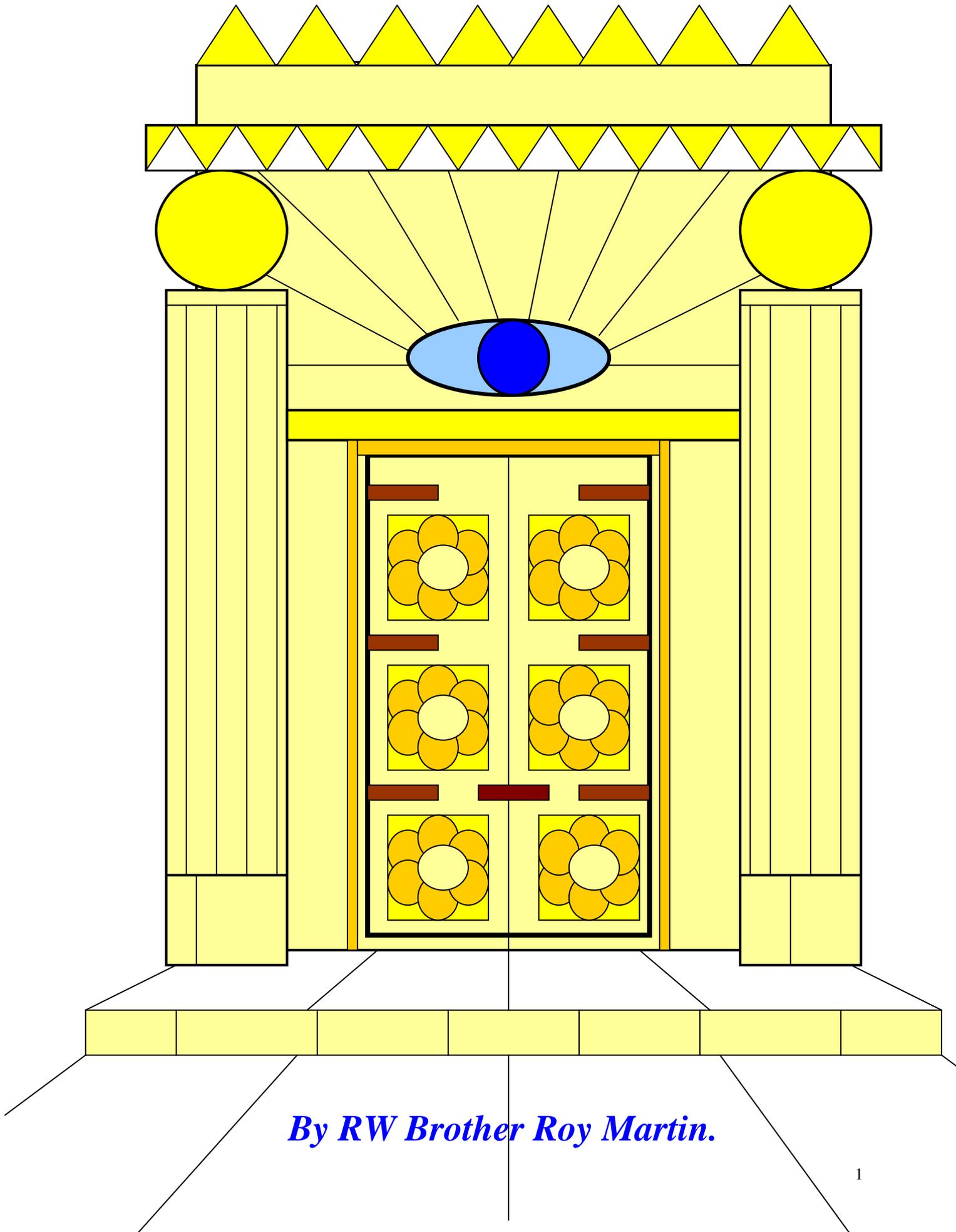


THE TEMPLE MOUNT



By RW Brother Roy Martin.

The Temple is the Temple of Solomon and the mount is the Mount of Moriah.

If you travel North from the plains of Sinai towards the Sea of Galilee, between the Mediterranean in the West and the Dead Sea in the East there are three fertile valleys known as the Hinnom, the Tyropeon and the Kidron. Between the Tyropeon and the Kidron there is a ridge which rises to two thousand feet above sea level. It slopes gently to the West and steeply to the East. The area enjoys good rainfall and excellent drainage. The ridge is covered in olive trees.

To the North is the Mount of Moriah and to the South the city of Jerusalem. At first sight it was not the best place to found a city. It was not on the rich trading routes between East and West nor between North and South. But it did enjoy ample fresh water and could easily be defended making it a formidable fortress city.

It was this ridge, the ridge of Ophel, that confronted Abraham in around 1800B.C. Abraham had made a promise to his God. As a demonstration of his total commitment to the concept of one god he promised to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Abraham was directed to the site of the Mount of Moriah, being the place where he would honour that promise and with Isaac accompanying him up the steep hills he came upon an area of flat stone about fifteen metres square and here he built a funeral pyre. Isaac unwittingly helped him to gather wood. Abraham bound his sons hands and feet and placed him on the sacrificial altar, raised his knife and was about to plunge it into Isaac's heart when God stayed his hand and substituted a ram that was caught in a thicket nearby.

A great length of time has elapsed between the telling of this story and it being written down, so whether we believe it to be true or merely fanciful is for each of us to decide. It doesn't really matter because the meaning of the story is the important thing. The fact that God stayed his hand meant that God was a forgiving God and it this principle of forgiveness and compassion that is basis of the three great religions of the world- Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The rock on which this sacrifice took place is known as the *sakhra*, and it was to become the site of Solomon's Temple a thousand years later. But before we look at the building of the Temple there are two other events that took place in the intervening years that we need to be aware of and which have a relevance to the Mount.

The journey begins....

The first was the Exodus. This took place around 1300BC. Moses had taken his people out of Egypt with the intention of leading them to the promised land somewhere in the region of Canaan, otherwise known as Phoenicia and now as Lebanon. Moses was not able to take a direct route, the most obvious being the Way of the Sea. His people were farmers, servants and builders and did not have the weapons or skills to defend themselves from the hostile warrior tribes that inhabited the coastal route.

He chose a route through the desert but he had good experience of the wilderness and knew where the best watering holes were. The journey was arduous and meandering. His people dutifully followed but it was not long before they began to ask questions.

Where were they going? When would they get there? Who precisely was this man Moses? What right had he to take them from their homes on this wild goose chase? It is true they were slaves but at least they had a roof over their heads and food to eat. Now they did not know where the next meal was coming from and they were sleeping under the stars.

Moses was becoming very disturbed because his people were beginning to worship some of the pagan Gods. The greatest of them being Ba'al, the God of fertility and whose symbol was the Bull or the Ox. He was losing control. He did not know what to do.

It so happened that he was passing the village of Midian which was the home of his father-in-law who was a wise old Rabbi. His name was Reuel sometimes called Jethro.

He advised Moses to take a firm hand. Do something dramatic that would restore discipline and order. He suggested a plan of action.

Moses needed time to think. He climbed Mount Sinai to try to work out what he should do and to look for divine inspiration. Which was forthcoming. God answered Moses' prayers by giving him a list or a *torah*, in the form of ten commandments which God carved into two tablets of stone with His own hand. This list was an agreement or covenant between God and Moses. Moses took it down to his people and after some initial dissension, it had the desired effect. His people listened to the word and began to once again obey the monotheistic faith.

The Ark of the Covenant.

Moses ordered that a casket be made which would house the tablets and the man put in charge was named Bezaleel. Bezaleel Ben Uri who was master carpenter. His assistant was Aholiab, a worker in metals. The box was constructed according to Egyptian techniques and was made of Acacia wood. The panels were let into grooves so as the wood expanded and contracted in the heat of the day and the cool of the night, it would not split.

The casket was four feet six inches long, two feet six inches wide and two feet six inches high. The interior was layered with gold. The lid being made entirely of gold had two winged cherubim on top and was known as the mercy seat. Bronze rings were fixed around the casket so that nine feet long staves could be threaded through, making carrying easier. The casket went wherever the tribes of Israel went. This was the casket of the torah or as we more familiarly know it, The Ark Of The Covenant.

Once in Royal David's City.

The next important event occurred some four or five generations later with the death of King Saul. Saul died without an heir and it was decided that the new King would be David, mainly because of his military prowess.

David set about the occupation of Jerusalem and having done so his first action was to buy that piece of rock that we know as the *sakhra* from the deposed Jebusite King, Araunah who had used it as a threshing floor. When Araunah heard what David wanted it for, he said "Take it, my friend. It is

yours for nothing.” But David insisted on paying. “How can I give my God a gift that has cost me nothing” he said. He paid 600 shekels for it. A shekel is not a coin. It is a measurement of weight. Three shekels is equivalent to about one ounce. So David paid out 200 ounces of silver that is just over twelve pounds or six kilos in weight.

David then went on to build his kingdom which at the time of his death stretched from the Euphrates in Northern Syria to Aqaba on the shores of the Red Sea. By warfare, by negotiation and by cooperation, David had brought together all the tribes of Israel and for the first time in years - peace. He now turned his attention to the Temple. Together with a man called Amon, who was an architect from the island of Tyre, he designed and laid down the plans for what was to become the most magnificent structure ever built.

The task of building the Temple was however denied to David. He was considered much too warlike. There was too much blood on his hands. The work was to be done by his son Solomon.

Even so it was four years into Solomon's reign before the work began. For Solomon had a problem. His people were either soldiers or farmers. He had no one with the skills necessary for such a grand undertaking. But his father David had a very good friend in the King of Tyre whose name was Hiram. The people of Tyre were Phoenicians. The Phoenicians were seafarers and used to building boats. They had many skilled carpenters, metal workers and, because they built harbours in the countries they visited, many stonemasons.

The other item that interested Solomon was the Lebanese Cedar tree. This tree grew to great heights and was a straight grained wood that was easily worked. So Solomon did a deal. In return for wheat, barley, olive oil and wine - all ingredients essential to a sea faring nation, Hiram would supply a skilled workforce and the timber for the Temple. To speed things up the timber was floated by sea to the port of Joppa, now known as Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv, and then overland to the Temple mount.

Solomon asked for one more favour. He wanted someone to oversee the entire project. The man that Hiram chose was the son of a widow woman from the tribe of Naphtali and whose father had been a worker in brass. His name was also Hiram. He was to be the top man, the boss, the governor - the Abiff. We know him of course as Hiram Abiff.

A formidable task.

The task that confronted Hiram was formidable. The ground was rugged and uneven, and the task of surveying the area was very difficult so that it is a measure of the very advanced skills of Hiram's surveyors, whose knowledge of mathematics and geometry must have been extensive and advanced. Added to this was the edict that forbade any noise during the construction of the Temple. This meant that everything had to be pre-fabricated and transported to the Temple site.

We know from the explorations of Charles Warren that some of the foundation stones were in excess of fifteen feet in length. We also know that the Phoenician builders favoured large foundation stones because the area was prone to earthquakes. The foundation stone identified by Warren was of an

interesting shape. It did not have square ends. The ends and in some cases the sides leaned in. The shape was trapezoidal.

It was a parrallelapippadon. What is a parrellelapippadon? The best description I have heard is, if you take a pyramid and slice off the top and then take another slice further down, the piece that you remove will be a parrallelapippadon. The reason that the stones were cut in this manner was because they were so heavy that precise laying was not possible. So a stone was placed roughly where it was required then the next stone was offered up, again roughly where it was required. All that now had to be done was for the stonemason to measure the gap and drop a smaller wedge shape into place. This could be moved backwards or forwards up or down to fit and then the surface made good. Just like a bought one. Such was the precision that Hiram's men worked to that Warren recorded some three thousand years later, that he could not get even the finest blade into the joints.

Warren was the first to identify the origin of stones from the carvings and painted marks on the stones. He was able to differentiate between those of the Solomonic Temple and the later Herodian Temple by identifying those marks made in Phoenician script- the language of Hiram and those in Jewish script from the times of Herod. As the stones were cut in quarries away from the site they had to be marked and identified for later construction. They were also marked with the stonemasons mark so that the overseer could inform the paymaster to recompense the right workmen for their endeavours.

A detailed survey of the Temple Mount.

Charles Warren was a lieutenant in the Royal engineers and had been sent to Jerusalem to replace Captain Charles Wilson who had been surveying the Temple mount and the area around Jerusalem. He had been sent by the British Government ostensibly to ascertain the quality of the water supply and the sanitation arrangements for Christian travellers to the area. He had also a hidden agenda in that the Suez canal was being built and the suitability of the area for a military base to protect merchant shipping and troop movements to the Far East was, of course, of great interest. Wilson's work was invaluable in recording the labyrinth of underground tunnels and passages on the Temple Mount. His work was so accurate and detailed that it is still used to this day without alteration. Wilson became ill and had to return to the UK

His work was continued by Charles Warren. However Warren's interest was even more intense. Warren was a Freemason and his knowledge of the masonic story took him well beyond his official brief. He became a Freemason in Gibraltar when he was nineteen. He joined Royal Arch and later Knights Templar - it is even recorded that he held a Knights Templar meeting under the Temple Mount .If the authorities had found out, goodness knows what would have happened. As it was he got on very well with the authorities who had banned all archaeological investigations on the Mount. Undeterred Warren went as far as he dared and in fact on one occasion very nearly overstepped the mark.

He had noticed that in the centre of the *sakhra* were two loose stones and being aware of the masonic legend, determined to see what lay below. Accordingly he arranged for some of his companions and their wives to distract the guards elsewhere in the dome while he, accompanied by his

Turkish minder investigated. To the dismay of his guard, Warren leapt onto the *sakhra* and raised one of the stones. However, his left arm had been injured in Gibraltar and he could not hold the stone which dropped into a cavern beneath, resulting in a great bang which resounded around the dome. Fortunately, one of the ladies in the party remarked that the wind must have got up and slammed one of the doors. Warren persevered and lowered himself into the cavern where he found a passageway that had been sealed.

He recalled that Wilson had also written about a similar passageway. By this time, realising that the Turkish guard was becoming very disturbed, Warren climbed out of the cavern. The remarkable thing is that nothing was said and within a couple of days the stone had been replaced.

Warren was convinced that if only he had been able to continue he would have found the route to the Ark of the Covenant.

As a matter of interest Warren returned to the UK where he continued his Masonic activities becoming a founder member of Quattuor Coronati Lodge. He was also the investigating officer for the Metropolitan Police in the case of Jack the Ripper murders.

Not that big.

The Temple was to be sixty cubits long, fifty cubits high and twenty cubits wide. So what is a cubit? It depends where you come from and what theory you are trying to prove. It is generally accepted that a cubit will be anything from 18" to 21" in length. The Egyptian or Royal cubit was 21" and since the Egyptian influence at this time was very strong it is reasonable to suspect that this was the length used by Hiram. That being the case, the Temple would be 100 feet long by 50 feet high and 30 feet wide. Not as big as you might have supposed. In fact it was quite narrow. The reason for this was because Solomon had said that he wanted the interior to be open - no columns. The width therefore is determined by the maximum span of the Lebanese Timber that would form the rafters. This span is 33 feet.

The Temple walls were built, the rafters put in place. The whole roof and all the walls were clad with timber. The artists set about carving open flowers, pomegranates, cornucopia and all manner of other decorations. Then it was all inlaid with gold. The Sanctum Sanctorum was built around the *Sakhra* - an area 30 metres square and the great doors were fixed. These were made from olive wood, cut from the girth of a single tree and taken from the nearby Mount of Olives. The wood was very hard and difficult to work - but Hiram's men were masters of their craft.

The Temple was magnificent and a tribute to the brilliance of Hiram Abiff and his men. But if Hiram thought this a daunting task, it was nothing compared to the next two projects that Solomon had for him.

Solomon ordered Hiram to construct two great pillars at the porchway or entrance to the Temple. They were to be named Boaz and Jachin. They were to be cast in bronze and stand thirty feet high. The diameter was to be six feet and the rim some four fingers wide. We know this because when Nebuzarradan finally destroyed the Temple in 586BC, Jeremiah himself measured the remains of one of the columns with his own hand.

I said the columns were cast in bronze whereas most writings will list them as being of brass. The columns were cast with a secret formula known only

Hiram Abiff. Bronze is made of copper and tin with arsenic added. The amount of arsenic will determine how brittle the metal will be. If you add zinc to copper then you get brass. If you mix all three with arsenic you will get a much harder bronze. It is in fact gunmetal or ordnance brass. The same as was used in the cannons of the navies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was this secret formula that Hiram used for the pillars.

The Jordan Valley.

In order to cast the pillars of this size, a large quantity of clay was required. Fortunately this was to be found in the Jordan valley but unfortunately for Hiram, it was some 40 kilometres away. It is almost certain that the columns were not cast as one piece because of the distance and difficulty of the terrain in transporting them; it is more likely that they were cast in sections. If each interlocking section was made to be about two cubits high then they would have weighed about two tons. They would then have been transported up to the Temple site and put in position. The first two would have been easy enough but as the column became higher the task of lifting them would become almost impossible. So we have to ask - how did they manage it? The best theory is that they built a ramp of hardened sand and as each section was put in place more sand was added until the pillar was complete. Then the sand was removed.

The pillars having been put into position, two capitals ten feet high were put on top. Before they were sealed it is believed that all the plans, the drawings, the secret formulas and notes of Hiram Abiff were put into the hollow columns.

Once the capitals were in place, the tops were decorated with hundreds of pomegranates. Some scholars suggest that the pillars were not capped but fires were lit in each so that one was a Pillar of Cloud during the day and the other a Pillar of Fire at night.

The Great Sea.

The second task was to cast a wash bowl. No ordinary wash bowl though. This one was fifteen feet high, fifteen feet in diameter with a rim five fingers wide and was known as the Great Sea. It was cast in the same bronze as Boaz and Jachin but this time it was in one piece. It was supported by twelve oxen, three at each cardinal point. North, South, East and West.

It was filled with water to be used by the priests to wash their hands and feet and to wash away the blood and entrails of the sacrifices. It is estimated that it contained 220,000 gallons of water. Because of its height, the water was dispensed from the large bowl into smaller bowls or lavers and hundreds of bronze ladles were cast to assist in the task. By dispensing the water in this manner, the water in The Great Sea always remained pure.

Did you notice that I said that the Great Sea was supported by twelve oxen? The ox is the symbol of Ba'al. Ba'al was the greatest of the pagan gods. What was Solomon thinking of - allowing a pagan symbol into the most holy of monuments to a single God? We will return to this later.

A day to celebrate.

The Temple was now complete. There was only one more thing to do and that was to bring the Ark of the Covenant from its home in Royal David's city to its final resting place in the Sanctum Sanctorum.

Solomon loved a ceremony. Any excuse for a party. Such an event as this could not go by without a magnificent celebration. Solomon arranged a great feast and spent seven months planning it. He invited all the tribal leaders and their people to the celebration.

Every spare room in Jerusalem was occupied. There was much burning of incense and the air was filled with aromas that kept the people in a state of euphoria for days. Thousands of sacrifices were made and come the day, the Ark began its hazardous journey up to the Temple Mount led of course by Solomon.

It was carried by priests from the tribe of Levi. The Levites had been chosen as the guardians of the ark for a number of reasons. They were a musical tribe renowned for their skill in composing and performing serious music especially religious music. They had also been the stalwart supporters of Moses against Aaron, but there was another, stranger reason. It seems that there had been occasions when people from other tribes had touched the ark and had been struck down and even suffered death. Indeed as the Ark was being carried up to a temporary home in the City of David the priests stumbled and a man called Uzzah who with his brother Ahio had been told to accompany the ark, put out his hand to steady it and was immediately struck dead. But no-one from the tribe of Levi had ever been affected. It was assumed that they were God's chosen tribe to be custodians of the ark. They are known as the *cohanim*.

There is a more simple reason however. The ark was layered with gold which given the right conditions of temperature and humidity could have acted as an accumulator and could have sent out a charge of static electricity which could have hurt or even killed anyone who was not insulated. The people of these times went barefoot whereas the tribe of Levi always wore sandals.

The Ark was carried up Mount Moriah, into the Temple grounds, between the pillars of Boaz and Jachin and into the Sanctum Sanctorum. It was placed on the *sakhra* and that is where it remains to this day.

Or does it?

Where is the Ark?

In the four hundred years between it being placed on the *Sakhra* and the Temple being destroyed it is assumed that the Ark stood in the Sanctum Sanctorum. But there is no proof that that was the case.

Well, there have been rumours, gossip, educated guesses but apart from a reference in the reign of Hezekiah and later of Josiah there has been no reference whatsoever to the whereabouts of the arc. NOT A THING.

It has been suggested that the arc was removed by the Levi priests almost immediately after it was installed, because the priests did not trust Solomon. It is thought to have been hidden under the Temple Mount in one of the many secret passages.

One eminent professor said it was taken through a thirty kilometre tunnel to the caves of Qumran- where he has spent the last thirty years searching for it!

The last known reference to the arc was during the reign of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was a quite remarkable King. It was he who restored the strict discipline of the monotheistic faith. He removed all the pagan statues and altars of Baal and Astarte from the temple grounds.

He was also very astute. The Assyrians had been conquering everyone in their advance throughout the region but the jewel in the crown as far as their King, Sennacherib, was concerned, was Jerusalem.

Hezekiah knew this and he set about fortifying the city. He prayed before the arc of the covenant that Jerusalem would be spared. And *this* was the last reference to the arc. Never again would it be mentioned.

Hezekiah also listened to the prophesy of Isaiah that Jerusalem would not fall and not a single arrow would fall on the Temple Mount. And while Hezekiah took comfort from his nabi he also took no chances. He fortified the city, took much grain into store and secured his water supplies.

I mentioned that Jerusalem enjoyed an ample supply of fresh water. This water drained down the mount and was known as the Gihon spring. But it ran out into a pool in the Kidron valley.

Hezekiah very cleverly had his engineers divert this spring so that it filled an underground reservoir which is known as the Siloam pool and is there to this day. But, he did not drain the original pool so that when Sennacherib's forces arrived at the outskirts of Jerusalem to start the siege, they were tired and thirsty having just completed a twenty five mile, mainly up hill march from Lachish which they had just captured.

They drank from the pool which by now was stagnant and polluted. It may even have been poisoned. The bible tells us that as a result 240,000 men died in one night! Other sources show that some 180,000 men died of choleric dysentery in two weeks. Sennacherib withdrew without taking the city and Isaiah's prophesy came true. Not a single arrowhead fell on the temple mount.

Hebrew mercenaries.

When Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became King. It was at this time it is thought that the arc was removed. Hebrew mercenaries fearful for its safety and unwilling to allow the arc to remain in the presence of the pagan gods that Manasseh had allowed back into the Temple, took it to an island in the Nile near Aswan called Elephantine Island. Here a temple was built identical to the Temple of Solomon even using the same Lebanese cedar timber for the roof. When this temple was destroyed in the fifth century BC the Arc is said to have been taken to Ethiopia and is now hidden and protected at Axum. The Falasha peoples of Axum still perform a ceremony based on the 'dance of David', they perform animal sacrifice and celebrate with a procession of the Ark. But, until the authorities who protect it, allow inspection, it will forever remain a subject for speculation.

We know for sure that the Ark was removed because there is a reference to it in the reign of Josiah who beseeched the priests to restore the Ark to its rightful place in the Temple where he promised it would be protected. The priests ignored his plea.

The Babylonians.

About a hundred years later Jerusalem was again put under siege, this time by the Babylonians. Now the Babylonians were a more formidable enemy than the Assyrians. Their King, Nebuchadnezzar was a determined man. He

laid the city to siege and as its population weakened he ordered the captain of his guard, Nebuzaradan to destroy the temple and the city and take the population prisoner, which he did.

An interesting fact of this period of history was the determination to write down everything that happened. So there is ample record of the treasures that were removed from the temple and the city. We know that Boaz and Jachin were smashed and used to make weapons for the Babylonian army. There are lists of all the gold, the bronze ladles and other artefacts. But there is no mention of the Ark.

The Ark had a value of course. The mercy seat alone being of solid gold would be worth some £6million by today's standards, but the tablets themselves had no monetary value. They would however have had an enormous political value. If Nebuchadnezzar had possession of the tablets he could have held the Israeli nation to ransom at any time.

Nebuchadnezzar knew this and he sent an order to Nebuzarradan to arrest and bring with him to Riblah where the King had stationed himself, the chief priest Seraiah, the chief assistant priest and the three most senior priests. Now the only reason he could possibly have wanted to speak to the priests would have been to ascertain the whereabouts of the Ark. The priests would have known, but they refused to divulge the information.

Eventually Nebuchadnezzar became impatient and had the priests executed. It seems that the secret of the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant died with those five priests at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in 586BC.

I would suggest that the Ark is still on the Temple mount, hidden in one of those underground tunnels and maybe both Wilson and Warren were within inches of finding it.

The death of the builder.

It was soon after the Ark had been put into place that a most awful tragedy occurred. Hiram Abiff was murdered.

It appears that three apprentices anxious to protect their income followed him into the Temple and killed him. They then smuggled his body out and crudely buried it in a high place on Mount Moriah.

This story is well known to Masons - but perhaps we take it too much for granted! It deserves a closer look. Consider this:

We know that Hiram entered the Temple at High Twelve. This we assume to be noon. He made his adorations in the Sanctum Sanctorum - the only person other than the High Priest allowed in there. Three apprentices followed him in. Lets say that he finished his prayers at about twelve thirty. As he attempted to leave he was accosted three times. This would bring the time to say twelve fifty. On the third occasion he was killed so at about 1pm the thugs would have taken his body from the Temple, through the streets and up to the barren area on Mount Moriah, where they buried him.

We need to ask some questions.

How did those villains get into the Temple? It was guarded day and night by Levi priests who were fanatical in their religious beliefs. Even if they got in how did they manage to smuggle him out without the guards knowing? How was it that no-one heard Hiram's cries for help? We know the Sanctum Sanctorum was not sound proof because when the high priest went in he had

small bells attached to his clothing so that the guards could hear him moving. If there was no noise then the guards would assume something was wrong. This being the case, surely they would have heard Hiram's cries! And again no-one saw him being dragged through the streets of Jerusalem? Although it is true, the streets would have been deserted. It is the Mediterranean custom to start work early, stop at twelve for a lunch, well swilled down with wine and at about one o'clock go to sleep for a couple of hours. So the streets would have been empty. They then hurriedly buried him in a high place and awaited the consequences.

It does leave a lot unanswered doesn't it?

But, what if the death of Hiram had been plotted by none other than Solomon himself?

Preposterous! Out of the question. What nonsense!

Or is it?

Let's look a bit closer.

There is a custom in the Mediterranean and Middle East that at the completion of a building there should be a sacrifice. This usually took the form of a slaughtered chicken or a goat or ram. Sometimes it was the measure of a shadow. The builder or someone selected would make a shadow which would be measured and the measure buried under the foundation stone of the building. It was also considered that the person providing the shadow would die within the year. The fact that some people lived to a ripe old age making a good living out of providing shadows did nothing to diminish the belief. In the case of great buildings, especially religious ones a human sacrifice would be made and the body buried under the foundation stone. This would protect the building for ever.

We also know that Solomon was beginning to worship pagan Gods. It is thought that he started doing this long before the Temple was completed. He was influenced by his wife who was an Egyptian and although she converted to monotheism is still thought to have followed the pagan ways. More especially he was influenced by the Queen of Sheba with whom he was infatuated. She worshipped Ba'al. She also worshipped and encouraged Solomon to worship a God called Molech. Solomon built a shrine to Molech at a high place on Mount Moriah to please Sheba. *Molech demands human sacrifice!*

Solomon was intensely proud of the Temple. It was magnificent. He even changed his name from Jedidiah to Solomon so that he would always be identified with the Temple. What if he wanted to give it the maximum of protection. What better way than by having the chief architect sacrificed and buried beneath it?

But Hiram Abiff was a very popular man. He was revered by his work force who were mainly Phoenician. If Solomon had openly sacrificed Hiram there would have been a riot.

So, what if he secretly arranged for the guards to be distracted? What if he had his body smuggled through the many passages under the mount and

known to only a few? What if he had his body indecently buried in that high place of Molech knowing that it would easily be found?

Then when the body was discovered he would show genuine grief and in accordance with his stature have Hiram's body laid to rest as near the Sanctum Sanctorum as the law would allow?

The murderers were executed so they would not be talking. Solomon had no problem with human sacrifice. He would be an all round winner. He would satisfy his God Molech by making a human sacrifice and in so doing impress his mistress The Queen of Sheba; he would protect his Temple by placing the architects body beneath it and he would be applauded by his people for honouring their builder. Clever. Very clever.

But perhaps I am being unfair to Solomon.

Lets say that it happened exactly as in the story. The apprentices that killed him would have been on very good wages. Solomon was a generous employer. But they knew that with the completion of the work they would be going back to an apprentices wage and they did not like the idea of that. The only work available was at the proposed new royal quarters and that would go to master masons first. So they tried to force Hiram to make them master masons by revealing the trade secrets.

As a result of his refusal they killed him. They ignominiously buried him. He was subsequently found, they were captured and executed and Solomon, full of grief, gave Hiram the only burial that someone of his stature deserved. He buried him with his greatest creation. The Temple. Simple as that.

The *sakhra* of Abraham has seen the birth of three great religions. It has also seen the death of thousands of people. It is still happening today. Perhaps if the Ark is eventually found it will resolve some of the differences.

Whatever, the *sakhra* has dominated world history for 4000 years and I am sure we have not heard the last of it.

The Jews say that the *sakhra* is the navel of the world. Perhaps, if they can only find the heart of the world, peace will at last come to the Temple Mount.

The Temple Mount.

Written by RW.Bro. Roy Martin.

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