

## **SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER**

The third and last degree in the Cryptic Rite is the Super Excellent Master Degree. The Degree is not strictly "Cryptic", in that the symbolism of the degree does not deal with the Vault or Crypt, but rather with the destruction of the first Temple. It tells the history of the siege of Jerusalem by the troops of Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylon) who was motivated into action by Zedekiah (the last King of Judah). This Degree in some jurisdictions is optional and is only conferred once a year on large classes. After the candidate assumes the obligation, he is instructed in the signs, grips, and words, as well as in the symbolism of the symbols of this degree: The Square, Circle, and Equilateral Triangle.

The Degree of Super Excellent Master is intended to inculcate a sincere devotion to the GREAT I AM which is, in other words, a symbolical expression for a reverence of Truth and an abhorrence of falsehood. It also impresses on us the necessity of a faithful fulfillment of our several vows, and the fearless discharge of our respective duties. It teaches us, by its legends and its ceremonies, that the violation of our solemn vows, as in the instance of the last king of Judah, will cause us to forfeit the respect and friendship of our companions. Let us, then, labor diligently and faithfully in the cause of TRUTH. So, at the time of the third watch, when our work is finished, we may be greeted as Super-Excellent Masters. So that we will be released from our captivity in the flesh, to return over the rugged way of the valley of the shadow of death to our abiding-place in the heavens, there to adore the Most High throughout eternity.

The Masonic legend of the degree of Super-Excellent Master refers to circumstances, which occurred on the last day of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Chaldean army. He had been sent by Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the city and the Temple, as a just punishment of the Jewish King Zedekiah, for his faithlessness and rebellion. It occupies that point of time, which is embraced in the Holy Royal Arch Degree, which represents the destruction of the temple, and the carrying of the Jews in captivity to Babylon. It is, in fact, an extension of that part of the Royal Arch degree.

Zedekiah the King of Judah has been adopted very appropriately as the symbol of treachery. Zedekiah, to his later grief, learns the answer to a riddle he proposes to Jeremiah, and immediately afterwards the king and his court are forced to flee before the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In the final section, the captured Zedekiah is brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, and receives a severe judgement for his past infidelities, misdeeds, and insensitivity. This degree is one of the most dramatic in Freemasonry. It strikingly and forcefully teaches the great lesson of loyalty to friends and fidelity to promises and vows.

Prepared & Edited from:

[A Manual of the Council](#) by Albert G. Mackey