



Nugget

The Master's Gavel

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The Master's Gavel - a ceremonial version of a working tool.

Summary

The Master's Gavel differentiated from other 'common gavels'.

Keywords

Master, Gavel, Conscience, Authority

The Master's Gavel

The words, *'I now place in your hand this Gavel which is an emblem of power and will enable you to preserve order in the Lodge, especially in the East'*, are spoken to a new Master. The Gavel, which he has just received, is a symbol of labour and of power.

It is probably the oldest working tool. Once an iron axe or pick, it had a steel edge or point with which the Quarryman would roughly trim the stone. An Operative Mason would use it to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones or ashlar, so as to make them a perfect-fit. In its modern usage, the Gavel has become a symbol of authority, in the form of a small ceremonial hammer used to strike a wooden-block; customarily struck to signal the opening, calling to order, closing, or adjournment of proceedings.

The use of the Gavel, and its big-brother, the Maul are often confused. The Maul is a much bigger and heavier used by an Operative Mason to drive his chisel; whilst to a Speculative Mason it is an emblem of assassination and violent death. In contrast, the Gavel represents the voice of conscience. Both Gavel and Maul have been commonly known as a 'Hiram'.

While the Square, Level and Plumb-Rule each have only one operative use, and symbolise only one Masonic office. The Gavel is used in many ways, either by itself or with other tools, cutting, chipping, driving and setting, it is always busy and always close to the hands of a Mason. The Worshipful Master uses it to open and close the Lodge, and claim the attention of the Brethren. It is the symbol of his power and an emblem of his authority. Such that the humblest tool in Masonry, a rough instrument commonly used in the quarry, becomes the tool used by the highest Officer in the Lodge. In his hand, it's sound regulates the Lodge, so that its work can be carried out with regularity and propriety.

It is capable of doing great work, or of spoiling good material. If wielded roughly, it could lead to ruin. If wielded weakly, it could mean failure. If wielded wisely and in the spirit of Brotherly Love, it is an instrument of goodwill. Man is tempted and tested by power and few are able to 'use it and not abuse it'. None should be a Master-Mason, or the Master of a Lodge, until he has learned to use the Gavel with dignity, self-control, and gentle skill.

##END##

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.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit “Solomon” at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

Acknowledgement:

UGLE gratefully acknowledges Michael Murton as the author of this item and for his permission to publish it in this form.

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