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### **CORN. WINE AND OIL**

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Corn, Wine and Oil have been known and associated together from the earliest times. In Chronicles II we read "The children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine and oil." Nehemiah tells of "a great chamber where they laid meat offerings, the frankincense and the vessels, and the tithes of corn, the new wine and the oil" and later "then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine and the oil into the treasurers."

In those days the grapes, the olives and the grain were not only wealth but the measure of trade;- so many skins of wine, so many cruses of oil, so many bushels of corn were to them as our dollars are to us today. Thus our ancient brethren received their wages in corn, wine and oil as a practical matter. They were paid their wages in the coin of the realm.

King Solomon employed some 153,600 workmen for the task of building.(1) They were divided into groups: 70,000 burden bearers, 90,000 hewers of stone and 3,600 overseeing the work of others. (2 Chronicles 2:17-19; cf. 1 Kings 5: 15-16, which gives 300 fewer overseers). They were apparently classified according to their abilities in craftsmanship: those who were beginning, those who had progressed to a larger opportunity and achievement, and those who had become master craftsmen. Their remuneration was fittingly of a different nature for each group. But more on the later.

CORN.(2) This seemingly insignificant "ear of corn" is, however a most important facet of Freemasonry. Let us establish at the outset however, that corn in this instance means "grain" or more specifically "wheat". Not only is it an important facet of Freemasonry, but it was probably the greatest essential element in the formation of society as we know it.

Picture, if you will, a nomadic tribe moving from place to place, all possessions held in common, searching for grass and wild wheat on which to feed their flock of goats. Such was man's existence for thousands of years.

Around 9,000 B.C. came the largest single step in the ascent of man,- the change from nomad to village agriculture. What made that possible? An act by will of men, surely; but with that, a

strange and secret act of nature. According to Bronowski, in his book, "The Ascent of Man" a new hybrid wheat appeared in the Middle East at the end of the Ice Age. It happened in many places. A typical one is the oases of Jericho. This wheat, a cross between goat grass and wild wheat combined the fourteen chromosomes of the one with the fourteen chromosomes of the other to produce "Emmer" with twenty-eight chromosomes. This hybrid was able to spread naturally, because its seeds were attached to the husk in such a way as to scatter in the wind.

More surprising, there was a second generic accident. "Emmer" crossed with another goat grass and produced a still larger hybrid with forty-two chromosomes, which is bread wheat. Now, has evolved an ear of corn which is so tight and heavy that it falls exactly where it grew. Suddenly man and wheat have come together. Suddenly wheat and the ancient sweet water oases springs such as that at Jericho, which have been flowing since time immemorial have come together. Suddenly man put his hand on plant and animal and, in learning to live with them, changed the world to his needs.

Thus, an ear of corn has been an emblem of plenty since the mists of antiquity. The Hebrew word "shibboleth" means both an ear of corn and a flood of water. Both are symbols of abundance and wealth.

WINE. The feast of the Booths--in early fall--when the grapes were ripe was a time of joy and happiness. New wine,- that is the unfermented, just pressed out of the grape, was drunk by all. (3) Wine is one of the elements of Masonic consecration and a wine of refreshment, to remind us of the eternal refreshments which the good are to receive in the future life for faithful performance of duty on earth.

OIL. The oil obtained by pressing the fruit produced from the growing of olive trees in biblical times was also an important product of the time as it had many uses. Besides using it in cooking and eating, it was also employed to make light in their homes and tents. It was also used as a cosmetic for their faces. The Hebrews anointed their Kings, Prophets and High Priests with oil mixed with rich spices (3) They also anointed themselves on special occasions. Psalm 45, v.7, "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." This extensive use gave oil an almost sacramental meaning.

Thus corn, wine and oil covered the whole range of mans' needs and wages paid to our ancient brethren. They were the masters' wages during the days of King Solomon. Today Masons receive no material wages for their labours, the work done in the Lodge is paid for only in the coin of the heart.

Corn is still a sign of Plenty.

Wine is a sign of Joy.  
Oil is a sign of Peace.

All three are used as symbols to consecrate buildings, Lodges, etc.,...that they may produce plenty, joy and peace, because they are given as rewards by the GAOTU to those who follow his commandments.

It is also a coincidence that those three are used in the most holy part of the Christian ritual. The Communion consists of Bread and Wine usually partaken under the chancel lamp, which in my old church, was kept lit 24 hours a day using Oil. These are outward visible signs of an inward and spiritual meaning.

Whether our ancient brethren were paid their wages for work performed on the mountain side or in the quarries, whether they received corn, wine and oil because they laboured in the fields and vineyards, it was true then and it is still true now, that "only by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread". To receive the equivalent today a Brother must labour. He must till the fields of his own heart or build the temple of his own "house not made by hands". He must give labour to his neighbour.

If a newly made Mason but stands and waits and wonders, he will not be able to ascend to the middle chamber where our ancient brethren received their wages. But if he works for the joy of working, does his part in the Lodge work, takes his place among the labourers of Freemasonry, he will receive his wages "pressed down and running over" and know a fraternal joy in his heart which is intangible to the profane world. ---Could it be that this is one of the "Secrets of Freemasonry?"

#### Bibliography.

- (1) "Beyond the Pillars" 1973 Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.
- (2) The Newsletter of the Committee on Masonic Education Vol. 71 No. 1, 1987 R.W. Bro. G. Hinchcliff.
- (3) Wine Mackey's Encyclopedia.

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