




## THE CAPTIVITY

The Lodge in which we as M.E.M. now work, and in which we confer the Degree of M.E.M. on those who are found worthy, is presumed to represent the Grand Lodge of Excellent Master which existed In Babylon during “the seventy years of the captivity.”   

The period began in the third year of Jehoiakim, and ended in the first year of Cyrus. Shortly after the death of the wise King of Israel disaster came upon his dominions. During the reign of Rehoboam, his son and successor, ten of the twelve tribes revolted and as a consequence the Jewish people were divided into separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

The Kingdom of Judah retained Possession of the Temple, but presently Jerusalem was attacked from without, and after a series of stirring events, it was finally captured and looted by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who carried away captives first Jehoiakim and finally Zedekiah, the last king of Judah,

The City surrendered at midnight in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah to Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian Guards.

According to the Masonic tradition that general rifled the Temple of its sacred vessels, (other authorities maintain that the treasures of the house of God had been carried off at an earlier date), set the Temple and City on fire, and carried the citizens captive to Babylon, the ancient capital of Chaldea, situated on both sides of the Euphrates, and once one of the most magnificent cities of the ancient world.

At length, in the seventieth year of their captivity, Cyrus on his ascending the throne and commiserating the calamity which had befallen the ancient people of the Lord, issued an edict granting them permission to return to Zion and rebuild the Temple which the earlier king had laid in ruins.

Here in alien surroundings, the Jewish captives continued for three score years and ten, during these years, they would naturally seek to preserve their identity in the land of their captors; and such of them as followed the Masonic Craft, would find a common meeting place in the Lodge.

Only those who were descendants of the children of the captivity were admitted membership, and doubtless at their meetings they would frequently sigh for their old home, from which they were exiled.

At length, in the seventieth year of their captivity, Cyrus on his ascending the throne and commiserating the calamity which had befallen the ancient people of the Lord, issued an edict granting them permission to return to Zion and rebuild the Temple which the earlier King had laid in ruin.

This, they were slow to do. Under the care of Zerubbabel the prince of Judah, who was assisted by Joshua the High Priest, and Haggai, the Scribe, they returned to the land of their fathers. But, previous to their departure, they agreed upon certain signs and tokens to mark them out from the rest of their brethren. These were communicated in the Lodge of Excellent Masters which was arranged and furnished after the pattern of a Craft Lodge with this difference that it was divided into separate compartments.

**10 May 1974**