

The Temple of Solomon: Historical Roots

by Phillip W. Weiss

The central spiritual edifice of Freemasonry is the temple. It was through the temple that God showed his devotion to Israel, and it is through the temple as symbolized by the lodge through which a man is made into a Freemason.

However, before the Temple was built, God was angry with Israel. His anger extended back to the time of Israel's sojourn in and from Egypt. God was angry because his people were rebellious against the Lord.

How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert! They tested him again and again, and provoked the Holy One of Israel. (Psalm 78:40-41)

The Lord brought his people to his holy land, but Israel continued to rebel.

Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God, and did not observe his testimonies, but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers; they twisted like a deceitful bow. (Psalm 78:56-57)

The Lord vented his wrath upon his people with fire and sword:

He gave the people over to the sword, and vented his wrath on his heritage. Fire devoured their young men and their maidens had no marriage song. Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation. (Psalm 78:62-64)

Then the Lord relented.

Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a strong man shouting because of wine. (Psalm 78:65)

He chose the tribe of Judah to build his sanctuary and chose David to be the shepherd of Israel. (Psalm 78:67-72)

The temple was built but then later was defiled by heathens, Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jews mocked.

O God, the heathen have come into thy inheritance; they have defiled the holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of thy servants to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them. We have become a taunt to our neighbors, mocked and derided by those round about us. (Psalm 79:1-4)

(A similar fate awaited the second temple which also was defiled by heathens and transformed into a house of debauchery with the Jews forced to witness and endure the sacrilege and persecution. It is thus recorded: *A man could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the feasts of his fathers, nor so much as confess himself to be a Jew.* [2 Maccabees 6:1-11])

Israel appealed to God for deliverance and compassion, and to show that his people were not forsaken by God.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for thy name's sake! Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" (Psalm 79:9-10)

Israel further appealed to God to return SEVENFOLD the taunts his people had endured from other nations.

Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted thee, O Lord!. Then we thy people, the flock of thy pasture, will give thanks to thee for ever; from generation to generation we will recount thy praise. (Psalm 79:12-13)

Such is the history that is associated with the temple. By taking his obligation on the Volume of Sacred Law located at the altar of every well-governed and properly furnished lodge, a Freemason forms a bond with that history, a history which is about loss, punishment, forgiveness, hope, and redemption.

Source: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible With the Apocrypha, revised standard version* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1977