

## **Are we leaving the womb environment too soon?**

During the 9 months of pregnancy mother and child experience a one – on-one relationship. Their relationship is sacred. The world is shut out in order for the baby to grow. They share the same foods, sounds, energy, and more. The womb environment created depends on the mother. The transition period for leaving the womb should be slowly. This period should be beneficial for mother and baby. They should not be immediately thrown back into the world. In many traditional African cultures mother and child are isolated after the birth. Visitors do not come and flood the mother and child. The postpartum period is delicate. The world is still shut out. Families in some communities such as Somalia make amulets for the baby. The room the mother and newborn dwell in is smoked with incense. The sacred womb environment is being maintained. It is maintained for 40 days. The mother does not cook and perform housework. Her job is to breastfeed, nurture, and fall in love with her baby. Mothers take measures to ward off negativity energy. She watches the child very closely and learns her baby's rhythm, so diapers are not necessary. After the 40 day period of rest called *afantanbah*, a celebration is held. Mother and child are now introduced to the community.

Many communities in Ghana also have a 40 day of rest. As in Somalia, the mother simply attends to her baby. The mother is fed nutritious foods and herbs. Her special diet prevents hemorrhage, promotes healthy breast milk, and prevents the baby from conditions such as colic. At the end of the 40 day rest a celebration is held for mother and child.

Rest and isolation from large groups of people is healthy. The baby is protected from germs and negativity. The mother is allowed to heal physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Rest prevents postpartum hemorrhage and healing of the perineum area. Rest also improves mental health. Women experience hormonal changes after birth. This results in postpartum depression for some women. A happy and comfortable mother shielded from daily worries and concerns will be less likely to have depression. The womb should have time to heal and close before the mother is exposed to society again. The womb is the mother's center. Her center must be protected. It can take up to 6 weeks for the womb to return to its normal state. Families should not only look at this time as physical womb healing, but emotional and spiritual healing too.

How many African mothers living in the Diaspora have a 14 day rest, let alone a 40 day rest? Africans leaving in the West take for granted that mother and child will be safe. Families no longer see how delicate life is. In the West, when mother and baby are not at optimal health after birth, it is perceived as a normal event. Families do not see the relation between the mother and child's health and the new womb environment. It is the community's responsibility to keep mother and child in the womb. The new being is a blessing for all. The community must begin preparing for the new arrival before she enters the world. Not only do we prepare by having baby showers and buying gifts. But, we should prepare by making sure the community provides meals. There should be designated people for cleaning the house and tending to the other children. The mother's only responsibility should be attending to her newborn. So, after the 40 days mother and baby are well bonded, healthy, and ready for celebration.

The number 40 is very significant. Given 40, the Mertens function returns 0. 40 is the smallest number  $n$  with exactly 9 solutions to the equation  $\varphi(x) = n$ .<sup>1</sup> The child matures in the womb for 9 months. Mother and child rest for 40 days. The womb then goes back to the primordial state of 0, infinite nothingness, peace. Is peace not are destination?

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Cited

1. Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia "40 (number)." 22 Mar. 2007  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/40\\_\(number\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/40_(number))>