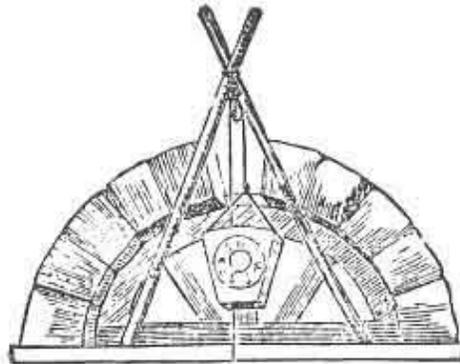




Anthony T. Stafford Chapter # 10 Holy Royal Arch Masons

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER, OR SIXTH DEGREE

No Mason can receive the Degree of Most Excellent Master until after he has become a Past Master, and presided in a Lodge, or, in other words, been inducted into the Oriental Chair of King Solomon.



**Property of Anthony T. Stafford Chapter # 10
Holy Royal Arch Masons PHA**

Delray Beach, FL

REVISIONS

Revised 2010

EHP Michael Campbell, (10)
EHP William Wims, (10)
EHP Terry Alexander, (10)

Revised 2014

ADDEHP William Wims, (10)

Revised 2020

EHP W. Matthew Stevenson, (10)
ES George Lockhart, (10)

OPENING

RWM (r) Bro. Marshal, (*Marshal rises, faces East, and gives sign of Fidelity*) Organize a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

MAR Officers take your respective stations and places, Brethren be clothed. (*Done*) Right Worshipful Master, a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is duly organized.

RWM (r) Bro. Senior Warden, (*Senior Warden rises and gives sign of Fidelity*), are all present Most Excellent Masters?

SW I will ascertain and report. Bro. Senior Deacon, ascertain if all present on the North side of the Lodge are Most Excellent Masters. Bro. Junior Deacon, ascertain if all present on the South side of the Lodge are Most Excellent Masters. (*The two officers proceed to take up the pass beginning at the East and going down to the West*)

RWM rrr (*The two officers meet West of the Altar and go to the Senior Warden station*)

JD Bro. Senior Warden, all present on the South side of the Lodge are Most Excellent Masters.

SD Bro. Senior Warden, all present on the north side of the Lodge are Most Excellent Masters. (*Deacons return to their stations*)

SW Right Worshipful Master, all present are Most Excellent Masters.

RWM See that the brethren are in order as Most Excellent Masters.

SW Brethren, be in order as Most Excellent Masters. (*Brethren will rise and give duegard of Most Excellent Master*).

SW Right Worshipful Master, the brethren are in order as Most Excellent Masters.

RWM (r) Bro. Junior Deacon, when a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is about to be opened what becomes your first duty?

JD To see that the Lodge is duly tiled.

RWM Attend lo that duty and inform the Tiler that I am about to open a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters. Direct him to take due notice thereof and tile accordingly.

JD (*Goes to outer door*) (r) Tiler (*Answers*) (r)

JD (*Opens door*) Bro. Tiler, I am directed to inform you that the Right Worshipful Master is about to open a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, take due notice thereof and tile accordingly. (*Closes door*) rrr-rrr

Tiler (*Answers*) rrr-rrr

JD (*Returns to station*) Right Worshipful Master, the Lodge is duly tiled.

RWM How is the Lodge tiled?

JD By a brother without, armed with the proper implements of his office.

RWM His duty there?

JD To observe the approach of cowans and eavesdroppers, and to see that none pass or repass except such as are duly qualified and having permission from the Right Worshipful Master. (*Takes Seat*)

RWM (r) Bro. Senior Warden, are you a Most Excellent Master?

SW (*Rises, gives sign of Fidelity*) I am, try me.

RWM How will you be tried?

SW By the Keystone.

RWM Why by the Keystone?

SW Because It completed King Solomon Temple, and on the ceremonies of the dedication and the placing of the keystone, this degree is founded.

RWM Where were you made a Most Excellent Master?

SW In a legally constituted and duly opened Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

RWM How many compose Lodge of Most Excellent Masters?

SW Two or more.

RWM When composed of only two, who are they?

SW The Right Worshipful Master and Senior Warden.

RWM Why is there no Junior Warden?

SW Because just before the completion of King Solomon's Temple our Grand Master Hiram Abiff was slain, as we have had an account in the preceding degrees. As no one had been appointed to fill his place, his station was vacant and his light extinguished.

RWM The Senior Warden's Station?

SW In the West.

RWM Why in the West, Bro. Senior Warden?

SW As the Sun is in the West at the close of day, so stands the Senior Warden in the West to assist the Right Worshipful Master in opening and closing the Lodge; pay the craft their wages if any be due, that none may go away dissatisfied, harmony being the support of all institutions, especially this of ours.

RWM The Right Worshipful Master's Station?

SW In the East.

RWM Why in the East?

SW As the Sun rises in the East to open and govern the day, so rises (*RWM rrr. Lodge rises*) the Right Worshipful Master, in the East to open and govern the Lodge, set the craft at work, giving them proper instructions for their labors.

RWM Bro. Marshal, see that the brethren are in due form for our devotions.

Marshal Brethren assemble around the Altar forming a circle. (*The brethren assemble around the Altar in a circle, leaving an opening at the East and West of the Altar for the Right Worshipful Master and the Senior Warden respectfully*)

Marshal Kneel on your right knee, (done) form a chain with the right hand over the left (*done*); Right Worshipful Master the brethren are in due form for our devotions and await your presence. (*Takes his place in the circle. Right Worshipful Master and Senior Warden descend and fill in spaces left open at the East and West sides of the Altar and complete the chain.*)

PRAYER

CHAP Father of Mercies, will thou at this hour put to silence, the ignorance of foolish men, and grant that all malice, and hypocrisy and envy and evil speaking be removed far from us, that we may taste that the Lord is gracious; help us to be as living stones in that spiritual house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Amen. Response Amen, So Mote It Be.

RWM Brethren, Balance two times three, taking time from the East. (*Brethren Balance by raising their arms up and down, six times, keeping the chain intact*).

RWM Rise (*All rise to their feet breaking the chain; Right Worshipful Master and Senior Warden return to their stations, Brethren remain standing*)

RWM Bro. Senior Warden, it is my order that a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters be now opened for work and instructions. This you will communicate to the brethren present that having due notice thereof that they may govern themselves accordingly.

SW Brethren, it is the order of the Right Worshipful Master that a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters be now opened for work and instructions, take due notice thereof and govern yourselves accordingly.

RWM Bro. Senior Deacon, Attend to the Altar. (*Senior Deacon goes to Altar and opens Bible at II Chronicles, VI Chapter; Gives due guard and sign and returns to station*)

RWM Brethren, observe the East, and attend the giving of the signs. (*Signs are given from Entered Apprentice through the Most Excellent Master*). **RWM** rrr-rrr.

SW rrr-rrr.

RWM (*The Right Worshipful Master or CHAP read or recites the following Charge*):

CHARGE

The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessings from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvations. This is the generation of them that seek him that seek thy face. O Jacob. Selah. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting door; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting door, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

RWM I now declare this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters erected to God and dedicated to the memory of King Solomon duly opened. Bro. Junior Deacon inform the Tiler. (*Junior Deacon goes to outer door*) rrr-rrr.

Tiler (*Answers*) rrr-rrr.

JD (*Opens door*) Bro. Tiler the Lodge is duly opened. (*Closes door*) rrr-rrr.

Tiler (*Answers*) rrr-rrr.

JD (*Returns to station*) Right Worshipful Master, the Tiler is informed.

RWM (r) Bro. Marshal, (*Marshal rises, gives sign of Fidelity*) See that the candidates are prepared and presented.

Marshal (*Goes to Junior Deacon Place*). Bro. Junior Deacon, prepare and present the candidate. (*Takes seat of Junior Deacon*).

JD (*Rises, goes to Altar, gives duegard and sign, then proceeds to preparation room and prepares*

candidate with apron, a cable-tow six times around the body, breast bare, and hoodwinked).

JD (*When ready*) rrr-rrr.

SD (*Rising and giving duegard and sign*) Right Worshipful Master, there is an alarm at the inner door.

RWM Attend to the alarm.

SD (*Goes to inner door*) rrr-rrr (*Opens door*) Who comes here?

JD Brother,who have been duly initiated, passed, and raised to the sublimed degree of a Master Mason, advanced to the Honorary degree of a Mark Master Mason, presided as Master in the Chair, and now seeks further promotion in Masonry by being received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master.

SD My brethren is this an act of your own free will and accord?

CAND It is.

SD Bro. Junior Deacon, are they worthy and well qualified?

JD They are.

SD Duly and truly prepared?

JD They are.

SD Have they made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree?

JD They have.

SD By what further right or benefit do they expect to obtain this important privilege?

JD By benefit of the Pass.

SD Advance and give it.

JD (*Advances and whispers the Pass to Senior Deacon*)

SD The Pass is right. Let them wait until the Right Worshipful Master is Informed of their request and his answer returned. (*Senior Deacon close door and goes to West of Altar, gives due guard and sign*)

SD Right Worshipful Master, there is without brother who has been duly initiated passed, and raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason, advanced to the Honorary degree of Mark Master, Mason, presided as Master in the Chair, and now seeks further promotion in Masonry by being received and acknowledged "a Most Excellent Master.

RWM Is this an act of their own free will and accord?

SD It is.

RWM Are they worthy and well qualified?

SD They are.

RWM Duly and truly prepared?

SD They are.

RWM Have they made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree?

SD They have.

RWM By what further right or benefit do they expect to obtain this important privilege?

SD By benefit of the pass.

RWM Give it.

SD (*Gives pass aloud*)

RWM The pass is right, let them enter this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, and be received in due and ancient form.

SD (*Goes to inner door, opens door*) It is the order of the Right Worshipful Master that the brethren enter this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters and be received in due and ancient form. (*Marshal takes place at inner door, Senior Deacon enter with candidates, and is conducted by Marshal to West of Altar, and faces East; Junior Deacon enters last and goes to his station*).

SD (*Placing small end of Keystone against breast of each candidate*) I receive you into this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters upon the Keystone (*then walks around*

behind candidates and halts in front of candidates, continues) because at the completion and dedication of the Temple, the Stone which the builders had rejected became the Headstone of the corner.

Marshal Right face, Forward March (*Marches to north and around Lodge room*)

SW (r) (*As they pass the West*)

RWM (r) (*As they pass the East and begins to recite*): "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." (*The reciting of each verse is so timed that it is completed when a complete circuit of the room has been made*).

SW r-r (*As they pass the West*)

RWM r-r (*As they pass the East and begins o recite*): "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, Oh Jerusalem," "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together"

SW r-r-r (*As they pass the West*)

RWM r-r-r (*As they pass the east and begins to recite*): "Wither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

SW r-r-r-r (*as they pass the West*)

RWM r-r-r-r (*As they pass the East and begins to recite*): "For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David."

SW r-r-r-r-r (*As they pass the West*)

RWM r-r-r-r-r (*As they pass the East, and begins to recite*): "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy gates."

SW r-r-r-r-r-r (*As they pass the West*).

RWM r-r-r-r-r-r (*As the pass the East and begins to recite*): "For my brethren and companion's sake, I will say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."

Marshal (*At the South*) Halt. Left face.

SD r-r-r-r-r-r (*No response as station being vacant*).

SW (*After slight silence*) Alas, poor Hiram! Unexpectedly in the midst of life, duty, and usefulness he was overtaken by death. Suddenly his sun of life went down at noon and his station is vacant. Let us remember his virtue, and imitate his worthy example. May we be reminded of the shortness of life an "the uncertainty of its **continuance, remembering that soon when our** brethren assemble to labor, our stations will also be vacant forever, and may we all at last fill our appropriate stations in heaven.

MAR Right face, Forward March (*Marches to Senior Warden's station in West*) Halt. Left face.

SD rrr-rrr.

SW (r) (Rises) Who comes here?

SD Brother,who has been duly initiated passed, and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the Honorary degree of Mark Master Mason presided as Master in the Chair, and now seeks further promotion in Masonry by being received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master.

SW Brother,is this an act of your own free will and accord?

CAND (*Responding*) It is.

SW Brother Senior Deacon, is he worthy and well qualified?

SD He is.

SW Duly and truly prepared?

SD He is.

SW Has he made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree?

SD He has.

SW By what further right or benefit does he expect to obtain this important privilege?

SD By benefit of the pass.

SW Advance and give it.

SD (*Advances and give pass*)

SW The pass is right. Conduct the brother to the Right Worshipful Master in the East for his examination.

MAR Right face. Forward March (*Marches to Right Worshipful Master station in the East*). Halt. Left face.

SD rrr-rrr

RWM (r) Who comes here?

SD Brother,who has been duly initiated, passed, and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the Honorary degree of Mark Master Mason, presided as Master in the Chair, and now seeks further promotion in Masonry being received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master.

RWM Brother,is this an act of our own free will and accord?

CAND (*Responding*) It is.

RWM Brother Senior Deacon, is he worthy and qualified? SD He is.

RWM Duly and truly prepared?

SD He is.

RWM Has he made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree?

SD He has.

RWM By what further right or benefit does he expect to obtain this important privilege?

SD By benefit of the pass.

RWM Advance and give it.

SD Advance and give it.

RWM The pass is right. Reconduct the brother to the Senior Warden in the West, who will teach, him to advance to the altar for the sixth time In Masonry, in due and ancient form.

MAR Right face. Forward March (*Leads candidate until he reaches his station and then takes his seat. Senior Deacon continues to conduct candidate to Senior Warden station in West*).

SD (*At the West*) Halt. Right face. Brother Senior Warden It is the order of the Right Worshipful Master that you teach the brother how to advance to the altar for the sixth time in Masonry in due and ancient form.

SW Cause the brother to face the East.

SD (*To candidate*) About face.

SW (*Takes position at Northwest corner of altar facing West*) My brother, advance as Entered Apprentice, give dueguard and sign; as Fellowcraft, give dueguard and sign; as Master Mason, give dueguard and sign; as Mark Master Mason, give dueguard and sign, as Past Master, give dueguard and sign; bring heels together.

SW (*Taking candidate by right arm*) I will now conduct you to the altar where you are about to be made a Most Excellent Master in due and ancient form, which is by kneeling on both knees, both hands resting on the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses. Right Worshipful Master, the brother Is In due form. (*Senior Warden returns to his station*)

RWM My brother, for the sixth time, you are again kneeling before the sacred altar of Free Masonry and are in due form to take upon yourself the solemn obligation of Most Excellent Master. I am permitted to give you the same assurance that you have received in the preceding degree that there is nothing therein contained that will conflict with your moral, social, or civil duties, be they what they may. With this assurance on my part, are you willing to take the obligation?

CAND (*Responding*) I am.

RWM rrr Brethren form a circle about the Altar. (*Right Worshipful Master descends to altar*).

RWM Say I - pronounce your name in full - and repeat after me.

Of my own free will and accord in presence of Almighty God and this Right Worshipful Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, erected to God and dedicated to the memory of King Solomon, do hereby and hereon solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, that I will not reveal the secrets of this degree to a brother of a preceding degree, nor to any person in the world, except it be within a legally constituted and duly opened Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, or to a brother of this degree whom I shall have found to be such by due trial, strict examination or lawful Masonic Information.

I further promise and swear that I will answer and obey all due signs and summons sent to and received by me from a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, or given me by a brother of this degree, if within the length of my cable-tow.

I further promise and swear that I will help, aid and assist all worthy distressed Most Excellent Masters, their wives, widows and orphans, wherever I might find them so far as their necessities may require and my ability permit, without injury to myself or those having prior claims upon me,

I furthermore promise and swear that I will dispense true Masonic light and knowledge to my lesser informed brethren to the best of my ability.

I furthermore promise and swear that I will not derogate from the character that I am about to assume, it being that of a Most Excellent Master. All this, I do solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, without any hesitation, equivocation, or mental reservation, binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my breast torn open, my vitals taken thence and thrown on a dunghill to rot, should I ever knowingly or willfully violate this my solemn obligation of Most Excellent Master. So help me God and make me steadfast to keep and perform the same.

RWM In token of your sincerity, kiss the Holy Bible on which your hands rest. Brother Senior Deacon, remove the cable-tow and hoodwink. (*The candidate kisses the Holy Bible and Senior Deacon removes hoodwink and cable-tow*).

RWM (*Returns to East*) (r) This is the duegard of Most Excellent Master (*Gives duegard*) and this the sign (*Gives sign*) They allude to the penalty of the obligation that you would have your breast torn open, your vitals taken thence and thrown on a dunghill to rot should you violate your solemn obligation of Most Excellent Master. This duegard (*Gives duegard*) and sign (*Gives sign*) should always be given as a salutation to the Right Worshipful Master on entering or retiring from a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

RWM (*Descending to the altar*) I now extend my right hand in token of friendship and brotherly love and will put you in possession of the grip and word of this degree.

RWM (*Gives grip to candidate*) This is the grip of Most Excellent Master. Its name is R.....(*Right Worshipful Master lets go of candidate's hand*) At the completion of the Temple, when King Solomon entered, he was so well pleased with the Master Builder that he took him by the right hand (*Gives grip to candidate*) and exclaimed "Hail R.....," which signifies Good Master, or Most Excellent Master.

It is otherwise called the cover grip, for as this grip cover signs of preceding degrees, so should we as Most Excellent Masters, considering that man in his best estate is subject to frailties and errors endeavor to cover his faults and imperfections with the broad mantle of charity and brotherly love.

RWM Rise. (*Lifts candidate by grip*) The pass given at the door, or to one of the officers at the opening of a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is G....., the word of a Past Master.

RWM (*Returns to East*) (*Senior Deacon conducts candidate to North side of Lodge, facing South*).

RWM Brother Senior Warden, What is the hour?

SW The third hour of the sixth day of the week.

RWM This is the day and hour set apart for celebrating the Cap-stone, and seating of the Ark of the Covenant. Brother Senior Deacon, reconduct the brother to the place from which he came and in due time return with him for the purpose of participating in the ceremonies of the completion and dedication of the Temple. (*Senior Deacon conducts candidate to West of altar, where they salute and retire to preparation room*).

SECTION II

(*Room is prepared. Officers change to the following rank; Right Worshipful Master to King Solomon; Senior Warden to Hiram, King of Tyre; the Masters of the Vails and Scribe to Overseers, with the Scribe as Master Overseer. The CHAP having previously been appointed.*)

RWM Brother Marshal, see that the brethren form in procession.

MAR Craftsmen, form in procession in two files on the North side of the Lodge, facing the East. (*The procession is formed with King Solomon on the right, and Hiram, King of Tyre, on the left, at head of procession followed by the brethren, then the Overseers with Cap-stone and gavel on carrier at rear. When procession is ready, Marshal goes to door of Preparation room and conducts Senior Deacon and candidate without hoodwink, to West of altar, facing East; then goes to head of procession*).

MAR *(Leading procession)* Forward March. *(Procession marches around room singing the following Ode, or other appropriate song):*

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER'S SONG

Companions assemble on this joyful day. The occasion is glorious, the Key-stone to lay; Fulfilled is the promise by the Ancient of Days To bring forth the Cape-stone with shouting And praise.

(The marching and singing is so timed that the brethren have made a complete circuit of the room by the time the verse is finished, and halted in the North; King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre step out from procession and go to position in front of arch).

KS Brother Marshal see that the Keystone is properly placed. *(Marshal goes through the lines and conducts the Overseers to the East. The Master Overseer hands the Keystone to King Solomon who places it in its proper place in the arch; then hands him the gavel, and King Solomon seats the keystone with gavel (rrr-rrr); then hands gavel to Master Overseer. Marshal conduct Overseers down South side of room, leaving gavel at Junior Warden station; then to Northwest where the carrier is disposed of; then to their places at rear of procession. Marshal proceeds through lines to head of procession).*

MAR Close ranks. Front face.

KS The Temple is complete. Assist in giving the sign of Admiration. *(Sign is given by all the brethren. King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre return to head of procession).*

MAR Forward March. *(Procession resumes marching and singing).* There is no more occasion for level and plumb line For trowel or gavel, for compass or squares Our works are completed, the stone safely seated And we shall be greeted as workmen most rare. *(Procession halls on North side of room).*

MAR Craftsmen, our work on the Temple is completed. It is no longer necessary to wear craftsmen clothes. Let the aprons be taken off and put aside. *(Senior Deacon removes apron from candidate; All brethren take off aprons)*

MAR Forward March. *(Procession resumes marching and singing)* Senior Deacon with candidate join rear of procession and halt in position East of altar, facing East. Now those that are worthy our toils who have shared and proved themselves faithful shall meet their reward. Their virtue and knowledge, industry and skill. Have our approbation, have gained our good will. *(Processional halts on North side of room).* *(King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre step out of procession and proceed to shake hands with candidate).*

KS We receive and acknowledge you a Most Excellent Master. *(King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre return to head of procession)*

MAR Forward March. (*Procession resumes, marching and singing*) We accept and receive them Most Excellent Masters Invested with honors, and power to preside. Among worthy craftsmen wherever assembled the knowledge of Masons to spread far and wide. (*As procession passes, Senior Deacon and candidate fall in at rear. Procession is divided in West by Marshal, one file passing to right of altar, the other to the left, and halt facing in ward. Senior Deacon and candidate with the Marshal on left, form across the West*).

KS Brother Hiram King of Tyre, the Temple now complete. Nothing remains to be done but to consecrate it to the service of the Almighty. I have appointed the month of Tisri for that sacred ceremony. Will you not, who have so generously assisted in the glorious work of constructing the House of God, be present at its dedication.

HKT Most Excellent King Solomon, although the structure has been finished, the Temple is not complete, for it cannot be the House of God until the Ark of the Covenant has been placed therein and the Temple accepted by the God of Israel. I will therefore be present with you at the dedication to behold the safe seating of the Glory of Israel and to watch for a sign of acceptance from the Almighty.

MAR (*Goes to head of procession*) Forward March. (*Procession resumes marching and singing*) (*Procession is led down South side and pass out the outer door to preparation room*).

All hail to the morning that bids us rejoice. The Temple's completed, exalt high each voice The Capstone is finished, our labor is o'er The sound of the gavel shall hail us no more.

(Procession halts in preparation room, The Overseers take rank of Levites, with the Scribe as High Priest of the Levites. The four Levites bear the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulder, and are in rear of procession behind candidate. The procession resumes marching and enters through the inner door, singing)

To the Power Almighty, who ever has guided The tribes of old Israel, exalting their fame; To him who hath governed our hearts undivided Let's send forth our voices to praise His Great Name.

(Led by Marshal, procession continues marching around room to West, where files are divided by Marshal, one file passing to right of altar, the other to the left, and halt facing inward. Senior Deacon, candidate, and Levites form across the West).

KS The year that has passed since the completion of the Temple, has brought us nigh unto the Feast of the Tabernacle. I have chosen this as a propitious season in which to consecrate the edifice to the worship of God, and dedicated to his Holy Name. Will you not assist me?

HKT Most Excellent King Solomon, it is indeed a fitting time for the performance of the solemn ceremonial of the dedication of the Temple, and it is my desire to participate in that sacred service; but I recall with profound sorrow the death of one long associated with us in the building of the Temple, and deeply deplore his absence from an occasion that must present to every builder astonishing evidence of the magnitude and excellence of his handiwork.

KS Alas, poor Hiram, his death was indeed untimely. Would that he were with us this day; but as that cannot be, let us console ourselves with the reflection that the perfectness and beauty of his workmanship, his virtue, his integrity, and his piety will be revered by all true craftsmen throughout the earth to the latest posterity.

KS *(To High Priest of Levites)* Let the Ark be safely seated. *(The High Priest leading and Levites following bearing the Ark on their shoulders, proceed between the lines and under the Arch in which the Keystone was placed to the Sanctum Sanctorum. As they proceed the following may be sung)* Almighty Jehovah descend now and fill this place with Thy glory, our hearts with good will. Preside at our meetings; assist us to find True pleasure in teaching goodwill to mankind.

(The Ark is placed on a pedestal. The staves are drawn out, and the Levites, keeping their faces toward the Ark, return between the lines to their places. The High Priest takes position behind the Ark, where he remains).

KS *(Goes to East of altar and faces East)* The Lord hath said that he would dwell in thick darkness. *(Lights out)* But I have build a house of habitation for thee, and a place for the dwelling forever. *(As Shekinah appears all drop on left knee, right elbow resting on right knee, and head resting on right hand)*

EHP *(Solemnly)* The Lord is in his Holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him. Arise. *(Lights on)*

CHAP *"And the King turn his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel, and all the congregation of Israel stood."*

KS *(Facing West)* Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, "Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be ruler over my people Israel. But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

Now it was in the heart of David, my father, to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to David, my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart; not withstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son, which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.

The Lord, therefore, hath performed his word that he hath spoken; for I am risen up in the room of David, my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel; and in it I have put the Ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, that he made with the children of Israel.

CHAP "And he stood before the altar of the Lord and kneeling down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, he spread forth his hands toward heaven, and said:

KS (*Kneeling at altar and raising hands towards heaven*) "O Lord God of Israel there is no God like thee in the heaven nor in the earth, which keepest covenant, and showest mercy unto thy servants that walk before thee with all their hearts. Thou which hast kept with thy servant David, my father, that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day."

Now, therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David, my father, that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way, to walk in my law as thou hast walked before me.

Now then O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David. But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! Have respect, therefore, to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord, my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee; that thine eyes may be upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place.

Hearken, therefore, unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place; hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest forgive.

CHAP "When Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord." (*Lights out. Fire descends. All fall on both knees, both hands to the floor, and repeat:*)

ALL *For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.*

KS *Arise. (Returns to East.)* **KS** (*r*) Brother Senior Deacon, seat the candidate. (*Candidate is seated on North side of Lodge room*).

HISTORICAL LECTURE

My brother, in the course of the ceremonies of this degree you have received a sign in addition to those given you at the altar. It is this (gives sign) This is the Sign of Admiration. It alludes to the wonder and admiration expressed by those of our ancient brethren who were permitted to view the interior of that magnificent edifice which King Solomon had erected but more especially to the admiration and astonishment of those who beheld the sublime manifestations of the Supreme Being at the dedication of the Temple, when fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house.

The ceremonies of this degree are intended to represent those of the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple. You have now arrived at a period of Masonry when the labor is over. The keystone has been placed in the principal arch, the temple finished, and the Ark, which has been so long without a resting place, has been at length safely seated. We have imitated our ancient brethren in assembling on that occasion, repairing to the place designated, and participating in those solemn ceremonies. We have imitated them in gathering around the altar, engaging in prayer, and have witnessed a representation of the fire coming down from heaven, consuming the burnt offering and the sacrifices. We have also imitated their astonishment on beholding it, by falling down upon the ground and exclaiming "He is good; for his mercy endureth forever."

A perusal of the books of Chronicles and Kings will give you a minute description of the Temple and of the ceremonies here intended to be represented. You will there find that the foundation of the Temple were laid by King Solomon In the year of the world 2992, and the building was finished in the year 3000. About seven years and six month were consumed in its erection. It was dedicated in the year 3001, with the most imposing and solemn ceremonies, to the worship of JEHOVAH, who condescended to make It the place for the special manifestation of his glory. The ceremonies lasted fourteen days. Seven days of this festival were devoted to the dedication exclusively, and seven to the Feast of the Tabernacle.

This structure, for magnificence, beauty, and expenses, exceed any building that was ever erected. It was build of large stone of white marble, curiously hewn, and so artfully

joined together that they appeared like one entire stone. Its roof was of olive wood, covered with gold; and when the sun shone thereon, the reflection from it was of such refulgent splendor that it dazzled the eyes of all who beheld it. Its various courts and other apartments were capable of holding three hundred thousand person. It was adorned with 1,453 columns, of the finest Parian marble, twisted, sculptured, and voluted; and 2,906 pilasters, decorated with magnificent capital. The oracle and sanctuary were lined with massive gold, adorned with embellishments in sculpture, and set with numerous gorgeous and dazzling decorations of diamonds and all kinds of precious stones. In the emphatic language of Josephus, "the Temple shone and dazzled the eyes of such as entered it by the splendor of the gold that was on every side of them."

The multitude on beholding it were struck with bewildering amazement and raised their hands in admiration and astonishment at its wondrous magnificence, as well as to protect their eyes from the effect of its exceeding brilliancy. Nothing ever equaled the splendor of its consecration. Israel sent forth her thousands, and the assembled people beheld, in solemn adoration, the vast sacrifice of Solomon accepted. The flame descended upon the altar and consumed the offering; the shadow and glory of the Eternal proclaimed his presence between the cherubim, and the voice of his thunders told to the faithful of the Craft that the perfectness of their labor was approved.

*Bright was the hour, When Israel's princes, in their pride and power
Knelt in the Temple's court; the living flame The accepted sacrifice to all proclaim,
Brightly the splendor of the Godhead shone in awful glory from His living throne;
Then bowed was every brow - no human sight Could brave the splendor of the flood of light
That veiled his presence and His awful form -*

Whose path the whirlwind is - whose breath to the storm

ADDRESS TO CANDIDATE

Our mystic Temple is now completed and dedicated. You have wrought more than seven years with zeal and fidelity and have been received and acknowledge as a Most Excellent Master. You are invested with power to travel into foreign countries, work and receive Master's wages, and dispense true Masonic light and knowledge to all uniformed brethren. The temple which we have just completed represents the temple of the present life. The foreign country into which, after its completion, a Mason is expected to travel, is that "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns." The wages which he is to receive are the rewards of a well-spent life and the knowledge of divine truth, which the Grand Master of the Universe will bestow upon all who have faithfully performed their task.

You have seen the foundations of the Temple laid deep and strong. You have, as an Entered Apprentice, served your Master with freedom, fervency, and zeal; and as a bearer of burdens, brought up from the quarries of Zarthan many a rough ashlar for the building. You have wrought your full time as a Fellowcraft and under the skillful touch of your working tools, these rough ashlars have become perfect ashlars - stones, we doubt not, fitted to adorn and beautify our temple. As a Master workman, you have watched with unceasing care the wondrous beauties of the temple increase under the skillful hands of the Window's Son; and now you have at length seen the object of our hopes completed and the last arch bound together by the rejected though priceless key-stone. We have now dedicated the Temple to the service of the Supreme Being, and by this we are reminded that we should also dedicate our spiritual building - that temple which we have been erecting within ourselves - to the services of the Supreme Being. And although we know of a certainty that all earthly things are transient, and that in process of time, even at the best, decay of ages will crumble our magnificent temple into dust, yet we are persuaded, that, if we have erected the temple of our inner life by Square, Plumb-line, and Rule, its foundations shall never fail, and its fabric shall never crumble nor decay. Then let us, my brother, take care that we so labor in the erection of our temple here, that when we leave this, for that far-distant country from whence we shall never return, we may there receive the wages of faithful craftsmen.

LECTURE

Q. Are you a Most Excellent Master?

A. I am. Try me.

Q. How will you be tried?

A. By the Key-stone.

Q. Why by the Key-stone?

A. Because it completed King Solomon's Temple, and at the dedication and the placing of the Key-stone, this degree was founded.

Q. Where were you made a Most Excellent Master?

A. In a legally constituted and duly opened Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

Q. Have you a sign belonging to this degree?

A. I have several.

Q. Show me a sign?

A. (Give duegard')

Q. What is that called?

A. The duegard of Most Excellent Masters.

Q. Show me another sign?

A. (Give sign)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign of Most Excellent Master.

Q. To what does that allude?

A. To the penalty of the obligation that I would have my breast torn open, my vitals taken thence, and thrown on a dunghill to rot, should I violate my solemn obligation of Most Excellent Master.

Q. Show me another sign?

A. (Give sign of Admiration)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign of Admiration.

Q. To what does it allude?

A. To the wonder and admiration expressed by those of our ancient brethren who were permitted to view the interior of that magnificent edifice which King Solomon had erected and was about to dedicate to the service of the Supreme Being.

Q. Have you a grip belonging to this degree?

- A. I have.
- Q. Communicate It?
- A. (Give grip of Most Excellent Master)
- Q. What is that?
- A. The grip of Most Excellent Master.
- Q. Has it a name? ...
- A. It has.
- Q. Give it.
- A. RBN.....I.
- Q. What does it signify?
- A. Good Master or Most Excellent Master.
- Q. What is it otherwise called?
- A. The cover grip.
- Q. Why?
- A. Because, as this covers grips of preceding degrees, so should we as Most Excellent Masters, considering that man in his best estate is subject to frailties and errors, endeavor to cover his faults and imperfections with the broad mantle of charity and brotherly love.

CHARGE TO CANDIDATE

My, brother, your admission to this degree of Masonry is proof of the good opinion the Brethren of this Lodge entertain of your Masonic abilities. Let this consideration induce you to be careful of forfeiting, by misconduct and inattention to our rules, that esteem which has raised you to the rank, which you now possess. It is one of your great duties, as a Most Excellent Master, to dispense light and truth to uninformed Mason; and I need not remind you of the impossibility of complying with this obligation without possessing an accurate acquaintance with the lectures of each degree.

If you are not already completely conversant in all the degrees heretofore conferred on you, remember that an indulgence, prompted by a belief that you will apply yourself with double diligence to make yourself so, has induced the brethren to accept you. Let it, therefore, be your unremitting study to acquire such a degree of knowledge and information as shall enable you to discharge with propriety the various duties incumbent upon you and preserve unsullied the titled now conferred upon you, it being that of Most Excellent Master.

CLOSING

RWM (*r*) Bro. Junior Deacon, when a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is about to be closed, what becomes your first duty?

JD (*Rises*) To see that the Lodge is duly tiled.

RWM Attend to the duty and Inform the Tiler that I am about to close a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters. Direct him to take due notice thereof and tile accordingly.

JD (*Goes to outer door*) *rrr-rrr*

Tiler (*Answers*) *rrr-rrr*.

JD (*Opens door*) Bro. Tiler, I am directed to Inform you that Right Worshipful Master is about to close this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, take due notice thereof and tile accordingly. (*Closes door*) *rrr-rrr*.

Tiler (*Answers*) *rrr-rrr*.

JD (*Returns to station*) Right Worshipful Master, the Lodge is duly tiled.

RWM How is the Lodge tiled?

JD By a brother without, armed with the proper implements of his office.

RWM His duty there?

JD To observe the approach of cowans and eaves droppers, and to see that none pass or repass except such as are duly qualified and having permission from the Right Worshipful Master. (*Takes seat*)