

Freemasonry and the Bible...From the first Hebrew texts upon papyrus and leather scrolls, the Old Testament, as we know it, today, comes down to us, through the ages.

The Bible in the foreground of the picture, above, is a Geneva Bible from 1581. It is leather and tooled in gold.

Q: Why is a basic understanding of Bible genealogy important to a Freemason, today?

A: The reason is that Freemasonry has biblical foundations.

Q: Is a Freemason Bible any different than a regular Bible?

A: No.

The Bible (from the Greek word, biblia) is for all Christians the most sacred of books, the source of truth and the revelation of God's word. Throughout the millenniums (thousands of years), no other book has been reproduced and translated as many times as the Bible.

No original manuscripts are known to exist...only copies of copies and via the many translations, many errors have invariably crept in. Written some 3300 years ago (1300 B.C.-100 A.D.), the Bible continues to be, by far, the most popular of books.

Much of Freemasonry is based upon biblical scripture and biblical characters.

Foundations of Freemasonry and the Bible

For Christians, Freemasonry and the Bible are intricately connected....just as the Holy Books of other religions are central to their Freemason foundations.

The Creator: It is to the Supreme Architect of the Universe, our Creator, he of many names around the world, that each of us worship.

Masonic Symbols: Ark of the Covenant, the Mosaic Pavement, Jacob's Ladder, the Lambskin Apron, King Solomon's Temple and others.

Masonic Ritual Degree Verses: The 3 verses within the 3 Masonic Degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason are direct quotes from the Bible.

Biblical Characters: King Solomon, Hiram Abif, Hiram of Tyre, Tubal Cain, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, Jacob and Jacob's Ladder, etc. All are biblical characters.

Masonic Altar: The Masonic altar holds a Holy Book (or several Holy Books, depending upon the personal religions of its members). It is around this Holy book that Freemasons circumambulate in their attempts to perform acts pleasing to the Creator.

Masonic Charity: The origins of Masonic charity begin with The Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37)

And so it is written that no man should ever engage in any important undertaking without first invoking the aid and blessing of Deity.

Masonic Bibles In History

Geneva Bible

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Freemasonry and the Bible go hand in hand, but throughout the centuries, different Bibles have been placed upon the Masonic altar. ..from the time of Freemasonry's Old Charges (1390 - 1714) and before, as well as to the current period.

While Holy Books from all languages reside upon the many Masonic altars around the world, it is of note that for English speaking Freemasons, whose Masonic lodge uses the Bible, the Bible of today is, like all Bibles, a translated version of the original Hebrew texts.

Septuagint: The Septuagint's name derives from the 72 Jewish scholars who translated the Hebrew to Greek. Their work was performed in Egypt.

It was necessary to translate the Hebrew to Greek because the Jewish people living in Egypt at the time spoke and understood Greek, rather than Hebrew. This Greek translation was in use at the time of Jesus.

St. Jerome's Vulgate: The first rendering of the entire Bible into Latin was St. Jerome's Vulgate, a name deriving from *vulgatus*, meaning for common use.

For a thousand years, St. Jerome's was the only authoritative Bible in Western Europe, but, ironically, it was seldom read by the common people.

Wycliffe Bible: It is interesting to note that the Wycliffe Bible of 1382 was available close to the time in which the first of the Old Charges were written.

John Wycliffe was among the first of many Englishmen to incur the Church's wrath for producing unauthorized translations of the Scriptures, as well as for his heretical writings.

Gutenberg Bible: Johannes Gensfleisch Gutenberg, of Mainz, Germany created a printed version of the Latin Vulgate translation.

Gutenberg's Bible is the first book created using movable type. Previous to this time, Bibles were laboriously handwritten manuscripts.

Tyndale Bible: William Tyndale, another English translator who was persecuted by the Church, fled to the Low Countries, where he was strangled.

Great Bible: Also, of note, Henry VIII had copies of the Great Bible chained in order to foil overzealous worshippers.

Geneva Bible: The Geneva Bible was a Puritan version.

Douay Bible: The Douay Bible was translated in Douai and Rheims, France by Roman Catholics fleeing Queen Elizabeth. It has remained as a favorite of English-speaking Catholics.

King James Bible: The most popular version among Anglicans and Protestants has been the King James, whose grand style influenced all English prose.

Freemasonry and the Bible is, for Christian Freemasons, the foundation of its Masonic precepts, just as the Vedas, the , Qur'an, the Hebrew Bible and the Holy Scriptures of other religions are the foundation of their Masonic precepts.

Freemasons are “Builders”. Firstly builders of themselves. Next, by living up an example and exemplifying standards, builders of a human society built upon values. One major task is to form oneself, to become a stone fit to be a part of the “Temple of Humanity”.

Introductory Remarks – Freemasonry and Symbols

Freemasonry has three “qualities”:

**Symbolic Craftsmanship
Masonic Science
and the Royal Art**

As an Entered Apprentice, a young Mason is faced with a number of symbols from the Builder’s Craft, and he ought to learn, that a Mason uses symbols as means of conversation, because a symbol is open to different meanings, and does not necessarily stand for a definite fact alone. Thus, Masons may widen their horizon in sharing each individual understanding thereon in a non-dogmatic and tolerant manner.

This was, in the time of the development of Modern Freemasonry in early 18th century, a revolutionary concept. In a time, when open discussions would subject the participants to persecution and sometimes even threaten their lives, because those days the worldly and

religious authorities did not quite appreciate frank discussions.

Freemasonry then, as is today, opened a platform for every member, to share their thoughts and learn from each other by adding to the concepts already given, regardless of social status, rank and nobility.

“Look into yourself” is an important theme the Entered Apprentice faces. This command emblematically represented by the plumbline. He is to listen, to learn and to reflect himself, to find out who he is and to reflect his shortcomings in order to enable him to erect himself uprightly, to improve himself according to his desires and definition of good.

As a Fellow of the Craft, a whole series of new symbols is given him. Not only the stone-builder’s tools, not only the history of Freemasonry, but also all the “Liberal Arts”, that are known to man, e.g. Rhetoric, Geometry, Astronomy, Music and others are for his reflection. This is to teach us, that wherever we happen to stand, all the aspects of human life are given us as means of growth, as ways to learn by discussion, interpretation.

“Look about yourself” as theme is emblematically represented by the level. This instrument emphasizes, that a Fellow of the **“Gentle Craft”** should always be aware of the fact that man interacts with his fellow creatures. The application and implementation of our ethical skills in our daily life, is the important lesson here learnt. Thus, by

living as example of our ideals, a Mason might hopefully positively influence his environment, jobwise as well as in general common human politics, and become a “living stone” in the “building of the Temple of Humanity”.

The Master’s task must be of even higher standards. He ought to be so skilled, that he needs no longer to reflect upon the aforementioned themes, but has so internalized them that he may freely start to build such beautiful artefacts, as we term the “Building of the Temple”.

“Look above yourself”, that command is represented by the Master’s (G.A.o.t.U.) square – find your position within the Creation, reflect upon the Great Tracing Board and think in dimensions of erecting the Temple.

Fig. 1: The Qualities of Freemasonry:

Level.	Field of Operation.	Task.	Lesson
Entered Apprentice	Field of Operation		
	Symbolic Craftsmanship		
	Task		
	Look into yourself !		
	Lesson		
	Symbols as language of tolerant discussion		

Level
Fellow of the Craft

Field of Operation

Masonic Science

Task

Look about yourself !

Lesson

Application of knowledge as working tool in life

Level

Master

Field of Operation

Royal Art

Task

Look above yourself !

Lesson

Wisdom for the Building of the Temple

The Building

Freemasons use the symbol of “Building the Temple of Humanity”

Building in all ages was considered to be a constructive act. Already in earliest days, it was also employed emblematically as expression of creating a spiritual edifice, and served worldly and religious leaders to unify the people and as one method of forming a nation.

To bring some light to this aspect, let us, as an example, quickly have a look into the description in the Holy Writ

regarding the operations necessary at the building of King Solomon's Temple.

How did Israel look like those days?

Using the "scientific" approach, let us have a look into the Israelite society of oldest days. It consisted of a loose conglomerate of 12 tribes, just having settled from nomadic shepherd tribes into farmers (a story being told with Cain and Abel).

These tribes lived in between the huge realms of Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia and Persia and were then reined by King David, followed by his son, King Solomon.

The first stunning fact is, that outside the Holy Scriptures nothing can be found on King Solomon. Modern archaeology could not identify a single piece of documentation mentioning him without the realms of ancient Israel - no scrolls, nothing hewn in stone. Quite amazing for a ruler, who has played such an important role in his nation.

(A few years ago, the yellow press stated a sensational finding of a stone, engraved in different languages, mentioning the name of King Solomon and the Temple.

Shortly thereafter another sensational relict was "found", a stone container keeping the mortal reminders of Jesus's brother. The whole thing was soon being identified as forged, together with over 200 more sensations. Still, there is nothing outside the Bible mentioning King Solomon and his involvement of the Building of the Temple.)

Judging from the lack of notice without the history writing of Israel itself, it appears that the tribes of Israel were not

even worth being mentioned to their neighbors.. What we know is, that they called the people of these tribes “habiru”, meaning roamers or loafers, from which today’s name “Hebrew” originates.

Of course the Israelites did not quite appreciate this denomination too well and insisted to be named after their founding father „Israel“, which translates as „GOD’s warrior“ thus „Israelites“ is commonly translated as „GOD shall fight (for us) “ or „GOD shall rule“.

In order to form a national identity, the tribes of Israel used a group dynamic process still in use today. They emphasized the differences between the “chosen people” and the “perverts” without, who committed sodomy, worshipped idols and turned away from the “One God”. On the contrary to those unbelievers, Israel had a belief in the “One True God” and wanted to build him a Temple.

The economic impact of the Building of the Temple in the area is described within the Holy Scriptures.

120,000 workers were employed, of which 90,000 Apprentices labored in the quarries, 30,000 Fellows of the Craft fitted the stones for the builder’s use, presented their work for inspection to the Overseers, Master Overseers took care that the organization in the building ground went smoothly and the designs were executed properly, Architects designed in accordance with statics, material

properties and the religious demands, in addition transport workers and freight experts, bakers, butchers, caterers, school teachers for the worker's families and many more had to be actively involved to make the undertaking a success. A whole nation needed to employ for such a building site.

In (2. Chronicles Chapter 2) and (2. Samuel 5, 11) we read that King Solomon formally called for assistance from his neighbor, Hiram King of Tyre in asking for material and workers.

Tyre was one of the major harbors in the Mediterranean and the most important trading nation those days. Hiram King of Tyre assisted with his fleet to transport woods from Lebanon. Gold for the adornment was brought from the famous gold land "Ophir" (in today's area of Abessinia) and from Saba (in the area of today's Jemen and Ethiopia).

(We read that Hiram, King of Tyre was a son of a widow of the tribe Naphtali, and his father had been a Tyrean blacksmith. The king sent the best design drawers, architects and master builders. One of which was a master called Hiram-Abif, said to have been the son of a woman of the tribe Dan, whose father was Tyrean.)

Considering the well governed nations around with high amount of a highly developed bureaucracy, it seems to be quite amazing, that with the amount of material being mentioned in the Bible, not a single trace is left for our inspection in any documentation of these realms which does plentifully exist. That leads scientists to the

conclusion that the size of the temple cannot be too impressive.

The unifying character of such an undertaking is self-evident and was often practiced before and afterwards. This could be a reason to adopt it as example.

But this was not the first time in history, such a task was done to form and unify a nation. The Temple of King Solomon was built around 988 B.C., the Babylonians had built their “Zikkurates” about 2,000 years earlier, and the Egyptians had built Pyramids, which were much bigger in size.

King Solmon's Temple

The size and glory of King Solomon's Temple. Though being described in the Holy Scriptures as being enormous, can by no means compare to the Egyptian Pyramids, Babylonian cities, Phoenician fortifications or Persian palaces. When size matters, it is not a key argument to adopt the Temple as a key symbol to Freemasonry. How then about the beauty of the Temple? Would that lead us any further in our question of the import to us Masons? At former excavations, there were not found too many ritual vessels on the Temple Mountain. Some might have been carried away by the Romans. And the political situation in the Holy Land at present does not allow any further excavations. Despite of the fact of little archeological findings, I am of the belief that the beauty

must be found rather the ritual meaning, and not the fiscal importance of ornamentation.

What makes King Solomon's Building of the Temple so different from the former large buildings of Babylonia and Egypt? Following the chronology of large buildings in history, we come from the Babylonian "Zikkurat" and the Egyptian Pyramids to the Salomonic Temple.

1) The Zikkurates of the Babylonians, in Old Testament named as „Tower of Babylon“, were buildings where man wanted to adore himself, trying thereby to make himself “even to GOD”. In the eyes of the Jewish this is considered to be blasphemy.

2) The Pyramids were, and still are, the ultimate „super-buildings“. For sure they were an instrument to form and unify a nation. (As an interesting side-note of history, they were not even mentioned within the Holy Bible.) They served as glorification of the Pharaoh who was considered to be man and God the same time, and they were the means by which man believed to work on his own immortality.

As indicated above, all the neighboring nations of Israel were looked down upon, as means of group dynamics. Amongst all those nations, Egypt was somewhat exempt from the bad-speaking – possibly due to the close

connection of Moses with the house of the Pharaoh where he was raised.

Having been such close to the Pharaoh himself, Moses necessarily must have been somewhat involved with the building of some pyramid. Such pyramid was, in comparison with the Babylonian buildings, not to indicate that man deemed himself higher than the gods, but still as adoration of the Pharaoh, the God-King. Mose's participation at such an undertaking must have been considered by the Jewish as blasphemic also. Maybe that is, why Egypt and his pyramids are "discretely left out" in the telling of history within the Holy Bible, and this might also be a reason for the description of this period as "Egyptian Slavery" as a means of inner distancing from those.

3) Now, after the building of the „Tower of Babylon“ where man wanted to elevate himself above God, and after the building of the pyramids, where man adored Pharaoh as one God-King and wanted to build on his own immortality, finally King Solomon began his Building of the Temple.

The "Lost Word"

Kind Solomon's Temple is again a great work which could serve to unify a nation. But it is also an expression of Solomon's famous wisdom - it is a religious statement. For

the first time ever, this large edifice is not a work, where man glorifies himself. Nor being created to elevate one man to the status of God-King. The building of this Temple unifies the forces and powers of a whole nation solely for the reason to “glorify “the One and Only True and Living GOD. That is the core statement of the Jewish Nation: The Temple is supposed to be an offer to HIM to take his house in the midst of his people. That is, what makes this building so different from all the others before.

The plan to build a house for the LORD was already made by his father, King David. But David believed that his hands were too bloodstained. Therefore he considered himself unworthy to build such house for the Lord. In dying, he begged his son Solomon, whom he considered to be innocent, to commence such Great Work.

The Temple is said to be a representation of the Tabernacle, which commemorates the covenant of the LORD with his people given to Moses at the burning bush when leading the “children of Israel” from captivity, and wherein Israel offered a place for the LORD to live in, in the midst of his people.

Moses is the “father” of the Nation of Israel. Undoubtedly by any historian, he was accepted as the historical author of the Pentateuch (the 5 Books of Moses). In the Jewish narration of his birth, his name is explained with the Hebrew word mšh, „draw“, and shall remind us to the story where his step-mother has „drawn him out of the waters“,

where, according to the Old Testament, he was put in into a weed basket into the Nile river. Pharaoh's daughter pulled him out and raised him. Later he became an important officer at Pharaoh's court, and still later he led the "Children of Israel" out of the "Egyptian Slavery".

Today's scientists rather believe that Moses' name comes from the Egyptian word *mśj*, „to be born / to give life“. And as such it would be in concordance with such Egyptian names as usually found as compound with a god's name, as i.e. *Rá-mś-św* (Ramses) „Ra gave him life “ and *Dḥwtj-mś-św* (Thutmoses) „Thought gave him life“. Many such names are found in Egyptian inscriptions and were also often written without the name of the denominating god (*Mś-św / Mś*).

Moses is the one to whom the LORD spoke in the burning bush and said: "I am the Only God". He also told him HIS name: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה - 'ähi'jäh 'asher 'ähi'jäh - „I AM THAT I AM “ – often written down in form of the Tetragrammaton יהוה - „JOD-HEH WAV-HEH“.

The LORD also stated that he is a "jealous GOD", and commanded in the First Commandment: „Thou shalt not have other gods besides me “.

Moses taught his people that man shall not speak out the „Name of GOD“, that the name of GOD is unspeakable, because man cannot comprehend GOD. In consequence, Moses himself can hardly have GOD's name as part of his own name. He cannot be some „Jah - Mś-św“ (GOD gave him life“), he can actually just be a „...-Mś-św“, which is („...“gave him life).

The Name of Moses:

Name

Pronunciation

Meaning

Moses

Mšh

„draw“

Ramses

Rá-mś-św

„Ra gave him life “

Thutmoses

Dḥwtj- mś-św

„Thot gave him life“

__Moses

__Mś-św / Mś

„__ gave him life“

The Name of GOD:

Name

Pronunciation

Meaning

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

'ähi'jäh 'asher 'ähi'jäh

„I AM THAT I AM“

יהוה

„JOD-HEH WAV-HEH“

The Tetragrammaton

Our “Temple”

Originating historically in the medieval European Builder's Guilds in the gothic period, one might actually wonder why Freemasons use the term of building a “Temple”, rather than building a “Cathedral” or a “Dome”.

Why do we use this symbol? And where does “King Solomon” come into play? Just stating that this king was the patron of the builders would not be satisfactory. What is so important of his undertaking? Presuming that it has to do with his “wisdom”, what kind of wisdom was it that makes it so important to us?

Freemasonry carries the answer to this question within its own Order – it is the knowledge of the “lost word”, which gives us the key. It is its meaning that elaborates the Temple.

The Ancients worshipped various gods of nature, when they believed to observe miracles and wonders (e.g. thunder, lightning etc.).

At the burning bush, it is for the first time, that man (here Moses) is allowed to speak to “Jahwe “ The first Letter of the Tetragrammaton: “JAH” denotes “I” or “It is I”. The following syllables of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, “HWH” complete the name of GOD.

But the “I AM THAT I AM” it is not to be meant as just a simple “Here I am“, implementing a “do not ask any further and keep your distance”. It is rather a J A H W E : I am the „I AM HERE“ for you.

Such familiar contact with GOD is still today with the Jewish practice.

Salomon’s Temple is a manifest of such knowledge. This statement binds King Solomon and his Building of the Temple with the operative and speculative Masons of the medieval Cathedrals.

This „I AM HERE for you” is also the central statement of the Rabbi named Jesus, the son of Joseph, who always

pointed out that man should turn himself to GOD and abstain from self-adoration and idolatry. Man should be kind to man and love his neighbor, consider all mankind as one family, all being GOD's children.

Thus, the "Building of the Temple" becomes a symbol for the belief that all men can consider themselves to be one unity. The stones for such building are the people. That "Building of the New Temple" is far more than just a moral or ethical exemplification of history. It is the central element of our whole "Western Culture".

Here is to be found the key for the importance of exactly this Temple to Freemasonry.

The early operative stonemasons of the „Compagnonnage des Fils du Roi Solomon“, the „Brotherhood of Fellows of the Sons of Solomon“, under the patronage of the Order of the Temple, were one of the first groups of cathedral builders. By emulating this "speculative" building into "operative" craftsmanship, by building cathedrals for the glorification of the LORD, they pointed out this concept, putting into stone the motto of the Templar's Order: „Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomine tuo da gloriam“ – „Not unto us, o LORD, not unto us, but unto THY name give glory“.

Let us therefore all be living stones in the building of the Great Temple !

Let us form ourselves, upright and in accordance with the plumbline, let us remember that we are on the same level with all mankind, and let us be tried by the Master's square !

Let our light so shine before us, that men may see the good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven !
Let there be light.

THE SCRIPTURE READING FROM AMOS

The Greeks, as we recall from our discussion of circumambulation, chanted an ode as the worshipper moved about the altar from left to right, for their odes were the most sacred literature in their possession; but the Master of the Masonic lodge reads from the Holy Bible as the Fellow Craft makes his mystic rounds, and that for the same reason. He on whose life's journey the Great Light sends its rays may walk confidently and cheerfully and not as those who stumble through the dark.

And it is fitting that in this connection the rays come from the prophecy of Amos, for that seer sought to bring order and light into the workaday world of men, one of the chief tasks of the Fellow Craft, who receives knowledge that he may become a social builder. Amos wrought his great work during the days of Jeroboam II, in whose reign religion had grown hard and formal, pleasure had rotted into vice, luxury had become a disease, and the

aristocracy fattened on the poor. Against these conditions Amos set himself, though he was "no prophet, nor the son of a prophet," and he lashed the abuses of his people with such effective fury, that the high-ups had him banished from the kingdom. "The first great social reformer in history" Amos was no mere denunciator, but one who condemned things as they are by setting before them a picture of things as they should be.

In the graphic visions recorded in his book, Amos sets before us a picture of Israel being judged by a plague of locusts; then follows a fire that "devoured the great deep, and had begun to devour the tilled land;" these visitations are stayed by the supplication of the prophet, and then Jehovah brings a new kind of judgment to bear on his people. As we may read in Amos' own words; "Thus the Lord shewed me; and behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a plumbline. Then said the Lord, behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore."

This was no mere dramatic way of saying, The people had been bad; they must now be good. The lesson is no such banality as that, but cuts deeper into things. It is really a vision of an entirely new kind of judgment, for consider:— At first Jehovah chastised his people physically, as one may whip a child; later, he passed from external things into their hearts and said, In your conscience you will be

judged and in your conscience you will be punished. It was just the Lord's method of plunging a sharp instrument into the naked left breast of Israel! External punishments came and passed, but when the inner standard was set up, it remained whatever came and went, and the Lord did "not pass by them anymore."

Ever is this the truth of things, the law of life—that bad men are not always visited by physical evils, and that good men do not always receive material reward. This was a lesson learned by Job many centuries ago. But there is a harvest from wrongdoing that is always sure, as sure as the tides, and it is nothing other than inward corruption. To lie blunts the moral perception; to fall into impurity beclouds the heart; to live in selfishness puts out the eyes of love, for "the wages of sin is death." Like the path of the eagle the ways of the punishment of transgression may be viewless, but they are sure, as sure as a plumbline; the universe is just, and in its laws there is neither variableness nor turning, and he that is a skilled Fellow Craft in the building tasks of life will be wise to govern himself accordingly.