

Three Temples at Jerusalem

Three Millennia of Faith and Worship

By

Sir Knight J. R. Dinkel

The story of the holy temples at Jerusalem has its beginning in the history of the Hebrews and with their monotheistic deity, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹ Abraham (Abram), patriarch of the Hebrews, is believed to have lived in the city-state of Ur in Mesopotamia during the second millennium B.C. and to have journeyed from there to Canaan, present day Israel, by the command of God and under His specific covenant and protection. The twelve tribes of Israel are the direct descendants of the sons of Jacob, Abraham's grandson, whose name was later changed to "Israel."

The establishment of the kingdom of Israel by God in 1000 B.C., with King Saul upon the throne, began the monarchical period during which the Israelites had a central government and state. Saul began his reign with obedience to God, but he soon became a disobedient and unworthy king and in consequence of this was struck down by the Philistines, along with all of his sons at the Battle of Mt. Gilboa in the Jezreel Valley.

David, the son of Jesse, anointed by the prophet Samuel as Saul's successor, was crowned as the second king of Israel, and after a partial subjugation of the Canaanites, he attacked and conquered the city-state of Jerusalem and made it his capital city and citadel.

Why Jerusalem, we might ask? Most capital cities of the time were founded next to major bodies of water or with

trade routes running through them to encourage trade, growth, and the accumulation of wealth. Jerusalem had none of these advantages, being inland from the Mediterranean Sea with no ancient trade routes passing through the city.

So, again, why Jerusalem? The answer is found on the hill situated high above the northwest part of the city known as Mt. Moriah. Holy writ and Masonic tradition informs us that upon this hill Abraham was about to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God, and here at a later period, King David purchased the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite and sacrificed unto the Lord to appease His wrath after undertaking a census of all the people of Israel in direct disobedience to God's will.

It was also here on Mt. Moriah that Jacob slept and dreamed that he saw a ladder extending from that spot up into heaven, showing the gateway to the house of the Lord, with angels going to and fro, doing God's holy will.

So this singular spot, Jerusalem, was chosen by King David's son, Solomon, as the holiest spot on earth and for the site of the building of the first temple. King Solomon, the third and final king of the combined Kingdom of Israel, spent the next seven years constructing the temple as a house unto the Lord God. This temple period has been used as the basis of much of our Masonic ritual, especially our three symbolic Blue Lodge degrees.

This Temple of King Solomon was de-

stroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, on the 9th of the Jewish month of Av (August) in 586 B.C. The Jewish people were then enslaved and carried away to Babylon, only to return to Jerusalem after more than fifty years of captivity by the command of Cyrus, King of Persia, whose empire had succeeded that of the Babylonians.

Upon their return, the exiled Hebrews rebuilt the sacred temple in 516 B.C., completed on the exact site of the first. This second temple, the temple of Zerubabel, was smaller and more modest than its predecessor, but it served until it was enlarged and beautified by Herod the Great beginning in 70 B.C. This expanded second temple (Herod's temple) is the temple that existed during the time of Christ and which was destined to be destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman Legions, during the Jewish rebellion.

So this second temple, like the first, was doomed to destruction, but there are references to temple building in Jerusalem within the New Testament of the *Holy Bible* that seem to refer to a "third" temple yet to be built. If constructed, this third temple must be built on the exact site of the original temples, because the Jews believe that there is a zone of holiness upon Mt. Moriah.

This third temple, alluded to in the *New Testament Book of Revelation* to John, is to be of limited use, perhaps for as little as only three years, until its own destruction signals the end of the age and, in the Christian tradition, the coming of the Lord himself in great glory to judge all mankind. As written in the *Book of Revelation*, "Then will the *city of New Jerusalem*² need no fourth temple, for its temple and lamp will be the Lord God Almighty Himself."

At this juncture, we can discern several striking references within the times of the building and destruction of the temples at Jerusalem. The date of the building of the Temple of Solomon is in some dispute, with many scholars putting the date around 957 B.C. The date of its destruction, however, is not in doubt, having been recorded on the 9th of Av in 586 B.C., by both the Jews and Babylonians.

Following the Babylonian exile and after the returning Jews completed their second temple, this structure survived until 70 A.D. when it was also destroyed on the 9th of Av by the Roman legions, so we see that this second temple had survived for a *total time period of 586 years!*³

Another recurrent figure is the number forty, which appears in the *Holy Bible* no less than one hundred forty-six times and generally refers to a period of testing or probation. King David reigned over Israel for forty years. Conventional dates for the reign of King Solomon, David's son, are from 970 B.C. to 931 B.C. So, if Solomon did not serve a complete year at the beginning or the end of his reign, then he, like his father David, would also have reigned for a total of forty years, the longest period of peace that has been given to Israel in all its history as an independent nation.

The book of Genesis tells us that for forty days and forty nights it rained during Noah's Flood. The Children of Israel wandered during the Exodus in the desert for forty years, Jesus spent forty days of fasting and testing in the wilderness before taking up His ministry, and He appeared to his disciples for forty days after His crucifixion before His ascension into heaven. Jesus prophesized the destruction of Jerusalem just before he was crucified in 30 A.D., and four Roman

legions did burn the city and temple to the ground forty years later, on the 9th of Av, 70 A.D., precisely the same day of the burning of the first temple by King Nebuchadnezzar II, six hundred fifty-six years before.

Another series of similarities shows a recurrent figure of seventy. The number seventy refers to the Jewish number seven times ten. In the *Bible*; the number seven is the number of perfection or completion; it is the number of days of the creation of world in the *Book of Genesis* and the number of years it took to build Solomon's temple. Seven times the number ten refers to spiritual order and to divine judgment. David was thirty years of age when he became the king of Israel and then reigned for forty years, seven at Hebron and thirty-three at Jerusalem, showing us that his lifetime was seventy years. Psalm 90:10 also tells us that the years of a man's lifetime are numbered three score and ten or seventy years. During that time, a man's life is perfected, and then there follows divine judgment.

The Jews of the exile completed their second temple seventy years after the destruction of the first. Herod began the renovation of this second temple in 70 B.C. The Romans destroyed it in 70 A.D.

In the Hebrew *Kabala*, a system of Jewish mysticism, the number seventy also refers to a double-sided coin referring to unity versus disunity. With just a little thought, we can easily see how moving from unity to disunity (and vice versa), could apply to all these dates and times.

Historically, we know that the modern state of Israel was founded on May 14, 1948, sixty-six years ago, within many of our own lifetimes. As Knights Templar, we will look forward with great

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interest to see what May of 2018 will bring to Israel, to us as Christians, and to the whole world.

This date, May 14, 2018, will be the 70th anniversary of the re-founding of the Jewish State of Israel on God's holy ground. Is there a movement toward unity or disunity between the Jewish and Palestinian states? The rebuilding of a third Jewish temple at Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah would surely cause great disunity with the Muslim peoples but also great unity within the Jewish peoples wherever dispersed throughout the world.

Will there be built a third and final temple in Jerusalem, and if so, will that temple also be destroyed as were its two predecessors? Will the disunity of the building and destruction of the last temple on Mt. Moriah, this holiest spot on Earth, signal the end of the age, with a final unity between creation and God's holy purpose? In three years time, on May 14, 2018, what will be revealed to us and to the world?

Notes

- ¹ The word Hebrew is considered by some historians to derive from the word *Habiru*, found in Egyptian writings of the 13th and 12th centuries B.C., and is used synonymously with Israelite to describe the Jewish people.
- ² Italics are mine - we note the reference to a New Jerusalem.
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