

# THE HIRAM KEY REVISITED

FREEMASONRY: A PLAN FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER



**CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT**

Co-author of *The Hiram Key*

**& ALAN BUTLER**

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**Christopher Knight** worked in advertising and marketing for over thirty years, specializing in consumer psychology and market research. His writing career began almost by accident after he had invested seven years conducting research into the origins of Freemasonic rituals and he has written four books on the subject co-authored with Robert Lomas. His first book, *The Hiram Key* was published in 1996 and it immediately went into the UK top ten bestseller list and remained in the list for eight consecutive weeks. It has since been translated into 37 languages and sold over a million copies worldwide, becoming a bestseller in several countries. He now divides his time between marketing consultancy and historical research for writing books.

**Alan Butler** qualified as an engineer, but was always fascinated by history, and made himself into something of an expert in astrology and astronomy. Since 1990 he has been researching ancient cultures, pagan beliefs and comparative religion and has published several successful books on such topics as the Knights Templar and the Grail legend. He is also a published playwright and a successful radio dramatist.

Christopher Knight and Alan Butler have written two successful books together, *Civilization On* and *Who Built the Moon?*

## **By the same authors**

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Previous books by Christopher Knight  
(co-authored with Robert Lomas)

*The Hiram Key*

*The Second Messiah*

*Uriel's Machine*

*The Book of Hiram*

Previous books by Alan Butler

*The Bronze Age Computer Disc*

*The Warriors and the Bankers*

*The Templar Continuum*

*The Goddess, the Grail and the Lodge*

*The Virgin and the Pentacle*

*Sheep*

By Christopher Knight and Alan Butler

*Civilization One*

*Who Built the Moon?*

**THE**  
**HIRAM KEY**  
**REVISITED**

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**Christopher Knight and Alan Butler**



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*This book is dedicated to the memory of Earl William Sinclair,  
builder of Rosslyn Chapel and creator of Freemasonry.*

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## Introduction

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What had just happened to me, I asked myself? The evening had started entirely normally but then I had been stripped of my clothes and dressed in virtual rags. My valuables had been taken and I was then hustled forward by men on either side, each with a tight hold on my upper arm.

As soon as I had stepped into the room I had been blind – the darkness was near total. Yet I could sense the large group of people around me – the odd creak of a chair, a small cough, the occasional shuffle of feet. My guides walked me for quite a distance from point to point with questions being fired at me from time to time.

Then my minders pulled me to a halt and relaxed their grip. A figure suddenly moved close in front of me. Even though my eyes had by now adjusted to the gloom I couldn't make out his face but he seemed to be very tall and he began to tell me a story – something about an ancient builder and the Temple in Jerusalem.

The words made no sense to me and I had closed my eyes for a second or two. I opened them again just in time to catch a glimpse of something moving quickly out of the darkness towards me and I felt a glancing blow crack down on my cheek. Before I could blink, hands grabbed at me – pushing me down onto one knee. I recovered my footing and quickly received a second blow and then a third hit me square in the forehead. I was pulled down before being wrapped in a sheet by many unseen hands.

At this point I definitely felt like I was in some bizarre dream, as funereal organ music filled the air and countless footsteps seemed to be circling around my prostrate body. It all stopped suddenly after a minute or so and the cloth was peeled back from my face. A man took my hand out of the shroud and tried to pull me up but I fell back as the hand slipped away. Another attempted to raise me but failed. Then I felt a powerful hand take firm grip around my right wrist and I was yanked to a standing position.

Suddenly the light increased a little. Everything was in monochrome but thanks to a star-shaped beam of light above the shoulder of my attacker I could take in the dozens of faces that filled the windowless room. The man in front pointed behind me and told me to turn and look at the spot where I had been lying. There, by the light of the single star, I could just make out a small cluster of objects. At first I could not recognize them but as I stared in the half-light I could make out a human skull and some bones of some long-decomposed cadaver.

The ritual was now finished and I dressed myself once again in my black suit and tie and joined the celebrations with my brothers, for the world now had one more Master Mason. As of that moment I was a fully qualified Third Degree Freemason.

Now, at last, I was permitted to ask my fellow Masons to explain all three rituals I had endured over the preceding six months. 'This is going to be interesting,' I told myself.

That was in September 1976. Thirty years have now passed since I walked out of the Masonic Temple wearing the small leather apron of a Master Mason given to me under the authority of the United Grand Lodge of England. I was brimming over with curiosity and enthusiasm – but I had no inkling at all as to just how much the proceedings of that evening were going to change my life.

To be honest, I had joined 'the Craft' in the first place as a matter of simple nosiness. I wanted to know what these men did behind closed doors that had given rise to all kinds of rumours. I knew that Freemasonry was a secretive fraternal order found mainly in Europe and those areas of the globe

where the British Empire or its offspring, the American 'empire', had ever had influence. But was the benign organization it seemed to be or did it have a covert agenda as critics sometimes suggest?

As a young Master Mason it slowly dawned upon me that none of the importantly titled Freemasons had a clue as to what the rituals were really about. They would have a meal and plenty of beer after the evening's ritual was over and compliment each other on the 'sincerity' with which they had delivered the memorized mumbo-jumbo – but there was never any discussion about what it all meant or where it came from.

From Calcutta to Calgary and Canberra to Cape Town, men dressed in splendid – if somewhat oddball – regalia meet in windowless rooms to perform arcane rituals in word-perfect manner without understanding why. The rituals are passed on from generation to generation, word for word – but for what?

Like every candidate for the Third Degree, I was made to act out the role of Hiram Abif, the man who is said to have been the architect of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem nearly 3,000 years ago. The legend tells how his own workmen attacked Hiram because they wanted to extract a great secret from him. The architect refused to give them the unspecified secret and was killed by the third of three blows to the head.

I began my personal investigation into the origins of Freemasonry as soon as I realized that no answers to my various questions existed. As the years of research rolled on and I started to uncover some tantalizing facts, I began to think that a book written about it might be of interest to at least a few people. I enlisted the help of a fellow Freemason, Robert Lomas, and several years later the result was finally published under the title *The Hiram Key*.

One man who read that book was Alan Butler, and he saw immediate parallels with his own research. Alan made contact and we began a process of sharing our deepest findings into the origins of Freemasonry and the extraordinarily ancient science that we found lies behind it.

Alan and I have now been conducting research jointly for the last ten years. This is our third book together and it is the one that goes right back 3,000 years to tell the full story of a group of hereditary super-priests from Jerusalem who set out to change the world. *The Hiram Key* was the book that uncovered the ancient heritage behind Freemasonry, but, inevitably, it raised far more questions than it provided answers.

The task we have set ourselves in this book is to investigate deeper and wider in order to piece together, step by step, the progress of an ancient priesthood, which, according to Masonic ritual, was established by King Solomon. These people were almost a cult within a cult – Jews with a secret knowledge of the movements of a blazing star they called the Shekinah. This brilliant astronomical wonder lit up the pre-dawn sky of Jerusalem at the dedication of Solomon's Temple and appeared again at propitious occasions heralding great events – including the birth of the promised Messiah a millennium later.

The mark of these secretive power brokers – whom we call 'the Star Families' – was two equilateral symbols overlaid one upon the other to form a six-pointed star, a device that, as we will explain in Chapter 1, precisely describes the latitude of Jerusalem in astronomical terms.

This symbol of the Star Families remained unseen by the outside world until the moment when the armies of Europe were induced, through Star Family influence, to march on Jerusalem and recapture it from the Muslims the sacred city from which the families had been expelled centuries earlier, under Roman rule. It was then a device used by the military wing of the Star Families – the Knights

Templar. Today it is an important piece of imagery for Freemasonry and it has been adopted (after much debate) by the state of Israel.

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In the following chapters we will discover how Solomon's power brokers have influenced and even directed the development of the Western world by infiltrating the Roman Catholic Church and national governments. Our investigation uncovers audacious and breathtaking powerplay from the time of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem to George W. Bush's White House in Washington DC.

We start with the beginning of all Judaeo-Christian ritual and myth – the Book of Genesis. And we finish by considering the enormity of the potential end game, which appears to be very close to its dramatic conclusion.

Christopher Knight,  
October 2006

### In the Beginning

#### **The biography of God is not all sweetness and light**

In the beginning, according to the Book of Genesis, God created all of heaven and earth before making the seas, the land, plants and animals and eventually humans. The sequence in which he performed his acts of creation varies according to different Old Testament traditions, but we do know two very important facts about God from verse 26 of Genesis, where he says, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness'. This tells us that, according to Genesis, God was, in appearance at least, a man and since God uses the word 'we', so apparently were his colleagues.

Today, most Jews and Christians fully accept the scientific view that the universe is many billions of years old and that humans evolved into their present form around 115,000 years ago. It therefore follows that a truly gigantic period of time elapsed between the creation of the heavens and the earth and the making of Adam and Eve. Even after the first humans arrived it would be more than another 110,000 years before God can definitely be identified as interacting with the creatures that looked like him.

Whilst there are many references to God in the Bible suggesting that he spoke with, and directed such Middle Eastern figures as Noah, Enoch and Abraham, it is generally accepted by biblical scholars that these were traditions concerning a variety of deities that were welded together by the people who first wrote down the Old Testament a millennium or two later.

Of these stories, the earliest account of Yahweh actually appearing on Earth was around 3,500 years ago. Here he was the tribal deity of a small clan of metalworking people who lived in the mountains of the Sinai Peninsula – that triangular region of desert that has the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Gulf of Suez to the west and the Gulf of Aqaba to the east. It is a remote and inhospitable place with few resources other than the scattering of precious stones and minerals that had been mined there since early in the ancient Egyptian dynastic period. Life must have been hard for the clan known as the Kenites, who scoured the arid mountains and rolling sand dunes for minerals from which to extract the metals with which they so famously worked. The Old Testament speaks of their great skill in the art of working both iron and bronze for many purposes, especially the manufacture of musical instruments.

The Kenites took their name from the belief that they were descended from Kain (Cain), the son of Adam and Eve, and their god was Yahweh, who was considered to be a storm deity of the mountains of the Sinai.

#### **Moses and the Exodus**

Life must have been very quiet for the Kenites and one can only imagine that these isolated tribesmen must have been greatly surprised when they saw an endless column of people heading towards them across and around the tightly packed, jagged peaks of rock that rise more than a mile and a half above the surrounding sea. These strangers explained how they had escaped from captivity in Egypt and crossed right through the waters of the River Nile under the leadership of an 80-year-old ex-army general called Moses.<sup>1</sup>



However, Moses himself was no stranger to the Kenites. They knew him well because he had previously worked for them as a shepherd for no less than 40 years. This bearded wanderer had originally been a clean-shaven general in the Egyptian army and an important member of the royal court until he had committed a murder and gone on the run in the Sinai Desert. Moses had married Zipporah, the daughter of Reuel, who was the 'Jethro', or high priest and leader of the Kenites. Moses and his brother Aaron had also been initiated into the priesthood of the Kenites and had begun to worship their god, Yahweh.

At some point Moses left his people and climbed up the largest mountain in the Sinai. There he had a meeting with that master of storms, Yahweh. The deity presented the old soldier with a number of instructions for life, including what we know today as the Ten Commandments. However, the relationship between God and Moses was not always an easy one. On one occasion his wife, Zipporah, had to rescue Moses (and, according to some biblical scholars, their eldest son Gershom) from an attack carried out by Yahweh, who had, for reasons unknown, decided to kill him.

Moses announced that his mobile nation was to continue on its journey, taking the Kenite god with it in a specially constructed box called the 'Ark of the Covenant'. The plan was to head in a vague northeasterly direction in search of a land that Yahweh had promised them. The problem was that hundreds of tribes of Canaanites already occupied the land.

The box in which they carried God was entirely Egyptian in design. It was made of *shittim* wood, acacia – the only tree that grows to any size in the arid sands of this desert region – and upon it sat two gold-covered effigies of winged sphinxes. When God had conversations with Moses, the divine voice would emanate from the box between these two gilded carvings.

The band of Hebrew escapees from Egypt continued their journey with the deity that had manufactured the entire universe safe inside the little box, which had been constructed with four extended poles so that it could be carried over the difficult terrain that confronted the Hebrews. Yahweh effectively took over the leadership of the column, dictating the pace to his carriers by making himself impossibly heavy when he wanted them to stop, and lighter when he wished to go faster.

As the people of the Exodus travelled through the desert, the Ark was carried a safe 2,000 cubits (over half a mile) ahead of the main party. And, according to ancient tradition, we are told that Yahweh would clear a safe pathway for the nation by burning snakes, scorpions and thorns with two jets of fire, as though there were flamethrowers slung from the undercarriage of the gold-plated Ark.

Unfortunately for the followers of Moses, their new god was prone to fits of ill temper. For example, when Moses' nephews Nadav and Avihu used a non-approved source to ignite a fire to offer a burned sacrifice to Yahweh, they were immediately consumed by a bolt of flame that, according to the Old Testament, was fired by Yahweh from inside his box. Yahweh continued to be easily annoyed. Priests who cared for the Ark had to think about every move, as even looking at the box at an improper time would result in immediate immolation in a ball of flames.

## **A Planned Return?**

In our view, the Israelites' 40-year journey to the land of Canaan was not an accidental event; rather than a spontaneous escape from Egyptian slavery, it was almost certainly a planned return to an old homeland.

It is now known that around 200 years before the Exodus, weather conditions had suddenly changed

and the land of Canaan had been baked dry by soaring temperatures. Towns across the eastern inland areas had almost emptied as rapid climate change dried up water sources and withered crops before they could establish themselves. Small villages lost many of their number as people tried in vain to scratch a living from the hard-baked soil. The endless drought appeared to be a curse from the gods and the only recourse was either to travel south to the land of the life-giving River Nile and work for the Egyptians, or head north to the more temperate climate of leafy Lebanon.

A couple of centuries later, the climate changed back to normal as suddenly as it had gone awry. Over a decade or two, the summer in Canaan reverted to being simply very hot instead of a veritable furnace. Rivers began to flow and springs refilled. People started to head back to their old homelands from both the north and the south.

The group led by Moses, and later his successor Joshua (Hebrew for Saviour), headed east and north into the land of Canaan, which was once again promising to be 'a land of plenty'. Upon arrival, they set about destroying every township they came across so that they could take the food and the water supply for themselves. The following extract is typical of accounts of the bloodlust that God appeared to have instructed:

**And the LORD said unto me, 'Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land'. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain: Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.**<sup>2</sup>

Apparently on God's explicit instructions, every man, woman and child was murdered, and their possessions were looted in towns and cities too numerous to list.

Time passed and Yahweh and his people occupied much of the 'promised land'. More than four centuries later, Yahweh's chosen people came to the holy city of Jerusalem, which was eventually surrendered to David, the king of the Israelites. It is claimed that David took 30,000 men to escort the Ark and its divine contents to their new capital. To make the final journey, Yahweh's mobile home was placed on a new cart drawn by Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab.

As the cart journeyed onwards, Uzzah accidentally invaded Yahweh's personal space in some way and died instantly in a ball of flame. David was livid with the temperamental deity and decided to go no further. However, after some time, arrangements were made to continue the journey, and David tried his best to humour God by sacrificing an ox every six paces, and in traditional Canaanite style his team danced to music around the cart as it trundled haltingly along.

## **A Temple for Yahweh**

On arrival at Jerusalem, David decided to build a temple for Yahweh and his Ark at a place above the city that was said to be the very spot where Abraham had intended to sacrifice his son Isaac, perhaps nearly 1,000 years earlier, as described in chapter 22 of Genesis.

The Israelites settled into their new capital city and then, according to the Second Book of Samuel, David fell in love with a beautiful woman called Bathsheba, having seen her from his window while she was bathing. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, one of David's officers, but nevertheless the king had her brought to his chambers, where he promptly had intercourse with her. This resulted in a pregnancy, and the king cunningly decided to summon Uriah back from the battlefield to relax, bathe and take time to 'visit' his wife – in the hope that the pregnancy would be attributed to Uriah.

But Uriah refused the king's offer, saying he could not 'go to my house, to eat and drink and lie with my wife' while his fellow soldiers were living in hardship in the open on the battlefield. David could not risk the wrath of a popular general, so he made sure that Uriah was placed in the forefront of the battle, where he was soon killed.

David took Bathsheba as his wife and she subsequently gave birth to their son. But the child died despite David's many prayers to Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Bathsheba soon bore David another son. According to 2 Samuel 12:25, he was given the name Jedidiah, meaning 'beloved of Yahweh', yet the previous verse says the child was called Solomon (Shelomoh in Hebrew). A number of scholars have suggested that his normal name was Jedidiah and that he took the throne name of Solomon when David's allotted reign of 40 years came to an end. This interpretation makes perfect sense because 'Solomon' is a Canaanite name that celebrated the old god of the city. *Shelomoh* was a form of word play connected to Salem, the original name of Jerusalem – meaning the planet Venus – which in turn was associated with peace (also the root of the word *shalom* in Hebrew).

And it was King Solomon who would build what is probably the most famous temple in all history – a temple that would become the centrepiece of Freemasonic ritual.

Solomon's elevation to the throne took place in 971 BC or possibly early the following year according to biblical scholar E. R. Thiele and others. This left his father, David, free to spend his time collecting materials for the building of a new temple in Jerusalem as a permanent abode for Yahweh and his earthly residence, the Ark of the Covenant.

During Solomon's own reign of 40 years, he surrounded himself with all the luxuries and the external grandeur of a typical Canaanite monarch, reputedly maintaining a staggering 700 wives and 300 concubines. The building he created for his harem was, by necessity, extremely spacious – in fact it was many times the size of the planned temple to house Yahweh and the Ark. Solomon is remembered for his great wisdom and there is no doubt that his early years brought great prosperity and influence to the small Israelite kingdom.

Alongside his traditional Israelite devotion to Yahweh – the god his people had once adopted at the time of the Exodus and now kept in a gilded box – Solomon worshipped a range of other gods. Venerating a host of deities was a token of cosmopolitan kingship, and, at this period, the idea that the tribal god of Israel was the only god in existence had not yet taken root. Solomon himself – unlike the later Jewish scholars who set about shaping the Bible – saw no inconsistency in his devotion to a range of deities.

Among the more unpleasant practices he embraced was the sacrifice of one's own children to the god Moloch, an ancient Canaanite solar deity. This was believed to be a necessary process for Canaanites who wanted to be true kings – appointed and empowered by the gods of heaven. It was a practice that the Israelite nation would carry on for hundreds of years before finally outlawing the procedure and inventing less grotesque techniques of establishing kingship.

It must have been very easy for Solomon to send in his guards to select a few of his hundreds of children born of concubines as sacrifices to the god Moloch. The very word Moloch is from the root word *malak*, meaning king. 'Moloch' literally means the act of becoming or being the monarch reigning under the authority of the gods. The sacrifice to Moloch was the only way to be assured of absolute power based on an authority beyond the world of men.

According to 1 Kings 11:7, Solomon erected 'a temple' for Moloch 'on the hill over against

Jerusalem'. The location of this temple where child sacrifice took place was to the southwest of the city of Jerusalem in an area called Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom, also known as the 'Valley of the Children' near to where King David's tomb is believed to be. The practice of sacrificing the king's children continued for hundreds of years until it was eventually outlawed: 2 Kings 23 states that 'no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Moloch'.

Whether it was due to his human sacrifices or not, Solomon and his government prospered and he entered into an alliance with Hiram I, the Phoenician king of Tyre, who greatly assisted him in his extensive building works – most particularly the great temple in which Yahweh could reside.

## **The Power of the Shekinah**

However, the evidence suggests that, while the Ark of Yahweh was indeed kept in the Temple, when the building was first erected it was not originally dedicated to Yahweh. Solomon's polytheistic kingship required a temple that connected with the gods – a kind of 'communications centre' that gave the ruler a 'conduit to the realm of the gods in the heavens'. The key to such a building lay in an understanding of astronomy and, most particularly, the long-term movements of the planet Venus and the goddess Ashtoreth.

The worship of the goddess Ashtoreth (also variously known as Astarte, Ishtar, Anat, Ashtaroth, Asherat, Baalat-Gabal and Asherah) was of central importance to Solomon. Ashtoreth was connected with fertility, sexuality and war, and her symbols were the lion, the horse, the sphinx, the dove and above all, a star within a circle – indicating the planet Venus, which was the visible manifestation of this astral deity.

Venus lies inside Earth's orbit around the sun and is the second in line from the sun after Mercury. Seen from Earth, Venus is by far the brightest object in the sky after the sun and the moon and appears either just before dawn as the 'morning star' or shortly after dusk as the 'evening star'. It always appears to weave a truly remarkable pattern over time when viewed from Earth.

Every eight years Venus returns to the same point in the sky, but the background stars are not the same; astronomically speaking, Venus has moved one fifth of the way through the zodiac. After every 40 years Venus completes one full lap of the zodiac – ending up back where it started. This movement is accurate to a second or so and has always provided a wonderful clock and calendar for astronomer-priests. In travelling through the heavens, the planet appears to describe a five-pointed star around the sun – and this is the basis of the pentangle that has always held mystical importance for humans from all cultures.

For Solomon, the cycle of Venus of precisely 40 years was of paramount importance. He, like kings before and after him, knew that every important aspect of life was governed by this divine period of 40 years, as the Old Testament records:

- Moses had led his people through the wilderness for 40 years from the age of 80 (the beginning of his third Venus cycle) until his death at the age of 120 (the end of his third Venus cycle).
- Throughout the Old Testament God frequently allows the land to rest for 40 years.
- Israel had done evil and God gave it an enemy for 40 years.
- Eli was judge (a proto-king) of Israel for 40 years.

- Saul, the first anointed king of Israel, became king at the age of 40 and ruled for exactly 40 years.
- Ishbosheth (Saul's son) was 40 when his reign began.
- King David, Solomon's father, ruled for 40 years.

Solomon knew that he himself could only reign for 40 years, and so it transpired.

There was only one astral power greater than Venus and its 40-year cycle and that was the holy *Shekinah*. This brilliant 'star' would appear in the sky at periods of every 12 Venus cycles – every 48 years – and then it would shine down several times over a few years before disappearing once again.

In fact the *Shekinah* was (and still is) caused by the planets Venus and Mercury rising in conjunction – meaning that, viewed from Earth, they overlap and look like a single, extremely bright star.

The appearance of the *Shekinah*, it was believed, heralded the greatest moments of Israelite and Jewish history. However, particular significance was attached to every third appearance of the *Shekinah* – which took place every 1,440 years – when the brilliant object is in exactly the same place within the zodiac (the background stars). One such appearance of the *Shekinah* was due to fall at the winter solstice in 967 BC, and Solomon ordered the land to be cleared on the hilltop to the north of the city in preparation for the laying of the foundation stone of his planned temple on that very day. According to priestly calculations, the divine *Shekinah* would appear in the dark morning sky like a brilliant beacon shortly before dawn.

This date was said to be precisely 1,440 years after Noah's ark, with its cargo of surviving animals had come to rest on dry land after the great biblical Flood, when the storm clouds of the Flood finally parted and the divine light had shone through, bringing a new covenant between God and humankind. Moreover, Solomon and his astronomer-priests believed that the previous *Shekinah* appearance, 480 years earlier, had occurred as Moses led his people through the Red Sea.

The *Shekinah* was something greater than Yahweh, Ashtoreth or any other single god alone. Solomon understood that the light of the glorious *Shekinah* heralded the mating of the total goddess with the entire world of men. The forces of the god and goddess merged as one. This was the entire world of humans linking with the realm of the gods – Earth and heaven united as one.

It seems that the 'male' shaft of light from the star above was understood to pierce the 'female' and fertile soil; as the interchange reached its climax, the identities of the male and female merged as one. As in the sexual act, they became a single entity with all attributes blurred and united: softness and hardness, physicality and intellectuality, aggression and love, pain and ecstasy. All polarity between the female earth and the male phallus of the beam of channelled light changed so fast they became one – male and female simultaneously, exploding in an orgasm of power and fertility.

Since the fifth millennium BC, temples had been built to channel the light of Venus through openings to carry them deep into the earth at astronomically important moments. Perhaps the greatest of them all was the structure that still stands today at Newgrange in Ireland. A thousand years older than the Great Pyramid and more than 2,000 years older than Solomon's Temple, this extraordinary building allows the light of Venus to penetrate into its central womb once every eighth winter solstice.<sup>3</sup>

Solomon's motive was certainly more complex than a desire simply to fulfil the wish of his father.

David by building a temple in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh. He wanted more than that – a temple that would act like a machine to produce a response to the light of the Shekinah. This was quite different to a temple of simple worship – it was a carefully constructed mechanism that would act as a conduit to all gods: a kind of telecommunications centre between mankind and the realm of the divine beings that controlled the future and could deliver success or failure to earthly kings.

To become a ‘real’ king with unquestionable power Solomon needed a Shekinah communication device that would connect him, through his god Yahweh, to the cosmos above. Unfortunately, neither he nor any of his priests knew the secret of building such a structure.

## **Hiram the Mason**

The Ark of the Covenant and its divine contents had to be in place to receive the light of the glorious Shekinah. However, whilst Solomon knew all about the importance of these Shekinah appearances, neither he nor any of his people had the astronomical knowledge to build a temple that would work as a perfect Shekinah observatory. For this reason, Solomon had to ask Hiram, the new king of the Phoenician city-state of Tyre, on the coast of present-day Lebanon, to help him with suitable timber, qualified workers and a priestly engineer who understood the workings of the gods. In return, Solomon taxed his people mightily, extracting economically disastrous amounts of produce such as oil, corn and wine to be shipped to Tyre.

The sophisticated people of Tyre were wealthy and highly educated. Ashtoreth, or Astarte, was the chief deity, and their understanding of the movements of Venus was unparalleled, even in comparison to the astronomer-priests of Egypt and Babylon.

The man sent by the Phoenician king to take charge of creating the new Temple in Jerusalem was Hiram Abif, a master craftsman and a high priest, perhaps descended from the Kenite clan. All of the stonemasons he selected to build the Temple were also priests – most probably with veneration for a number of gods as well as the mighty Ashtoreth and their own tribal god, Yahweh.

It seems possible that Hiram Abif had Kenite ancestry because he was, above all, a skilled metalworker, and it was he who created the two freestanding decorated bronze pillars known as Boaz and Jachin that were erected in front of the Temple, marking the solstice extremes of the sun on the horizon.

With the aid of Hiram Abif, the foundation stone of the new Temple was duly laid in 967 BC, four years after Solomon had taken the throne in Jerusalem and two years after Hiram had become king of Tyre. It seems probable that one of King Hiram’s first official acts was to send his namesake to plan out the Jerusalem Temple. It would have taken at least one full year to make the astronomical observations and calculations required to design a temple that would work with the coming Shekinah.

The exact centre of the Temple had to be erected on the high ground to the north of the city, on what is now part of the Temple Mount, so that the light of the rising sun would break the horizon at precise points on the hillside to the east throughout the year. The sun rises due east twice a year, once in the spring and once in the autumn, on the two equinoxes, when there are exactly 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness.

An observer visiting the proposed site of the Temple at dawn every day for a year, beginning with the spring equinox, would see the sun rise earlier and further to the north on the horizon each morning for precisely three months until the summer solstice – the point in the year with the most hours of daylight. From that point, the time of dawn would get later and the point of sunrise would return

towards the east, reaching the centre point (due east) again three months later at the autumn equinox. ~~The dawn would continue to be later and later as the sun rose each day a little further to the south~~ until, after another three months, it reached its extremity at the winter solstice – the shortest day.

If one were to take a photograph of the sunrise each morning and make a film of it, the effect would be like a pendulum swinging, with the equinoxes at the centre and the solstices at the extremes of the sun's swing across the horizon. Such knowledge was fundamental for astronomer-priests 3,000 years ago.

The location of Jerusalem was no accident, because it is an ideal place from which to observe sunrises and sunsets. The angle of shadows cast by the rising and setting sun vary by longitude. At the equator, every day is more or less equally divided into light and dark and the sun rises due east and sets due west. At the poles, the sun never sets in summer and never rises in winter. In between these extremes, the angle between the two solstices increases the further one travels away from the equator. The latitude of Jerusalem is  $31^{\circ} 47'$  north, which means that the angle of the shadows cast by the winter and summer solstices is precisely 60 degrees.

To observe this, all that was necessary was to draw a circle on the ground and place a vertical stick in the east and another on the other side in the west.

On the morning of the winter solstice the easterly stick would cast a shadow 30 degrees north of the centre and that evening the westerly stick would cast a shadow 30 degrees south of west. The reverse would be the case at the summer solstice, creating a diamond shape inside the circle. A north-south line across both angles produces a signature that is unique to this latitude – and at Jerusalem it forms the perfect six-pointed star that is known as either the Seal of Solomon or the Star of David.

So, the symbol that has relatively recently become the emblem of Judaism and of the modern state of Israel is a solar diagram that celebrates the remarkable geographical position that the city of Jerusalem occupies.

Hiram Abif would have understood this perfectly well, because Jerusalem had been a famous place of worship for this very reason since the Stone Age. But his interest was in more than just the basic sunrise and sunset patterns. The name 'Jerusalem' in the Canaanite language means 'foundation for observing Venus rising', and Hiram wanted to calculate the movements of Venus and of the highly complex patterns of the Shekinah as it rises ahead of the sun.

Any visitor to Jerusalem today will be told that Solomon's Temple was built on the Dome of the Rock where the Al-Aqsa mosque has stood for around fourteen and a half centuries. This is the very highest point of the hill – but it is not the place where the Jewish Temple once stood.

We believe that Solomon's Temple was built a little further to the north, at a site now known as the 'Dome of the Spirits'. The reason for this belief is the alignment to the hillside to the west, which has always made Jerusalem special. This tiny dome is only a few hundred years old but beneath it is the holiest spot on Earth. It marks the east-west line running from the peak of the Mount of Olives (Olivet), viewed through the Golden Gate, through to the two domes of the Holy Sepulchre in the west. It was upon the peak of Olivet, according to the Mishnah, that the high priest used to stand when he sacrificed the Red Heifer. During this ceremony it is said he would have had to look into the holy of holies of the Temple and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice in its direction. More importantly, the light of the Shekinah would rise in the east above the peak, pass through the Golden Gate and penetrate the dormer window of Solomon's Temple, where it would shine on the Ark of the Covenant.

Quite independently of Chris Knight's researches in this area, Professor Asher Kaufman from the

University of Notre Dame has argued exactly the same theory without any reference to the Shekinah.

The early Muslims under the Caliph Omar first occupied Jerusalem and the Temple Mount in AD 638 with the intention of building a great mosque on the holy spot known to them as the *Shtiah* rock. The Caliph's men discovered the exact spot among the ruins of the Temple thanks to helpful Jews who pointed out the correct place amongst the piles of rubble. Later, Abd el-Malik built the Dome of the Rock in this place. This fact is recorded in many sources of both Jews and non-Jews, such as in the Cairo Geniza. Elsewhere in the Geniza, it is written that Jews came to Jerusalem with Omar and showed him the location of the Temple. A similar source to the Geniza states that Jewish guides helped to expose the *Shtiah* rock.

However, the Jewish people are passionate about their devastated Temple, which is the most sacred site in Judaism. Surely, common sense would suggest that they would *deliberately give the wrong information* to any non-Jews intent upon building on such a holy spot?

Perhaps we, and Professor Asher Kaufman, are causing some small problems by raising this issue but none of the authorities of any religion in Jerusalem is going to admit to such a fact. Old conventions, however wrong, tend to have a life of their own and only the real cognoscenti will ever care anyway.

But let us return to the time of Solomon.

One can imagine the moment when the Shekinah arrived, as predicted, in 967 BC, 1,440 years after Noah's Flood – at the moment that the foundation stone of the new Temple was laid. The blazing star rose quickly in the east, its brilliant glow lighting the entire landscape, all present dropping to their knees as the light of heaven shone down upon them. It lasted for ten minutes or more before the red orb of the rising sun spilled across the horizon.

## **Secrets of the Temple**

Then, as now, knowledge is power. The Israelites expected the Phoenician craftsman Hiram Abif not only to build the Temple but also to explain to them the secrets of astronomy and the rituals required to make it work as a conduit to the gods.

The Old Testament does not elaborate on the details of the construction work of the Temple, but perhaps surprisingly, the oral traditions of Freemasonry do. They describe events surrounding the building of King Solomon's Temple in considerable detail, and the Masonic ritual of the Third Degree is an important part of that information.



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