

John, chapter 3

- NIV John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.

- Sanhedrin comes from the Greek term *sunedrion* (literally, "sitting together") meaning council. The Sanhedrin is both a Jewish judicial and administrative body.

- The Sanhedrin was composed of local elites--including members of the high-priestly family, scribes (religious experts), and lay elders. It probably operated under some sort of Roman oversight, at least with respect to its taxing, law enforcement, and other administrative functions.

- According to gospel accounts, Jesus was brought before the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, presided over by high priest Joseph Caiaphas.

- The gospel of John indicates that the Sanhedrin turned Jesus over to Pilate because it lacked the power to impose death: "Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.'

- The Jews replied, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death.'" The Mishnah, however, clearly shows that the Sanhedrin did have the power to impose death for certain crimes--at least sometime before 200 a.d.

- In particular, Mishnah Sanhedrin 6.1 to 6.4 specify the procedures for stoning or capital punishment. The Jews practiced stoning as capital punishment. Crucifixion was a Roman form of capital punishment.

The Sinai Assembly

The Sanhedrin

- **The Ruling Council.** The Great Sanhedrin was made up of a Chief/Prince/Leader called Nasi (at some times this position may have been held by the Kohen Gadol or the High Priest), a vice chief justice (Av Beit Din), and sixty-nine general members

- In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and Shabbat.

John, chapter 3

- The term *Sanhedrin* is Greek and dates from the Hellenistic period, but the concept is one that goes back to the Bible. In the Torah, God commands Moses to "Assemble for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and officers, and you shall take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with you." (Numbers 11:16)

John, chapter 3

- God commanded Moses to lay hands on Joshua son of Nun. It is from this point, classical Rabbinic tradition holds, the Sanhedrin began: with seventy elders, headed by Moses, for a total of seventy-one. As individuals within the Sanhedrin died, or otherwise became unfit for service, new members underwent ordination, or Semicha

- These ordinations continued, in an unbroken line: from Moses to Joshua, the Israelite elders, the prophets (including Ezra, Nehemiah) on to all the sages of the Sanhedrin. It was in the year 191 BC that the Sanhedrin was established. It was not until sometime after the destruction of the Second Temple the Sanhedrin dissolved.

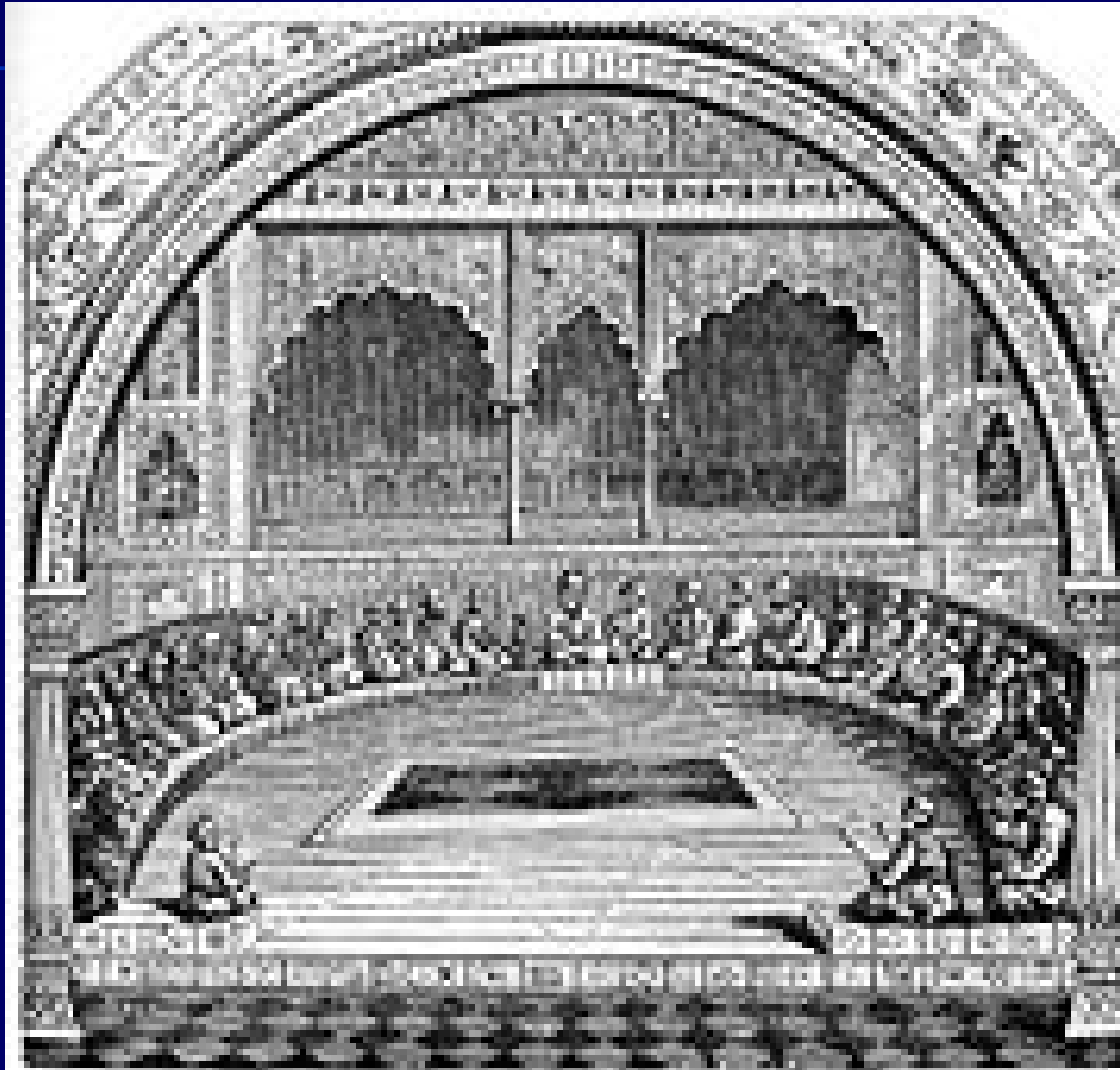
The Chamber of Hewn Stone: The Assembly of Sinai meeting place

The Chamber of Hewn-Stone





The Hall of Hewn Stone



Elton S. Gardner

Requirements to Serve

- Every member of the Sanhedrin had to be distinguished in Torah knowledge, wisdom, humility, fear of God, indifference to monetary gain, love of truth, love of fellow man, and good reputation.

Exodus 18:21

Deut. 1:13

- In order that the Sanhedrin command the utmost respect, its members must be of good appearance, and free of bodily defect. Therefore, a person who is blind, even in one eye, cannot be a member of the Sanhedrin.

- The members of the Sanhedrin must command respect as mature individuals. Therefore, it is preferable that each member be at least 40 years old, unless he is incomparable in wisdom and universally respected.

- The head of the Sanhedrin be at least 50 years old.

- To be a member of the Sanhedrin you had to be married and at least 30 years of age.

A person who is very old may not sit on the Sanhedrin, since he is apt to be too severe. The same is true of a man who is sterile, or even childless. A Sanhedrin containing any such member is not validly constituted. Therefore, if a member becomes very old or sexually maimed, he must be replaced.

Every member of the Sanhedrin must be of unblemished family, as was the first Sanhedrin under Moses. Therefore a bastard (*mamzer*, i.e., the son of an adulterous or incestuous union) is ineligible for membership and renders a Sanhedrin invalid...

- Every member of the Sanhedrin must be ordained, following a tradition from Moses. It is thus written, "Moses did as God commanded him. He took Joshua... and laid his hands on him, commanding him, as God spoke through Moses" (Numbers 27:22-23).

- To qualify for ordination, one must be expert in all areas of Torah law.

- The Sanhedrin judged accused lawbreakers, but could not initiate arrests. It required a minimum of two witnesses to convict a suspect. There were no attorneys. Instead, the accusing witness stated the offense in the presence of the accused and the accused could call witnesses on his own behalf. The court questioned the accused, the accusers and the defense witnesses.

John, chapter 3

- 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

**Probably met inside by
lamp light**



The Night Meeting?

- The Sanhedrin acted publicly but with a lot of politicking behind the scenes.
- Jesus does not operate in darkness. He wants His work and ministry out in the open for all to see – God and man.

John, chapter 3

- Life, blessing, healing, and goodness come only from God. Jesus' authority was proven in the miraculous display of these in His ministry.

John, chapter 3

- 3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
- The term for being born means "begotten" or "brought forth from being" making no distinction of conception or the actual birth.

John, chapter 3

- 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"
- Jesus is talking about a greater spiritual reality than the physical one.

John, chapter 3

- 5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

John, chapter 3

- Baptism is a public act for all to witness as with other water events involving the creative Spirit.
- Creation, Flood, Red Sea, Jordan crossing, ceremonial washing, and our Lord's Baptism.

John, chapter 3

- 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'