

SIXTEENTH DEGREE

PRINCE OF JERUSALEM

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INTRODUCTION

Let us first take a quick look at where we are in the sequence of the 33 degrees of the AASR. The **Lodge of Perfection** (4th to 14th degrees) constitutes the highest level of perfection which a Mason should reach to become a real Master. It is the basis of the **Chapter Rose-Croix** which aims at raising the Mason's mind to a higher level of mystical consciousness, or union with God's spirit, starting in the 17th Degree and culminating in the 18th Degree. This 16th Degree complements the 15th Degree and finalizes the necessary moral foundation which makes the Mason's mystical ascent possible. It also hints at: (a) the intimate realization of **Love**, the New Law declared by Jesus of Nazareth, the basic principle on which the 18th Degree (Knight Rose Croix) was originally developed, and (b) the ways and means to establish this universal principle of compassion and wisdom in society which later on will be the ultimate objective of the **Council of Kadosh** culminating in the 30th Degree.

LEGEND OF THE DEGREE

The Hebrews, who had been exiled to Babylon, returned to Jerusalem about 530 B.C.E.. However, their adversaries thwarted their efforts to rebuild the Temple for almost 20 years. They had to wait for Darius to be on the throne, to regain their hope after a long period of discouragement. Zerubbabel, their Prince and leader, had to go back to Babylon to obtain the new king's full support in his struggle against his enemies. Eventually, the Second Temple was completed about 510 B.C.E..

THE CEREMONY

The Candidate, called Kadmiel ben Zabud, explains that the operations for restoring the Temple move slowly and painfully due to attacks by Samaritans. This compels workmen to labor with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other (as in the 15th Degree). In addition, the objections of the Syrians and Artaxerxes (a.k.a. Cambyses), the previous king of Persia, have stopped the works. Zerubbabel, who has been quite despondent, is encouraged by the prophet Haggai to go to Babylon and remind Darius, the new king, of his forefather Cyrus's commitment to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel, accompanied by Kadmiel, goes to Babylon and is offered a feast by Darius, during which they are asked to solve a riddle, as is often the case in a symbolic quest¹. The riddle is : "Which is strongest, wine, the king or a woman?" Darius answers "wine" because it makes all men forget everything. Kadmiel answers "the king" because he is above all men.

¹ As Man progresses in the world or in his spiritual ascent, he is confronted with problems at all times which he must solve before he can proceed further.

Zerubbabel answers ða womanö because men leave everything for a womanø sake and bring all they have to their loved one. However, he adds that Truth is strongest because it always eventually prevails and makes justice and good, strength and power possible. In other symbolic terms, **wine** represents a life based on seeking pleasure rather than responsibility; **the king** symbolizes avoidance of responsibility by obeying the orders of authority without question; and **a woman** symbolizes a life built on passions and desires rather than self-control and responsibility. Zerubbabel is found to be the wisest by Darius who gives him full power and support to rebuild the Temple. However, back in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel finds that misery and despair prevail in the city which is no longer ðthe City of Peaceö. Therefore, Zerubbabel appoints **five** judges to reinstate peace, equity and compassion among all citizens². Kadmiel, the Candidate, is received as Prince of Jerusalem in charge of rebuilding the Temple and the walls of the ðCity of Peaceö, acting as a peacemaker, keeping faith in Godø justice and beneficence, and restoring hope for the oppressed and the persecuted.

ESOTERIC SYMBOLISM

LODGE DECOR: The **Lodge** consists of **two apartments** linked by a **passageway**. The first apartment represents the Court of Zerubbabel in Jerusalem and the second apartment represents the Council Chamber of Darius, the new king of Persia. The passageway represents the countryside between Jerusalem and Babylon.

The predominant color of **Zerubbabel's Court** is the **yellow orange** of saffron, the color of **dawn**, the symbol of **hope for the dispossessed, the oppressed and the persecuted**. In addition, white, blue, red and violet hangings separate the Holy of Holies from the chamber of Zerubbabelø throne. **White** symbolizes **the purity of life and mind, rectitude of conduct and justice; blue, spirituality and fidelity, universal friendship and benevolence; red, fervency and zeal** in the war against evil; and **purple, royalty and constancy** in battle, as it results from a mix of blue and red, respectively for faith and fidelity, and war. A **black and white Star of David**, with a Tetragram (YHVH) in Phoenician letters, in its center, is over Zerubbabelø throne³.

On the **Altar of Obligation** are the **Book of the Law**, the **Book of Constitutions**, a **sword**, a **trowel** and a **pair of scales**, as in the 14th Degree of the Lodge of Perfection. In the Holy of Holies are the **Altar of Incense** (for purification of the mind), **the Table of the Bread of the Presence** (for communion), **the Great Candelabrum** (for enlightenment of the spirit) **and the Ark of the Covenant** with the Cherubim on either

² Before building oneø inner temple, one has to establish peace and love within oneself.

³ The two inverted black and white triangles of the Star of David symbolize dualism in Creation. The pre-requisite for Manø mystical ascent is to overcome this dualism in order to reach the central point of the Star, representing the Creator, the One from whom the many are projected, symbolized by the Tetragram. Thus all apparent contradictions (the two triangles) can be merged into the unity of complementary opposites (the Star), as also symbolized by the Oriental Yin and Yang or the two sides of the same coin. The 6 points of the Star hexagram and the central point make 7, the number of the higher level of human perfection generated by unity and equilibrium regained in oneø innermost being.

side (for the sacred union of Man and God under Divine Law). This together with the color of the hangings and Joshua as ðExcellent High Priestö are familiar to York Rite Masons.

Number 5 is prevalent in this degree. It is the Pythagorean « nuptial number », as it combines and unites 2 and 3, respectively the symbolic numbers of the female and male elements in human nature. It is therefore the symbolic number of **human perfection** on this plane of existence. The apartment is lit up by **25 lights** distributed into groups of **5 lights** forming a **quincunx** in front of each of the **5 principal officers**. Zerubbabelö throne is ascended in **5 steps**⁴.

The predominant colors of **Darius's chamber** are **white, blue and green** (the color of **renewal, hope and immortality**). There is a **Blazing Sun** over Dariusö throne. In Europe, the colors are red and saffron, like the apron.

REGALIA : The **apron** is **crimson** (for zeal, faith in Godö goodness and justice) edged and lined with **saffron** (for the dawn of a new hope for the distressed and oppressed). On the apron is represented the **Second Temple** of Jerusalem symbolizing our life, our heart, our society and the universe, all bathed in the new Light of the divine Spirit (the Blazing Sun in Dariusö chamber). On one side of the Temple is a **sword across a shield** (for the **constant war against evil in oneself and in society**); on the other side is a **square with a triangle on top**, a higher symbol of **human perfection**, representing the human earthly creature (the cube) refined by his or her inherent divine nature (the pyramid) and Masonic labor⁵. The apron also bears two Phoenician letters for **A** (alpha) and **T** (theta), the initial letters of **Adar**, the twelfth month of the year, on the **23rd day** of which was the Day of Thanksgiving for the completion of the new Temple; and **Tebeth**, the tenth month, on the **20th day** of which the Jewish Princes reentered Jerusalem. The other symbolic meanings of the two letters are respectively **God**, the primal source of all that is, just as « alpha » is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and **Judgment**, since « theta » is the initial of ðThanatosö, the Greek word for death, which is the right sentence for tyrants and blood criminals, as illustrated in the Council of Kadosh degrees.

On the **flap** is a **hand of justice** holding a **balance in equipoise**, symbolizing the necessary **impartiality of justice and righteousness** to reestablish the ðCity of Peaceö, the ðNew Jerusalemö, and the **equilibrium and harmony** which God maintains throughout the universe⁶.

⁴ It is necessary to go to the utmost limit of oneö human potential of perfection prior to attempting at ascending towards God.

⁵ Universal Creation (Number 4, the mathematical base of the perfect square and cube) has to be further refined by Godö spirit (Number 3, the mathematical base of the perfect triangle and pyramid) to become the perfect mystical base (Number 7) from which Manö ascent towards Godö unity can start. A pyramid over a cube (rather than a simple cube) is the shape of the perfect ashlar in most European lodges.

⁶ The harmonious equilibrium of the whole results from the interactive contradictory forces of its innumerable elements.

On the **saffron cordon** are a **balance** and a **hand of justice** holding the **sword of justice** which symbolizes the stern severity necessary to repress crime; a **dagger** representing the justice to be meted to tyrants, oppressors and criminal fanatics, just as Ehud killed the oppressor Eglon, king of Moab; **five stars** symbolizing **human perfection** and the first **five princes** of Israel; and **two crowns** representing **separate civil and religious authorities** embodied by Zerubbabel and Joshua, respectively. A silver **trowel** hangs from the cordon, as a symbol of the constant Masonic task to build and maintain the holy Temple within oneself as well as in society.

The **jewel** is a **disc of gold** reproducing a **hand of justice** holding a **balance in equipoise** on one side and, on the other, an upright double-edged, cross-hilted **sword of justice** (the symbol of the Order of the Temple, or Knights Templar), **five stars** and the initials of **Darius (D)** and **Zerubbabel (Z)**.

The **gloves** are red, symbolizing the zeal required to wage the bloody war against evil, without ever tainting one's hands with the blood of sin.

SIGNS, TOKEN AND WORDS

Signs: Left hand placed on hip and extend right arm at the height of the shoulder -

Answer: Right foot forming a square with the toe of the left foot touching the heel of the right foot.

Token: Join right hands with thumbs on the joint of the little finger and strike **5 times** in 1 + 2 + 2

Join right feet with toes forming a straight line and left hand open on the counterpart's shoulder

One says: **öTwentyö**- The other answers: **öTwenty-threeö** (See the two sacred days of the two sacred months in **öRegaliaö** above)

March: **5 slow steps** (slide left foot forward on tip of toes and bring right toe to left heel, five times)

Password: **TEBETH** (10rd month - See **öRegaliaö** above)

Sacred Word: **ADAR** (12th month - See **öRegaliaö** above)

Battery: **25 raps (5 times 5 raps)**

Time: From **Sunrise** to **High Noon** (From the hope of dawn to the peak of sunlight at meridian, the symbol of utmost beauty and perfection)

PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS

It is obvious that the rebuilding of a material temple is purely symbolic and the main objective of Masonry is to discover **the whole world, the universe at large and, above all, every human heart as God's temple**. This will happen more easily if we know how to preserve the sense of wonderment of our childhood and be conscious at all times of the wonderful reality of the world, life and human nature. Indeed everything on our physical earth and in our material body is the symbol of a far greater and higher reality with which Man should commune within his inner self in order to fuse with God. Commune with the spiritual scene around you, hear the voice of the Spirit in every sound, see its signs in every passing form of things, and feel its impulse in all action, passion and being.

The objective of **all action in life** should be **moral and spiritual improvement** since all life and the world are spiritual in essence. There cannot be any **spiritual development** without a **strong moral base** including justice, equity, peacemaking and love. **Everyday's tasks and relations of life** provide millions of opportunities to improve oneself and society by restraining our passions, practising patience, calmness, perseverance, selflessness and forbearance, and spreading wisdom and loving kindness. These virtues inscribe the name of any human being in the great eternal pages of the universe, or **Akashic archives**, to use an Oriental expression. Hence the necessity to labor for **harmony and sympathy** which are God's fundamental laws, as potent and inflexible as gravitation. Going against them brings about negative **karmic** effects as automatic retribution for the evil-doer unable to build his divine inner temple of peace.

The Hebrew people's trials, the destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora have often been presented as occurring because the Hebrews lost the **True Word**, that is to say the right concept of what or whom we call God, to make things easier. They are said to have lost **Truth**, in the sense of the highest possible human concept of the ineffable essential reality and Supreme Principle of the universe. Therefore, « Princes of Jerusalem » should be the soldiers of Truth, armed with the sword of courage and patience, and the trowel of untiring labor, to propagate the universal philosophy, the non-dogmatic spiritual, moral and political tenets of Masonry. Truth requires constant **self-examination** and deliberate choices to do what is intellectually, morally and spiritually best for oneself and society, and not what is most funny, most convenient and most popular. Princes of Jerusalem should leave a new temple, a noble heritage to those who come after them.

CONCLUSION

This Degree is an allegory of the trials that Man faces when he decides to build a life of goodness and ethics based on love, Truth, peace and toleration, intended to benefit others. He is immediately beset by enemies, as he hinders the dishonest game of those impelled by greed, selfishness, fanaticism and tyranny as well as his own instinctive

impulses within himself. Hence the prevailing symbols of the sword and the trowel, and the saffron color of hope for the eventual victory of Good and the glory of Humanity.