

RUSSIAN PROVERBS AND SAYINGS ABOUT NUMBERS

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Russian proverbs and sayings about numbers appeared with man's life and activity, with the development of economic relations. Numbers personification started the era of their usage in folk proverbs. The quantity category which is in close connection with the quality category plays a great role in proverbs. Measure understandings, quantity gradation via metaphors, gradation of good and bad things were transmitted in sayings with the help of numbers: *Лучше один раз увидеть, чем сто раз услышать* (*Seeing is believing*). Numbers in proverbs and sayings often possess not direct, but indirect and symbolic meanings. Russian proverbs analysis allows to make a conclusion that the most often used numbers are numbers 1, 2, 3, 7, which have the special magic meaning in Russian linguistic. Number 1 in Russian proverbs and sayings has direct meaning and denotes quantity equal to one, and also in indirect meaning, denoting a small amount of smb, smth or nothing: *Один в поле не воин* (*One man, no man. There is safety in numbers*). Number 2 is more frequently used in its direct meaning: *Два медведя в одной берлоге не уживутся*. Proverbs and sayings with this number in figurative meaning contain comparisons and denote an indefinite quantity, which is greater in comparison to other indefinite quantity, expressed with the word "one": *За двумя зайцами погонишься – ни одного не поймаешь* (*If you run after two hares, you will catch neither. Grasp all, lose all*); *Старый друг лучше новых двух* (*Old friends and old wine are best*). Number 3 in Russian culture has a magic character: a fairytale hero performs three deeds; three sons or three daughters usually grow in a family; in Bible God is presented in three persons; width, length and height are distinguished in space. In the meaning «much/manу»: *Обещанного три года ждут* (*It is never long that comes at last / Between promising and performing, a man may marry his daughter*). In the meaning «little/few»: *от горшка три вершка*. Antithesis principle is presented in a proverb: *Не узнавай друга в три дня – узнавай в три года*. Number 7 is also very often used in Russian culture: seven holes are in a human head; seven virtues; seven sins; seven rainbow colors; seven skies; seven week days; God created the world for seven days, devoting the seventh day to rest. Even patients were treated repeating: *Сделай настой из семи трав на семи водах, пей семь дней по семь ложек*. Psychologists found out that one man's glimpse is able to see not more than six objects at once; therefore "seven" is already «a lot». That is why such proverbs are used: *Семь раз отмерь, один раз отрежь* (*Measure twice, cut once. Second thoughts are best*); *Семеро одного не ждут* (*For one that is missing there's no spoiling a wedding*).