

Ahishar, Zabud, and the Mysterious Number Nine
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People learn in different ways. My oldest son's primary learning style isn't audial, but he excels in visual and tactile learning. As a father who wanted his son to have the best opportunities in life, I developed a keen interest in recognizing these styles and applying them. Delving into this subject, I reflected back to my training in the U.S. Army and realized that most of that training involved not only various methods of learning but also repetition and scalability. The saying "crawl, walk, run.", has had a profound impact on not only how I learn, but also teach. In my career, these concepts have also been instrumental in helping to successfully train my co-workers to function in a high-threat environment.

In Cryptic Masonry, we have a multitude of resources at our disposal. We have works by Albert Mackey, and more recently Robert G. Davis which I highly recommend. However, the most insight I have received in York Rite Masonry has been through learning ritual. Our ritual books are filled with buried treasures that are there, if only you are willing to dig a little bit. I was recently tasked with learning a new part for some upcoming degree work. After assigning the part I usually do to a newer Companion, I set out to learn this new part and try to fill some big shoes.

In the Select Master Degree, There is one of these treasures that is hidden in plain sight in the opening of the Council. In the opening of the Council, it is either asked or volunteered by four Officers who they represent: Captain of the Guard-Adoniram, Conductor of the Council-Hiram Abiff, Deputy Master-Hiram King of Tyre, and the Illustrious Master-King Solomon. These are plainly stated in ritual. There is one more Officer that is representative of a character in the Select Master Degree. Who is it? Although it isn't stated in the opening, it is alluded to: He guards the Secret Vault with sleepless vigilance.

In learning the Historical Lecture, I found out that the door to the Secret Vault was left unguarded by the Grand Steward Ahishar, who was sleeping at his post. Now it makes sense why the steward guards the Vault with "sleepless vigilance."

Furthermore, there are some important lessons in the opening ritual of this Body. The hours of our labor are from Nine at night to Twelve, when prying eyes are closed in sleep. I once put forth the statement during a presentation to Blue

Lodge members on the significance of York Rite Masonry, that most of the virtues and lessons inculcated in the first three degrees have a distinct outward manifestation. In contrast, the virtues inculcated in the York Rite degrees have a more internal manifestation. The work we do in the Blue Lodge (during our regular hours) have a very outward manifestation in our own lives, the Lodge, among our fellow Masons and in our communities. In the Middle East in Biblical times, work was done from sunup to sundown, six days a week “When the sun’s first and last rays gild the mountaintops.” (Basically from 6AM to 6PM) Twelve hours a day, six days a week for a total of seventy-two hours. Seventy-two is a significant number Biblically. In Numbers: Moses to lay hands on 70 elders so that the Spirit of Moses is imparted to them. These men then prophesied. It is then discovered that two men had been called but didn’t show up. Their names were Eldad and Medad and at the same time the Spirit was transferred from Moses to the seventy, that same Spirit was imparted to Eldad and Medad and they prophesied outside the camp, bringing the total to 72. In addition, in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus sends out twelve and later seventy-two. (For future reference $7+2=9$).

There was a Hebrew way of determining the numerical value of a word or name. In Hebrew, every letter has a numerical value. As in the paragraph above, they would add the numbers together to assign a value. This is also the case in numbers. There is a lot of speculation about the “Mysterious Nine” and while there is no way to definitively say what that is without causing an intense amount of debate, let’s consider one more ASPECT of the number 9 that is even more mysterious: Anyone who has memorized his times tables (Do they even teach those anymore?) recognized when multiplying 9 that the numbers on the right and left from 9 to 90 are Inverse: 09,18,27,36,45,54,63,72,18,90. Using the Hebrew method, we can add those numbers together and find out they will always equal nine. As stated in the above paragraph, the regular hours of our labor are 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, or 72 hours. $7+2=9$. Now if we get into the ritual of the Select Master, we discover that the hours of their labor were an additional 6 days a week, “from nine at night to twelve, the time when prying eyes are closed in sleep.” That is an additional 18 hours a week. $1+8=9$. If we were to add up the total hours of our labor $72+18=90$ hours a week. $9+0=9$. In addition, Nine is the square of three, the Mysterious Triad, emblematic of Deity as we learn in the Royal Master Degree.

So the numbers are cool, but what is it really saying? The internal work we do, the extra mile we go, the extra devotion to God and understanding the work we are called to do is just as sacred as the external and obvious work that is noticed by our fellow man. When combined, our actions are even more sacred and we are

way more effective in our respective duties to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Or if I was to write it out as an equation $7+2=1+8$.

In addition, as Grand Steward, it wasn't too flattering to find out that I was the guy sleeping on the job in the ritual. So, there is an admonishment to be alert and aware when it is time to be. Of course, Ahishar is replaced by Zabud who has some initiative, so we all have an inner and outer work to Steward, so will you be Ahishar or Zabud?