

4th Degree AASR : Kabbalah of the Secret Master Unveiled Bro Michel Jaccard - Alpina Research Group¹

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Aim

The subject of the presentation is the explanation of the various Kabbalistic allusions of the IVth degree AASR (Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite), **Secret Master**.

We will demonstrate that the redactor(s) of the corresponding ceremony had at least basic knowledge of the Jewish Kabbalah, possibly originating from the writing of Christian Kabbalists, but that they had also a fair understanding of ancient Christian authors.

Reminder: AASR creation – the Morin Rite of Perfection

Most of the original AASR ceremonies come directly from France, even if the final structure of the AASR was set up in Charleston (USA). On August 27, 1761, the Grand Lodge of France gave a charter to the businessman *Etienne Morin* to establish lodges in the New World. Morin took with him the rituals of 25 degrees and called the whole set of ceremonies “**Order of the Royal Secret**”, which, later, was at times denominated as **Rite of Perfection (an expression that we will use in this presentation)**. The rituals, including the first three degrees (which were created later on in France at the beginning of the XIXth century), were divided into 7 classes; the Rite of Perfection included many popular degrees practised in France, especially in Bordeaux and Paris. *Morin* died in 1771, but *Henri Francken* was the Brother able to translate the rite of Perfection in English, and there exist several copies of his manuscript. The transcription is believed to have been finalized in 1783. *Morin* had previously appointed him Deputy Grand Inspector General (DGIG) as one of his first acts after returning to the West Indies. The Francken manuscript shows a careful and uniformed structure, with an identical table of content for each ceremony

This text was the basis of the AASR, created in 1801, and the first Supreme Council of Charleston added 8 more ceremonies, situated after the XIXth degree of *Sublime Scotch Masonry* or *Grand Pontiff* (dealing mostly with the Apocalypse and the advent of the celestial Jerusalem). Some of them are short, such as the 23rd degree, *Chief of the Tabernacle*. On the other hand, if the first nineteen degrees present a logical progression, the structure, between the twentieth and the thirtieth degrees, looks like a collection of diverse and independent ceremonies.

Evolution of the AASR Rite

If the rituals of the original AASR Rite of 1801 were identical to those of the Rite of Perfection included the Francken Manuscript, many modifications were carried out during the XIXth and XXth centuries. Famous reformers were in USA *Albert Pike* and on the European continent *Eugène Goblet d'Alviella*, Liberal Protestant and Professor of History of Religions

¹ Please consult the website of the Research Group of the Grand Lodge Alpina of Switzerland:
<https://masonica-gra.ch/fr/for-our-english-speaking-brethren>

² Please consult the website of the Research Group of the Grand Lodge Alpina of Switzerland:
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at the (Masonic³) Free University of Bruxelles (Belgium); however, most authors responsible of changes remain difficult to identify.

Reasons to bring modifications were diverse: removal of Christian content, add-on of natural philosophic or alchemical elements, accentuation of the content inspired by the continental philosophy of the Enlightenment, and, alas, simplifications to keep awake the “Knife and Fork Masons” during the sessions 😞, etc.

These modifications are particularly important in the ceremony of the Secret Master, practised in Switzerland. The simplifications are so substantial that it is now difficult to understand the various symbols and myths of the degree. Well, this doesn’t seem to trouble many candidates and Officers of such lodges, but certainly, disturb the (quite rare) Brethren seeking the deep meaning of the ceremony...

This presentation uses, therefore, the content of the IVth degree of Secret Master, taken from three different, but similar original sources:

- De Hoyos, A., *Freemasonry’s Royal Secret*, The Scottish Rite Research society (2014).
- *Ordo ab Chao, the Original and complete Rituals of the first Supreme Council, 33^e*, Poemandres Press (1995).
- Francken, H. A., *The Francken Manuscript 1783*, Kessinger Legacy Reprints (2010).

Place of the Secret Master in the Rite of Perfection

The degrees of the first nineteen degrees of the AASR and of the Rite of Perfection show a logical progression: the death of Hiram Abif caused a lot of damages in the construction process of the first Temple of Jerusalem, as well as in the social structure of the Jewish kingdom.

This chaotic situation (first implementation of the motto *Ordo ab Chao*) needs a restoration at many levels, before being able to find the Lost Word:

- 4th and 5th degrees of *Secret* and *Perfect Master*: mourning and funerals of Hiram Abif, the first discovery of elements of the Lost Word.
- 6th degree of *Intimate Secretary*: reconciliation between the two kings Hiram of Tyre and Solomon, the logistical supply of raw materials for the building site is restored.
- 7th and 8th degrees of *Provost and Judge* and *Intendant of the Buildings*: reorganization of the building site, which functions again, internal decorations of the Temple.
- 9th and 10th degrees of *Elected Master of the 9*, *Elected Master of the 15*: search and punishment of the Hiram murders.
- 11th and 12th degrees of *Sublime Knight Elected* and *Grand Master Architect*: Solomon’s reward, management of Israel tribes, accession to the full knowledge of the profession of Architect. Competencies and responsibilities of the initiate are fully restored, He may be able, in a next step, to find the Lost Word,
- 13th degree of *Royal Arch*: finding of the Lost Word, his pronunciation in an antediluvian cave. The spiritual ternary composed of *Solomon*, *Hiram of Tyre* and the

³ Not Miskatonic !

New Initiate, replacing *Hiram Abif*, is restored, and able to connect again Sky and Earth, that is the highest spiritual realms and our existing (material) world.

- 14th, 15th and 16th of *Grand Elect Perfect Master and Sublime Mason, Knight of the East, Prince of Jerusalem*, connects to the construction of the second Temple.
- 17th, 18th and 19th degrees of *Knight of the East and West, Knight of the Rose-Cross, Grand Pontiff*, make a bridge between Jewish and Christian cultures. Most important is here the Apocalypse, the destruction of the Old Word and the appearance of the Celestial Jerusalem, the most sublime spiritual symbol of architecture (in symbolic relation with the destruction and new building of the Jerusalem Temple, but at the cosmic level), alas not highlighted nowadays.

Symbolic and Kabbalistic Content of the Secret Master

The mythical site of the ceremony

The ritual unfolds in the Temple of Jerusalem. The Secret Master is the guardian of the Hiram Abiff mortal remains, temporarily placed in the Holy of Holies, the Debir. Although received the Debir, he is situated in the Saint, the Hekal, in the vicinity of the door separating the Holy and the Holy of Holies.

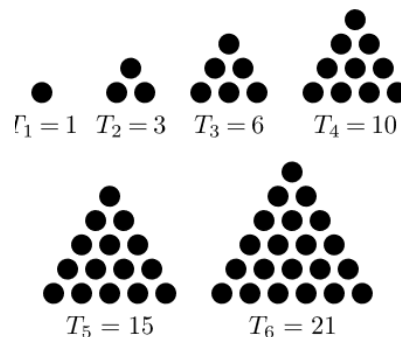
For a practising Jew, the presence of Hiram's corpse, would have been a nonsense, even a sacrilege, but there is a certain logic behind it: one must understand that Hiram Abiff's mortal remains are also a symbol of the Lost Word, which no longer can be spelled in the Debir (please refer to 5.2.2).

Note also that in this ceremony, the Temple seems in full activity, which doesn't correspond to other parts of the Masonic myth, asserting that, Hiram dead, the Temple had still to be completed.

Triangular Numbers and AASR Lost Word

Triangular Numbers

Triangular numbers are mathematical beings which have special properties; in the past, they were often associated with symbolic and spiritual meanings. The best known triangular number is obviously the Pythagorean Tetractys, of 4 side, and which sum is 10 ($=1+2+3+4$); Jewish Kabbalists often associated the Tetractys to the Tetragrammaton (which contains 4 letters). In the lecture of the degree delineated in 5.1.1, the Tetragrammaton is enclosed in a triangle, relating the Tetractys to this divine name.

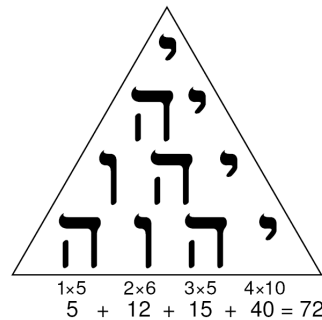


The triangular numbers of side 1 to side 6 ($T=4$ being the Tetractys)

The triangular number of side 5, which sum is 15 ($=1+2+3+4+5$), is included in the degree of Secret Master, being also the sum of $3+5+7$, the ages of the three degrees of the “Blue” Lodge.

AASR Lost Word

In the Rite of Perfection, the Lost Word is the same than in the British Royal Arch, the Tetragram Iod Hé Vau Hé. In the Jewish culture, His pronunciation was lost after the destruction of the Second Temple.



Tetragram as a Tetractys

This name of God was spelt by the Grand Priest in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, once a year, for the remission of Israel sins. The ceremony indicates:

- *What was the name of the Sanctus Sanctorum in Hebrew?*
- Dabir.
- *What signifies this word?*
- Speech
- *Why so?*
- Because it was there the Divinity resided and where he delivered his Oracles.

In the AASR, the pronunciation is lost because it had to be simultaneously carried out by three key officiants: Solomon, Hiram of Tyr and Hiram Abiff, in a vault situated under the Holy of Holies, where a sacred column Beauty supported this part of the edifice (being also symbolically the fundamental stone supporting the whole universe). In the blue degrees of the AASR, the Worshipful Master represents Solomon, the Senior Warden Hiram Abiff, and the Junior Warden Hiram of Tyr.

Hiram Abiff dead, the Word could no longer be pronounced. It was up to the new initiate to recover, on his own, the Lost Word, and, after having found it, to integrate the reconstituted ternary.

The Lecture of the Secret Master Ceremony gives the following information about Lost Word:

- *In which place were you received?*
- In the Sanctum Sanctorum (Holy of Holies)
- *Did you perceive anything on Entering the Sanctus Sanctorum?*
- The Character of the Divinity
- *Did you perceive anything else on entering the Sanctum Sanctorum?*

- I perceived the Great Circle in the middle of which is enclosed the blazing star which blinded me with holy respect and contemplation.
- ***What signifies the Hebraic characters in the Triangle?***
- **A Thing about common knowledge of Human that I cannot pronounce.**
- *We are in the Lodge and that is permitted.*
- I have seen the great Light dazzling without knowing it.
- What did enclose that great brightness?
- **The Ineffable name of the Great Architect of the Universe, Moses alone has seen it, he had the first pronunciation from the Grand Architect of the Universe when he appeared to him on the mountain. It was forbidden by a law Moses made public never to pronounce it by which means we lost the true pronunciation and we are now uncertain of the number of Syllables it contains, but I hope one day to arrive at the knowledge of the Ineffable word.**
- ***It is true, my Brother the just pronunciation of those characters was lost to all but Grand Elect Perfect Sublime Masons, of which I hope you will one day acquire by virtue of your attachment to our order and your zeal in discharging the duties of your obligations.***

Jewish Kabbalists often associated the Tetractys to the Tetragrammaton (which contains 4 letters). Other associations of the Tetragrammaton by the Jewish Kabbalists were for instance:

- The 4 elements of Fire, Air, Water and Earth
- The 4 worlds of the Kabbalah (Atziluth, Beri'ah, Yetzirah, Assiah)
- The 4 different parts of the cosmos of the Greek and Romans, related to astrology (Earth and its four elements, the sphere of the seven planets (including the two Lights Sun and Moon), the zodiac and the so-called fixed stars and the divine heavens.
- The 10 sefirot of the Kabbalistic tree.

In the above lecture, the Tetragrammaton is seen enclosed in a triangle, relating the Tetractys to the divine name.

Numbers associated with the Hebraic alphabet

In the ancient Jewish culture, figure and numbers were written with letters of the alphabet: each letter corresponded to a precise number. Therefore, to each Hebraic word corresponds a number, which is the sum of the figures of the letters included in it.

6 Vahv 6 ו 22 ויו 64	5 Hay 5 ה 6 הא 117	4 Dalet 4 ד 434 דלת 914	3 Geemel 3 ג 73 גמל 227	2 Beit 2 ב 412 בית 838	1 Aleph 1 א 111 אלף 216
30 Lahmed 3 ל 74 למד 588	20 Kaf 2 כ 100 כפ 185	10 Yoad 1 י 20 יוד 476	9 Tait 9 ט 419 טית 845	8 Chait 8 ח 418 חית 844	7 Zaiyin 7 ז 67 זינ 193
90 Tzahday 9 צ 104 צדי 558	80 Pay 8 פ 85 פה 91	70 Aiyin 7 ע 130 עינ 256	60 Sahmek 6 ס 120 סמכ 300	50 Nunc 5 נ 106 נונ 234	40 Mame 4 מ 80 מנ 160
The Three Mothers: א מ ש The Seven Doubles: ב נ ד כ פ ר ת The Twelve Elementals: ה ו ח ט י ל נ ס ע צ ק 900 Tzahday-Sophit 9	Std Value Reduction Letter Name Letter Ordinal Optional Spellings Spelling of Letter Gematria Full Value 900 Tzahday-Sophit 9	400 Tahv 4 ת 406 תו 428	300 S(h)een 3 ש 360 שינ 486	200 Raysh 2 ר 510 ריש 890	100 Qoaf 1 ק 186 קופ 293
900 Tzahday-Sophit 9	800 Pay-Sophit 8 ץ 27	700 Nunc-Sophit 7 ך 26	600 Mame-Sophit 6 ן 25	500 Kaf-Sophit 5 ם 24	400 Dages-Sophit 4 ך 23

Hebraic letters and associated numbers

Secret Words of the Secret Master

The text of the reception states:

The Secret Word is Iod (sometimes written Jod), Iah and Adonai. These are the first names which God gave himself when he manifested himself to Moses on the Mountain.

However, if the Torah indeed states that God gave himself with three names, they are not those given in the ritual, but EHYEH ASHER EHYEH. How to explain these changes?

- Iod is the first letter of the Tetragrammaton (Iod).
- Iah (Iod Hé) contains the two first letters of the Tetragrammaton.
- Adonai is the substituted name of the Tetragrammaton in the Torah, which can be pronounced.
- Both Iod and Iah were considered by the Jewish Kabbalists as sacred names of God.
- Interesting enough,
 - The arithmetic value of the first secret word is 10 (Iod = 10), the value of the Tetractys.
 - The number connected to Iah is 15 = 10 (Iod) + 5 (Hé), corresponding to the value of the triangular number of side 5 (and to the sum of the ages of the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason).
- The value of Adonai is 65.
- If one adds the value of the three secret Words of the degree, the sum is 90 = 9 x 10. The number 9 is present in other contents of the degree (consult for instance the next section), related to a quest and noncompletion. 10 is, of course, the number of the Tetractys and is related to the first Secret Name (Iod).

The new Secret Master then possesses at the end of the ceremony:

- The usual substituted word to be pronounced instead of the Tetragrammaton (Adonai).
- Two divine names, directly issued from the Tetragrammaton, the Kabbalists used in their prayers and meditations. These two divine names are the apparent parts of an object, the other part being lost, hidden or absent, *Symbolism*.

With these three divine names, the new initiative of the AASR Higher Degrees can start his own spiritual quest.

9 and 72 names of God

9 Names of God

The Lecture of the Degree further states:

- *What did you perceive more?*
- Nine other words of Hebraic Characters.
- *Where were they placed?*
- In 9 beams that came from the Luminous blazing.
- *What signifies the 9 names?*
- The 9 names which God gave himself when he spoke to Moses, making him hope one day his future, Issue should know his real name.
Eloah, Adonai, Jehovah, Yahweh, Iod (sometimes written Jod), Aloim (probably Elohim), *Achab, Osem and Jesays*, **which together compose those letters which include 72 names who are taken like the names of the Divinity to the Cabalistic tree and the Angel alphabet.**

What about the number 72 associated with 72 divine names? First, 72 is the sum of the Tetragrammaton placed in the Tetractys:

First line: Iod = 10

Second line: Iod and Hé = 15

Third line: Iod, Hé and Vau = 21

Fourth line: Iod, Hé, Vau and Hé = 26

Sum of the 4 lines: 10 + 15 + 21 + 26 = 72

Note that:

- The nine listed names of God contain both Jewish (for instance Eloah, Elohim, Iod, etc.) and Christian names (Jehovah) of God. We do not know why the redactors chose to mention this (at the first sight) exotic list instead of divine names associated, for instance, to the nine first sefirot of the Kabbalistic tree.
- There are not 72 divine names associated with the Kabbalistic tree in the published literature of Jewish Kabbalah I consulted, but 72 divine names indeed play an important role in both Jewish and Christian Kabbalah. What are they?

72 Divine Names

72 names of God are the combination of letters taken from three verses from the Book of Exodus, Chapter 14, dealing with the crossing of the Red Sea. The three verses 19, 20 and 21 contain 72 letters for each of them.

Verse 19

מִחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּלָּךְ, מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם; וַיִּסַּע עֲמֹד הָעֲנָן, מִפְּנֵיהֶם, וַיַּעֲמֹד, מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם יַם וַיִּסַּע מִלֶּאֱדָה הָאֱלֹהִים, הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵי

Verse 20

הַלְיָלָה-זֶה, כָּל-קָרֵב זֶה אֶל-הַלְיָלָה; וְלֹא-כ וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מִחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם, וּבֵין מִחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיְהִי הָעֲנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ, וַיֹּאזֶר אֶת

Verse 21

הַיָּם לְחִרְבָּה; וַיִּפְקְעוּ, הַמַּיִם-הַלְיָלָה, וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת-הַיָּם בְּרוּיַח קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל-הַיָּם, וַיּוֹלֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת-יָדוֹ, עַל-כַּא וַיִּט מַלְּשָׁה אֶת

The 72 names of God, each consisting of three letters are produced:

- by writing down verse 19 from right to left, without spaces.
- Underneath verse 19, by writing verse 20 from left to right, without spaces.
- Underneath that, by writing verse 21 from right to left, without spaces.

This way of juxtaposing the three verses produces the 72 names of God. These Names are not ordinary names; they represent sources of energy taken from an infinite and transcendental current that flows through the world.



The 72 Names of God

What was their use?

- For Jewish Kabbalists, the loop repetition of the Names would open the doors giving access to superior and spiritual heavens.
- For Christian Kabbalists, the names corresponded to angels who could be evoked during theurgic operations.

- Nowadays, Kabbalistic websites assert that they are “*a powerful spiritual tool, a Kabbalistic key to an abundance of blessing, fortune, prosperity, wholeness and happiness*⁴”.

Password Zizon, Door of the Sanctum Sanctorum

The text of the reception states:

WORD: the password is Zizon (other versions indicate Ziza), signifying Balustrade

The Lecture indicates also:

- *How many doors were in the Sanctum Sanctorum?*
- **Only one, on the East Side and was called Zizon** and was covered by purple, hyacinth, Gold and Azure.

Then, the password reflects the door separating the Holy and the Holy of Holies, in front of it Secret Masters are placed on guard duty. Isn't it very symbolic to attribute a password to a door? Doesn't it remind us of the doors of the Egyptian Book of The Dead, where the deceased had to give the right password to a terrible guardian to pass?

The Hebraic Letter Zayin

Both Zizon and Ziza put an emphasis on the letter Zayin, which, like the letter Hé in the Tetragrammaton (which also composed of 4 letters), appears twice in both passwords.

Zayin corresponds to the value 7. The ritual also ascertains that 7 is the sacred number of this degree. Moreover, the ceremony mentions the presence of the Menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum, made of 70 pieces. The ritual attributes the seven candles to the seven planets and the 70 pieces of the zodiac and fixed stars, doing a correspondence of this object with the cosmos of the ancient Romans and Greeks (Ptolemean Universe). Zayin is also associated with a sword, which may correspond to a Guardian weapon.

In the Jewish Kabbalah, Zayin is often related to:

- An internal conflict, which is here overcome by Laurel (Victory over own Passion) and Olive (symbol of Peace and Union), which are presented to the candidate in the shape of a crown.
- A separation (the door of the Sanctum Sanctorum) or a death (Hiram assassination or corpse), which allows a path to perfection (succession of the AASR degrees).

Zizon

Zizon is composed of the letters Zayin, Yod, Zayin, Alef.

A couple of observations:

- a) Yod and Alef are the first letters of the three sacred Words of the degree (Iod, Iah, Adonai).
- b) The arithmetical value of Zizon is $25 = 5^2$, this arithmetic expression can be related to the blazing star of the degree, enclosed in a circle, which can, for instance, be

⁴ See for instance <http://www.kabbalahnames.com/72-names-of-god> (access April 2018).

interpreted as the human being (the star or a microcosm) related to the Divine (the circle or the macrocosm).

- c) Zizon of value 25 can be reduced to $2 + 5 = 7$, sacred number of the degree.
- d) 25 is also the sum of the arithmetical values of Iod and Iah, two sacred words of the degree directly deriving from the Tetragrammaton.

The Ivory Key, a Possible Connection with Christian Kabbalah

Zizon, the door of the Sanctus Sanctorum and the Ivory Key are related, the last one allowing to unlock the first one. However, an ivory key is made of a matter not really suited to open a door.

Why did the authors choose such an inconvenient substance?

- There is a first and obvious answer: It relates to the sentence of an ancient Masonic catechism which mentioned the existence of a secret kept in a box of ivory. Understand that the box was the oral cavity containing the tongue (able to pronounce a sacred or a password) and protected by a closed jaw, composed of teeth (ivory).
- Another track, which was probably known by the redactors of the ceremony, derives from a speculation of Christian Kabbalists:
 - o Christian Kabbalists, following the pioneering work of Pic de la Mirandole, often believed that Kabbalah belonged to a branch of the *Philosophia Perennis* or *Prisca Theologia* (a complete religion or major spiritual current from time immemorial), is also a precursor of Christianity.
 - o These learned believed that just a letter was necessary to transform the Tetragrammaton Iod Hé Vau Hé in the name of Jesus or Yeshoua, spelt according to them as Iod Hé Shin Vau Hé.
 - o Then, the insertion of the letter Shin would transform the Tetragrammaton into Jesus (Christ), Curiously enough, the thing usually related to the letter Shin is the tooth (made of ivory) Consequently:
 - **The letter Shin, associated with an object of ivory, is the key to unlock the Tetragrammaton and reconstitute its pronunciation in the name of the Jesus Christ.**
 - The name of Jesus Christ, Universal Savior of our sins, can now be spelled and invoked by any human being adopting the Christian religion, and is no longer kept, as the Tetragrammaton, by a Great Priest and to the focused benefits of Israel tribes (remember that, when Jesus died, the curtain separating the Holy from the Holies in Herod's Temple tore apart).
 - The five letters were often placed at the five apexes of a pentagram, which is present in the ceremony. The pentagram was at times related to the 5 wounds of Christ.
- However, of course, Jewish Kabbalists didn't agree with this reasoning, arguing that Yeshoua was written with the letters Iod Shin Vau Ayin and not Iod Hé Shin Vau Hé, ruining the assumptions of their Christian colleagues.

Zizon, Four Elements and ancient Christian Writings

Let's come back to the Lecture of the degree:

- *How many doors were in the Sanctum Sanctorum?*
- Only one, on the East Side and was called Zizon and was covered by purple, hyacinth, Gold and Azure.
- *What doth these colours represent?*
- The Four Elements

Correspondences between the pigments and the Elements:

- Water: Purple, taken from a sea gastropod.
- Earth: Hyacinth, from a mineral brown orange.
- Air: Azure (variation of blue that is often described as the colour of the sky on a clear day).
- Fire: Gold (traditionally associated with the Sun).

Attribution of colours and Aristotelian elements to the Door of the Sanctum Sanctorum were not included in the Bible. One doesn't find them also in the Kabbalistic books I consulted.

Where do they come from?

Surprise, they are listed in the writings of an early Christian author, Church Father and theologian, Clement of Alexandria (150-215), in *The Stromata*, V. Such a finding demonstrates that the authors of the Secret Master ritual had a large religious culture, not limited to the study of Kabbalistic books such as *Kabbala denudata* attributed to Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, a Christian Kabbalist, and published in 1684 or an earlier source, *De arte cabalistica* of Johann Reuchlin, published in 1517.

Finally, what is the meaning of the four Element closely related to the door of the Sanctum Sanctorum?

Most probably:

- That, being received in the Sanctum Sanctorum, the new Secret Master symbolically leaves the earthly world of the 4 elements, submitted to unending processes of generation and corruption.
 - Being an Hiram-like, he will have (once again, symbolically) access to the planes encountered by the souls of the dead, but contrary to Hiram, he stays alive, as do the human being subject to the modified state of conscience and temporarily living in strange realms.
 - That the new initiates begin his ascension through the sphere of the seven planets, of the fixed star and of the zodiac (represented by the Menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum placed in the Holy of Holies, to eventually access the angel's domains and finally divine Heavens (represented by the other symbols and objects of the Holy and Holies).
 - That the ceremony of the Secret Master's degree partly unveils the whole progression of the AASR Mason, notably culminating with the XXVIIIth degree of *Knight of the Sun*.
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Conclusion

During my years in the staff of an AASR chapter (where I was the Orator), I was puzzled by the vacuum of the meaning of the Secret Master ceremony in which I was acting. My search for a deeper understanding has now convinced me that their authors were learned and had a deeper esoteric knowledge than I had first supposed and that this degree has a high level of symbolic coherence. Unfortunately, the followers of Andrew Francken brought so many modifications and simplifications that the underlying content of the degree is quite lost.

Now I am wondering if other AASR degrees, given mostly by communication during a brief session, do not contain such a rich esoteric content. **I must continue my quest!**

On the other hand, the text of the ceremony is not perfect, as if a good original ritual had been badly transcribed by unlearned copyists. I hope to verify, by finding an older ritual, the truth of my assumption.

Finally, looking both at the content of the Secret Master Degree and at the overall AASR quest of the Lost Word, what was the aim of the redactors of the degrees and of Etienne Morin?

- **To provide an alternative spiritual path including the operational repetition of divine names as part of the masonic asceticism, complementing the use of symbolism and the practice of virtues?**

Or,

- **as it is mostly the case nowadays, to display to more or less enlightened human beings, the (often superficial) glimpse of a spiritual surrounding?**

This crucial interrogation, which would need a long-term investigation, is unfortunately not “the cup of tea” of the Masonic researchers, exclusively devoted to the so-called “authentic School of research” and dealing in priority with the history of the Order.

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