



## NUGGET

### Step Off with the Left Foot

**Summary:** Origins in antiquity and religion.

We are all familiar with the phrase '*Step-off with the left-foot*', which is not only used in the First Degree, but in the Fellow Craft and Master Mason Degrees, and also in the Royal Arch. The phrase, you will recall, was used as you perambulated around the Lodge, and likewise for those of you in the Chapter.

That pace forward with the left foot forms the first part of the First Degree step, after which the right foot is drawn into the hollow thereof, to form a right-angle sign. But why the left foot, not the right?

The answer may be found in antiquity. For example, the surviving artwork, bas-reliefs and sculptures, of the Ancient Egyptians almost invariably show the left foot advancing. Scholars have speculated that this may be derived from military marching, so that the strong right arm is immediately brought into play; victorious Pharaohs are shown in this way. Male figurines from Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece are almost always shown with the left foot forward.

The Egyptians knew that as the left-side of the body was where the heart resided; it was therefore regarded as the house of will, emotion and consciousness. The Ancient Egyptian stepped off with his left-foot to tread out evil so that the heart could proceed in safety. It has been suggested likewise that the left foot was representative of the power of Isis, the fertility goddess associated with life and new beginnings.

This idea of the left foot subduing evil has appeared in other cultures and faiths; the Archangel Michael, for example, is frequently depicted with his left foot on the defeated Satan.

The priests, on their way to King Solomon's Temple, tradition informs us, began their journey ritually with the left foot. In the barbarian lands of Western Europe, the left foot was the starting point for the ancient druids.

So, when we '*step off with the left-foot*' we are trampling the forces of evil beneath us at the beginning of each part of our Masonic journey.



## 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 unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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