

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **If I want to join, what is the process?**

You must be a Royal Arch Mason in good standing of a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in the State of New York. You then must petition a local Council to join. You may either download the generic petition below or request one from a Cryptic Companion you know. If you do not have a Cryptic connection, use the Council Locator below to find a Council near you. Then email or write the Recorder of that Council expressing your interest in joining. Once you have submitted your petition to the Council, you will be visited by members of that Council, then the Council will vote on your petition and inform you of the result. If accepted, you will receive further instructions.

### **What are degrees?**

Degrees are similar to one-act plays, in which you play a key part by your attendance and your heartfelt desire to become a Mason. Degrees teach very beautiful lessons using a system of symbols and allegories. There is never any hazing or poor taste in the degrees. They are majestic and the Masons who work hard to exemplify the degrees want the best experience for you. The Cryptic Rite consists of three degrees: the Royal Master Degree, the Select Master Degree and the Super Excellent Master Degree. The first two are mandatory degrees and in New York State the third is an honorary one and not mandatory. See page 2 for further explanation of the degrees.

### **How will I know what to do?**

Your Council will consult with you in selecting a mentor who will assist you through the degrees and for your introductory period into the Council. The mentor is usually the first line signer of your petition. Your mentor will be proficient in his duties, and will be your guide throughout the process.

### **What do I have to bring?**

Your Council will communicate to you any special requirements that they may have prior to your taking the degrees. Every Council has an Initiation fee and your Council will notify you the amount that must accompany your petition and the balance that you bring to your First Degree. By now you have already met Brothers from your Lodge, or Companions from your Royal Arch Chapter who are members of the Cryptic Rite. You now only need to witness and participate in the Cryptic degrees for yourself. This experience will complete your circle of perfection of becoming a well-informed Master Mason in Freemasonry.

### **What does it cost?**

Every Council has a different fee structure. You must inquire about the fees and dues costs at the Council you wish to join. They will be only too happy to inform you!

**WE DO HOPE YOU WILL EXPERIENCE  
THE CRYPTIC RITE!**

# **THE CRYPTIC DEGREES**

[Conferred in Cryptic Councils]

It is a peculiarity of the York Rite, whether intended or not by the authors, that the movement of degrees is often inverse, and the historical connection reversed so that we apparently go forward in regular progression, the knowledge and light gained always reflects backward upon the path we have traveled before, and degrees that seemed complete when we received them are found to require the explanation of subsequent degrees before they can be understood. That is what makes the infinite interest in the work, and causes the reflective mason to continually study the sublime precepts and ceremonies of the order. This is especially true of the Cryptic degrees, two of which historically preceded the Royal Arch but which hold in reserve their valuable teachings until the candidate is ready to receive them with the most impressive effect.

## **ROYAL MASTER**

In this degree Hiram Abif is alive and speaks, imparting to the candidate the sublime teachings of useful labor on earth and a worthy end of life. The tragedy of his untimely death is again brought forth with the great loss suffered by the Craft. This is one of the most beautiful degrees in all Masonry, with lessons so impressive that they are never forgotten. It is especially illustrative of the third and seventh degrees.

## **SELECT MASTER**

In this degree we have dramatized one of the incidents that occurred during the building of the Temple. It is closely connected with the Royal Arch degree, and in fact it affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding. The place of meeting represents a "Secret Vault" or crypt beneath the Temple. Our ancient Grand Masters appear in charge of a very important work connected with the Temple. One of King Solomon's most particular friends is promoted to the work, in which only a limited number are employed. The historical object of the degree is to commemorate the deposits of an important secret or treasure. Certain secrets are imparted to the candidate, which make clear to him the preceding degrees. It is highly dramatic and of the greatest interest.

## **SUPER-EXCELLENT MASTER**

This degree has no connection either in history or symbolism with the Royal and Select Master degrees. It refers to circumstances that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, commander of the army of the King of Babylon. The ceremonies are intended to represent the final destruction of the Temple and the carrying away of the captive Jews to Babylon as exemplified in the Royal Arch degree. The Super-Excellent Master degree is divided into three striking scenes. The first scene represents the Jewish captives at Babylon under the direction of Haggai, the Prophet. In the second scene King Zedekiah, of Judah listens to his false counselors and despises the warnings of the Prophet Jeremiah, and the vengeance of the Lord is poured upon him. Jerusalem is captured and its wicked King is taken with his sons before King Nebuchadnezzar, who causes the sons to be put to death before their father's face, after which he deprives the wretched parent of his eyesight and carries him in chains to Babylon. In colorful and spectacular manner, this degree portrays the fatal effects that follow the violation of sacred obligations.