

Signet of Zerubbabel Council Number 36

King Solomon and Building a Successful Masonic Lodge

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In the beginning, we learn, Masonry dedicated its lodges to the illustrious King Solomon, the first Grand Master of Freemasonry. In honor of his forethought and actions, Solomon is accredited with creating the Masonic structure we enjoy today. But how?

During Solomon's time he was said to be the greatest king the world had ever known. His wealth and power were immeasurable, his brilliance was divinely inspired and his charisma was coveted by his enemies and envied by his peers.

Indeed, the legends of Solomon's wisdom have proven resilient, surviving the unrelenting ignorance of man, the countless attacks by the dark forces of time and the hypocrisy of those intent on destroying all that is good. Solomon's wisdom and its relentless luminosity have prospered beyond the confined intellects of the profane minds wishing to destroy it. As a result, our secrets, our Craft and the genesis of Freemasonry has also escaped the malignant talons of darkness and the efforts of those whose malicious and malevolent desires for an ignorant world never ceases. With Freemasonry's successful utilization of Solomon's design, our Craft has camouflaged itself through ritual and rhetoric, thus preserving our Masonic heritage within full view of the unseeing eyes of the profane whose senses are incapable of understanding how its brilliance never ceases to shine.

As a proof of the actions initiated by Solomon, two valuable Masonic lessons are born. As Masons we must first learn to understand and relish the enormity of our responsibility to the Craft and to our brethren and secondly, as Masons, we must preserve our history at all costs, whether favorable or unfavorable!

Solomon's actions along with his wisdom are said to encompass every aspect and the very essence of Masonry. He was a writer of songs. He was a champion of rhetoric and he was a master of ritual, allegory and riddles. His quest for knowledge was insatiable and legendary and his compassion for his brethren is documented in scripture as well as Masonic ritual.

It is no coincidence that to the York Rite Mason all of these characteristics will sound very familiar.

However, these characteristics are not what made Solomon a Masonic legend.

As great as Solomon's gifts were, it was his inadequacies that made him a Masonic legend.

Solomon was bequeathed the unenviable and daunting task of constructing a temple of unimaginable magnificence, one suitable of housing the greatest deity known to his people! Unfortunately, this was a task in many ways he was unprepared to do.

Solomon needed to find wisdom, strength and beauty where none existed!

He must develop new ways and think outside the box. To the benefit of Freemasonry he did just that. Solomon found greatness that would separate himself from the Kings of his day and the rulers of our day as well. As a King he would do the unthinkable- he would carefully examine himself, assessing his own weaknesses. Then he would take the necessary steps to compensate for them.

In Solomon's mind's eye he saw that neither he nor his people possessed the knowledge or skills necessary to complete his mission. Solomon knows that without significant help he will surely fail. No doubt Solomon's view of the future must have been dark. However, Solomon would discover a lighted path in this void of darkness, a path on which few, if any, had walked before him. He would follow this path to a place of light and with the knowledge he obtained he would, in time, create a lodge whose magnificence will never be equaled; a lodge that will withstand the agonies of time and the prejudices of the profane.

But how!

To Solomon it was now clear, he must acquire more light.

Now the million dollar question: How?

Solomon now understood that to complete his task he would need to utilize every advantage available to him and when those were exhausted he would need to devise new ones.

He would start by building friendships with technologically advanced cities such as Tyre. He would partner with the ancient city of Gebal, contracting with its highly skilled workers named Giblym. The Giblym would, in turn, hew the perfect stones necessary for construction of the Temple. As payment for Tyrian and Giblym skills, Solomon would provide his brethren with prosperity, freedom and safety. He would also step aside and allow the workers (who were considered foreigners and sojourners by his people) the necessary freedom to perfectly construct the Temple.

Solomon would extend the “right hand of fellowship” and embrace the foreigners, rewarding them with honor and trust; even though these workers worshiped Phoenician deities different from the Hebrew.

By extending the hand of friendship rather than the fist of war, Solomon was successful in cultivating friendship and working alliances that would ultimately allow Solomon to procure the knowledge, building materials and trust necessary to complete the Temple to his God.

With the evolution of Solomon, he now has the wisdom to look past the cultural, political and religious differences of his new colleagues. Solomon had learned to open his eyes and relish the knowledge collected from his new brethren.

Solomon has learned the primary lesson of a Past Master: You must first learn to govern yourself and you will then understand how to govern others. This newly found light allowed Solomon the confidence and strength to place his ego to the side and allow a talented and cunning foreigner named Hiram complete autonomy to build the sacred items of the Temple.

Solomon would marry the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt, securing a temporary alliance with the past enslavers of his people. He would marry a princess, native to the Phoenician city of Sidon, whose worship of the astral deity Ashtoreth (Astarte in Phoenician) would be forever linked to Solomon in Scripture as the cause of his fall from glory.

Solomon would marry many other wives from neighboring countries, constructing the cultural alliances needed to secure peace and acquire the knowledge necessary to complete his mission. Solomon cultivated these alliances even though marrying outside of the Hebrew clan was not permitted.

In my opinion, by “thinking outside the box” and building unconventional alliances, Solomon created the nucleus of modern day Freemasonry. Utilizing the by-products of these alliances, Solomon would create a utopia where men could work, create and enjoy fellowship regardless of social, political or religious differences. Thanks to Solomon, modern Masons enjoy the same atmosphere in our Lodges. Thanks to Solomon’s rise and fall we understand that knowledge comes with a very high price tag. However, we also understand the price of ignorance no Mason can afford to pay. By utilizing the fruits of these alliances Solomon would achieve what no other man of his day had...he would become master of the seven sciences of Freemasonry!

I believe Freemasonry has kept Solomon’s lessons alive as a reminder to us that regardless of the color of our eyes, the pigmentation of our skin, the texture of our hair, the language we speak, the amount of cash in our checking account or the deity we worship, if you desire more light, if you seek this light, if you are willing to labor and humble yourself while keeping your mind open then you shall find light.

Solomon learned the ultimate of Masonry- that true and lasting power is generated from the genius of the collective mind and the collaboration of intellects differing from our own.

The lessons Solomon learned now teach us to Fear not those who are different but to embrace them and bring them into the fold; for it is through this collaboration of minds that true knowledge is fostered and it is this light that separates man from the beasts and alike separates Masons from the profane.

I know that many of us may have been told that education has no place in the lodge.

To this statement I refer back to the lessons of Solomon. Solomon realized that in order to change the world he must first educate himself and then his brethren; ignorance is the true enemy of our world and our Craft. Solomon used his abilities to construct a lodge of hope by creating a common ground workplace, free of the social pressures of politics, religion and bigotry, he created a place of light designed to foster brilliance, regardless of its source. Solomon and his brethren utilized the power of fellowship rather than the sword and, as a result of this fellowship, they created the magnificent. Yes, Solomon implemented the ultimate lesson of Freemasonry: a Mason is born from the soul not the physical appearance of his body.

My Brothers, I challenge you to be the Solomon of our lodge. Build alliances that will foster learning. I guarantee you will discover new and exciting pathways to Masonic light.

I understand most of us believe we are not luminous, that we do not possess the light necessary to change the world. Let me tell you this: it is true, you may not possess the genius of Solomon, but you are a conductor of light. I have found in my many years in business as well as my tenure in Freemasonry that most of us, while not possessing true genius, have the remarkable power of stimulating it in others!

You may be thinking to yourself, "Who am I to teach a room full of Masons about Masonry?" Or, "I am just a humble mason and I do not seek to be in the spotlight." Let me tell you this, my brothers. Seeking to share the light is not the same as seeking to bask in it!

Brothers, let your knowledge be known. Even a small pebble thrown into a pond will send a ripple the full circumference of the pond. You are a conductor of light and you have the ability to create a ripple throughout our lodges and our society.

In the advertising world, human personality is broken down into this simple principle.

“With Human beings’ attention goes where energy flows.”

I challenge you to step outside your comfort zone and create a ripple. Follow Solomon’s example and write that Masonic paper you have been waiting to read, learn your parts with such conviction of the heart that others will have no choice but to listen. Seek to share the light without any intention of basking in it and share it not for recognition but for contribution.

If you follow Solomon’s path you will have the same results. In your life you will experience unimagined greatness and you will suffer indescribable anguish. But as your reward the light of your works, like Solomon’s, will never fade. My Brothers remember this lesson, teach this lesson and live this lesson! You will get back from Masonry what you put into it. If you put nothing into it you will leave empty handed. True gains in self, faith, hope and charity can only come from hard work, dedication, compassion, and the collection of knowledge.