

We know that the Acacia is one of the important symbols of the third degree, but what significance does it have?

The sprig of Acacia plays a central role in our third degree ritual, but there is some debate in several publications whether it was the Acacia, or indeed the Cassia, that led to Hiram's grave. In Prichard's "Masonry Dissected" (1730) and Anderson's 1738 Constitutions, it is the Cassia that is mentioned as the sprig that indicated the grave. However, Cassia is not indigenous to the soil of Palestine, the location of Mount Moriah and the legend of Hiram Abiff. The Acacia, on the other hand, grows in the desert, and produces extremely hard wood. The Egyptians saw the thorn of the Acacia as an emblem of the mother-goddess Neith, symbolizing birth and death, and they often used it for funeral wreaths. The Egyptians believed that many of their gods were born beneath the goddess Sais's Acacia tree north of the ancient city of Heliopolis. Horus was supposed to have emerged from this tree as well.

Talking about emerging, in Vedic practice, a small hole is bored into a piece of Acacia wood, a soft piece of wood is then rapidly turned, and a flame emerges, which is used for sacrifice rituals. The Acacia (a.k.a. the Shittah in Exodus 25:10) was also used in the building of the Tabernacle (see Exodus 26) and the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 37). Legend also says that it was a crown made of Acacia thorns that Christ wore on his crucifixion, and his cross was made of Acacia wood.

Also of importance is the fact that the red and white flowers the Acacia tree produce were seen as symbols of birth and death.

A sprig of Acacia is at times placed in graves, or on caskets, at Masonic funerals. The Acacia is also seen on the 14th Degree cordon.