

House of the Lord

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The accounts of the construction of the *House of the Lord* is perhaps one of the most interesting events to Freemasons on their journey to Masonic Light. It starts with the Hiram Legend in the Second Section of the Master Mason Degree; followed by Albert Mackey's Lectures of the *Destruction of Temple, Captivity of the Jews at Babylon*, and the *Return to Jerusalem* and subsequent rebuilding of the *House of the Lord* in the Royal Arch Degrees; and finally, the *Historical Lecture* of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar in the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, a prelude to the solemnities of the Order of the Templar.

Since the earliest times, man has built temples or shrines where he could worship his own god. The Tower of Babel is the first such structure mentioned in the Bible and was probably constructed prior to 4000 BC. After receiving a Divine call to build an Israelite nation free from idolatry, Abram took possession of the land southwest of the Euphrates River and erected an altar the Lord in 2090 BC. During the second month of the Exodus, Moses made intercessions on behalf of his people, spend two forty-day periods on Mount Sinai, received a new Covenant, and directed the people to erect a Tabernacle or "tent of congregation."

The early patriarchies of Israel were semi-nomadic, so their Tabernacles were temporary structures. Around 1002 BC, after consolidating his power, David became King of Judah and decided to build a permanent residence and shrine to the Lord. He said: "**I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth with Curtains.**"¹ But, because David's hands were stained by the blood of his enemies, he was precluded from building a Temple for the Lord,² but could collect the materials, treasures, and land for the project. The site selected was on Mount Moriah on the east side of the "Old City" of Jerusalem.

Solomon's Temple – The First Temple

The task fell to David's son, Solomon, who started to build the "First Temple" in 966 BC and finished seven years later. The crowning achievement of King Solomon's reign was the erection of the Lord's House in the capital of ancient Israel – Jerusalem. Solomon entered a compact with Hiram I, King of Tyre, and spared no expense building the Temple. He ordered vast quantities of cedar wood from King Hiram of Tyre³, had huge blocks of the choicest quarried stone hewn for the building's foundation.⁴ To complete the massive project, he imposed forced labor on all his subjects, drafting people to work shifts sometimes lasting month at a time.⁵

¹ 2 Samuel 7:2, NIV

² 1 Chronicles 28:3, NIV

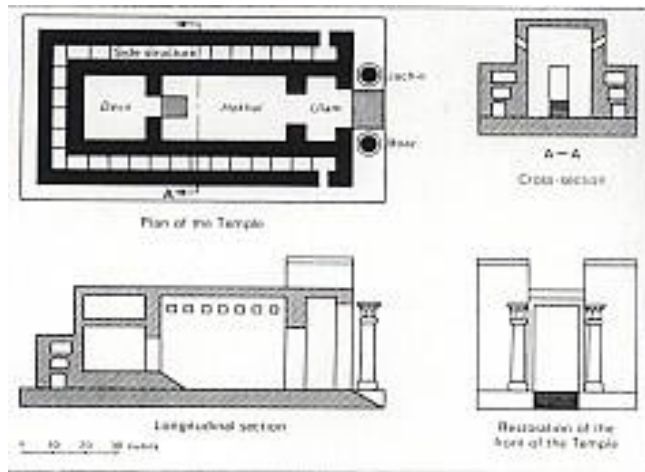
³ 1 Kings 5:8-10, NIV

⁴ 1 Kings 5:17-18, NIV

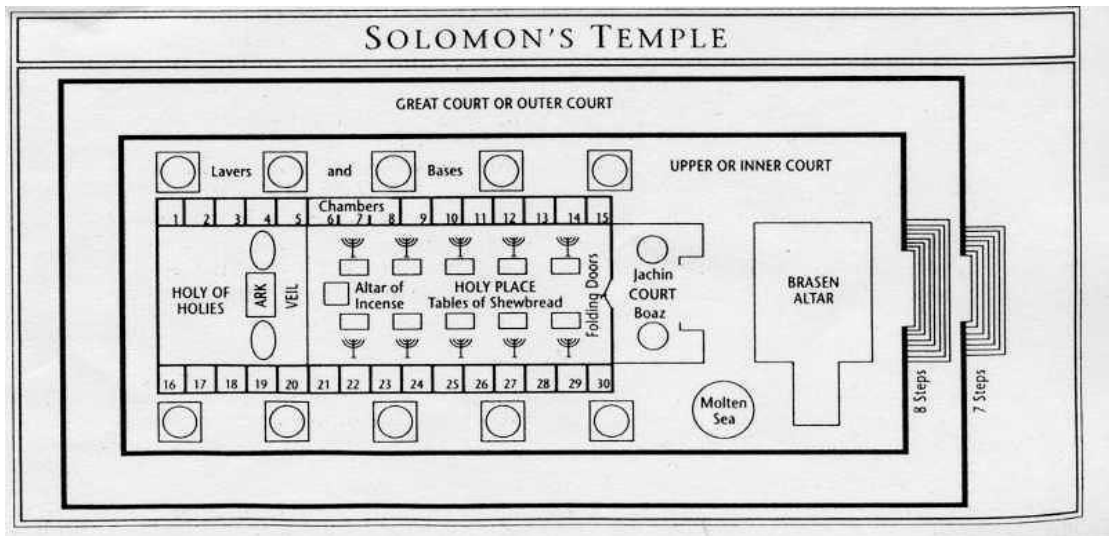
⁵ 1 Kings 5:13-14, NIV

Some 3,300 officials were appointed to oversee the Temple's erection.⁶ Solomon assumed such heavy debts in building the Temple that he was forced to pay off King Hiram by handing over twenty towns in Galilee.

There is little known of Solomon's Temple as there has not been any archaeological discoveries of the First Temple. What we have are references to the construction of Solomon's magnificent Temple are found in 1 Kings 7:13-40 and Bible Scholars. On the Day of Dedication, the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the "Holy of Holies". The splendor of Solomon's Temple brought



Plan of Solomon's Temple (*Encyclopedia Judaica*)



Ryrie Study Bible

royalty and pilgrims from near and far⁷ and soon Solomon accumulated enormous amounts of wealth, horses and chariots, and many foreign wives and concubines. Eventually, he wandered

⁶ 1 Kings 5:15, NIV

from fellowship with the Lord, compromised with idolatry, and did not keep the Lord's covenants and statutes, God raised up an adversary against him, Hadad the Edomite.⁸ The result was considerable turmoil in Judah and the king's court and, after Solomon's death, the Kingdom of Judah began a spiritual decline.⁹

After Solomon's death in 945 BC, Judah was ruled by twenty self-centered, personally ambitious kings for the next 367 years starting with Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Ancient temples usually served as state treasures, to be filled with booty from conquests or emptied to pay tribute to overlords. Solomon's Temple was no exception and declined in wealth, splendor, and importance. Pharaoh Shishak I, King of Egypt, raided the Temple and royal palace of treasures during Rehoboam's fifth year. New treasures were collected for the Temple but, over the years, many of the kings of Judah desecrated the Temple and robbed it of its treasures, built idolatrous alters in the Temple Courts, and placed graven images in the Temple.¹⁰

During the reign of Jehoiakim (thought to be around 603-601 BC), Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, plundered Jerusalem and its Temple. Jehoiakim and his family, his court and prominent citizens, and a thousand skilled craftsmen were taken prisoner and deported to Babylon in 597 BC. Judah lost its independence as a nation when Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiakim's uncle Zedekiah king of Judah and his servant.¹¹ Zedekiah rebelled and Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem resulting the city's destruction in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city wall and the Temple including the Ark of the Covenant. After his family was slaughtered, Zedekiah's eyes were blinded, and he was put in chains and taken to Babylon. Judah became a Babylonian province.

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel was captured and exiled to Babylon with Jehoiakim. He later became important among the Jewish exiles because of his predictions for the downfall of Jerusalem and Judah and subsequent restoration of its lands and temple.¹² Ezekiel's vision of a temple like that of Solomon's Temple was to be erected but was never built.

Zerubbabel's Temple – The Second Temple

When Cyrus II, King of Persia, came to the throne in 559 BC, Persia was a client state of the Empire of the Medes. Cyrus revolted around 553-550 BC, conquered the Median capital and deposed the King of Medes. He quickly extended his conquests, eventually defeating the Babylon Empire, and founding the Persian Empire. In 538 BC Cyrus made a proclamation allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity in Babylon.¹³

⁷ 2 Chronicles 9, KIV

⁸ 1 Kings 11:14, NIV

⁹ 1 Kings 12:26-28, NIV

¹⁰ 2 Kings 21:3-9 and 2 Chronicles 33:2-9, NIV

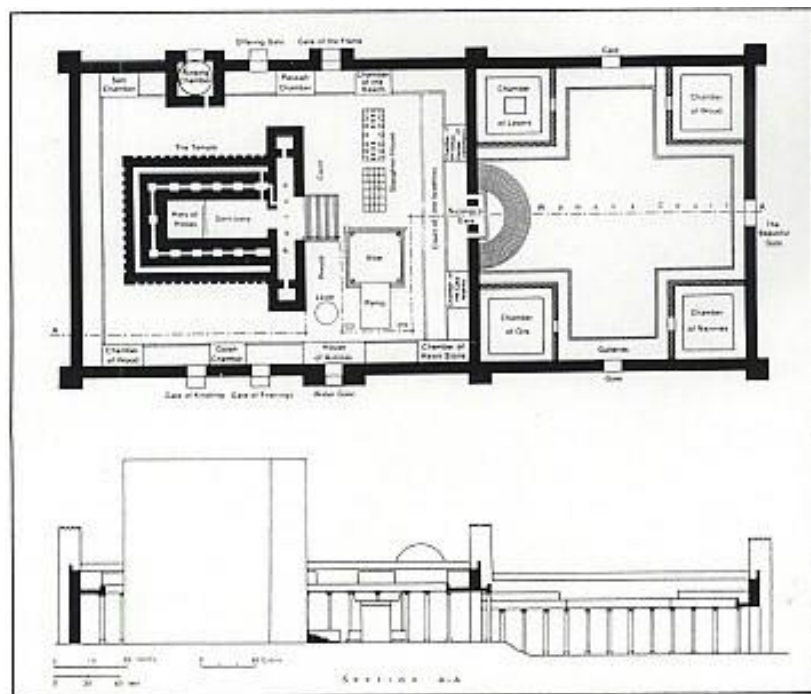
¹¹ 2 Kings 24:1, NIV

¹² Ezekiel 1-28, NIV

¹³ Ezra 2-4, NIV

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”

As the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they began rebuilding the temple under Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, the Persian Governor. But, meagre resources and construction difficulties delayed completion of the temple until 515 BC, almost twenty years after the first group of Jews left Babylon. Nevertheless, the Second Temple was completed and dedicated in the reign of Darius I, King of Persia. During the latter part of the First Century BC, Herod the Great, ruthless king of the Jews, enhanced the Second Temple in an unsuccessful attempt to gain popularity. Despite



Herod's enlargement of the Second Temple (*Encyclopedia Judaica*)

various attacks by Syrians, Greeks, and Romans, and various periods of neglect, the Second Temple remained functional for nearly 600 years. Only a small portion of the remaining Temple remains to this day – known as “The Wailing Wall.”

Over the centuries, the Muslims eventually took control of Jerusalem and built two mosques on the Temple Mount, the site of the two Jewish Temples – building mosques on other people’s

holy places was a common Islamic custom. Any attempt to level these mosques would lead to an international Muslim holy war against Israel, the Temple cannot be rebuilt in the foreseeable future. Because of the religious sensitivities involved, and the politically volatile situation in Jerusalem, no archaeological excavations and only limited archaeological surveys have been permitted on the Temple Mount in modern times.

In the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians,¹⁴ we read:

Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgivings, to the glory of God. So, we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for we know that what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

The construction of the *House of the Lord* is an operative story wherein ancient masons are engaged in the construction of an early and material temple. But, today's speculative Masons are using operative tools – the Trestleboard, twenty-four-inch gauge, common gravel, plumb, square, level, and trowel – engaged in the construction of a spiritual temple, a house not made with hands.

That is the symbolism of Solomon's Temple in the Hiram Legend, Mackey's Lectures, and the Historical Lecture of the Order of the Red Cross.

So Mote It Be!



¹⁴ Corinthians 4:15-5:1, NIV

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