

Tool Box
Fellow Craft Degree

MENTOR: Well my Brother, tell me what you thought of your Fellow Craft Degree last evening.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: It was ok, I guess. Thankfully I passed my EA proficiency examination before I was allowed to begin the evening's degree work, but I have many questions about what was said around me and to me.

MENTOR: I'll do my best to answer them all. Go ahead and ask your first question.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: When I was received into the Lodge and being conducted twice around the room, the Chaplain made an odd reference to someone called AMOS and then mentioned a plumb line set in the midst of the people of Israel. What did that have to do with me and the degree I received?

MENTOR: When we refer back to the Biblical days, we find Amos, a Judean shepherd and a chosen prophet of God. Amos's duty was to warn the people of Israel of impending destruction if they didn't repent from sin. God did set a plumb line in the midst of the people. Amos recognized the plumb line and knew this was a standard of uprightness and justice. Even though Amos continued to warn the people to give up their sinful ways they would not do so, and Jerusalem was destroyed and the people enslaved. The lesson tells us that while God is forgiving, there is a limit to his patience. In our Fellow craft Degree, we refer to the plumb as a working tool, used to check an object to be upright or perpendicular. We Masons consider the plumb to be an emblem of spiritual and moral uprightness.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Now that is something. Can I assume most items in the Masonic degrees in this Lodge reflect stories from the Holy Bible?

MENTOR: Yes, the majority of items discussed in the degrees come from the Holy Bible. If you want to do some fact checking in your own Holy Bible look at the Old Testament, AMOS 7:7-8.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Can you explain to me the meaning of Shibboleth? I heard that word numerous times during my degree.

MENTOR: Certainly, Shibboleth is a term applied to a flood of water or a rapid stream. Also, it is represented by a sheaf of wheat suspended near a Waterford. Maybe that reference might help you understand the conversation between the Senior Deacon and the Junior Warden when you arrived at the outer door of the middle chamber.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Tell me about a phrase I heard used between the Junior Warden and Senior Deacon during the story about the word Shibboleth. It was mentioned... "and there fell on that day forty and two thousand." What's up with that? Why don't Masons just say the number the way we talk today?

MENTOR: That verbiage was taken right out of the Geneva Bible. That bible was used by men who crafted many of our lectures back in the day when ritual was first written. You may want to research the origins of the Geneva Bible and how it came to America.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Ok, that may help. Are you allowed to tell me why I must now wear my Masonic Apron in a different fashion than I did as an Entered Apprentice? It looks kind of odd to wear an apron in this manner.

MENTOR: Sure, no problem. Our ancient Brethren who were Fellows of the Craft, actually wore their aprons in this odd fashion to carry their working tools in. Sort of like a tool box.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Great, thanks. My next question is about this big deal made over a temple built for King Solomon. Why was this temple more important than any other temple along the Nile?

MENTOR: King Solomon's temple was really a Holy House. The others were not.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Ok, I guess; but what about all the talk about the Middle Chamber? I may have missed the point during the evening, but what was so special about that chamber?

MENTOR: Sure; it was believed that God's very presence dwelt in the Middle Chamber. That is what gave significance to Solomon's Temple verses the other temples.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Oh, now I get it. To get back to the obligation I took at the altar; it sure was different from the first. What is it I'm supposed to take away from this second obligation?

MENTOR: It wasn't entirely all that different, however this obligation stresses your duty to the craft and duty to others.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Ok, that makes sense. But what about this business of... "if within the length of my cable tow." Just how long is a cable tow?

MENTOR: Well, the first speculative Lodges of London considered the length as being 3 miles, the distance a man might walk in one hour, but today we consider it to be the extent of commitment, which might be reasonably expected of an individual Brother.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Phew. Now about those two brazen pillars that so much explanation went into; what about this part they being hollow so that records could be kept inside them?

MENTOR: Sure. Not only did hollow pillars adorn the entrance to the porch of King Solomon's temple, the great Semitic cities, such as Babylon, used hollow pillars for keeping records for general use, and for immediate reference by the citizens to contain the two classes of laws, rules and regulations then in force. The pillars protected those records from floods and fires.

NEW FELLOW CRAFT: Thank you for making things much clearer. This will help me as I focus on studying for my proficiency test.