

The Master Mason and The Masonic Traveler Lessons



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

THE MASTER MASON'S DEGREE

You have now been raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. It is indeed a sublime degree, one to which a man might devote his whole life in study without exhausting it. Undoubtedly, you realized this yourself as you participated in its mysteries, so that now you may appreciate a hint as to its meaning. Almost any interpretation of it, especially one as brief as this, must necessarily be a hint only for the sake of stimulating a man to reflect upon it for himself and to study it more thoroughly in the future.

In the first and second degrees, you found yourself surrounded by the symbols of emblems of architecture. In the third degree, you found yourself in a different order of symbolism, one cast in the language of the soul, its life, its tragedy and its triumph. To recognize this fact is the first step.

The second step is to recognize that the ritual of the third degree may, by its nature and by its purpose, have many meanings. It is not intended to be a lesson written complete, finished, closed up, but rather to be a pointing out of paths, a new departure and a series of inspirations awakening all the faculties—like a great drama, picture or symphony to which one may return to find new meanings as an inexhaustible fountain of truth.

There are countless interpretations of this degree, some true, some imaginative. Most essentially, it is a drama of the immortality of the soul, setting forth the truth that, while man withers away and perishes, there is that within him which does not perish.

We say a man is initiated as an Entered Apprentice, passed as a Fellowcraft and raised as a Master Mason. By this, it appears that it is the raising that most Masons have found at the center of this degree. If you already know the significance of Raising, you hold the key and will find your way into all the meanings of the degree.

The life of a man is organized in many groups and experiences; some are incidental, while others of disease, sin, treachery, sorrow and loss of life are more tragic. If we can find the wisdom and the strength to deal with these and if we can triumph over and solve our problems, our characters will be secure and our happiness assured. Evil, in the form of tragedy, is set forth in the drama of the third degree. Here is a good and wise man, a builder, working for others and giving others work of the highest caliber we know—as it is dedicated to God. Through no fault of his, he experiences tragedy from associates and fellows. Here is evil—pure and simple—a complete picture of human tragedy.

The first step the Craft took in meeting this tragedy was to impose the supreme penalty to those who had the will to destroy; they therefore had to be destroyed lest

another tragedy follow. The greatest enemy man has makes war on the good; no merciful consideration can ever be given.

The second step was to discipline and pardon those who acted not out of an evil will, but out of weakness. Forgiveness is possible if a man condemns the evil he has done, since in spite of his weakness he retains his faith in the good.

The third step was to recover from the wreckage caused by the tragedy and save whatever of value it had left undestroyed. Confusion had come upon the Craft but order was restored. Loyal craftsmen took up the burdens left by traitors. It is in the nature of such tragedy that he would suffer for evil and it is one of the prime duties of life that a man must toil to undo the harm wrought by sin and crime otherwise, in time, the world would be destroyed by the evils that are done in it.

But what of the victim of the tragedy? Here is the most profound and difficult lesson of the drama, difficult to understand, difficult to believe if one has not been truly initiated into the realities of the spiritual life. Because the victim was a good man, his goodness rooted in an unwavering faith in God, that which destroyed him in one sense could not destroy him in another. The spirit in him rose above the reach of evil. By virtue of it, he was raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular. If you could raise yourself in spirit, and have faith and forgiveness in similar circumstances, you would emerge a much happier man than ever before.

The secret of such a power is in the third degree symbolized by the word. If the word is lost, a man must search for it. If a man possesses that word, he has the secret of the Masonic art. To rise to the height of spiritual life is to stand on a level above the reach of such tragedy or the powers of evil. To have the spirit rest in God, to have a sincere and unwavering faith in truth and goodness, is the inner secret of a Master Mason.

THE LEGEND OF HIRAM ABIFF

During our ceremony of the third degree, which is so well named the Sublime Degree, you can hardly fail to have been impressed by the tragedy of Hiram Abiff. To understand and appreciate it to the fullest, its profound richness of meaning is something that will remain with you as long as you live. The tragedy of Hiram Abiff is the climax of the Master Mason's Degree, the essence of Freemasonry and the foundation of its philosophy. To understand its symbolism is to understand Masonry.

Hiram Abiff was a widow's son of the Tribe of Naphtali. He was from Tyre, a cunning workman who was sent to King Solomon by his friend King Hiram of Tyre. Abiff is not a surname as our use of it might indicate. In the English Bible, it is translated "my father" and "his father." Taken literally this is confusing, but Masonic scholars are in general agreement that "Abiff" is a Hebrew idiom indicating superiority in his craft and therefore, in a general way, synonymous with "Master."

The first step in understanding the story of Hiram is to realize that the whole of the degree is symbolic. A few facts borrowed from history are used, but they are symbols of what is happening in the life of every man.

Hiram Abiff is the acted spirit of the human soul, yours and mine, any man's. The work he was engaged to supervise is the symbol of the work you and I have in the supervision, organization and direction of our lives from birth to death. The enemies he met are none other than the symbols of those lusts and passions, which in our own hearts, or the hearts of others, make war on our characters and our lives.

His fate is the same fate that befalls every man who becomes a victim of those enemies, to be interrupted in one's work, to be made outcast from the mastership over one's self, and at the end, to be buried under all manner of rubbish, which means defeat, disgrace, misery and scorn. The manner in which he was raised from the dead level to the living perpendicular again is the same manner by which any man, if it happens at all, rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. And the Great Architect, by the power of whose words Hiram Abiff was raised, is the same God in whose arms we ourselves forever lie, and whose mighty help we also need to raise us out of the graves of defeat, or evil, and even death itself. Did you wonder, while taking part in the drama, why you were personally made to participate in it? Why you were not permitted to sit as a spectator? You were made to participate in order to impress upon you that it was your drama, not another's, that was being exemplified. No man can be a mere spectator of that drama because it takes place in his own soul. Likewise, because it was intended that your participation should itself be an experience to prepare you for becoming a Master Mason by teaching you the secret of a Master Mason, which is, that the soul must rise above its own internal enemies if a man is to be a Mason in reality as well as in the name. The reality of being a Master Mason is nothing other than being the Master of one's self.

Did you wonder why it was that the three enemies of Hiram Abiff came from his own circle and not from outside? It is because the enemies to be feared by the soul are al-ways from within and are nothing other than its own ignorance, lusts, passions and sins. As the Volume of the Sacred Law reminds us, it is not that which has the power to kill the body that we must shun, but that which has the power to destroy the spirit.

Did you wonder why it was that after Hiram Abiff was slain, there was so much confusion in the temple? It was because the temple is the symbol of a man's character and, therefore, breaks and falls when the soul, its architect is rendered helpless. Because the craftsmen are symbols of our powers and faculties, they fall into anarchy when not directed and commanded by the will at the center of our being.

The ritual emphasizes that the men of evil within us can be neither trained nor educated out of us. They must die so that the good man in us may live. Viewed in this light, the drama of Hiram Abiff the builder, is a symbol of redemption and redemption is the central theme of this degree.

DUTIES, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

You will not find all of the duties, rights and privileges of a Master Mason anywhere fully or clearly stated and numbered. They are scattered here and there, some in the form of symbols, others of customs and others of laws. Some are stated very clearly and explicitly; others are merely implied.

A Master Mason's first duty is to live by, and act consistently with, his obligation. Unless this is done, he cannot perform his other duties nor should he be able to claim his rights and privileges. With this as a foundation, a number of those duties and rights will be discussed in detail.

It is a Master Mason's duty, legal and moral, to pay his share of the financial costs of the Fraternity promptly and ungrudgingly. The payment of your annual dues becomes due and payable no later than the first of January of each year. If it is not paid by that date, you are in-arrears, which causes "confusion" in the Lodge.

If a Mason is unaffiliated, he has the right to petition for membership at any regular Lodge. He may choose the Lodge to which he makes his petition, but he should seek membership in some Lodge and become a member of the Fraternity.

One may hold his membership where he is happiest, or it is most convenient, provided he is elected to membership in that Lodge. A Master Mason has the right to resign, if he is in good standing—to be "in good standing" means to be current in dues. However, resignation does not release him from the obligation to the degrees and landmarks.

Visiting Lodges in which you do not hold membership is both a right and a privilege for a Master Mason in good standing, though not a duty. It is a right in the sense that he may seek admittance into any regular Lodge; it is a privilege in the sense that his admission into the Lodge is contingent upon his being vouched for or examined, and then permitted to enter by the Worshipful Master.

If you seek to visit a Lodge, you have the privilege of being vouched for if some Brother is present who has sat in an open Lodge with you. This is done so that you are not compelled to undergo an examination every time you seek to visit a Lodge.

Masonic Charity, like visiting, is both a right and a privilege. Every Mason has the right to ask for it upon need without injuring his dignity or endangering his standing. It is a privilege in that neither a Lodge nor a Master Mason is compelled to give Charity. The Lodge is not an insurance society, an organized charity or a death benefit association. Nor is a guarantee given any member that he will receive what he asks. Each Lodge and each Mason is under obligation to heed the call for Charity, but each is free to use judgment whether to extend it.

Every Master Mason, in good standing, has the right of a Masonic burial. By previous arrangement—a simple request of the family—these rites will be tenderly

performed by the Brethren of his Lodge or as a courtesy by Brethren of a nearby Lodge if the deceased Brother is at a location away from his home Lodge.

Among and most important of his rights, though exercised under unhappy conditions, is his right of trial by his peers, under regulated conditions, with complete freedom to present evidence in his behalf. This assures you that no Lodge can degrade you without a fair trial. Neither his Lodge, nor any officer, or any member can remove him through malice or spite. Nor can he be made to suffer the penalties of Masonry out of idle gossip or hearsay. Right of trial, whether as an Entered Apprentice Mason, Fellowcraft Mason or Master Mason, guarantees him all the securities of justice.

If he is brought to trial on charges of un-Masonic conduct (violation of Masonic Law) and found guilty, he has the right of appeal to the Grand Lodge. This right is his guarantee against possible injustice or spiteful prosecution by some private enemy.

However, this does not deny a Grand Master from invoking Masonic discipline in appropriate circumstances.

Being a speculative Master Mason, you have new responsibilities and new burdens thrust upon you. You are now responsible for others beside yourself. Your duty now is not only to strive to become better yourself but also to teach others, both Masons and non-Masons by instructions and example. In the Lodge, you are able to take part in the work of the Lodge of accepting one of those junior offices, which, with time and diligence, may result in the Brethren electing you to serve as Worshipful Master of your Lodge.

Outside the Lodge, it is expected that the Master Mason will seek to improve the morals of men in society. As an Entered Apprentice Mason, he had been instructed to practice charity and to exercise universal benevolence. Now he is not only to do it himself, but he is to inculcate in others the practice of universal benevolence. It is expected that by his own conduct he will demonstrate to the world the highest principles of morality and virtue. It is not sufficient to only observe the letter of the law or to conform to the behavior which society finds acceptable.

He must at all times uphold the fundamental principles of Brotherly Love, Charity and Truth, and practice such time honored virtues as Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. Taking an active part in your community, you must carry these virtues into operation so that your neighbors may know, without your wearing any badges that you are in fact a Master Mason.

Duty, Honor and Gratitude now bind you to your trust. Let no motive therefore, ever make you swerve from your duty, but be true and faithful and imitate the example of that celebrated artist whom you have now represented. Endeavor to convince the world that merit has been your title to our privileges and that our favors have not been undeservedly bestowed upon you.

THE TEACHINGS OF MASONRY

In summary, you have discovered that Masonry's teachings will make a Mason study and learn—it will force him to search out the truth, will compel him to take the initiative, as a mature man should, so that the very act of learning is, in itself, a great educational value. The purpose of secrecy is not to keep the candidate in the dark, but to stimulate him to seek the light. The symbols and emblems do not conceal the teaching, they reveal it; however, they reveal it in such a manner that a man must find it for himself.

Freemasonry has three great tenets or teachings: Brotherly Love, Charity and Truth. Freemasonry is a Fraternity devoted to Brotherhood; however, this Brotherhood must be understood in a special sense. Freemasonry's position is that Brotherhood is supported by a religious basis. We are all brothers because God is the Father of us all. Therefore, religion is one of the foundations of Masonry.

Masonry is dedicated to God, the Great Architect of the Universe. It keeps an Altar at the center of every Lodge room, and the Volume of the Sacred Law lies open upon the Altar. It begins and ends its undertakings with prayer. Its petitioners must believe in a Supreme Being. All this is genuine religion, but not a formal religiousness. The religion of Masonry, like all else in its teachings, is not set forth in creeds or in any other form of words. The Mason must come upon it for himself and put it in such form as will satisfy his own mind.

Along with religion, Masonry teaches the necessity of morality, requiring of its members that they be good men and true, righteous when tried by the square, upright when tried by the plumb, their passions kept in due bounds by the compass, just in dealings with their fellows, patient with the erring, charitable, truthful and honorable.

Concerning the theological values of Faith, Hope and Charity, our Craft acknowledges, "The greatest of these is Charity." Each of us must stand ready to extend a helping hand in relief of an unfortunate Brother or his dependents. Masonry, however, unlike some of the sects and cults, does not advocate a charity carried to the limits of fanaticism. There is such a thing as a cabletow, the extent of ability and opportunity. We are not expected to give relief beyond the point where it would damage ourselves or create hardship for our families.

Another of Masonry's great teachings is equality, symbolized by the level. The lesson of equality you heard just recently, that in all respects all men are the same and equal, but it is evident in many respects that men are very unequal, as in physique, in talent, in gifts, in abilities and in character. It is, rather, the principle that we owe goodwill, charity, tolerance and truthfulness equally to each and all, and that in our Fraternity, all men travel the same road of initiation, take the same obligations, pay the same dues and have the same rights, duties, and privileges.

Consider the lessons taught by the Five Points of Fellowship by using the various parts of the body. The first point is companionship—standing together,

proceeding together, going the second mile, providing spiritual and physical sustenance for one another. The second point symbolizes fellowship with our creator—we must have fellowship with both God and man and, therefore, live on both vertical and horizontal planes. This point must remind us that we should daily pray for our fellowman, all our Brethren and ourselves. The third point is further evidence of fellowship—a man needs privacy and companionship. He must be able to confide his private and secret hopes and desires to a close friend or Brother. He must be able to have intimate conversations with someone with whom he has complete confidence.

The fourth point indicates our backs must be strong enough and willing to support each other's burdens—this calls for loyalty, character and discretion. It further stresses the importance of fellowship. The fifth point is meant to teach us that we should be ever ready to whisper good counsel in the ear of a Brother, tenderly remind him of his faults, and give him due and timely warning of approaching danger.

Masonry, my Brother, according to the general acceptance of the term, is an art, directed to the service and convenience of mankind.

A Freemason's Lodge is a temple of peace, harmony and brotherly love. Nothing is allowed to enter which has the remotest tendency to disturb. A calm inquiry into the beauty of wisdom and virtue and the study of moral geometry, constitute the chief employments within the tyled recesses of the Lodge. The lessons of virtue, which proceed from the East, like rays of brilliant light from the rising sun, illuminate the West and the South, and as the work proceeds are absorbed by the workmen. Thus, while wisdom contrives the plan, strength lends its able support to the moral fabric, and beauty adorns it with curious and cunning workmanship. All accomplished without any compulsory or coercive means but on the principle of friendship and Brotherly love, which guards the precincts of our temple, that nothing may enter or disturb the peaceful sanctity of that holy place.

PROFICIENCY IN THE THIRD DEGREE

Your Mentor Program has now planned the third and final study lesson on Proficiency in the third degree. This meeting will deal with questions related to the Master Mason's Degree. You have shown your proficiency with the first and second degrees. You should be proud of this accomplishment. By this time, you must realize that an active and accomplished Mason will continue to educate himself in vast knowledge related to Masonry.

Having received the Master Mason's Degree, you are beginning to realize you have been raised to the sublime degree. This degree outlines the duties and responsibilities of a Master Mason as he goes on through his life. By his conduct, he will demonstrate to the world the highest principles of morality and virtue. Your committee has exposed you to the nature of Masonry and they have asked you to show proficiency in these degrees. Now these Masons will expect you to join and ranks of the craft and function as a Master Mason.

THE MASTER MASON'S DEGREE PROFICIENCY

1. Describe how you were prepared for the third degree.
2. What is the story of the lecture in the East?
3. Give the hailing sign and words of distress.
4. Explain what took place when you were "Raised."
5. How is the apron worn in this degree?
6. Relate portions of the obligations you took. What have you sworn to and what is the penalty?
7. Give steps, signs, grips and word of a Master Mason.
8. What are the five points of Fellowship?
9. Name the working tool used in the Master Mason's Degree. What is its Symbolic significance?
10. Describe position of "Square and Compasses" upon the volume of Sacred Law.
11. What is required to visit another Lodge?
12. Where and when was the first official "symbolic" Grand Lodge formed?
13. Are any degrees higher than Master Mason?
14. Describe the proper way to take the "Lion's Grip."
15. What is the Ahiman Rezon'?
16. Describe the balloting procedure.
17. How do you leave the Lodge room when the Lodge is in session?
18. What ways can you become involved in your Lodge?

RECOMMENDING A PETITIONER

Recommending a man for the degrees of Freemasonry is a serious matter. The recommenders are staking their own reputation on the character of the petitioner. Hence, it is not wise, nor can a member afford to be so careless as to sign a petition just to accommodate a friend or another member.

Recommenders should have knowledge of certain basic facts and requirements relative to the procuring and processing of a petition. These are available from the Lodge secretary when the blank form of the petition is requested. The petitioner should be informed of the initiation fee and the current annual dues of the Lodge. He should be informed that the Masonic Fraternity is not a beneficial or insurance type society.

The recommenders must make certain that the petitioner comes of good report and is mentally and morally qualified for the degrees of Freemasonry. They should assure themselves that the petitioner comes of his own free will and accord and that he can financially afford this step without injury to himself or his family. He must reside in this Jurisdiction (Pennsylvania) for one year before making application to be made a Mason.

Both recommenders should be in attendance at Lodge when the petition is presented and when the petitioner is balloted upon. It is an appropriate responsibility of the recommenders to accompany their candidate when he appears for each degree and introduce him to the various Brethren. It is particularly proper that the recommenders stay with the candidate until the guide takes him for preparation.

The recommenders should feel free to advise the candidate, after he has been elected, along the lines of proper dress and cleanliness, so as to avoid any embarrassment when he is notified to appear at the Lodge meeting. He should also be informed by his recommenders, before receiving his degrees, that every word spoken and every phase of the degree has a definite significance, which will become clearer to him as he progresses.

He should be assured that there will be no levity, by either word or act, during the conferring of the degrees.

When recommenders consider it a sincere Masonic duty to properly process a petitioner and then personally see their candidate through the degrees, both a wholesome effect and a lasting impression will result in the life of any newly made Mason. You have then acquired another Brother to add to your equity in Freemasonry and strengthened the Masonic fraternity as a whole.

INQUIRY OF A PETITIONER FOR FREEMASONRY

Of all the committees appointed by the Worshipful Master of a Lodge, the most important to the Lodge in particular and to Freemasonry in general, is the Committee of Inquiry. The Committee of Inquiry is—the Masonic sentry—appointed to conduct a full and searching inquiry on a petitioner. In their investigation, they must make sure that any man who is not fitted for the teachings of Freemasonry shall be unable to gain admittance to the Fraternity.

The duties and responsibilities of the Committee of Inquiry are many. However, if the recommenders have fulfilled their responsibilities, the task confronting the committee can be somewhat reduced. Although the inquiry of a petitioner is a most important matter, the qualifications of the members on that committee are equally important and perhaps more so. As a member of the Committee of Inquiry, you are answerable only to your own conscience. Your Lodge in particular, and Freemasonry in general, are dependent upon your efforts and judgment. You are screening a person who can make the structure of Freemasonry strong or weak.

As soon as the Worshipful Master appoints the Committee of Inquiry, the chairman should assemble his committee—without delay—to afford as much time as necessary for investigation. An inquiry of a petitioner should never be considered as routine but as a serious matter that should command every effort and concern of all committee members. The Committee of Inquiry is, in a sense, the eyes and ears of the Lodge and Freemasonry as a whole. The decision by the Brethren at the ballot box is usually influenced by the report of this committee.

Each member of the Committee of Inquiry should be thorough, but unbiased. The committee should work independently and collectively in carrying out the inquiry of the petitioner. The inquiry should be pursued in every possible way.

It is important that whenever possible, each member of the committee visit and meet the petitioner where he resides. Explain to the petitioner that a full and searching inquiry is normal procedure in the processing of a petitioner for the degrees of Freemasonry.

While keeping the visit informal, maintain a concern that reflects the seriousness of your mission. Encourage the petitioner to ask questions. If a petitioner is married, suggest that his wife join the interview and ascertain whether she concurs with the step her husband is taking. During this interview, the petitioner's motive to join Freemasonry should be determined. Why did he petition your Lodge? What are his ideas of the character of Freemasonry? Has he any Masonic relatives? What does he expect to obtain from his membership in Freemasonry? What does he expect to give as a member of Freemasonry? Of what other organizations is he a member?

While an inquiry should be done with dispatch, it should not be hurried. If additional time is required to conduct a proper investigation, the Worshipful Master should always approve such requests from the Committee of Inquiry.

Before signing your name to a favorable report, be certain that you would be willing to welcome the petitioner into your home and your Lodge, and that you would be proud to greet him as a Brother. Never sign a report in the presence of a petitioner.

The members of the Committee of Inquiry, in a sense, have been honored by the Worshipful Master by being entrusted with the character and reputation of the Lodge. This honor imposes a tremendous responsibility. If you make your investigation a perfunctory affair, you may be doing a disservice to yourself, your Lodge and even the petitioner. However, if you attend to the full duty assigned to you, you will distinguish yourself each time you serve, as the guardian of those sacred and cherished portals of Freemasonry.

THE MASONIC TRAVELLER

