

One of the first things we learn about Freemasonry is 'That it is a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols' - and there in a dozen or so words, you have the complete definition of Freemasonry, about which so many thousands of words have been written by our forebears and contemporaries with fertile imaginations and so many men have been and are inspired to build this near world-wide institution - this brotherhood of man which knows no bounds.

But does it not strike you as strange that this vast and most influential institution, given over almost entirely to the positive practice of morality - as a way of life - is, peculiarly, founded and propagated on allegory and symbols, stories and illustrations which, in part, lack positive proof to the point of mythology.

Conversely, some of the symbols around which the Masonic ritual is written and practised with such a high degree of ceremonial and intensity of intention, were, and in certain instances, still remain ^{physical entities} ~~AA~~ to this day.

This may sound paradoxical but it is true.

Two of the most important symbols in Freemasonry and which are at the very foundation of the craft are King Solomon and his magnificent

Temple at Jerusalem. Not forgetting, of course, the ancient Guilds of his operative Masons and the working implements with which they plied their skills. All these are of paramount importance in the development and practice of the ritual as we know it.

The same working implements are, of course, in use to this day in operative masonry and still have the same significations in Freemasonry.

As an operative Mason myself - as to all operative Masons - it provides a fascinating study ~~for me~~ to endeavour to relate the ancient story of the work of operative masons to the present day ritual of Freemasons.

And for one's guide and most authoritative story of the ancients and a detailed account of King Solomon's Temple - and no little about King Solomon in person, we turn to the Old Testament, the First Book of Kings and, in particular, Chapters Six and Seven

How much credence you place on this Old Testament account is a matter for each individual to decide but the Historians and Archaeologists, although differing in detail, have, down the centuries, accepted in general terms the Old Testament Story.

A visit to the Holy Land strengthens one's belief in the Old Testament story although the complete absence of physical remains of King Solomon's Temple itself is bound to give rise to differences of opinion and interpretations of what really did exist and what the Temple really did look like.

There have been many artists impressions of the Temple, some of which I find unacceptable on structural grounds and others because, in my view, they present a far too elaborate exterior because if one accepts the Old Testament picture then it was a magnificently and lavishly enriched interior - beyond imagination in fact - but the exterior was simply pretentious and of very simple plan. *Almost bordering on Egyptian style presentation*

The Temple was conceived by King David, Solomon's father, who had most of his life been involved in wars and fighting and conquered Jerusalem about 1000 years B.C. and was so struck by its strategic value that he made it his capital city and called it the City of David - later only did it become Jerusalem.

To commemorate his victorious campaigns and as a tribute of praise and thanksgiving to the eternal God he decided he would build a temple in Jerusalem.

But he was by now an old man and 'war drenched' and that David should build the Temple was not altogether acceptable to God and ~~so~~

Solomon, who was not David's eldest son, became King of Israel.

His preferment was largely because of his disinclination to warlike tendencies (the people of Israel were tired of wars) his wisdom, his diplomacy, his ability to attract wealth and get things done and his ability to curry friendship and favour with some of his neighbours and obtain their help and gifts - notably Hiram King of Tyre. Above all was his devotion to the eternal God, especially in the earlier years of his reign and he was favoured by God and ruled over the Israelites for 39 years (961 - 922 B.C) mostly years of peace and comparative plenty for the Israelites although in some measure at the expense of others.

Mind you, I think, without doubt, he was very much a showman, a spendthrift - one who liked lavish living - had an eye to beauty and the ladies (I think about 750 wives and 500 others!) he brooked no interference with his wishes and incidentally was one of the originators of the Unions of Labour - quite a politician in fact.

But this was the King for the people of Israel, at the beginning of a period of non-molestation in war and looking for a richer pleasanter life - a life in which they were prepared to be led into a closer and peaceful relationship with God. Perhaps not to be wondered at following their many years of turbulence and strife.

King Solomon was quick to assess and encourage this new mood in the people of Israel and the Old Testament story tells us he was 'inspired' to build the Temple conceived by his Father David and in which would be housed the 'Arc of the Covenant' containing the tablets of the law which were of inestimable value to the Israelites. This Temple would also be the Shrine at which the Israelites would worship the Eternal God.

Largely because of this decision Solomon had become very friendly with Hiram King of Tyre who was a great admirer of David and passed on his liking to King Solomon. So much so that he promised to supply all the cedar and fir timbers from the forests of Lebanon for use in the new Temple. His own people would hew them and shape them and float them by sea to Israel but Solomon had to provide the casual labour and food (oil and wheat) to Hiram King of Tyre in large quantities by way of payment for the vast quantity of timber required.

The stone for the Temple was quarried locally in Israel and some of the individual stones were of enormous dimensions 12'0" cube and 15'0" cube are mentioned in the Old Testament which also refers to sinkings^{turned} around the edges of the stones which I believe to have been a form of 'keyed' or 'interlocking' jointing.

The quarrying, handling, transporting and hoisting of these huge stones (and the timbers) is a source of wonder even although the enforced labour was in plentiful supply.

A veritable army of people (slave labour) was directed by Solomon to the forests of Lebanon, the stone quarries and the bronze casting grounds.

30,000 Men were levied to go to Lebanon - in relays of 10,000 men at a time working one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adorniram, whose name some of you will recall, was in charge of this levy.

80,000 Hevers or quarrymen were sent to work the stone in the mountains and 70,000 men were directed to carry and transport the burdens.

3,300 Overseers were engaged to look after this army of people - a total of 183,300 in all. But none of those directed to slave labour were Israelites - they the Israelites lived in comparative plenty on the fabulous wealth which Solomon attracted in gold, precious stones and food. The slaves were from subjected territories.

Now as to the site of King Solomon's Temple. To be able to begin to appreciate the amount of work involved in the preparation of the site and the building of the Temple on it, one has to realize that Jerusalem is a city built largely on mountain slopes and King Solomon's Temple was no exception. It was built on the lower slope of Mount Moriah - which became the Holy Mount Moriah because of its adaptation as a site for religious worship - with King Solomon's Temple becoming the ~~for~~pre-runner of subsequent places of worship on the same site.

The whole site extends to a vast level plateau 35 acres in extent levelled into and on the side of Mount Moriah.

In these days of mechanical diggers and earth moving equipment, to level a site of 35 acres on the side of a mountain would be quite a feat of engineering achievement but imagine the same operation undertaken by hand 3000 years ago! Yet this was done.

Not only was the feat accomplished but around the filled area - that is the lower slope on the west side - a high retaining wall was built of stone then called the Holy Wall - now called the Wailing Wall. This was an incredible feat.

The wailing wall, as you will know, is the only remaining part of the original building development on this site which embraced King Solomon's Temple, his palace and other national monuments built by King Solomon during his reign .

The wailing wall is the shrine at which, when possible, the Jews in Israel still pray to the Eternal God some standing quietly and reverently, some swaying to and fro to emphasize their prayers and some becoming quite vigorous in their movements whilst praying as if casting out their own evil spirits. Many write notes to the Eternal God and fold them up tightly then drop them into crevices in the Wailing Wall in the belief that they will be answered. To many, if not all Israelites, the Wailing Wall still represents the Temple of King Solomon.

I am not sure when the vast plateau, the Holy site of 35 acres, was formed but the existence of the Wailing Wall which, in part at least, was part of the original scheme of King Solomon goes back nearly 3000 years - 35 acres is an area which I guess to be nearly similar to the area bounded by Wellington Road, Stafford Street and Queens Cross, Dudley.

There were, of course, two temples built on the same site - that of King Solomon built 957 - 950 B.C. (in seven years and four months) and King Herod's Temple built in the first century Before Christ.

King Solomon's Temple was badly damaged by fire and depredation by the Babylonians in the year 586 B.C. some 370 years after it was built. It was later restored by Cyrus and Darius, both Kings of Persia (of which Israel became a part) in the second half of the 5th Century B.C. They were assisted by the Israelites on their return from Babylonian captivity. This restoration was undertaken over a long period of time 578 - 515 B.C. and the restored Temple was reconsecrated in the year 515 B.C. and presumably used until it was completely destroyed by King Herod in the first century B.C. some 900 years after it was first built.

The records mention the names not only of Cyrus and Darius, Kings of Persia, but also of Zerubbable and others who figure prominently in Royal Arch Masonry, as being involved in the restoration of King Solomon's Temple but it is important, I think, to remember that the original Temple was restored after its first desecration and not rebuilt as the second Temple, as is sometimes popularly believed, until the time of Herod.

The second Temple - Herod's Temple - was comparatively short-lived as it, in turn, was completely sacked by the Romans in the year 70 A.D.

Except for the Wailing Wall - which as you will recall helps to hold up the Holy Plateau, nothing remains of the building of King Solomon's Temple nor of Herod's Temple although the Israeli guides who now take tourists around the site will point out some parts of stone columns lying around on the ground which they say have been excavated from the ruins of the first temple but I am satisfied from my researches that these are not genuine. This is, perhaps, a bit of commercial comment which should be disregarded.

On the site of the plateau to-day, there are two quite elaborate 'churches' one in which the Israeli's worship and the other known as the 'Dome of the Rock' which is a huge mosque for Arab Worship - a most ornate building. This is linked with King Solomon's Temple in that there is in the marble floor a protrusion of the natural rock on which the Mosque is built and this is said to be part of the original Temple of King Solomon but there is no proof of this.

Again, I think a bit of comment for commercial gain.

Be it said the Dome of the Rock is a magnificent building of its kind - like King Solomon's Temple lavishly finished - and one has to pay (as a tourist) for admission.

So much for background. What of King Solomon's Temple itself as a building.

As I have said, the most detailed account of it we have is probably that contained in the First Book of Kings of the Old Testament and, in particular, Verses 6 and 7 which account, to the best of my knowledge, has not been disproved so on it I base my comments.

In my mind's eye, I see a fairly simple rectangular building, externally, the dimensions of which are stated in the Old Testament in CUBITS and HANDS BREADTHS. For simplicity, I shall quote in feet and inches - a cubit being the length of an adult's forearm from elbow to finger tips, namely 18" or thereabouts and a hands breadth 4". For the metricated, a little under half a meter and about 100mm, respectively.

The main rectangular block of the nave was 90'0" long and 30'0" wide and 45'0" high, completely cubic in shape and I believe flat roofed. In front of the main block was an entrance porch (or narthex as we should call it to-day) the same width as the nave (i.e., 30'0") and projecting 15'0". Thus, the main temple was overall a total of 105'0" long and 30'0" wide - not a very large building by today's standards.

There were windows with gratings in the walls of the Temple but these must have been set high up above the floor because all around the two long side walls (south and north) and one end (the east) - note carefully - there were built a continuous series of small side rooms, three storeys in height, each storey about 7'6" high and approached by trap doors from one floor to the next above.

These side rooms were a different width in each storey, the lower storey being 7'6" wide, the middle storey 9'0" wide and the top storey 10'6" wide, thus each row or storey cantilevering out 1'6" beyond the one below. This allowed for the planks and timber joists upholding the storey above to be secured without piercing the main walls of the Temple. It's not at all clear how the oversailing - or cantilevering - was done but it obviously was effective.

One reason for this method of fixing the joists was to avoid the use of hammers, chisels and all other metal tools on the site. No sound of metal on metal or metal on stone was heard on the site during the whole of the building operation. A truly remarkable achievement of pre-planning and prefabrication that all parts of this remarkable structure were made off site and fitted together on site.

But to return to the side rooms around the building. These were entered from one entrance only on the south side of the Temple (presumably from the nave) so that all these rooms must have been intercommunicating. Their uses are not clear but storage is suggested. They could have been (and I think more likely) private shrines. ^{were}

It is significant, however, to note that the records do not mention three entrances to the Temple as is done in the Masonic ritual. Logical deduction and analysis of the records lead me to the opinion that there was no entrance at the east end since that end of the main block for a depth of 30'0" was walled off completely to form the Holy of Holies, or Sacred Shrine 30'0" square which housed the Arc of the Covenant and other ornaments (which I will mention later) into which only the Priests were allowed to enter.

Between the nave and the ~~Idy~~ of Holies was a pair of massive doors formed in olive wood heavily carved and gold plated, ~~and~~ these with ~~two~~ ornate pillasters forming part of an inner vestibule in the form of a pentagon.

- I haven't yet fathomed this one.

The north, south and east walls of the main block being surrounded with side rooms it would appear, therefore, that there may have been but one entrance to the Temple - in the west wall - this being an imposing entrance, the main porchway or entrance.

As I have previously said, it was the full width of the nave (30'0") and 15'0" deep. The height of the main block was 45'0" and the end and two flanking rows of side rooms were 21'6" high but the height of the porchway or entrance is not stated. One imagines it may have been the same height or higher than the nave - this would depend to some extent on the position of the two great polished bronze columns or pillars which were placed at the porchway or entrance.

The records don't say they were in the porchway or that they supported the roof of the porch. In fact, the description of them rather leads one to believe they were free-standing.

The Old Testament story describes them as being 27'0" high, 18'0" in girth (i.e., nearly 6'0" in diameter) and the shell about 4" thick. They were formed hollow and each had a capital of polished bronze 7'6" high making a total height of 34'6". Each capital had two rows of pomegranates cast on, 100 in each row, and a network or trelliswork was over each of them. It is also said each capital supported a sphere ^{representing} the Celestial and Terrestrial Globes, respectively, but there is no mention of connecting beams or masonry at the head.

The pillars were named Boaz and Jachan (facing left and right of the entrance, respectively) denoting strength and stability. All in all I come down in favour of them being free-standing.

As with the hewing, handling and shaping of the timbers and stones for the building, so the casting of these two pillars with all their ornamentation were cast away from the site of the Temple as were so many other massive bronze ornaments within the Temple. It is almost inconceivable that such huge and highly finished castings in those days could be made.

I am indebted to Wor. Bro. Vincent Rutter (an expert himself) who tells me he doesn't know how such massive castings would be cast except in sections since the individual weight of each completed pillar would be approximately 34 tons - and even large modern electric crucibles have a capacity of only about 10 tons of molten metal.

Again, the question of transporting them from the plains of the Jordan where they were cast and erecting them makes the mind boggle. How could one get sufficient men sufficiently close to lift 34 tons. I think even in those days there must have been some system of pulleys and hoists, and lewis.

These pillars were extraordinarily beautiful and obviously made by a master of the craft who, in fact, was Hiram of Tyre, son of a widow and whose father also had been a worker in bronze. Hiram, so the old Testament tells us, was full of skill, acute and clever at all kinds of bronze work.

He it was also who cast the huge polished bronze 'sea' or 'bowl' 15'0" diameter, 7'6" high, 45'0" girth and with a lipped (lilylike) rim, all around it, the whole richly ornamented and cast in one piece - the capacity being 16,000 gallons of water and it was supported

on 12 high polished bronze bulls. What the purpose of the sea or bowl was I am not sure but it was placed on the south side of the Temple at the eastern corner.

There were 10 trolleys of bronze each 6'0" wide, 6'0" long and 4'6" high each with a 6'0" diameter bronze pot on top to hold 320 gallons. These were placed beside the Temple 5 to the south side and 5 to the north side. Again these uses I find are not too clearly defined.

Across the full width of the Holy of Holies were two cherubs of exquisite form and design carved in olive wood each 15'0" high and plated with gold with outstretched wings and from tip to tip each cherub measured 15'0" thus protecting the Arc of the Covenant.

Where and precisely how the cherubs, the Arc of the Covenant and all the other solid bronze and numerous solid gold ornaments were placed inside the Holy of Holies and Temple can only be imagined - there is no record to my knowledge.

Hiram was the man who masterminded the bronze and gold work. The overall appearance and splendour inside the Temple backed by the abundance of cedar wood beams, wall linings and ceilings, some heavily carved and overlaid with gold, and including solid gold hinges on some of the doors, must have been beyond belief. The Old Testament records tell us there was no way of weighing the mass of bronze ornaments in the Temple - it was past counting.

It would be interesting to know if the clay grounds between Sukkoth and Zarethan in the Jordan Valley had any special qualities for castings of the kind Hiram produced. I'm afraid I have no knowledge of them.

The Old Testament, as far as I have read, makes no mention of Hiram being the principal Architect of the Temple, although this could well have been so, because in olden days Architects were often master craftsmen, master operative masons, as well as being skilled designers.

Hiram's early training and the country of his origin may well have influenced the design of King Solomon's Temple for he, Hiram the designer or architect, was very highly thought of by Solomon and Solomon's great friend King Hiram of Tyre. These three it would seem (Hiram) made the plans and designs, Solomon found the money ^{and the slaves (about} and Hiram King of Tyre found much of the material and skilled labour used in the building of the Temple.

These three also have Masonic significance which I will not go into here.

King Solomon's Temple was in the Phoenician style which had not then reached the advanced stage of forming Catanerian arches and domes in stone - they came later. I make this comment because of the references in Royal Arch Masonry to these feats of building. And although there are no comments to this effect in the First Book of Kings I can imagine King Solomon's Temple being built on the lower slope of the Holy Mount Moriah than the present plateau then, following the conflagration, subsequent levelling operations could have completely enveloped and submerged the ruins of the Temple. Later excavations could have revealed some of the columns of the inner courtyard which surrounded the Temple - but I think this most unlikely or the Archaeologists would have discovered

far more than they have done in their excavations
- which is very little.

I believe ^{the story of the} ~~any~~ subteranean vault or chamber supposed to have been found when King Solomon's Temple was first restored was, perhaps, part of a story formulated in a festive, if perhaps not completely informed, mind. Alternatively, it could have been a sort of catacomb or cave formed in the solid rock beneath the Temple. Recent excavations tend to give credence to this type of cavern in other similar rock formations.

But I must not wander off into the realms of Royal Arch antecedents which are, perhaps, equally well founded and, ~~perhaps~~, equally or more colourful than those of the Craft.

The whole story is fascinating and I have but picked pieces as from a skeleton but time passes and I must draw to a conclusion.

As I see the story of craft Freemasonry, it has been built around a most wonderful interpretation of King Solomon's Temple and King Solomon's personality including those ^{also} whom he gathered around him in this operation. One of the brightest and most skillful of these was Hiram - the brass founder - the architect - whose untimely death graphically told, but I very much doubt if physically carried out in

the manner and place stated in our ritual -
in a place where there must have been many
people milling around at the very time the
deed was supposed to have been committed -
but that too is another story.

King Solomon's Temple was an edifice
lavishly built and adorned to the glory of the
Eternal God.

The Temple we build as Freemasons is
the Temple within our hearts from which our
individual and collective morality springs.
Only we as individuals can make the endeavour
and only the Great Architect of the Universe
can measure the level of our achievement.

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