



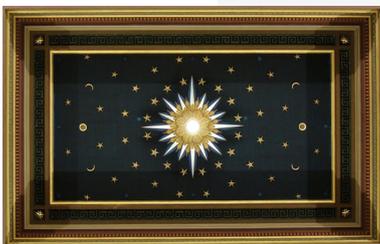
# NUGGET

## The Chequered (Mosaic) Pavement

**Summary:** The duality symbolised by the black and white Chequered Pavement which characterises our Masonic Lodges.

The Chequered Pavement is one of Freemasonry's most recognisable symbols and is the ritualistic floor of all Masonic Lodges. Today it is classed among the ornaments of the Lodge along with the Indented Tassel and the Blazing Star. All of which are depicted in the First Degree Tracing Board.

The Chequered (Mosaic) Pavement, began life as drawing in chalk or charcoal on the floor of a room in an inn and has evolved into a floor design, usually a chequered carpet. Symbolic of light and darkness, good and evil, and the joys and sorrows of our chequered existence on Earth.



The Blazing Star is generally found in the centre of the Lodge, either on the floor or on the ceiling. In early Freemasonry it represented the nearness of God. Today it represents the sun which enlightens the Earth.

The Tessellated Border surrounds the Lodge and is often depicted at the edge of the carpet. Its origins lie in astrology at a time when it was thought that the planets influenced behaviour. Hence it represents something of the external influences on a Freemason's Lodge.



The Chequered Pavement is so much more than mere decoration, having a profound esoteric meaning related to life itself. In the Entered Apprentice Degree, the Mosaic Pavement represents the ground floor of King Solomon's Temple. The Bible describes it as been made of pine or fir (depending on the translation). Though its depiction as a chequered floor is probably grounded upon the vision of early biblical artists and engravers rather than the floor of the actual temple. Whatever its origin, it has provided a wonderful allegorical tool given that it endlessly replicated the square; and we 'square the Lodge' when we perambulate around it, moving from the darkness of ignorance into light of knowledge. It also reminds of our history and tradition, of



First Degree Tracing Board - John Harris  
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a time when we moved in such a way as to avoid the designs and symbols so laboriously drawn on the floor, then washed-away by the newest apprentice or 'Tyler', wielding a mop & bucket.

The Chequered Pavement embodies the idea of duality with its allegorical links to the concepts such as good and evil, joy and sorrow, the sacred and profane. An image comes to mind of the 'Yin-Yang', which might be said to express the concept of duality and balance. Balance is an important concept in Freemasonry. A Mason is taught to avoid irregularity and intemperance and to divide his time equally by the use of the Twenty-Four Inch Gauge.

These lessons refer to the importance of balance in a Mason's life, and the mosaic pavement could be construed to mean that balance it provides as a foundation of our Masonic advancement. The floor or groundwork of the Lodge, a chequer-work of black and white squares, denotes the duality of everything connected with terrestrial life and human nature, the mortal body and its appetites and affections. These opposites govern us in everything until such time as, having learned and outgrown this mortal existence, they cease to be opposites and are realised as a union.

To find that unity or synthesis is to know the peace which surpasses understanding, where darkness and light are both alike and our present concepts of good and evil, joy and sorrow, are transcended and found in a condition combining both. This

supreme condition is said to be represented by the Indented or Tessellated Border skirting the chequer work. Furthermore, the chequered floor is representative of Earth, the material world, and contrasts the ceiling, which is made to represent the heavens and the spiritual realm.

Every Mason is intended to be the builder of his own personal temple and to make of it a place where he and his Deity may meet. He must rise above the jumble of good and evil, to be superior and indifferent to the ups and downs of fortune, the attractions and fears governing ordinary men, swaying their thoughts and actions.

Living in balance makes us healthy, happy and just. If our feet are well balanced, both literally and figuratively, we may be able to fulfil the purpose of our existence faithfully.

As you can see from this early Masonic Tracing Board, it is a concept that has been with us for many, many years and will enlighten and sustain us in the future!



First Degree Tracing Board c.1801  
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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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