

The Mysterious Nine and the Craft Lodge

*Christopher Wehrenberg, Grand Marshal
Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri Education Committee*

Last year I wrote a paper on the Mysterious Nine in the context of its division into three times three with regard to the Cryptic Degrees and how the symbolism blended well with that of the Royal Arch. A short summary would point of such colorations would point us to the pattern of 3x3 is found in the battery (knocks on the door/raps of the gavel) of the Select Master Degree. It is also in the discourse on the piece of work presented to King Solomon in the Royal Master Degree and in the Geometry of raising a Royal Arch in the degree which bears that name. Further it is also referenced in the form of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as well as the Seraphim seen in Isaiah 6.

About a year ago, I set a personal goal of learning the three lectures in the Blue Lodge Degrees. It took four months and is something that I regularly brush up on to keep it fresh in my memory. Recently while doing so, I noticed that in the Fellow Craft and Master Mason Degrees, this pattern of 3x3 is also present. In fact, the numeric representations of the Master Mason and Fellow Craft Degrees provide certain patterns but are inverted in order.

Overall, there are three sections to each degree. There are three Degrees (3x3). In the Master Mason Degree, we are informed that seven formed a Lodge of Entered Apprentices, consisting of three Master Masons and four Entered Apprentices. They held their meetings on the ground floor of King Solomon's Temple. Five formed a Lodge of Fellow Crafts, consisting of three Master Masons and two Fellow Crafts. They held their meetings in the Middle Chamber. Three constituted a Lodge of Master Masons. They held their meetings in the Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies until the temple was completed. So, we have this pattern of seven divided into three and four, five divided into three and two, and three.

In the Lecture of the Second Degree, we see the three flights of steps consisting of three, five and seven steps. The first flight refers to the three principal officers of the Lodge. The second flight refers to the five orders of architecture (three of which are revered among Freemasons) and the five human senses (three of which are esteemed essential to Freemasons.) The third flight consists of seven steps alluding various things but especially the seven liberal arts and sciences. In Missouri ritual, our attention is called to the last three.

So, we see the same numerical pattern established here in the Fellow Craft and Master Mason degrees: 3, 5 (3+2), and 7 (3+4). So hidden within the degrees of the Symbolic Lodge is the pattern of 3x3 or as it is referred to in the Cryptic Rite, the Mysterious Nine. This is fitting.

In the three degrees of the Symbolic Lodge, the outer temple is being built. It is one that is visible. The structure and layout is there to be seen by all. So the numbers in the Symbolic Lodge are 3, 5, and 7 right? Or is there something deeper, something underlying here? At the same time the Temple of Solomon is being built outwardly, there is a Secret Vault, a deeper work happening directly under it that is just as significant. The number of this vault is 3x3 or 9. One could make the argument that this work is even more consequential because it survives

longer than the temple. In fact, it has been built for this purpose and without it, the second temple would have been a shell of what it was.

So it is with us. We will be recognized and given accolades for our external temples that we build that are visible to so many around us. Very few, some could say a select few, will be able to see the inner work that is done that sustains us and even enables us to rebuild when the outer temples that we build are destroyed. The outward temple displays the numbers 3, 5, & 7 which are clearly perceived. Yet the Secret Vault within carries the 3 x 3 or Mysterious Nine, emblematic of that immortal spark or Deity within. The breakdown of the number patterns in the Fellow Craft and Master Mason degrees shows us that if we are willing to dig deeper, we can see the influence of that immortal spark within manifesting in our thoughts, words, and actions without. So many people have the idea that if something has a practical or worldly application it by default is not of spiritual significance. The Mysterious Nine being present in the 3, 5, and 7 of the Blue Lodge teaches us that the hand of the Almighty is there upon us even if the result is more functional and concrete. They might be tangible and hands-on but they are still as Divinely inspired as the most fervent prayer or mystic experience. The fingerprint of God is there, within and without, if we are just willing to search for it.