



*The Master who is at-one with both Nature and Divinity discerns the truth, and teaches and records it for all future generations of men. ...but it should ever be remembered that the sole authority of the Master is in the Truth; and not the authority of Truth in the Master.*

*J.D. Buck, Mystic Masonry*

## **THE MASTER MASON RITUAL AND SYMBOLS**

There are no new methods to learn before you begin working in the Master Mason degree. In this section, you are given reminders on what techniques to apply, as well as a list of the key elements for contemplation.

### **Exercise 3:1 - Preparation**

You are advised to attend the raising of a Master Mason as soon as possible. Before you arrive at the lodge or temple, perform the centering exercise. As your contemplation, formulate two or three questions about specific things in the ritual that you wish to understand more fully. Once you have the questions clearly in mind, you may pray for more light on the Master Mason degree. After completing the centering exercise, write the questions in your journal. You can then go to lodge and practice mindful and prayerful behavior during the ritual. To help you maintain focus, do not arrive early and do not stay late. As soon as you arrive home, do the centering exercise, contemplating the ritual as a whole, or any one of its many steps. After the centering exercise, make appropriate notes in your journal, responding to the questions you previously wrote. You are advised to repeat this process of contemplative attendance of the Master Mason ritual more than once, and you may do so as often or as many times as you wish. After having completed the process a few times, you may also begin participating in the ritual, being especially mindful and prayerful in the role or roles you play.

### **Exercise 3:2 - Raising**

This exercise requires you to be the candidate of a Master Mason's raising. It need only be done once, though it will require more than one session. To actually perform this exercise, begin by doing the centering exercise. When you reach the time for contemplation, imagine yourself as the candidate going through the Master Mason degree. Over a span of two or three days, you are advised to perform three separate sessions, each one corresponding to a phase of the ritual. For convenience you may choose to begin the first phase with entering the preparation room, and continue through the obligation. Do not forget that you were blind in this phase, which means that the primary sensory experience was hearing. In the second phase, move from being brought to light to receiving the working tools and exiting the lodgeroom. The third phase encompasses your return to the lodge room and the lessons that you then received. In the third phase, imagine yourself clothed in a white robe, wearing the apron as a Master Mason. In each phase, make every effort to imagine each of the key points that you would actually experience as the candidate. Perfection is not to be expected, and characters other than those already mentioned do not require the same level of detail.

After completing the exercise, make appropriate notes in your journal. Be sure to answer the following questions:

- What emotions did you experience? Note at which parts of the ritual you experienced those emotions most strongly?
- What parts of the ritual seemed most meaningful to you? Explain what thoughts they stimulated.
- What parts of the ritual seemed most difficult to fully understand?
- What parts seem to hold deeper and more profound meaning than you currently grasp?
- In which parts of the ritual did you feel the Divine presence most clearly?

### **Exercise 3:3 - Instruction**

These exercises entail more thorough contemplation of the details of the ritual and symbolism of this degree. There are literally thousands of details, and hundreds of significant points. However, you are asked only to further contemplate those parts you found most intriguing and inspiring in the previous exercise, as well as the key elements presented in this subsection.

The following list presents the key elements of ritual and symbolism for contemplation. You may make omissions or changes to reflect the details of your jurisdiction's ritual. As you complete a session for each element, be sure to make appropriate entries in your journal on the significance that each holds for you at all four levels of your psyche, especially relating to whatever religious, spiritual or philosophical tradition that you personally follow. It is very important that you contemplate not only the teachings concerning each element, but the associated symbols and images as well.

1. The Conditions of Entrance
2. The Reception
3. Ecclesiastes 12:1-7
4. The Circumambulations
5. The Obligation
6. The Three Great Lights in the Master Mason Degree
7. The Due Guard, Penal Sign and Step of the Master Mason
8. The Password of the Master Mason
9. The Apron of the Master Mason
10. The Working Tools of the Master Mason
11. The Sanctum Sanctorum
12. The Three Ruffians
13. The Three Burials of the Body
14. The Twelve Fellow Crafts
15. The Sprig of Acacia
16. The Grand Hailing Sign of Distress
17. The Failed Attempts at Raising the Body
18. The Prayer before Raising
19. The Strong Grip of the Lion's Paw
20. The Five Points of Fellowship
21. The Substitute Word
22. The Monument to Hiram Abif
23. The Three Steps
24. The Pot of Incense
25. The Beehive
26. The Book of Constitutions, Guarded by the Tyler's Sword
27. The Sword Pointing to the Naked Heart
28. The All Seeing Eye
29. The Anchor and the Ark
30. The Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid
31. The Hour Glass
32. The Scythe
33. The Spade
34. The Setting Maul
35. The Coffin
36. The Grave
37. The Sprig of Acacia
38. Travel in Foreign Countries
39. Master's Wages

In developing your understanding of each of these elements, you are advised to use all four types of contemplation – associative, analytical, intuitive and interactive - within the context of the centering exercise. You may also use the Secret Smile as the technique leading to associative, analytical or intuitive contemplation, though not for interactive contemplation. It is recommended that you practice the interactive form no more than twice per week. All together, each element of the previous list should be

worked on for at least a few days, completing no more than two per week. Depth of understanding for each element is always more important than the speed with which you advance to the next. Indeed, you will find that many elements continue to reveal their depths over years of contemplation. Be patient and use your best judgment before moving from one element to the next.

To begin a session of interactive contemplation, perform the centering exercise. When you reach the step for contemplation, formulate a single question concerning some part of the ritual and symbolism of the Master Mason degree that you want to understand more fully. Next, imagine yourself clothed in a white robe, wearing your apron as a Master Mason. Visualize yourself standing at the closed outer door of a lodgeroom. Knock upon the door three times, listening to the knocks reverberating into the depths of the Cosmos. You hear three knocks returned, and the door opens to reveal a Master Masons' lodge at labor, with the four officers at their stations. Note the illuminated symbol above King Solomon. Step inside and close the door behind you. Advance to the altar, taking note of the arrangement of the Three Great Lights. Give the due guard and penal sign of a Master Mason, noting that King Solomon returns it. At this time you should invoke the aid of Deity with a short heartfelt prayer asking for more light.

After your prayer, advance by the north to east and approach King Solomon, the Worshipful Master. Note the illuminated symbol above his head. Ask him your question, keeping in mind that if he responds it will be with the voice of your spirit. As a Master Mason, more emphasis is placed upon intuition and the balance of intellect, emotion and behavior. Therefore, you may spend more time in the east, asking further questions of King Solomon. When you are ready, thank him and continue clockwise to the south.

Approach Hiram Abif and ask him your question. You should also inform him about any response you were given by King Solomon. Expect his answers to be characterized by reason and balanced judgment. You may also ask a few questions to gain greater clarity and understanding of what he is communicating. When you are ready, thank him and continue clockwise to the west.

Approach King Hiram of Tyre and ask him your question. You should also inform him of what happened in the east and in the south. Expect his responses to be emotional in nature, expressing strong desires and convictions about the issue. You may ask him questions about why he feels the way he does. When you are ready, thank him and continue clockwise to the north.

Approach the Senior Deacon and ask him your question. You should also inform him of what transpired in the east, south and west. Expect his responses to be focused on the physical world, with instruction on ways to physically experience or express the truth of what you are learning. When you are ready, thank him and return directly to the altar.

At the altar, note the arrangement of the Three Great Lights. You should then express your gratitude with a short heartfelt prayer of thankfulness. After the prayer, give

the due guard and penal sign of a Master Mason, noting that King Solomon returns it. Once again take note of the illuminated symbol above his head. Walk to the outer door, open it and pass through, turn to face it as it you close it. Allow the imagery to fade, and complete the last steps of the centering exercise. Make appropriate notes in your journal.