

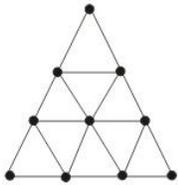
Education & Enlightenment

A Special Committee of

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada



Tetractys Symbolism



The Tetractys Symbol can be seen over and over again in many Scottish Rite Degrees. Although it is an actual equilateral triangle of three sides, it derives its Greek name Tetractys, which means “consisting of four” because of the symbolism that can be interpreted when its sides are divided by four equally spaced parts.

The famous geometrician Pythagorus felt this symbol was so important he swore his students to secrecy regarding its true meaning, probably because much of the symbolism he taught would have been considered heretical during his age. Pythagorus had travelled extensively in Egypt and no doubt was introduced to much older traditions of Alchemy and the importance of the Hebrew Kaballa and its study of numbers. It was here too that he was introduced to the Tetragrammatron, the four letter word that has become one of the Great Ineffable words of Freemasonry. In Hebrew this word was considered the true name of God and was written:

יהוה

Pythagoras saw that the number four appearing in the Tetractys, and the Tetragrammatron, had many significant relationships to these older teachings:

1. The top point represented the Monad, the One or the Unity. In geometry it also represented a single point with zero dimensions.
2. Two points below the Monad represents a Dyad, or Duality, examples of which could be Light and Dark, Good and Evil. Geometrically two points form a line which has length and one dimension.
3. Three points on the Tetractys represents a Triad signifying the harmonic balance between the Duality and geometrically three points can add the two dimensions of a plane when viewed as a triangle having length and breadth.
4. The four points along the bottom of a Tetractys formed a representation of the Kosmos which alchemically was made of the four cardinal energies of air, fire, earth and water. Four points viewed in the geometric form of a tetrahedron gave the third dimension of height to breadth and length.

Pythagoras also realized that the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 added together to make 10. Ten was the alchemical number of steps, or stages of development, from the Unity or the Spirit of God to the manifestation of Man in this world. In the Kaballa it was also the number of Sephiroth, or emanations of the Deity, which were depicted as spheres on the Tree of Life.

From the Pythagorean Tetractys it is possible to form many different symbols by connecting the four points. Overlapping two Tetractys, one pointing up, the other down, forms the famous Seal of Solomon which is emblazoned on the flag of Israel. An upward pointed triangle is also the symbol for fire in Alchemy, and the downward a symbol for water. The

lines formed through the overlapping triangles complete the symbolism of Air and Water.