

ROYAL MASTER

This degree is held in the Council Chamber, and represents the private apartment of King Solomon, in which he is said to have met for consultation with his two colleagues during the construction of the Temple. Its symbolic colors are black and red -- the former being significant of grief and the latter of martyrdom -- and both referring to the chief builder of the Temple. The period of time referred to in the first and second sections of the degree is different. In the first section, Hiram Abif is active in the construction of the Temple. In the second section, he is missing and the Temple is very near completion. This is evident by the presence of the Ark of the Covenant and the investiture of Adoniram with the responsibility of the Master Builder. His search is not complete as he is instructed that in due time, he will receive his reward, and is returned to the Clay Grounds to continue his labors. The Beautiful Piece of Work (brought up by Adoniram), represents a pure and complete life, offered to the Supreme Architect of the Universe, followed by an admonition to remain content and in due time we shall receive our reward. The reward will come after our life has been completed, and is further symbolized by our entry into the 9th Arch, after completing all the symbolic instructions of Ancient Craft Masonry. The 9th Arch is usually considered the symbolic Gate of Death.

It is now high twelve, an appropriate time to cease our labors and commune with the Supreme Architect of the Universe. The number twelve is considered a sacred number in Mythology. It is explained by some as being the product of multiplying the three-sided triangle by the four-sided square. The triangle represents the three equal attributes of Deity; His Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence (Universal wisdom, peace, and power). Low twelve consists of the same numbers, but represents death, or the midnight of life. Hiram Abif passes from the spiritual trestleboard to the temporal trestleboard, where he is met again by the eager candidate, who is still pursuing his search for Divine Truth. Then he delivers the commentary on death, moving slowly around the room, going in the same manner and direction as the sun. He explains that all men are equal in the eyes of God, from the youngest Entered Apprentice, to King Solomon.

ROYAL MASTER (Second Section)

We approach the Altar by steps; symbolizing our reverence toward Deity. We alternate steps as we pass through the degrees, up to, and including the Royal Master degree. It is believed this has an allusion to the path of the Sun crossing the Northern and Southern Hemisphere, between two signs of the zodiac, Capricorn and Cancer, in a zigzag motion. When the two hemispheres are laid out end-to-end, with two parallel lines on the sides, it forms an oblong square or the shape of a Lodge.

Alpha is the first and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet; equivalent to the beginning and the end of anything. Alpha and Omega are adapted as a symbol of Deity. The equilateral triangle represents our three Grand Masters at this point in the ritual. The broken triangle represents the allegory of life. Some must go, and other must remain and carry on. The number seven was sacred in Hebrew Scriptures and ceremonies. The seventh day was the Sabbath day; Solomon was seven years in the building of the Temple; there are usually seven sabbatical years; seven days usually constituted the feast periods; and the number seven represents completeness.

In the Temple, twelve loaves of shewbread were always kept upon a table in the sanctuary (representing the twelve tribes of Israel). It was a symbol of the bread of eternal life by which we are brought into the presence of God. The principal article of furniture in the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem was the Ark of the Covenant. The Cherubim surmounted it. Between the wings of these fabled characters was the Shekinah, or perpetual cloud, from which the Bathkol issued when, consulted by the High Priest.

The Altar of Incense was made of wood and overlaid with gold, as was most of the furniture of the Temple. On the four corners were horns, in shapes like those of ram's horns. A censer was placed on the top center of the Golden Altar, and in it sweet incense was burned every morning. On the table of Holy Vessels were pots, shovels, basins, flesh-hooks, and fire pans, as well as all the other vessels or utensils necessary to the services of the Altar. These were made of gold and brass.

Arranged & Edited from:

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