

HISTORICAL LECTURE

Companions, there are three epochs in Freemasonry which peculiarly merit your attention, namely, the retrospective periods of the First, or Holy Lodge; of the Second, or Sacred Lodge; and of the Third, or Grand and Royal Lodge.

The First, or Holy Lodge, was opened in the third month after the exodus of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, by Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel, on Holy Ground at the foot of Mount Horeb in the wilderness of Sinai. Here the Almighty had previously revealed himself to Moses, speaking to him out of the flame of fire in the midst of the bush, and had commissioned him His high ambassador; of wrath and destruction against Pharaoh and his people, but of deliverance and freedom to the House of Israel; and had said unto him: Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. In accordance with this promise, (and in fulfilment of this token), the hosts of Israel were now assembled, to offer up their thanksgivings to the Most High for their signal deliverance from the hands of the Egyptians. Here a second time the Almighty had spoken to Moses 'face to face' as a man speaketh unto a friend, and during his wondrous sojourn of forty days and forty nights upon the mountain, had dictated to him the forms of those mysterious prototypes, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. Here were delivered the Tables of the Sacred Law, 'graven by the finger of God', containing those sublime and comprehensive precepts of religious and moral duty, the Ten Commandments; and here also were dictated by the unerring wisdom of the Most High those peculiar forms of civil and religious polity, which by separating the Hebrews from all other nations consecrated Israel unto Himself as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. This lodge was held upon the very spot where Moses had stood when he first beheld the flame of fire in the midst of the bush; and Moses said: 'I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt'. And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is Holy Ground'. For this reason, and because here the Holy Law was first delivered to the people, we distinguish this as the First or Holy Lodge.

S.K.I., H.K.T., and H.A.B. presided over the Second, or Sacred Lodge, which was opened on the holy Mount Moriah, upon the piece of ground where the Holy of Holies was about to be erected, and where, in the time of the Second Temple, the solemn Sanhedrin afterwards assembled. Here, a foretime, Abraham had proved his matchless faith, by placing his son, his only son, a destined victim on the Altar of his God, Here, while the ground

was occupied as the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, David had offered up the mediatorial sacrifice by which the plague was stayed; and here also he received through the prophet Nathan, the promise that one of his seed should build a house for God's Name, a promise now on the point of fulfilment in that magnificent Temple, which was shortly to be completed by his illustrious son. In this place had God specially declared that He would establish his Sacred Name forever; wherefore we denominate this the Second, or Sacred Lodge.

The Third, or Grand and Royal Lodge, was also held at Jerusalem, and was opened shortly after the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, by Z prince of the people, H. the prophet, and J. the son of Josedech the High Priest. At this time the kingly power was in some measure restored, in the person of Z. to the royal line of David, and the princely tribe of Judah; and from that time there was not wanting a man to sit on the throne of his father David, until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus, in the seventieth year of the Christian era; thus verifying the prediction of Jacob in Egypt, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh came.

To commemorate this restoration, we, in every regular R.A. Chapter, acknowledge the representation of the Grand and Royal Lodge of Jerusalem, and of Z.H. and J., who presided over it, in the persons of our Three Ps., who severally bear those names. Our two Scribes, named respectively E. and N., represent those two ancient Companions who bore those names E. the faithful and learned Scribe in God's Law and N. the Kings cupbearer, who were mainly instrumental in the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and in rebuilding the Temple and the Holy City. The P.S and his two Assistants represent the three faithful Sojs. by whom the S ... s of the R.A. were recovered. For this service they were rewarded with seats in the august Sanhedrin, an assembly or council consisting of seventy-two of the Rulers or Elders of the people, who are here represented by the rest of the Companions now present.