

# *What is Freemasonry?*

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NOTE—Let us not attempt to define Freemasonry definitely or completely, because Freemasonry comprehends such a vast field of speculation that the best any of us can hope is a continually improving conception of Masonry. The object of this outline is to develop thought and discussion, and it is the desire of the committee to have suggestions or criticisms brought to their attention.

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The explanations given in the second section of the Entered Apprentice degree are only partial and exoteric. There is always much that requires diligent thought and careful analysis. In this we should always bear in mind the central truths and basic principles of Freemasonry so that our interpretation will be important in building the Temple of Character, and harmonize with the declarations we have made and the tenets we have professed.

“At the building of King Solomon’s Temple there was not heard the sound of an ax, hammer or any tool of iron.” In building our spiritual temple the tools are not metal. The twenty-four inch gauge and common gavel are symbolic tools with the most pertinent moral and spiritual significance.

The symbolism of King Solomon’s Temple occupies a central position in the system of moral philosophy which Freemasonry teaches, and should always encourage us to improve ourselves in speculative Freemasonry, by translating its allegorical lessons into higher ideals, purer thoughts and nobler deeds. This alone is the real test of its efficiency.

We are reminded that in ancient times a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor as a testimony or pledge. As civilization becomes more highly developed and complex there is still greater need of pledging our services and lives to the general good of humanity. We are not alone interested in making a perfect ashlar of individuality but also in making it fit into a larger unit of humanity.

Fidelity, symbolized by the right hand, is a token by which we should always be distinguished. This constant re-

minder of our pledge to act uprightly in our duty to God and on the level in our duty to our fellowman is here another form of using the Square of Virtue to regulate our conduct.

The second section makes several exoteric explanations, yet we must always remember that

"The whole is a regular system of morality veiled in allegory, which will unfold its beauty to the candid and industrious inquirer."

It is only by the most serious thought and reflection, based on a sincere desire for knowledge of character building philosophy, that any adequate conception of the "Hidden mysteries" may be obtained.

The third section contains much that requires the same devoted study to reveal its more important significance.

The Lodge is a symbol of the world. Whence came you? The question brings to the reflective mind the most important problem that humanity, individually and collectively, has to solve. Whence did we come? Why are we here? Whither are we bound? If we consider the Lodge as a symbol of the world, we become impressed with its full significance.

High hills and low vales suggest to us the possibilities of a Lodge being able to consider the highest ideals of human attainment, and also to be able to meet in the low vale of everyday life and physical manifestation.

What is more able to support a comprehensive system of morality than Wisdom, Strength and Beauty? When each of the principal officers fully function as such pillars in the temple of morality, no discord or confusion is possible. They will be able to set the craft at work and give them proper instruction.

The covering of the Lodge is symbolized by the starry-decked heaven—the blue sky. Blue is the pertinent color of the symbolic degrees. We prefer the phrase Ancient Craft Freemasonry to the expression "Blue Lodge", and yet if we consider its symbolic meaning it implies a universality that precludes any higher attainment.

The furniture of the Lodge is but another way of using the symbols. The Master who fully comprehends his duty to the Lodge, and qualifies himself to always have character building designs on the trestleboard will soon find the craft circumscribing their desires by Masonic principles.

The ornaments consisting of the Mosaic Pavement, the Indented Tessel, and the Blazing Star are in perfect accord with the Lodge as a symbol of the world. We find it checkered with good and evil. We find ourselves surrounded with blessings and comforts. We know the need of reliance on Divine Providence. It is necessary for us to know the tendencies which tend to lower us and use the tools and implements of Freemasonry to break off the useless and harmful parts and shape a perfect ashlar that will be found square and level.

Light is a most significant symbol in Freemasonry. The Lodge has three lights, situated east, west and south. Let the light from the East give us reason or wisdom, let the light from the west give us strength or willpower, and the light from the south give us volition or active manifestation of the two former.

The Jewels are but another form of character building symbolism. Their efficient use will surely complete the work we have laid out. The rough ashlar is gradually made into a perfect ashlar by following the design on the trestleboard of Freemasonry.

The tabernacle was used as a symbol. All its parts were symbolical. King Solomon's Temple was built with the symbolism of the tabernacle as a model. Lodges are symbolical of the same central truths of the Universe. As the tabernacle was situated due east and west to receive the rays of the rising sun, Lodges are symbolically situated likewise to receive the light of Truth from the source of all Light.

#### References

- Symbolical Masonry (Haywood):  
Chapter 23—Working tools of an Entered Apprentice.  
Chapter 7—The Lodge.

## Symbolism of the Three Degrees (Street):

Page 24—The Lodge.

Page 54—High Hills and Low Vales.

Page 56—Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty.

Page 91—Whence Came You?

## Encyclopedia of Freemasonry (Mackey):

## Articles:

Esoteric	Blazing Star
Exoteric	Light
Working Tools	Lights, Fixed
Shoe	East
Fides	West
Lodge	South
Hutte	North
Highest of Hills	Jewels of a Lodge
Covering of the Lodge	Plumb
Blue	Square
Ancient Craft Masonry	Level
Furniture of a Lodge	Ashlar
Mosaic Pavement	Trestle-Board
Mosaic Symbolism	Tabernacle
Tessellated Border	Temple of Solomon
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