

The Pillars and the Promises

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In every Masonic lodge room you will find two pillars. I will paraphrase the ritual so you can't be a stickler on any mistakes I might make. The one on the North was called Boaz and denoted strength. The one to the South was named Jachin and signified to establish. Taken together they allude to a promise made by God, to David. "In strength will I establish this mine house and kingdom forever."

Now, forever is a long time. And if we examine this, we have some questions. The first question is: If there is one promise, why are there two pillars? In the study of symbolism we find that a freestanding pillar with no structural meaning is always used to represent, or be a symbol of a covenant. We can get a pile of blocks and pile them up here and say, "As long as that stands, our agreement stands." Which gives you a nice convenient way to break your agreement, simply knock over the pile of rocks, but that's another story. King Solomon's temple had a large aisle or porch at the entrance to which there were two brazen pillars set up. They had no structural meaning in any way, which means that they were purely symbolic.

Since there were two pillars, and a pillar is a representation of a covenant or promise, there are actually two promises. God said, "In strength will I establish this (1) mine house and (2) kingdom forever". God is talking about *His* house and kingdom forever. Obviously, that wasn't the alluded to promise made to David. So, what was the promise made to David? That's a good question... I hope that before this paper is over you'll have the answer.

In order to answer that question, we need to review the promises made throughout the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. The first promise alluded to in the Bible was that Adam, and therefore all of his children, would some day be redeemed from his fall by some action of God. That's the promise of the Messiah. The implementation of that promise began with the call of Abraham. In Genesis 17:verses 4-7, God said:

"As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee to thy seed after thee."

Let it be noted that this Covenant is an Everlasting Contract. Concerning this Covenant it is said in Hebrews 6:13-20 that because God had sworn it by an oath and because it was impossible for God to lie, the covenant is immutable. The covenant was unalterable, unchangeable, and everlasting, which means IT MUST EXIST TODAY.

We still haven't gotten to the promise that God made to David...

Abraham was also promised a tremendous number of descendants.

“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” [Gen. 13:16].

“And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” [Gen. 28:14].

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be” [Gen.15:5].

“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore: and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” [Gen. 22:17].

“And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” [Gen. 32:12]

This promise, and set of promises, was passed from Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob. A little problem came up in the middle. Sarah laughed when Abraham said she was going to bear a son and he was to be named Isaac. She was laughing because she was beyond the childbearing age, so she told him to take her handmaid and have his child. He did that, and Ishmael was born. Ishmael's followers argued that since he's the firstborn, he gets the birthright. But God said Isaac was the promised birthright child. God got the last laugh, Sarah discovered that she was pregnant! By the way, Isaac means laughing. The fight's been going on ever since.

That blessing was passed onto Isaac's son. His name was originally Jacob. While on an outing he laid down to rest. He rested his head on a rock and fell asleep. In his sleep he saw a vision of a stairway, or ladder going up to heaven and angels of God coming up and down it, and God standing at the top of the ladder. And when he awakened, he said, “Surely God is in this place”. And he took oil and anointed that stone. He called it Beth El, which in Hebrew means, house of God. And said, “Wherever this stone is, is the house of God”.

Hint: That stone may be a key to God's promise to David and its fulfillment!

God changed Jacob's name at that point to Israel. He had 12 sons, and we all should know the story of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Now we cruise forward in time, and we find that we have David as king. Boy, did I leave a lot out! Now it's time to get to the point of our story. I have to risk boring you by reading some Bible verses, so bear with me because I have to set the context of all of this, or it won't fit with that exact nicety that we are used to finding.

We read in 2nd Samuel, Chapter 7: *“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the King, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee. And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus sayeth the Lord, Shalt thou build me a house to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus sayeth the Lord of hosts, I took thee from a sheepecote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee withersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime. And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: Thy throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

This brings up an interesting question. “Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel”. They already had a place didn’t they? They’re living in the Holy Land, why do they need a place appointed for them? Good question. That means that God knew that at some point in the future, they weren’t going to be there. They would build King Solomon’s Temple, but they wouldn’t be there later on. However, the throne would be established forever. Interesting. Let’s move on.

Psalm 89. Starting with verse 29. *“His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once I have sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.”* Wow, pretty strong stuff. One last one and then I can establish the context, and we can go forward.

This is from Jeremiah the prophet. Chapter 33, starting with verse 17. *“For thus sayeth the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;”*

There’s our promise! Let me re-read that. *“For thus sayeth the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel”*. Never!

“Neither shall the priests of the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying, “Thus sayeth the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites, the priest, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David, my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, “Considerest thou not what this people has spoken saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more nation before them. Thus sayeth the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven of earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity return, have mercy on them.”

Have I made the point that God said he was going to establish these things forever? Have I now revealed to you, what the promise was that God made to David? David shall never want a man to sit upon his throne. He further said, as long as there is a sun and a moon making their daily appointments, David will not want for a man to sit upon his throne. I ask you, if the sun and the moon made their revolutions today, where’s David’s throne? Since I probably didn’t get an answer, I guess I’ll have to try and throw some things at you to think about. The first thing I want you to do is to go back to Genesis 48, 49. We find there Jacob, now Israel, is about to die, and he calls his sons before him, including Joseph who is now the number two man in all of Egypt, and says, “Bring my sons before me that I may bless them.” If you read the blessing, and look at the symbolic character that he gave to each of his sons, you can find them today. And then he did something very special. He called Joseph over and said, you’re the number two man in Egypt. There’s nothing I can bless you with. But, nevertheless, I will.” And he did. He then said, “Who are these two lads?” Joseph said, “They’re my two sons.” And he said, “Bring them to me that I may bless them.” And he did. The custom was to put the oldest on the right, and the youngest on the left, so that the right hand would go upon the head of the oldest, who would receive the first blessing. Joseph brought them over and set them before him. Israel knowing what he was doing, took his hands and crossed them. Joseph said, “My father, you err”, to which he replied, “No, I know what I’m doing. The older will serve the younger.” Ephraim was to become the head of many nations. But his brother Manasseh would break away from him and become a great nation.

Well, who are these people today? Can we find these people today? If we look at all these promises that I read to you, we *can* find these people today. Where are we going to look for them? Well, we know that after the building of the temple, and the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam was made king. And ten of the tribes to the north started a “tax revolt.” Yeah, nothing’s changed has it? “You’ve taxed us to death, they said, we’ve had enough. We want tax reform!” Rehoboam went to the old men and said, “What shall I do?” and they said, “Reform the taxes”. He then went to the young men and they said, “Double the taxes”. Well, this caused the rift that split the kingdom into two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel, and the Kingdom of Judah. Those of you in the York Rite should know that 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar came to the kingdom of Judah, the Assyrians had already removed the entire Kingdom of Israel from the area. And, therefore, after the captivity, when they went back the bulk of the people were not of the Twelve Tribes of the House of Israel, but could have had some sprinkling of that. Most of them were of the Kingdom of Judah, and there is some question as to whether the Benjamites stayed with them or not, but that’s another story.

But, what do we have here? The House of Israel is gone. Where are all these people? Can we find them today? We know one thing: Ephraim was one of the larger tribes of the House of Israel. If you’re a York Rite Mason, you know their banner contained the bull ox. You know anybody called Johnny Bulls today? I’ll let you think about that. They had a monarchy and Jeroboam was made their king. The Assyrians moved them to the Caucasus mountains area but they were not slaves. They were actually free. But anyone wanting to get to the Assyrians had to get through them first, and they’re not going to let that happen. So, it was a buffer, a common military tactic at the time. But they were free. They went forward from there, northwestward, and every place they went, they left a circle of stones. Which was a custom they picked up back in Joshua’s day. Build a circle of stones. I don’t know all the details, but I just know that they built a circle of stones. Maybe there was some particular headstone or something that pointed them in the right direction. Where do we find the longest-lasting, biggest circle of stones? Anybody know of a flag that’s got something like crossed arms on it? Now, if we take a look at that, do we have a monarchy, that is a group of many nations? Now, if we look at Israel, there were Twelve Tribes, but Joseph’s blessing was split into two. Ephraim and Manasseh became two tribes, sometimes referred to as one, sometimes individually. But the older was to serve the younger. Manasseh served Ephraim. But if we took Twelve Tribes and split that last blessing wouldn’t we have a thirteenth tribe? Look at Ephraim and look at the promise. His brother would break away from him and become a great nation. Do we know anybody that broke away from Ephraim and became a great nation whose number is 13?

Between the two of them, do they possess the gates of their enemies? Can you pass through the North Sea, the Straits of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, around India, Hong Kong, around South Africa, around South America, the Panama Canal or the Bering Strait, without answering to one of the two of them? Do they possess the gates of their enemies? So, we are sitting here singing Irving Berlin’s beloved song, “God Bless America,” and He already did that, didn’t He? Our enemies would not afflict us. That’s what He promised. Have either one of them ever lost a war?

Now, I've gone way out on a limb. How does Masonry fit in with this? Well, let's see. Everywhere Ephraim colonized, and through a lot of Western Europe, and through America, God gave us a constant reminder, through Masonry, of our Hebrew heritage and who we are. Those two pillars remind us of his promise. People who meet in rooms like this, for the most part, know and love the Lord. And they look forward to some day in the future when things will change. And we're in that celestial lodge above where peace and harmony will truly prevail. Where did that spirit come from? That spirit has been here since time immemorial.

We all should know the story of how Nebuchadnezzar thought he could beat God. And from all appearances, it looks like he did. What did he do? He went to the Holy Land, and the ones he didn't kill, he hauled off to slavery in Babylon. Zedekiah, whom he referred to as a covenant breaker, was the last of the Davidic line. He murdered all of his sons before his very eyes, put out his eyes and hauled him off to prison in Babylon to die. Perfect. No male heirs to pass on the birthright. "I win," says Nebuchadnezzar. But he made one tiny mistake, playing by Nebuchadnezzar's rules in a fight with God. He let Jeremiah the prophet and his servant Baruch and Zedekiah's daughter go free. Not realizing, that in Numbers 27 and 36 this subject was discussed. What if there are no male heirs? The birthright then goes through the daughter to her firstborn son, provided she marries into her own tribe. Nebuchadnezzar let her go free carrying that birthright.

The Bible is silent on the subject at that point, but the Chronicles of the Kings of Ireland are not. I am thankful to E. Raymond Capt for his book "Jacob's Pillar" for much of what follows. They talk about an old man, whom they called Ollam Fodhla, who came to their country with his servant Berach, and the daughter of a Pharaoh, meaning a princess. And 'the' stone. Not 'a' stone, but 'the' stone. While leaving Egypt, she had met and married a Milesian, Zarah of the Judah line, her tribe. Sometime after arriving in Ireland, their first born son, Eochaidh, is crowned King of Ireland. Later, when the Princes of Ireland claimed Scotland, they named it after their mother, Scotia, Zedekiah's daughter. The stone, they called Leafael.

Now, we find Masonry spread throughout the world by these people. You will find the pillars from Solomon's temple. All of this so that God could continually say to us, "What do you mean I didn't remind you of who you were? Didn't I show you? Didn't I make it plain? Don't you know who you are? I've given you all these signs, all these promises, and said I can't lie. I have kept all the promises."

Masonry is God's gift to us, His people Israel, to remind us who we are. And to show us through these stories that we tell, that he was faithful to his word. The sun and moon make their revolution today, we now know where David's throne is and we know who's sitting on it. And we know the identity of Ephraim and Manasseh today. Threw in Ireland and Scotland as a surprise. What more can I say? I love Masonry because God gave it to me, and to you, to remind us of Him. Masonry is here for all, especially those who worship God as Jews, Moslems or Christians, for when we refer to Yahweh, Allah, or Jesus, we all mean the God of our common biological father, Abraham, don't we? We truly are brothers!