

Master Mason Degree

Congratulations! You have been raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. There are several duties, rights, and privileges to which you are now entitled.

As a Master Mason you may: Vote, hold office, serve on committees, demit from your Lodge, petition for dual and plural membership, and petition for degrees in the Scottish or York Rites, and petition for membership in the Shrine.

As a Master Mason your first duty is to live and act consistently with your obligation. Unless this is done, you cannot perform your other duties nor should you be able to claim your rights and privileges.

The constant responsibility of a Master Mason is "To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied." Leading an upright life is the best means of carrying through our individual responsibilities to our Lodge, and our Craft. The conduct of each Master Mason is strictly his own responsibility. He should choose the course that will bring credit to himself and honor to the Fraternity.

There is no minimum attendance requirement as Ancient Lodges had; nor is there a penalty for not attending as there once was 250 years ago. However, every Master Mason has a moral obligation to be loyal to the Lodge, which gave him Masonic Light and all the benefits that come with it. This should be your inducement to attend Lodge as often as possible and to join in the fellowship, which makes up Freemasonry.

Your deportment while the Lodge is open is governed by good taste. You should not engage in private conversations; nor through any other action, disrupt the business of the Lodge, however, discussions of the Lodge are always a healthy sign and promote the interest of the Lodge, if properly conducted. If you wish to speak in Lodge, rise to your feet, and after being recognized address the Worshipful Master, give the sign of the degree the Lodge is open on, make your remarks and be seated. You should observe the rules of Propriety and refrain from mentioning personalities or disturbing the peace and harmony of the Lodge. Religion, politics, and any subject, which might disrupt the peace and harmony of the Lodge, should not be discussed in a Masonic setting.

Only those who are members of a Lodge can vote. No member present can be excused from voting on any question before the Lodge. No member is permitted to retire from the Lodge to avoid casting his ballot. When voting on a petition by using the Ballot Box, the white balls are the affirmative, or favorable ballot, while the black cubes, or ball, is a negative vote on the question. As the ballot is spread, examine your own motives, and hope that the ballot you are about to cast will do justice to the candidate, to Freemasonry, and yourself. Only by doing so will we be able to continue building membership of worthy Brothers. Masonic Law guarantees the right to secrecy of the ballot, and custom allows each member to have perfect freedom in balloting on petitioners. No Brother should disclose how he voted, and no Brother shall inquire into how another Brother voted on a particular candidate.

There are three methods of balloting in a Masonic Lodge, they are: the Written Ballot, used in election of officers; the Ballot Box, used in voting on petitions; and the usual sign of a Master Mason, which is used for all other types of voting, and when using the ancient sign either hand may be used.

There are two types of financial responsibility a Mason has to his Lodge. The first type has to do with paying the dues. By paying his dues a Brother carries his share of the expenses incurred by the Lodge. The other type is voluntary, and in this method he must determine the extent of his participation, measuring needs versus his ability to contribute.

Not being able to pay dues can be handled without embarrassment. No Lodge desires to suspend a Brother who is unable to make payment of his dues because of his inability to pay. A distressed Brother should inform the Master or Secretary of his situation. One of these officers will take care of the situation; no record will be shown on the books, and no debt is accumulated. This is not Masonic Charity, but rather Brotherly Love. It is felt that a Brother who finds himself unable to pay his dues has an obligation to make his situation known to the Master or the Secretary.

Symbolism of the Degree

The Sublime degree of a Master Mason is truly a “Sublime” degree, one that a Mason may study for years without exhausting its lessons. Any interpretation must necessarily be only a hint, yet a hint may stimulate you to reflect upon it for yourself and to study it more thoroughly in the future. In the First and Second Degrees the symbols and emblems of architecture surrounded you. In the Third Degree you found a different type of symbolism; one that speaks the language of the soul, its life, its tragedy, and its triumph. To recognize this is the first step in interpretation. The second step is to recognize that the ritual of the Third Degree has many meanings. It is not intended to be as lesson finished and closed, but rather lessons pointing out paths of travel, a new journey, a series of inspirations, an awakening of all the faculties, like a great drama, picture, or symphony to which one may always return and find new meanings.

One of the lessons of this degree is this truth: That though a man withers away and perishes, there is always a part of him, which never dies.

When the Fellow Craft is received into a Lodge of Master Masons for his Third Degree he is reminded that all the lessons of Freemasonry must be implanted into the heart if they are to serve a useful purpose and become a part of you. The lessons of Masonry should be something we practice in our lives on a daily basis.

The obligation is the center of the degree. When you assumed the obligation a bond was created between yourself and the other Brothers of the Lodge who have already made this pledge, thus creating a duty common to all. You must learn the obligation, not only its words, but more especially the underlying meanings if you are to abide by it.

Did the drama that you took part in actually take place in history? No, probably not. Does that make it any less meaningful or important? Absolutely not. The symbolic method of teaching is part of the beauty of our Gentle Craft. Learning what Masonry has to teach is much easier, more enjoyable, and a more personal experience when taught in this format. The name “Abif” means “his Father” or “my Father,” and the name of the central character in the legend is translated to be “Hiram, my Father.”

The symbolism of King Solomon’s Temple as it relates to Freemasons is founded on the idea that man himself is a living Temple where God Resides. Freemasonry encourages each of its members to build a statelier mansion within themselves. Our individual

temples are mental, physical, and spiritual, and our work on these temples should not be inferior.

There is symbolism in the character of the three ruffians as well, in that every Master Mason is reminded that rewards must be earned rather than obtained by violence or deceit. The ruffians also symbolize the “passions,” which we want to subdue, but there is still further symbolism.

When a man is enslaved one of the first rights he is denied is the right of free speech, and the blow of the 24-inch gauge symbolizes that across the throat. A man enslaved is not allowed to have unapproved affections, and this is symbolized by the blow across the breast by the square. People who wish to enslave someone will always try to destroy their mind, or take away freedom of choice, and the blow to the forehead with the Setting Maul symbolizes this.

Further, the enemies Hiram Abif faced were symbolic of Greed, Jealousy, and selfishness. These are the same kind of enemies each of us faces almost on a daily basis, and as Hiram was not victorious in his legend, we must do our best to fight these temptations and passions in every way we can.

The people of Israel used to plant a sprig of acacia at the head of a grave for two reasons: to mark the location of the grave, and to show their belief in the immortality of the soul. Because of its evergreen nature they believed it to be an emblem of immortality and innocence.

At the conclusion of the drama the New Master Mason was given the true grip of a Master Mason, and the Master’s Word. The word can only be given or received in the manner in which you received it. The purpose of this is to teach us: to aid a Brother Master Mason, his Widow and Orphans within reason; to remember a Brother in all our prayers to the Great Architect of the Universe; to keep a solemn trust imparted to us by a Brother Master Mason; to ever be swift to serve, help, aid, and assist a Brother Master Mason; to support a Brother Master Mason’s character, and never to revile his character behind his back.

The legend of Hiram Abif teaches all Master Masons that to knowingly betray a trust is a fate much worse than death. It reminds us that we must each day; steadfastly adhere to the principles of honor, honesty, and integrity.