

* Please note that any opinions expressed in these lectures are those of the individual writers and may not necessarily reflect the views of the Province or Supreme Grand Chapter.

Lecture 4 WHY NOT MORE THAN 72 ?? by E Comp Dr Helmut Gardner PrGReg
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"Presented to the Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals Nr. 6731 on Friday 11th June 2010"

Have you ever asked yourself :-

Why do we have two Scribes, - the 2 most senior offices in the Chapter, - but only one can write?

Why the Principals of the Province traditionally sit on the second row, - in the north, while the Elders of the Chapter traditionally sit on the second row, - in the South, and the Sojourners sit in the west with their Staff-of-Office? Why is it acceptable for a visitor to occupy an office in your Chapter? - and finally what does "not more than 72 elders present" mean?

The answer is in the VSL, and we will answer these questions by establishing here, in this Holy RA Chapter, the ancient Biblical Court System called the "Sanhedrin"

The word Sanhedrin, is used TWICE in our Royal Arch Ritual, and is a Hebrew representation of a Greek word meaning "Judges sitting together" as in a Court of Law or a Bench of Magistrates!!

(1,5)

Now I want you to imagine a Sanhedrin, here in this Temple, 2 rows of elders in the South, where the Sojourners sit in the West and 2 rows of Elders in the North, making an arch, with its base, - in the East, where our Principals, -the Judges sit, and me – I'm the plaintiff standing in the middle pleading my case. (1)

Now what is the RA evidence in our Ritual? (2)

Companions, we are reminded of the end of the second part of the Exaltation Ceremony, The Sojourners having told their story, been accepted and offered work, "-but we lay this strict injunction upon you, that should you, during the progress of your labour make any discovery you deem of importance, YOU will communicate it to NONE but this – GRAND SANHEDRIN -- now sitting."

So they toddle off to do their work, and we are then reminded of the last part of our Exaltation Ceremony when the Sojourners return, "having made a discovery they deem of importance, and are anxious to communicate the same to the GRAND SANHEDRIN now sitting."

They tell their tale of discovery, and after a kerfuffle in the east, are told:- My Companions in office concur with me in opinion that as a reward for your zeal and fidelity at having found the long lost secrets of the RA, you should at once be called to that exalted rank so long held by your illustrious ancestors, " - we reward you with this jewel, as a mark of our entire approbation, and admit you Companions amongst us; We decorate you with this ribbon, and Badge which is the insignia of our Order, and entrust you with this Staff of Office which you will ever have a right to bear unless 72 of the elders are present; " and hereby constitute you a Prince and Ruler in the Order," - and we sit him in the front row.

Now where does it come from??? As I have already premised, the VSL.

We set the time about 3500 years ago, and more specifically, by Exodus 19 v 1. (1)

"In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone out of the land of Egypt" – AFTER you remember, 70 years of captivity, - foretold by the profit JEREMIAH, in our ritual. (2)

The situation is explained in Exodus 18 v 13-18. Moses was the leader of a people who had their laws, their Religious law and the Civil Law, but no infrastructure to regulate and control them, OTHER THAN Moses, - and that kept him busy from dawn till dusk. * Moses` father in law Jethro, told him, "- thou wilt surely wear away, - for this is too heavy for thee, thou art not able to perform it thyself alone (1)

Luckily, The Lord God was in a good mood that day, and agreed to give Moses some help, so in Numbers X1 v 16-17 The Lord tells Moses " – gather unto me 70 men of the elders of Israel."

In Numbers X1 v 24-25 -Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the 70 men of the elders of the people, and set them round the tabernacle, and the Lord came down in a cloud and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him (*Moses*), and gave it to the 70 elders; (1,4)

Now these 70 Elders sat in the first row in the South, and in the west where the Sojourners sit, also the first row in the North, forming an arch with its base in the east. Now, according to the Bible, several other Biblical sources and WBro. C.N. Bathan of the Quator Coronati Lodge fame, Moses sat in the centre of this arch, so that each could see who was speaking. (1,3,4,6)

M.E., could I invite you to be in the middle of the arch and represent Moses. congratulations you are now Moses, Also, as you are the President you are called “Nasi”, meaning “Prince” (4,5,6)

So, here is Moses, surrounded by 70 Elders, each with your Staff-of-Office, - 2 non-voting Scribes in the middle of the second row, - and guess what Companions, - YOU are now a duly constituted Court of Law!! (1, 6)

THIS COMPANIONS, IS THE ANCIENT BIBLICAL COURT SYSTEM CALLED THE SANHEDRIN DECREED BY THE LORD GOD IN THE TORAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

And since there must always be 70 elders present, + Moses, making 71, - and all were required to vote, - there was always a decision. (4,5)

Time goes by, and as the tribes grew so did the workload and it was decided to split the court into two new separate Courts, the Civil Court, called - The GERUSIA, and the Religious Court, called - The GREAT BET DIN, which sits in the Hall of Hewn Stone. (3,6)

So they appointed a vice-president, to control each of the Courts, with Moses as President. But since they could both sit at the same time, you could have 71 or 72 voting depending on whether Moses is present or not, but NOT more than 72 according to our RA ritual. And since they could sit at the same time, so we will also have them sitting here together.!! (1,2,6,7)

I now invite the 2nd Principal to be the Vice President of The Great Bet Din, or “Religious Court. Congratulations, you are now a Vice-President of the Great Bet Din,

The Religious court, which sits in the Hall of Hewn Stone. Now we have 70 Elders with their S-o-O, + a Vice President with his Sceptre of Office, = 71, + Moses (if present) = 72, But not more than 72, - according to our RA ritual.!!

Now can we invite the 3rd.Principal to be the Vice President of The Gerusia, or “Civil Court.” Congratulations, you are now a Vice-president of the Garusia or Civil Court.

No more money and you sit in a tent. Again we have 70 Elders with their S-o-O, + a Vice President with his Sceptre of Office,= 71 + Moses (if present) = 72, But- not more than 72, - according to our RA ritual!!

In the Court there were also 2 NON VOTING Scribes, who sat in the middle of the 2nd. Row one who counted the votes in favour of conviction, and the other, counted the votes in favour of acquittal, and they also recorded the decision. (1,3)

NOW, WE COME TO THE SCOURGE OF ANTIEN & MODERN TIMES, - ABSENTEEISM ???

We called it the Modern sickness, but it was also prevalent then. According to the Jewish Court System, by Rabbi Kaplan, if any of the compulsory 70 elders on the front benches was absent, the “Court” could not function, so they had 2nd. row of RESERVE Elders, - sitting behind the 1st. row, - who would come forward, - accept the STAFF-of-OFFICE, - and make up the 70 voting numbers on the front row. (3,4,6)

Likewise Companions, in our RA Temples, if any of the offices, such as Sojourners, Scribe N, are absent, or if there is no one to deliver the Mystical Lecture then:-

Sitting on the 2nd. Row, in the North, are the Principals of the Province who are very experienced and can do any of the Offices at a moments notice. Isn't that correct??

One of you would come forward, accept this Staff of Office, and become one of the 70 voting Elder! and sit on the front row.

Likewise, sitting on the 2nd Row in the South, are the Elders of this Chapter, who likewise are very experienced and who can do any of the Offices at a moments notice, One of you would come forward, accept this Staff of Office, and become one of the 70 voting Elders! and sit on the front row.

If there is STILL a vacancy on the front row, then we bring forward an Exaltee, we invest him, reward him, decorate him and entrust him with this Staff-of-Office, and constitute him a Prince and Ruler in the Order,

AND SIT HIM ON THE FRONT ROW AS ONE OF THE 70 VOTING ELDERS !!!

Who with the Vice President = 71, + (Moses), if present = 72,

BUT – NOT MORE THAN 72.

HENCE COMPANIONS, I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU HAVE ALREADY WORKED IT OUT, RE IN THIS HOLY ROYAL ARCH TEMPLE. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE ANCIENT BIBLICAL COURT SYSTEM CALLED THE GRAND SANHEDRIN -- AND YOU - ARE NOW IN SESSION, !!!!

b). Sources:-

No.	Source.
(1)	VSL, and explanatory notes.
(2)	Domestic Ritual.
(3)	Quator Coronati Lodge No. 2076 summons, (C. N. Bathan,)
(4)	The Jewish Court System by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan.
(5)	The Re-established Jewish Sanhedrin, by The Sanhedrin.org
(6)	Jewish Encyclopedia.com
(7)	Mishnah Yadayim 3:5, iv 2.

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