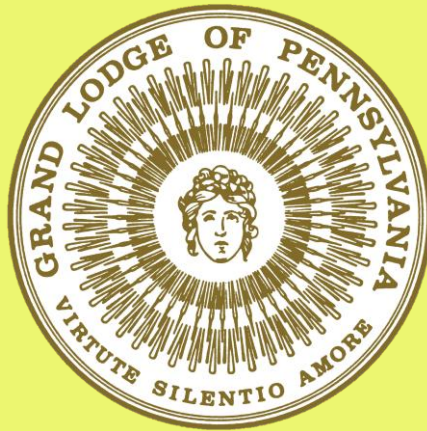


The Entered Apprentice Mason's Lessons



**The Right Worshipful Grand Lodge
of
Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania**

INTRODUCTION

You are now called, an Entered Apprentice Mason. I hope you never forget your experience in the first degree. Your possession of the degree is complete. You can continue to enjoy it as long as you live and the more you study it the more it will mean to you. Not every interpretation can be given here because different symbols have different meaning to the Brethren of Freemasonry.

The interpretation that you hear throughout the balance of these meetings should not be construed as being derived solely from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania alone since these explanations are derived from many sources and individual opinions. We hope that our explanations will stimulate your own research into the symbolism of Masonry.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ENTERED APPRENTICE MASON'S DEGREE

Apprentice: The word "apprentice" means "learner," one who is taking his first steps in mastering a trade, an art or a profession. During the era of the guild or operative Mason, the apprentice was a boy, usually between twelve and fifteen years of age. He had to be sound physically in order to do the required work. He had to be of good habits, that is, obedient, willing to learn, of unquestioned reputation and well recommended by Masons already members of the Craft.

Belief: The questions asked by a skilled Brother are phrased so that Christian, He-brew, Moslem and all others who believe in one Supreme Being may be initiated. Further, they must believe that the spirit never dies; consequently, punishing vice and rewarding good means for all time even after this mortal existence on earth. Believing that a Supreme Being revealed his will to man signifies a belief in a holy book or books, wherein are laid down moral principles and a way of life.

Preparation: Your physical preparation was symbolic of your mental preparation. The candidate should be prepared in both his mind and in his heart. You were like the prodigal son, who had wandered for years and was still not satisfied. You came to our door seeking more than the material things in life, having prepared your mind and heart for better things.

Closed Door: The closed door through which you passed represents the obstructive elements within yourself. With preconceived ideas and convictions you have kept the door closed; thus blocking your own light. Only you can remove this barrier by asking with a prayerful heart, seeking with intellectual curiosity and understanding the truths contained within the symbolism of Masonry.

Three Knocks: The three distinct knocks represent body; soul and spirit not jointed together but separate. In our presentation to you, this is the first example of

symbolism being explained and I hope you enjoy and appreciate it. The knocks that you heard used in the degree symbolize the fact that in the early days of Freemasonry, the Craft was distinctly Christian. Consequently, the explanation of the knocks is as given in The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter 7, Verse 7: "ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened onto you."

Metals: You were deprived of all metals to emphasize a later lesson on charity. The lack of metals also refers to the entrance of all men into this world, penniless and dependent on others. We come into this world with nothing, and we surely leave with nothing.

Darkness: The hood wink symbolizes the darkness and state of ignorance from which you hope to emerge. It is wrong to think that you were blindfolded to prevent you from seeing what was coming in your initiation.

THE PLACE OF OBLIGATIONS IN MASONRY

As an Entered Apprentice Mason, you have already taken the first of three obligations. The word "obligation" comes from the same root word as the word "ligament" which means a cord or tendon by which one thing is tied to another. An obligation, therefore, is a solemn pledge, made on a man's honor, by which he ties himself to a society and to the duties and responsibilities imposed by it. Such an obligation a man cannot disregard, except at the cost of defaming his own honor.

Our Masonic obligations are taken without a time limit; that is, for the rest of our natural lives. A Mason may withdraw (resign) from the Lodge, or he may be suspended or expelled, but that will not release him from his pledge because he took that obligation not as a Lodge member, but as a man. This is the meaning of the phrase "once a Mason, always a Mason."

Perhaps nothing has been as damaging as the misunderstood function of the penalties to be invoked, if the oaths of secrecy in Masonic rituals and ceremonies are violated. To fully understand these obligations and the reason that the penalties attached to them are of a type so different from the obligation itself, we must go back in our history.

The first thing we must look at is the form of the penalties. The form reverts to symbolism and precedes the formation of the first Grand Lodge of England in 1717. At that time, all crimes were understood to be one of either of two classes: heresy or treason. By heresy was meant some violation of the religious principles, morals and ideals of the church. By treason was meant some crime against the political and legal authority of the state. Two sets of punishments, familiar to everyone for three or four centuries, became so identified with the crimes that they became synonymous with them.

The second is the reason for so harsh a symbolism. Historically, most faiths had a very strict view of the relationship between the physical body and the soul.

Various religious faiths of the Medieval Era believed that a desecrated body, or a body that had been mutilated and was thereby incomplete, could not release its soul into the glorious eternal afterlife. There were similar religious beliefs about bodies that had expired as the result of violent executions. There were even specific ways in which bodies were to be interred in order to allow the spirit or soul to be released for salvation. For example, a body buried in unconsecrated ground, such as a tidal flat where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, would never be able to release its soul to everlasting salvation.

You can now understand your own penalties and the fact that they, unlike the rest of the obligations are strictly symbolic. They teach that any crime against Masonry is either heresy, that is, a violation of its teachings; or treason, that is, against the authority of the Lodge or Grand Lodge or its laws and statutes. The penalties are a symbolic representation of the suffering inflicted on the human soul, by deeds done against the human body, for crimes committed by the human mind.

As for punishments literally in force, they are as laid down in our Constitutions and By-Laws: 1) a reprimand, 2) suspension from all rights of Masonry for a definite or indefinite period of time and 3) expulsion. The penalties attached to the obligations express symbolically the general nature of the offense.

THE DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF AN ENTERED APPRENTICE MASON

In the "Old Charges," it is laid down as a fundamental law of the old Craft that a Mason is subject to the civil powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against the peace and good order of society.

At the time the "Old Charges" were written, the people had no voice in their government. They were ruled by kings, and often the dynasty to which the king belonged was challenged in its right to rule by some other dynasty. A rebellion or a revolution was the only method by which a government could be changed. Almost every organization, including churches and colleges, took sides with one dynasty or another. Masonic law took the position that this system of warring parties was harmful to mankind and a danger to the people, and that it ought to be replaced by the principle of good will and peaceful cooperation.

It is now possible for us to define the Masonic concept of citizenship. It means that in all your relations with the community and the country, a Freemason is motivated and controlled by the principles of Fraternalism, which means, that as one of the people, he works for and with the people in the spirit of good will and for the general good of all. You are to apply Fraternalism in detail and in such manner, as meets your best judgment.

A Mason may be an active worker in some political party but as a Mason he will not hate those who differ with him nor will he enter unjust plots against them. He will not set up his own party in opposition to the public good nor will he canvas for

supporters among his own Brethren. Above all, he will not enter into any political discussion while in Lodge.

He may be an active member of a house of worship. As such, and as a Mason, he will not be influenced by prejudice or intolerance nor will he be a party toward making war upon any religious community however much in error he may think them to be. In his social life, he may belong to any circle he wishes, wealthy or poor, and enjoy the companionship of those he chooses, but as a Mason he will not consider his own circle above others, nor despise those who might not be as fortunate as he is in his social relations, for such snobbery is repugnant to the principle of Fraternalism.

Also, it is possible that he may feel a pride of race, may cherish the traditions of his own people, may love its language and prefer its customs. If so, nobody has the right to forbid him, for it is right and honorable in every man to respect his own blood; but as a Mason, he will not despise others of a different race, nor seek at their expense to exalt his own, for there is nothing more un-Masonic than racial prejudice.

Freemasonry leaves it wholly for us to decide what form our citizenship shall take or where we shall find our own place in the great structure of public life.

To sum it up: if a Mason asks, "How am I to apply the teachings of Masonry to citizen-ship?" The answer is this: "It is for you to decide and act accordingly. All that is required of you is that you be guided throughout by the principles of Fraternalism. Let the rights that reason dictates, prompt you."

PROFICIENCY IN THE FIRST DEGREE

As a candidate you will progress through The Mentor Program of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and will be guided by your Mentoring Committee to demonstrate your proficiency in knowledge about Masonry. As a candidate you will show your proficiency by being able demonstrate an understanding of what you have learned during the Entered Apprentice Mason's Degree. Masonic knowledge is gained from the mouth of a Master Mason to the ear of a candidate during the conferral of the degree, application of The Mentor Program, and through one's research and investigation.

Your Mentoring Committee will spend a learning session(s) with you so you will gain proficiency in the first degree. They will ask you for your answers to the list of proficiency questions. Respond to the best of your ability. Ask any questions you have. Your committee will help you gain proficiency in a meaningful and purposeful way.

This session will be conducted in a relaxed manner so you will be able to learn well.

**ENTERED APPRENTICE
MASON'S DEGREE PROFICIENCY**

1. What are the prerequisites for Masonic Membership?
2. How did you petition the Lodge?
3. Explain what you can about how your petition was processed.
4. Describe how you were prepared for the first degree.
5. How is the apron worn in this degree?
6. Relate portions of the obligation you took.
1. What have you sworn to and what is the penalty of the obligations?
7. Give steps, sign, grip and word of an Entered Apprentice Mason.
8. Name some things that happened during the conferral of the first degree.
9. Name the working tools in this degree. What is their symbolic significance?
10. What are "The Three Great Lights of Freemasonry" and describe their position?
11. What do "The Three Lesser Lights" represent?
12. What was the purpose of traveling about the Lodge room?
13. Why is the gavel known as the "Tongue of the Lodge?"
14. How old is Pennsylvania Freemasonry?
15. What are three general head of duties of a Freemason mentioned in the Charge at Initiation?
16. What were the three important questions you were asked when you entered the Lodge?
17. Why were you told to face the East?
18. Is Freemasonry a religion? If not, what is it?
19. What is the significance of the Altar in the Lodge room?