

SELECT MASTER

This degree commences with a character by the name of Zabud. Zabud was a friend of King Solomon, and appears in several of the Masonic degrees. To most of our membership, Zabud is but another character out of the past. Yet a reading of the Holy Scriptures reveals that he was truly the friend and companion of King Solomon, for Zabud was one of the sons of Nathan the Prophet. Nathan was the chief advisor of King David, and it was through the strategy of David, Nathan, and Bath-Sheba that Solomon came to the throne of Israel, for the natural heir to the throne should have been Adonijah. Zabud probably frequented the Royal Court where he acquired the friendship and favorable notice of Solomon, later developing into a friendship which caused King Solomon to refer to Zabud as "my particular friend and favorite."

The Deputy Master refers to the number 27, which is also alluded to in the closing ceremony. Although the closing ceremony states it a little differently, some authors believe that 27 members were made up from one of each of the twelve tribes of Israel, the three workmen who discovered the triangle hidden by Enoch before the flood, nine Grand Masters of the Arches, one of whom was Ahishar, and our three Grand Masters. The Select Master degree, or the building of the Secret Vault, took place between the first and second sections of the Royal Master degree. This is explained by saying that the secrets of the Select Master degree were not brought to light until long after the existence of the Royal Master Degree had been known and acknowledged. In other words, to speak only from the traditional point of view, Select Masters had been designated, had performed the task for which they had been selected, and had closed their labors without ever being recognized as a class in the Temple of Solomon. Their occupation and their very existence, according to legend, were unknown in the first Temple. Whether the punishment meted out to Ahishar was deserved, we should not question, for the story is but a legend, teaching us that constant watchfulness is necessary in waging the warfare of life, and only those shall succeed who are constantly on guard.

Legend has it that Josiah, foreseeing the destruction of the Temple, commanded the Levites to deposit the Ark of the Covenant in this vault, where it was found by some of the workmen of Zerubbabel, at the building of the second Temple. Masonic legend, whether authentic or not, teaches that there was an Ark in the second Temple, but that it was neither the Ark of the Covenant, which had been in the Holy of Holies of the first Temple, nor one that had been constructed as a substitute for it after the building of the second Temple. It was that Ark which was presented to us in the Select Master degree, and which, being an exact copy of the Mosaic Ark, and intended to replace it in case of its loss, is best known to Freemasonry as the Substitute Ark.

In the Masonic System there are two Temples; the first Temple in which the degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry are concerned, and the second Temple, with which the higher degrees, especially the Royal Arch, are related. The first Temple is symbolic of the present life; the second Temple is symbolic of the life to come. The first Temple, the present life, must be destroyed; on its foundations, the second Temple, the life eternal, must be built. Finally, we arrive at the Masonic Stone of Foundation. It is a symbol of Divine Truth, upon which all Speculative Masonry is built. The legends and traditions which refer to it are intended to describe, in an allegorical way, the progress of Truth in the soul, the search for which is a Mason's labor; and the discovery of which is to be his reward.

Arranged & Edited from:

A Manual of the Council by Albert G. Mackey