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16<sup>th</sup> Degree – Prince of Jerusalem  
Topic 1

“Built True: The Concept of Truth and its Importance to the Building of the Second Temple”

*Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?  
If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him,  
for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. - I Corinthians 3:16 and 17*

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul defines the true temple of God. Rather than being made of marbled stone, finely molded wood, and stained glass, the true temple is made of the human body, mind, and spirit. The true temple is inside of each and every one of us, for each of us is God's temple.

Throughout many degrees of Freemasonry, the stories of building King Solomon's temple and the building of the second temple are retold. During the days of King Solomon's temple, we learn of the craftsmen who worked diligently in the quarries hewing, squaring, and numbering stones; of the men in the forest of Lebanon who cut down trees, floating them down to Joppa and thence across land to Jerusalem; of the intricate and ornate furnishings of the temple; of the priceless valuables contained in the temple's secret crypts; and of course we learn of the leaders of this great and glorious work: Hiram, King of Tyre; Hiram, the widow's son; and Solomon, King of Israel. Interestingly, we learn from the historian Josephus that it took seven years to build King Solomon's temple, and during that time it never rained during the day so that work on the temple was never delayed due to adverse weather conditions. Whether this statement is factual or not, the symbolism is clear. As the number seven represents the unification of God (3) and man (4), it seems as though God and man were certainly working together on this magnificent project.

The building of the second temple was not as picture perfect as the building of its predecessor. Between what we would today refer to as governmental "red tape" and numerous attacks by neighboring peoples such as the Samaritans, the temple's progress was constantly impeded. Finally, the prophet Haggai advised, and practically forced, Zerubbabel to travel to Darius's court, where he was to ask for assistance and support. Prior to obtaining Darius's support, the King required his visitors to answer a philosophical question, "Which is stronger: wine, women, or the King?" By analyzing the answers to this question, we can begin to understand some of the lessons contained in the 16<sup>th</sup> Degree.

The Persian first answers with the choice of wine since it causes all men, regardless of rank or status, to error. Surely, this response would also incite some humor among the members of the court. In a modern day scene, we can picture several men, minus their female counterparts, enjoying some wine and food in the backroom of a tavern. One man responds, "Wine surely must be the strongest of the three choices, and quite frankly the stronger the better!" Laughter ensues and toasts are made in honor of their friend's witty remark. However, an answer like this displays more than just a humorous, lighthearted jest. Rather, it can also display our ego's lust for base drunkenness. In an altered state of mind, we are not in control of our actions or thoughts. Our moral compass is demagnetized. While wine can be one of life's

many pleasures, too much at one setting leaves us with a headache the following day and a list of actions we have to apologize for as well. Truly, of the three choices that Darius provides, wine represents one's desire to waste his existence in pursuit of mental highs resulting from chemical toxins. This kind of a lifestyle leads a person to personal destruction: failed relationships, financial insolvency, and poor physical health.

Kadmiel offers the second answer with the choice of the king since he is the lord of all things and all are to obey his commands. Being in the presence of the king, this would obviously be a popular response, at least from the King's point of view. Human nature dictates that in any group, one person tends to take the lead. In that position, one's ego is normally further elevated and heightened. To feed that ego would be a popular action on behalf of the group's members. Of course, with an answer like this the man feeding the leader's ego is likely to be scorned by his colleagues for being such as "suck up" or "brown noser," but at the same time the leader is sure to note his obedience and loyalty. We see once more that an answer like this may actually allude to a person's chosen lot in life - that of a blind follower. The world is sure to have leaders, and leaders are not such without followers. However, there is a distinct difference between being blindly acquiescing to authority and being consciously subordinate. When we have a country, a state, a county, a city, or even a local school district as large as the ones we have today, we need a government to manage and regulate the intricate system. However, the people being represented cannot have blind faith that these leaders are representing them the way they intended. As conscious citizens, it is our duty to question authority. By asking "why" actions are taken and "why" precedence exists, we ensure that our leaders are held accountable for their decisions. By simply allowing ourselves to be ruled, we contribute to the formation of a tyrannical and despotic government, governments which are despised by the very essence of Freemasonry.

Zerubbabel first answers with the choice of women since man leaves his former life behind to marry a woman, who from then on is the focus of his decisions. Again, in a setting of men like the one described above, more laughter and honorary toasts would follow a response such as this, for prior to marriage men tend to have prowled after the opposite sex. I'm sure that some of the group's members would recall examples of strange behavior all done in the name of love, or lust as the case may be. The men would reflect on past crushes and fantasies of women who they had known or dreamt of since boyhood. Again, an answer like this represents more than meets the eye. Lusting after women, or men as the case may be, again signifies that the ego is in control rather than the spirit. Humans are unique to the animal kingdom because they have both base instincts and a conscience. Morally, we regard those who give into their lustful passions as weak. This kind of behavior not only leads to public scorn in the form of a bad reputation but also to physical consequences in the form of sexually transmitted diseases. Once more, a life lead in pursuit of the ego's lustful instinct results in personal destruction.

Zerubbabel then makes a further observation, which leads him to choose an answer outside of the question's borders. The final answer to the king's question is that truth is stronger than any of the three possible choices. After the horseplay that ensued following the previous three answers, this answer is sure to be followed by a sobering silence that is only shared when a bit of wisdom is conveyed. After allowing the strength of his words to soak in a bit, a final toast is raised to the wise words of the fellow.

Truth is indeed "a Divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue." That is, at the heart of every virtue is a universal truth. In the first degree we find that to be "good and true is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry." Thus, as Masons, we are to be beacons of truth and

models of virtue. In the 16<sup>th</sup> degree, we are reminded that as we labor on the second temple, that is as we work to improve ourselves throughout our life, we are to uphold the virtues of Freemasonry: to keep silent that which is private, to be obedient to just authority, to maintain fidelity to our obligations, to be industrious members of the human community, to be honest in our dealings with others, to be zealous in our efforts to improve the world, to be just and disinterested in our judgments, to be benevolent to our fellow men, to be peaceful in our relationships, to be charitable with our resources, to be tolerant of those with different views, and to seek wisdom for the governance of our thoughts and actions. As a Prince of Jerusalem, we are "the Soldiers of Truth, armed with the sword of courage and the trowel of untiring labor (who are to) propagate Scottish Rite Masonry as a universal philosophy, a moral and political creed, intent upon making good men better and thus a good world a better world" (Hutchens 129-130). In the words of Albert Pike, building the second temple means that we are "to establish all over the world the New Law and Reign of Love, Peace, Charity, and Toleration" (Pike 241).

Our work here on earth is moral progress. Like the building of the second temple in Jerusalem, the building of our own second temple, our moral progress, is hampered by the ego's will. Fortunately, we have a soul - the spark of the Divine - inside each one of us. The soul may be the only receiver we have that is capable of interpreting God's messages; however, we also have a powerful ego. The ego wishes to suppress God's voice and attempts to convince us to adhere to the world's vile values. Thus, the struggle between the ego and the spirit is ongoing. To suppress the ego's passions is to come closer to perfection. In order to suppress the mighty ego, we rely on morality and virtue as truing forces, which we employ while endeavoring to build our second temple. Freemasonry offers us a path to perfection by teaching the morals and virtues necessary to build an upright second temple - a temple built true.

#### Works Reviewed

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