

Royal Arch Masonry **The Path to More Light** **in Masonry...**

In each of the first three degrees of Freemasonry, the candidate expresses a desire for light. But once he has been raised, we tend to leave him to his own devices. Those true seekers will find the Royal Arch degrees to be the best “next step” on the path to more light in Masonry.

The six Royal Arch degrees are intimately related to the first three degrees in Masonry. They detail the story of the completion, dedication, destruction, and rebuilding of King Solomon's Temple including the recovery of the lost secrets.

The Royal Arch Degree completes the Blue Lodge Mason's basic instruction and prepares him for a lifetime of seeking light. In Virginia our ancient Constitution of Masonry (Chapter 3, Section 4, Number 7) states, “to exercise all degrees of the Ancient Craft, and consequently the Royal Arch.” This clearly shows the intimate connection between the Blue Lodge and the Royal Arch from ancient times.

PLEASE NOTE:

This material is intended for, and should only be given to, those who have received this degree. Its purpose is to assist new Royal Arch Masons to better remember and understand their experience in this degree.

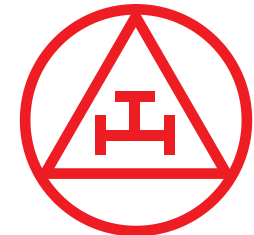


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This material was produced by the Committee on Membership Development and Education, Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia, Donald L. McAndrews, Chairman, and for exclusive use by and within this Grand Jurisdiction



The Holy **Royal** **Arch**



Royal Arch Masonry
Uncovering The Lost Secrets

The Holy Royal Arch the restoration of the Lost Secrets

According to John Dove in his *Royal Arch Textbook*, “This degree is indescribably more august, sublime, and important than all which precede it; and is the summit and perfection of ancient Masonry. It impresses on our minds a belief of the being and existence of a Supreme Deity, without beginning of days, or end of years; and reminds us of the reverence due to His holy name.”

The principle symbol of this degree includes a circle and an equilateral triangle, both of which are symbols of Deity. The circle having no beginning or end alludes to that Eternal Being, the Great I Am, who always was, is now, and will always be. The equilateral triangle symbolizes the three natures of our triune God: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. We observe a repetition in the above symbols of the sacred number three which can be observed throughout Masonry: three knocks, three initial degrees, three Grand Masters at the building of the Temple, three persistent conspirators, three stationed officers in the Lodge, three Great Lights, three lesser lights, three working tools of a Fellowcraft, three forms of wages, three companion candidates in the Royal Arch Degree, three stationed officers in the Chapter, nine companions (three time three) necessary to open a Chapter, the three sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth), the triangular pavement, and the living arch.

As the Royal Arch Degree begins, we encounter God through the biblical account of the burning bush (Exodus 3), where Moses was given the command to return to Egypt and lead forth the children of Israel from bondage, and where God imparted to him the Ineffable Name. With bare feet and hidden eyes we learn

to stand in His presence with humility. Next, we receive a brief account of the evil behavior of King Zedekiah which eventuates in the destruction of the city and Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar (II Chronicles 36), the slaughter of its inhabitants, and the captive exile of the survivors. Finally, the scene jumps forward over fifty years in time to the ascent of King Cyrus to the throne of Persia, his order to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, and the release of willing captives to return and engage in that great and glorious work.

This degree is incredibly rich in the mental pictures it evokes as the three companion candidates make their long trip over rough and rugged roads, across bridges, through ruins, over mountains and past quarries back to Jerusalem. Throughout the journey they are continually reminded to look to God for protection and guidance, and to humble themselves in order to pass increasingly low arches through which their journey must travel. For the candidate, nearly all of the senses are involved in the experience of this degree - that of seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling - that of taste only being excluded. This full involvement of the several senses makes this degree a peculiar and spectacular experience.

Once back in Jerusalem the candidates experience the pain of seeing the destroyed fragments of their beloved Temple and the fractured walls and bulwarks of their ruined city. On seeing a new building on Mt. Moriah, they are hopeful of participating in the great and glorious work of rebuilding. After passing the tests of the four outer veils of the sacred tabernacle now standing on Mt. Moriah, they finally present themselves to the Grand

Council of High Priest, King and Scribe, prove themselves to be Most Excellent Masters, and offer their humble services.

During their work of clearing rubbish from the ruins, the three companions discover evidence of a vault below, a secret structure which was explained in the Select Master Degree. Numerous items of importance to the Craft were recovered on several hazardous descents, the greatest of which was a long lost secret of the Craft for which a substitute was given in the second section of the Master Mason Degree until future generations should at long last discover it.

The Royal arch degree is at the pinnacle of Ancient Craft Masonry. It effectively demonstrates that there is no substitute for the genuine in any walk of life; that the Book of the Law is an indispensable guide for our faith and conduct; and that the discovery of the hidden meanings of life and its mission is worth all of the effort and sacrifice necessary in obtaining them. “Holiness to the Lord” is its creed, and the true sanctification of the pilgrimage of life is its sublime lesson.

In the Holy Royal Arch we travel a great and perfect circle. We return to the point from which we started - we came from God and to Him we finally return. Ritualistically, in Masonry, we began our journey humbly upon our knees with the proclamation of our faith in the Supreme Being. In the quiet darkness of the Holy Royal Arch, we find inestimable gifts of knowledge which He preserved for us. In the shade of a living arch and over a triangular pavement we quietly hear His Name. In the company of our companions, we receive the eternal command to seek. So mote it be.