

# **Symbolic Keys of the Rosicrucian Ritual**

**by Thomas D. Worrel**

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The purpose of this paper is to explore two of the most important symbols present in the SRICF ritual system: the Pythagorean *Tetractys* and the Hebrew *Shem Ha-Mephoresh*. This paper will consider their origins in light of the history of the Rosicrucian ritual, their particular prominence within the rite, an analysis of the individual symbols themselves and finally some speculation upon their purpose and value to us as Rosicrucians.

## **Origins of the SRICF Ritual**

The origin of the rituals of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) is uncertain. There are different stories about the origins that have circulated at different times. One version depicts the rites being found by Robert W. Little in the cellar at Freemason's Hall in either 1864 or 1865. Another version has these manuscripts found by Little but placed there by the then Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England (William Henry White) who was rumored to be the last surviving member of an earlier English Rosicrucian society. One elaboration of these different explanations portrays Little conferring with Kenneth Mackenzie and developing the material from the manuscripts into the rites now worked in the society. The most likely origin, and the one with the most evidence, is that Little was a member of a Rosicrucian Society in Edinburgh, Scotland. We know that he and William James Hughan were admitted to the first two grades on December 31, 1866 and advanced

rapidly from that point. In any case the SRIA was founded in London by Robert Wentworth Little on June 1, 1867. The exact and original source of the rites remains vague.

Although the current rites now exemplified by the Society show a remarkable consistency with the early rites, we are not sure if the rites from the early English society are verbatim from the Scottish society or mere reflections. We do not know, for instance, if the rites evolved or changed in different ways prior to the earliest copies of them. There is, in fact, some evidence of a revision taking place prior to the early English rites now used. An example of specific later changes is mentioned by R.A Gilbert when he writes: "Under Woodman's control, the SRIA expanded and a kabbalistic emphasis was added to its studies..."<sup>1</sup> This is an interesting statement. Does this mean that there was little Kabbalistic material prior to William Robert Woodman? That would be hard to imagine as even the grade structure is based upon the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. (The grade structure appears to have been derived from an earlier society called the "Fraternity of the Golden & Rosy Cross" lead by J.H. Schmiidt aka Hermann Fictuld around 1757.) This is not to mention the numerous Kabbalistic references and allusions in the original Rosicrucian documents. In addition, a comparison of the SRIA rites used in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with those of the current SRICF rites reveals slight changes and certain omissions For example, the philosophical lecture of the older SRIA Philosophus degree is omitted in the current SRICF degree.

Another approach to investigating the history of a rite is to isolate various elements present within it and explore them individually. This will be my approach but the aim is not so much the origin of the rite itself but only a historical exploration of certain elements or themes within it and its relevance to us today. In the SRICF rites we find major emphasis on a few ritual themes with a long history –

namely: the *tetractys* and the concept of the *Shem hamephoresh*.

### **Prominent Elements of the Rites.**

In the opening prayer of our assembly, there are contained within it the words: "Sanctify our desires and purify our thoughts, so that we may become worthy to commune with the Holy Ones whom Thou hast created; ..." Who are the Holy Ones mentioned here? Why would we want to commune with them? Can they be any other than what we refer to as angels? Is this a literary device within a prayer or is it serious? If it was an isolated reference then we might gloss over it in our devotions or, in these modern times, even dismiss it altogether. But we find it again and again in the material both within our own society and in supporting documents of the Rosicrucian tradition.

In the description of the jewel of our Rite we find that: "The Jewel of the Society consists of a cross, the arms of equal length, on a curved shield having the form of a lozenge or rhombus. The arms of the Cross exhibit four times 18, that is 72 lines, having reference to the 72 rounds of the Ladder of Jacob; ..." And in the initiation ceremony of the Zelator grade, the lecture mentions in the section on the number 12 that: "No. 12 alludes to the 12 Apostles of the Messiah, and to the 12 signs of the Zodiac, expressing the cosmogony of Nature, spiritually and materially. The square of 12 – namely 144 – was once the limit of each Rosicrucian circle, and reminds us of the 72 attributes of God, which form the names of the 72 angels who occupy the 72 degrees of the ladder of Jacob, which is mystically said to reach from earth to heaven." In this statement the angels or "attributes of God" are clearly identified and their mention in such a specific manner alludes to their importance.

In the lecture of the second grade of Theoricus, the candidate is instructed that the Four Ancients represent the four classical elements and are attributed to four specific colors, to the four Hebrew letters of the Holy Name (I.H.V.H.) and are further attributed to a separation of the world into four divisions: "... they refer also to the Four Worlds of Existence: the Divine, Angelic, Formative and Material." One of the four divisions then is specified as angelic. We will see a four-fold division with the *tetractys* as well. In the next and third grade, that of Practicus, another reference to the angels can be found at the end of the lecture regarding alchemy. In reference to the practice of spiritual alchemy, we are told that it is devised to cause a change in man, a reformation, and it will make us "fit to commune with the Holy Ones whom God has created." That statement clearly reflects the previous mentioned phrase of the opening prayer.

In the Second Order of our Society, reference to the angels is again articulated to the candidate in the lecture given during the Adeptus Minor grade. This time it is through an explanation of the Second Order Jewel which portrays the Pythagorean *Tetractys*. This *tetractys* symbol should be well known to Scottish Rite masons. It is the equilateral triangle made up of 10 dots or stones. These stones are placed in the formation of 1 stone at the apex, beneath which are 2 stones, beneath which are 3 stones and finally 4 stones at the base of the triangle. Sometimes it is seen as 10 repetitions of one Hebrew letter, "yod", in the same triangular formation. Sometimes it is seen to have just one Hebrew "yod" inside of an equilateral triangle as in the 14<sup>th</sup> degree ring. That is because if the Hebrew letter "yod" is used as a number, it is the number 10.

In that same lecture, the Adeptus Minor or shall we say - child Adept - is informed of the connection between the Pythagorean *tetractys* and the Unutterable Divine Name of God symbolized in Hebrew letters as I.H.V.H. or Yod-Heh-

Vav-Heh. The Hebrew letters of the Divine Name (or Tetragrammaton) replace the individual dots or stones in a special manner. The first stone is a Yod or 10; the second row of two stones is changed to Yod-Heh or  $10 + 5$  or 15. The third row then is Yod-Heh-Vav or  $10+5+6$  or 21. Finally the last row of four stones is now transformed into Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh or  $10+5+6+5$  or 26. As you know the Hebrew letters are numbers and if you sum all the letters placed upon the *tetractys* it results in the number 72. The lecture continues by saying: "The total is seventy-two, the number of steps of the Ladder of Jacob which reached from earth to heaven; upon each step, says the Talmud, was an Angel bearing one of the names of God. These letters are derived from the words and letters of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20, and 21<sup>st</sup> verses of the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of *Exodus*, ... The Seventy-two lettered Divine Name was called the *Shemhamphorash*." These verses are three consecutive verses in *Exodus* which each contain 72 Hebrew letters.

Questions arise as to how the Greek *tetractys* and the Jewish *Shem ha-mephorash* have been combined into an integrated symbol that has an obviously important role in several areas of Freemasonry and especially the Rosicrucian Society. First it is probably best to consider these two symbols separately to understand where they originated, how they were used in their respective traditions and when and where they merged into a joint symbol.

### **The Pythagorean *Tetractys*.**

(alternative spellings: tetraktys, tetraktus)

As mentioned above, the *tetractys* (Quaternary or Fourness) consists of the first four integers (1,2,3,4) arranged, not as Arabic numerals but as stones or dots in an equilateral triangle. It is made of stones or dots in the pattern 1,2,3,4 which sums to ten or the decad. One of the earliest appearances of the *tetractys* is found in the

Pythagorean material about 590 B.C.E. The emblem represented a major teaching of that fraternity and is even used in one of their oaths, for example: "I swear by the discoverer of the Tetraktys. Which is the spring of all our wisdom. The perennial fount and root of Nature." It might seem odd to the modern mind to look upon a diagram of 10 dots arranged in an equilateral triangle as anything but a chance grouping of dots. Certainly it seems odd to revere it enough to take oaths upon it. Understanding that the Pythagorean philosophers considered numbers not only as mathematics but also contemplated numerical and geometrical diagrams as paradigms, as actual realities underlying and structuring the phenomenal world in its workings and expressions. How and why they came to these conclusions is a study in itself. Here we can but give indications of their reasoning through giving examples of a few fascinating aspects of the *tetractys*. Below are a few aspects of this powerful symbol:

"For the Pythagoreans the Tetraktys symbolized the perfection of Number and the elements which comprise it. ...the Tetraktys symbolize, like the musical scale, a differentiated image of Unity; ...it is an image of unity starting at One, proceeding through four levels of manifestation, and returning to unity, i.e., Ten. In the sphere of geometry, One represents the point, Two represents the line, Three represents the surface, and Four the tetrahedron, the first three-dimensional form. Hence, in the realm of space the Tetraktys represent the continuity linking the dimensionless point with the manifestation of the first body; the figure of the Tetraktys itself also represents the vertical hierarchy of relation between Unity and emerging Multiplicity. In the realm of music, it will be seen that the Tetraktys also contains the symphonic ratios which underlie the mathematical harmony of the musical scale: 1:2, the octave, 2:3, the perfect fifth; and 3:4, the perfect fourth."<sup>2</sup>

Every American Blue Lodge mason should be able to see that he is taught the *tetractys* even though in the York Rite it is not mentioned by name. In fact, in the study and unfoldment of the *tetraktys* the mason will realize he is immersed in much of the ancient Greek study of the Quadrivium. David Fideler goes on to inform us that the *Tetraktys* or Decad, because of its properties, was referred to by many names: Kosmos (world-order), Ouranos (heaven), and Pan (the All). The Decad, for the Pythagoreans, represented the whole, containing the sum of all the universal forces and all the laws of nature, and thus was sometimes called the "receptacle".

Plato, if not a Pythagorean, was at least strongly influenced by the Pythagoreans and his philosophical work, the *Timaeus* reflects that fact. It is generally thought that the passages regarding cosmogenesis (35a-36b) reflect the metaphysical unfolding of the *tetractys* in the process of creation. Also, within that unfolding is the formation of the "Platonic" solids (known by the Pythagoreans) which Plato relates to the primordial elements of fire, air, water and earth which are all in the (not described) "fifth" regular polygon, the cosmos or heaven (respectively tetrahedron, octahedron, icosahedron, hexahedron, and the fifth, dodecahedron). The demiurge or divine craftsman imposed order upon the primordial chaos by the ordering of these regular polyhedra. And these five are the only possible regular polyhedra in nature. Only three kinds of surfaces can compose these five: triangles, squares or pentagons. But there can be an almost endless variety of combinations using these foundational geometric patterns.

The properties and ratios of the regular polyhedra were applied to the motions of the heavens as well. In Plato's *Myth of Er* he speaks of a Siren upon each planetary sphere which sings the specific tone of that sphere. This is an allusion to the concept of the harmony of the spheres. There was an attempt to link the several ratios and properties of

the *tetractys* not only with the musical ratios but also to the heavenly movements. An interesting Pythagorean maxim asks and answers the following: "What is the oracle in Delphi? The Tetraktys, the very thing which is the Harmony of the Sirens." So this maxim is specifying the *tetraktys* to be the oracle at the temple at Delphi, the temple of Apollo, the sun god. Jean Richer in his *Sacred Geography of the Ancient Greeks* makes a compelling case that the ancient Greeks planned their cities according to the heavens. He places Delphi at the center and shows that certain shrines, temples and cities reflect the appropriate segment of the zodiacal wheel.

"In *The Laws* and in *The Republic*, Plato refers to the authority of Delphi and does so repeatedly. It is therefore highly probable that his plan of the ideal society was in many ways a later codification of what had been an ancient practice. I believe this to be especially true of the division of the country into twelve sectors that corresponded to the gods of the zodiac."<sup>3</sup>

The human being is not left out of the underlying harmony of the universe. The soul itself corresponds with certain numbers, ratios and proportions. Gregory Shaw in his book on Iamblichus, a 4<sup>th</sup> century Platonist, writes:

"... mathematics permeated the soul's entire life. In strictly Platonic terms, the soul was a mathematical entity (*Timaeus* 34-36; 43-44) and its immortal *ochema* (soul vehicle) was also designed according to mathematical ratios. ... For Iamblichus, mathematics revealed divine mysteries. Specifically, he maintained that mathematics recapitulated the soul's descent and return, and since the soul was a mathematical entity, the performance of mathematical disciplines allowed it to see this process clearly. The soul's mental projection of mathematic images initiated a ritual activity that effected the soul's return to its true self (*autos*) if the *mathesis* was performed in a Pythagorean manner."<sup>4</sup>

We find the same type of view expressed in the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus, a study of which is one of the aims of our Society. The philosophical and religious writings attributed to him are collectively known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. These documents, written in Greek, are dated from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. In the following quote it will be clear that the older Pythagorean philosophy was integrated into their philosophy.

"Tractate XIII of the *Corpus Hermeticum* suggests that the sun played a key role in the highest mysteries, and the Hermetic apotheosis exemplifies several theurgic characteristics. Tat, the disciple of Hermes, learned to "regenerate" his soul and complete the "tetraktus" of intelligent generation.(i.e., the "measured descent" ...) At his point, Hermes tells him: "You now know, my child, the way or regeneration. When the Decad comes into being, my child, your spiritual birth has been established.". ... Hermes explains to Tat that by completing the decad he has entered into contact with the One since "the Decad is in the One, and the One is in the Decad" (CH XIII, 12) The decad was the Pythagorean symbol of the actualized *tetraktus*, the manifestation of all principles in the cosmos. Having been reborn into this "body" Tat sees himself in all things, an experience amenable to a theurgical interpretation for, according to Iamblichus, the soul may return to the One only if it has been homologized to the All."<sup>5</sup>

I have already described the use of the *tetractys* in the SRICF. The *tetractys* is used extensively in other Masonic rites as well. For example, it is of major importance to the Scottish Rite: "In the Scottish Rite workings of the symbolic Degrees (1-3) the Pythagorean Tetractys is an important symbol."<sup>6</sup> Regarding the Master Mason degree from Pike: "The Tetractys thus leads you, not only to the study of the Pythagorean philosophy as to numbers, but also to the Kabalah, and will aid you in discovering the True Word, and

understanding what was meant by "The Music of the Spheres."<sup>7</sup> We see the symbol in the 6<sup>th</sup> degree of the Scottish Rite as the jewel of that degree: it is a triple delta inside an equilateral triangle with the signs of the sun, moon, and Mercury inscribed within them. It is also found in the higher degrees of Scottish Rite. "Pike intended that candidates have a thorough understanding of the Tetractys of Pythagoras before they receive the instruction of the Council (19-30) and Consistory (31-32) degrees. For this reason a lecture on this important symbol may be found as the end of the Rose Croix ritual."<sup>8</sup> In the material on the 31<sup>st</sup> degree of Scottish Rite, *Inspector Inquisitor*, Pike writes that: "The peculiar and principal symbol of this Degree is the Tetractys of Pythagoras, suspended in the East, where ordinarily the sacred word or letter glitters, like it, representing the Deity."<sup>9</sup>

Finally, as a last point in regards to this ancient symbol and its relation to Freemasonry, I wanted to point out that it has been promoted under various custodianships for over 2500 years. Probably one should not venerate symbols just because they are ancient. But if they have endured through the ages from ancient times, then there is something about them that demands respect and our closest inspection.

### **The Hebrew *Shem ha-mephoresh*.**

(alternative spellings: Shemhamphorash, Shemhamphoras, Semhamaphoras, Schemahamphorasch)

Biblical scholars believe the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt reached its final form – the form we now have – by 550 B.C.E. Variations and the development of the story in scrolls may have existed as early as 950 B.C.E. In any case, the book called *Exodus* was written several hundred years after the events it reports. It is not unreasonable that much thought was given to its construction. But whether coincidence or not, there is a very

interesting group of passages in that part of the narrative that describes the tribes fleeing from the Egyptian army and the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea . There are three consecutive verses each composed of exactly 72 Hebrew letters. These verses when written directly over each other with the middle verse going in an opposite direction form 72 vertical three-lettered "names". The particular biblical verses (in English) from which *Shem ha-Mephoresh* derived:

*"19. And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud moved from before them and stood behind them:  
20. And it came between the army of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was cloudy and dark all the night, but it gave light all the night to the children of Israel, so that they could not draw near one to the other all the night.  
21. And Moses lifted up his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."* (Exodus 14:19-21)

*Shem ha-mephoresh* basically means "Name of Extension". Therefore in this symbolism, the Ineffable Name IHVH has become or revealed the Extended Name. Sometimes it is referred to as the Great Divided Name or the 72-Fold Great Name of God. To understand its importance it is necessary to understand the tradition behind the power of Hebrew letters and the Ineffable Name. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet were considered divine and the foundational powers of the universe which when combined or bound together became the divine words by which God created the universe. Names thus became embodiments of divine powers:

"Another way of understanding the unfolding of divine language is to see emanation as the process of creating names. Names are vessels that contain essences or refer to subjects that exist. The Kabbalists describe the emanation of

the vessel *Hokhmah* as God giving Himself His first and most important name, YHVH, traditionally pronounced *Adonai* and called *the four-letter name* (Tetragrammaton). The combination forming this name is the first emanation of the divine letters through *Hokhmah*. All other divine names are elaborations of the Tetragrammaton."<sup>10</sup>

Although the biblical verses of *Exodus* were composed over 2500 years ago, it is not clear if or how they were treated until the writings of the mystical sage and prophet Abraham Abulafia who lived from 1240 to 1291. Abraham wrote several books on mystical methods to increase awareness of the Divine Spirit and awaken mystical consciousness. He represented the great tradition of Kabbalah that was emerging from Spain at that time. It was this tradition that also taught the Tree of Life with its 10 "spheres" as attributes and emanations of the Deity Their doctrine of the 10 spheres help link the Kabbalah with the *tetractys*. Although his work was based on the Kabbalah he emphasized the techniques of ecstasy. One of his major techniques centered upon the Name of 72 or the *Shem ha-mephoresh*.

"Of all Abulafia's books, the one that explains his methods most completely is his *Chayay Olam HaBah (Life of the Future World)*. ... Rabbi Chaim ... speaks of it as being the most important guide for attaining meditative enlightenment. ... Instead of making use of the Tetragrammaton, however, this book utilizes the Name of Seventy-Two Combinations. This Name was known from most ancient times, and is discussed in both the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*, but significantly, not in the *Hekhalot*. By the Eleventh Century, it had been popularized in Rashi's commentaries, and is also mentioned in a late Midrash. But while the Name itself was known earlier, the actual methods of its use had never been written down until Abulafia did so."<sup>11</sup>

Like advanced yogic techniques, Abulafia's practices taught the aspirant a systemized approach to prayer. It included mental repetition, bodily movements, and breath control as well as keeping the underlying intention of prayer. His practices are not unlike some of the Tibetan religious practices of coordinating mantra (inner speech), yantra (visualization of geometric symbols), breath control and mudra (hand gestures) so that each aspect of body, breath and mind are "aligned".

"To him the closed doors of the soul open in the music of pure thought which is no longer bound to 'sense,' and in the ecstasy of the deepest harmonies which originate in the movement of the letters of the great Name, they throw open the way to God. This science of the combination of letters and the practice of controlled meditation is, according to Abulafia, nothing less than the "mystical logic" which corresponds to the inner harmony of thought in its movement towards God."<sup>12</sup>

It seems that a major development emerged from the school of Italian Renaissance philosophers centered on the great Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). One of Ficino's students and associates was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who is considered to be the first major Christian philosopher to study the Jewish Kabbalah. In 1486 Ficino wrote to Pico asking for the return of his copy of the Koran and within which is clearly indicated Pico's interest in the Kabbalah. The great German humanist Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) was also involved with this Platonist circle and was obviously influenced by Pico. Reuchlin became the first great Christian scholar of Judaism and the Hebrew language. In those times, the study of Hebrew for a Christian was considered highly suspect. Reuchlin not only became a great exponent of Christian Kabbalah but defended and promoted the study of Jewish manuscripts and language. It is in Johann Reuchlin's book *De Arte Cabalistica* that the first mention

that I have been able to find of the fusion of the Greek *tetractys* and the Hebrew *Shem ha-Mephoresh*.

From that point on there are several magical texts that include either or both of these symbols: Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) in his *Three Books on Occult Philosophy* for example and Athanasius Kircher (1602 –1680) born in what is now Germany has a diagram in his work *Oedius* titled “The Seventy-Two Names of God”. It is explained as: “The leaves at the top bear seventy-two names in Hebrew, distributed among the nine angelic orders ...”<sup>13</sup> Obviously, this picture depicts a division and distribution of the 72 Names among the 9 angelic orders, the 9 orders which have become almost standard since the work of Pseudo-Dionysius or the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century. In *A Treatise on Angel Magic* (Harley Ms. 6482 in the British Library) written at the end of the 17th century by Dr. Rudd, there is a complete listing of the *Shem ha-mephoresh*. In more recent times, the 72-fold Name has been incorporated in papers and studies from societies that are either derived from the original SRIA or from members of those groups who went on to found other societies. An example is the English occultist Aleister Crowley who was once a member of the “Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn”, a Rosicrucian society founded by members of the SRIA. Crowley founded his own organization and produced numerous related books and studies. These societies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to develop the structure and images of the Tarot as a virtual picture book embodying the Kabbalah. For example, the Tarot card “The Universe” shows: “In the corners of the card are the four Kerubim showing the established Universe; and about her is an ellipse composed of seventy-two circles for the quinarys of the Zodiac, the Shemhamphorasch.”<sup>14</sup> Here we see aspects of the astrological symbolism associated with the Extended Name. The 72 angels have been assigned one to each 5 degrees of the zodiac (360 divided by 5 equals 72). Therefore, they represent the celestial forces surrounding our world. This is

also another elaboration of the unfolding of the Divine Name IHVH as here the four fixed signs of the zodiac (Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius Taurus) are attributed to the four letters of the Divine Name. We find these "tetramorphs" in *Ezekiel* 1:10 and *Revelations* 4:6-7. A further connection is that not only the Divine Name sums to the number 26 but the astrological placement of these four "houses" also sum to 26. For example, Leo is the 5<sup>th</sup> House, Scorpio is the 8<sup>th</sup> House and so on. Furthermore, each of these signs and letters is associated with one of the four elements or Ancients.

The Tarot is divided into two major parts called the major and minor trumps. The major trumps consists of 22 images each relating to a Hebrew letter among other things. The card mentioned above – the "Universe" or "The World" – is the last of the major trumps. The minor cards are very similar to the modern playing cards with numbers and court cards. The seventy-two Angels are present in the Tarot Cards as the 36 small cards (minor trump) excluding the Aces and the Court Cards. In other words, the minor trump cards from 2 through 10 (9 x 4 suits = 36 x 2 "day & night" = 72). These are explained thus:

"Important: although these 'small cards' are sympathetic with their Sephirotic origin, they are not identical; nor are they Divine Persons. These (and the Court Cards also) are primarily sub-Elements, parts of the 'Blind Forces' under the Demiourgos, Tetragrammaton. Their rulers are the Intelligences, in the Yetziratic world, who go to form the Schemhamphorasch."<sup>15</sup>

Finally, in all things related to the Kabbalah, it is important to consider the numerical equivalents and correspondences to find other hints at interpretation or further insight. There are several correspondences to the number 72 not only in Hebrew but also in Greek and Latin. One of the most interesting is that of the little known and

vague references to the Urim and Thumim which interestingly enough add up in Hebrew to 72. One explanation is that:

“According to some, the Urim and Thumim also consisted of a parchment containing the 72 letter Name, which was placed in the Breastplate. According to the Kabbalists, the names of the tribes and other words inscribed on the twelve stones also contained exactly 72 letters. This is significant, as ... , the 72 letter Name plays an important role in the attainment of the prophetic state. ... the Urim and Thumim could only be used by the High Priest when he was wearing all Eight Vestments. In using the Urim and Thumim, the Priest would reach the eighth level, transcending mere physical perfection and entering the spiritual domain.”<sup>16</sup>

What is also of significance is that the names of the twelve tribes, which was inscribed with one tribe upon each gem, total 72 Hebrew letters.

The *Shem ha-Mephoresh* has not shown up as often in Masonic circles as the *tetraktys*. It is found in the material of the Order of the Elect Cohen founded by Martines de Pasqually in 1754. I understand that it has made its way into certain Martinist circles through their connection with that older order. According to MacKenzie's *Royal Masonic Cyclopedia* it is also found in the old French Rite instituted by the Grand Orient in 1786. This rite consisted of 7 degrees. The 72-fold Name is found, not surprisingly, in the 5<sup>th</sup> degree named the “Second Order of Rose Croix”. And of course, it is incorporated in the Masonic Rosicrucian societies.

## **The Role of Angels in Western Spirituality**

The question arises as to what is the importance of such instruction on the 70-fold Divine Name. What is the point in knowing these angelic names and how does it relate to our society? The first avenue might be to go to the founding documents themselves: the Rosicrucian manifestoes of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. But in the original Rosicrucian manifestos, angels are only mentioned three times that I can find: once in the *Fama* and twice in the *Confessio*. They include:

"... he seeth the Heavens open, the angels of God ascending and descending , and his name written in the book of life."<sup>17</sup>

"...we hold that the meditations of our Christian Father on all subjects which from the creation of the world have been invented, brought forth, and propagated by human ingenuity, through God's revelation, or through the service of Angels or spirits, ..."<sup>18</sup>

"... to the silent he sendeth his angels to hold speech with them, ..."<sup>19</sup>

Although interesting, these passages do not really give us any further insight into why the *tetractys* and the *Shem hamephoresh* are so prominent in our society. On the contrary, one may wonder how they did become so important being that they are not particularly specified in the original documents. But, the role of angels in regard to human spiritual awareness has been a major factor in Western spirituality from very early in our religious history. The names have always been of prime importance as well. One of the great scholars of Jewish mysticism writes:

"Knowledge of the names of the angels was already part of the mysticism of the Essenes, and it developed in both rabbinic and heterodox circles up to the end of the geonic period (8<sup>th</sup> century). ... In *Merkabah* literature the names of the angels easily intermingle with the secret Names of God,

many of which are mentioned in the fragments of this literature still extant."<sup>20</sup>

The *Merkabah* literature probably records the earliest form of Jewish mysticism and was centered upon the theme of Ezekiel being lifted up into heaven by a "chariot" to witness God's presence in vision. The Names of God and the angels become a type of sacred veil concealing but also revealing spiritual mysteries. The role of angels has been to : "... serve as guides or spirits that 'awaken' the visionary to the vision, at other times they serve as interpreters of the vision itself, thus assisting the visionary or prophet in discernment."<sup>21</sup> By tradition and mostly secondary sources of theological commentary, angels have been grouped in hierarchies, ranks, armies, by function and status. But when we think of hierarchy we tend to think of rankings with notions of higher and lower. This image has certain limitations and the medieval Christian world began picturing the hierarchies as concentric rings expanding from the Throne of God, thus showing the angelic worlds as levels or vehicles for the divine manifestation. The names thus become similar to passwords allowing access to a deeper type of spiritual discernment. "Each order represents a mode of divine proximity ... each manifests a particular teaching, a particular form of guidance or spiritual assistance, a particular beauty and power that serve to purify one's individual path while drawing one nearer to God."<sup>22</sup> In this way then, the angelic hierarchies become not only revelations of God but also a spiritual path of the aspirant:

"The theme of angels as theophanies of God assisting in the spiritual formation of the soul is closely related to the theme of the angels as light. But whereas the theme of the angels as light focuses on the goal of the spiritual journey, that is, the uncreated light of the Father of Lights and Jesus as the Light of the Father, the theme of angelic theophanies focuses on the many possible maps of the journey itself. That is, as with the theme of the angels as spiritual paths,

each angel is a revelation or theophany of a particular "voice" of God. By listening to and discerning the true voice of God, one begins to follow one's own God-given path to holiness."<sup>23</sup>

The angels then are seen being of supreme importance as the link between the transcendent and immanent nature of Deity, each bestowing a particular grace, a particular illumination and leading the soul to the ultimate spiritual heights. One beautiful example of the separate roles of different angelic forms is found in descriptions of the order of Thrones, the Cherubim and the Seraphim:

"... the angelic Thrones as that order 'receptive to the highest divine visitations by ecstasy of mind.' ... the Cherubim represent the point at which divine transcendence is 'understood' as beyond the grasp of human reason. ... understanding here reaches the consummation of its knowledge and light. ... the Seraphim, represent forms of mystical consciousness that reach beyond the borders of reason and language, beyond the revelations of light, beyond the aid of symbol and metaphor. ... Finally, each of the angelic orders, in fact, does "speak" in its own way of the attributes and names of God, yet at the same time each reveals the "silence" of the unspeakable nature of God."<sup>24</sup>

From the above comments we can readily see the importance of angelic spirituality to our religious consciousness. The development of theological thought upon this theme has produced a beautiful and sophisticated approach to deeper and deeper understandings of the nature of the spiritual world and the role of angelic powers in our world. In seeking for more light, the Freemason would be wise to consider the avenues available to him in this regard.

## **The Spiritual Intention of the Rosicrucian Rite.**

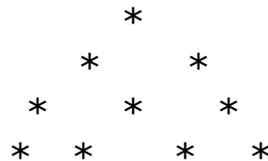
In conclusion, both the *tetractys* and the *Shem ha-mephoresh* are ancient symbols with deep philosophical and spiritual significance. They derive from completely different traditions. The origin of the *tetractys* was probably the Pythagorean fraternity. Its several meanings covered broad areas of philosophical and mystical thought. Some of the major areas embodied within the *tetractys* include those of the mystical conception of number, geometrical figures, musical ratios, the progression of dimensions, the four worlds and astronomical speculations. In a sense, it covers the classical quadrivium. It was most of all the symbol of the "All", the cosmos, as unfolding and as a receptacle of all the creative powers of nature. The *Shem ha-mephoresh* developed out of the Jewish tradition from the story of a people being released from slavery to overwhelming and massive worldly powers by divine intervention. It is, in a sense, a story of the rending of the veil between the material and spiritual world. And within the biblical verses communicating that mystery is hidden the key to the spiritual forces within and behind the natural world.

The fusion of these two symbols can be traced back at least the philosophical and theological circle of Marcilio Ficino's students during the Italian Renaissance. The combination of the classical philosophical paradigm of the *tetractys* with the mystical theology of the *Shem ha-mephoresh* has provided the Rosicrucian society with a powerful symbol and tool of spiritual growth and possibility. The fusion of these symbols and their spiritual meanings has given us not only the designs of the mystical temple itself but the tools and materials by which to build it. The spiritual intent of the Rosicrucian rite is clearly that of the path of initiation. The 72 rung ladder of the angels is a powerful symbol of our ascent to the divine world. In that light, there is an interesting correlation of that metaphor with the Latin

word *abiegnus* which also numerates to 72. The word is Latin for "clad in fir" but is used in several Rosicrucian documents as the name of a mountain: *Mons Abiegnus* or the Mountain of Initiation. The spiritual intent of the Rosicrucian rite is nothing less than the Beatific Vision or the mystical union of the soul with the Divine.

The Tetractys and the Shem ha-Mephoresh

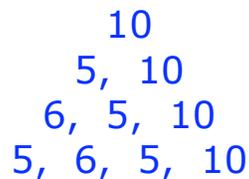
The Pythagorean Tetractys:



Substituting Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton: YHVH (or, IHVH)



The numerical values are...



**10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 6 + 6 + 5 = 72**

Thus is the numerical value for the *Shem ha-Mephoresh*.

## Endnotes:

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- <sup>1</sup> R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook*, p. 73.
- <sup>2</sup> Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, ed., *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, “Introduction” by David Fideler, p. 29.
- <sup>3</sup> Jean Richer, *Sacred Geography of the Ancient Greeks*, p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 195.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.
- <sup>6</sup> Rex Hutchens, *A Bridge to Light*, p. 33.
- <sup>7</sup> Albert Pike, *Morals & Dogma*, p. 88.
- <sup>8</sup> Rex Hutchens, *A Bridge to Light*, p. 113.
- <sup>9</sup> Albert Pike, *Morals & Dogma*, p. 826.
- <sup>10</sup> David S. Ariel, *The Mystic Quest: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism*, P. 116.
- <sup>11</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 93.
- <sup>12</sup> Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 134.
- <sup>13</sup> Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge*, p. 63.
- <sup>14</sup> Crowley, *Book of Thoth*, p. 119.
- <sup>15</sup> Crowley, *Book of Thoth*, p. 189.
- <sup>16</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, p. 141.
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Foster Case, *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, p. 17.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Confessio, Ch. XI.
- <sup>20</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 19.
- <sup>21</sup> Steven Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, p. 15.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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