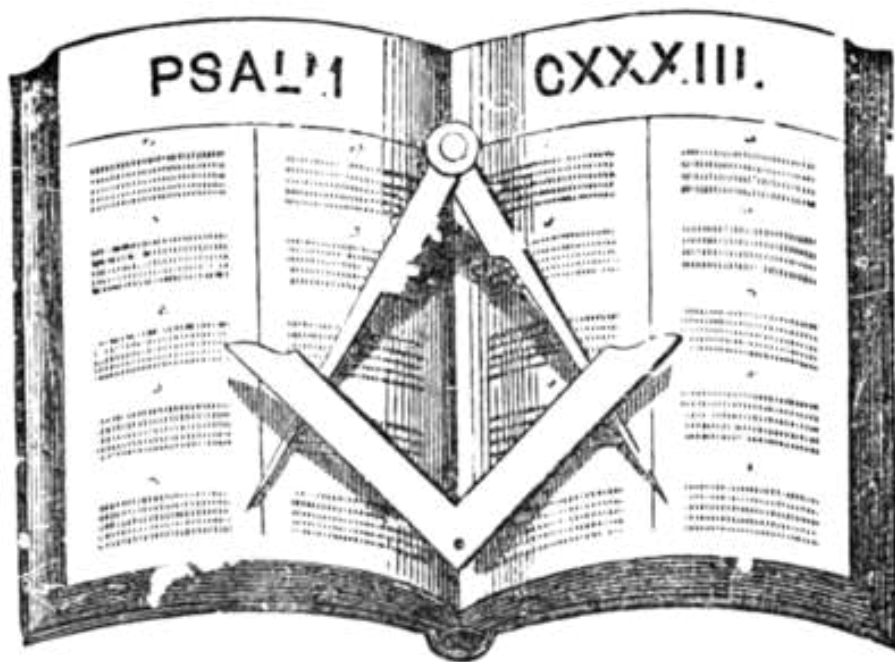

The Lyceum



A publication of the Illinois
Committee on Masonic Education



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Brothers all,

Your committee on Masonic Education conducted surveys in which it asked you--the constituents of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, what you had an interest in for publication in *The Lyceum*. We worked to compile the results, and we had in late 2022 to begin covering the topics you wanted most.

Starting with the left foot--we begin 2023 with our Entered Apprentice issue. This issue contains articles originally written for this issue as well as carefully selected pieces that had been previously published elsewhere. The Entered Apprentice degree is our foundational Masonic experience, and by this one degree, candidates will forever be changed if done appropriately.

We hope this issue will serve to inspire you, educate you, and offer perspectives and points of view that will expand our minds--to become better than we are.

Past AEO, Jordan Kelly breaks apart the Entered Apprentice Charge in a modern way that helps us understand what it's telling us. Education Committee Member Chad Lacek speaks to Freemasonry's journey--that we're all in it together. An original piece by Committee Member Justus E. Fischer finds us reminiscing about the Entered Apprentice Degree through his eyes and ultimately coming to a solemn truth about our progress in the Craft. We've also got an exclusive announcement in the form of a short write-up by Brother Kevin A. Wheeler. The Illinois Lodge of Research has launched a formal self-driven Masonic Education Course, and Bro Kevin lays out the details. We've also included a spiritual piece from Brother Hilton Kaufman, the editor of the *Annual Transactions of the Illinois Lodge of Research*. In it, he explores those famous words, "In the beginning..."

There's even more to discover as you dive in. Enjoy!

R.H. Johnson
R.H. Johnson



From the Chairman

W.:B.: Michael Overturf, Chairman



On behalf of the Committee on Masonic Education, my brothers, we wish you a very Happy New year. May 2023 bring you peace, love, and prosperity. This month we start a new series that I am looking forward to. We will investigate the First Degree and explore the Entered Apprentice degree further. This issue caused me to go into my library and do a little research of my own, and I hope that it will cause you to do the same, as this is the foundation of our masonic journey.

Depending on our perspective, we can make this as straightforward or as complex as possible. I have found that starting with the Entered Apprentice and moving to Master Mason, our ritual has some hidden gems, mainly the importance of patience and prayer--they serve us well both in good times and during the difficult trials which life throws at us. Another portion of the ritual that always sticks out to me is the charge given to me in the northeast corner of the lodge--"to walk and act as such," no matter the situation.

Our progress in Masonry ebbs and flows like the tides. Some days we make huge breakthroughs. Others have huge backsteps which erase our gains and put us back to square one. But regardless of where this finds you, always remember that the building of this edifice is based largely on our work, and we may need a refresher course to help us along the journey sometimes.



Next Month's Theme

The Fellow of the Craft

IMSAP

Mission & Vision

Our Mission is to SAVE LIVES by partnering with schools and providing training and support to teachers and educators to prevent bullying and drug and alcohol abuse amongst children and young adults.

Our Vision is to grow this successful program and to continue to change the narrative of students who are at risk of compromising their futures.



MASONIC STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Through a school-based early intervention approach, we work to enhance educators' skills in identifying at-risk students. We work with administrators to develop an intervention team--or Core Team--to develop a plan to guide students toward school and community resources for support.

BE PART OF THE CHANGE!

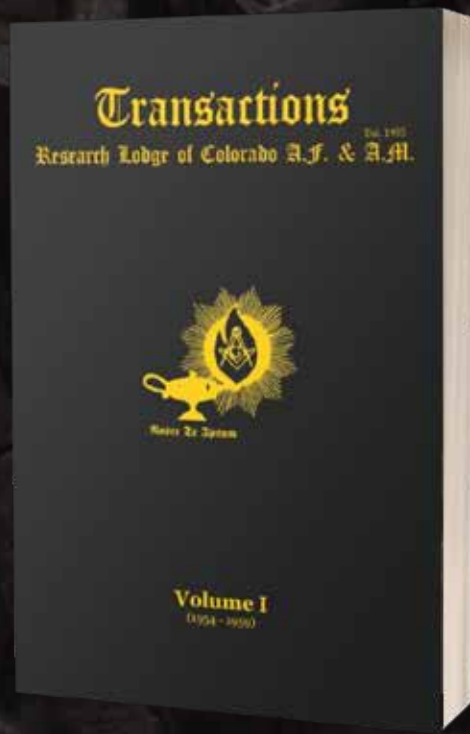
We are always welcome and encouraging of any assistance provided to us. Whether through your monetary contributions or by reaching out to your district to bring IMSAP to your local schools, you can be a part of the change we work to instill in the lives of our youth. You can be impactful and be a part of the incredible impression we have on our students and our future.

DONATE

You can save lives! Every dollar you donate is applied to our programs, and your money literally saves lives. We are a 501C 3 entity; therefore, your contribution is deductible.



Visit www.IMSAP.org to get started!



Since 1953, the Research Lodge of Colorado has been producing quality Masonic Education papers. Over the last three years, the Lodge has worked tirelessly to compile the transactions into an amazing volume that is beautifully curated and printed. Volume II is coming!

\$20

RLCOLO.Org/Items

Understanding the Charges Pt. 1

The Entered Apprentice

by PAEO Western Area WB Jordan Kelly

The following is certainly not what you're used to reading when you look through the ritual. Something often talked about by Masonic Scholars is a hypothetical situation in which our ritual is rewritten in modern-day language. The record just screeched to a halt, and the crickets are singing... Rewriting the ritual?! Not under my watch!

Well, bear with us. Something that every Masonic jurisdiction deals with are our member's unfamiliarity with the meaning of the words within our ritual. It sure sounds poetic and profound, but what does it mean? Seasoned veterans of the Craft will tell you that only through learning the ritual via memory were they able to truly comprehend what the words we all recite mean. And in truth--it's a shame that any Freemason parrots the ritual and goes about his life not understanding what he preaches to our new Brethren.

So, what if? What follows is the first in a series that will be printed in the next two months, written by PAEO Jordan Kelly. In these, he breaks down each paragraph of the Charges (EA, FC, & MM) in regular, easy-to-understand verbiage. No thesaurus or etymology dictionary necessary. I hope you find it engaging and thought-provoking. It may help if you have your ritual book with you as you parallel-read the ritual paragraph and then these breakout sections.

~R. H. Johnson



1st Paragraph

Congratulations! You did it! You joined the oldest fraternity in the world. Not only are we ancient, but also honorable. How are we honorable? Because by abiding by the fraternity's

rules, the men become honorable. This creates a cycle of an honorable institution--teaching honorable lessons, creating honorable individuals, and forming an honorable institution. We are founded in the PRACTICE of moral and social virtues, which we'll get back to soon. Throughout our history, our members have included moral and intellectual leaders, and even those leaders that are not members have understood our importance. We stress the importance of meeting on the level, so much so that even state leaders will step down from their rank in order to spread brotherly love and learn our lessons.

2nd Paragraph

Have a Volume of the Sacred Law! Of course, most of us have one specific preference. But our teachings are that we must have this standard of truth and justice. If we attempt to determine this ourselves, we will fail. We must look to Divine guidance for light. Treat God with the respect and fear that is due. Ask for

Divine help in all things, but especially for comfort and support during difficult times. Treat our “neighbors” fairly and remember the Golden Rule, acting with brotherly love and relief. Treat yourself with respect and be disciplined. Be the best version of yourself possible so that you can tap into your natural talents. Above all, lead by example!

3rd Paragraph

We are all members of society. As the lodge is made up of individual Masons, so is the community made up of individual citizens. Hold yourself to high standards. Ask yourself, “is what I’m about to do going to hurt the harmony of this group? Is it peaceful and orderly?” Abide by the law. This is not to say that we must agree that all laws are just. But again, lead by example, and change things through proper channels as much as applicable. By breaking laws, regardless of their injustice, we denigrate our reputation in the minds of society. Have an allegiance to your country, specifically the people that make up our society, as discussed at the beginning of this section.

4th Paragraph

Practice the virtues taught in this degree. **IT IS OUR FOUNDATION!** Remember the Cardinal Virtues. Be restrained, both in attitude and substance, by remembering our penalty. Be resilient by pushing through difficult times and remembering how you were received. Be cautious and aware of your surroundings, interactions, and thoughts by remembering your oath. Be fair by acting with civility and walking uprightly,

recalling your time as the youngest Entered Apprentice.

Live by our Tenants. By practicing Brotherly Love, we engrain ourselves as one family--a family that never would have met otherwise if not for Freemasonry. In practicing Relief, it is our duty to aid those that need help. This is the basis of friendships. Live in Truth. Truth is a divine attribute. It teaches us not to be hypocrites or deceivers but to speak clearly, precisely, and sincerely.

5th Paragraph

We’re trusting you to keep all of these things. By following these lessons, we are able to build a sense of faith, purpose, and loyalty. Make sure if you want someone to join, that they are able to believe that they can live and abide by these lessons! Perhaps not living these fully at the moment, but having the capacity and potential to do so. For if we bring in unfit members, it reflects poorly on the Craft and us. However, when we bring in those that can abide by our lessons, we are able to continue the cycle of our Ancient and Honorable Institution!



Featured Article

Fear Not, New Brother

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°



Just the other day, I started reading *The Ethics of Freemasonry* by Dudley Wright. It's a compilation of articles from 1924. I was doing so on my phone, which,

when turned sideways, only allowed me to see nine lines at a time. It was tedious to pause every few seconds to advance the text, so I developed the technique of rhythmically gliding my thumb over the screen to keep the words steadily scrolling by. I felt excited and impatient for the next sentence to appear, but my eyes couldn't read comfortably if the words were moving too quickly. Then it hit me. I was reading with the exact same naiveté and wonder that I had when I was an Entered Apprentice.

How could this be? I am a Past Master this and a Right Worshipful that. I've gone through the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 32nd, and even 33rd degrees! When I was an Entered Apprentice, I thought that Masons of that experience were wizened sages who had all the answers, with powers just short of controlling the stars as they transit the heavens. I realize now how untrue that is. I'm still at the starting line, right next to you, new Brother.

It's very common to describe one's journey in Freemasonry as a "Path." This conjures the image of a winding road extending to the horizon, which each of us will walk as we progress in the Craft. It means that an

Entered Apprentice is just taking his first step, and I am far ahead, so far, that you can't see me. It also means that we will never meet on this path since I have such a large head start. This couldn't be further from the truth. I don't believe in the path anymore.

I think every single Mason is standing shoulder-to-shoulder beside one another. We are all facing forward in the direction of the moments of our life, which advance toward us and then wash over us, never to be experienced again. We are all standing at the Starting Line, though some of us have been standing there longer than others.

It means that you are not alone, Brother. You do not walk a lonely path. No one, not even the Grand Master himself, is ahead of and far removed from you. I know that you feel overwhelmed with so many new things to learn, so many symbols to interpret, and so much ritual to study. Fear not, new Brother, because we all still feel that way. I have just as much to learn now as I did when I first knocked on the preparation room door. I'm convinced that will never change, and that's the way it's supposed to be. So relax. Enjoy the lifelong journey. You have no one to catch up to. We're with you all the way.



Reflections on the Entered Apprentice Degree

by Bro. Justus E. Fischer,

At the time of writing for this issue of *The Lyceum*, I am rapidly approaching the Fifth Anniversary of my Masonic membership in this ancient and honorable society. To some of our more seasoned members, five years is a short time, but it feels much longer for me. I can distinctively recall my initiation into the lodge. I remember being asked in the anteroom if I was “truly prepared.” to embark on this journey before entering the lodge room. Deep in my heart, I knew I was evermore ready before giving three distinct knocks on the lodge door.

During my initiation as an Entered Apprentice, I distinctly recall a passage read taken from the Book of Genesis to conclude my obligation before the blindfold was removed from my eyes by one of the lodge officers.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, let there be light, and there was light.”

Masonic light is a subjective term with various connotations, but the light referenced here is the illumination of one’s consciousness. As we leave the profane world behind us and blindly enter a sacred space devoid of secular vocations, we are reborn like the phoenix rising from the ashes.

I became an Entered Apprentice of Freemasonry on September 11, 2017, and afterward, we shared libations at a pub down the street to celebrate my birthday at midnight. Little did I know my entire life would change from that moment onward. This experience left me with more questions and contemplation. A new lodge member is assigned a mentor to help guide them further during the process. However, in my particular situation, I’ve had a revolving cast of members to help teach and guide me along my prospective journey as a Freemason. These mentors had various ideals and values of making “good men better.” This experience was deeply profound to my psyche, as it was one of the most memorable degrees I have witnessed in my five years as a member (and I’ve seen a lot of de-

grees.) When properly executed, this ritual truly illuminates the candidate’s mind. It sparks that part of the creative mind that drives our curiosity. This anecdote is my humble opinion, but if a candidate were to witness his Masonic Degrees in a sizeable classroom-style setting (i.e., one-day degree conferals.) I recommend taking the 1st degree separately via the traditional method as intended. The obligation is a big undertaking for the new member. It is a solemn and sincere token of affection to the Craft.

I still remember vividly the oath I swore to uphold on the altar with the volume of sacred law in front of me and my hands attached to it, with the weaker half of my body kneeling before the Worshipful Master. It does not matter to me how many awards, titles, or accolades I have obtained thus far in my Masonic journey. I will always be an Entered Apprentice searching for knowledge, truth, and justice. Until my labors on earth have ended, I will always be that speculative builder with the bib of my apron turned up in the operative fashion.



The Illinois Lodge of Research Masonic Education Program

by WB Kevin A. Wheeler



After the recent release of the Illinois Masonic Education Program by the Illinois Lodge of Research, I was asked to do a write-up on it for the Lyceum.

At first, I was confused as to what was being asked of me regarding doing a write-up, as I was somewhat unfamiliar with the term, but after meditating, I figured I'd discuss how it came about, what it is, and what its goals are.

Like many Masons, I joined Freemasonry because I had a thirst for knowledge. I wanted to discover the so-called hidden truths that the mystery schools left behind for its inheritors. Truthfully, I wanted the knowledge that was not provided in my traditional educational methods, as well as knowing if the "conspiracy stuff" had any truth to it. After joining Freemasonry, I was intrigued by its beautiful rituals and lessons found in the degree work, but I felt a kind of void in the sense of truly knowing some of the other aspects of Masonry. Thus, I began participating in the various education programs that I could find throughout Freemasonry.

I looked for formal education programs around the United States. I found a handful, and I enrolled and completed them all. While participating in those great and amazingly created formal Masonic Education Programs, I was only able to find one whose focus was on Craft Masonry. The others all dealt specifically with either the York or Scottish Rites. One of the most important things I've learned while on this journey for Further Light In Masonry is that More Is Obtained When Knowledge Is Shared. Knowing this and seeing the need for more educational avenues, I embarked on a journey that resulted in creating a self-guided and self-paced Masonic Education program that could be utilized and adapted for any grand jurisdiction. As some of you may know, I am also the creator



of the education programs for the Grand Chapter, Grand Council, and Grand Commandery of Illinois; however, what I'm sure only a few may know, is that this program was my first creation.

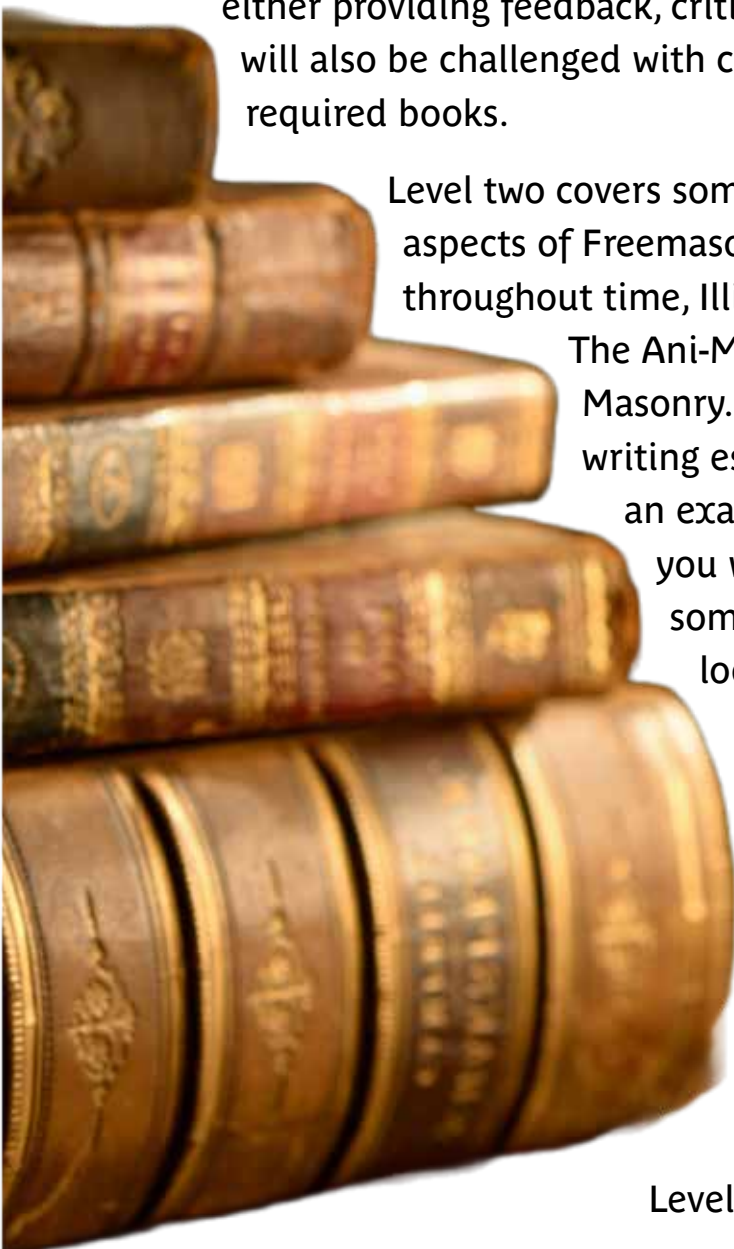
This program focuses on the Craft Lodge and is far more difficult than those you'll find in the York Rite, and this is because it was designed for those who aspire to become Masonic Scholars, who not only want to learn but are also dedicated to sharing that knowledge. The program has four levels because Freemasonry originally had four parts or degrees, "It is declared and pronounced that pure Ancient (sic) Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more viz: those of the entered apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch" (1813 Articles of Union). Therefore, each level incorporates an aspect of Freemasonry while also instilling valuable skills.

In level one, we explore the history and origins of Freemasonry. Here, you are charged with reading several required & optional books and writing an essay, either providing feedback, criticism or discovered light, etc. You will also be challenged with completing an exam pertaining to the required books.

Level two covers some very important and often overlooked aspects of Freemasonry. Here we explore Freemasonry throughout time, Illinois Masonry, Prince Hall Masonry, The Anti-Masonic Movement, and Clandestine Masonry. To complete this level, in addition to writing essays for each book read and passing an exam accompanying the required books, you will have the option of conducting some type of formal education at your lodge.

Level three causes you to focus on the symbolism found throughout the first three degrees, providing various perspectives pertaining to both the York and the Scottish Craft Degree Symbolism. As in the previous levels, you are charged with writing essays and completing an exam.

Level four is the section where the



Brother is given the option to explore any aspect of Masonry of his choosing. Specifically, he is tasked with writing a comprehensive review of the education program or a research paper dealing with some aspect of Esoteric Masonry.

Aside from obtaining Further Light in Masonry by participating in this program, you will also inadvertently develop as a person and a Mason. The overall goal of the program is to develop Masonic Scholars in order to provide an additional tool to use in our journey of becoming perfect ashlar, to aid in making good men better. After all, More Is Obtained When Knowledge Is Shared.

WB Kevin A. Wheeler

Junior Deacon

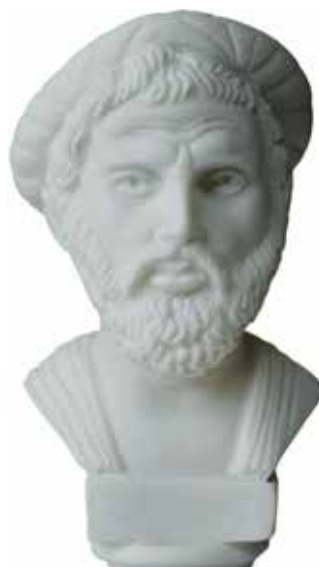
Illinois Lodge of Research

To get started in this free educational program, visit



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FOR THE MASONIC SCHOLAR



In the Beginning

Hilton Kaufman. P.M.

Everyone is entitled to his own opinion regarding what Masonry is and what it means to him. Some consider Masonry to be highly esoteric, while others consider that approach to be complete nonsense. Take this as you will.

There is a passage in Masonic Ritual as the blindfold is removed after the obligation, at least in Illinois, which begins, "In the Beginning, . . ." What does this mean? What is the beginning? Was there something before the beginning, was the universe created ab initio? This can be quite esoteric if one wants to go that way.

This opening single Hebrew word or English phrase which starts the Bible can receive a Kabbalistic approach for an esoteric understanding. I am not trained in philosophy and question just how esoteric Masonry is in practice, but I hope this explanation will be found to be of some interest.

The Sepher Yezirah[1] describes how a universe of little more than letters and ideas had to exist before the Earth and its inhabitants could be created. There was a period of Nothingness, followed by a period of existence, which is related to something which is--the beginning.

The Zohar[2], another important Kabbalistic work, describes a dark flame issued from a "mysterious Infinite." After the flame gained form and size, it produced radiant colors. Eventually, a well broke through under the influence of a heavenly point of light. Humans are unable to comprehend this preceding period of Nothingness; the creation from it is known as the beginning. [3]

The period of Nothingness has been described as being one with the infinite, also known as the Ein Sof. Everything with that which later becomes the Creator, Deity, or Supreme Architect is part of this incompressible and unidentifiable Ein Sof. We cannot comprehend the period of Nothingness. [4]

A major Kabbalistic school thus maintains that the heaven and the Earth were creatio ex nihilo, created from nothing. [5]

Masonically, this is the moment when the candidate is brought from darkness to light and begins to receive his Masonic enlightenment. His conductor has been leading him through something which he cannot comprehend. A new Masonic existence is being revealed to him. He now has light so that he can see that which is all around him. It is his beginning on a journey of enlightenment.

[1] Rev. Dr. Isidor Kaliisch. Sepher Yezirah: A Book on Creation; or, The Jewish Metaphysics of Remote Antiquity. (North Hollywood, CA: Symbols & Signs, 1973, reprint of 1877)

[2] Gershom G. Scholem. Zohar: The Book of Splendor. (New York: Schocken Books, 1974)

[3] Scholem, 2

[4] Charles Ponce, Kabbalah: An Introduction and Illumination for the World Today (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973) 94-96.

[5] Rabbi Sneur Zalman of Liadi. Litatei Amarim: Tanya, Bi-Lingual Edition, "Shaar Hayichud, Chapter 2", (Brooklyn: "Kehot" Publication society) 291



The First Step in Masonry

An examination of the role of the Senior Warden

by WB Adam Thayer

Recently, I've been lucky enough to sit as Senior Warden for several Entered Apprentice degrees. Of course, as often happens, my mind starts to wander during the "downtime" of the station, and I found myself considering the truly magnificent role the Senior Warden plays, which we usually take for granted.

At a relatively early point in the degree, the Senior Warden teaches the candidate, who is not yet a Mason, the proper way to approach Masonry. This lesson is often glossed over, as immediately after the man takes the first obligation and becomes a brother; however, there are infinite depths that can be explored from this very short, simple teaching.

The Senior Warden is responsible for helping the candidate take his first step in Masonry. What a powerful moment--when we are reminded of how Masonry should be taught: an experienced, established brother guiding an inexperienced one by example and allegory.

The candidate is taught (and we are reminded) of the importance of walking and standing upright. This lesson is repeated over and over throughout the three degrees; however, this is the first time the candidate is exposed to the idea.

The candidate is also taught to take growth slowly, and to only take one step at a time. In our excitement for the teachings of the fraternity, it is very easy to get ahead of ourselves and try to learn everything at once. Freemasonry, however, is a progressive science, and it is pointless to try to learn the wisdom that we aren't prepared for. So, for now, just take the one step in front of you.

Finally, we remind the candidate of the importance of acting on the square. Again, this is reemphasized at many different points in the degrees; however, as it is one of the most valuable teachings of our institution, it cannot be discussed enough.

All of this is taught in just a few sentences, which is a constant reminder to me of the depth of teaching that our ancient ritual writers were able to understand and that we hope, by a constant application of study, to rediscover.



THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE AND THE LODGE CLOSING CEREMONY

by Brother Randy Sanders

The other evening, I was honored to be included in an interactive presentation by North Carolina's Past Grand Master, Shaun Bradshaw. In this presentation, Most Worshipful Shaun described the Hero's Journey and how it fits into Masonic initiation. Several of us described the travels of the initiate, the 12 steps the candidate takes in each degree, and even how the whole of the three degrees itself becomes the journey.

MWB Shaun skillfully guided the group in comparing and contrasting the Hero's Journey and the Masonic initiation by listening to the participants and adding perfectly timed insight to the conversation. I highly recommend any opportunity you may take to listen and learn from the Most Worshipful in this and his other presentations.

A new Brother goes through the degree, takes his obligation, receives the lecture and charge, and is seated among the brethren. This was a powerful moment for me when I received my EA because now I was recognized as a Brother and had become a part of the Lodge. It was very exciting. I watched with wonder and anticipation as the Lodge conducted what little business needed to happen, then proceeded to close

on the EA degree. How cool it was for me to witness the actual ritual of the Lodge!

We, as candidates, hadn't been a part of the opening ceremony, of course, and the Lodge created the sacred space into which we were escorted by a friend, who we later came to know as a Brother. The Lodge had prepared itself for us, and we were prepared, instructed, and escorted. As the evening progressed, we were included in the closing ritual. Included! This was a part of the Hero's Journey in and of itself, but it didn't end there.

The EA degree doesn't actually end with seating the new Brother amongst his Brethren but actually ends with the closing of the Lodge. That's right; our initiatic experience isn't over with the degree... Now we take an active part in the ritual in which we just received. The closing, in many jurisdictions, includes a closing charge, and the closing becomes a part of that initiation, the circumambulation, the hoodwink, the lecture, and the EA charge. This closing of the Lodge, of releasing the sacred space, of being challenged to go out into the world to be better men, all tie back into the degree we each received.

Brothers, this was another powerful reminder to me, a newly made Entered Apprentice, that I was a part of the Lodge. I could now be a part of the ritual of the opening and closing, and it reminds me now that the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason degrees extend beyond the ceremonial degrees themselves. My point is to ask us to remember our own Hero's Journey through the degrees such that we continue to help new Brothers in their own journey. So may we ever meet, act, and part.



EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

Thursday-Sunday, February 8th-12th, 2023

Masonic Week

Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia

<https://amdusa.org/wp/masonic-week>

MASONIC WEEK 2023

FEBRUARY 8TH – 12TH

HYATT REGENCY CRYSTAL CITY
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Friday-Sunday, April 28th-30th, 2023

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Canton Masonic Temple, Canton, Ohio

<http://www.mcme1949.org/events.html>



Saturday, April 29th, 2023

The Southeastern Masonic Education Symposium

Hillsborough Lodge No. 25 F&AM, Tampa, Florida

<https://www.h25smes.org> for more information.



For more visit, MasonicConferences.com

If your lodge or organization is having an Educational Event (not related to instruction or charities), please let us know. Email the details to: secretary@spesnovum.com

Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.





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