

Twelve Original Perfect Points of Entrance

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According to ancient English lectures, used in the ritual from 1738 till 1813, the names of the 12 Patriarchates of Israel, the male heads of the families of Israel, symbolized the Twelve Original Perfect Points of Entrance through every candidate for Freemasonry must pass, otherwise his initiation would not be legal¹:

opening, preparation, report, entrance, prayer, circumambulation, advancing, obligation, entrusting, investiture, placing in the northeast corner, and closing.

Those points are as follows:

1. Opening

It is absolutely necessary that the Lodge be opened in due and ancient form; without these ceremonies, the assembly is not a Lodge. The Master and Officers must be reminded of their duties, the Fraternity must maintain reverence for Deity, and prayer must be offered to invoke the Blessing of the Great Architect. Opening of the Lodge was symbolized by the *Tribe of Reuben (or Re'uven)*, because he was the first born of his father Jacob, who called him "the beginning of his strength." He was, therefore, appropriately adopted as the emblem of that ceremony which is essentially the beginning of every initiation.

¹ Henry Wilson Coil, 33°, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Company Inc., New York, New York, 1961, p. 478

2. Preparation

In all the work of Masonry, emphasis is placed upon the importance of adequate preparation for moral, ethical, and spiritual vocations. Preparation of the heart is the first essential in Masonry, and certain outward preparations symbolic of, and manifesting, inward preparedness are required. The preparation of the candidate was symbolized by the *Tribe of Simeon*, because it was Simeon who prepared the instruments for the slaughter of the Shechemites. Jacob abhorred Simon's cruelty, so candidates for initiation were deprived of all weapons, both offensive and defensive.

3. Reporting

As it is one of the prerogatives of the Master that he may admit to his Lodge or deny admittance thereto whomsoever he chooses, it is necessary that all persons who would enter should wait with patience until he can be informed of their requests, and his answer returned. The report of the Senior Deacon referred to the *Tribe of Levi*, in commemoration of the signal or report which Levi was supposed to have given to his brother Simeon when they assailed the men of Shechem at a time when they were incapable of defending themselves, and put them all to the sword, because of the affront which, Dinah, their sister, had received from Shechem, the son of Hamor.

4. Entering

This point is symbolic of "crossing over" the Jordan into the Promised Land, coming from the darkness of Ignorance and entering the Light of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding. The entrance of the candidate into the Lodge was symbolized by the *Tribe of Judah*, because they were the first to cross the river Jordan and enter the promised land of "milk and honey".

5. Prayer

Petitions to Deity in behalf of one's own needs intercession for others, communion with the Creator, and prayer in all its elements of praise, worship, and remembrance are fundamentals in the tenets of Masonry. From the time a candidate crosses the threshold of the Lodge to the topmost degrees in Masonry, the privilege and duty of prayer are urged upon him, and every step is taken in a holy atmosphere of divine worship. The prayer was symbolized by *Zebulon*, because the blessing and prayer of Jacob were given to Zebulon, in preference to his brother Issachar.

6. Circumambulation

The ancient practice of walking in a circular procession around a holy place, such as an altar, or the Holy Ka'aba (The Cube) in Mecca - the Holy City in Arabia where the Holy Qur'an was revealed. Many Biblical references can be found supporting the antiquity of the practice, and it was usually done in a direction which was consistent with the apparent movement of the sun (from the east to the west by way of the south). The circumambulation referred to the *Tribe of Issachar*, because, as a thriftless and indolent tribe, they required a leader to advance them to an equal elevation with the other tribes.

7. Advancing

The approach to the Altar of the Lord should be bold, in that we fear not to supplicate for our needs, trusting in their fulfillment, and it should be speedy, without hesitation. The advancing to the altar was symbolized by the Tribe of Dan, that the candidate might be taught by contrast to advance in the way of truth and holiness as rapidly as this tribe advanced to idolatry, for it was among the Tribe of Dan that the serpent was first set up for adoration.

8. Obligation

From time immemorial, men have entered into covenants of brotherhood and friendship under solemn oaths of fidelity and loyalty, and whenever the circumstances and purposes justified it, secrecy has been pledged. This practice among Masons has many precedents and is based upon the truths and principles of the Great Light in Masonry. The oath in such covenants is given in the Name of the Creator; perjury in such oaths is subject to severe and deadly penalties. All vows voluntarily taken in Masonry must be faithfully performed, and are never subject to revocation. The obligation referred to the *Tribe of Gad*, in allusion to the solemn vow which was made by Jephthah, Judge of Israel, who was of that tribe.

9. Intrusting

This point symbolizes the gladness and fortune of receiving enrichment, in this case, the secrets of the Degree conferred. The entrusting of the candidate with the mysteries was symbolized by the *Tribe of Asher*, because he was then presented with the rich fruits of Masonic knowledge, as Asher was said to be the inheritor of fatness and royal dainties.

10. Investiture

To be invested is to receive prosperity, and the presentation of the lambskin is the emblem of the greatest ransom one can ever present to his Lord: his innocence in all matters. The investiture of the lambskin, by which the candidate is declared free, referred to the *Tribe of Naphtali*, which was invested by Moses with a peculiar freedom, when he said, "O, Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the West and the South."

11. Placing

Being placed in the Northwest as an Enter Apprentice establishes the newly-made Mason as a member of his Lodge, as there is nothing more that remains for him to do to obtain said membership. Here, he represents the addition of a stone in the Lodge's wall and foundation. The ceremony of the Northeast Corner of the Lodge referred to Joseph, because as this ceremony reminds us of the most superficial part of Masonry, so the two half *Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh*, of which the *Tribe of Joseph* was composed, were accounted to be more superficial than the rest, as they were the descendants of the grandsons only of Jacob.

12. Closing

All that which is opened finds balance in its closing. Since the work which Masonry attends must continue until the end of the world, it is never proper to adjourn. However, periods of refreshment are permissible, until such time as work is resumed. During such times of refreshment, the Lodge is closed, and since the hour is styled "XII", the time wherein the day is at its most glorious, it is at this time that the Officer in the South superintends the Craft. The closing of the Lodge was symbolized by the *Tribe of Benjamin*, who was the youngest of the sons of Jacob, and thus closed his father's strength.

Thank you for inviting me into your Lodge and I hope you learned something new about the Ancient English lectures and the Twelve Original Perfect Points of Entrance.