

If I Had A Hammer

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"If I Had a Hammer," known as "The Hammer Song," was written by Pete Seeger and Lee Hays in 1949 and first recorded by The Weavers, a folk music quartet composed of Seeger, Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman. The song was written in support of the progressive movement and the lyrics allude to the labor movement, taking symbols from the work place and turning them into calls for action toward equality. Peter, Paul and Mary re-recorded the song in 1962 in support of the emerging civil rights movement.

*If I had a hammer
I'd hammer in the morning
I'd hammer in the evening
All over this land
I'd hammer out danger
I'd hammer out a warning
I'd hammer out love between my
brothers and my sisters
All over this land*

*If I had a song
I'd sing it in the morning
I'd sing it in the evening
All over this land
I'd sing out danger
I'd sing out a warning
I'd sing out love between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land*

*If I had a bell
I'd ring it in the morning
I'd ring it in the evening
All over this land
I'd ring out danger
I'd ring out a warning
I'd ring out love between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land*

*Well I've got a hammer
And I've got a bell
And I've got a song to sing
All over this land
It's the hammer of justice
It's the bell of freedom
It's the song about love between my
brothers and my sisters
All over this land*

The hammer is one of the oldest working tools used by man. In Scandinavian mythology the "mjolnir," or hammer or mallet had special powers, as in Thor's hammer, capable of leveling mountains, and always hit its target with great force and then returned to the thrower. Symbolically, the hammer of Thor destroyed his enemies and those of humanity. The name "gavel" was not known in England before the nineteenth century.

Webster's Dictionary defines gavel as "the mallet of the presiding officer for commanding attention or confirming an action." Henry Wilson Coil, 33^o, wrote a gavel is "a stonemason's hammer which has one flat face opposite the sharp

peen, so that from the top, it bears resemblance to a simple gabled roof and house, from which appearance, it takes its name, thus, *gable* from the German, *Gipfel* (meaning summit or peak) becomes *gavel*. It is used directly on the stone to make a rough shaping or rough dressing, and the finishing is done with chisel and mallet or maul, the latter being of wood and entirely different from the gavel. The gavel has been generally adopted by Masonic bodies and by many parliamentary bodies as a hammer to call the meeting to order, keep order, announce the result of a vote, the recordation of a resolution, etc. Some lodges use the setting maul or mallet. In German lodges the instrument is called "the Hammer."

We learn that three hammers are in use in the Symbolic Lodge: the common gavel, the setting maul, and the Worshipful Master's gavel. Each has a special purpose and application in Masonic ceremonies and rituals. Each carry both an operative and symbolic message.

While the Worshipful Master's badge of office is the Square, **The Gavel** is the emblem of his power and authority and to a lesser degree that of the Wardens of the Lodge. It is not a "common gavel", but rather a "mallet" used to preside at the meetings of the Lodge and allows him to conduct its business with decorum and harmony. Through it we are taught to rise, sit, and finalize our business during our labors. Gavels come in all sizes and shapes but, as "the scepter in the hands of the king, so is the gavel in the hand of the Master, to use it, not arbitrary, but prudently, and if occasion require, firmly." The gavel is used by the Master, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden in tiling their respectful stations. As an emblem of the Master's power he should always retain possession of the gavel and never have it beyond his reach whether moving about the Lodge during conferring degrees or when the Lodge is in the charge of the Junior Warden at refreshment. The Worshipful Master's authority comes from his election and installation as Master under the authority of the Grand Lodge and once installed, the Master cannot be deprived of the gavel of authority except by the Grand Master or the Grand Lodge in session.

In ancient times the **Setting Maul** was a heavy wooden hammer used by Operative Masons to "set" stones in place in mortar. Mauls were used to drive chisels and wedges into stones, breaking them for the builder's use. The setting maul carries great significance to Speculative Masonry as it reminds us of the death of Hiram Abif, the Master of King Solomon's Temple in the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. As he was struck by the setting maul, Hiram explained "*My life you can take, my integrity never.*" In some Lodges the maul is improperly used by the Master as his gavel, from which it totally differs in form and symbolic signification--the gavel is a symbol of order and decorum; the setting maul, a formidable weapon of death by violence.

The **Common Gavel** is in fact a true gavel. Its shape has a “gable” on one end and a flat surface on the other. In the Entered Apprentice degree, we learn Operative Masons use the common gavel to break off the rough parts of stone (the Rough Ashlar), to better fit them (finished stone or Perfect Ashlar) for the builder's use. In Speculative Masonry we are reminded of our personal “rough and imperfect” state and of the need to gain education, understanding, and control of our many imperfections. Placed in your hands as an Entered Apprentice, the common gavel is a symbol of that responsibility and opportunity to become a better man and Master Mason.

It is through reflection and individual effort each Mason forms the foundation of his personal "temple." Becoming a better Mason comes through divesting your minds and consciences of the vices, habits, desires, and unnecessary wants so common in youth. Each of these imperfections appears as a rough point on our character and the common gavel calls us to pay due attention to them and smooth them away, always preparing for the Spiritual Temple in our future. By the common gavel we are reminded that we are in constant need of self-improvement and watchfulness; perfection in conduct comes from work and constant vigilance. From the lowest to the highest in the Lodge, the gavel reminds us that symbolically we should use it in Freemasonry to divest ourselves of the vices and superfluities of life.

The Bell of Warning comes from Brother Alphonse Cerza's book “A Masonic Thought”:

FREE MEN -- Freemasonry challenges no man's political creed, leaving that to his country, and to himself. It does not interfere with any man's religious opinions, leaving that a matter between his God and his conscience: and yet it does seek to impress by the most sublime and beautiful lessons, enforced but the most profound reasoning, the Almighty Power of Truth, appealing the highest and purest sentiments of the human soul for the enforcement of its principles. Ignorance, tyranny and fanaticism are its foes; liberty, equality and fraternity, its watchwords; it seeks the light pure and undefiled and casts its radiance into the dark recesses and bathes of God's pure ignorance and fanatics may have enshrouded him. Too many are free in name only. (Anonymous)

The Song of Happiness comes from Most Worshipful Brother Robert Morris, Poet Laureate of Masonry:

The Mason's Pledge
("The Poetry of Freemasonry")

*Brother, hearken, while I tell you
What we Masons pledged to do
When, prepared at yonder altar,*

*We assumed the Mason's vow!
Foot and knee, breast, hand and cheek —
Hearken while I make them speak!*

*Foot to foot, on mercy's errand,
When we hear a brother's cry,
Hungry, thirsty, barefoot, naked,
With God's mercy let us fly.
This of all our thoughts the chief,
How to give him quick relief.*

*Knee to knee, in earnest praying,
None but God to hear or heed,
All our woes and sins confessing,
Let us for each other plead;
By the spirit of our call,
Let us pray for brothers all.*

*Breast to breast, in sacred casket,
At life's center let us seal
Every truth to us entrusted,
Nor one holy thing reveal!
What a Mason vows to shield,
Let him die, but never yield.*

*Hand to back, a brother's falling,
Look, his burdens are too great.
Stretch the generous hand and hold him
Up before it is too late.
The right arm's a friendly prop,
Made to hold a brother up.*

*Cheek to cheek, in timely whisper
When the temper strives to win.
Urge the brother's bounden duty,
Show him the approaching sin.
Point to him the deadly snare,
Save him with a brother's care.*

*Brother, let us often ponder
What we Masons pledged to do
When, prepared at mythic altar,
We assumed the Mason's vow;
Foot and knee, breast, hand and cheek,
Let these oft our duties speak.*

In closing, Freemasons revere the hammer, mallet, gavel, setting maul, or common gavel stands symbolizing the height of Masonic power and authority--the majesty of power, the wisdom of the Master and the Light radiating from the East. Like "*The Hammer*" verses, the Gavel symbols development of the intellect of everyone, the Bell of Warning symbols the Pure Light radiating from each of the individual Mason, and the Song of Happiness symbols the bonds of friendship and brotherly love.

The challenge is to elevate yourself from the state of a Rough Ashlar to that of a Perfect Ashlar. Remember, a Mason's work is never done so "May every Mason rise in the East, find refreshment in the South, and be so dismissed in the West, as to find admission into the middle chamber to receive the reward of a Good Man."

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