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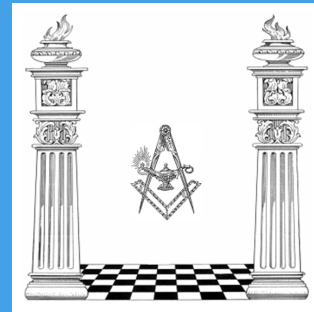
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And the Earth was without

form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, 'Let there be light'



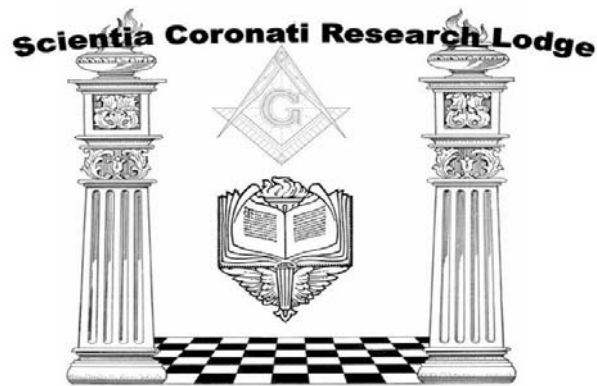
Address postal correspondence to:

Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM

1028 Willow Creek Road Prescott, Arizona, USA 86301-1642

Address electronic correspondence to:

secretary@scientiacoronati.org



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE – THE PILLARS OF THE PORCH (PART I)

by George Weil

Freemasonry is a living fire where answers fuel new questions.

I would like to discuss with you the pillars from King Solomon's Temple in two parts. The first part will be a snapshot of history and the second will be the details of the two pillars. Many argue that there is no part of the architecture of the ancient Temple, which is so difficult to be understood in its details as the Scriptural account of these memorable pillars. Hopefully, we can shed more illumination toward this beautiful subject.

The Society adopted the Temple of Solomon for its symbol, because it was the most stable and the most magnificent structure that ever existed, whether we consider its foundation or superstructure; so that of all the societies men have invented, no one was ever more firmly united, or better planned, than the Masons . . . The edifices which Freemasons build are nothing more than virtues or vices to be erected or destroyed; and in this case heaven only occupies their minds, which soar above the corrupted world. The Temple of Solomon denotes reason and intelligence." (Rev Dr George Oliver DD, 1801)

In the earliest of times it was customary to perpetuate remarkable events, or exhibit gratitude for providential favors, by the erection of pillars. Ancient temples often had two pillars. For example, the two obelisks at the temple of Karnak are far older than the two pillars of Solomon's temple. Among the Egyptians the pillars were, in general, in the form of obelisks from fifty to one hundred feet high, and exceedingly slender in proportion. Upon their four sides hieroglyphics were often engraved. According to Herodotus, the Greek researcher and storyteller of Halicarnassus (fifth century BCE) and the world's first historian, they were first raised in honor of the sun, and their pointed form was intended to represent his rays.

The pillars most remarkable in Scripture history were the two erected by Solomon at the porch of the Temple. It has been surmised that Solomon, in erecting these pillars, referred to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire which went in front of the Israelites in the wilderness, and that the right hand or South pillar represented the pillar of cloud, and the left hand or North pillar represented that of fire.

Solomon did not simply erect the pillars as ornaments to the Temple, but as memorials of God's repeated promises of support to his people of Israel. For the pillar *Jachin*, derived from the words, *Jah*, meaning *Jehovah*, and *achin*, *to establish*, signifies that *God will establish His house of Israel*; while the pillar *Boaz*, compounded of *b*, meaning *in* and *oaz*, meaning *strength*, signifies that *in strength shall it be established*.

Thus, the Jews, in passing through the porch to the Temple, were reminded daily of the abundant promises of God, and inspired with confidence in his protection and gratitude for his many acts of kindness to his chosen people.¹

The pillars are described in three Biblical passages: *1 Kings 7, 15-21 and 2 Chronicles 3, 15-17 and 4, 11-13*. All three descriptions, name the right hand pillar *Jachin* and the left hand one *Boaz*. But what is still questioned today is whether right and left should be taken from the inside or outside of the building.²

The idea of gravity was unknown to the people of the ancient world, and they were unable to understand the support of the earth in its place. Hence they looked to some tangible explanation and none appeared more plausible than the manifest strength that pillars represented.

The Old Testament abounds with references to this idea. "*For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them*" (1 Samuel, 2:8); "*He shaketh the earth out of her places, and the pillars thereof tremble*" (Job, 9:6); "*The earth and all its inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it*" (Psalm Book 1, 75:3)

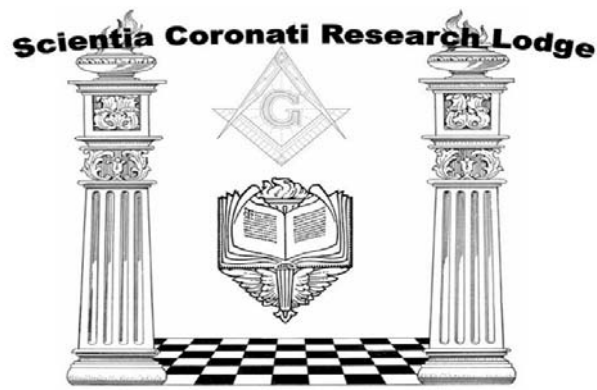
All the old religions taught the same doctrine; that of pillars being regarded as the supporters of the earth, they were adopted as the symbol of strength and firmness. The Masonic symbolism of the two pillars may be considered, without going into minute details, as being twofold.

First, in reference to the names of the pillars, they are symbols of the *strength* and *stability* of the institution. Second, in reference to the ancient pillars of fire and cloud, they are symbolic of our dependence on the superintending guidance of the Great Architect of the Universe, from which our strength and stability are inexorably secured.

Bro. George Weil
Secretary, Scientia Coronati

¹ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Kindred Sciences, Albert Mackey, Vol. II, Chicago, 1878, p. 778.

² Symbols of Freemasonry, Assouline, New York, 2000, Chapter 8, p. 44.



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE – THE PILLARS OF THE PORCH (PART II)

by George Weil

Thought is the Raw Material

In this article, we explore the pillars of Solomon's Temple by going more into the details of the architecture. The pomegranates, lilies and spheres will be our focus.

Let's begin.

The pillars are topped by chapters, which are the upper part of a column that supports the entablature and are decorated with pomegranates, lilies and spheres. How many of them and how they are distributed depends on which Biblical passage you read.

POMEGRANATE: *“And four hundred pomegranates for the two networks...”* (1 Kings 7:42) Commentators on rituals have compared the seeds of the pomegranates to the Freemasons, who are joined together by their souls. It was customary to place ornamentation like pomegranates upon the tops of columns and on other symbolic applications.

For example, the skirt of Aaron's robe was decorated with golden bells and pomegranates. *“And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about the pomegranates.”* (Exodus, 39:24-26)

In ancient Greece, pomegranate seeds were linked to the idea of error. Persephone tells her mother how she was seduced against her will: *“He cunningly placed sweet sugared food in my hand, a pomegranate seed, and forced me to eat it despite myself.”* (Homeric Hymn to Demeter)

Was this then a forbidden fruit, like the one eaten by Eve? In the text of Genesis the fruit is not actually named. *“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”* (Genesis, 3:3)

The word used for fruit is *peri*. This has become “the apple” in translation, but many commentators and scholars now associate the apple with the pomegranate, which are more common in the Middle East than apples.¹

¹ Symbols of Freemasonry, Assouline, New York, 2000, Chapter 8, p. 44.

LILIES: The lily ornamentation that is described as a part of the two pillars in the porch of Solomon's Temple is said to be, from the whiteness of the flower, symbolic of purity and peace. The plant so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament under the name of lily was actually, the lotus of Egypt and India. This was among the Egyptians a sacred plant, found everywhere on their monuments, and used in their architectural decorations. It is evident from the description in Kings, that the pillars of the porch of King Solomon's Temple had a striking resemblance to the pillars of the Egyptian temples.

Another explanation for the symbolism of the lily or lotus: "The flower of the water lily or lotus rises from a root growing at the bottom of the water, and maintains its position on the surface by its columnar stalk. It is therefore symbolic of the power of the Almighty constantly employed to secure the safety of all the world."²

SPHERES: Scholars have surmised that the chapter or upper part of the pillars was in a shape of a bowl, not a sphere as is often said. Modern research indicates that the upper bowl probably was a vessel to contain oil, which was used to illuminate the darkness. It is known that similar decorated pillars were used at shrines in Palestine and Cyprus during the period 1000 BCE to 900 BCE, when King Solomon's temple was built.

The Greek historian Herodotus, writing in about 450 BCE, described two large pillars that stood near the temple of Hercules at Tyre, which "*shone at night*". Like the Phoenician models, the two immense incense stands at the porch of King Solomon's temple would have illuminated the facade of the temple on Mount Moriah at night, while also catching the first glint of the sunrise at Jerusalem. They have been interpreted as sacred obelisks, their blazing smoking wicks recalling to worshippers the pillars of fire and cloud that led the Israelites of old through the wilderness.³

CONCLUSION: Each Masonic degree ceremony is based on the preparation and usage of the relevant stone during construction and ultimately the completion of the temple. The way in which a stone is prepared by a stonemason and utilised by fitters and erectors on the building site, is used to illustrate how an individual should prepare himself for the life hereafter. The moral lessons imparted are also illustrated by the application of the various working tools used at the various stages of the work, not only in the shaping, testing, fitting and marking of the stones, but also during erection on the site.⁴

By no means are we finished. This article is just a glimpse into a very complex subject that requires a great deal of review and study. An informed Mason is a better Mason. Hopefully, this and future articles will help each of us develop a deeper appreciation of the symbolism woven into the entire fabric of Freemasonry.

My brothers, until the next article.

Bro. George Weil

² Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Kindred Sciences, Albert Mackey, Vol. II, Chicago, 1878, p. 781.

³ King Solomon's Temple, R.W. Bro. Don Falconer, Pietre-Stones Article, Masonic papers on-line

⁴ Ibid. Introduction.