

A visit to King Solomon's Temple

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Let us go back in history to the year 965 BCE when Solomon succeeded David as King of the United Israelite Kingdom of the Twelve Tribes. A year later Solomon ordered the start of preparations for the construction of the First Temple. Hiram, King of Tyre, a good friend of both he and his father, had already volunteered to help him with the temple construction. Hiram, King of Tyre, was the son of Abibal, and the contemporary of both David and Solomon. David during his reign had asked Hiram for cedars, carpenters, and masons; and they had built David a house. Nearly forty years afterward, when Solomon ascended the throne, and began to prepare for the building of the Temple, he sent to the old friend of his father for the same kind of assistance. The two kings sealed their agreement with prayers together on Mount Moriah, and the construction of the great Temple began.

Let me now take you to a visit to the temple.

As you reach the Temple, you notice the two pillars on the porch way. The left pillar is named Boaz and the right one is called Jachin. The pillars are more than eight meters high, and are made of brass. They are huge and weigh about 40 tonnes each. The pillars have been built by the legendary Master Hiram Abif, the widow's son, who was a great artificer in brass and other metals.

You cross the two pillars and enter. You come across winding stairs. As you enter you notice that the stairs have a set of three steps, followed by a set of five steps, and finally a set of seven steps. Thus there are fifteen steps. This odd number of steps is not without purpose. The purpose is that you are supposed to start with your left

foot, so that when you reach the entrance of the temple, you step out there with your left foot. A convention which has not lost any significance with the passage of time.

The first three steps allude to the three great lights of freemasonry, viz., the Square, the Compass and the Volume of Sacred Laws. It also allude to the three lesser rights of freemasonry, viz., the Sun, the Moon and the Master of the Lodge.

The next five steps allude to the five senses of men. Reminding us to exercise due control over the senses. It also alludes to the five architectural orders, viz., Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite. Each Order had its specialization and you could see the workmanship of each of such Order in the Temple. They also allude to the five points of fellowship.

The last set of seven steps allude to the seven liberal arts and sciences, viz., grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astrology. It reminds you that you are expected to keep improving your skills in these seven disciplines. Grammar, so that you can express yourself properly. Logic, in order that you can distinguish good from bad, and can take a reasoned decision when faced with a dilemma. Rhetoric, because it beautifies your language, arithmetic, because a Mason needs to be calculative in his action, geometry, because the whole science of Temple construction depends upon geometry, music, so that when you shift from labour to refreshment, you are able to appreciate the beauty of life, which is best expressed in terms of music, and astrology, because it helps you know the day, and night, to know when to begin the work, and when to stop, to understand the seasons and to know the total area of jurisdiction of the Great Architect of the Universe.

As you reach the outer door, you find that the door is half open, but is close tyled by the Junior Warden, who demands a password. After due satisfaction, you are allowed to enter. There is one more door to be crossed, credentials to be established again, and the password to be given again to the Senior Warden who lets you in the Middle Chamber.

As you enter, you see great light emanating from the letter G which is hanging at the Eastern side. The light is so intense that you find it difficult to see any other thing. As your eyes slowly get accustomed to the dazzling light, you notice King Solomon standing on the East

together with Hiram, the King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif holding the registers in their hands. They inspect the register and calculate the wages due to you. The wages are paid to you in the form of corn, oil and wine. Corn to feed you, wine to help you charge your energies, and the oil to apply on your body. Having taken your wages, you salute King Solomon, and withdraw from the Lodge, with a promise to return again whenever summoned.