israel did evil; God gave them to an enemy for 40 years (Judges 13:1).
- Eli judged Israel for 40 years (1 Samuel 4:18).
- Goliath presented himself to Israel for 40 days (1 Samuel 17:16).
- Saul reigned for 40 years (Acts 13:21).
- Ishbosheth (Saul's son) was 40 when he began reign (2 Samuel 2:10).
- David reigned over Israel for 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4, 1 Kings 2:11).
- The holy place of the temple was 40 cubits long (1 Kings 6:17).
- 40 baths (measurement) was size of lavers in Temple (1 Kings 7:38).
- The sockets of silver are in groups of 40 (Exodus 26:19 & 21).
- Solomon reigned same length as his father; 40 years (1 Kings 11:42).
- Elijah had one meal that gave him strength 40 days (1 Kings 19:8).
- Ezekiel bore the iniquity of the house of Judah for 40 days (Ezekiel 4:6).
- Jehoash (Joash) reigned 40 years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:1).
- Egypt to be laid desolate for 40 years (Ezekiel 29:11-12).
- Ezekiel's (symbolic) temple is 40 cubits long (Ezekiel 41:2).
- The courts in Ezekiel's temple were 40 cubits long (Ezra 46:22).
- God gave Nineveh 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4).
- Jesus fasted 40 days and nights (Matthew 4:2).
- Jesus was tempted 40 days (Luke 4:2, Mark 1:13).
- Jesus remained on earth 40 days after resurrection (Acts 1:3).
- Women are pregnant for 40 weeks (time of testing).

So what can we get from this list? Well, with no substance behind it, the word - 40 - appears roughly 157 times in the Bible. However, if we look further the number 40 could represent a period of testing or judgment, the fulfillment of promises, waiting, preparation, trial or punishment. Also, the Bible often resorts to the number 40 to the duration of a generation or a long period and when starting a new stage of record.

So we have seen that the number 40 appears a lot in the Scriptures and we as Masons can relate several meanings why our ancient brothers used the number 40 in our rituals.

*Templars are urged to go any reasonable distance to aid a distressed brother; it is the general opinion that forty miles is the maximum distance to comply with the term reasonable*

A TEMPLAR ENCYCLOPEDIA  
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There are other instances where the number 40 is used in an exceptional way such as; In Islam, It is said that a person's intellect attains maturity in forty years, everyone according to his own capacity. Believers have also been encouraged to devote themselves to God Almighty for forty days to see the springs of wisdom break forth from their hearts and flow from their tongues and that a mourning period officially last for 40 days. Or that in Russian folklore that some Russians believe that ghosts of the dead linger at the site of their death for forty days. Also, in Hinduism, some popular religious prayers consist of forty shlokas or dohas (couplets, stanzas). The most common being the Hanuman Chalisa (*chaalis* is the Hindi term for 40).

But as Christian Warriors what do those 40 mile represent? I will go in to four different theories on why we should travel those 40 miles.

#### 1. Jesus' Death.

The first is a one of the more *intriguing* explanations that I have heard of. It is the 40 hours of Jesus' death. Well, I should divide this into to two parts; the first one is that Jesus was on the cross for 40 hours. Is this right, No! According to scripture (Mark's Gospel) we can deduce that that Jesus endured the torment of crucifixion for 6 hours from the third hour (at approximately 9 am) until his death at the ninth hour (corresponding to about 3 pm) of the day.

While the first try was a *bit* off, which I attribute some misunderstanding or lack of research. The second part to the explanation which might be more relevant would be the time frame that Jesus was in the Tomb or the time Jesus was away from body before the resurrection. How does this relate? Well there is a tradition in the Catholic Church that is observed every year, the *Quarant' Ore* or *Quarantore* Which is also known as the "*Forty Hours' Devotion*" a devotion in which continuous prayer is made for forty hours before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. This forty hour of devotion and its precise origin and reason is veiled in a good deal of obscurity. However, one explanation is that "the 40 Hours Devotion remembers that traditional "forty-hour period" from our Lord's burial until the resurrection." Now, this could be one reason that our ritualist chose 40 but this tradition goes back to roughly 1537 (and as we know the order started in 1118). Could this be the likely explanation? Let's look further before we decide.

## 2. The “Jesus trail”

The Jesus Trail is a 65 km (40 miles) hiking and pilgrimage route in the Galilee region of Israel that traces the route Jesus may have walked, connecting many sites from his life and ministry. The main part of the trail begins in Nazareth (the city is described as the childhood home of Jesus, and as such is a center of Christian pilgrimage), the largest Arab city in Israel, and passes through Sepphoris, Cana (Kafar Kanna, the town regarded as the place where Jesus turned water into wine), the Horns of Hattin (the very spot where, in 1187, where Salahaddin defeated the Crusaders, signaling a bloody end to the Second Crusade), Mount Arbel Cliffs, the Sea of Galilee (Much of the ministry of Jesus occurred on the shores of Lake Galilee. One of Jesus' famous teaching episodes, the Sermon on the Mount, is supposed to have been given on a hill overlooking the lake. Many of his miracles are also said to have occurred here including his walking on water, calming the storm, the disciples and the boatload of fish, and his feeding five thousand people (in Tabgha).) Capernaum (According to Luke 4:31-44, Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum on Sabbath. Jesus then healed a man who had the spirit of an unclean devil and healed a fever in Simon Peter's mother-in-law. According to Luke 7:1-10, it is also the place where a Roman Centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant. Capernaum is also mentioned in the Gospel of Mark (2:1), it is the location of the famous healing of the paralytic lowered through the roof to reach Jesus. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus selected this town as the center of his public ministry in the Galilee after he left the small mountainous hamlet of Nazareth (Matthew 4:12-17).), Tabgha (traditionally considered to be the place where Jesus appeared the fourth time after his resurrection), and the Mount of Beatitudes (the presumed site of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.). An alternate return route passes by Tiberias, the Jordan River, Mount Tabor, and Mount Precipice. Although this is extremely intriguing, I highly doubt this was the reason. This is a new Christian tourism ploy. So while it is interesting it is highly unlikely.

I believe these next two explanations are the closest explanations as to why our ritualist chose 40 miles. Both have their own mystique in Masonic lore, the first is more logical or exoteric and the latter is more esoteric.

## 3. Joppa

*They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.*

Ezra 3:7

Joppa is on the Mediterranean Sea about 15 miles northwest of Lydda. Also called "Yafo" or "Jaffa" in Hebrew, Joppa is the nearest port to Jerusalem, about 40 miles to the southeast. The name Yafo comes from the name of Noah's son Japheth, or Yafet. . It was included in the portion assigned to Dan (Josh 19:46). Its harbor naturally made it the port of Jerusalem. It was to Joppa that Hiram floated down from Tyre the fir trees of Lebanon (2 Chron 2:16), and, later, Zerubbabel, acting on the edict of Cyrus, caused to be brought here cedar trees from the same mountains (Ezra 3:7). If one went to Joppa today it would be difficult to recall the former glory under the reigns of King David and King Solomon in which the products of

the world came unto this port. The city (Yafa) now comprises the S part of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality.

Masonically, we know that Joppa was where the materials for building the first and second temples, sent from Lebanon, Tyre and other places, landed and conveyed to Jerusalem. Among the other ports in the area it was the closest and most convenient to Jerusalem, it became the principal port of Judea, and was a great landing place of pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land. The peculiarly hilly and even steep nature of Joppa is preserved in the rituals of the degree of Mark Master and morally deduced, in accordance with the entire instructions of the grade. Also, according to Albert Mackey, in *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*, [1882] It was on the direct road from Jerusalem to Joppa, and is thus the very spot where a *weary brother*, travelling on that road, would find it convenient to *sit down to rest and refresh himself*.

#### 4. The cable-tow

If we were to simply break the number down according to Hebrew Gematria we would see that 40 equals to the letter Mem in Hebrew מ or to the Greek Letter Mu μ. And if we look at a particular word in scripture we might see why our ritualist chose 40.

*lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand*

מדה: חבל ובידו והנה איש וארא עיני ואשא

Zechariah 2:1

According to strong exhaustive concordance:

Original Word: חָבֵל

Transliteration: chebel, chabel

Phonetic Spelling: (kheh'-bel)

Short Definition: band

band, coast, company, **cord**, country, destruction, **line**, lot,

Or chebel {khay'-bel}; from chabal; a rope (as twisted), especially a measuring line; by implication, a district or inheritance (as measured); or a noose (as of cords); figuratively, a company (as if tied together); also a throe (especially of parturition); also ruin -- band, coast, company, cord, country, destruction, line, lot, pain, pang, portion, region, rope, snare, sorrow, tackling.

This particular phrase can relate to numerous other scriptures references (Revelation 11:1, Jeremiah 31:39, Ezekiel 40:3, Ezekiel 47:3, Zechariah 1:16).

A further look in to Hebrew Gematria reveals that Mem (40) as in Maim (waters) has practically no resistance at all, no hardness, but is responsive to forces acting on it. In fluid mechanics water is often imagined to be a perfect fluid without resistance and thus as a projection of Dallet

(Dallet, no. 4, is physical existence, as response to life, of all that, in nature, is organically active with Ghimel. Where the structure is inorganic Dallet is its own resistance to destruction.) we see another example of opposites. However, Mem also responds as the waters and is vital to life as we understand it.

In the Sefer Yetzirah, the letter Mem is king over water, formed Earth in the universe, Cold in the year, and the belly in the soul.

The cable-tow is the sign of the pledge of the life of a man. He agrees to go to the aid of a Brother, using all his power in his behalf, "if within the length of his cable-tow," which means, if within the reach of his *power*. How strange that any one should fail to see symbolical meaning in the cable-tow. It is, indeed, the great symbol of the mystic tie, which Masonry spins and weaves between men, making them Brothers and helpers one of another.

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So what does all really mean? Although we may have put a very physical number to the length that a Sir Knight will go I believe that the meaning behind it goes much deeper. What is the length of a cable tow nowadays? How far are you willing to go? Is it what you on would walk, drive, fly or even make a call around the world to relieve or save a Brother?

This is what it means to me as a Sir Knight:

I will humbly go within the length that God has determined to me to go, despite *my* self-preservation, to save or relieve a TRUE brother of mine. That is what *40 miles* means to me!

How many of us that have recited this obligation will truly go any length let alone *that length* for their Brother?

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