

KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

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PUBLISHED IN "THE MASONIC HOME JOURNAL" NOVEMBER 1966

Time, change and decay are part of God's Natural Law against all things material. The Roman Amphitheater, the Grecian Forum and the Palaces of the Caesars, together with King Solomon's Temple have long since crumbled into dust.

However, the Grecian Forum, even to this day, lives on in Literature and Art; the Roman Amphitheater and the Palaces of the Caesars, even unto this day, live on in History and Hollywood; and the Temple of King Solomon lives, even to this day, in the story of Masonry.

For the past twenty years, the writer has been interested in the Story of the Building of King Solomon's Temple. I have had the opportunity to search through many volumes of writing relating to the building of this Temple. A number of the Articles and Histories were so old that some of the pages were moth eaten and turned yellow. Others were as new as last month's magazine.

Since this is so, I want to make it clear at the outset, most of the information contained in this Paper is a compilation of the selections I have clipped out, or from notes that I have made from such writings. Those of my own thoughts will be stated as I go along.

This magnificent structure was founded in the fourth year of the reign of King Solomon, on the 2nd day of the month Zif, being the second month in the sacred year, and the year of the world 2992 and the 480th year after Exodus.

King David had collected a vast quantity of gold and silver, and other metals and materials before his death. The legacy he bequeathed to King Solomon for the purpose of building a Temple is described in the First Book of Chronicles, the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses: "Now behold in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD, one-hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron, without weight, for it is in abundance, hewers, and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work."

A number of years ago, some writer, to give some idea of the enormous amount of this legacy, made an estimate in English pounds, shillings and pence, of the talents of gold and the talents of silver referred to in David's legacy to King Solomon. Here is the estimate: A talent of silver, like those bequeathed by David, is 353 pounds, 11 shillings and ten pence, and consequently, a thousand thousand talents of silver (1,000,000) would amount to 353,591,666 pounds. A talent of Gold is 5,975 pounds, 15 shillings and 7 pence, and a hundred thousand talents of gold, therefore, amounts to 507,577,916 pounds, making King David's bequest amount to the enormous sum of 861,169,582 pounds. From my notes, I believe that this breakdown to English pounds was made in the year 1861. And thus at that time, the total legacy, when estimated in American Dollars was worth about 3,827,420,364 dollars.

Using my limited knowledge of mathematics, I have figured that if all the legacy were in silver it would weigh 100,510 tons; it would have required 50,255 wagons, of the type used in those days, to carry two tons each. Allowing 60 feet to each wagon and oxen, 671 miles would be covered. It would make 109

Banking Institutions having a deposit of \$35,000,000 each and still have a surplus of \$12,420,364. The annual interest would amount to approximately \$229,645,221 -- the daily interest to \$629,161 – the hourly interest to \$26,215, the interest per minute to \$437 and per second \$7.28.

Solomon ascended the Throne in the eighteenth (18th) year of his age, and two years before the death of his father, King David. At this young age, King Solomon immediately made contracts with foreign princes to furnish materials to carry on this stupendous work; he caused a census to be taken of all the slaves in Israel and it is said he found 153,600 eligible slaves for this work. He engaged the co-operation of Hiram, King of Tyre, together with Hiram's most skillful artist of that or any other age, called in the Philistine dialect Abdonemus, but in Masonry as Hiram Abbiff, who was appointed Grand Master of the Work. Under Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abbiff, were 300 Princes, 3,300 expert Master Masons, as overseers, 80,000 sculptors, hewers and layers, called Fellow Craft, and 70,000 men of burden known as Entered Apprentices.

Josephus, the Historian, informs us, that although more than seven years were occupied in building the Temple, yet, during the whole term, it did not rain in the daytime, that the workmen might not be obstructed in their labor. And from sacred history we also learn that there was not a sound of axe or hammer, or any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was building.

I have discussed the matters of the lack of sound of ax or hammer, or any tool or iron, with many construction contractors and architects. Many were members of the Craft and strange it is that most of them replied that they had not even considered how this Temple was built and could not give a reasonable answer when I read the description of the building of this Temple from the Seventh Chapter of First Kings.

However, I did find one Architect and one Building Contractor, members of the Craft, who were interested enough to meet with me for several evenings to study and discuss the building of King Solomon's Temple, from what we could gather, from the information given in the Holy Bible, together with a vast amount of notes and references that I had gathered on this subject.

Both of my friends were of the opinion that since no nails were used on the inside of the Temple, that it must have been prefabricated and thus Solomon's Temple was the first prefabricated house ever built.

The Temple, they concluded, had to be built outside and moved inside in sections. The ceiling, they concluded, had to be laid in patters of cells and the mitred joists forming the square cells. And because of this, the workmen were able to produce the roof away from the Temple and bring it to the site and move it into place. And since the roof was movable, it must have had to be fastened down and they believe that Hiram the Architect conceived the idea of putting a King Pin in the roof and wedged it down with small wooden wedges.

Perhaps the most interesting discussion we had relative to the building of King Solomon's Temple was the way in which Hiram the Architect erected the two immense pillars, called Jachin and Boaz in Masonry. From my reading and research, I know that neither the Hebrews nor the Men of Tyre understood how to make columns like the Greeks of 1,000 years later. My friend, the Contractor, conjectured that the craftsmen must have take a center post of wood, nailed or spiked on it boards to a diameter they wanted, hauled them to the furnaces, forges and foundries, located in the clay valley of the Jordan, made brass bands and then banded the two posts with a series of brass rings. Since the two pillars were almost six feet in diameter, and on the top of each were large chapters of molten brass, this is about the only way, my friend, the Contractor, could figure out how it could have been done.

Also, we have been able, with the information given us by a Stone Mason, member of the Craft, to figure out how the walls of the Temple were held together. He informed us that the craftsmen laid the Stones in Archeological pattern with a large header stone and two stringers tying the walls together.

The building of the Temple had to be a colossal task. For we read in the Great Light that the cypress and cedar trees were cut in the forest of Lebanon, hauled to the Sea, and were floated by raft to the seaport of Joppa. From there they had to be taken by laborers and hauled over the Judean hills to Jerusalem, a distance of thirty-five miles inland. The Cypress, because of its durability, was ideal for flooring, and the bright color and sweet odor of the cedar wood made it highly desirable for interior finish.

Prior to my research on the building of King Solomon's Temple, I had formed the impression that the Temple was large, massive and big, somewhat similar to the dimensions of the Medieval Churches of Europe. However, much to my surprise, I learned that the Temple was not a large building at all, and was very small when compared to the various Temples of Egypt, Babylonia or Assyria.

The dimensions of the Temple, as read in First Kings, Second Chronicles and in The Antiquities of Josephus, were sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. Carried over into feet, the Temple was approximately 104 feet long, 30 feet wide and 40 feet high. It was the smallest of the Buildings in the Temple Courtyard. The Hall of Judgment, which contained the Throne Room where King Solomon sat in Judgment and where he formally received Ambassadors and Foreign Guests; the Hall of Pillars, which was used as a waiting room for the Foreign Ambassadors and other people who sought an audience with the King and the Hall of the Forest of Lebanon, which was used as Court gatherings and the assemblies of the Elders, all were larger than the Temple.

The Temple itself was divided into three parts or sections: the Porch, at the front of the building was fifteen feet wide from east to west and thirty feet long from north to south. The Hekal, or Holy Place, was sixty feet wide from east to west and thirty feet from north to south and was forty-five feet high. It contained the golden Altar, standing directly in front of the door leading into the Holy of Holies; a table of shewbread and ten golden lampstands, five on the right side and five on the left side.

The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, 30 feet each way. In the Holy of Holies rested the Ark of the Covenant, which had been carried there by the Priests on the day of Dedication.

We read that the site of the Temple was on Mt. Moriah. This Mount was 2,440 feet above sea level, with the Mount of Olives to the east and Mount of Zion to the west. What makes the building of King Solomon's Temple such a gigantic undertaking was due in part to the fact that the narrow ridge of rock at the top of Mt. Moriah provided insufficient level areas upon which to construct the Temple and it was necessary to fill the declining sections on both east and west with stones and large quantities of earth in order to raise them to the level of the highest point of the hill, and to build massive retaining walls to prevent landslides. And as my Contractor friend stated: "It has only been in the last several decades that modern equipment has made such a task easy; that prior to that it was a very large and gigantic undertaking even for modern craftsmen." What, then, must it have been at the time of King Solomon?

And thus, with the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, it gave to King Solomon, Hiram, King of Tyre and Hiram the Builder, immortality beyond everything else that either or them or all of them did.

I know of no more fitting tribute to the building of King Solomon's Temple than that written by Bro. Harry K. Eversull, deceased minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Chaplain in

the Masonic Memorial Chapel, in his book, *The Temples in Jerusalem*. “More important than the building of the Temple, however, was the God whom the people worshipped and to whom they offered sacrifices. Also more than anything else, it helped to establish Hebrew leadership throughout Palestine and the near East. It unified the Jewish people as never before. It provided a sounding board for the prophets of later times to proclaim their inspired messages. It gave rise to a new ritual which gradually embodied the ever-expanding concepts of the nature and character of God. It was the greatest single contribution ever made in the history of the Hebrew people, for it became the center of their national life, the epitome of all their hopes and aspirations, the inspiration of the religious thought of both prophet and priest, the symbol of the unity of God and ethical monotheism. Monotheism unified the universe and made the universal reign of law comprehensible to man; and when the character of the one God is conceived in ethical terms, a religion attains a sublimity that transcends all mundane experiences. The Temple of Solomon takes its place beside all of the glorious triumphs of the human spirit. For, while the building of the Temple was an achievement of intellectual genius and physical prowess, it was actually an achievement of the Spirit.”

And while the Temple that had served the Hebrew people for almost four centuries finally lay in ruins, the worship of Jehovah God did not die but continued to grow in the hearts and soul of men; and the Temple of Solomon symbolically is being rebuilt in the Story of Freemasonry, and lives on in the memory of every Master Mason.