

The Hidden Father in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas
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This piece grew out of the Feedback Session for the Academia paper “Hidden World”¹. In that paper, I had suggested that Th42 was intended to be moved to the end of Gos. Thom. along with Th11.1 such that the latter would be on lines 668-669 and the former on line 670. In the Feedback Session, I gave my reasons for believing that Th42 was the textual equivalent of “the Father” that other pieces of the text were referring to. In the process, I noticed a few other clues that that was so. I had also written earlier about Th42 and Th11.1 in “Catchword at a Distance.”² Herein, my current thoughts on the matter.

The Coptic phrase rendered in English as 'the Father' occurs 11 times in Gos. Thom. The occurrence most relevant to Th42 is in Th27.2, which appears to be a pointer to Th42. The nature of the clues is numeric in both cases, but the numeric clues in Th42 are directly so, whereas the numeric clues in Th27.2 are mediated through its language. Although all the numbers involved are significant in some way, what we will be looking for in particular are those connected with “the Father” as mentioned in the Gospel of Truth (NHC I, 3, 31-35 – 32.18):

“He [Jesus] is the shepherd who left behind the ninety-nine sheep which were not lost. He went searching for the one which had gone astray. He rejoiced when he found it, for ninety-nine is a number that is in the left hand which holds it. But when the one is found, the entire number passes to the right (hand). As that which lacks the one – that is, the entire right(hand) – draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings (it) to the right, so too the number becomes one hundred. It is the sign of the one who is in their [the sheep] sound; it is the Father.”

The author is alluding to a method of finger-counting widely used in antiquity wherein the numbers 1 through 99 were counted on the left hand via curvatures of the fingers. Hundreds were counted with the right hand, which was widely regarded as the better or cleaner hand. So the number 100 (= $\bar{\rho}$ in Greek alpha-numerals) is associated here with the Father. As to the sound of the sheep, it seems clear that what's meant is the phoneme 'BA', spelled both right-to-left as in Hebrew and left-to-right as in Greek to form 'ABBA', the Aramaic word for 'father.'

Interestingly, the chi-rho symbol ties in here, since chi was 600, the value of KOSMOS. But if the number 100 is to be associated with “the Father” in Gos. Thom., then what about saying 100 itself? As I observed in “Secret Inner Workings”³, the size of Th100 is 119 letters, but the one clause “give me what's mine” is non-canonical (which is apparently how this 100th saying “went astray”) and can be detached to fit with Th72, resulting in a *transformed* Th100 (100 letters arranged in a 26-24-24-26 chiastic structure) as well as a transformed Th72 (two 80-letter segments). But the fact is that (1) Th100 isn't monadic, which “the Father” must surely be, and (2) this particular “sheep” *did* go astray, and so it can't be “the Father”, though it must have a prominent role, since the shepherd is said to cherish it more than “the 99”. Because of this, I believe that Th100 is closely connected to “the Father” and must be one of the first pieces to follow the command in Th42, to wit:

Blk 6 ΠΕΧΕ·Ιϸ ΧΕ ·ΨΩΠΕ ΕΤΕΤḢ·Ḣ·ΠΑΡΑΓΕ 12+12 = 24 letters (line 280)
Th 42 Said-IS42 (--) come-into-being as-you(pl)-pass-away.

Though there are other sayings-blocks containing a single saying, this is the only one-liner. In fact, the first clue to its importance is that it sits on a single line by itself. That is against the odds, since if Gos. Thom. had been inscribed randomly, the chances of this being so are only 1 in 13 – based on its number of syllables (the place where line-breaks occurred.)

The numbers associated with this piece of Gos. Thom. are these⁴:

- 6 = the sayings-block number = the first perfect number = the numeric value of ABBA
- 24 = the number of letters, evenly divided into “beginning” and “end” segments of 12 letters each
- 28 = a tenth of the line number = the second perfect number
- 42 = the saying number and the IC-number = 2*21, where 210 = the number of $\bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}$

The total of these numbers is 100. But as if this and ABBA and the first two perfect numbers weren't sufficient (which they are) I've since stumbled on the third one – 496 – as well, for 280 (line-number) + 210 ($\bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}$) + 6 (block-number) = 496.

- 1 [The Hidden World in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas](#)
- 2 [Catchword at a Distance: The Strange Case of Logia 11.1 and 42](#)
- 3 [A Glimpse of Gos.Thom.'s Secret Inner Workings: Logia 8, 72, and 100](#)
- 4 See also [Numbers Associated with the Coptic Gospel of Thomas](#)

Th27: The Pointer Saying

27.2 ⲈⲦⲈⲦⲚ̄ⲧⲙ̄Ⲉⲓⲣⲉ Ⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲘⲐⲖⲀⲖⲀⲦⲚ Ⲛ̄ⲘⲀⲖ//ⲖⲀⲦⲚ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈⲦⲚⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲈⲡⲓⲈⲓⲦⲧ
if-Upl-don't-keep/make the sabbath (as?) sabbath, Upl-will-see not the-Father.

Th27 begins on line 210, which must be assumed to be important, but this sub-saying occurs on parts of lines 212-213, the line-break occurring as shown in CABBATON. The full logion is one of 18 (!) that don't contain a *nomen sacrum* for IHSOUS. Indeed, it's one of only three that have no introduction at all – the other two being Th93 and Th101. The first part of Th27 (i.e., 27.1) reads something like “If you don't fast from the world, you won't discover the kingdom,” so the two parts are structured much the same. Do they both point to Th42? I think so, but I'm not sure how 27.1 does, so I'll focus here just on 27.2. The sizes of the two parts are interesting though. Whilst 27.2 has 49 letters, coinciding with a sabbath of sabbaths (7*7), the size of 27.1 is 6*6 = 36 letters. Is this a “twin type” allusion to the fact that 6*7 = 42? Seems likely.

Though Th42 doesn't occur in the Greek fragments, Th27 does, and it presents an interesting contrast – first because the Greek version *does* have a 'Jesus said' introduction, and second because both occurrences of 'sabbath' therein are spelt with two B's. I don't know why the intro is missing in Coptic – perhaps it'll be supplied later from elsewhere – but I think I know the reason for the spelling CABBATON. It's because it serves as a location for two numeric pointers to Th42. The simplest and most obvious one is that MB was the number 42. The second is more obscure, though likely not nearly as much so to bilingual Greek-Coptic readers of the time as it is to us:

Imagine looking at the word CABBATON as composed of three elements: (1) the Coptic word 'CA', meaning 'side', (2) the letter 'M', with its Greek value of 40, and (3) the Greek word 'BATOS', which can mean either 'thorn bush' (as in the bush wherein Moses saw a vision of God) or a Hebrew liquid measure (as in Lk 16.6, a hundred “measures of oil” in the Parable of the Shrewd Steward). Putting these three components together and taking the second 'sabbath' (CABBATON) as evoking the number 7, we would arrive at something like this:

If you don't make/keep the side forty measures of seven (=280), you won't see the Father.

The phrase 'the side' could indicate that puzzle-solvers would number the lines on the side edge of the pages. There would certainly have had to have been some method like that. Now admittedly, this second clue related to CABBATON isn't as intuitive to us as the first, but if it's a coincidence, it's quite an astonishing one, given that it tells us exactly what would cause someone to fail to see “the Father”. If we didn't number both the sayings and lines appropriately before we began moving stuff about, we would miss those numeric clues deriving from Th42's precise location in the manuscript.

As to the phrase 'N-CABBATON', I believe that it, too, contains several pointers to Th42:

1. The presence of ABBA in it invokes both the word 'father' and the number 6 – the block-number of Th42.
2. The numeric value of the whole phrase is 676, which is 26*26, while if the N's (=50 each) at both ends are removed, the remaining letters have a value of 576, which is 24*24. This coincides with the chiasmic structure of the transformed Th100 (26-24-24-26), hence the number 100 as the sum of two sets of “twins” (24's and 26's).
3. Finally, there is the fact that if ABBA is removed from the phrase, the value of the remaining letters is 670. Another astonishing coincidence, if that's what it is, since it was suggested in my earlier paper that Th42 (now identified as “the Father”) belongs on line 670 – the top of the upper heaven, as it were.

In summary, then, Th27.2 has some connection to every one the five numbers we discussed earlier as being associated with Th42, and in addition it seems to imply that if one ignores these numbers, “the Father” won't be found, which has turned out to be true both then and now. Gos. Thom.'s authors succeeded all too well in hiding its real nature from outsiders.

If it's any consolation to the average reader of this piece, analyses of sayings other than the three discussed here will almost certainly be less complex, since it's safe to assume that the authors of Gos. Thom. devoted special attention to that which represented “the Father.” Nevertheless, my research indicates that subtle clues of one kind or another are usually involved. Is it all worth it? It is if one has any curiosity about what's in the transformed “new world” of Thomas. Here, we've searched and found and had trouble and been astonished (at what the authors did). I think it's safe to say that what being a “king of the all” actually meant was to be in charge of altering and moving pieces about in conformity with definitive textual clues.