

## Victoria Lodge of Education and Research

650 Fisgard St, Victoria, B.C. Canada

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### *The Grand Lodge of the State of Israel*

Presented to the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research  
Tuesday February 21, 2006

by R. W. Bro. Isaac Brower-Berkhoven, Deputy Grand Master,  
Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon  
and Representative of the Grand Lodge of Israel  
near the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

Brethren, What a wonderful tribute to Freemasonry, to be here tonight to celebrate our Freedom and to join together in mutual harmony.

I bring you the greetings of M.W. Bro. Sami Raphaeli, Grand Master of the State of Israel, and the Worshipful Master and Officers of Amistad Lodge No. 81. You will notice that I am wearing a medallion indicating that I am a founding member of Amistad Lodge No. 81.

I am honoured to be your representative to the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel near the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. Some time ago I was asked to speak to your Lodge regarding the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel and I have prepared a brief history for you this evening. Since we are talking about history, let us take a virtual walk in the Holy city, Jerusalem, "Ir Shalom", the city of light, Holy to the three great faiths- Christians , Muslims and Jews.

Starting at the top of the temple mount, where we are told Abraham proved his intuitive faith by not refusing to offer-up his beloved son Isaac when the Almighty provided a more agreeable sacrifice in the form a of a ram., thus teaching us that human sacrifice is not acceptable to the Divine Creator. On that same spot, King David later had revealed to him the plans of the temple which was the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. The honour of building that edifice was not granted to him because of his previous behaviour, which had displeased the Almighty and so the project was entrusted to his illustrious son, King Solomon, to whom we refer frequently in our ritual. This was about 967 BC to 960 BC or AL 2992 to AL3000. Of the Temple itself, so far nothing has been found but there are many relics of the period close by. The bare rock at the top of the temple Mount is enclosed in a beautiful Mosque called the "Dome of the Rock," for according to the Muslims - to whom this is a holy place - it was from this spot, it is said, that Mohammed the Prophet flew on his horse to Mecca. This was the site of the former Temple, the destruction of which is still mourned by the ultra-orthodox Jews to whom it is Holy as well and of course to the Christians because of the claimed activities in the Temple of Jesus of Nazareth.

Leaving the temple Mount on which there are other Mosques, and descending by a narrow staircase cut into the face of the living rock, one arrives at the foot of the Western Wall which the Ottoman rulers of the Holy City called the “wailing wall,” for it here that the Jews say their prayers of lamentation, for even to the present day the ultra-orthodox Jews will not set foot on the Temple itself. This is the earth retaining wall of the temple Mount, some thirty meters high, and one sees the different levels which have been added through the ages. The blocks of stone of the present ground level date from the time of Herod the First, who had rain channels cut into the stone to feed the underground reservoirs. As we leave the wall on a walk through the old city of Jerusalem, one is thrilled at seeing sights and hearing sounds which probably have remained unchanged for thousands of years. Here we find a coppersmith, a shoemaker, the woodworker, a baker and even a stone-mason with his chisel and maul. There is no sound of motor traffic. One often sees a man with a donkey carry a baby with his wife following behind carrying parcels. In the Via Dolorosa, one observes Holy men of the three great faiths passing to and fro and as we leave the old city through the Damascus gate we have experienced life as it was described in the sacred writings.

A few moments walk from the Damascus Gate under the walls of the old city there is a barred entrance, over which is a sign proclaiming that this is King Solomon’s Quarries or the cave of Hezekiah. The cave opening is beneath the North wall of the old city close to the Damascus gate. From the entrance the main path leads south for a quarter of a kilometre until it reaches the main large cave called the “Freemason Hall”. The cave contains a number of different kinds of rock, mainly white massif limestone used for building, and while it is not too hard it does not flake off. There is a more dense limestone called Mizzi-helou (meaning sweet and soft), some with iron deposits called Mizzi-ahmar, (meaning red) and others called Mizzi-yehudi (meaning too hard for cutting).

I have several documents which have been sent to me by the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. One is a greeting card which is sent out at the beginning of the Jewish New Year in September; one is a pamphlet which bears my name as founding member of Amistad No. V 81, a Spanish Speaking Scottish Ritual Lodge. I am wearing a medallion from Israel on which is the Seal of the Grand Lodge State of Israel, there is the Star of David, for Jews; the Cross for Christians and the Crescent for Muslims. You may be interested to know that whenever the Grand Master enters a lodge he is preceded by three brethren bearing the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran, which are opened in Lodge. Only the book to be used for an obligation has the Square and Compasses placed on it.

There is no doubt that there we operative masons are working in Jerusalem, the Holy City, “Ir Shalom” the city of light. So let’s get into the history of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel:

In 1868 Reclamation Lodge opened for one evening in the caves of under the Holy City and only met once, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May when a “Secret Monitor” ceremony was conducted by M.W. Bro. Dr. Rob Morris, Past Grand Master of Kentucky. This ceremony was held

in King Solomon's Quarries. There were six American Freemasons, one a Vice-Consul of the USA in Jerusalem, a Mr. R. Beardsley from Elkhart, Indiana. Another, a Captain Sir Charles Warren of the Palestine Exploration Society in England, would eventually become the first master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, the premier Lodge of research in the world. The other, a local Mason, was the Turkish Governor of Jaffa, Nouredin Effendi, 29<sup>th</sup> Degree A&ASR and a member of Amite Clementi Lodge of Paris. These same quarries are used several times during the year when a Mark Master degree is conferred 135 metres below the surface of the earth. Dr. Rob Morris worked incessantly to erect the first regular Masonic Lodge and in 1873 the first Masonic temple or Lodge formed. This was granted to a group of Canadian Archaeological Engineers, called "The Royal Solomon", under the auspices of the Grand lodge of Canada. They continued to operate until 1907, and had lots of members who went off and formed their own Lodges under the National Grand Lodge of Egypt.

In 1891 French engineers who were building the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem formed a lodge called "le Port du Temple du Solomon," which later in 1906 changed the name to "L'Aurore" and again later to Barkai No. 17, which is still in existence and is recognized as the oldest Lodge in Israel.

In 1903 several Christian German Engineers, having fled Germany, formed a Grand Lodge of Germany in exile and operated such until after the ceasing of hostilities. They then returned to Germany, leaving behind five German speaking and ritualistic lodges.

By 1932 there were several lodge speaking German, Hebrew, French, English and Arabic, and they owed their allegiance to Egypt, England Scotland France and Germany. Seven lodges formed themselves into the National Grand Lodge of Palestine in 1933, long before the creation of the State of Israel, and brought together all the lodges which had been working under Egyptian or French jurisdictions. The English-speaking lodges, however, refused to join the New Grand Lodge and united to work separately. Lack of recognition by the United Grand Lodge of England resulted in almost complete isolation. Twenty years later in an impressive ceremony conducted in Jerusalem by Brother the Earl of Elgin and Kincaid, Past Grand Master of Scotland, the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel was consecrated and M. W. Bro. Shabetay Levy, Mayor of Haifa, was installed in the Chair of King Solomon as first Grand Master.

On October 20, 1953, the Lodges of Israel all formed under the banner of the State of Israel and followed the Scottish traditions. Since that time several lodges have been formed and speak Spanish, Romanian, and Turkish. These Lodges differ not only in language, but also in ritual, Hebrew and Arabic speaking Lodges work according to ritual approved by Grand Lodge based on English ritual. Foreign language lodges use ritual habitual to the countries of origin. Lodge Ranna, for instance, was founded by immigrants from South Africa and Rhodesia. They use the ritual from the Netherlands. Spanish Speaking lodges use the Scottish ritual widely used in Latin America and Spain.

There are about 3600 Freemasons in Israel whose Grand Lodge Headquarters is located at 5 Weisman Street, Tel Aviv. The 84 lodges meet in towns or hamlets throughout the

land from the Lebanese border in the North to the Red Sea in the South; from the river Jordan in the East to the Mediterranean in the West. Most lodges meet at least once a month for nine months of the year around six o'clock in the evening, followed by a light meal after lodge closes. There are some special lodges: one is for men of 18 years who are considered to be a Lewis (defined as having a father who was initiated before they were born). This Lodge is called Alumim, or "youth Lodge." Only a Lewis may join. Another is a Military Lodge where the members wear their regimental uniform always and it is a travelling lodge.

Despite its small size the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel can be proud of having been able to foster and develop a true fraternal spirit within its lodges, even under the most trying circumstances.

The Holy Royal Arch is active, with 13 Chapters speaking three different languages, and six Cryptic Rite Councils. The A&ASR hears six different languages in 13 lodges of perfection (4-14), 4 Chapters of Rose Croix (15-24) one 25<sup>th</sup> degree lodge, one 30<sup>th</sup> degree lodge, one 31st degree lodge, one 32nd degree lodge and a Supreme Council 33rd degree.

As you may well gather the Brethren of the Holy Land of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel adhere to the principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth and will always endeavour to practice Freemasonry in that land where events took place that are recorded in the Holy Bible and are used a basis for Masonic ritual. And while they may belong to one of the smallest recognized jurisdictions, they are comfortable in the saying to the untold millions of Freemasons scattered through out the world with humility and in the words of the Psalmist;

**“BEHOLD HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT IT IS FOR THE BRETHREN TO  
DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY”**

Thank you, Worshipful Master and Brethren for this opportunity to speak to the Lodge tonight. From the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, "Shalom"; from Amistad Lodge No. 81, "Buenos Noches;" and from me, "Good Night."