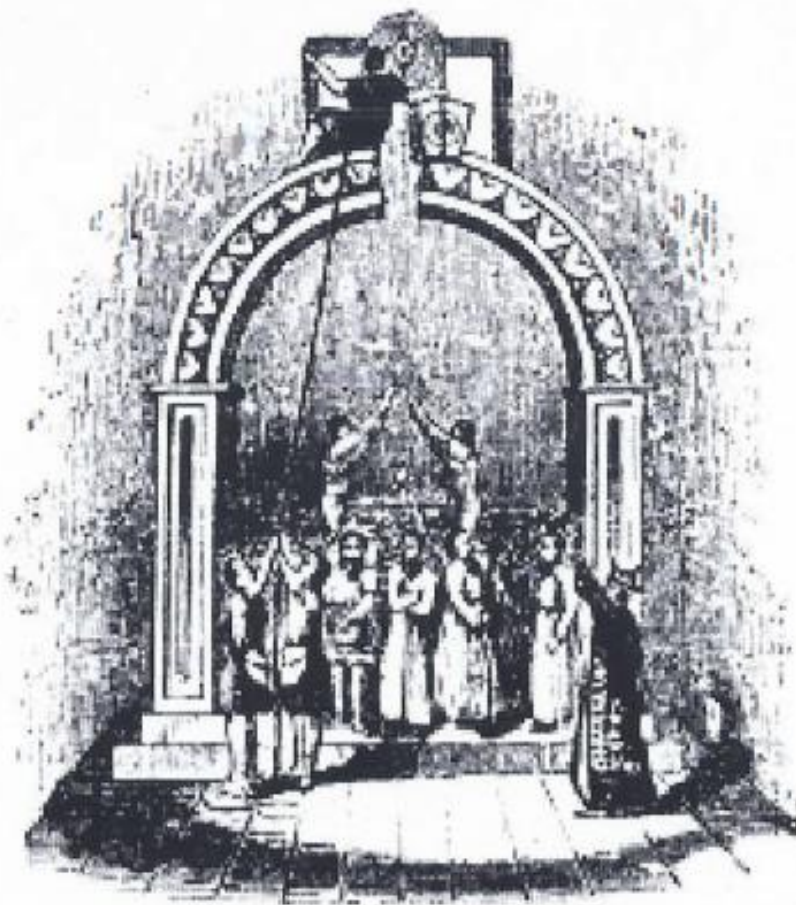


**MOST EXCELLENT
MASTER OR
SIXTH DEGREE**

Study Guide for Candidates



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

Delray Beach, FL

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Symbolism

The Most Excellent Master degree is by far one of the most impressive rituals in all of Freemasonry. It is the only degree that brings forcibly to our attention the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple, atop Mount Moriah in the Holy City of Jerusalem - the very idea upon which all Masonic symbolism has been based.

Drawing upon the history recorded in 2 Chronicles 6 and 7, and I Kings 7 and 8, the degree depicts celebration of the Temple, its final architectural step, and the installation of the sacred items within the Holy of Holies, while mourning the death of Grand Master Hiram Abiff. In this degree, the brother is taught the lesson that he has a responsibility to exploit opportunities to share with less informed brethren his wisdom and Masonic light.

II Chronicles: 6

6 “Then said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. ² But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever. ³ And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood. ⁴ And he said, 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, ⁵ 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 an house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel: ⁶ But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.”

The symbolic color of the Most Excellent Master's Degree is purple. The apron is of white lambskin, edged with purple. The collar is of purple, edged with gold. But, as Lodges of this Degree are held under warrants of Royal Arch Chapters, the collars, aprons, and jewels of the Chapter are generally made use of it's conferring the Degree.

Holiness to the Lord

Lodges of Most Excellent Masters are "dedicated to King Solomon."

The foundation of the Temple was laid by King Solomon in the years of the world 2992 and the building was finished in the year 3000. Seven years and Six months

“¹⁶ And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” (Isaiah 42:16)

SIGN OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER



FIG. 28. SIGN OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

The sign is given by placing your two hands, one on each breast, the fingers meeting in the centre of the body, and jerking them apart as though you were trying to tear open your breast. It alludes to the penalty of the obligation. (See [Fig. 28.](#))

GRIP OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

The grip is given by taking each other by the right hand, and clasping them so that each compress the third finger of the other with his thumb. (If one hand is large and the other small, they cannot both give the grip at the same time.) It is called the grip of all grips, because it is said to cover all the preceding grips. (See [Fig. 29.](#))



FIG. 29. GRIP OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER.

SIGN OF ADMIRATION OR ASTONISHMENT

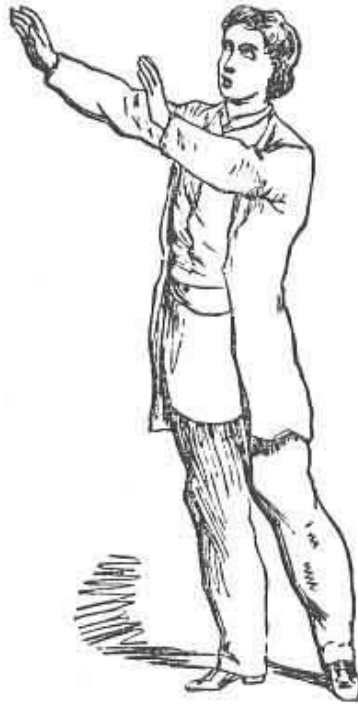


FIG. 30. SIGN OF ADMIRATION, OR ASTONISHMENT.

To the wonder and admiration of our ancient brethren who were present and 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. (Fig. 30.)

LECTURE ON THE SIXTH, OR MOST EXCELLENT MASTER'S DEGREE

Question. Are you a Most Excellent Master?

Answer. I am. Try me.

Q. How will you be tried?

A. By the cap stone.

Q. Why by the cap stone?

A. Because it completed King Solomon's Temple, upon the ceremonies of the dedication of which this Degree is founded.

Q. Where were you received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master?

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

Q. How gained you admission?

A. By six distinct knocks. (••••••)

O. To what do the six distinct knocks allude?

A. To the Sixth Degree of Masonry, it being that upon which I was about to enter.

Q. What was said to you from within?

A. Who comes here?

Q. Your answer?

A. A worthy brother who has been duly initiated, passed to the degree of Fellow Craft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master, and regularly passed the chair, now wishes for further promotion in Masonry, by being received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master.

Q. What were you then asked?

A. If it was an act of my own free will and accord; if I was worthy and well qualified; if I had made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree, and was properly vouched for, all of which being answered in the affirmative, I was asked by what right or benefit I expected to gain this important privilege.

Q. Your answer?

A. By the benefit of the pass.

Q. Give it. (Word---Mark Well.)

Q. What was then said to you?

A. I was directed to wait until the Right Worshipful Master could be informed of my request, and his answer returned.

Q. What was his answer?

A. Let the candidate enter.

Q. How were you then disposed of?

A. I was conducted *six* times round the Lodge, to the Worshipful Senior Warden in the West, where the same questions were asked and answers returned as at the door.

Q. How did the Worshipful Senior Warden dispose of you? A. He directed me to be conducted to the Right Worshipful Master in the East, where the same questions were asked and answers returned as before.

Q. How did the Right Worshipful Master dispose of you?

A. He ordered me to be conducted to the Worshipful Senior Warden in the West, who taught me to approach to the altar, advancing by six upright Masonic steps, my feet forming a square and my body erect, to the Right Worshipful Master.

Q. What did the Right Worshipful Master do with you? A. He made me a Most Excellent Master.

Q. How?

A. In due form.

Q. What is that due form?

A. Kneeling upon both knees, both hands covering the Holy Bible, square and compasses, my body erect, in which due form I took upon myself the solemn oath of a Most Excellent Master.

Q. Have you that obligation?

A. I have.

Q. Will you give it?

A. I will with your assistance.

Q. Proceed. (I, A. B., etc., etc. See obligation.)

Q. Have you a sign belonging to this degree?

A. I have several.

Q. Show me a sign. (Give sign.)

Q. What is that called?

A. A duegard.

Q. Show me another sign. (Gives sign.)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign.

Q. To what does it allude?

A. To the penalty of my obligation, that I would have my breast torn open--my heart torn out and exposed to rot upon the dung hill, sooner than divulge any of the secrets of this degree unlawfully.

Q. Show me another sign. (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 of our ancient brethren who were present and 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?

A. I have.

Q. Communicate it to a brother? (Give grip.)

Q. Has it a name?

A. It has.

Q. Give it. (Rabboni.)

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.

Q. When originated this grip?

A. 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 and exclaimed, Hail, Rabboni, which signifies Good Master and Most Excellent Master.

Q. What followed?

A. A procession was formed, the ark safely seated, the cap stone placed in the principal arch, and Lodge closed with solemn invocations to Deity.

Footnotes

The Masonic tradition upon which the Degree is founded is described in the ancient Book of Constitutions, in the following words.

The Temple was finished in the short space of seven years and six months, to the amazement of all the world; when the cope-stone was celebrated by the fraternity with great joy. But their joy was soon interrupted by the sudden death of their dear Master, Hiram Abiff, whom they decently interred in the Lodge near the Temple, according to ancient usage.

After Hiram Abiff was mourned for, the tabernacle of Moses and its holy relics being lodged in the Temple, Solomon, in a general assembly, dedicated or consecrated it by solemn prayer and costly sacrifices past number, with the finest music, vocal and instrumental, praising Jehovah upon fixing the holy ark in its proper place, between the cherubim; when Jehovah filled his own Temple with a cloud of glory."

It is an established doctrine of the Order, that while three form a Lodge, and five may hold it, seven only can make it perfect. In such a case there requires an intermediate Degree to complete the series; for the Mark and Past Masters have been already admitted into the Craft Lodges. This Degree, as used by our transatlantic brethren, who are zealous and intelligent Masons, is called the Excellent Master, and the routine is thus stated: 1, E. A. P.; 2. F. C.; 3. M. M.; 4. Mark Master; 5. Past p. Master; 6. Excellent Master; 7. Royal Arch.--*Historical Landmarks*. vol. ii, p. 669.

"She turned herself, and saith unto him, RABBONI; which is to say Master."--St. John xx. 16.

The reader has observed that the number six, in the Degree under consideration, is particularly respected. In the opening scene of initiations, not noticed above, the candidate is prepared with a rope wound six times round his body, and is then conducted to the door of the Lodge, against which he gives six distinct knocks, which are answered by the same number from within; and, when admitted, he is walked six times around the Lodge, moving with the sun. On the contrary, the brethren more advanced form a procession, as above stated and march six times around the Lodge, against the course of the sun. Masons from habit pass through these ceremonies, without stopping to examine into their meaning and original intention.

The Druids also paid great veneration to the number six. "As to what remains," says Mayo (vol. ii. p. 239), "respecting the superstitions p. 209 of the Druids, I know not what was the foundation of the religious

respect which they had for the number six: but it is certain they preferred it to all other numbers. It was the sixth day of the moon that they performed their principal ceremonies of religion, and that they began the year. They went six in number to gather the mistletoe; and in monuments now extinct we often find six of these priests together."--*Fellow's Inquiry into the Origin, History, and Purport of Freemasonry*, p. 318.

During the ceremonies two pillars are erected each of about five feet high, and an arch placed over them, made in imitation of block-work, in the centre of which a mortise is left for the reception of a KEYSTONE; the Most Excellent Master, taking the keystone in his hand, places it in the arch, and drives it home with six raps of his gavel.--*Historical Landmarks*, vol. ii. p. 128. This pot contains gum camphor or other inflammable matter.

"Recent discoveries in Ethiopia have brought to light," says a writer on the Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, "arches regularly constructed with the key-stone. The same arch is also found in the vaulted roof of a small building or portico in the Egyptian style, which is attached to one of the sides of the largest pyramids at Assour. At Jebel Barkal, Mr. Waddington observed an arched roof in a portico attached to a pyramid." These pyramids are supposed to be of higher antiquity than the building of King Solomon's Temple.--*Theo. Phil.*, p. 208.