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The Legend of King Solomon

To most, the name of King Solomon is synonymous with wisdom recounted in the Bible in 1 Kings 3:15-28. Confirmed, at least in legend eight hundred years later, around 150 BC by the Jewish historian Eupolemus, the verses describe when two women approach King Solomon, claiming the same baby as their own. In the wisdom of his solution, he proposes the baby should be split in half, each woman receiving her "fair share" of the child. The woman who would deceive the king agreed with the plan while the true mother immediately withdrew her claim believing it better for her child to be raised by the other woman than see her baby put to the sword. King Solomon instantly grants the baby to the woman speaking the truth, recognizing that the rightful mother would suffer the greater loss to herself that her offspring might survive.

But there is far more to the understanding of King Solomon than this single story. According to Jewish, Christian and Islamic scripture, he was a man of considerable force of character. It is said he was learned of philosophy and poetry; possessed of esoteric knowledge of nature and metaphysical powers; consumed by immense political ambitions and great personal desires in his life; and guided by divine inspiration to weld his people into a strong and respected kingdom. To these ends, he built the First Temple in Jerusalem as the center of the religious worship of his people and a symbol of their national unity, which continues to this day.

Tonight we take a brief glimpse into the history, legends and secrets of King Solomon. Many of these accounts form the basis of the legend and lore of Freemasonry, which uses the construction, destruction and rebuilding of the Temple as a backdrop and metaphor for moral instruction. But before we open the doors of the temple, let us first examine just who King Solomon was.

Evidence of a historical figure comparable to Solomon, independent of religious accounts, is scarce. The period of his rule from circa 970 to 930 BCE is considered a "dark age" in which the centralized empires of the Late Bronze Age were collapsing, and the new Iron Age monarchies had yet to grow.

However, the association of Solomon with the city of Jerusalem may even precede this early period. Some etymologies suggest the name Jerusalem means "The City of Solomon", and is much older reference to Ebla from around 2,350 BCE, and is thought to specifically reference the slope leading down from what is now the Al Aqsa mosque. Archaeologists have been desperately excavating the site for many decades, yet not one iota of evidence

of the existence of King Solomon has been found. No mention of his name has been found on any tablet, inscription, tax record or pot decoration. But located in what is now northern Syria and known as Tell Mardikh, we find the ancient city of Ebla, famous for its archives of about 15,000 cuneiform tablets. Written as Uru Sholom/Shalim, texts refer to "Shalim and Shachar", as two beneficent Gods, sons of El and Asherah, divine figures of the sunset and sunrise respectively. El and Asherah were further associated with two mountains that were located on the Eastern and Western rim of the known world. The Association of Shalim with a "high place", like that of Mount of Zion, suggests that the Temple of Solomon may have initially been a temple to Shalim, administered by an early priest-king called Melchizedek. Based on ancient Hebrew, Melchizedek can be translated either as "my king is righteous", or Zedek, meaning "is my king". In Genesis, Melchizedek is also referred to as King of Salem and Priest of El Elyon. If this is the case, it could explain the size of "Solomon's Empire" stretching from Palmyra to Ezion Geber, as the realm over which Shalim was honored

Archaeological excavations at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer however, have uncovered fortifications matching those described in the Bible as built by Solomon at the same time period. Various inscriptions have also been found, with one of the most exciting finds referencing the "House of David", but evidence of King Solomon remains elusive, though excavations are continuing.

But the legend of King Solomon is rich with allegory and filled with as many secrets as the long-lost chambers of his temple. Even the name of Solomon is surrounded in mystery. The name Solomon or Shlomo in the Old Testament means "peaceful," or "complete", from the Hebrew Shelomoh and Sulaiman in Arabic. However, in 2 Samuel 12:25, the name given by God to Solomon in the Bible is Jedidiah, meaning "loved by God". And, some scholars have conjectured that Solomon is only a "title name" taken either when he assumed the throne or upon his death. Whatever the true name of Solomon, his case is one of the few in the Bible where the name given by God or man does not stay with the character.

Birthright of Solomon

Born around 848 BCE, Solomon was the thirtieth son of King David and the second of his wife Bathsheba. In the Hebrew Bible, the prophet Nathan explains to King David that it is the will of God that David must endure the loss of their firstborn son. This punishment is made in recompense for David staging the inevitable execution of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, so that David may establish an intimate relationship with his widow. Thus following the death of his firstborn son with Bathsheba, the birth of Solomon was considered a grace from God. Not only did Solomon represent David's atonement, but as the son of David through the house of Judah, he was a direct descendant of Isaac. And through Bathsheba, he was a direct descendant of Ishmael, whom Hagar bore unto Abraham. Thus, the two great families founded by Abraham were united in Solomon.

THIS ENDS PART 1 OF 3

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