



## NUGGET

### Introducing the Royal Arch: Kneeling

**Summary:** Kneeling - Connecting the Craft and Royal Arch.

In the Lodges of medieval operative masons, candidates for initiation into the Mason's Guild were required to kneel with both knees bared on the Rough Ashlar, so that nothing came between their bodies and the stone. This perpetuated the ancient beliefs that the strength and stability of the stone would thereby be communicated to the candidates, and that their oaths taken on the stone would be inviolable.



Pictures of early Speculative Lodges show that Candidates knelt, not on a stone, but on a chair or kneeling-stool like the ones we use today.

An exposure of the Initiation Ceremony published in 1765 states that the left knee, on which the Candidate knelt, was the weakest part of the body, symbolising that he was at that time, the weakest part of the Lodge. This implied that he would grow stronger as he advanced, and those of you who have advanced beyond the First Degree will recall that this is true.

When we kneel to take our Obligations, our hands lie on the Volume of Sacred Law, reminding us that Freemasonry is not just about moral behaviour, but looks beyond our duties to our fellow man to our duty to God. The posture taken when praying differs from kneeling in some cultures. In the Masonic Ritual, you may have come across the instruction, '*Brethren, turn to the East*'. In Jewish Lodges, Candidates stand to take their Obligations on the Tanakh or the Torah.

There are arguments about the difference between the Masonic *Sign of Fidelity* (with the thumb at right-angles to the fingers) and the *Sign of Prayer* (with the thumb parallel to the fingers). Some Lodges and Chapters insist that the use of '*so mote it be*' is confined to the Lodge Room, and so '*Amen*' is used at the Festive Board. In Royal Arch Chapters, some of the Signs are different and kneeling is taken a little further.

However, it is more important to remember that, when we completed our Initiation Ceremony, we answered the question:

*'Where were you first prepared to be made a Mason?'*

with:

*'In my heart.'*

Simple though it sounds, that answer is the essence of all the Degrees, the Royal Arch, the Mark Degrees, the Knights Templar, whatever. How you kneel, how you stand, whatever the sign, however you may privately address God, is your business, but if you have this essential fraternal precept in your heart, you will never fail the Brotherhood, nor the Royal Arch.





## Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.

Themed with the meeting or activity.

Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.

Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.

Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

\*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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## Acknowledgement:

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