

## King Solomon's Temple

Before we investigate the structure of the Temple, we will first study the background and the reason for building this magnificent complex. The Israelites under the leadership of Moses wandered around in the wilderness for forty years. During that time Moses went up on Mount Sinai and received from God the ten commandments, thus a covenant between the two was made. During the forty days that Moses spent on the mount instructions were given on how the covenant was to be housed. As the Israelites at that time were nomadic, the tabernacle had to be a tent which was easily portable. Once they reached the promised land a Temple was to be build patterned after the Tabernacle they carried in the wilderness. While the proportions changed the main components stayed in tack.

David was 30 years old when he became king. During his forty-year reign he made an alliance with the Phoenicians, then moved on to conquer the Philistines, Moabites, Zolahites, Syrians, Ammonites, Amalekites, Rehobites and Hittites. His army numbered thirteen hundred thousand, and the spoils of war were enormous. He also enforced these countries to pay an annual tribute into his coffers. From this wealth came the money and material to build a great temple to God. As he spent his entire lifetime unifying the neighbouring countries through war and bloodshed, he was told by God that because of this he would not be allowed to build the temple, but the task was to be left to his son.

Life in those days was very violent. Multiple wives and concubines were quite common if you had wealth and status. King David had several wives and 18 children. The children of concubines had no legitimate right as family. David's eldest son Amnon raped his half sister, Tamar, so David's third son, Absalom had him killed. Absalom in turn tried to take his fathers throne by force but was killed in battle.

In those days, the life and health of a nation was reflected in the physical well being of the ruler. Not only was it important that the King be a person of strength, but he had to be a man of sexual vigor and potency. The reproductive power of the monarch symbolized the blessings of fertility for the land and flocks. When David became old, feeble, and impotent, his 4th and at that time eldest living son, Adonijah, chose this moment to seek the throne. Adonijah had his followers anoint and declare him King. David had no knowledge of this event and he and Solomon were not invited to the feast. Solomon's mother realized that their lives were in danger, so she conspired with Nathan the prophet and came up with the following plan. She would go and inform David of what Adonijah had done and asked if he did not remember his promise to put Solomon on the throne. Nathan then came in and reminded David of this supposed promise as well. This being done Solomon at age 20 was anointed King. Solomon spared Adonijah's life asking only a promise of loyalty.

After David died Adonijah asked for one of his father's wives to take as his wife. Now in those days a new ruler automatically took possession of the former king's wives and concubines so that to ask the king for one of his wives was as good as a threat to the kingdom. So, Solomon had Adonijah killed. Joab who was previously commander of

David's army had killed several innocent people and King David had said to Solomon, <sup>3</sup>Do in your wisdom what you feel is best. <sup>2</sup> Joab had taken the side of Adonijah when he appointed himself King, so Solomon had him killed as well.

Solomon then made an alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt and married his daughter. Solomon was the son of Bath-Sheba a direct descendant of Isaac. As Ishmael and Isaac were stepbrothers these two great families founded by Abraham and Sarah were thus united in Solomon.

From the time that Moses led his people out of Egypt a period of 480 years lapsed before the building of the temple began. The masons who were selected to build the Temple of Solomon were declared <sup>3</sup>free<sup>2</sup> and were exempted together with their descendants from import duties on goods and all taxes. They were also given the right to bear arms.

Usually, we picture in our minds only an image of the temple, but it was part of an exceptionally large complex. Measurements in those days were given in cubits. A cubit being the distance from the elbow to the tip of the forefinger. Now the question is whose arm was used to determine the measurement. Were people taller or shorter than they are today. Scholars have chosen 18<sup>2</sup> 20<sup>2</sup> and 24.<sup>2</sup> My arm measures 19<sup>2</sup> and I believe that people were generally shorter in days gone by. I have translated the measurements in the Bible at 18<sup>2</sup> as it is easier in converting cubits to feet.

In the fourth year of King Solomon's reign the construction of the temple began and was completed in 1004 B.C. The Temple and Palace together consisted of a series of terraces on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. The second highest terrace was 1600 ft. in length by 800 ft. in width. Within this first enclosure the architects provided homes for the porters and singers as well as a place for the worshippers. The upper terrace enclosure, also known as the outer court, was 800 by 400 ft. The eastern half of this terrace was enhanced by three rows of stone pillars which formed a colonnade and supported cedar beams. The western half was the court for the women. To the south was the court of the Priests, containing the chambers for those actively engaged in Temple services. In the center of this court was built the inner court which measured 405 by 330 ft. Again, another colonnade made up of three rows of stone pillars also supporting cedar beams. The only entrance to the inner court was on the eastern side. In the inner court stood the Great Alter of Burnt Offering which was made of bronze. This alter measured 30 ft by 30 ft and stood 10 ft high. In the southeast corner was a large circular bowl made of bronze and called the Molten Sea It measured 15 ft across and stood 7 and a half ft high. The Molten Sea held 10,000 gallons of water. This bowl rested on the backs of 12 bronze bulls. Three bulls facing north, three south, three east and three west. The twelve bulls represented the Twelve tribes of Israel. On the north side of the bowl there were five Lavers, each made of bronze. There were an additional five Lavers on the south side. These Lavers were 6 ft by 6 ft standing 4 and a half ft high and were on wheels. They were made in two parts the base and the Laver itself. Each Laver held 200 gallons of water and as they were on wheels they could easily be moved around. They were used for washing the animals to be sacrificed in the burnt offering. They were highly ornamented with pictures of lions, oxen, and cherubim.

At the dedication of the Temple 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed. This amounted to great amounts of blood being spilled, however, they had built a system of drains to carry it away from the complex. This court also contained the temple which was 90 ft. in length, 30 ft. in width and 45 ft. high. The Porch way or entrance was also 30 ft. in width and 15 ft. in depth.

I wish to point out currently that in the Bible there are two accounts of King Solomon's temple, the one being in the Book of Kings and the other in Chronicles. While most of the measurements coincide, there are some that contradict. I have taken the measurements from the Book of Kings except for the Great Alter of Burnt Offering which is not recorded there but is found in the Book of Chronicles.

It was flanked by two bronze pillars each 27 ft. high and 12 ft. in circumference with capitals in the shape of bowls each 7 and a half ft. in width. There was a network of lilies and wreaths of chain work, seven for each capital. There were two rows of pomegranates encircling the network. There were 200 pomegranates in two rows around each capital.

The Most Holy place which we refer to as the middle chamber was 60 ft in length by 30 ft. in width and 30 ft. high. The ceiling and walls were of cedar overlaid with gold. There were engraved with settings of palm trees, open flowers, and cherubim on the walls. The entire place was ornamented with precious stones. The entrance was by a large double door of olive wood carved with cherubim, palm trees, open flowers and overlaid with pure gold. Each part of the door had two leaves which folded. The furniture of the Holy place consisted of 10 tables and 10 candle sticks of pure gold, 5 on the right and 5 on the left side. Each candlestick had six branches going out. Three on each side. They did not use candles, but each branch was a small recess which held cotton and enough oil to burn through the night. These candlesticks were lit each night. The alter was 1 and a half ft square with a height of 3 ft. Each of the corners was horn shaped and made of wood. The Alter was made of cedar and overlaid with gold. A Censor for the daily burning of incense stood in the middle.

The Holy of Holies or sanctum sanctorum was remarkably similar, the walls were made of cedar with carvings of palm trees, open flowers, and cherubim. Even the floor was covered with gold. It's shape was a perfect cube 30 by 30 by 30 ft. Over the entrance hung a veil of blue, purple and crimson which was decorated with palm trees, open flowers, and cherubim. Also hanging there were chains of gold. The only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies Place was the Sacred Ark of the Covenant which contained a golden jar which held the manna, the rod of Arron and two stone slabs upon which were written the ten commandments. This was the purpose of building the temple, a place to house the Sacred Ark and to worship God. The Ark was made of wood from the Acacia and covered with gold. The lid of the box was solid gold and was called the Mercy Seat. Two cherubim were carved on the box with their wings touching and forming a triangle. Above this were the extended wings of another two cherubim made of olive wood and overlaid with gold. Each cherub was 15 ft. high and 15 ft. from wing tip to wing tip. Together the outer wing of each cherubim touched the outside wall.

This Sanctum Sanctorum was visited but once a year by the High Priest on Yom Kippur, which is the Day of Atonement. On this day atonement was made for the sins of the people.

Above these two holy places was the Treasure Room which extended the entire length and width of that area and was 15 ft. in height. Here were stored the silver and gold vessels, instruments, and all dedicated things such as gifts from allied kings. It was also the royal treasury where Solomon deposited and dispensed all things of value. These two Holy Places were surrounded by a series of chambers on the two sides and one end of the outside walls. While these chambers were up against the wall of the Temple, they were not attached by any structural supports such as a beam. There were no windows or doors going in through the Temple walls. There was only one entrance door to these chambers, and it was located on the south side of the temple. They went up the stairs into the middle chamber and out of this chamber into the third one. The lower chamber was 10 and a half ft wide, the middle, 9 ft., and the upper 7 and a half ft. The rooms were on top of each other making three stories and were connected by a set of stairs. These chambers were finished in wood and overlaid with gold. It is believed that they were used by the priests for storage as well change rooms.

The Temple was covered with beams and boards of cedar. The Temple took seven and a half years to complete after which there were seven days of dedication and then another seven days of feasting. During the next 13 years King Solomon finished the complex. The Citadel was on an elevation just below the Temple and included, King Solomon's palace, the Queen's palace, the House of the Forest of Lebanon, with its beautiful sunken gardens. The Tower of David, Palace of the High Priest and the Throne or Judgement Seat. This throne had six steps leading up to it. Over the throne was a round covering or canopy. The throne had arm rests and on each side of the six steps stood a lion so that there were 12 lions in all. This again represented the 12 tribes of Israel. In this same enclosure was the Royal Gardens, which contained a great variety of trees, shrubbery, enclosures for wild and domestic animals, the residence of the immediate and official Royal family as well as their attendants and the Royal harem.

King Solomon's reigned for forty years and then died. The ten tribes under Jeroboam broke away to form the independent kingdom of Israel. They soon fell into idolatry; but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained faithful to the line of David. The latter held the mountain stronghold of Jerusalem, which commanded the trade-route between two warring countries, Syria, and Egypt. Solomon's son Rehoboam was now King and in the fifth year of his reign, Shishak, King of Egypt, sacked Jerusalem and carried away all the gold from the Temple. It seems he was not interested in the famous bronze work, such as the pillars, molten sea, etc. as they were left behind. The temple had only lasted for a period of 33 years without attack.

In 740 BC it was profaned by Ahaz. In 722 B.C. the independent kingdom of Israel became an Assyrian province, the ten tribes at that time being taken into captivity and removed. At Jerusalem Hezekiah secured peace by paying tribute, and he to some extent restored the Temple worship. Eighty years later Josiah repaired the Temple and refurnished it with gold vessels. It was at this time that the incident of Shaphan finding

the lost volumes of the Sacred Law in the treasury, occurred. In 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon and Chaldea. In 598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took the 18-year-old King Jehoiakin and 10,000 other prominent Hebrews into captivity. These were primarily the warriors and the artisans. Now captivity did not mean that they were put in prison. One of the main reasons was to keep an eye on them. They were not treated as slaves but rather as colonists. They were allowed to purchase land and build houses. The poorer classes of people were left behind to till the land.

In 588 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar made Zedechias, ruler of Jerusalem. In 586 B.C. Zedechias turned traitor and tried to hand over the fortress to the Egyptians. Jerusalem, including the Temple, was thereupon sacked by Nebuchadnezzar. The Temple vessels, both gold, silver and bronze, were carried away to Babylon. The Assyrian empire was now nearing its end. Cyrus, King of Persia, then conquered the Chaldean kingdom in 538 B.C. and occupied Babylon. He invited the two tribes to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple. He supplied them with treasure and materials and promised to restore the golden vessels carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. The walls of Jerusalem, as well as those of the actual Temple had to be rebuilt. Unfortunately, Cyrus died before this was completed. His successor, Cambyses, influenced by surrounding nations bitterly hostile to the Jews, stopped the work on the Temple.

When Darius came to power, he agreed to complete the work stopped by Cambyses. Accordingly, around 516 B.C. Zerubbabel, accompanied by Joshua the Priest and Haggi the prophet returned to Jerusalem to carry out the building of the second temple. The Sidonians sent timber by sea from Libanus, which is present day Lebanon. The rebuilt Temple had a tragic history of being plundered, profaned, and destroyed around 168 B.C. by Antiochus Ephiphanes.

In 165 B.C. it was rededicated by Judas Maccabeus, then again profaned, and plundered. Finally, Herod the Great leveled the Temple down to the foundations and in 20 BC he built the third temple on the same spot. It was built on a grander scale, approximately double the size and as a memorial to himself. This temple lasted 90 years before it was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman General Titus.

Today the only visible remains of the third temple is what is called the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The mosque known as Dome of the Rock is built directly on top of the first temple location. This land is controlled by the Muslims, and they will not allow any archeological probes to take place.

It is said that the temple was one of the costliest structures to ever have been built. It contained 7.6 million pounds of gold and 75.6 million pounds of silver in its construction and ornaments. The total number of workmen used was 183,600. Of these 30,000 were Israelites. No Israelite was made a slave, they were the soldiers, officials, attendants, and commanders. Here is an excerpt of King Solomon's trading and tax empire. His annual gold income besides import taxes and tribute was 25 tons of gold. He had fleets of ships which traded throughout the Mediterranean and Red Sea. His land-based trade extended into Asia, Egypt, and Arabia.

Despite his reputation for wisdom, Solomon's extravagance and disregard for his people were partly responsible for the later disruption of the kingdom. Outside conditions, moreover, contributed to his original success. The larger empires were preoccupied with their own affairs, and Israel's trade and industry flourished in the absence of extensive warfare.

This information may be freely given to Masons; however, the following recognition is requested. The information contained in this educational paper was taken from the following books:

The Old Testament

Freemasons' Guide and Compendium by Bernard Jones

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia

It was compiled and edited by

Bro. Barry D. Thom P.M.

Lodge Mackay # 1129 S.C.