

## THE PRIMEVAL CRAFTSMAN



In passing through the Royal Arch Degree, each candidate encounters the names of two ancient craftsmen who contributed much to the adorning of the great Temple of King Solomon.

In Exodus 31:2-6, is recorded a message from God naming Bezaleel of the Tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the Tribe of Dan to have charge of the cutting of the stone, the carving of the wood and the fashioning of the gold, silver and brass employed in the construction of the Temple. The Lord filled them with great wisdom, knowledge and comprehension in all manner of workmanship in His spirit.

Bezaleel was an exceptional teacher, equally gifted in inspiring others in the acquisition of knowledge and operative expertise. Bezaleel, whose name means, 'in the shadow of God,' was the son of Uri of the Tribe of Judah. He was an able craftsman in the fashioning of wood, silver, brass and cloth. Filled with wisdom and knowledge in all manner of things by the Divine Spirit, he engaged in building and furnishing the Tabernacle.

To complement the skills of Bezaleel in this holy endeavour, the Lord called upon Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach of the Tribe of Dan. Aholiab, whose name means 'father's tent,' possessed great skill in working with fine linens and was equally adept as an engraver on wood. It would seem probable that he began his labours as a tent maker, an essential trade of this era, acquiring this skill while a slave in Egypt before the Exodus.

In addition to his ability as craftsman, Aholiab had, also, the quality of teaching others and to superintend their efforts. The Lord chose Aholiab to assist Bezaleel in the construction of His Holy House.

These two men were especially adept in working with wood from the acacia tree which grew in abundance in the region. This wood was light in weight, durable and well suited to the construction of a structure that might be easily carried by the children of Israel in their wandering across the desert.

The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant would forever be the dwelling place of God with His people Israel only the finest in craftsmanship, design and construction would suffice in this awesome and sacred endeavour. Aholiab and Bezaleel would perform their ordained labour in the highest standards of their ability.

The Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle which held it became the most revered symbols of the Israelite nation and represented their true and unending devotion to God. The building of the House of the Lord was the centre of endeavour for the whole nation. All men of Israel were expected to contribute to its creation under the supervision of these two noble craftsmen chosen by the Lord accompanied by King David and King Solomon to carry to completion His divine plan.

At the dedication of that most magnificent edifice, their labours were accepted and approved by the "voice of His thunders" from on high. In the best tradition of Capitular Masonry, the roles taken by Bezaleel and Aholiab strongly represent, in truth, that the greatest reward to be received by the skilled craftsman is the approval of his own conscience.

Above all, it is demonstrated, by their good effects, that labour dignified and enhanced by knowledge and by love is the true worship of the Supreme Being. It is the union of labour, light and love which demonstrates to the world at large the real character of Freemasonry.

The words expressed, by the writer, George Brown, "The noblest workers of this world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves," forms a fitting close to this brief paper.

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