

**CORN, WINE, AND OIL,  
THE ELEMENTS OF CONSECRATION**

**Think back to when you were being passed to the degree of a Fellowcraft and the Worshipful Master told you that you were entitled to an explanation of your wages, consisting of corn, wine, and oil. Have you ever wondered where that came from, what it may have meant, what it means today?**

**First, at the building of King Solomon's Temple, it truly was the wages paid to the workmen of the Temple. They were also used to pay Hiram, King of Tyre, for the timbers and skilled workers he sent to build the temple. They literally represented the necessities of life.**

**Second, they were used in the Temple as offerings to the Deity. The grain and wine were used as an offering presented at the altar. The first pressing of olive oil, the very finest and most pure, was used as fuel for the lamps and the Menorah, as well as being the key ingredient of the Oil of Anointment for the priests.**

**These three elements have been key in the history of man and the development of modern society. Beginning around 11,500**

**B.C.E., in an area known as the Fertile Crescent, this area saw man move from being a hunter gatherer to a more stable society of becoming an agriculturist. The area stretched from the Nile River Valley along the edge of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as modern-day Lebanon, then east to the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys and down to the Red Sea. The first established society would be the Mesopotamians.**

**The first crops grown were the cereal grains, wheat, which Biblically is called corn, barley, millet and Emer, another early relative of wheat. These first crops originated from the wild grasses growing in the area. They were improved through time by selection, for taste, ease of harvest and utility. The first fruits were figs and dates, and goats were the earliest domesticated animals.**

**The growing of olives would begin around 5,000 B.C.E., domesticated from wild shrubs growing in the rocky hills of Asia Minor on the edge of the Tigris and Euphrates River Basin. They were first grown for the oil they produced. The tough-skinned original fruit, when brined, were then found to be edible, as well.**

**The final crop, grape, was domesticated around 3.500 B.C.E. It was the natural yeast that was found on the skins of grape that created the fermentation reaction to produce wine. It is no wonder then, why these three elements have for so long been important to the development of modern civilization. They conceptualized the thought of divine pleasure and the manifestation of divine activity. Together they were used at the Consecration of Solomon's Temple and to designate it as hallowed ground. They, as Masonic iconography, are drawn from Biblical tradition, much like the plumb, level, corner stone, the all-seeing eye, and the square. Together, corn, wine, and oil are referred to as the Elements of Consecration. In the Bible, corn is mentioned 106 times, wine 231, oil 191 and the three together 22 times. They conceptualized in Hebrew thought, the concrete form of Divine Blessing. As with any symbol, especially in Masonry, when a literal is given, there is usually another half, an idea, or a lesson.**

**For us, these three elements are recurring symbols. They are an integral part of the Laying of a Cornerstone, the Consecration of a new Lodge and symbolically, for each of us, as we advanced in each Degree.**

**Corn or wheat, considered the staff of life, appears in some form and in ways not often realized. Corn is the symbol of plenty. One of its symbolic representations is the Cornucopia. Look to the Stewards and the symbol of their station, the Cornucopia. As we made our first entrance across the threshold of the newly opened door of the Lodge by the Stewards, we were symbolically being led, first, to what could be the thrashing floor, thus, to be “harvested” from the fields of the world. As grain is thrashed to separate it from the chaff, we were being separated from the mundane world. As an Entered Apprentice, we were moved from darkness to light. As a Fellowcraft, before we were to receive an explanation of our wages, there was a more subtle introduction. The word in Hebrew for an ear of corn is Shibboleth. It is also the word used in Hebrew for flood or deep water, and, to beat out or to thrash, as well. This was the word used by the Gilalites to separate the Eremites, in a sophisticated way and with tragic results for the latter. The thrashing floor also has a further significance for us. It was upon a thrashing floor that Abraham, David, and Solomon would erect an alter to the Deity.**

**Wine, as an offering, was used by the priests to be consumed away from the Middle Chamber of the Temple. Josephus records**

that at the Second Temple, there was a massive grape vine of gold, with grapes as tall as a man, suspended on the outer porch. This could only mean grapes, as a symbol, were deeply sacred. When written in Hebrew, the word for wine, “yayan” is numerically identical to “sod” or secret. There is a Hebrew saying that “when the wine goes in, the secrets come out”. However, in the more philosophical Kabbalistic interpretation, sod refers to the symbolic meaning, “when our spiritual nourishment is stored away in the dark and left to mature, it results in a deeper understanding of life”.

Now, about the olive. The Talmud records a strange warning that “eating a whole olive will cause a man to forget his learning of 70 years”, yet later teaches that drinking olive oil, he will gain 70 years of learning. Of course, this can be easily disproven. As Rabbi Avrohm Chaim Fleur pointed out: This may be understood allegorically. The whole olive alludes to the flesh, and the outer husk of the fruit, whereas the olive oil is the inner essence. In the pursuit of knowledge, a person should always strive to penetrate to the inner core of a subject to gain comprehension of its essence. Never should a student “swallow if whole”. In other words, we should never study matters superficially, because those breed misconceptions

**and ignorance. This can cause confused knowledge of essentials, leading to errors that may be remembered for a lifetime.**

**Masonically, when these three elements are poured out upon the floor at the Consecration of a new Lodge, as they were at King Solomon's Temple, or at the Laying or Dedication of a Cornerstone, or as a part of the Fellowcraft Degree, it could also be interpreted to mean that we are sharing anew in the Consecration of our own Lodge, even if it took place generations ago.**

**It has been so aptly said, "As corn is an emblem of plenty, let us be abundant in the measure of our brotherly love, ever ready to use what means God has given us to assist a brother who may claim our help. As wine is an emblem of cheerfulness, let us foster the spirit of Joy and Gladness so that when the sorrows throw their shadows upon life, we may be enabled to look forward to the brighter day when the trials of our earthly pilgrimage shall be forgotten, and sadness shall be unknown. And oil, as an emblem of Peace, may it be ours to extend the boundaries of Her Empire, so that strife and discord may be banished forever from the mind of man".**