

Freemasonry in the Holy Land

Lecture given at the Festive Communication of the 50th Anniversary of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, on October 10, 2003 by M.W. Bro. Ephraim Fuchs, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, A.F.&A.M.

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A

For many years now, Masonic literature has dealt with discovery, preservation and operative uses of Masonic traditions from ancient times. The Usages, Customs, Rituals, Traditions, Landmarks, Ancient Charges, etc. constitute the foundations of the Order's existence since ancient times, still do and ever will. The Ancient Charges, Rituals and Constitutions educated us to observe and preserve the "Core of Freemasonry," which has accompanied it during many hundreds of years.

The importance of research into Masonic history is the life-giving spirit for continuation and prosperity of the Order. It is not surprising that Masonic voices worldwide call for raising the banner of "The heritage of the past—the challenge of the future." In the framework of the Order's feats worldwide for "Masonic awareness," it is desirable to learn and examine its history. It should be remembered that:

The *past* provides us with recall and experience, the *present* offers us challenge and opportunity, the *future* instills in us vision and hope.

B

King Solomon and the Temple in Jerusalem

We and our Brethren have had the good fortune to live in the Holy Land, a land holy to the monotheistic religions and humankind around the world. Jerusalem in the Masonic world is considered to be the Cradle of Freemasonry, and King Solomon's Temple is the moral Temple, which marks and signifies the behavior, teachings and values of Freemasons. King Solomon is considered to be the first Grand Master of the Order.

Today, in the course of celebrating the 50th year of existence of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, we have met here for the labors of our Grand Lodge.

When the Most Worshipful Grand Master conducted the Opening of the Grand Lodge Meeting, he concluded this ritual by asking: "Who does the Grand Master represent?" And the Deputy Grand Master replied: "King Solomon," and afterwards the Grand Master declared: "In the name of King Solomon, I declare that the Grand Lodge is Open." This is because King Solomon is the First Grand Master of the Order.

The Temple that was built by King Solomon on the Temple Mount, which is Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, was a magnificent construction, and was considered as perfect, as the name of Jerusalem - שלם - is perfection; also the name Solomon - שלם - is perfection.

The construction of the Temple lasted 7 years, and was consecrated in the year 954 B.C. The Temple stood for 368 years, until it was destroyed by the Babylonians, headed by King Nebuchadnezzar in the year 586 B.C.

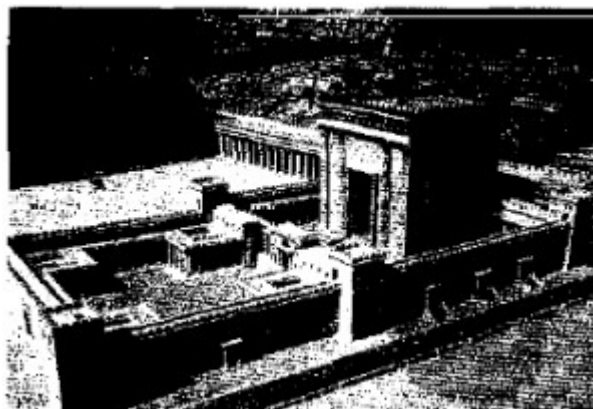


Model of the first Temple

The magnificent Temple of King Solomon was, according to the Freemasons' tradition, the seat of the Grand Lodge, in which King Solomon was the Grand Master, Hiram, King of Tyre, the Grand Senior Warden, and Hiram Abif, the Grand Junior Warden. Later they were known as the first three Grand Masters of the Order.

According to the doctrine of Freemasonry we learn that the building of the Temple was supported by three major columns, which were: Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, and they symbolize the first three Grand Masters. The column of Wisdom symbolized King Solomon with whose supreme wisdom the magnificent Temple was built; the column of Strength symbolized Hiram, King of Tyre, who

supported and encouraged King Solomon in his huge enterprise; and the column of Beauty symbolized Hiram Abif, with whose great talent of the arts the Temple was decorated.



Model of the second Temple

At the porch of the Temple, stood two big brass pillars with magnificent chapters, which were named Jachin and Boaz, which symbolized the entrance to the Temple. These pillars serve us symbolically as the most important place on the floor of our Temple.

The theory that the source of “Masonic-Institution” is in King Solomon’s Temple is an ancient tradition and is based on the “Old Charges” of the Operative Masons. In the first “Old Charges” that were discovered, it was written in the Masonic Manuscript—Cooke, of 1410:

In the construction of the Temple, King Solomon gave the builders the Charges, and taught them the customs and usages, and they are not much different from those of today.

This is the first source in Masonic history that Freemasonry is connected with King Solomon’s Temple.

In the Masonic Manuscript of Edinburgh—Register House M.S. of 1696, there is a lesson in the method of catechism, and one finds there, as follows:

Question: “Where was the first Lodge?”

Answer: “In the entrance of King Solomon’s Temple”.

In the Masonic framework, known as “Lectures of Freemasonry,” to the question: “To whom are our Lodges dedicated?” the answer is: “To King Solomon, the earliest Grand Master and founder of the Order.”

In accordance with our traditions, an installed Grand Master or an installed Master of a Lodge is seated on King Solomon’s Chair.

From time immemorial, Jerusalem, where King Solomon’s Temple was situated, constitutes a sign and symbol in universal Freemasonry and its history. Therefore Jerusalem is known as the Cradle of Freemasonry and serves as the symbolic foundation stone of Masonic philosophy.

The Holy Temple built by King Solomon is the symbol of Masonic values from which Freemasons derive strength in order to convert the rough ashlar to the perfect spiritual ashlar.

The “Legend of Hiram” is based on the Temple Legend which is drawn from the account in the Gothic Constitutions recounting that King Solomon loves Masons well and gave them Charges.

Anderson’s *Book of Constitutions*, which among other things, is a memoir of the history of the Order, contains all the legends and customs of our ancient Brethren and also records the “Hiramic Legend” which originated in ancient mythology. Their educational aims led our founders to place this legend at the foundation of the Third Degree and even to regard it as a Landmark to which every Freemason is committed.

In the *Grand Mystery of the Freemasons*, discovered in 1724, occurs the following question and answer:

Question: give me the Jerusalem Word.

Answer: Giblin.

Question: give me the Universal Word.

Answer: Boaz.

The origin of this phrase is as follows: After the completion of the Temple, a portion of the workmen traveled abroad to seek employment, while another portion remained in Jerusalem. This “Jerusalem Word” was the word which the Masons used in Jerusalem, while the “Universal Word” was the word

common to the craft everywhere.

King Solomon's Quarries were the source of the stones which were removed as rough ashlar and were converted into the perfect ashlar for the construction of the Temple. Also in our day these Quarries are used as a meeting place for Masonic activities, for us and for visiting Freemasons.

I would like to emphasize this subject with the words of our Brother Dr. Albert Mackey, in his book, *The History of Freemasonry*:

The fact, however, remains, that in the "Legend of the Craft" the Temple is prominently and definitely referred to as a place where Masons congregated in great numbers, and where Masonry was confirmed or established, and whence it traveled into other countries.

Here in Israel, in Jerusalem the Holy City, on the Temple Mount, Mount Moriah, which stands out in the heart of the city, is the place where King Solomon built his Temple.

The building of King Solomon's Temple plays a most significant role in the teachings and history of Freemasonry, and of all the objects which comprise Masonic symbolism, surely the most cherished is the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. If the Craft were to be divorced from its dependence on the Temple, if we remove from our rituals all reference to the Sacred Edifice, and the legends and traditions so closely connected with it, where would that leave Freemasonry?

In the Higher Degrees, which expand the teachings of Freemasonry, and in the affiliated Masonic bodies of Higher Degrees, there is stronger emphasis on the connection with King Solomon's Temple.

In the "היכל אדון הברית" as we designate in Hebrew what in English is The Holy Royal Arch, the Mark Degree, for instance, is based on the building of the First Temple, and the central figure in that Degree is King Solomon.

The Royal Arch Degree, on the other hand, is based on the construction of the Second Temple, after the return of the Babylonian exiles, and the leading figure in this Degree is the Governor Zerubbabel (in the United States, he is Jeshua, the High Priest). The construction of the Second Temple on the ruins of the first one forms the background and the foundation of the ceremony.

In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, as well, the building and completion of King Solomon's Temple serves as the basis for several Degrees, from the first to the 12th Degree (Master Architect), then the 13th (Royal Arch of Solomon), and later on the focus is on the Second Temple under the direction of Zerubbabel (15th Degree: Knight of the East) and the 16th (Prince of Jerusalem).

In other Degrees, that of the Chief of the Tabernacle (23rd Degree) and Prince of the Tabernacle (24th Degree) we move back to the Tabernacle and its construction.

The Degree of Knight Kadosh or Knight of the White and Black Eagle (30th Degree) takes us to the next step. The Knight of the East and West Degree (17th Degree) takes us to this chapter.

Therefore, here, in the Holy Land, are the roots of the teachings and symbols, the legends and the history of Freemasonry.

C

The "Order of the Knights" in Jerusalem

The Holy Land, as a source for the establishment of Freemasonry's doctrine and its sources, brings us to the first millennium of the Christian Era.

In 1099 the first Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem and in a fierce battle they conquered the city for Christianity. The Moslems did not give up their resistance and fought the Christian Pilgrims. In the year 1118, the Order of Knights Templar was established for the protection of the Pilgrims. This Order received the Pope's blessing and settled near the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. As a result of their being situated near the Temple they were called "The Knights of the Temple" or "The Templars." They determined their own Law System and instructions for their way of life and principles that are used as an example for the modern Templars.

As time passed, the Moslems defeated them and after Saladin conquered Jerusalem, they migrated to Acre, Cyprus and finally returned to their countries of origin, except for the Grand Master, who, according to the Constitution, had to remain close to the Holy Land and thus settled in Cyprus. This Ancient Order had 22 Grand Masters during the time of its existence and the last of them was Jacque De Molay, who is considered the spiritual father of "The Templars" to this day.

Jacque De Molay's fate and his cruel death are used as informative Masonic content to this day. In those days, "Phillip the Fair," who was a tyrant and greedy king, ruled in France. When he noticed the many assets that the Order owned, he conspired with the Pope, Clement the 5th to kill the knights and rob them of their possessions. In June 1306, the King invited Grand Master De Molay for a consultation about important issues, and when he arrived, he and all his companions were arrested together with all the other knights all over France. The knights devoted their lives and served the Pope loyally, but the Pope himself sent the King the indictment, and in it many counts which were all false accusations. On December 5, 1310, all the arrested knights were burned at the stake and on November 3, 1314 De Molay and the Senior Office Bearers of the Order were burned as well.

De Molay's tragic death, his firm and brave standing and the spirit of justice that surged in his heart until his last breath, endowed the inspiration to his spiritual heirs: the "Templar Knights" and the youth Order "De Molay."

In the "York Rite" there is the division of the Degrees of the "Templar Knights," although not in every Temple such Degrees exist.

In the "Scottish Rite" there is a Degree of a "Holy Knight" (30°) that is closely linked in its content with the Ancient Order of the "Templar Knights."

However, there are Masonic authors who think that the "Templar Knights" are one of the possible sources for the beginning of Freemasonry.

D

The New Era

The Freemasonry chapter in the "New Era" brings us closer to the present. The event that we celebrate today—the Jubilee of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, 50 years, deserves to get its significant dimensions if we look at the history of Freemasonry in Israel in the "New Era."

Looking at these beginnings during the "New Era," the first Masonic Lodge in the Holy Land met in 1868, when Bro. Robert Morris was resident here in the course of his research work. He was a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, U.S.A. In his book "Journey of Research on Masonic

Life in the Near East," he writes that after arriving in this country, he sought Masonic activity here. He found no Lodge, but met Freemasons. He founded a Lodge known as "Reclamation" (the name meaning betterment, since we maintain that we accept good men into the Order, so as to make them even better men). He and the Masons then in the country conducted their first Lodge meeting on May 13, 1868, in Zedekiah's Cave (King Solomon's Quarries) in Jerusalem, by candlelight. This was the first Masonic event in the country (in the "New Era") and can be seen as the beginning of Freemasonry in Israel.

There existed two more pioneer Lodges: the one was "Suleiman al-Muluki" ("Solomon the King") Lodge No. 293 that was also called "Royal Solomon Mother Lodge," founded in Jerusalem on January 5, 1873, under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of Canada. In contrast with the "Reclamation" Lodge, whose span of work, following the gala founding assembly, is not known, the "Suleiman al-Muluki" Lodge is regarded as the country's first regular Lodge. This may be gathered from the fact that its first Master, Brother William Hyatt, then serving as the British Consul in Jerusalem, was elected Master four times consecutively, in tribute to the extensive Masonic work of the Lodge during his tenure.

The second pioneer Lodge was "Gate of Solomon's Temple," consecrated in August 1891, on the roll of the Egyptian Order in Paris. This Lodge was founded by the French engineers who built the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway. Its Temple was in the residence of the Litvinski family in Jaffa. The Lodge members included local Jews and Arabs.

The "Barkai" Lodge, which was erected in 1906 under the aegis of the Grand Orient de France, originated from this Lodge after it became dormant. The Grand Orient de France was closed down when the Germans occupied France, and in 1942 "Barkai" severed its French connection and came under the Jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge of Palestine. Today "Barkai" is considered the oldest active Lodge in Israel.

As with "Barkai," there were other Lodges in the country belonging to different jurisdictions—Egypt, France, England, Scotland, Germany and others.

As is known, this was the period of Capitulations, wherein the rule of the country was vested in the Consuls of the different countries, who ruled arbitrarily, according to the laws of their countries. Amongst their other activities was the founding of Masonic Lodges to serve their own citizens, as well as disseminate the cultures of their respective countries, so as to extend their spheres of influence among the residents. During this genesis period, which underwent ups and downs due to the First World War, to the edicts of the Turkish regime, and the like, no fewer than 40 Lodges were established.

Another important chapter of Masonic history here were the Lodges founded under the aegis of the "Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany," which had moved from Germany to Jerusalem and added to its name the words "in exile." The first Lodge thus founded was "Ein Hashiloah" in 1931, in Jerusalem.

Much was done by the National Grand Lodge of Egypt. Seven regular Lodges worked under its patronage.

As the different Lodges in Palestine belonged to different jurisdictions, the seven Lodges under the National Grand Lodge of Egypt combined in order to found a local Grand Lodge and signed an appropriate petition to establish a National Grand Lodge of Palestine.

These Lodges were "Jerusalem" founded in 1925, French speaking; "Har Zion" founded in 1927, Hebrew speaking; "Moriah" founded in 1928, French speaking; "Pax" founded in 1928, English speaking; "Hiram" founded in 1929, Hebrew speaking; "Har Sinai" founded in 1929, Hebrew speaking; "Heichal Shlomo" founded in 1929, Arabic speaking.

In June 1932, these founding Lodges affixed their signatures to the Petition of Foundation and elected Brother Shuqri Hourri to be the first Grand Master and Brother Mark Gorodisky to be Substitute Grand Master. However, it so happened that Brother Shuqri Hourri fell ill and passed away before he was installed.

On December 1, 1932, the founding Lodges convened for a special meeting to elect a new Grand Master. They unanimously elected Brother Mark Gorodisky as Grand Master, Brother Dr. Yaacov Nuzhah as Substitute Grand Master, and Brother Asher Koch as Grand Secretary.

On January 8, 1933, a distinguished delegation arrived from Egypt, headed by the Grand Master the Most Wor. Bro. Fuad Bey Hussein. On the following day, January 9, 1933, there was held in the Masonic Temple, on St. Julian Street in Jerusalem, the founding ceremony of the National Grand Lodge of Palestine and the Installation of its Grand Master by the Most Wor. Bro. Fuad Bey Hussein, in the presence of a festive audience of Jews, Arabs, Christians, and Moslems.

It transpired that after the founding of this Grand Lodge and during its activities, many difficulties mounted up and Masonic life here was not harmonious. Doubts were cast in the Masonic World regarding the National Grand Lodge of Egypt founded in 1876. In 1922 arguments arose and a new

Grand Lodge was established there. In addition, there were three separate bodies in Egypt: the National Grand Lodge, the Grand Orient and the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite. All this weakened the standing of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt in the Masonic World. Most Grand Lodges worldwide did not recognize it, the foremost being those of England, Scotland and Ireland. This led to the non-recognition of those Lodges here which were under the Egyptian Jurisdiction, and later the National Grand Lodge of Palestine. It must be remembered, too, that later Masonry in Egypt was forbidden by the "Free Officers" (headed by General Najib, Nasser, Sadat and others) who fomented in 1952 the revolution in Egypt, unseating the Monarchy and taking over the country.

What were the difficulties of the Order in Israel?

As a consequence of their being under Egyptian Jurisdiction, the Grand Lodge and Lodges in Palestine were not recognized by most Grand Lodges worldwide and in particular by the premier Grand Lodges of England, Scotland and Ireland. There remained in the country other Lodges not under Egyptian Jurisdiction and they continued their Masonic activities under their respective Jurisdictions.

Thus Masons in Palestine were divided into two groups without any communication between them. Brethren from either group were unable to visit Lodges in the other. There were no visits between Lodges, as unrecognized Lodges were considered as being "non existent." There developed a separation amongst Brethren which is contrary to the principles of Masonry. There arose many difficulties regarding initiations and visits by foreign Masons who could only visit recognized Lodges. This situation was absurd and embarrassing.

Because of the spirit of the newly born State of Israel—renewal, revival and growth were felt also among Masons.

The Masters and Brethren of the five Lodges under Scottish Jurisdiction, which were recognized Lodges, took the initiative, and steps were taken for the establishment of an independent sovereign Grand Lodge in Israel, recognized by all other Grand Lodges and unifying all Freemasons in Israel. These Lodges were "Reuven" of Haifa, "Mizpah" and "Holy City" of Jerusalem, "Sharon" and "Aviv" of Tel Aviv.

After much debate, serious efforts on the part of the Brethren and their overwhelming desire for linking of units, an agreement for sponsorship was received from the Grand Lodge of Scotland with the knowledge of the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Ireland. The stage was set for the establishment of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. This took place on the 20th of

October 1953.

Many delegations of Freemasons from Israel and abroad came to Jerusalem for the occasion, but the main and most prestigious amongst them was the delegation from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, which came to dedicate the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel and to install the Grand Master in office. Prominent in this delegation were the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine (Past Grand Master), the [Rt. Wor. Bro. Dr. G. L. C. Colenso-Jones](#) (District Superintendent for the Eastern Mediterranean) and [Rt. Wor. Bro. Dr. Alexander](#) Farley Buchan (Grand Secretary).

In Jerusalem there was much activity. The representatives from abroad called on the President of the State; a festive Masonic luncheon was held at the King David Hotel; the Israel Ministry of Posts issued a special seal to commemorate the event; Jerusalem took on a festive appearance, and everyone looked forward to the ceremonies at the Y.M.C.A. Auditorium.

Impressively, and in accordance with the Ancient Scottish Ritual, first came the Dedication of the Temple, followed by the Installation of the Grand Master, the Most Wor. Bro. Shabetai Levi, by the installing Master, the Rt. Wor. Bro. The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine and the installing Grand Wardens assisting him. The installed Grand Master appointed the Most Wor. Bro. Dr. Avraham Shaoni Immediate Past Grand Master, as well as the Grand Lodge Office-Bearers for the year 1953. The splendid ceremony ended with a legal-formal act, as thirty reigning Masters of all the Lodges were presented to the installed Grand Master. They took the Obligation and received new Charters from the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel.

This historic event was splendidly continued with a festive Consecration Banquet, at which greetings and orations were offered, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Freemasonry in Israel.

This was the historic occasion of the Unification of all Masonic Lodges in Israel demonstrating the importance of the establishment of our Grand Lodge.

It is not out of place to mention that within a short time the Grand Lodges of England and Ireland extended recognition to the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, followed by most other Grand Lodges, well over a hundred.

Now, fifty years have passed and today we celebrate the Jubilee of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. We thank the Grand Architect of the Universe for granting us the privilege of having reached

this stage.