

KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

by

Alex. T. Brand, M.D., V.D.

There can be no subject of greater interest to Freemasons than the Temple of Solomon, King of Israel, Supreme Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Jerusalem.

The Temple is intimately bound up with the ritual and traditions of Craft and royal Arch Masonry, as well as the Degrees of Mark Masonry, Royal and Select Masters, and part of the Allied.

It is described in the V.S.L., in the Talmud, and by historians such as Josephus; but in no case is the description sufficiently complete to enable one to make even a mental reconstruction. So many important details are wanting that no two authors who have written on the subject seem to be able to agree upon all points.

Much however is known about the temple, and enough to fill us with wonder and admiration, for its partial description proves that it must have been what its builder intended it to be, "exceeding magnificent" (I Ch. Xxii, 5).

In the short time at my disposal, it is impossible to give an exhaustive description even from the available material; I shall, therefore, confine myself to general statements, pointing out some of the more salient features, and leaving it to those of you who are interested in History, archaeology, and Architecture to fill in details from the writings of authorities on the subject.

Since the Temple of Solomon was built on the model of the Tabernacle, I shall first refer to that structure.

The Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was the place where the Holy One met the congregation of Israel, and it was the centre and seat of the Hebrew Theocracy. There the people had audience of the Most High, and thence He issued His commands in a manner cognisable by the senses for their guidance.

The Tabernacle was erected in the wilderness by Moses, Aholiab, and Bezaleel, by the special command of the G.A.O.T.U., according to instructions given by Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The form, situation, ornaments, and furniture were minutely described, and as minutely and faithfully carried out by those loyal three, as will be found recorded in that book of the V.S.L., Exodus, in chapters xxv, xxvi and xxvii.

The term "Tabernacle" was applied to the whole structure set apart for the worship of the Most High, and consisted of two parts, viz., the Tabernacle proper which included the shrine of Jehovah, and the surrounding court where the religious services were held.

Entering the court by the only gate, which was in the East, and proceeding Westwards, one came first upon the Altar of Burnt Offering.

Passing this, one next came to the Laver where the priests performed their ablutions before entering the Tabernacle itself. Having passed the laver, the entrance to the Tabernacle proper was reached.

This erection, which also had its only entrance in the East, was constructed of an acacia-wood framework covered on the roof and walls by variously coloured textile materials and rams' skins dyed red.

The roof over the structure was a pitched one of 90 degrees, the coverings descending from a horizontal ridge-pole.

The Tent was divided into two unequal parts separated from each other by a hanging wall. The larger Eastern portion was called the Holy Place, 20 cubits long, 10 high, and 10 wide, into which the Priests alone were permitted to enter; and a smaller Western portion, a cube of 10 cubits. This latter portion was the Shrine itself, called the Holy of Holies, which none might enter excepting the High Priest alone, and then only once a year and under certain conditions.

The Holy Place contained the Altar of Incense, the Table of Shewbread, and a Golden Candlestick.

The Holy of Holies contained only one object, the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two Stone Tables of the Law, a golden pot of Manna, and Aaron's Rod "that budded". The top of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat, on which were two figures called Cherubim, and from between these the G.A.O.T.U. spoke to the High Priest.

Over the Holy of Holies, in the open air, hovered the Pillar of Cloud, the visible indication of the presence of Jehovah, dark as smoke by day, and luminous as flame seven lights.

The congregation assembled for worship in the open air in the Court around the Altar of Burnt Offering, for no layman might set foot within the Tabernacle Tent.

The Tabernacle was in existence for nearly 500 years, as the centre of religious life and worship, having accompanied the Israelites in all their wanderings, and it did not cease to be such until King Solomon brought the Ark and the holy vessels from it and deposited them in the Temple which he had erected on Mount Moriah at Jerusalem.

The Tabernacle itself was also brought to Jerusalem and probably preserved, as a sacred relic, in one of the chambers of the Temple, but its later history is unknown.

While a movable Tent was necessary for a nomadic nation, the incongruity of a settled people having only a Tent for the dwelling of God first occurred to the mind of King David. It appeared unseemly to him that the Ark of God should still dwell "between curtains" while he himself abode in a "house of cedar". He therefore proposed to build a Temple of stone as a more becoming dwelling-place for the Most High. On account, however, of his having shed so much human blood in his many wars, he was not permitted to carry his project into execution, and it was reserved for the peaceful reign of his son and successor, King Solomon.

In preparation for the great undertaking, King David appropriated much of the immense treasure he had collected (I Ch. Xxix, 1-7).

He provided all, or nearly all, the materials before his death, secured the services of skilful mechanics and artificers for every branch of the work, and furnished the design, plans, and site of the proposed building, so that more of the credit of this part of the work seems due to King David than to King Solomon.

As the term "Tabernacle" included both the Tabernacle Tent and the surrounding Court, so that general term "Temple" includes the Temple proper, and the surrounding courts and other buildings.

Interesting though it would be to refer to these courts and the numerous objects they contained, such as the splendid Altar of Burnt Offering, the wonderful Brazen Sea, the Lavers, etc., and the magnificent Palace of the King, time would utterly fail me; while any allusion to the other Temples of the Jews built in later years by Zerubbabel and Herod, would be foreign to my subject. I therefore propose to confine my thesis to that sacred edifice erected by King Solomon which stood by itself, apart from all other building, and known as the Temple, which is so intimately bound up with our traditions and ritual.

The dimensions of the Temple are all given in cubits, and a cubit is generally considered to be a measure of length estimated at 1- ½ of our modern lineal foot. Caldecott, however, points out on good authority that three different measures of length are called by the same term of cubit, viz. :--

1. The cubit used in plotting the Temple courts, 1-1/2 feet of 18 inches.
2. The cubit used in the erection of the Temple buildings, 1-1/5 feet, or 14.4 inches.
3. The cubit used in the construction of the figures of cherubim, gold and silver vessels, and Veil of the Temple, 9/10 of a foot, or 10.8 inches.

The standard of measurement, therefore, chiefly referred to as a cubit in the following account is the building cubit of 14.4 inches.

The Temple, which took seven years to complete, was built on the model of the Tabernacle, being a veritable Tabernacle in wood and stone. The appearance of a Tent was to be preserved. To this master-idea all others were subordinated and made to conform. It governed both the inception of the new building and all its accessories, down to the last particular.

From that tent-like construction the Jewish Temple never departed during the thousand years of its existence.

It was the dominating idea which flowed from Mosaic through Davidic and Maccabean, down to Herodian days.

In Solomon's Temple there were, as in the Tabernacle, a Holy of Holies, and a Holy Place, separated by a partition; and, in addition, a lofty Porch-tower. In the Temple, however, the proportions were double those of the Tabernacle, except as regards the depth of the Porch, which was the same in each case.

The Holy of Holies was a cube of twenty cubits, or 24 feet, and the Holy Place was 40 cubits, or 48 feet long, by 20 cubits, or 24 feet, wide, and the same in height. These are internal measurements.

The Porch was 120 cubits, or 144 feet, high; 20 cubits, or 24 feet, from side to side; and 10 cubits, or 12 feet deep.

Built round the Western end and North and South sides, were three stories of small chambers: the lower or nethermost, the middle, and the third. Each story of chambers was 5 cubits, or 6 feet, high.

The lower were 5 cubits, or 6 feet, wide; while the middle were 6 cubits, or 7-1/5 feet, and the third 7-1/5 cubits, or 8-2/5 feet in width.

The reason why these tiers of chambers differed in width was that no breach might be made in the walls of the Temple structure, and therefore ledges, or abutments, had to be built against them on which to rest the inner ends of the beams which supported the floors of the middle and third, and the roof of the third stories. Thus it is evident that the chambers formed no part of the Temple itself, but were built against its outer walls. They were designed for the use of the Priests (a kind of monastery), and for storing the Temple furniture (I Kings vi, 6).

The entrance to the middle story was on the "right side of the house" by winding stairs (I Kings vi, 8). The uppermost chambers were entered from the middle, and the lowest from the ground, presumably by the doorway which gave access to the winding stair leading to the middle story. All the chambers communicated with each other.

Before proceeding farther it will be well to indicate how the Temple stood with regard to the points of the compass.

There was only one entrance, and that was through the Porch which faced the East, or rising sun, as all Eastern temples did, and do.

The oracle, or Shrine, or Sanctum Sanctorum, was at the Western end.

As regards North and South and Right and Left, the V.S.L. tells us in I Kings vii, 39, "and he set the Sea on the Right side of the house Eastward against the South," and again, in II Chron. Iv, 10, "and he set the Sea on the Right side of the East end over against the South."

Josephus says, "and he set five of the Lavers on the Left side of the Temple, which was on that side towards the North wind, and as many on the right side towards the South." He then adds the following explanation, "by the Right hand is meant what is against our Left, when we suppose ourselves going up from the East gates of the Courts, towards the Temple, whence it follows that the Pillar Jachin, on the Right hand of the Temple, was on the South against our Left hand; and Boaz on the North, against our Right hand.

Thus we see that the Right of the Temple means its own proper Right facing the sun, and therefore the South; while its Left is the North, exactly the reverse of a person going towards the front of the building.

The Temple was built of dressed stones already prepared and fitted in the quarries, and all the beams and other woodwork were also prepared away from the site of the permanent erection, "so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building" (I Kings vi, 7).

We must assume that all the materials were so accurately made and adjusted at a distance, that they were capable of being placed in position by being simply laid in their proper order, and it would appear that the stones, beams, etc., were kept in position by dovetailing and tenons. It is supposed that the stonework was fixed without mortar, which was rendered unnecessary by the perfect apposition of the true surfaces and by the great weight of the stones, which are stated to have been of enormous proportions. The pegs for fixing the woodwork must have fitted so accurately that they could be silently forced into position.

The walls inside were lined with cedar, as well as the ceiling and floor, but the last was covered with planks of fir in addition.

Thus no stonework was apparent from the inside.

The form of the roof of the Temple is uncertain. As is well known, all eastern houses and buildings have flat roofs, but the Temple was probably an exception. It is stated in I Kings vi, 9, "so Solomon built the house and finished it, and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar." Here it is affirmed that the roof was composed wholly of cedar wood, which is in itself presumptive evidence of a pitched roof, since flat roofs required the use of stone or cement to form their floor. The marginal reading of "planks" is "rows".

These rows were probably shingles, or wooden slates, which require to be so placed as to secure the regular overlapping of one another, to render them rain-proof. These shingles rested upon beams, or rafters of cedar, thus justifying the statement that the House "was covered with cedar."

The Temple is thus to be conceived of as having a gable roof, this being the only way in which the analogy of the Tabernacle Tent could be followed care of course being taken that the angle of the roof-ridge should be the same as that of the Tent, viz., one of 90 degrees. The smaller and loftier covering of the Temple Porch came under the same law.

This form of roof involved the existence of a loft, or attic, below it. The floor of this loft, which was the roof of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, being 20 cubits, or 24 feet wide; the height at the apex, inside according to geometric rule, would be 10 cubits, or 12 feet; thus making up the height of 30 cubits, or 36 feet, mention in I Kings vi, 2.

The Porchway was approached by a flight of 12 steps. On the tenth which was continuous with the floor of the Porch, and probably within the lines of the front wall of the Porch, stood the two brass columns, Jachin and Boaz.

The eleventh and twelfth steps were in the thickness of the partition between the Porch and the Holy Place.

Each step was half a cubit, or 7.2 inches, high.

THE PILLARS

The Pillars consisted of a circular shaft 18 cubits in length, and 4 cubits in diameter, cast hollow, the casting being 4 inches thick.

Each shaft was surmounted by a square capital, or chapter, 5 cubits high, on the summit of which was placed a supra-capital, 4 cubits in height. The Pillars were set on bases or plinths, 3 cubits high, which rested upon the tenth of the steps leading up to the Porch, and thus stood 35 cubits, or 42 feet, high above the surface of the court.

Two Biblical writers, the Author of Kings, and Jeremiah (I Kings, vii, 15, Jer. lii, 21), affirm that their height was 18 cubits, while a third, the Author of Chronicles (II Chron. iii, 15), gives the height as 35 cubits. The first height evidently refers to the shafts of the Pillars alone, and the latter to the shafts together with the higher and lower capitals, and bases, and the ten steps each half a cubit high, making 35 cubits as already stated.

These Pillars, which were formerly entirely of brass, were the chief external artistic glory of King Solomon's Temple. The artist who designed them was the eminent artificer, Hiram Abiff. Hiram, having been by training a Phoenician, determined to make the most of his opportunity for elaboration and followed the custom of his country as before every Phoenician temple stood two columns, generally monoliths. They were constructed and erected after the tragic death of Hiram Abiff, by his son, Hiram the Second, "the Widow's son" (I Kings vii, 4).

As before mentioned the shafts of the Pillars were surmounted by square capitals of brass, 5 cubits, or 6 feet high. Jeremiah saw them at the burning of the Temple, and was present when they were pulled down with ropes and broken up by the soldiers of Nebuzaradan.

It is from the description which he gives (Jer, lii, 21-23) that we know that the capitals were square adorned with 24 pomegranates on each of the four sides, and that the number of 96 was made up to 100 by the addition of 4 blooms, placed presumably at the four corners of each capital.

The ground work pattern upon the casting of the capitals was of basket, or net, work. It was probably at the intersection of the diagonal lines of the pattern that the pomegranate blossoms were placed.

Besides this network adorned by pomegranate flowers, there were cast with them wreaths of chainwork, or festoons of flowers.

Above these square and heavy capitals was a singular creation, which is peculiarly Hebrew in its applied conception. This was a supra-capital of four cubits in height, separately cast in the form of a lotus-flower, or tulip. This is the "lily-work" of I Kings vii, 19.

These are called "bowls" in I Kings vii, 41, and "pommels" in II Chron. Iv, 12. There can be little doubt that this form of decoration was derived from the sacred flower of Egypt. It is certain that the casting was hollow, open at the top.

To preserve these supra-capitals from possible defilement by the settling of birds upon them there was placed before each of them a separate screen, or network, of wreathed work like that of bent cane-work, made of brass (I Kings vii, 41). As a veil does the human face, so these brazen nets concealed the two sacredbowls, which surmounted the capitals, and into whose hollow, in all probability, was poured at coronations and consecrations, a portion of the sacred oil used for anointing, such application being characteristic of Hebrew symbolic action.

The Pillar on the Left hand or North side, was named Boaz, meaning, "In it is strength," which name it has been suggested was engraved on the face of the Pillar. There can be little doubt but that the choice of this name was determined by considerations of gratitude and hope, for this was the Royal Pillar, and the name placed upon it was a continuous proclamation that the throne depended, for its stability, upon the favour of Jehovah. Boaz was the name of the great grand-sire of David.

It had been Jehovah's repeated promise to David that He would "establish" his kingdom or throne for ever. The raising and naming of this Pillar was, therefore, a kind of national votive offering, by which the reigning successors of David were reminded of their dynastic indebtedness to Jehovah, and their constant reliance upon Him.

Every new sovereign, at his coronation, stood beside this Pillar, and took upon himself afresh the obligations implied.

Thus it was arranged that Joash (II Kings xi, 14) should stand by this Pillar, "as the manner was," i.e. as the coronation precedent required. The situation of the Pillar is referred to in II Chron. Xxiii, 12-13, "the

King stood at this Pillar at the entering in" "into the House of the Lord." Here he stood while they crowned and anointed him. In the same way Josiah stood by the Pillar, and "made a covenant before the Lord" (II Kings xxiii, 3).

On the right, or South side, stood the Pillar called Jachin. By this Pillar stood every High Priest at the moment of his consecration.

Jachin, meaning "He shall establish," was a perpetual reminder to him as he passed and re-passed it that his "strength" lay in the favour of Jehovah and in the keeping of His law.

Thus were the highest dignitaries of Church and State, with many befitting accessories, set apart for the service of Jehovah.

THE PORCH

Passing between the two famous Pillars, the Porch of the Temple was entered.

Although there is no description given in the V.S.L. of a porch in front of the Tabernacle, there is more than a strong probability that there was such a portico and this formed the precursor of the Porch of King Solomon's Temple.

No layman, even the King, might enter the Holy Place; but King David, as the anointed of Jehovah, had the right of passing beyond the sereg, or fence, which kept back the laity, and to take his place in the intermediate space that stood between the Altar of Burnt Sacrifice and the Holy chambers. This space was the porch of the Tabernacle. It would appear that this porch, covered by its tent-curtains, was the ordinary place of worship for the Judges and early Kings of Israel (II Sam. vii, 18, and xii, 20).

Josephus tells us that the Tabernacle consisted of three parts into two of which the priests went daily in the course of their ministrations; but into the third the High-priests went but occasionally.

This we know to have been the Holy of Holies. The middle one of the three spaces was known as the Holy Place. Outside of this was a third space, presumably of the same area as the Holy of Holies, to which is given the name of the Porch, though this was not its designation till the building of the Temple. In the V.S.L. it is usually spoken of as "the

door of the Tabernacle," and the Eastern and archaic meaning of this term is a defined space and not a mere entrance threshold or passage-way. This porch, then, was a well defined area of 12 feet square, and the devotions of the Sovereign, when there, would be made in public and must have been disturbed by the passing and re-passing of the priests as they performed their duties in the Holy Place, and at the Altar outside.

The area of the Porch of the Temple was fixed to allow of a floor of 12 feet deep, and 24 feet from side to side, twice the area of the portico of the Tabernacle. The Porch of the Temple was 40 cubits, or 48 feet high.

This splendid entrance hall had no outer doors. On the floor, which was continuous with the tenth step, stood the two imposing Pillars flanking the entrance. The walls, ceiling, and floor were overlaid with gold, the two former ornamented in bas-relief, and the latter smooth.

It is difficult to realize the effect of the rays of the rising sun as they shone full upon those surfaces of polished gold.

The eyes of the beholder must have been dazzled as they gazed upon the wonderful structure, by the scintillating reflection from every square inch of the glittering surface. One can readily understand the impression which must have been made on the Queen of Sheba and her retinue as they gazed upon it.

On each side of the Porch, and opening from it, was a small chamber, 12 feet by 6 feet in size, continuous with the lowest of the three stories of chambers built around the Temple walls. These two chambers were the "Treasuries of the Porch," the plans of which were handed to Solomon by King David along with the other "patterns" of the Temple (I Chron. Xxviii, 11). Here were stored the sacred utensils of the Temple, many of gold, and others of silver.

The gold-plated floor and walls of the Porch-entrance were relieved from bareness by two tables, one on each side. Of these tables one was of gold, the other of silver. When the attendant priest changed the 12 loaves of Shewbread, on each Sabbath day, the new loaves which had been presented to Jehovah were then brought out and placed on the golden table, as having the higher sanctity.

In the Right, or South, side of the Porch, in the corner, and not visible to one standing outside in front of the entrance, was the spiral

stairway, described as a "winding stair", leading to the floor above the Porch.

THE ROYAL ORATORY

In order to avoid subjecting the King to the inconveniences of his worship as hitherto in the Tabernacle, it was planned to give him, in the Temple, a similar space but on the first floor, which should be reached by the spiral stairway. The plan was supplied by David to Solomon, as stated in I Chron. Xxvii, 11, viz., "the pattern of the Porch and the houses thereof," which included such a provision.

These "houses" or rooms were the Royal Oratory over the Porch, with a room above it, for storing wine, etc. (Jer. xxxv, 1-5).

Of the height of 120 cubits given to the Porch-tower, 40 were allocated to the Portico, 40 to the royal Oratory, and the remaining 40 to the third chamber, attic, and roof.

These rooms were reached by the winding stair whose commencement was in the Right hand of South corner of the Porch. It must have been a work of extreme difficulty, in the infancy of architecture, to build a perpendicular flight of stone steps to a height of over 100 feet, yet this is what was done. It was this final marvel of the "ascent by which he went up into the House of the Lord" that left "no more spirit" in the Queen of Sheba. This triumph of architectural skill surpassed all that she had seen of King Solomon's magnificence, and, to a "dweller in tents" from the land of Arabia, the perpendicular ascent would doubtless seem to have savoured of the miraculous.

On ascending the spiral staircase for 80 steps, each half a cubit in height, which must have resembled the tower stairs so common in English churches and in lighthouses, the floor of the Royal oratory was reached. The walls and floor of this chamber were also overlaid with gold (II Chron. Iii, 4). There was a throne for the solitary worshipper, and a table on which he could "eat bread before the Lord," this being an essential part of all festival worship. It was also a cardinal official duty of the King to attend the Temple services on each Sabbath day, and so to indicate his continued obedience to Jehovah, Whose servant he was.

To permit the King to see the great Altar of Sacrifice, there was an opening in the front of the Porch-tower, which admitted light to the

Oratory. This opening was 16 cubits, or 19-1/5 feet, from side to side, and across this space were hung chains of brass, on which, at intervals, were decorations of pomegranate flowers. Guarded by these metal festoons the King, himself unseen, could see all that passed below at, and around the Altar of Burnt offering.

In the seclusion of this Royal Oratory some of the holiest scenes of Jewish history took place. Here Hezekiah entered, wearing sackcloth, on hearing the words of Rabshakeh (Isa. xxxvii, I), and here he spread out Sennacherib's letter before Jehovah (II Kings xix, 14).

To this place he came on the third day after his recovery from his serious illness. Here was the praying place of all the godly Kings of Judah.

Here also the wicked Ahaz, who had shut up the doors of the House of the Lord (II Chron. xxviii, 24), still came to worship, the brazen Altar of Solomon being reserved for him "to inquire by" (II Kings xvi, 15).

It was from this place that King Uzziah proceeded when he insisted upon forcing his way into the Holy Place, in spite of the opposition of the priests, to offer incense, for which sacriligious act he was smitten with leprosy (II Chron. xxvi, 16).

THE THIRD CHAMBER

Above the Royal Oratory arose the third chamber, or "Chamber of the Sons of Hanan," low, but overlaid with gold throughout.

In Jeremiah xxv this third chamber is mentioned. The Rechabites were conducted hither by the Prophet, who was also a Priest.

They entered first into the Porch, which is described as the "chamber of Maaseiah," "the keeper of the door," and one of the chief officials of the Temple. From the Porch the company, by ascending the "winding staircase," entered the "chamber of the Princes," or royal Oratory, which was 'by," or above, that of Maaseiah, and, by farther ascent, they reached the third chamber call "The Chamber of the Sons of Hanan." This third chamber was immediately beneath the attic of the Porch-tower, and was used as a storeroom for wine and other Temple offerings. Above the attic was the roof, or summit, of the Porch-tower.

THE HOLY PLACE

Standing upon the golden floor of the Porch, surrounded on all sides by shining gold, a visitor facing Westwards would see a folding door. The leaves of this door were kept constantly closed, and were of elegant workmanship. The opening they closed was 6 feet wide.

They were made of olive wood beautifully carved in low relief, the design being "cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers," and overlaid with gold. The door was in the partition between the Porch and the Holy Place and was 24 feet high. These folding doors being opened outwards into the Porch on hinges of gold, a second pair of folding doors came into view on the inner side of the partition, which was one cubit in thickness. The second set of doors was carved and decorated in the same way as the first, but the wood of which they were made was cypress. They opened inwards into the Holy Place, and were also overlaid with gold.

When both these sets of doors were opened, the visitor to the Temple (and priests only were permitted to enter) found himself gazing into the Holy Place.

Ascending the two steps by which the floor of the House was raised one cubit above the floor of the Porch, the visitor's feet stood upon the golden floor of the Holy Place. All the objects which met the eye were either of pure gold or cased in gold.

There were no windows, properly so-called, in the Holy Place, but high up in the walls on each side there were what are called "windows of narrow lights," stated in the margin of the V.S.L. to have been "broad within and narrow without," letting in air and a little light, but not capable of being opened and closed. They were in fact what are known as clerestory lights, serving more as ventilators than anything else.

It is evident that the chief illumination came from the ten seven-branched golden candelabra which were placed five on each side of the chamber, and these required the constant attention of the priests.

On the North or Left, side of the interior stood the golden Table of Shewbread. At the Western end stood a small golden altar, the Altar of Incense, which was the most Holy of all the furniture around it. It stood before the partition separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and upon it were burnt sweet spices every morning and

evening, from which arose the incense that found its way into the Oracle.

The lower part of this partition was of olive wood, 10 cubits high and one cubit in depth, covered with gold. Supporting this were six golden pillars reaching to the roof and dividing it into five spaces.

The centre space contained the entrance into the Oracle, which was guarded by a single set of folding doors opening outward into the Holy Place, and made of olive wood also, similarly decorated to the others and overlaid with gold. These folding doors were 10 cubits high, the height of the wooden screen, and their breadth was 4 cubits.

There was thus an open space above the wooden partition of 10 cubits, across which were stretched the golden chains that hung before the Oracle (I Kings vi, 21). These chains were decorated with 100 pomegranate flowers of gold and garnished with precious stones, and festooned from pillar to pillar.

This open construction of the upper part of the partition permitted the smoke arising from the golden Altar of Incense to find its way into the Holy of Holies or Oracle.

The olive-wood doors in the partition being opened outwards into the Holy Place displayed part of the veil of the Temple. This Veil was woven in one piece and made of textile material coloured blue, purple, crimson, and byssus (fine twined linen, yellowish in colour), with figures of cherubim wrought thereon (II Chron. Iii, 14). The Veil being woven in a single piece had to be lifted, not parted, by the High Priest before he could enter to make atonement for his own and the People's sins. It hung from the ceiling to the floor, and covered the whole Eastern side of the cubical chamber, the Holy of Holies.

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The Holy of Holies, having no windows, was shrouded in darkness.

No ray of sun, or artificial light, penetrated its sacred seclusion.

Its walls, ceiling and floor were overlaid with pure gold, the walls and ceiling being covered with beautiful carvings, and the floor smooth.

On the floor, opposite the centre of the Western wall, stood the Ark of the Covenant, a small chest of acacia wood, 27 inches long, 16.2 inches in height, and the same in width, made by Moses for the Tabernacle nearly 500 years before. It is probable that the Ark rested upon a stone, as stated by Maimonides, or some other similar support.

It was lined within and without with plates of gold. Around its upper edges was a moulding or cornice, projecting above the level of its edges. Within this moulding a lid of the same size as the chest lay, having neither hinges nor fastening. This lid or cover was named the Mercy-Seat. Upon the Mercy-Seat stood two figures of cherubim of hammered gold made in one piece with the movable cover, one at each end. The faces of the cherubim looked towards each other, and their wings were outstretched.

The Ark contained only the two tables of stone of the Law which Moses had placed there, the golden Pot of Manna, and Aaron's Rod "that budded" having disappeared, probably at the time the Ark was captured by the Philistines (I Kings viii, 9).

At each corner of the Ark there was a golden ring, and through these were placed the golden staves for carrying it when the Tabernacle was moved from place to place in the Wilderness.

On each side of the Ark stood a colossal cherub, made of olive wood and overlaid with gold, 9 feet high, with outstretched wings, the outer wings touching the chamber walls on each side, the inner wings touching each the other.

Beyond the gilded staves which lay at the feet of the larger Cherubim, the Holy of Holies was unoccupied by any created thing.

This 24 feet cubic chamber was that towards which the heart of every faithful Hebrew turned in every distress, and from every quarter of the globe, his feelings of reverence, gratitude, hope, and adoration based upon the belief that "He that dwelleth in the Secret Place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. xci, I).

CONCLUSION

Such is the very meagre account time permits me to give you of what must have been a magnificent and unique structure. There does not appear to be any evidence to show that the external appearance of the

stonework was particularly striking, apart from the extreme whiteness of the stone, for there is no reason to suppose that the Temple was overlaid with gold externally, as is believed by some.

The striking characters of the exterior were the two famous and magnificent brass Pillars which stood in the front of the Porch, and the Porch-tower itself. This latter must have been an extraordinary structure, rising to a height of 120 cubits or 144 feet (II Chron. Iii, 4), being only 24 feet from side to side, and 12 feet deep; but to this must be added the thickness of the walls, for these measurements refer only to the inside of the structure. It must have completely dwarfed the rest of the building which was but 36 feet height at the apex of the roof. This height of 144 feet, though often repudiated, is still the dominating element of the Temple facade. The Victoria Tower of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster is 75 feet square and 336 feet to the top of the pinnacles. It is therefore 2-1/3 times as high as was the roof-ridge of the Porch of King Solomon's Temple.

The "exceedingly magnificent" aspect of the Temple was its interior for everywhere, on all four sides of the structure, there was one continuous blaze of glittering gold, and only on the floor was this gold smooth and plain. The walls and ceiling were covered with exquisite designs in bas-relief. All the furniture of the Temple, Candelabra, Altars, Tables, Ark, and the Cherubim were of gold or cased in gold, while the golden chains in front of the Holy of Holies were studded with precious stones.

As I premised at the outset I have confined my self to a description only of the Temple proper. I have not attempted to include in this short account any description of the Courts surrounding the Shrine, the Altar of Burnt Offering, the great Brazen Sea, the Lavers, nor the King's Palace which occupied 13 years in building, and the other buildings which made up the Temple in its entirety. All these you must conjure up for yourselves, as well as the magnificence of the morning and evening services, presided over by the High Priest, clad in gorgeous robes with his Breastplate of gold blazing with divers gems glorious in size and colour, surrounded by attendant priests, and by the thousands of devout worshippers.

For nearly five centuries the Temple of King Solomon existed, though repeatedly despoiled, till in the year 588 B.C., and, according to

Josephus, exactly 470 years, 6 months and 10 days after it was built it was utterly and ruthlessly destroyed.

By command of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the King's General, besieged Jerusalem, and having taken the Holy City he pillaged and burnt the beautiful structure, and conveyed all the holy vessels to Babylon.

THE TEMPLE AND OUR RITUAL

From the foregoing narrative we learn definitely many points of interest which have reference to our traditions and ritual.

Thus, we are able to determine the exact situation of the famous Pillars, Jachin and Boaz, with regard to right and Left. We now know that these terms had relation to the right and Left of the Temple itself, and not to the Right and Left of one standing facing the building; that is to say, Jachin was placed on the south, or Right of the entrance, and Boaz on the North, or Left, exactly the reverse of one facing the Porch.

We have found that these Pillars were not only an architectural ornament to the Temple, but that they also played an important part in the rites and ceremonies of the people, Boaz in the coronation of the Kings, and Jachin in the consecration of their High priests.

We have discovered that these Pillars were not surmounted by spherical balls representing the terrestrial and celestial globes, but by bowls in the form of lotus blooms. Indeed, such testimony was hardly necessary, since we know that the first terrestrial globe on record was made by Anaximander of Miletus, about four centuries after the completion of the Temple, and that the first celestial globe was probably of even later date.

These mythical balls, therefore, must be looked upon as two of the "mock pearls" of Freemasonry.

Although these Pillars, as well as many other objects, are described as having been made of "brass", this term is an improper translation of the word "Nehosheth," since the Hebrews were not acquainted with the metal zinc, which with copper forms the compound known as "brass." In most places in the Old Testament, copper would be the proper translation, although, when a hard material is obviously intended it must mean bronze, a compound of copper and tin, both of

which metals were well known around the Eastern Mediterranean long before the Exodus.

We must, therefore, infer that the Pillars were really made of bronze and not of "brass."

These pillars were not pillars in the ordinary sense since they supported nothing. They were really ornamental columns.

With regard to the architectural design and plans of the Temple, these were all made by King David, and handed by him to his son Solomon, with instructions even to the minutest details. King David also supplied all the costly materials for the Temple, such as the precious stones, gold, silver, copper, tin, and iron; while King Solomon provided the stonework, and Hiram, King of Tyre, the woodwork at King Solomon's request and expense.

Hiram Abiff was the executive Architect and after his tragic death his work was complete by his son, Hiram the Second, "the Widow's son."

There is no analogy between King Solomon's Temple and a modern Christian Church, or a Masonic temple.

The Temple proper was not a place of public worship at all as we understand such. It was the Shrine of the Most High, and, amazing condescension, the dwelling-place of the G.A.O.T.U. on Earth, and the only one. It is from the failure to realize this fact that surprise has often been expressed at the diminutive size of the Temple when compared with the huge dimensions of many Cathedrals, and Temples of other religions.

All Hebrew public worship took place outside the Temple proper, in the Courts surrounding it, in the vicinity of the great Altar of Burnt Offering.

The Shrine of the Most High was at the Western end of the structure and was entered from the Holy Place by the High priest alone and only once a year. Thus the sacred end of the Temple was the West, whereas, in Christian churches, the chancel in the East is the holy place. Of the rest of the Temple, the Holy Place was reserved for the

priests entirely, who performed certain duties in it, and acts of worship, and they were housed in the three-storied series of small chambers which surrounded the edifice on all sides except the front, or East. The only entrance from the surrounding court was in the East by way of the Porch, and in the Porch alone had any layman the right of entrance, and he the King only, who took part in the outside worship, stationed in the Royal Oratory, over the Porch, which faced the Altar of Burnt Offering.

The floor of both the Holy Place and the Sanctum Sanctorum was overlaid with pure gold, smooth and polished. There was no mosaic work of black and white anywhere.

There was no dormer window over the entrance to the Sanctum Sanctorum for the admission of light or any other purpose. The Veil of the Temple filled the entire Eastern end of the Oracle. Its interior was shrouded in impenetrable gloom, unless the Shekinah, of "glory of the Lord," hovering over the Mercy Seat, lighted up the holy chamber when the High Priest, once a year, ventured to enter, but we are not informed of this. We read in the V.S.L. (I Kings viii, 12), "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness."

With these words King Solomon opened his benediction at the dedication, when the glory of the Lord filled the newly-built Temple as the Shekinah cloud, with veiled brightness, took its place between the wings of the Cherubim over the Mercy Seat of the Ark. It was, therefore, imperative that no other light of the sun, moon, stars, or lamps, should mingle with that uncreated Radiance.

The mere suggestion of the possibility of an internment in the Sanctum Sanctorum is not only revolting, but even sacrilegious.

Apart from this, it was the law among the Hebrews that no dead body might remain within the walls of any city, village or camp, for it was unclean (Num. Xix, 11-16). It had to be disposed of outside the precincts, such disposal being carried out within a few hours of death, by deposit in the ground, or in a rock-hewn tomb, the body being enveloped only in a winding sheet. No coffin was used (II Kings xii, 20-21).

No doubt the idea of internment not in, but as near the Sanctum Sanctorum as possible, was suggested to some brother by the objectionable and insanitary custom of burying bodies in Christian churches, but which was doubtless considered eminently respectable by the brother who was originally responsible for the statement, and who thus betrayed his entire ignorance of Jewish custom and law.

The "Middle Chamber" of King Solomon's Temple is of great interest. The reference in the V.S.L. (I Kings vi, 8), to "the door of the middle chamber" which "was in the right side of the house, and they went up the winding stairs into the middle chamber," is clearly to the middle story of Priest's apartments or chambers, which were built against the Temple walls on the West, North, and South, and were thus really outside the structure proper. The "winding stairs" leading to the middle storey was in the space between the walls enclosing these chambers, and as probably as not had no connection with the Porch. The entrance to the staircase was most probably in the middle of the Right, or Southern wall, while in all probability there was also a corresponding staircase on the North, giving access to the middle storey on that side of the Temple. The chambers themselves were very small, being only six feet high by seven wide, and proportionally long, accommodating, as has been suggested, two priests in each chamber.

On the other hand, the Royal Oratory, situated over the Porch, was a lofty apartment, 48 feet high, 24 feet long, and 12 feet wide, and it also was a "middle chamber." The entrance to the "winding stairs" leading to this noble chamber was undoubtedly in the Right or South, side of the House, in the Porch itself, and was thus within the actual building, in full view of anyone standing within the Portico.

This royal Oratory, then, must have been the "Middle Chamber" of King Solomon's Temple, to which allusion is so often made in our Ritual.

It is obvious that our second and third T.B.s are somewhat in need of revision as regards both their design and description, so as to have them in accordance with these well-known historical facts.

Mention is made in the Ritual of three entrances to the Temple, viz., on the East, North, and South; but as there was only one entrance to

the Temple proper, and that in the East, it is clear that these entrances could only have been into the Courts around the Temple, and not into the Temple itself.

Many other points of interest might be averted to, but quickly passing time forbids further reference to a subject which becomes more and more fascinating the further it is pursued.

Extracted from:

British Masonic Miscellany, Vol 16

compiled by
George M .Martin P.M., S.C.

Published by
David Winter and Son
Shore Terrace, Dundee (Scotland)
(Pages 72-99)