

## Grand Council Short Talk # 2

### SWORD AND TROWEL

The Sword and the Trowel are common Masonic symbols first introduced in the Blue Lodge degrees and contained in some Royal Arch chapter rituals, but most often they combine to identify the Companions, Officers, Councils and Grand Councils of Royal and Select Masters. Swords and trowels adorn our jewels, lapel pins, insignia, and rings.

Yet, how many of the companions of the Council have a clear understanding of how these symbols relate to the Royal and Select Masters degrees?

In the Blue Lodge, the sword is most closely associated with the duties and place of the Tiler. The trowel is used as one of the working tools to teach a lesson in the Master Mason's degree. But in European lodges of the 1700s and 1800s, a sharp trowel was often the symbol and weapon of defense for the Tiler. Also, several European Craft Lodges of this era honored the newest made Entered Apprentice or raised Master Mason with a jewel bearing a silver trowel. Many times the new initiate is exhorted to exercise Charity, which is related to the cement or mortar which binds, completes, and perfects a building.<sup>1</sup>

In older rituals of the Royal Arch chapter, the reference to Masons to be equipped with a sword and a trowel is outlined as follows:

*"The Sword and Trowel have been adopted by Masons of the Royal Arch to commemorate the valor of those worthy Masons who carried on the building of the Second Temple, with the Trowel in their hands and the Sword by their sides, that they might be ever ready to defend the holy city and*

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<sup>1</sup> FREEMASONS' GUIDE AND COMPENDIUM; BERNARD E. JONES, P. 447-48

*sanctuary against the unprovoked attacks of their enemies; by which they left a sacred and impressive lesson to succeeding ages: that next to the obedience due to lawful authority, a manly and determined resistance to lawless violence is the first step to social duties."*

In 1737 Chevalier Ramsay stated at a convocation of the Grand Lodge of France meeting in Paris, "*after the example set by the Israelites when they erected the Second Temple, who, whilst they handled the trowel and mortar with one hand, in the other held the sword and buckler.*"<sup>2</sup> Also, the symbol of a combined sword and trowel is found in the end of the eighteenth century in Unanimity Chapter, in Wakefield England. The Principal Sojourner of Unanimity Chapter wore a jewel bearing a crossed sword and trowel. Thus, Royal Arch symbolism has for years included the combined sword and trowel.

Therefore, the sword and trowel of a Royal and Select Masters Council are appropriate emblems because the Council is a union or bridge between Ancient Craft and Royal Arch Masonry. The sword and the trowel remind us of the secret and important work performed by those 27 ancient craftsmen that secured the gift of the Jewish, not only for the Israelites and their descendents, but also, for the future generations of followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These Masons provided a means to keep the treasures of the Jewish people safe. Working with a sword in one hand would be very difficult and slow down the process of constructing the secret vault, yet the high importance and need for secrecy of the work demanded that a few workers be employed and that every man be armed. Thus, they showed they had to protect the treasures, as well as the project itself.

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<sup>2</sup> FREEMASONS' GUIDE AND COMPENDIUM; BERNARD E. JONES, P. 495-96

**When used as symbols, the sword and the trowel can also reveal deeper meaning. They show you, as a Royal and Select Master, that as you are building a just and moral life by means of your spiritual temple with the aid of the trowel, you must be on constant vigil to defend the work already completed in the secret vaults of your soul with the defense of the sword. The progress you have made in securing the treasures of a righteous life will be destroyed and God's plan set back for a generation, if your enemies are to freely attack the secret vault of your spiritual temple.**

**As it was written by an ancient Jewish author "*guard your heart for it is the wellspring of Life.*"**

## **Discussion Questions**

- 1. What does the "spread of moral cement," with the trowel mean to you in your daily life?**
- 2. The sword is an emblem of defense. What are some symbolic swords that you use on a regular basis to defend your own principles, beliefs, morality, and livelihood?**
- 3. Look carefully at the Texas Council logo. What symbolism do you receive from what appears there?**

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