

Illustrious Brethren, you have just witnessed the 15th Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.....Knight of the East, of the Sword or of the Eagle. You surely must have been impressed with the resolve of Zerubbabel in not succumbing to the offerings of the evil GM of the Treasury.

You were transfixed by Zerubbabel, first dressed in a scurvy coat which might have served as an ancient horse blanket and later as a Prince of Israeland you attentively witnessed the Masonic allegory of the building of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

Historically, the people of Israel, having fallen into idolatry, are abandoned by their Lord and are taken as captives and slaves into Babylon for a period of 70 long years.....their Temple in ruins, their sacred treasures carted away.

From all of this mayhem, there emerges a central character, Zerubbabel, who introduces himself in the opening scene as “one of the children of the captivity, who cometh hither from Babylon, who can show his fathers’ house and his descent, that he is from Israel.

But who is this Zerubbabel???

By an examination of writings in the Scriptures(in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Chronicles) , in the “ Bridge to Light”, on the Internet and in Mackey’s Encyclopedia, we learn that he was the son of Shealtiel, the 2nd son of King Zeconiah,who was exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 607 BC.

After 70 years of captivity, Zerubbabel led the first group of captives, totalling 42,360(exclusive of servants and slaves) back to Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Cyrus . After a journey of about 4 months and encountering resistance and attacks on the way, the returnees rested for 7 days, after which a tabernacle was erected near the ruins of the ancient temple and a Council was called with Zerubbabel as King, Jeshua as High Priest and Haggai as Scribe(Royal Arch Masons are quite familiar with this structure). Plans were made to begin construction of the Second Temple at the site of the original Temple of Solomon, which had remained a devastated heap during the captivity.

The building of the Second Temple began in the 2nd year after their return and was completed and dedicated in 516 BC, some 20 years later, during the reign of Darius, who had a great friendship for the Israelites and especially for Zerubbabel with whom he was acquainted in his youth.

History shows us that the First Temple was beautiful costing Millions; in contrast the Second Temple was somewhat shabby, built on the cheap, causing onlookers, Scripture informs us, to weep openly at its dedication.

While he was a skilled warrior, a great and inspirational leader, very little is known of his personal life...in Scripture there is mention of two sons, Mashullam and Hananiah and 1 daughter, Shelomith...and 5 others named in Chronicles 1-3:19

Interestingly, after the Temple was completed and dedicated to Jehovah with the greatest joy, we hear nothing further of Zerubbabel; the time or manner of his death is not recorded in Scripture or preserved by Masonic tradition.

It is believed, however, that he lived to a good old age since no successor to him as Governor of Judea is evident until Ezra is so appointed 57 years after the completion of the Temple.

Rest in Peace, Zerubbabel... "Keeper of the Holy Fire" -----You remind us that a life of virtue and integrity is not a life of ease but one of constant struggle.

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