

Ish Sodi
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Masonry presents us with many titles, plaudits, and attributes, but perhaps one of the more meaningful is found within Cryptic Masonry and the Select Master Degree- “Ish Sodi”. It is this title that shows the select nature of the degree and impresses upon us the deep nature of our relationship to each other once we pass the circle of perfection and are greeted within the Vault. Yet what does it mean to you as a Cryptic Mason and Select Master?

Ish Sodi is the term applied to our dear friend Zabud following the near fatal initial events surrounding his reception into the Secret Vault of Solomon as a part of the Select Master Degree. It is a Hebrew phrase, and its parts as a whole literally translate to “Man of my couch”. Solomon telling Zabud that he is now a “Man of my Couch” may seem odd at first, but its broader meaning would have been interpreted much differently at that time and in a symbolic sense. Ish Sodi in its masonic and cryptic sense relates to being a man of trust and nearness, one to whom there is great familiarity, and such can be taken to mean “Man of my Choice” or “Select Man”¹. There is a tender yet firm implication of companionship, fraternity, zeal, and dedication, agape² even perhaps

Albert Mackey’s Manual on Cryptic Masonry tells us that ISH or שׁי means “man” specifically and SOD or SODI or סוד means “a couch on which one reclines”³ and thus indicates “One who reclines with me on the same seat, an indication of great familiarity and confidence.”⁴

Interestingly considering the broader implication of being a “Select Man” or Ish Sodi, we should come to the realization we have been one in a sense throughout our entire initiatic experience in Freemasonry, and that the concept of being “select” while more intimate in the Council, is not unique to the Craft. In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, they have a series of degrees, that include the title “Elu”, French for “elect” and Brothers are made “Elu” in those degree through Solomon’s selection. Thus, brethren in that rite are elevated by him to greater, more specific and important tasks. Remember in the broader sense of the Craft that each of us is selected, by the vote of our brethren, by our merits and qualities, we the petitioner become a candidate and are initiated as masons based on that ballot or selection. Noting that, we cannot forget the injunction of a Master seeking objection prior to a degree’s conferral. These actions show the endorsement of our fellows, our brothers, and our selection from among the profane, or even initiated, to a higher purpose and path of illumination and truth.

Our singling out as Ish Sodi in the Council, is not but a passing action, it is an endorsement of greater trust, an acceptance of our persons into the profound silence, secrecy, and bond built within the Crypt dedicated to the fervent practice of Freemasonry’s lessons. To join that limited number, not open to each and every- but to the few, whom can be trusted to greater calls of service, to greater needs, and to a deeper friendship- that is our boon. Our work in the Council is a greater endeavor made so by our selection and singling out as Ishi Sodi, and thus brought nearer those whom seek Light and Truth.

¹ *Cryptic Masonry Education Course*, R. Davis Pg. 56

² A Greek word roughly representative of a form of profound unconditional love

³ *Cryptic Masonry: A Manual of the Council*, A. Mackey Pg.55

⁴ *Cryptic Masonry: A Manual of the Council*, A. Mackey Pg. 55