

## The Corner-Stone of King Solomon's Temple

At last the day had arrived when, with solemn ceremony, King Solomon was to lay the corner-stone of the Temple. During the morning the Hebrew priests had made sacrifices and throughout the country masonic lodges were assembled; every mason, whatever his degree, was to be found in his lodge. Soldiers in their magnificent uniforms, as well as people of all classes, professions and trades, of many nationalities, crowded the streets. Never had there been seen such a multitude of people, happily and peacefully awaiting the glorious event.

One hour before midday King Solomon and his guest, King Hiram of Tyre, went towards Mount Moriah, accompanied by their life guards and various high officials, as well as by representatives and ambassadors of other countries. Having arrived at the foot of the mountain, the two sovereigns alighted from their horses and proceeded alone on foot. At that moment they were approached by Grand Master Hiram Abiff who, greeting them respectfully as Grand Masters of Freemasonry, invested them with aprons of lambskin.

According to masonic tradition the Second Grand Lodge or Sacred Lodge was held on the Holy ground of Mount Moriah, under the guidance of Grand Masters King Solomon, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff, the builder. That ground where, according to legend, Adam was created, was in possession of two brothers, both married but only one of them with children. One evening, during the harvest, one of the brothers said to his wife; "My younger brother does not resist the heat of the sun and the work is too much for him. I'll add some of my own sheaves to his". The other brother had the same idea, thinking: "My elder brother has a family and it is my duty to help him. I'll put some of my own sheaves with his". Great was the surprise of both when, the morning after, they discovered that nothing had changed. This repeated itself for several days until, one night, the brothers met in the fields, both loaded with sheaves. It was because of this demonstration of abnegation and altruism that the sacred ground of Mount Moriah was chosen as the site of the Temple of King Solomon.

Now listen to the continuation of the legend of the Corner-Stone.

A long procession of freemasons separated itself from the crowd and thousands of brethren, vested with their aprons, followed their three Grand Masters and proceeded slowly towards the imposing foundations on the top of the mountain. When the long file of masons had arrived on the site of the Temple, they found in the north-east corner a platform of bronze, on which the three Grand Masters took their seats. The brethren arrayed themselves around the platform in a particular manner, the nearest forming a triangle, the next a circle and the furthest a square which encompassed nearly the whole area of the Temple. Hiram Abiff placed himself in the geometrical centre. After a few moments of solemn silence he turned towards Grand Master Solomon and, with a calm voice, said: "It is High Noon".

After these words Solomon lifted his right hand and with his gavel of ebony, with a handle of ivory, he gave three knocks on the stone in front of him.

The silence that thereafter enveloped the mountain was as profound as that which reigned before there was life on this earth. Down the slopes and in the valleys, and in the cities, and everywhere on earth fell this solemn silence.

But .....hark ....., there were more knocks of wood on stone, strong and insistent; nearby, then further away, and finally so far that they could no longer be heard by those present on Mount Moriah. The Masters of all the lodges, who had heard King Solomon's knocks, responded with their gavels. And those further away, who heard only the knocks of the Masters near them, also responded. And thus the signal traveled from mount to vale, from vale to mount, ahead and ahead, wherever there were lodges, wherever vibrated the free air of God, where masons' hearts were beating and where brotherly love attended. The signal of Masonic force spread over the whole world; towards the East, towards the South, towards the West and even towards the twilight of the North. Those knocks went further and further; towards the slopes of Lebanon, where the cedars were felled and where the stones were cut. Ahead, towards the rafts that transported the stones. Further and further.

And the echo of that knock still reverberates in our days. Our Master replies to the knock of King Solomon's gavel and with it calls us to labour.

And then King Solomon spoke:

We are here assembled in the name of the Great Architect of the Universe, to bear witness that we have the abundance he has given us, only on loan and to demonstrate that the talents he has endowed us with, are used in his service. We are going to lay the corner-stone of the greatest Temple that has ever been erected to his glory.

It is customary that memorable events, names and dates are carved on this stone, or hidden in its hollow. We, my brethren, have not done so. Hiram Abiff proposed to engrave the name of the king. I suggested the name of the architect. We discussed these possibilities, when King Hiram of Tyre had the happy idea of suggesting the name of the Most High. But, my brethren, God wrote his name on the heavens; he carved it on the mountain slopes and in the river beds; he put his mark on the fields and on the forests, on flowers and plants, on birds and beasts; he traced his name on the clouds and on the rays of the sun, on the silence of the storm, on the thunderbolt of his anger and on the rainbow of his promise. He engraved it in the hearts of men. The Great Architect of the Universe has therefore no need for us to write his name and, consequently, this corner stone will remain without it.

Nor shall we engrave a date. Which year should we choose? "The year of the king", said Hiram Abiff. "The year of the builder", said I. We found many arguments until, eventually, the wise Hiram of Tyre proposed the heavenly date. The idea seemed a sound one, but ... what is the heavenly date? The years men have lived and sinned on the earth? Or the year of the Infinite itself? We decided that choosing a date for the Divinity, would be like using his name in vain.

Brethren, this stone will therefore remain without a date.

And what could we hide in the stone? A fist full of gold coins? But all the gold in the world belongs to the Most High. The effigy of a man perhaps, sculptured in precious metals? But all men belong to God; he praises the righteous whilst

the wicked are punished with the desperation of solitude. Should we then place the Sacred Scriptures in the stone? Brethren, the result would be that only those who would destroy the Temple would have access to the truth. Who hides the Truth, retards the diffusion of Wisdom. Should we then hide in this stone the documents of Freemasonry? But the craft does not have any. It is the prophecy of great things to come, the promise of glorious events, the bud of profound truths, the beginning of a grandiose humanity. But today it is still a newly born, with empty hands. Brethren, for this great Temple we'll lay the corner stone without a name, without a date, and empty. Solomon then kneeled and asked the divine blessing for his people and for all freemasons and, whilst there was a sound of music and the chant of a thousand voices, the masons put the corner-stone into position. King Solomon handed the level to the Grand Master Hiram King of Tyre and the plumb-rule to grand master Hiram Abiff, saying: "keep these utensils and use them up to the completion of the construction, when I shall send messengers to collect them". By means of the square he then checked every angle of the stone and, turning towards the four winds, declared it to be perfectly square. King Hiram of Tyre, in turn checked the stone with great care and declared it to be perfectly level. Hiram Abiff, using his jewel, the plumb-rule, carefully examined the stone and, looking down and up towards the sky, exclaimed that it was perfectly plumb. And King Solomon, approaching the corner- stone once more, strewed grain upon it saying: "May there be abundance in this country, for my people and for all faithful members of the brotherhood". And then the brethren responded: "So mote it be". Whilst the King strewed grain, the Masters of the nearby lodges did likewise; thereafter those of the distant lodges and in this manner the message spread to all the lodges in the world. And the response of the brethren was so clear that even the sailors on the sea strained their ears and listened. Then the King of Tyre approached the stone and poured some precious wine, saying: "May happiness be with you all. May the Omnipotent unite all people, so that he may govern a world united in friendship and brotherly love. And the brethren exclaimed with clear voices; "So mote it be". And soon wine sparkled in every lodge, nearby and far away. The echo of the response of the brethren seemed to make tremble even Mount Moriah. Hiram the builder, in turn, approached the stone and poured some perfumed oil, exclaiming: "My there be peace from East to West, from South to North. May the brethren protect the widow, the widow's sons and all those against whom destiny has turned its cruel power. May good take the place of evil in all countries of the world". And the brethren exclaimed: "So mote it be." And perfumed oil was poured in all the places where masons were assembled. The echo of the response of the brethren seemed like voices behind the stars. Then Solomon, turning towards the West where the sun was setting, prayed. Thereafter he solemnly gave three knocks on the stone, and also those knocks were repeated ... near ... and far away. It was as if the royal hand had touched the centre of a lake; the heart of every mason was touched by the ever-expanding waves. To-day our masters continue repeating those knocks of King Solomon and their sacred promise will never die.

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