



LODGE VEGAS # 32

UPPER CHAMBERS

The practice of holding Masonic Lodges in the upper rooms of houses is so universal that, in all his experience, Doctor Mackey had no knowledge of a single instance in which a Lodge has been held in a room on the first floor of a building. Brother Clegg has been present at a country Lodge held in a one-story building which of course was carefully tiled.

The most apparent reason for the use of an upper floor room is, that security from being overseen or overheard may be thus obtained, and hence Doctor Oliver says, in his Book of the Lodge (page 44), that "a Masonic hall should be isolated, and, if possible, surrounded with lofty walls. As, however, such a situation in large towns, where Freemasonry is usually practiced, can seldom be obtained with convenience to the Brethren, the Lodge should be formed in an upper story. "This, as a practical reason, will be perhaps sufficient to Freemasons in general. But to those who are more curious, it may be well to say, that for this custom there is also a mystical reason of great antiquity.

Gregory, in his book, Notes and Observations on some Passages of Scripture (1671, page 17), states: "The upper rooms in Scripture were places in that part of the house which was highest from the ground, set apart by the Jews for their private orisons and devotions, to be addressed towards [Solomon's Temple](#). "This room received, in the Hebrew language, the appellation of Alijah, which has been translated by the Greek hyperoon, and improperly by the Latin ceneculum. The Hebrew and the Greek both have the signification of an upperroom, while the Latin appellative would give the idea of adining-room or place for meeting, thus taking away the sacred character of the apartment. The Alijah was really a secret chamber or recess in the upper part of the house, devoted to religious uses. Hence the wise men or Rabbis of Israel are called by the Talmudists *beni Alijah*, or "the sons of the upper secret room."

And so (in Psalm civ, 2 and 3), the Psalmist speaks of God as stretching out the heavens like a curtain, and laying the beams of his chambers in the waters, where, in the original, the word here translated "chambers" is the plural of Alijah, and should more properly be rendered "his secret chambers": an allusion, as Doctor Clarke thinks, to the [Holy of Holies](#) of the [Tabernacle](#). Again, in Second Chronicles (ix, 3 and 4), it is said that when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon and the house that he had built - his provisions, servants, and cupbearers, "and his ascent by which he went up in to the house of the Lord- there was no more spirit in her. "The word which our translators have rendered "his ascent, "is again this word Alijah, and the passage should be rendered "his secret chamber," or "upper-room"; the one by which, through a private way, he was enabled to pass in to the Temple.

On the advent of Christianity, this Jewish custom of worshiping privately in an upper-room was adopted by the apostles and disciples, and the New Testament contains many instances of the

practice, the word Alijah being, as we have already remarked, translated by the Greek huperon, which has a similar meaning. Thus in Acts (i,13), we find the apostle praying in an upper-room; and again, in the twentieth chapter, the disciples are represented as having met at Ephesus in an upperroom, where Peter preached to them. But it is unnecessary to multiply instances of this usage. The evidence is complete that the Jews, and after them the primitive Christians, performed their devotions in upper-rooms. And the care with which Alijah, upper-room, or upper-chamber, is always used to designate the place of devotion, abundantly indicates that any other place would have been considered improper.

Hence we may trace the practise of holding Lodges in upper-rooms to this ancient custom; and that, again, has perhaps some connection with the sacred character always given by the ancients to "high-places," so that it is said, in the Masonic lectures, that our ancient Brethren met on high hills and low valleys. The reason there assigned by implication is that the meeting may be secret; that is, the lectures place the Lodge on a high hill, a vale, or other secret place. And this reason is more definitely stated in the modern lectures, which say that they sought "to observe the approach of [cowans](#) and [eavesdroppers](#), and to guard against surprise. "Probably the ancient symbolism of the sanctity of a high place was referred to as well as that more practical idea of secrecy and safety.

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

Prepare By, Br. Florian for the benefit of the Craft, OCT, 2012