

2011

# La Masonería en el mundo – Israel (1)

Archivo C I E M - Madrid

Documentación - países

Adrian Mac Liman  
Centro Ibérico de Estudios Masónicos (CIEM)  
03/04/2011



# Contemporary Freemasonry in the

## Holy Land - Israel

*Modified and communicated by Dr. Daniel Farhey, Jacob Caspi Lodge, Haifa, Israel*  
*References by <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/zeldisfr.html> Leon Zeldis , FPS,*  
*Editor, The Israel Freemason:*

- *"Israeli Freemasonry,"*
- *"Jerusalem - Symbolic Cradle of Freemasonry,"*
- *"World Masonic Conference in Mexico," and*
- *"International Masonic Peace Prize."*

The first National Grand Lodge in Israel was constituted on 1933, even before the creation of the State, and brought together all the Lodges that had been working under Egyptian or French jurisdictions. The English-speaking lodges, however, refused to join and continued working separately. Lack of recognition by the United Grand Lodge of England resulted in almost complete international isolation. There was need for the creation of a Grand Lodge, that would achieve "unity" and recognition abroad. This ideal was realized in 1953 when, in an impressive ceremony conducted in Jerusalem by Brother the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, the [Grand Lodge of the State of Israel](#) was consecrated and Shabetay Levy (Mayor of Haifa) was installed as its first Grand Master.

Jacob Caspi was one of the founders of the "united" Grand Lodge. He also founded the "Caspi" international navigation company in Haifa. "Jacob Caspi Lodge" of Haifa is one of the most active and popular lodges in Israel. "Mount Carmel Lodge" of Haifa works in English. The Masonic Temple of Haifa is located on Mount Carmel, 119 Hanassi Blvd.

From 30 Lodges at its foundation, the number of Lodges working under the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel has grown during the years, reaching some 70 active lodges at this time. The last to be consecrated, in 1993, was the French-speaking "France" Lodge of Jerusalem, in the presence of the Grand Master of the (regular) French National Grand Lodge.

The historic origins of Freemasonry in the Holy Land date from the 13th of May, 1868 (the first recorded Masonic ceremony in Israel), when Dr. Robert Morris, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky (a lawyer and educator from Boston, Massachusetts, and the founder of the Order of the Eastern Star in the U.S.), directed a Secret Monitor Ceremony in the Cave of Zedekiah, popularly known as King Solomon's Quarries, deep under the walls of the old city of Jerusalem. Morris worked unceasingly to erect the first regular Masonic Lodge in the Holy Land, and in 1873 he finally succeeded in obtaining a charter from the Grand Lodge of Canada (Ontario) for the "Royal Solomon Mother Lodge" #293, working "at the city of Jerusalem or adjacent places". This was the first regular Lodge in Israel. Most of its founding members were American settlers living in Jaffa, belonging to a Christian sect called the Church of the Messiah. In 1866, they had left Jonesport, Maine, for the Holy Land, with the avowed intention of founding an agricultural settlement. Robert Morris was supposed to be the lodge's first Master, but it appears that he could not arrive, and Rolla Floyd, one of the leaders of the American group took his place. The lodge had a

difficult existence and after a few years stopped reporting to the Grand Lodge of Canada. It was finally erased in 1907.

The next Masonic lodge to be formed in Israel was officially established in Jaffa. Around 1890, a group of Arab and Jewish Brethren petitioned the Misraim (Egypt) Rite, based in Paris, but active at the time in Egypt, and founded the Lodge "Le Port du Temple de Roi Salomon" (The Port of King Solomon's Temple), working in French. Not long after its creation, the Lodge received a large influx of affiliate members, French engineers who had come to build the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway, the first in Palestine. The arrival of the French engineers led some writers to conclude that they founded the Jaffa Lodge, though this was not the case.

In 1906, realizing that the Misraim Rite was unrecognized by most Grand Lodges of the world, the Jaffa brethren decided to change the lodge's affiliation to the Grand Orient of France, which was very active throughout the Middle East. They adopted a new name, Barkai (Dawn), and eventually become integrated into the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. Lodge Barkai is the oldest in the country still in existence and, although it now works in Hebrew, rather than French, it preserves many features of the French rituals.

Three other Lodges were constituted before World War I, when the country became a British Mandate. Under British rule, a number of Lodges were chartered by the Grand Lodges of Egypt, Scotland and England, and the Grand Orient of France. Some of these Lodges are still in existence to this day.

Five German-speaking lodges were founded in 1931 by the Grand Master of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, Otto Mueffelman. He realized that the rise of Hitler in Germany sounded the death knell for Freemasonry in his country. With the help of German Brethren who had emigrated to Israel to escape the racial laws of the Nazis, he founded lodges in the three main cities: Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, and Haifa. Soon after, Freemasonry was indeed banned in Germany, the Grand Lodges disbanded, and many Brethren met their fate in the concentration camps. German-speaking lodges in Israel (and also in Chile) kept alive the flame of German Freemasonry during those dark years and, after the end of the war, were instrumental in restoring regular Freemasonry to Germany. Today, Freimaurer-Loge "Mueffelman Zur Treue" of Tel-Aviv works in German.

Most Israeli lodges work in Hebrew and the vast majority of their members is Jewish, although there are no statistical numbers on the religious affiliation of Israeli Masons, because no such question is ever asked of a candidate. Arabic-speaking Brethren, whether Christian, Muslim, or Druse (and even Jews originally from Arab countries) work in five lodges, in Acre, Haifa, Nazareth, and Jerusalem. An Arab lawyer, Jamil Shalhoub, was elected Grand Master for 1981 and reelected the following year.

Israel is a country of immigrants. The cosmopolitan origin of its population is reflected in the large number of lodges operating in foreign languages. Apart from Israel's two official languages (Hebrew and Arabic), there are lodges working in six other languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Rumanian, and Turkish.

These lodges differ not only in language, but also in their rituals. Hebrew and Arabic-speaking lodges generally work according to standard rituals approved by the Grand Lodge, based on the English rituals. Foreign-language lodges generally use the rituals habitual in their countries of origin. "Lodge Raanana," for instance which was founded by immigrants from South-Africa and Rhodesia, uses the Netherlands ritual. Spanish-

speaking lodges use the Scottish Rite ritual, widely used in Latin America and Spain.

Freemasonry is one of the few institutions that actively promotes better understanding between the different ethnic and cultural segments of Israel society, particularly between Jewish and Arab Brethren, and also assists in the social integration of immigrants.

Three Volumes of the Sacred Law are opened side by side upon the altar in every lodge in Israel: the Hebrew Bible (TaNaCH), The Christian Bible, and The Koran. The official seal of the Grand Lodge encloses the symbols of the three great monotheistic religions: The Jewish Star of David, Christian Cross, and Muslim Crescent, all intertwined within the square and compasses. Frequently, joint meetings are held between lodges, so that sometimes three or more different languages are heard in the course of a single meeting.

Individual lodges and Grand Lodge itself perform numerous charitable activities, including donations of expensive medical equipment to hospitals, help to the blind and elderly, and food for the needy. The Order maintains a parents' home in Nahariya, a town near the Lebanese border.

Grand Lodge meets in Tel-aviv, but there are Masonic Temples in all important cities, from Nahariya in the north to Eilat, Israel's southern port on the Red Sea. In Acre, the Masonic Temple is located in the Old City, in a building with the characteristic arches and vaults of medieval construction.

In Jerusalem, the "Freemasons Hall" inside King Solomon's Quarries (or Cave of King Zedekiah) are used several times a year to conduct masonic meetings, generally in the Mark Degree, usually conducted in English and attended by numerous Brethren from abroad. The underground quarry could explain what is written in the Bible, that no sound of metallic tools was heard at the building site of the Temple. If the stones were dressed underground, no noise would have reached the Temple site.

Jerusalem, the city of King David, who, in the 10th century B.C., unified the Holy Land under his rule and established Jerusalem as his capital. His son King Solomon built a Temple to the God of Israel which became the archetypical Temple in Western thought and a central subject in Masonic tradition. King Solomon's Temple already appears in the Old Charges of Operative Masons used by medieval lodges and many legendary and ritual features of various Masonic degrees are related to its construction and architecture.

For both Christians and Jews, Jerusalem is the focal point of the world, the place where heaven and earth touch each other (Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem). In the middle ages, some maps show Jerusalem as the center of the world, with Europe, Asia, and Africa radiating from it like the petals of a flower. Jerusalem is mentioned in the Old Testament no less than 656 times, in addition to other appellations such as "The Holy City", "The City of Truth", "The City of God", "The City of Peace", "The City of David", etc.

In 586 B.C., King Solomon's Temple was razed by Nebuchadnezzar. A second Temple was erected by Jews returning from the Babylonian exile in the 5th century B.C., and was rebuilt and greatly enlarged by King Herod.

The Western Wall (formerly known as the "Wailing Wall") is a striking remnant of the Herodian Temple. After the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, the whole area has been opened up and now a large section of the wall has been exposed, part of which can be

followed through underground passages. Some of the huge Herodian ashlar are among the largest construction stones in the world.

The newly-opened Museum of the History of Jerusalem, at King David's Tower, near the Old City's Jaffa Gate, gives a fascinating account of the city's 3000-year history. Other places in Israel with strong Masonic connections, such as Jaffa (Joppa) and Acre (Templars), are within driving distance of Jerusalem.

There are eight Lodges working in Jerusalem, all of them under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge. Most work in Hebrew, "Holy City Lodge" works in English. The Masonic Temple is located at 13 Ezrat Israel St., off the main thoroughfare of the New City, Jaffa Road. Other attractions in Jerusalem include the Israel Museum, where the original Dead Sea Scrolls are in exhibition, among many fascinating archeological discoveries, some of them thousands of years old. The world-famous Yad Vashem memorial perpetuates the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The recently-opened Bible Lands Museum explores the history, art, and architecture of the Holy Land throughout the ages.

In 1993, the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, celebrated its 40th anniversary. It maintains close fraternal ties with regular Grand Lodges throughout the world. Frequent visits by delegations and individual Brethren from abroad give testimony to the universality of our Order.

Despite its small size, the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel can be proud of having been able to foster and develop a true fraternal spirit within its Lodges even under the most trying external circumstances. We must endeavor to bring our message of enlightenment, toleration, and fraternal love to all, so helping to build a better world for our children.

An extraordinary meeting of world Freemasonry took place in Mexico on March 19-23, 1995. The assembly, summoned by the Grand Lodge "Valle de Mexico" to celebrate its 112th anniversary, was destined to examine, from a world masonic perspective, the challenges to be faced by the Fraternity in the third millenium. The conference was attended by 41 Grand Masters and accredited representatives from Grand Lodges all over the world.

In the concluding ceremonies at Acapulco, the "Charter of Anahuac" was issued, calling the world Masonry to intensify international cooperation and exchange of information, to be in a better position to face the challenges posed by the changing circumstances of contemporary life, the communications revolution, the threat of fundamentalism, etc.

A second world meeting has been programmed for 1996, in Portugal.

The Grand Lodge and Supreme Council of Argentine joined together to institute the "International Masonic Peace Prize", to be awarded to individuals, both Freemasons and others, as well as institutions, who have distinguished themselves in promoting peaceful coexistence and fraternity among men and nations. The prize was awarded this year for the first time, at an international ceremony held in Buenos Aires on March 28, 1995.