



PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF
HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

Setting the Scene

Narrative elements for the
Exaltation Ceremony



Introduction

There are a number of different versions of 'setting the scene', but each has the objective of improving the Candidate's experience, engagement and understanding of the Royal Arch Ceremony.

If your Chapter currently uses a different version of this narrative to that given here, please continue to use your preferred version.

In this document there are two versions – one that may be adopted for use with the form of ritual traditionally used in Chapters across the Province, e.g. Complete or Aldersgate, the second as included in the recently introduced Hampshire & Isle of Wight Abbreviated Ritual.

It is important to note that whichever version is used there is flexibility in how the Chapter presents this during the ceremony.

Usually, it would be delivered at the various breaks in the ceremony when the candidate is outside of the Chapter room and then should be delivered to the Candidate while he is outside and, separately, to the Companions in the Temple or, where the set-up of the Temple allows, the Chapter Mentor (or another Companion) may be able to stand in the door of the Temple and deliver it to both the candidate and the Companions simultaneously.

With the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Abbreviated Ritual, there are fewer occasions when the candidate is outside of the Temple, and so the second form should always be used.

Narrative for the ritual usually used by Chapters in the Province (e.g. Complete, Aldersgate).

BEFORE THE FIRST ENTRANCE...

The following readings - Inside the door of the Temple and Outside the door of the Temple should be read simultaneously.

As PSoj retires to entrust the candidate, when he is outside the door of the Temple.

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

Janitor: (reads) Bro [name], the story about to unfold builds on, and is inextricably linked to, your three Degrees in Craft Masonry. It takes place some 500 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple. King Solomon has long since died. Jerusalem has been attacked by the Babylonians, the city and its once magnificent temple have been destroyed and its inhabitants taken into captivity into Babylon where they remained for 70 years.

We are now at that period in history where the Babylonian Empire itself has been attacked and defeated by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus has recently issued a decree allowing the descendants of the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem. As a candidate for Exaltation, you represent one of those exiles returning to Jerusalem as a Sojourner or Journeyman builder. You will discover that the Temple and Holy city are in ruins and, with your colleagues, offer your assistance in building a new temple when, as you will eventually see, a discovery of very great importance is made.

Before the story begins, however, you will be tested in the Three Degrees of Craft Masonry and then entrusted with a password leading to this Supreme Degree.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

Mentor: (reads) the story about to unfold builds on, and is inextricably linked to, the three Degrees in Craft Masonry. It takes place some 500 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple. King Solomon has long since died. Jerusalem has been attacked by the Babylonians, the city and its once magnificent temple have been destroyed and its inhabitants taken into captivity into Babylon where they have remained for 70 years.

We are now at that period in history where the Babylonian Empire itself has been attacked and defeated by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus has recently issued a decree allowing the descendants of the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem. Our candidate for Exaltation represents one of those exiles returning to Jerusalem as a Sojourner or Journeyman builder. He will discover that the Temple and Holy city are in ruins and, with his colleagues, will offer assistance in building a new temple when, as we will eventually see, a discovery of very great importance is made.

Before the story begins, however, the candidate will be tested in the Three Degrees of Craft Masonry and then entrusted with a password leading to this Supreme Degree.

BEFORE THE SECOND ENTRANCE...

As the candidate is invited to retire after his obligation.

Mentor Goes to the door and opens it so he is in a position where both the Candidate and the Chapter at large can hear him.

Mentor: (reads in such a way that both the Candidate and Comps in the Chapter can hear) "Companion [name], You will shortly return to the Chapter as one of the three Sojourner journeyman builders. You will go right back to the start of the story but, this time, you will not be hoodwinked and therefore you will be able to see what happened in the previous part of the ceremony.

Whilst the scenery in the Chapter has not changed, the room now represents the Grand Sanhedrin, the council of 72 Elders who sat together to regulate the affairs of the Temple and the religious life of the Jews. Zerubbabel presides, with Haggai and Joshua. Those companions already in the Chapter represent the Council Members.

You have to imagine that the secret vault, represented by the carpet and its equipment is still undiscovered under the foundations of the former Temple. Cyrus has issued a decree allowing the exiles to return to Jerusalem, You, as one of the three Sojourners, are about to arrive from your captivity in Babylon, having heard that the Temple is about to be rebuilt to offer your services in that great and glorious undertaking."

Mentor resumes his seat and the door is closed.

BEFORE THE THIRD ENTRANCE...

After the Sojourners have been given the proper working implements and MEZ says "Go, and may the God of our fathers go with you".

Mentor Goes to the door and opens it so he is in a position where both the Candidate and the Chapter at large can hear him.

Mentor: (reads in such a way that both the Candidate and Comps in the Chapter can hear) "As one of the Sojourners you were given the implements of labour as you left the room. Figuratively you will prepare the ground for the foundation of the second Temple when you return to the Chapter. The room still represents the Grand Sanhedrin but the secret vault, represented by the carpet and other equipment, will now become the focal point of the story. The Sojourners, as members of the princely tribe of Judah (the elite) were given the heavy & menial task of clearing the ground for the foundations of the second temple.

Doing so, they make an important discovery, as you will soon see. A lesson that truly humble workmen, though engaged on unskilled and uninteresting work, may nevertheless find in it great reward entitling them to a place amongst the wisest of men in the Council of Rulers. Traditionally, the Grand Sanhedrin was the council of Princes and Rulers of the people set up by command of God to assist Moses. The word Sanhedrin means 'the body of elders'.

You will now experience a dramatic account of how that discovery was made."

Mentor resumes his seat and the door is closed.

Narrative in Hampshire & Isle of Wight Abbreviated Ritual

When the Sojourners retire with the Mentor to prove the Candidate, the Mentor reads the following to the Candidate...

Mentor (reads) "Bro. [name], the story about to unfold builds on, and is inextricably linked to, your three Degrees in Craft Masonry. It takes place some 500 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple. King Solomon has long since died. Jerusalem has been attacked by the Babylonians, the city and its once magnificent temple have been destroyed and its inhabitants taken into captivity into Babylon where they remained for 70 years.

We are now at that period in history where the Babylonian Empire itself has been attacked and defeated by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus has recently issued a decree allowing the descendants of the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem. As a candidate for Exaltation, you represent one of those exiles returning to Jerusalem as a Sojourner or Journeyman builder. You will discover that the Temple and Holy city are in ruins and, with your colleagues, offer your assistance in building a new temple when, as you will eventually see, a discovery of very great importance is made.

Before the story begins, however, you will shortly be tested in the Three Degrees of Craft Masonry and then entrusted with a password leading to this Supreme Degree, then admitted into the Chapter. I trust therefore that the Janitor or your Proposer has ensured that you can advance in the Three Degrees and communicate the Wds of a M.M. on the f.p.o.f."

Whilst this is being read to the Candidate outside the Chapter, the Scribe E reads the following to the Chapter at large.

Scribe E (reads) "Companions, the story about to unfold builds on, and is inextricably linked to, the three Degrees in Craft Masonry. It takes place some 500 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple. King Solomon has long since died. Jerusalem has been attacked by the Babylonians, the city and its once magnificent temple have been destroyed and its inhabitants taken into captivity into Babylon where they remained for 70 years.

We are now at that period in history where the Babylonian Empire itself has been attacked and defeated by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus has recently issued a decree allowing the descendants of the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem. Our candidate for Exaltation represents one of those exiles returning to Jerusalem as a Sojourner or Journeyman builder. He will discover that the Temple and Holy city are in ruins and, with his colleagues, offer his assistance in building a new temple when, as we will eventually see, a discovery of very great importance is made."

After the sojourners has been supplied with the proper working implements, and MEZ says "Go, and may the God of our fathers be with you", 1st ASoj & 2nd ASoj lead the candidate to the South side of the Altar.

When they arrive... Mentor (reads) "Companion [name], You now represent one of the three Sojourner journeyman builders. You will go right back to the start of the story but, this time, you will not be hoodwinked and therefore you will be able to see what happened in the previous part of the ceremony, Whist the scenery in the Chapter has not changed, the room now represents the Grand Sanhedrin, the council of 72 Elders who sat together to regulate the affairs of the Temple and the religious life of the Jews. Zerubbabel presides, with Haggai and Joshua. You have to imagine that the secret vault, represented by the carpet and its equipment is still undiscovered under the foundations of the former Temple.

As one of the Sojourners you were given the implements of labour. Figuratively you will prepare the ground for the foundation of the second Temple. The room still represents the Grand Sanhedrin but, the secret vault represented by the carpet and other equipment will now become the focal point of the story. The Sojourners, as members of the princely tribe of Judah (the elite) were given the heavy & menial task of clearing the ground for the foundations of the second temple.

Doing so, they make an important discovery, as you will soon see. A lesson that truly humble workmen, though engaged on unskilled and uninteresting work, may nevertheless find in it great reward entitling them to a place amongst the wisest of men in the Council of Rulers. Traditionally, the Grand Sanhedrin was the council of Princes and Rulers of the people set up by command of God to assist Moses. The word Sanhedrin means 'the body of elders'.

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