



Internet Lodge 9659
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Province of East Lancashire
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Number One?
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Freemasonry appears to be full of numerical symbolism. Indeed the prime numbers three, five and seven appear regularly in Masonic ritual. For example, in the Second Degree *"...they then passed up the winding staircase, consisting of three, five, seven or more steps; three to rule a Lodge, five to hold a Lodge and seven or more to make it perfect"*. The sum of five and seven is twelve: the twelve months of the year; the twelve days of Christmas and also the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ.

The three grand principles on which the Order is founded are *"...brotherly love, relief and truth."* In the *Third Degree*, the candidate seals his obligation three times. There were three ruffians and three entrances to the temple: North, South and East. Likewise attempts to extract the secrets from Hiram Abif were reinforced with three working tools. Of course *"...those secrets were known to but three in the world"*. Three groups of Fellowcrafts were sent out, and there were three, who descended the grave to raise our Master, the body of which was later re-interred in a grave, from the centre: *"...three feet East, three feet West, three feet between North and South, and five feet or more perpendicular."*

The ornaments of a Master Mason's Lodge are *"...The porch, the dormer and the squared pavement."* While the tracing board shows *"...the coffin, the skull and cross-bones."* In a wider context, the number three is more commonly associated with the Holy Trinity; the three graces: faith, hope and charity, and the three crosses of Calvary.

The number five corresponds to the digits on the hand; the five senses, and in Freemasonry: *"...the five noble orders of architecture, which are the Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite."* The *Third Degree* has five signs and the *"...five points of fellowship"* form the very cornerstone of the ceremony, while the Hebrew character for *"five"* appears three times on the Tracing Board.

The number seven represents the days of the week, during which time God is believed to have made heaven and earth. It also refers paradoxically to the number of deadly sins, while back in the *Second Degree*: *"...seven or more make a perfect Lodge, because King Solomon was seven years and upwards in building, completing and dedicating the Temple at Jerusalem to God's service; they likewise have a further allusion to the seven liberal arts, namely: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy."*

In conclusion, our ritual, like the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', seems to depend heavily on the magic of numbers. Could it be that in manipulating the Masonic myth so as to include a great amount of numerical significance, there was an attempt to add a more mystical quality to Freemasonry? View *"...the untimely death of Hiram Abif"* as a valuable lesson in *"...a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols"* and it all makes sense.

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