

Masonic Words and Phrases

**Edited by
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A Cornerstone Book
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FORWARD

Freemasonry, when properly understood, is a life-long journey towards self-improvement. By means of presenting certain philosophical truths, the teachings of Freemasonry can offer an opportunity for living a more productive and rewarding life. There is, however, no final examination administered by grand lodges to determine when self-improvement takes place nor any attempt to determine ones level of self-improvement (if such a thing could be measured). Ours is a personal journey down the particular path we choose for ourselves. There is no rule that we must all walk the same path nor any yardstick used to measure our progress against another. The fact is that if one wishes to remain a member of a lodge, but make no attempt towards self-improvement, he may well remain a member of that lodge for life. If, however, one wishes to employ the teachings of Masonry with the goal of personal development, then a proper foundation is necessary.

The first steps to properly understanding the philosophical truths offered by Masonry require an understanding of the medium used to deliver these truths. In our case, this would mean an understanding of our symbols, words, usages and manner of presenting our instructions. By understanding these basic elements, our ways of teaching become clear and we can properly benefit from all that Masonry offers.

The goal of this work is to provide a handy and useful quick reference guide to many of the common words and phrases used in Masonry. While not designed to replace the education a new Mason receives from his instructor, this work can augment any study plan and provide valuable assistance to any Mason. This work is designed to be only one of many tools used by the dedicated student during his journey towards self-mastery.

Michael R. Poll
2005

A

Aaron

he was the brother of and "second in command" to Moses, and the first high priest under Mosaic dispensation; he was the founder of the "Aaronic" priesthood.

Aaron's Rod

the rod or staff carried by Aaron, brother of Moses, as a token of his office. The rod miraculously blossomed as evidence of his Divine choice as High Priest. It was afterwards preserved in the Ark of the Covenant.

Abhorrence of Evil

the quality required of all true Masons.

Abif

The "Abif" of Hiram Abif does not appear in the Bible. The word Abi or Abiw or Abiv is translated in the King James version both as "his father" and "my father" - using the word "father" as a term of respect and not as denoting a parent. Hiram, the widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, was "my father" in the same sense that Abraham was "my father" to members of the tribes of Israel.



The thought that the two syllables are a surname is an error. The legend gains, not loses, in appeal when Abif becomes a title of honor. Just when and how it came into the Masonic terminology is still unknown; it

does not appear in the Regis document (oldest of our Constitutions, dated approximately 1390) but does appear - only as one name among many - in the Dowland manuscript of 1550. Apparently the term was not in common use until after the King James Bible (1611) had become familiar in Masonic circles.

The story of Hiram Abif as told in the Masonic tale is not found in the Bible, nor is there any meaning in the word which can be construed as part of the story as Masons tell it, except that of veneration.

Abraham

in the Bible, the first patriarch and progenitor of the Hebrew people. He was the father of Isaac. Abraham was earlier known as Abram, the son of Terah of Ur. His name was changed to Abraham by God. He was noted for his faith, for piety, and for his loyalty to God.



Acacia

any of various often spiny trees or shrubs of the genus *Acacia* in the pea family, having alternate, bipinnately compound leaves or leaves represented by flattened leafstalks and heads or spikes of small flowers. Also, the Shittim tree. The wood of the Shittim tree is said to have been used for the furniture of the Temple of Solomon. In speculative Masonry, the term is often used as a symbol of the immortality of the soul.



Accepted

In Operative Masonry members were admitted through course of time, and when the Craft had begun to decay, gentlemen who had no intention of doing builders' work, but were interested in the Craft for social, or perhaps for antiquarian reasons, were "accepted" into membership; to distinguish these gentlemen Masons from the Operatives in the membership they were called the "Accepted." After 1717, when the whole Craft was revolutionized into a Fraternity, all members became non-Operatives, hence our use of the word in such phrases as "Free and Accepted Masons."

Accord

to make to conform or agree; bring into harmony. Required of all Masons in the philosophical sense in order to attain true Brotherhood.

Active Member

an active member is one who maintains his membership in a Masonic Lodge by the payment of his lodge dues and who takes part in the work and duties of the Craft. One who fails to do these things may remain a Mason at heart, but deprives himself of the benefits of active membership.

Adam

in the Bible, the first man and the husband of Eve. The name denotes that he was derived from the ground.

Adjournment

to suspend until a later stated time. The Worshipful Master is the most often the sole judge with reference

to the adjournment of a Lodge, unless a time is fixed in the lodge bylaws.

Adhering Mason

There was a time in America (early 1800's) when the enemies of Freedom formed an anti-Masonic political party. The issues of the anti-Masons were brought before the people of the United States, and the anti-Masonic party was soundly defeated in a national election. The time, however, was still difficult for many Masons in different areas of the U.S. Those Masons who remained loyal to their lodges and grand lodges were called Adhering Masons. The "Adhering Mason" was then often scorned; now the term is one of honor.

Admonish

to reprove gently, but firmly. One of the most exacting duties in the ethics of Freemasonry is that a Mason should not publicize the faults of a Brother Mason, but shall whisper good, private counsel in his ear. An admonition must be given in the language of brotherly affection, the magic tongue of love, and with the persuasive attitude of "mercy unrestrained."

Adonai

used in Judaism as a spoken substitute for the ineffable name of God. While this proper name is not found in our English Bible, it occurs in several passages of the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

Adoration

the act of worship. A fundamental tenet of Freemasonry is that God is supreme, pre-eminent, and exalted above all creation, and that He alone is to be wor-

shipped. Throughout all of the Degrees and in all of the ritual of Masonry, God is worshipped in adorations which are expressed in both silent and oral prayers.

Adversity

a state of hardship or affliction; misfortune. Freemasonry believes that adversity should be accepted as a test of character and met with courage and prayer. Also, a Mason should go to the aid of a Brother Mason in adversity.

Affiliate

to associate oneself as a subordinate, subsidiary, employee, or member. *Filius* is Latin for son, *filia* for daughter; the prefix "af" is a form of the Latin ad, meaning to add to. To be affiliated means therefore to be adopted into a family as a son or daughter, a meaning that beautifully covers a Mason's relation to their Lodge once they have affiliated with it.

Affirmation

something declared to be true; a positive statement or judgment. Affirmations instead of oaths are entirely inadmissible in Freemasonry.

Age, Lawful

this is the age when a man may apply to join a Masonic Lodge. In many jurisdictions, it is the age of twenty-one (21); in others, it is eighteen (18).

Ahiman Rezon

a book of Masonic law. The Antients' Grand Lodge of England published a Book of Constitutions in 1756,

under the title "Ahiman Rezon, or a Help to a Brother." Eight editions were published in all before the Union of the two Grand Lodges in England in 1813. The title "Ahiman Rezon" was brought to America and used by several Grand Lodges; it is still the title of the books of law in Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

Aid of Deity

a fundamental principle of Freemasonry as illustrated in David's intercession for Solomon for the task of building the Temple.

Alarm

The Latin for weapons, or arms, was *arma*. Our "art" and "article" came from the same root, art meaning something originally made by the use of the arms, hands and fingers. The English "alarm" goes back directly to the Italian *alle arme*, and ultimately to the Latin *ad arma* so that "alarm" means "to arms, signifying that something has happened of possible danger. A knock at the Lodge door is so named because it calls for alertness, lest one unworthy be permitted to enter.

Allegiance

A Mason's first allegiance is to God, second to his family, then to his country and then to his Lodge.

Allegory

The Greeks called a place of public assembly *agora*; from this they built the word *agoreuein*, meaning speak, in the sense of addressing the public. When to this is added *allos*, meaning another, the compound gives us our "allegory," which is the speaking about one thing in the terms of something else. In Masonry we have the

allegory of Solomon's Temple, of a journey, of the legend of a martyr builder, etc., in each case the acting and describing of one thing being intended to refer to some other thing. For example, the building of Solomon's Temple is described, not for the purpose of telling how that structure was erected, but to suggest how men may work together in brotherliness at a common task.

All-Seeing Eye

A perpetual and permanent symbol in the Lodge and work of Freemasonry, signifying the omnipresence and omniscience of God.

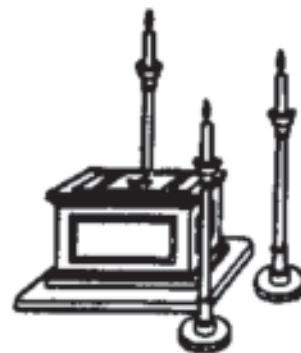


Almsgiving

helping the poor; a cornerstone of charity.

Altar

Alt, in Latin, referred to height, preserved in our "altitude;" this root appeared in *altare*, literally meaning a "high place." In primitive religion it was a common practice to make sacrifices, or conduct worship, on the top of a hill, or high platform, so that "altar" came to be applied to any stone, post, platform, or other elevation used for such purposes. The altar holds the central place in the Lodge room of Freemasons. Lying on the altar is the Holy bible, the principal Light of



Masons, which is open during the work of the Lodge. Here, candidates voluntarily kneel and assume the obligations of the several Degrees.

Amen

used at the end of a prayer or a statement to express assent or approval. An expression by which one person confirms the word of another and expresses his wish for the success of that word. Following "Amen," Masons often employ the literal rendering of the word, "So mote it be."

Anchor

In those Degrees of Masonry where the ceremonies and instructions relate to life and death, man's journey over the sea of life is symbolized by Noah's Ark, and the hope of immortality and a safe landing in the haven of eternal security is symbolized by the anchor.



Anger

a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility. The tenets of Freemasonry teach its members to avoid and to subdue every element of ire and wrath, or enraged emotions and malicious emotions and sentiments.

Angle

the inclination of two lines meeting in a point. Angles are of three kinds-acute, obtuse, and right angles. The right angle, or the angle of 90 degrees, is the principal one recognized in Freemasonry.