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Lecture 8 THE FOUNDERS OF THE ROYAL ARCH AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS E Comp Dr A Milsom

The exegesis of the Royal Arch Order is fully expressed in the following section of words, which is presented at the phase in the ceremony of exaltation, when the Principal Sojourner removes the hoodwink and these words are recited by the MEZ: "...having exalted you to this Supreme Degree, so truly denominated the essence of Freemasonry"

Paradoxically, the Royal Arch Order encompasses the Craft Degrees, in the time domain, evidenced by the dialogue contained in the Catechism between the MEZ and the Principal Sojourner, which is always given in this Province at the festive board after the Convocation has been closed. There are also the three sections of the Historical lecture, an option that can be given after the ceremony of exaltation; the genesis of the Craft Degrees is embedded within the central section, again reflecting its encompassment by our Supreme Order. The key to the understanding of this Supreme Degree and the contribution of its founders is within the books of the Old Testament and in particular, will be quoted from the appropriate book, chapter and sometimes verse where the evidence is to be found supporting their contribution to this Supreme degree. The catechism of the Royal Arch Order opens and identifies, the first or Holy Lodge, and its three founders: Moses, Aholiab and Bezeleel.

There arises no problem of familiarity with the first of this trio, Moses. In the book of Exodus: his birth is described, Exod Chapter 2; the various plagues which were brought on Egypt by him, under God's guidance; see Exod Chapters 7 to 12. God gave him the instructions and the specifications for the tabernacle construction in Exod Chapter 26:27 (in which the dialogue with the other two founders is also recorded).

Aholiab or Oholiab was a Danite craftsman and the son of Ahisamech a fabric artisan who worked with Bezeleel in the design and construction of the tabernacle- Exod 31:6; 38:23. and also the design the three curtains for the entrance of the holy- of- holies, the blue, the purple, and the red, each with a plain white cotton veil as its inner layer.

Bezeleel was the son of Uri and the grandson of Ephrath. He was reported to excel in the crafts and was touched by the hand of God and given intelligence, ability and knowledge to work in all the spectrum of the crafts- Exod 31: 2-3, in particular, to work on the Tabernacle or the tent of the meeting and the Ark of the Covenant and also all the furnishings of the tent- Exod 35:30-33; 36; 1-2. He constructed the Ark of the Covenant- Exod 37:1 and was renowned for other achievements- Exod 38:22, which included the manufacture of a bronze altar- 2 Chron 1:5.

These founders were the original representative figures of the guilds of craftsmen in Jerusalem, possibly there was cross fertilization of knowledge and information between them and the operative masons who were commencing their labours. The Lord gave his instructions to Moses in Exod 26:1 " Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen and BLUE and PURPLE and SCARLET stuff" (the colours of the Principals' robes) . The layout of the Tabernacle, has its entrance at the East and it is evident that the positions of the tribes of Israel viz: three tribes Asher, Dan and Naphtali are on the north side and Simeon, Reuben and Gad are still on the south side of a Royal Arch Chapter layout; while the Ensigns of tribes on the east facing the tabernacle went to new positions as follows: Zebulun went to the south side, Judah to north side, Issachar to the south side. Those on the west side went to the new positions as follows: Benjamin went to north side, Ephraim to south side, and Manasseh to the north side. We are already seeing the influence that the first three founders had on the pattern and Chapter layout of our Supreme Order.

Turning now, to the Second or Sacred Lodge, the three founders who presided at its opening, were Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram the widow's son. God directed Solomon to building the first temple at Jerusalem. This temple is known chiefly from the description in I Kings chaps 6-8 and 2Chronicles chaps 2-4. There can be no doubt that, alien as it may have been to the older Israelite ideas of God who dwelt with his people rather than in a building, the temple came to play an immensely important part of the religious life of Judaism, and had far reaching implications for our Masonic Order. The other two founders played a very important role in its construction. King David established a treaty with Hiram King of Tyre, which was extended by Solomon, who also traded with him for craftsmen and materials for the building of the temple- I Kings 5:12-18 and 2Chronicles 2:3-12. King Hiram, supplied cedar and other materials for the building of the temple, and craftsmen, in exchange for olive oil and wheat. At a later date he supplied Solomon with gold and further large amounts of timber and in particular cedar.

The artisan Hiram, the widow's, son was sent by Hiram King of Tyre to carry out the bronze work at the temple-I Kings 7: 13-14. He was the son of a woman of the tribe of Naphthali - I Kings 7:14 and he was also responsible for the casting of the bronze pillars, the molten sea, and other furnishings in a clay that was especially suited for these operations and which was located between Succoth and Zarethan I Kings 7:40-46 (note the reference to a section within the second tracing board)

There is no doubt that this second lodge, presided over by these founders forms an important link of continuity between the First or Holy Lodge and the Third or Grand and Royal Lodge and without these founders and their labours there would be no Royal Arch Order. It should also be noted that the Royal Arch ceremony took place in a Craft lodge and its members were called Brethren in most places until the mid 1770s and in some Craft lodges even long afterwards. There were however great fundamental changes, which occurred in the 1830s; these changes will be considered later.

The founders of this Third Lodge were Zerubbabel, Prince of the people; Haggai, the prophet; and Joshua (or Jeshua) the son of Josedech (or Jehozadak), the High Priest. Zerubbabel played a major part in re-establishing Judah and Jerusalem when the Persian rule was first introduced into the region in the 6th century B. C. He played a leading role in the organisation of the rebuilding of the Temple Ezra 5:2 and was also much esteemed for the vital role he played in the re-establishment of the community after the exile; he is addressed as 'governor' in Hag1:1 and Hag 2:2. Haggai was active in Jerusalem around 520 B.C. He was concerned for the purity of the people Hag 2:10-14 and more especially for the rebuilding of the Temple - Hag Chap 1, due to the fact that many of the Jews had returned from exile in Babylon and this gave an excellent opportunity to commence this task. Joshua who along with Zerubbabel led the return of a group of exiles from Babylon captivity Ezra2: 2, Neh 7:7. He worked closely with Zerubbabel in re-establishing the worship of God, Ezra3; 1-5 and then with the encouragement of Haggai, Hag, 1:1-11 made a major contribution in organizing the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezra 3; 8-9; 5:2, he is referred to in scripture, as Haggai the high priest.

The final two founders are included at the close of the Historical Lecture: the scribes Ezra and Nehemiah lecturers and expounders of the Sacred Law. Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the layman dominated this period of Jewish history. Ezra was a Jewish priest who returned to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes Ezra7: 1, Ezra7: 6-10 and I Esdras 9:49 He played a prominent role in instituting reforms which rehabilitated the Jewish state and the church; he restored the sacred vessels to the Temple, he proved himself a priestly patron of ecclesiastical art in the ritual. He led the people into a new understanding of the Law of Moses and founded the elements of reform, ritual and religious education Neh Chap10.

Nehemiah a Jew in Susa who amassed a fortune Neh 5:14-18 and was the cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes. Reports reached him in 445 B. C. that Jerusalem was in a wretched

condition and the king gave him, the appointment of the Governor of Judea. He went to Jerusalem to provide the materials necessary for the city's reconstruction Neh 2:7-9, he made a secret survey of the demolished walls of the city Neh 2:12-16; then in an assembly of the citizens he secured their co-operation in the task of rebuilding the walls. The building of the walls was opposed, by the-Samaritan's Neh 4:1-7 and all attempts to stop work was conducted by Sanballat the governor of Samaria Neh 6:1-9; but Nehemiah had the psychological resources to overcome every attack of his enemies (see latter part of the Symbolical lecture). He was a loyal layman; a man of piety, of prayer, and of great faith in God and his knowledge of engineering was only equaled by his marked organizing ability.

When the names of the founders are mapped to the layout of the Royal Arch Chapter, we note that the Principals: Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua and the scribes Ezra and Nehemiah are clearly defined in it and play very important roles in the ceremony of exaltation. Moses name does appears in two of the Installation ceremonies, however, we observe that the names of Aholiab and Bezeleel are not mapped to any part the two ceremonies or defined in the Chapter layout, which appears to be an unusual feature, and it does not reflect their importance as expressed in the Catechism and also in the Historical Lecture. Now, the final address in the ceremony of exaltation to the exalte, given by the MEZ, gives a pointer, to the reason for this omission; consider the words of following the section: " We congratulate you on being exalted into Royal Arch Masonry, at once the foundation and keystone to the whole Masonic structure". The Union of 1813 statement, disclosed that the order of the Royal Arch was included within the three degrees of the Ancient Craft and it never implied that the Royal Arch was simply a second part of the third degree as it now appears. At one time only Installed Masters were admitted to this Supreme Degree and given secrets, which were only then available to those masons who had passed the chair of Master of a Lodge. Those secrets encompassed the Mark story of the Capstone of the Arch, the story of the Exodus and the Ark of the Covenant, the exile in Babylon and the stories of Josiah and Zerubbabel, which explained the hidden mysteries found beneath the Temple.

As the Master Mason degree became more popular, the previous elements above were restricted to the knowledge of Past Masters only. That explains how the degrees of Mark Master, Most Excellent Master and Super Excellent Master (or the veils) were formulated. On the admittance of Master Masons the password was amended then, the Masters Degree lost its primacy and its Masonic word JEHQ.'VAH became the norm of the Royal Arch Chapter. The other degrees were not necessary and they (including the veils ceremony) were dropped. The seven steps that are taken by the Principals at the opening of the Chapter and later by the candidate in the ceremony of exaltation: arise from the Super Excellent Degree (Veils ceremony) which once was the penultimate degree before the Royal Arch. The ceremony allowed the candidate to pass, through three veils, which were suspended at right angles across the lodge room; by seven steps and passwords given at each veil; the three veils represented, symbolically, the three stages in the passage of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. Hence the conjecture that is put forward: that consequent on the amendment of the Royal Arch, by a group approved by the Duke of Sussex in 1834, (which met in camera). The initial edict was that the ceremony had to be a complete entity and should include, only sections of pure and ancient masonry that use to be provided within the associated degrees of Mark, Excellent and Super Excellent.

The next edict was that candidates could be exalted without, first having been a Master, who had passed through a Craft Chair. In the ceremony of exaltation, the final address by the MEZ to the exalte commences with the words: " We congratulate you on being exalted in Royal Arch Masonry, at once the foundation and keystone of the whole Masonic structure". This statement implies the state of the structure of the Royal Arch pre 1834 and confirms the removal of the Super Excellent Degree after this date. This fact now explains why any reference to the two founders Aholiab and Bezeleel is now absent from the ceremony of exaltation and obligations and from the installations of the three Principals, with only Moses' name occurring in two of the installation ceremonies. however they are still of prime importance in the opening of the Historical Lecture In conclusion: pre 1834, the names Aholiab, Bezeleel and Moses played a major role in the ceremony of exaltation via the Super Excellent Degree but are absent from the modern working of the post 1834 Ceremony of

Exaltation. Furthermore, the historical order is now integrated in the correct sequence: construction of the first Temple (Craft Degree ceremonies) to destruction/reconstruction of the second Temple (Royal Arch Order ceremony). The ceremony of the veils has not been completely eliminated which would be confirmed by a visit to a Royal Arch Chapter in the Province of Bristol where it is exhibited; an example of a wonderful experience of the ritual wealth and depth of this Supreme Order for any Royal Arch Companion.

Notes to accompany an address given by Excellent Companion Dr J A (Tony) Milsom, PZ, Provincial Second Assistant Grand Sojourner to the Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals No 6731.