



## *Numbers in Hermetic Alchemy*

By Albert Pike

This text has been transcribed from "*Morals and Dogma*" by *Albert Pike*. *Morals* and *Dogma* was sanctioned in the late nineteenth century by the Supreme Council of the *Thirty-Third Degree*, for the Southern Jurisdiction of *Freemasons* of the United States.

The number *ONE* designates *harmony*, order, or the *Good Principle* (the *ONE* and *ONLY Deity*, expressed in Latin *Solus*, whence the words *Sol*, *Soleil*, symbol of this *G-d*). The interpretation of the Hermetic fables shows, among every ancient people, in their principal gods, first, *1*, the Creating *Monad*, then *3*, then *3* times *3*, *3* times *9*, and *3* times *27*. This triple progression has for its foundation the *three* ages of *Nature*, the *Past*, the *Present*, and the *Future*; or the *three* degrees of universal generation, Birth, Life, Death, Beginning, middle, end. The *Monad* was *male*, because its action produces no change *in* itself, but only *out* of itself. It represented the *Creative Principle*.



*Two*, or the *Duad*, is the symbol of *Antagonism*; of *Good* and *Evil*, *Light* and Darkness. It is *Cain* and *Abel*, *Eve* and *Lilith*, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, *Ormuzd* and *Ahriman*, *Osiris* and *Typhon*. The *Duad* is the origin of *contrasts*. It is the *imperfect* condition into which, according to the *Pythagoreans*, a being falls, when he detaches himself from the *Monad*, or *G-d*. Spiritual beings, emanating from *G-d*, are enveloped in the *duad*, and therefore receive only illusory impressions.



*THREE*, or the *Triad*, is most significantly expressed by the *equilateral* and the *right angled* triangles. There are *three* principal colors or rays in the rainbow, which by intermixture make *seven*. The *three* are the blue, the yellow, and the red. The *Trinity* of the *Deity*, in one mode or other, has been an article in all creeds. He *creates*, *preserves*, and *destroys*. He is the *generative power*, the *productive capacity*, and the *result*. The immaterial man, according to the *Kabalah*, is composed of vitality, or life,

the breath of life; of *soul* or *mind*, and *spirit*. *Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercury* are the great symbols of the alchemists. To them man was *body*, *soul*, and *spirit*.



**FOUR** is expressed by the *square*, or four-sided *right-angled* figure. Out of the symbolic Garden of Eden flowed a river, dividing into four streams,--*PISON*, which flows around the land of gold, or light; *GIHON*, which flows around the land of *Ethiopia* or Darkness; *HIDDEKEL*, running eastward to *Assyria*; and the *EUPHRATES*. *Zechariah* saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains of bronze, in the first of which were red *horses*; in the second, black; in the third, white; and in the fourth, grizzled: "and these were the four *winds* of the heavens, that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." *Ezekiel* saw the four living creatures, each with four faces and four wings, the faces of a *Man* and a *Lion*, an *Ox* and an *Eagle*; and the four wheels going upon their four sides; and *Saint John* beheld the four beasts, full of eyes before and behind, the *LION*, the young *OX*, the *MAN*, and the flying *EAGLE*. *Four* was the signature of the Earth. Therefore, in the 148<sup>th</sup> Psalm, of those who must praise the Lord on the land, there are *four times four*, and *four* in particular of living creatures. *Visible nature* is described as the *four* quarters of the world, and the *four* corners of the earth. "There are *four*," says the old Jewish saying, "which take the first place in this world: *Man*, among the creatures; the *Eagle* among birds; the *Ox* among cattle; and the *Lion* among wild beasts." Daniel saw *four* great beasts come up from the sea. The *quaternary* is the most perfect number, and the *root* of other numbers, and of all things. The *tetrad* expresses the first mathematical power. *Four* represents also the *generative power*, from which all combinations are derived. The Initiates considered it the emblem of *Movement* and the *Infinite*, representing everything that is neither *corporeal* nor *sensible*. *Pythagoras* communicated it to his disciples as a symbol of the *Eternal* and *Creative Principle*, under the name of *Quaternary*, the Ineffable Name of *God*, which signifies Source of everything that has received existence; and which, in Hebrew, is composed of *four* letters. *Four* was a divine number; it referred to the *Deity*, and many Ancient Nations gave *G-d* a name of *four letters*; as the Hebrews, the Egyptians *AMUN*, the Persians *SURA*, the Greeks, and the Latins *DEUS*. This was the *Tetragrammaton* of the Hebrews, and the Pythagoreans called it *Tetractys*, and swore their most solemn oath by it. So too *ODIN* among the Scandinavians, *ZEYS* among the Greeks, *PHTA* among the Egyptians, *THOTH* among the Phoenicians, and *AS-UR* and *NEBO* among the Assyrians. The list might be indefinitely extended.



**FIVE** is the **Duad** added to the **Triad**. It is expressed by the **five**-pointed or blazing star, the mysterious **Pentalpha** of **Pythagoras**. It is indissolubly connected with the number **seven**. Christ fed His disciples and the multitude with **five** loaves and **two** fishes and of the fragments there remained **twelve**, that is, **five** and **seven**, **baskets** full. Again He fed them with **seven** loaves and a few little fishes, and there remained **seven baskets** full. The **five** apparently small planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, with the two greater ones, the Sun and Moon, constituted the **seven** celestial spheres. The number **5** was considered as mysterious, because it was compounded of the **Binary**, Symbol of the **False** and **Double**, and the **Ternary**, so interesting in its results. It thus energetically expresses the state of **imperfection**, of **order** and **disorder**, of **happiness** and **misfortune**, of **life** and **death**, which we see upon the earth. To the Mysterious Societies it offered the fearful image of the **Bad Principle**, bringing trouble into the inferior order,—in a word, the **Binary** acting in the **Ternary**.



The number **6** was, in the Ancient Mysteries, a striking emblem of **nature**; as presenting the **six** dimensions of all bodies: the **six** lines which make up their form, viz., the **four** lines of direction, toward the **North**, **South**, **East**, and **West**; with the two lines of **height** and **depth**, responding to the **zenith** and **nadir**. The sages applied the **sexanary** to the physical **man**; while the **septenary** was, for them, the symbol of his immortal **spirit**. The hieroglyphical **sexanary** (the double equilateral triangle) the symbol of **Deity**. **Six** is also an emblem of **health**, and the symbol of **justice**; because it is the first **perfect** number; that is, the first whose aliquot parts ( $1/2$ ,  $1/3$ ,  $1/6$ , or 3, 2, and 1), added together, make itself. Ormuzd created **six good** spirits, and Ahriman **six evil** ones. These typify the **six Summer** and the **six Winter** months.



**SEVEN** was the peculiarly sacred number. There were **seven** planets and spheres presided over by **seven** archangels. There were **seven** colors in the rainbow; and the Phoenician Deity was called the **HEPTAKIS** or God of **seven** rays; **seven** days of the week; and **seven** and five made the number of months, tribes, and apostles. Zechariah saw a golden candlestick, with **seven** lamps and **seven** pipes to the lamps, and an olive tree on each side. Since he says, "the **seven** eyes of the Lord shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." John, in the Apocalypse, writes **seven** epistles to the **seven** churches. In the **seven** epistles there are **twelve** promises. What is said of the churches

in praise or blame is completed in the number three. The refrain, "who has ears to hear," etc., has ten words, divided by three and *seven*, and the *seven* by three and four; and the *seven* epistles are also so divided. In the seals, trumpets, and vials, also, of this symbolic vision, the *seven* are divided by four and three. He who sends his message to Ephesus, "holds the *seven* stars in his right hand, and walks amid the *seven* golden lamps." In *six* days, or periods, God created the Universe, and paused on the *seventh* day. Of clean beasts, Noah was directed to take by *sevens* into the ark; and of fowls by *sevens*; because in *seven* days the rain was to commence. On the *seventeenth* day of the month the rain began; on the *seventeenth* day of the *seventh* month, the ark rested on Ararat. When the dove returned, Noah waited *seven* days before he sent her forth again; and again *seven*, after she returned with the olive-leaf. Enoch was the *seventh* patriarch, Adam included, and Lamech lived *777* years. There were *seven* lamps in the great candlestick of the Tabernacle and Temple, representing the *seven* planets. *Seven* times Moses sprinkled the anointing oil upon the altar. The days of consecration of Aaron and his sons were *seven* in number. A woman was unclean *seven* days after child-birth; one infected with leprosy was shut up *seven* days; *seven* times the leper was sprinkled with the blood of a slain bird; and *seven* days afterwards he must remain abroad out of his tent. *Seven* times, in purifying the leper, the priest was to sprinkle the consecrated oil; and *seven* times to sprinkle with the blood of the sacrificed bird the house to be purified. *Seven* times the blood of the slain bullock was sprinkled on the mercy-seat; and *seven* times on the altar. The *seventh* year was a Sabbath of rest; and at the end of *seven* times *seven* years came the great year of jubilee. *Seven* days the people ate unleavened bread, in the month of Abib. *Seven* weeks were counted from the time of first putting the sickle to the wheat. The Feast of the Tabernacles lasted *seven* days. Israel was in the hand of Midian *seven* years before Gideon delivered them. The bullock sacrificed by him was *seven* years old. Samson told Delilah to bind him with *seven* *green* withes; and she wove the *seven* locks of his head, and afterwards shaved them off. Balaam told Barak to build for him *seven* altars. Jacob served *seven* years for Leah and *seven* for Rachel. Job had *seven* sons and three daughters, making the perfect number ten. He had also *seven* thousand sheep and three thousand camels. His friends sat down with him *seven* days and *seven* nights. His friends were ordered to sacrifice *seven* bullocks and *seven* rams; and again, at the end, he had *seven* sons and three daughters, and twice *seven* thousand sheep, and lived an hundred and forty, or twice *seven* times ten years. Pharaoh saw in his dream *seven* fat and *seven* lean kine, *seven* good ears and *seven* blasted ears of wheat; and there were *seven* years of plenty, and *seven* of famine. Jericho fell, when *seven* priests, with *seven* trumpets, made the circuit of the city on *seven* successive days; once each day for six days, and *seven* times on the *seventh*. "The *seven* eyes of the Lord," says Zechariah, "run to and

fro through the whole earth." Solomon was *seven* years in building the Temple. *Seven* angels, in the Apocalypse, pour out *seven* plagues, from *seven* vials of wrath. The scarlet-colored beast, on which the woman sits in the wilderness, has *seven* heads and ten horns. So also has the beast that rises Up out of the sea. *Seven* thunders uttered their voices. *Seven* angels sounded *seven* trumpets. *Seven* lamps of fire, the *seven* spirits of God, burned before the throne; and the Lamb that was slain had *seven* horns and *seven* eyes. No number has ever been so universally in repute as the *septenary*. Its celebrity is due, no doubt, to the planets being *seven* in number. It belongs also to sacred things. The Pythagoreans regarded it as formed of the numbers *3* and *4*; the first whereof was, in their eyes, the image of the three material elements, and the second the principle of everything that is neither corporeal nor sensible. It presented them, from that point of view, the emblem of everything that is perfect



*EIGHT* is the first cube, that of *two*. The number *8*, or the octary, is composed of the sacred numbers *3* and *5*. Of the heavens, of the seven planets, and of the sphere of the fixed stars, or of the eternal unity and the mysterious number *7*, is composed the ogdoade, the number *8*, the first cube of equal numbers, regarded as sacred in the arithmetical philosophy. The Gnostic ogdoade had *eight* stars, which represented the *eight* Cabiri of Samothrace, the *eight* Egyptian and Phoenician principles, the *eight* gods of Xenocrates, the *eight* angles of the cubic stone. The number *eight* symbolizes perfection: and its figure, *8* or (*infinity*) indicates the perpetual and regular course of the Universe. It is the first cube ( $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ), and signifies *friendship* *prudence*, *counsel*, and *justice*. It was a symbol of the primeval law which regarded all men as equal.



*NINE* is the square of *three*, and represented by the *triple* triangle. The novary, or *triple* ternary. If the number *three* was celebrated among the ancient sages, that of *three times three* had no less celebrity; because, according to them, each of the three elements which constitute our bodies is ternary: the water containing *earth* and *fire*; the *earth* containing *igneous* and *aqueous* particles; and the *fire* being tempered by globules of *water* terrestrial corpuscles which serve to feed it. No one of the *three* elements being entirely separated from the others, all material beings composed of these *three* elements, whereof each is *triple*, may be designated by the figurative number *three times three*, which has become the symbol of all formations of bodies. Hence the name of *ninth* envelope, given to

matter. Every *material extension*, every *circular line*, has for representative sign the number *nine*, among the Pythagoreans; who had observed the property which this number possesses, of reproducing itself *incessantly* and *entire*, in every multiplication; thus offering to the mind a very striking emblem of *matter* which is incessantly composed before our eyes, after having undergone a thousand decompositions. The number *nine* was consecrated to the *Spheres* and the *Muses*. It is the sign of every *circumference*; because a circle of 360 degrees is equal to 9, that is to say,  $3 + 6 + 0 = 9$ . Nevertheless, the ancients regarded this number with a sort of *terror*: they considered it *a bad presage*; as the symbol of *versatility*, of *change* and the emblem of the *frailty* of *human affairs*. Wherefore they avoided all numbers where *nine* appears, and chiefly 81, the product of 9 multiplied by itself, and the addition whereof,  $8 + 1$ , again presents the number 9. As the figure of the number 6 was the symbol of the terrestrial globe, animated by a divine spirit, the figure of the number 9 symbolized the *earth*, under the influence of the *Evil Principle* thence the *terror* it inspired. Nevertheless, according to *Kabbalists*, the figure 9 symbolizes the generative *egg*, or the image of a *little globular being*, from whose lower side seems to flow its *spirit* of *life*. The *Ennead*, signifying an aggregate of 9 things or persons, is the first square of unequal numbers. Everyone is aware of the *singular* properties of the number 9, which, multiplied by itself or any other number whatever, gives a result whose final sum is always 9, or always divisible by 9. *Nine*, each member whereof, composed of two figures, presents a remarkable fact; for example: multiplied by each of the ordinary numbers, produces an arithmetical progression.



*TEN* includes all the other numbers. It is especially *seven* and *three*; and is called the number of perfection. *Pythagoras* represented it by the *TETRACTYS*, which had many mystic meanings. This symbol is sometimes composed of *dots* or *points*, sometimes of *commas* or *yods*, and in the *Kabbalah*, of the letters of the name of *Deity*. It is thus arranged:

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The Patriarchs from *Adam* to *Noah*, inclusive, are *ten* in number, and the same number is that of the *Commandments*. The number 10, or the *Denary*, is the measure of everything and reduces multiplied numbers to unity. Containing all the numerical and harmonic relations, and all the properties of

numbers which precede it, it concludes the Abacus or Table Pythagoras. To the Mysterious Societies, this number typified the assemblage of all the wonders of the Universe. They wrote it thus (*theta*), that is to say, Unity in the middle of *Zero*, as the centre of a circle, or symbol of *Deity*. They saw in this figure everything that should lead to reflection: the *centre*, the *ray*, and the *circumference*, represented to them *God*, *Man*, and the *Universe*. This number was, among the Sages, a sign of *concord*, *love*, and *peace*. To Masons it is a sign of *union* and *good faith*; because it is expressed by joining two hands, or the Master's grip, when the number of fingers gives 10; and it was represented by the *Tetractys* of *Pythagoras*.

