

WITH THE AUTHOR'S COMPLIMENTS
Epku Sep 1974

“WITH THEM THE SEEDS OF WISDOM
DID I SOW,
AND WITH MY OWN HAND
LABOURED IT TO GROW”

(Omar Khayyàm)
(Circa 1050-1123)

R. A. NOTES AND MUSINGS

by

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THE GRAND SANHEDRIN (from the Greek; lit; "A sitting in")

The Grand Sanhedrin constituted the Supreme Council taking notice of false doctrine—teaching Mosaic Law and regulating observancies peculiar to Jewish Hierarchy.

At one time holding also the power of life and death, this was taken from it by the Romans (John 18.31) who otherwise respected its Decrees. It is recorded however, that in the absence of Pilate in Rome, the stoning of Stephen occurred at which tragedy the Sanhedrin must have connived.

Usually meeting in the Temple, or its precincts—it did on occasion assemble at the house of the High Priest who invariably presided. Also present, were Vice Presidents (2), Heralds, and Scribes, whose function was to register Votes of Conviction and acquittal, plus other attendants.

The Sanhedrin sat in crescent form (possibly triangular) the President in the centre of the Arc, with Heralds on each side of him. It was composed of six representatives from each of the twelve Tribes—Priests, Scribes, and Elders, all of whom were required to be unmarried, above thirty years of age, well instructed in Law, and of good report.

The numerals constituting the prescribed number of seventy-two, when offset against their value of the *Cabbala, produce a geometrical Figure so startlingly familiar to R. A. Masons, that one is left wondering if the compilers of the Ritual knew the Secret! This geometrical exercise is easily demonstrable on the Tracing Board, but cannot be further detailed here.

**The Cabbala. A secret science alleged to have been divinely imparted in remote times, and preserved by tradition, by means of which the Rabbis affected to interpret the mystic sense of words, letters and numerals, of which the latter were given alphabetic values.*

THE EPHOD — pronounced "EEPHOD"

Part of the ceremonial dress of the High Priest of Israel in the post exilic period described in Exodus XXVIII; 6. It was worn outside the robe and kept in place by a girdle and shoulder pieces from which hung a Breastplate (or pouch) containing the sacred Lots, Urim and Thummin.

It is uncertain if it covered the back encircling the body like a kind of waistcoat, or only the front. At all events, it was not a garment in the ordinary sense, and its association with "Lots" indicates that the Ephod was used for divination (see Numbers XXVII, 21).

A similar vestment was on occasion worn by persons other than a High Priest in serving before the Tabernacle, e.g. Samuel and David (Sam II-VI, 14).

The Breastplate must have been magnificent, since it mounted twelve precious stones, each stone representing one of the twelve Tribes, and set in gold.

THE URIM AND THUMMIN

Hebrew words for objects that were used for reading the Oracles in Ancient Israel. That they were "pebble like" can be deduced from the mention of the "stone of exclusion" usually translated "stone of plummet" "in the hands of Zerubbabel they are the eyes of the Lord" (ZACH; 4-10).

The precise use of the Urim and the Thummin is unknown, but it clearly involved some form of casting Lots. There is uncertainty about the meaning of the words which are usually mentioned together in the Old Testament.

At first every Levitical Priest could draw Lots (Deut 33-v8) but later this privilege was withdrawn and reserved for the High Priest himself.

In the period of the Kings drawing Lots was probably in favour of a system whereby the High Priest carried Lots "Symbolically in the pocket of decision" and under the Breastplate, this splendid vestment being received on his entry into the priesthood, and once in Office his decision was the "Word of God and the Oracle Sign".

There may have been two additional stones concealed in the Breastplate. Josephus adds two sardonyx "Buttons" worn on the shoulder, which, he says, "emitted luminous rays when the response was favourable but the particular mode in which the Oracles were given is lost in obscurity.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

To the historian Solomon's Temple fascinates the writer and intrigues the reader. It records the history of a Nation, and the record is one of travail and triumph; jubilation and despair; fire, pillage, desecration, massacre, and a final destruction merciless and cruel.

The site "Mount Moriah" is an ancient site mentioned in the Bible (Gen. XXII-2) in which is situate a mountain hallowed beyond belief as a focal point of worship to generations of Hebrews, as well it might be. Here is the place—that "threshing

floor of Araunah (or more correctly 'Ornan' the Jebusite" where Abraham readily prepared to offer up his son as a sacrifice at the Lord's command, and here it was, that the Lord commanded David a Temple should be built.

Mount Moriah seems to have been a series of platforms terminating in a summit upon which the Sanctuary was built, these platforms forming a series of graduated Courts reserved for the women. The Holy of Holies was in itself very small and housed the Ark of the Covenant, Shewbread, Aaron's Rod, and other precious and sacred relics. The *Holy Place* was used for the daily offices, the *Holy of Holies* being entered but once a year and only by the High Priest himself.

Solomon finished his Temple 1004 B.C.; it was destroyed 586 B.C.; rebuilt under Esra and Nehemiah 515 B.C.; polluted by Antiochus 167 B.C. and after once more being restored by Herod 17 B.C. finally and utterly destroyed by Titus A.D. 70.

This dreadful slaughter, merciless by any standards, becomes even more dreadful, when it is realised that Titus's Legions arrived before Jerusalem a few days before Pasover when the city was filled to overflowing. After the outer walls had been breached, numbers crowded into the Temple precincts which resembled a fortified place. It is said Titus wished to—and indeed would have—spared the Temple, but a maddened mercenary throwing in a blazing torch, started a fire which all attempts to extinguish failed. Thus was the most splendid edifice of its time and generation consumed by flames and totally destroyed. The figures quoted¹⁸ of the holocaust which followed are frightful—one hundred thousand being killed, wounded or maimed, and a further ninety thousand being carried off to be sold into slavery or—even worse—reserved for Gladiatorial exhibitions.

To commemorate this misery and destruction the Roman Senate erected a triumphal Arch in honour of Titus, and made many issues of coins showing Judah as a Captive Maid.

*vide Sherrers "Jewish people in the time of Christ".

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SHERRERS