

The Two Temples of Jerusalem

by Phillip W. Weiss

In Jewish history there were two temples built in Jerusalem. The first temple was built by Solomon, king of Israel. Solomon's temple was built by foreign laborers. Part of that history is recounted in the Masonic ritual. The second temple was built by Jews themselves after they were freed from captivity in Babylon. Both temples were destroyed by foreign armies, with catastrophic results for the Jews who both times were forced into exile. These events are recorded in the Bible, also known as the Volume of Sacred Law or VSL, which is to be found at the altar in any well governed and properly furnished Masonic lodge. It is through that venerable book, upon which every Mason takes his obligations, that every Mason establishes and renews his sublime connection with that most revered place which although physically gone still exists in the hearts and minds of Masons.

Now, why should we as Masons know anything about the physical layout of the new temple? The answer to that question is found in the VSL. On the

twenty-fifth year of the captivity of the Jews, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured (Ezekiel 40:1), the Lord, through the prophet Ezekiel, said:

Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed of their inequities, and let them measure the pattern. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances and perform them. This is the law of the temple; the whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple. (Ezekiel 43:10-12)

Now, who is allowed to enter the temple? The VSL provides the answer to that question too.

Thus says the Lord God: "No foreigner uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel." (Ezekiel 44:9)

Upon taking the obligation, a Mason renders himself worthy of admission to the lodge and therefore to the temple.

And who will manage the temple? Once again, the VSL provides the answer:

And the Levites who went far from me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their inequity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. (Ezekiel 44:10-11)

All this and much more about the temples are written in the VSL upon which every Mason takes his obligation. These admonitions explain why every Lodge must be properly tiled, for to permit any cowan, eavesdropper or anyone else who has not taken the obligation to enter the lodge is to commit a profanity. Every Masonic lodge is a symbolic representation of the Temple of Solomon *and of its successor*, the second temple, which too served as the spiritual heart of the Jewish people until that temple became debased and corrupted (Matthew 21: 12-13, John 2:13-25) and like its predecessor was destroyed and the Jewish people scattered.