

“This Cabal Guy Could Be Right”: Numeric Correlations in Maury Yeston’s *In the Beginning*

Leonard Vandegrift

Cal Poly Pomona

Pomona, California, USA

lkvandegrift@cpp.edu

Abstract: The study of gematria and isopsephy, the numeric conversion of Hebrew and Greek words, yields an abundant harvest of biblical insight. Though applying this method to more secular literature is rare, we have a unique set of circumstances in Maury Yeston’s musical *In the Beginning* that renders its use appropriate. Derived from Hebrew and Greek, the names of the show’s principal characters can be converted to numeric values, all of which share at least one of three common factors. Moreover, the names are often connected thematically, and their factors reflect key elements in the first five books of the Bible.

Along with contributions from fellow collaborators Larry Gelbart and David Hahn, Yeston appears to be the most likely candidate to have included these numeric features, the intention of which is expressed in the words of the antagonist Romer, who draws particular attention to Kabbalah’s use of numbers: “There is something about the number forty. This *Cabal* guy could be right” (2.4.65; emphasis added). The character only skims the surface of the number 40’s implications and misses entirely the deeper meanings that further reflection offers, but having drawn some attention to the matter, the script seems to have left the question open for any observant director, performer, or audience member familiar with such things and with sufficient interest to investigate further. In the case of this article’s author, his background in theatre, literary criticism, and gematria provided the key to unlock a rich subtext of the writing that until now had lain otherwise dormant and awaiting discovery.

Keywords: Gematria, Isopsephy, Number, Numeric Value, Standard Value, Ordinal Value, *In the Beginning*, Hebrew, Greek, Musical Theatre

Maury Yeston's *In the Beginning* has been described as a work in progress that is not yet ready for a Broadway stage. One critic holding such an opinion is Richard Connema who says the show is better suited for regional theatre. However, Connema also compliments certain aspects of the production he saw at the Willows in 2000:

Mr. Yeston has fashioned an old fashion Broadway musical with toe tapping songs, romantic ballets (sic), songs of hope, and vaudeville routines . . . The score does have some beautiful romantic songs . . . "Till the End of Time" . . . is lovely[,] and . . . "No Man's as Wonderful" . . . is one of the most memorable moments of the show.

Most of Connema's praise is reserved for the music and represents the view of much of the industry. Stephen Sondheim, for instance, named "New Words" one of "the songs he wishes he had written himself" (Pogrebin E1). Likewise, in an interview with Pat Cerasaro, Yeston says that Alan Jay Lerner decided to mentor him on the merits of that song alone, and in a review of *The Maury Yeston Songbook*, Matthew Murray declares that "You're There, Too" is "perhaps the most perfect expression of Yeston's talent . . ." Consequently, most admiration for the show is based on its score.

Not so much ado, however, has been made over the book, which was originally drafted by Larry Gelbart and later revised by David Hahn. Speaking about a 2001 production, which included Hahn's revisions, Connema admits to being somewhat entertained by the writing: "There is some good material here with zingers and corny routines." Less amused, however, is Albert Williams, who flatly states of the *History Loves Company* iteration, ". . . what [the show] sorely lacks right now is a good book." Though Yeston does not address the writing per se, he does classify the show as one of his "misses." In the interview with Cerasaro, he attributes the show not being Broadway-ready to very talented people not sharing a common vision. Citing Peter Stone, he says,

"the reason shows don't click sometimes is because everyone on the team at the same time isn't necessarily doing the same show." I think that's very true. That would be true of a number things. Well, in that particular show I think we all wanted to get a very funny take on the Bible. I think everyone just wasn't on the same page in terms of the tone of the show.

Yeston's sentiments are reflected in Hahn's comments about the book, which foretell the show's enduring struggles to be deemed Broadway-worthy: "No one has ever left a musical saying, 'Wow! What a book!' . . . You never hum the book. But if a musical doesn't work, you blame the book" (Price 2E).

Despite Yeston's brilliant compositions, Gelbart's mastery of comic writing, and Hahn's worthy efforts at revision, we can rely on the critics' assessment that *In the Beginning* is not yet ready for Broadway success and requires further work before it can be received as a truly great show. There are, however, reasons to reconsider its status as a "miss," primarily due to a book that never measured up to the score. In fact, there is evidence of something concealed in the text that evokes the themes of the show in a way that is entirely unlooked for. This becomes clear when we apply two methods. Commonly employed in the interpretation of literature, the first is to analyze the meanings of characters' names, most of which are derived from either Hebrew or Greek in this case, and then consider how they correlate thematically. The second is used in biblical interpretation and involves calculating the numeric values of each Hebrew or Greek name using *gematria* or *isopsephy* and then considering any correlations between the factors thereof. In the end, the application of these methods will reveal that the show, while not exactly Broadway-ready, has received somewhat short shrift critically and merits more consideration as a piece of theatre that has not been fully understood or appreciated.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF LETTERS AND THEIR NUMERIC VALUES

Analyzing the meanings of names in fiction and how they might represent certain themes is a common practice in interpreting literature. However, as part of such an analysis, using gematria and isopsephy—that is, converting Hebrew and Greek names and words to numeric expressions, noting any common factors between them, and deriving meaning from such correspondences—is rare outside biblical exegesis. Still, the textual conditions present in *In the Beginning* are ideal for viewing the show through such a lens as most of the characters' names are derived from the biblical languages. While the use of these methods does not necessarily lead to a final judgment on which interpretations of the story are exclusively true, we can see with a high degree of certainty how particular interpretations have their foundations in the numeric values that sets and subsets of names share.

To arrive at a firmer understanding of how these values are determined, we need to review the foundations of gematria and isopsephy. As most of the characters' names are Hebrew in origin, a Hebrew alphabet and numeric values table is included below.

Table 1

Numeric Values of the Hebrew Alphabet^a

Name	Letter	Standard	Ordinal	Name	Letter	Standard	Ordinal
Aleph	א	1	1	Lamed	ל	30	12
Bet	ב	2	2	Mem	מ	40	13
Gimel	ג	3	3	Nun	נ	50	14
Dalet	ד	4	4	Samekh	ס	60	15
Heh	ה	5	5	Ayin	ע	70	16
Vav	ו	6	6	Pey	פ	80	17
Zayin	ז	7	7	Tsadi	צ	90	18
Chet	ח	8	8	Quf	ק	100	19
Tet	ט	9	9	Resh	ר	200	20
Yod	י	10	10	Shin	ש	300	21
Kaph	כ	20	11	Tav	ת	400	22

Source: Alter, Michael J. *Why the Torah Begins with the Letter Beit*. Aronson, 1998, p. 8.

Munk, Michael L. *The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet: The Sacred Letters as a Guide to Jewish Deed and Thought*. Mesorah, 2010, p. 42.

Reproduced from *The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet* by Michael L. Munk with permission of the copyright holders, ArtScroll / Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

a. Those interested in the Greek alphabet and the corresponding values of each letter may refer to the appendix.

As reflected in the numeric value columns above, each of the 22 Hebrew letters has standard and ordinal values assigned to it. In the case of standard values, letters are assigned numbers based on succeeding decimal places increasing from ones to tens to hundreds. In the case of ordinal values, the numbers assigned reflect the placement of the letter within the alphabet. With this in mind, consider the following example of how Hebrew words and their numeric values combine to produce insights and interpretations that go well beyond the simple meaning of the words themselves.

Table 2

Words Numerically Equivalent to the Word for God

Name/Word	Hebrew	Translation	Standard	Ordinal
El	אֵל	God	31	13
Al	אֵל	No/Not	31	13
Lo'	אֵל	No/Not	31	13

Source: Strong, James. *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 387; p. 3773.

In the first row, we see the word for "God" transliterated in English and spelled in Hebrew. Likewise, we see that the standard value is 31 ($\aleph = 1 + \beth = 30$) and the ordinal is 13 ($\aleph = 1 + \beth = 12$). By looking at the two values together, we recognize that the word's standard and ordinal values are numeric reflections of each other as the first calculates to 31 and the second to 13. We may also note that both are prime.

If we consider this word and its numeric values in light of other Hebrew words that have the same values, we begin to see connections between them that would not otherwise be apparent. In the case of those listed, when we reflect on how they relate, we are struck by the synchronicities among them. As the Hebrew words for "no" and "not" have exactly the same standard and ordinal values as the word for "God," we may conclude that, without God, there is only negation, and no one and nothing can exist outside the context of a divine creator.

Gematria and isopsephy are esoteric means of interpreting the Bible and not widely employed. Such methods are even more rare for interpreting texts originated in English. In the case of *In the Beginning*, however, we have a unique set of circumstances in which most of the principal characters have been given Hebrew or Greek names. Therefore, we are able to calculate both their standard and ordinal values and determine whether any numeric relationships exist. In some cases, we can even translate a name from one biblical language to another, calculate its value, and note numeric correspondences. After converting all the names into numbers, we find that each value can be derived using 11, 13, or 40 as a factor. As Yeston, Gelbart, and Hahn all contributed to the work, it is difficult to surmise exactly which character was named by whom, but the fact that all ten names correspond numerically indicates that this feature of the text is intentional.

Yeston's influence on the text seems very likely as he has the appropriate educational background to use gematria as described. As Mary Kalfatovic reveals in *Contemporary Musicians*, Yeston attended Hebrew school in his youth, and his grandfather was a cantor in a synagogue (251). She also says he taught religion at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania (252). Additionally, Sarah Douglas, the vice president of Abram Artists Agency, writes in private email correspondence, "It is perhaps not generally known that Mr. Yeston attended an Orthodox Jewish Yeshiva for the first 10 years of his education—learning the Hebrew and English alphabets simultaneously at the age of 5. That education did indeed include Biblical studies, Commentary, Mishnah, Gemmorah, folklore, a smattering of Gematria and all other manner of Hebraic learnedness." Gelbart and Hahn possibly contributed to naming the characters, too, but there is little evidence to suggest that they had the requisite background to coordinate the names numerically. In fact, just three principal characters retained their original names from Gelbart's initial draft to Hahn's final—that is, Avi, Arielle, and Romer (Dietz 338; Williams; Martin H10). During the intervening years, only Yeston remained a constant on the project as its creative team changed from production to production and its characters developed in the revision process (Dietz 338; Williams; Martin H10).

THE NUMBER 13

We will begin this analysis with the names of characters whose values either equal 13 or are multiples thereof as they provide the thematic foundation on which the rest of the story is based. There may be more than one interpretation of how these characters correlate, but the evidence is strong that they have been named according to certain themes. The names, along with their values and factors, are summarized in the following table.

Table 3

Names of Characters Whose Values Share 13 as a Factor

Name	Hebrew	Translation	Value	Factors
Avi	אָבִי	My Father	13	13 x 1
Ben	בֶּן	Son	52	13 x 4
Zymah	זָמָה	Wickedness	52	13 x 4
Romer/Roma ^a	רומא	Rome	247	13 x 19

Source: Strong, James. *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1467; p. 1481; p. 1495.

Waldstein, A. S. *English-Hebrew Dictionary*. Mizpah, 1939, p. 443.

a. Though Romer serves as antagonist to Avi's protagonist, he fits the discussion best in the sections covering the numbers 11 and 40.

It may be too much to hope that a direct relationship exists between all names that share the same factor. However, many of the characters' names seem to have been chosen based on both their meaning and numeric correspondence. Perhaps the best examples are Ben and Avi. On the one hand, we note the thematic connection in that the former's name means "Son" and the latter's "My Father." On the other, we see the numeric association (Avi = 13 x 1 and Ben = 13 x 4). Taken together, the two correspondences are compelling features of the text that suggest a conscious decision in storytelling (see fig. 1).

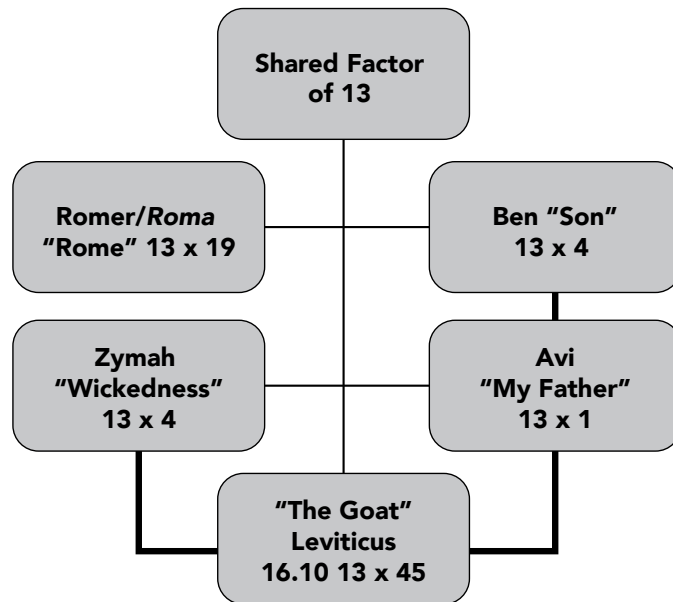


Fig. 1. Chart depicting numeric and thematic relationships between Avi, Ben, Zymah, Romer, and Leviticus 16.10

Even correlations within the biblical literature can be called on to support the conclusion that gematria was used to select character names. In the case of Avi, who is hiding his true identity as Cain, we find a correlation with Genesis 4.1: "And she conceived and bore Cain..." (*The Interlinear Bible*). If we calculate the

value of this passage, we find it is a multiple of 13 (or $13 \times 124 = 1,612$). Also, Cain's genealogy calculates to 2,223 (or 13×171) (see table 4).

Table 4
The Cain Line of Names

Name	Value
Adam	45
Cain	160
Enoch	84
Irada	284
Mehujael	95
Methushael	777
Lamech	90
Jabal	42
Jubal	48
Tubal Cain	598
Total	$13 \times 171 = 2,223$

Source: Bullinger, Ethelbert W. *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*. Martino, 2011, p. 207.

As the number 13 is so well represented in the record of Cain's birth and genealogy, the name "Avi," which calculates to 13, seems a fitting alias.

Understanding the numeric connection between Avi and Cain, as well as between Avi and Ben, helps us also see Avi's connection to Zymah, the character representing God. Like Ben, Zymah's name calculates to 52 (or 13×4). As the Hebrew word from which the name Zymah derives means "Wickedness," diverse opinions on the authorial intent behind the name could be offered. On the surface, one might wonder if the name is meant to express a Gnostic view of the Old Testament God—that is, the Demiurge that created matter, which, according to Gnostic thought, was inherently evil (MacRae 258; Powell 230). This is possible, but the use of gematria, combined with Romer's assertion that "[t]his Cabal guy could be right," suggests a more direct relationship to Kabbalistic tradition than an indirect one to Gnosticism (2.4.65). Also, while Kabbalah does parallel Gnostic doctrines, it does not go so far as to accept the premise that matter was produced from an evil source (Ginzberg 477).

A more consistent view is that, like Avi, Zymah himself is a scapegoat who bears the "wickedness" of immature humanity as represented by the members of the tribe. In fact, this interpretation can be supported both numerically and thematically. In Leviticus 16.10, we read the following: "And the goat [*ha sa`iyr*] on which the lot for a scapegoat [*'aza'zel*] fell shall be caused to stand living before Jehovah to make atonement by it, to send it away for a scapegoat into the wilderness." The Hebrew word for "the goat" calculates to 585 (or 13×45) (see fig. 1). Also, though not a multiple of 13, we find that both the name Cain and the Hebrew word for "scapegoat" calculate to the ordinal value 43.

We can see a clear connection between the number 13, the theme of the scapegoat, and how they apply specifically to Avi/Cain, but how exactly do they relate to Zymah? The answer is to be found in Romer and Lydia's frequent refrain of who is to blame for their misfortunes, a question invariably followed by Zymah's appearance or a veiled reference to him. Below are instances in which this is employed most clearly:

1. After being expelled from the garden, Romer says, "I want to know whose fault it was" (1.3.11). Lydia

and the group point to Adam, Eve, and the serpent when Zymah enters with the intention of teaching the tribe to hunt and gather.

2. In the flood aftermath, Lydia asks, “Who’s [sic] fault is it?” (1.8.37). After some tribal infighting and delusion about the garden returning, Zymah appears again, this time to teach them the principles of agriculture.

3. During the drought scene, Romer superstitiously identifies Avi’s son as the cause of the tribe’s suffering. Sarcastically, Ben responds by leading the group in their ritual chant: “Avi’s fault. Avi’s fault” (1.10.48). If we refer back to the translation of Avi’s name, we see the pattern with Zymah repeated: “My Father’s fault. My Father’s fault.”

On the one hand, we see how Avi represents Zymah, the Father of All Things, and the responsibility he shoulders for the tribe’s welfare. On the other, we observe Avi perverting this responsibility into blame and unconsciously shifting it from Zymah to himself when he indicates that Romer may be right (1.10.48). Because he believes the group’s suffering is a direct result of God’s judgment on him, Avi offers himself as a scapegoat, providing for their desire to blame someone for the troubles they experience along the path to maturity. The scenes cited above reinforce the various associations discussed in that Avi (13 x 1) represents Zymah (13 x 4). Likewise, both take on the role of “the goat” (13 x 45) assigned to bear the collective guilt of others (see fig. 1).

When Avi and Zymah appear alone together in the final act, their identification with each other is completed and theatrically most obvious. In this moment, Avi realizes who Zymah is and, recognizing he is quite literally “meeting his maker,” prepares to be struck dead. When Zymah corrects his assumption on this, Avi explains his reason for thinking it in the first place:

AVI. You already took everything I love.

Upon hearing this, Zymah denies taking responsibility for Avi’s misfortune and reverses the running theme of bearing such burdens for others:

ZYMAH. I took? Well, I like that. Romer blackmailed you and you caved in. How does that become my fault? You want your son and your wife, go fight for them. (2.8.75)

Avi’s persisting belief that he is being punished for his crime against Abel is revealed to be an unjust scapegoating of God. It is during this conversation that Avi finally realizes Arielle is justified in her faith that all things have a purpose and it is his responsibility to finish strong in the life he has been blessed with, despite his past wrongdoing.

The Number 11

If the evidence informing these interpretations ended with the foregoing correspondences, the results could be coincident. However, what we have seen is only the beginning, so please consider the following as further evidence of authorial intent.

Table 5

Names of Characters Whose Values Share 11 as a Factor

Name	Hebrew/Greek	Translation	Value	Factors
Lydia/ <i>Lud</i>	לוד	Strife	22 (<i>ord</i>) ^a	11 x 2
Arielle	אַרְיֵאל	Lion of God/Jerusalem	242	11 x 22
Zeke/ <i>Zechariah</i>	זְכַרְיָה	The LORD Remembers	242	11 x 22
Dottie/ <i>Da’ati</i>	דַּאֲתִי ^b	My Knowledge	484	11 x 44

Romer/ <i>Rhomaïos</i>	Ῥωμαῖος	Roman	1,221	11 x 111
------------------------	---------	-------	-------	----------

Source: Strong, James. *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1476; p. 1491; p. 1495; p. 1519; p. 1641.

a. Ordinal values are distinguished by the abbreviation *ord*.

b. This spelling of Da'ati may be found in Proverbs 22.17 with particular attention to the Masoretic Text (MT).

The set in Table 5 can easily be subdivided according to character relationship (e.g., Zeke and Dottie). In other cases, such relationships are not immediately apparent but, nonetheless, present. For instance, Arielle's and Zeke's values are identical (11 x 22 = 242). This suggests that Arielle, whose name means "Lion of God" and refers to the city of Jerusalem (Isa. 29.1-2), is in some way related to Zeke, whose full name Zechariah means "The LORD Remembers." These characters rarely interact, so the identical values of their names seem at first coincident. However, further investigation into the characters, as well as into the themes that emerge through them, reveals much.

Both, for instance, are staunch advocates of Avi. While Romer and Lydia continuously blame him for the tribe's suffering, Arielle and Zeke repeatedly demonstrate their trust in him. Arielle, for example, seems to see Avi as more than just himself, apparently perceiving the divine through him. On the one hand, her song "Is Someone Out There" foreshadows Avi's imminent advent onto the scene. On the other, we are keenly aware that she is yearning to understand herself and the world outside the context of the garden. She wants to know if someone transcending her physical experience is guiding events and if she can depend on that someone now that the garden and its low-hanging fruit are gone. Avi's introduction to the story appears to answer these questions on some level, and Arielle seems vaguely aware that he represents a response to her previous petition to the unknown "Someone Out There." Perhaps seeing Avi as a pledge of her initial act of faith, Arielle becomes more and more convinced that there is a divine purpose to the group's trials, never losing faith that this purpose is for their benefit. Therefore, even when learning that Avi is Cain, she continues to see the good in him, apparently looking past his recently revealed identity to what he represents on a divine level.

Zeke demonstrates a level of trust similar to Arielle's. Though his lines are few, he spends a good number of them defending Avi and his judgment. When Avi is first introduced to the tribe, for instance, Zeke immediately requests that he join them, setting off a heated debate over whether he should be included (1.5.23). In other examples, Zeke seconds Avi's aversion to following the people of Abraham into Egypt (1.10.49), and when Romer begins to blame Avi for the tribe being sealed in an Egyptian tomb, Zeke jumps to his defense (2.2.61). Even after learning Avi is actually Cain returning with the Ten Commandments, or what Romer perceives to be only a bag of broken rocks, Zeke counters that they are rocks "with writing on them" (2.9.77).

In addition to trust, another thematic connection between Zeke and Arielle exists. Bearing the name of the "eleventh" minor prophet, Zeke seemingly takes on such an office when seeking answers through Arielle on two occasions. On the first, he asks the reason for the drought (1.10.48). On the second, he inquires how crossing the Jordan is different from the tribe's previous wanderings, a question echoed by others as well (2.9.79). These examples of inquiring through the medium of Arielle, who represents Jerusalem, very much parallel a prophet making inquiries at the house of God.

Finally, a curious correlation with the biblical literature should be considered in the case of Arielle and Zeke. While "Arielle" is used as another name for the city of Jerusalem, it also refers to one of the exiles returning from the Babylonian captivity as recorded in Ezra 8.16: "And I sent for Eliezer, for *Ariel*, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for *Zechariah*, and for Meshullam, head men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding (emphasis added)." There are several curious points about this passage. First, the list includes the names of both characters under observation. What compounds this curiosity is that the name Ariel appears only six times in scripture—five times in Isaiah 29, referring

to Jerusalem, and once in Ezra 8, referring to one of the chief men. Were Ariel's and Zeke's names selected from this list because their values are identical and the only two that factor to 11? The fact that there are also exactly eleven men named and that the entire passage totals to a multiple of 11 ($11 \times 511 = 5,621$) suggests that someone was indeed aware and meticulously selected these names for thematic purposes (see fig. 2).

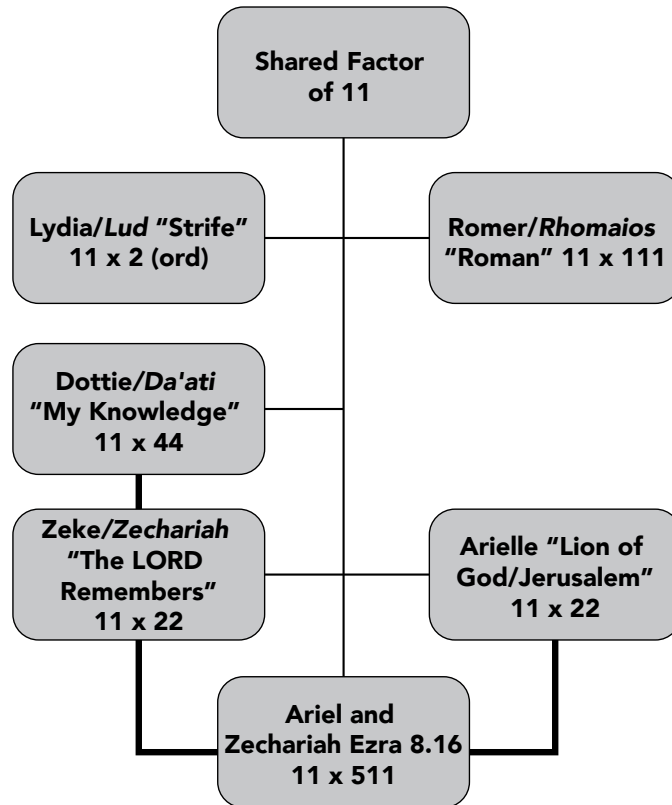


Fig. 2. Chart depicting numeric and thematic relationships between Arielle, Zeke, Dottie, Romer, Lydia, and Ezra 8.16

As multiples of 11, the values of Romer's and Lydia's names are not as closely aligned as those of Arielle and Zeke. However, they bear special recognition. Romer means "Roman" in German (Martini 352). In Greek, "Roman" is translated as *Rhomaïos* and has a numeric value of 1,221 (or 11×111). The Greek name Lydia corresponds to the Hebrew name *Lud*, which has an ordinal value of 22 (or 11×2). In both languages, the meaning of her name is similar ("Strife" in Hebrew and "Travail" in Greek).

Allegorically, Romer and Lydia's relationship seems to parallel that of the western and eastern regions of the Roman Empire. Lydia was a kingdom in the ancient world whose borders were within what is now the modern state of Turkey. In antiquity, it eventually became a province of the Persian and Greek Empires and was finally bequeathed to Rome by the last king of the Attalid dynasty (Herodotus 51; Freeman xvi-xvii; Allen 84). In other words, the Attalid Kingdom, which seems related to the character Lydia, was legally transferred to Rome, which is clearly represented by Romer. The ease with which Romer acquires Lydia as his wife parallels Rome's acquisition of the Attalid Kingdom and stands in direct contrast to the resistance he faces in Arielle, who represents Judea's capital city Jerusalem struggling bitterly to remain an independent state married to God.

These interpretations can be extended to include the Christian conversion of Rome, too. In the final scene, Romer claims the Ten Commandments as "Romer's Rules" (2.9.79). On the one hand, he seems to

undergo a kind of conversion to Avi's (or "My Father's") code of ethics. On the other, he supplants the Father and declares the code his own. Just as papal Rome is often accused of usurping God's position, Romer seems ready to supersede Zymah and his chosen agent Avi and to use the Commandments for his own personal gain.

This reading is further supported by the Romer-Lydia connection. Thematically, Romer has obvious ties to Rome, including its imperial and papal manifestations. Less obvious, however, is Lydia's relationship to Rome ecclesiastically. During the imperial period, the region once named after the former kingdom of Lydia and ultimately given to Rome came to be known as Asia Minor and included the seven churches mentioned in Revelation (1.4). The part the region played in church history provides a clear connection between Lydia and the churches most important during the apostolic period.

Later in the 4th century, Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. Following his defeat of Licinius and becoming sole emperor, he united the western half of the empire with the eastern (MacMullen 138). As a result, Rome in the West (as represented by Romer) was united with Asia Minor in the East (as represented by Lydia). In so doing, both formed a political and ecclesiastical corpus that would dominate most of the known world, a development very much reflected in the ambitions of the tribe's power-couple, Romer and Lydia.

The Number 40

The final value addressed in this paper is 40. This value is explicitly highlighted in the text when Romer says, "There is something about the number forty. This Cabal guy could be right. I mean, the flood was forty days and forty nights. It's been forty years in the desert. And Moses has been up on that mountain for how long? Forty days and forty nights. There's something fishy in it" (2.4.65). The fact that Romer invokes the number 40 as one invested with Kabbalistic implications strongly supports the view that the characters' names have been selected because they correlate numerically. In light of this, consider the following names, all of which either calculate to 40 or are multiples thereof.

Table 6
Names of Characters Whose Values Share 40 as a Factor

Name	Hebrew/Greek	Translation	Value	Factors
Lydia/ <i>Lud</i>	לוד	Strife	40	40 x 1
Romer/ <i>Roma</i>	רומא	Rome	40 (<i>ord</i>)	40 x 1
Aaron	אֶהֱרֹן ^a	Light Bringer	40 (<i>ord</i>)	40 x 1
Mavis	Μαβίς	Purple	40 (<i>ord</i>)	40 x 1
Cain	קַיִן	Possession	160	40 x 4
Ben/ <i>Huios</i>	υἱός	Son	680	40 x 17

Source: Spiliadis, Thanasis. *Greek Phrasebook and Dictionary*. Edited by Brigitte Ellemor, 5th ed., Lonely Planet, 2013, p. 229.
 Strong, James. *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1469; p. 1519; p. 1561; p. 1650.
 Waldstein, A. S. *English-Hebrew Dictionary*. Mizpah, 1939, p. 443.
 a. This particular spelling of Aaron may be found in Numbers 16.50 (MT).

Here we see a much closer connection between Lydia (as represented by the standard value of her Hebrew name *Lud*) and Romer (as represented by the ordinal value of his namesake "Rome" spelled in Hebrew). The fact that "Rome" calculates to 40 speaks directly to Romer's conclusion that there is "something fishy in it" (2.4.65). Practically all the examples he lists of the number evoke cataclysm, judgment, and testing, a common understanding of how the number is applied biblically. This is ironic as Romer and Lydia themselves are so often the agents of trouble, whether they are oppressing the tribe in the town, which is ultimately washed away by the flood, or leading them to Egypt, where they are all enslaved.

In fact, Romer and Lydia's destructiveness is mirrored in Avi's alter ego Cain, so it is not surprising

that the name Cain is also a multiple of 40. And yet, we can see Arielle’s purpose even in Cain’s fall when we realize that the standard value of his name correlates with the ordinal value of Aaron. In the first act, Avi (“My Father”) brings Aaron (“Light Bringer”) into the tribe. In the second, a reformed Cain brings them the light of Torah (see fig. 3). In the numeric correlation between the names “Cain” and “Aaron” then, we see that the number 40 is not confined to expressing simply trial and testing, but also two other themes—that of bringing forth children through the bodies of their parents and bringing forth good fruit through a spirit governed by God.

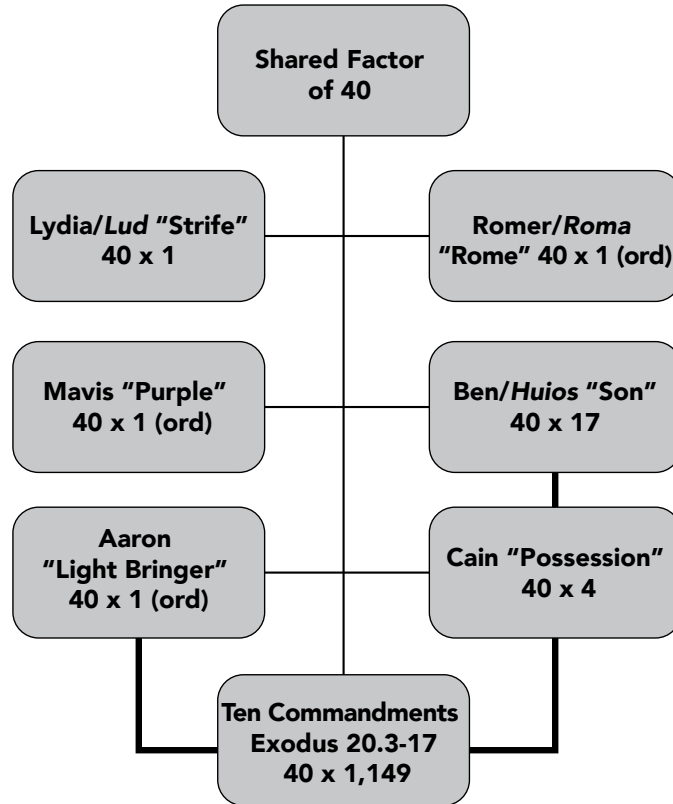


Fig. 3. Chart depicting numeric and thematic relationships between Lydia, Romer, Ben, Mavis, Cain, Aaron, and Exodus 20.3-17

For one, the theme of bringing forth children is expressed by 40 in that the number reflects the average length of pregnancy in terms of weeks. Likewise, the Talmud applies the number to the 40th day of gestation, which marks the transition to fetal viability, whereas prior to this, “the semen . . . is only a mere fluid” (*The Babylonian Talmud*, b. Yev. 69b). Therefore, the number 40 is understood as applying to the duration of time leading to something brought into being, whether an embryo on its 40th day, a newborn in its 40th week, or even a nation in its 40th year.

Moreover, when we reflect on the fact that Ben (“Son”) and Avi (“My Father”) are thematically connected to birth and that Ben’s name in Greek (*Huios*) and Avi’s original name Cain share the factor of 40, we are all the more impressed with such authorial attention to detail. Even with these realizations, however, we do not appreciate the fuller scope of this vision until we recognize that the number 13 is connected to 40. In other words, the 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Mem and has a standard value of 40. With this in mind, compare the following names and factors in the table below.

Table 7
Avi/Cain and Ben

Name	Factors	Name	Factors
Avi	13 x 1	Cain	40 x 4
Ben (Hebrew)	13 x 4	Ben (Greek)	40 x 17

Here we see that Ben, whose name means "Son," and Avi, whose name means "My Father" and who is otherwise known as Cain, share the factors 13 and 40. This correlation not only punctuates the relationship between the two characters' names, but also further develops the theme of begetting and birth (see fig. 4).

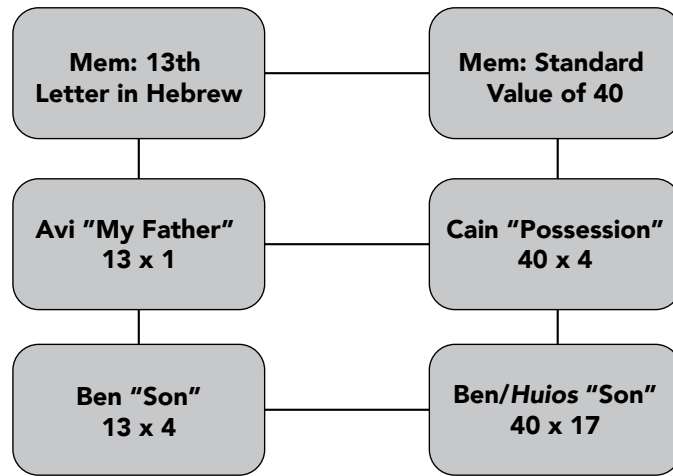


Fig. 4. Chart depicting numeric and thematic relationships between Ben, Avi, Cain, and Mem (13th letter in Hebrew with a standard value of 40)

The related theme of bringing forth good fruit through a spirit governed by God is revealed when we consider how the use of the number 40 reflects the show's literary progenitor—that is, the Bible and, more specifically, the Ten Commandments (see fig. 3). The original title of *In the Beginning* was 1–2–3–4–5 (Kalfatovic 253). In one sense, this sequence of numbers relates to the first five books of the Bible. However, its significance runs much deeper than this in that it suggests a factorial equation of all five numbers (i.e., $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 = 120$). The number 120 is divisible by 40 and can be read as a multiple thereof ($40 \times 3 = 120$). With this in mind, we may recall that Moses lived until the age of 120 and his life was divided into three periods of 40 years each. At the age of 40, he fled Egypt (Acts 7.23; *The Midrash*, Ex. R. i.27), at 80 he returned to lead Israel out of bondage (Exod. 7.7), and at 120 he died (Deut. 34.7). This may seem just an interesting coincidence to some, but when we learn that the Ten Commandments themselves can be calculated using 40, 80, and 120 as factors, we discover a compelling numeric relationship between the Commandments (Exod. 20. 3-17) and the life of Moses. With this in mind, consider the following table, which accounts for the individual value of each commandment and the sum total.

Table 8
The Value of the Ten Commandments

Commandment	Value
I	696
II	12,573
III	4,451
IV	17,303

V	2,783
VI	729
VII	562
VIII	486
IX	1,522
X	4,855
Total	45,960

Source: *The Interlinear Bible*. General Editor, Jay P. Green, Sr., 2nd ed., Hendrickson, 1985.
 McGough, Richard. "The Holographic Decalogue." *The Bible Wheel*,
www.biblewheel.com/GR/GR_TenC.php. Accessed 14 Nov. 2014.

As a complete set, the Commandments may be divided by either 40 or 120; subdivided from I to III and IV to X, they may be divided by 40 and 80 respectively. The relevant factors and divisions are summarized in the following table.

Table 9

The Ten Commandments: Divisible by 40, 80, and 120

Commandments	Factors	Value
I-X	40 x 1,149	45,960
I-X	120 x 383	45,960
I-III	40 x 443	17,720
IV-X	80 x 353	28,240

Source: McGough, Richard. "The Holographic Decalogue." *The Bible Wheel*,
www.biblewheel.com/GR/GR_TenC.php. Accessed 14 Nov. 2014.

The numeric significance of the Ten Commandments goes far deeper than what we can develop here. However, we can easily discern from the original title of the show read as a factorial equation, from the prevalence of 40 as a factor in certain characters' names, and from Romer's Kabbalistic invocation of the number that *In the Beginning* correlates with the Commandments and the life of Moses on a highly profound level.¹ More specifically, we can see in Avi's response to the Commandments a genuine conversion experience in which the spirit of a lost soul bears fruit once it becomes subject to the law of God.

A Possible Connection Between 11, 13, and 40

The foregoing evidence demonstrates how all the names of the principal characters are divided into sets sharing 11, 13, or 40 as a factor. Depending on whether names are calculated using standard or ordinal values, a name can fall into more than one of the numeric categories represented (e.g., the factors 11 and 40 are reflected in the ordinal and standard values of Lydia's name in Hebrew). Likewise, a similar correlation may be seen even in a translation of a name from one biblical language to another (e.g., the factors 13 and 40 are reflected in the standard values of the name Ben in Hebrew and its translation in Greek). Furthermore, the evidence shows how 13 and 40 are related and how certain characters' names sharing both factors correlate with each other thematically (e.g., Avi/Cain and Ben share both factors and reflect the themes of begetting and birth).

However, can a case be made which ties 11, 13, and 40 together? It may be that there is a connection between the Ten Commandments and God's very first commandment to humanity in Genesis 1.28: ". . . and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply . . ." The value of the verb phrase "Be fruitful" (*p'ru*) is 286 (or 2 x 11 x 13), and that of "multiply" (*r'vu*) is 208 (or 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 13). Consequently, we see the role that the numbers 11 and 13 play in God's very first commandment in Genesis. Moreover, the sum of 11 and 13 is 24, which represents the product of the factorial equation preceding 5! = 120. That is, 24 is the product of the sequence 1

x 2 x 3 x 4, while 120 is the product of the sequence multiplied by the next factorial number 5. If we reflect on the significance of this, we can see that God's first commandment, which is expressed by $4! = 24$ (or $11 + 13$), precedes his commandments to Israel, which are expressed by $5! = 120$ (or 40×3). Accordingly, these numeric correlations interconnect in ways that help tie *In the Beginning* to its original source of inspiration—God's commandments to humanity in general and to Israel in particular.

CONCLUSION

Despite being an esoteric means of expounding on musical theatre, interpreting *In the Beginning* in such a way reveals a kind of hidden wisdom locked inside what is so often deemed an unremarkable book. While the show would almost certainly benefit from another revision and further workshoping, seeing these numeric and thematic correlations helps us expand our appreciation beyond the score so as to include certain features of the writing that have been otherwise unobserved. The fact that all the principal characters' names in *In the Beginning* can be grouped into at least one of three numeric categories is compelling. Likewise, evidence of thematic correlations between names that share common factors supports the conclusion that an elaborate subtextual framework has been built into the writing.

Under Yeston's leadership, the creators have not simply lampooned the Bible, but developed, on one hand, a Mishnah of their own, and on another, a parallel set of scriptures. This blend of Mishnah and scripture includes not only narrative and psalm, but also underlying numeric strata that reflect the themes being developed. This effort is notable in that, even in the midst of its amusing dialogue, the text goes to great pains to mimic its literary parent's more mystical qualities. The high degree of emulation evident in the writing, all the way down to the numeric foundations, belies a deep love for the original source material, even while the creators have sought to poke as much fun as possible in the process.

APPENDIX

Table 10

Numerical Values Ascribed to Greek Alphabet

Name	Letter	Value	Ordinal	Name	Letter	Value	Ordinal
Alpha	A	1	1	Xi	Ξ	60	14
Beta	B	2	2	Omicron	Ο	70	15
Gamma	Γ	3	3	Pi	Π	80	16
Delta	Δ	4	4	Qoppa	Ϟ	90	--
Epsilon	E	5	5	Rho	Ρ	100	17
Digamma	Ϝ	6	--	Sigma	Σ	200	18
Zeta	Z	7	6	Tau	Τ	300	19
Eta	H	8	7	Upsilon	Υ	400	20
Theta	Θ	9	8	Phi	Φ	500	21
Iota	I	10	9	Chi	Χ	600	22
Kappa	K	20	10	Psi	Ψ	700	23
Lambda	Λ	30	11	Omega	Ω	800	24
Mu	M	40	12	Sampi	Ϻ	900	--
Nu	N	50	13				

Source: Barry, Kieren. *The Greek Qabalah: Alphabetic Mysticism and Numerology in the Ancient World*. Weiser, 1999, pp. 206-207, table 2
 THE GREEK QABALAH © 1999 by Kieren Barry used with permission from Red Wheel Weiser, LLC Newbury Port, MA www.redwheelweiser.com.

Bullinger, Ethelbert W. *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*. Martino, 2011, p. 49.

WORKS CITED

- Allen, R. E. *The Attalid Kingdom: A Constitutional History*. Clarendon, 1983.
- The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nashim*. General editor, Isidore Epstein, vol. 1, Soncino, 1936.
- Connema, Richard. Review of *In the Beginning*, by Maury Yeston. *Talkin' Broadway*, [2000?] www.talkinbroadway.com/page/regional/sanfran/s72.html. Accessed 23 May 2016.
- Dietz, Dan. *Off Broadway Musicals, 1910-2007: Casts, Credits, Songs, Critical Reception and Performance Data of More Than 1,800 Shows*. McFarland, 2010, p. 338.
- Douglas, Sarah L. "Answer to Academic Question." Received by George Roegler, 31 Oct. 2014.
- Freeman, Philip. *Alexander the Great*. Simon, 2011.
- Ginzberg, Louis. "Cabala." *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. General editor, Isidore Singer, vol. 3, Funk, 1925, pp. 456-479.
- Herodotus. *The Histories of Herodotus*. Edited by E. H. Blakeney, vol. 1, Dent, 1964.
- The Interlinear Bible*. General editor, Jay P. Green, Sr., 2nd ed., Hendrickson, 1985.
- Kalfatovic, Mary. "Yeston, Maury." *Contemporary Musicians*. Project editor, Luann Brennan, vol. 22, Gale, 1998, pp. 251-254.
- MacMullen, Ramsay. *Constantine*. Dial, 1969.
- MacRae, G. W. "Gnosticism." *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. General editor, Berard Marthaler, 2nd ed., vol. 6, Gale, 2003, pp. 255-261.
- Martin, Douglas. "The Characters Don't Know from Adam." *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1988, pp. H5+. Proquest, search.proquest.com/docview/110394114/90B92697AEA9470CPQ/1?accountid=10357.
- Martini, Ursula, editor. "Roman." *German-English Dictionary*. Barron's, 2007, p. 352.
- The Midrash: Exodus*. General editors, H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, vol. 3, Soncino, 1951.
- Murray, Matthew. Review of *The Maury Yeston Songbook*. Comp. Maury Yeston. *TheatreMania*, 11 Apr. 2011, http://www.theatermania.com/new-york-city-theater/news/04-2003/the-maury-yeston-songbook_3344.html
- Pogrebin, Robin. "A Song in His Psyche, As Hummable as Fame." *New York Times* 19 May 2003: pp. E1+. ProQuest, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/92607131/241DBBFC1EDD4C67PQ/1?accountid=10357>.
- Powell, J. M. "Albingsias." *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*. General editor, Berard Marthaler, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Gale, 2003, pp. 229-231.
- Price, Cathy Nelson. "MSMT's Gift to Mainers: 'A World Class Out-of-town Tryout.'" *Portland Press Herald* 9 Aug. 1998, city ed.: p. 2E. Proquest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/276882717/6B4D7D08DED54479PQ/1?accountid=10357>
- Strong, James. "Asia." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1596.
- . "Be fruitful." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1555.
- . "Goat." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1577.
- . "Multiply." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1564.
- . "Scapegoat." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1545.
- . "Travail." *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Revised by John Kohlenberger and James Swanson, Rev. ed., Zondervan, 2001, p. 1625.
- Williams, Albert. Review of *History Loves Company*, by Maury Yeston, and *Phantom*, by Maury Yeston. *Chicago Reader*, 12 Sept. 1991. Sun-Times Media, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/history-loves-companyphantom/Content?oid=878234>

Yeston, Maury. *In the Beginning: The Greatest Story Never Told*. MTI, 1998.

Yeston, Maury. Interview by Pat Cerasaro. "InDepth InterView: Maury Yeston – Part 1: Getting Tall." *Broadway World*. Wisdom Digital Media, 2016, <http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/InDepth-InterView-Maury-Yeston-Part-I-Getting-Tall-20100507-page2#>

ENDNOTES

[1] The curious reader may wish to consult Richard McGough's more involved calculations in "The HoloDec: Two Divisions of the Law" and "The HoloDec: The Spirit Shines" to see how the numbers 11 and 13 are also reflected in the Ten Commandments.

AUTHOR BIO:

Leonard Vandegrift teaches composition, argument, and research in the English and Foreign Languages Department at Cal Poly Pomona and serves as program coordinator of the campus' University Writing Center. In his leisure time, Leonard has performed in various musicals and plays and pursued the study of gematria and isopsephy. In 2014, he had the rare privilege of portraying Avi in a local production of *In the Beginning*, which ultimately led to the current study.

REFERENCE CITATION:

MLA

Vandegrift, Leonard. "‘This Cabal Guy Could Be Right’: Numeric Correlations in Maury Yeston's *In the Beginning*." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018. <http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v5-issue-1/this-cabal-guy-could-be-right-numeric-correlations-in-maury-yestons/>

APA

Vandegrift, L. (2018). "This Cabal guy could be right": Numeric correlations in Maury Yeston's *In the Beginning*. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. 5(1). <http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v5-issue-1/this-cabal-guy-could-be-right-numeric-correlations-in-maury-yestons/>.

