



The Master's Trestle-board

It is October and our meeting year of 2002 is drawing to a close. In the next several meetings we will be setting our course for the future. At our special communication on Oct. 3rd we began to assemble our slate of appointed officers for 2003 and we will hold our election of Elected Officers at the Stated Meeting on Thursday October 17th. This change of election date from November is to accommodate a Third Degree we plan to put on for Br. Mike Davis at our November 21st Stated Meeting.

Looking for some fun? Well look no further as we are going to have a card and board games night for our Special Communication on Thursday November 7th beginning at 6:30 PM. We will have finger-food and goodies to snack on. This is open to all members of your family, you may even bring friends. Brethren, please give us a clue as to the number in your party, we would not wish to run short of food & drink. We will have decks of regular cards but you will need to bring your own favorite specialty card deck or board game.

Sincerely,
WM Buck Strickland

The Wisdom of Rome

The month of October is: **THE MONTH TO PROMISE**. "In ancient Roman times, October marked an end to an intensely active period for farming as well as travel, commerce, and military conquest. During this fall month, farmers busily prepared for the coming of winter, making certain of adequate supplies and provisions to last through the dark cold months looming just ahead." We are in the last of the harvest months when winter squashes, late apples & pears and nuts are brought in. October is also the time that grapes are picked, crushed and fermented into wine. Late in this month the festival **Isia** (saluting the Goddess Isis) was held, from October 28th - November 3rd.

Veneration for the Egyptian Goddess Isis spread widely throughout the Mediterranean area during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E. (BC). Isis was the Great Mother Goddess and it was her acceptance of all people which gave her such widespread popularity. The Romans added her festival to their calendar in 40 C.E. (AD). Isis represented hope and gave meaning to people regarding the uncertainties of life. "In antiquity, this goddess found faithful worshipers among people of social rank dwelling in such far-flung lands as Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Britain, and the shores of the Arabian Gulf and Black Sea. The goddess Isis welcomed all and did not discriminate by gender, social class, wealth, or racial background. Isis bestowed her love on all peoples and was a goddess of redemption and forgiveness, welcoming those who had sinned equally with the sinless. Isis gave freely of love, compassion, and forgiveness, for she herself had known great sorrow. Isis, the Mother of Life, offered unconditional love."

The source of the goddesses' grief was the murder of her brother/husband Osiris. He was killed by his own brother Seth. Seth dismembered the body and scattered the parts. This was a devastating loss to Isis and her tears fell into the Nile river initiating its annual flood. Isis sought out and recovered all the parts except for the phallus. A miraculous mating between her and her dead husband resulted in the birth of their son Horus. Later Isis was able to bring Osiris back to life when she "breathed the wind of life into his nostrils. Osiris was reborn and resurrected in the image of his own posthumous son Horus." Isis was the arch type of other mother goddesses: Minerva, Venus, Diana, Juno and Ceres, to name a few. Many of the Isis shrines in Southern France become associated with either Mary Magdalene or Mary-Mother of God, as the Black Madonna. In Christianity Mary the Madonna took over many of the aspects of the older Mother Goddesses thus showing how important the divine feminine was for the common folk and how it still remains so in the Catholic Church.

It should not be lost on those of us in Freemasonry that our fraternity shares many common ideals with the cult of Isis. Equality between the genders (which we claim to have handed down to us from Euclid), love for our fellow humans, tolerance, forgiveness, faith and hope. To these last two we add charity.

Brethren, it is indeed time to prepare for the cold winter months ahead
but always in mind & heart
is the promise of a Spring to follow.

More next month - ; -SS John Browne

On Our Future: In our meeting of Thursday Oct. 3rd we talked some about a problem faced by many local lodges, poor attendance. This is indeed a problem but we also have another, more serious one, a nearly dried up pool of members willing to be Master. (When I suffered my heart attack I considered not serving a 2nd term as WM. A brother pointed out to me that if I did not serve we might as well "fold our tent." I decided to serve.) WM Buck Strickland is about to serve his second term and no one appears on the horizon ready or willing to serve after him. Brethren, we have three choices: someone steps up to be Master, we merge with another lodge, or, we fold our tent. Brothers, you are the solution to both these problems and we have only a short time to chart a course of action and put it into play. Many Lodges have had to merge, but regardless of our choice the execution of it will take planning and effort, please lend your hand. SS John Browne



Book Review

THE BIBLE UNEARTHED

The build up of Judah continued through the reign of King Ahaz and his successor King Hezekiah (727-698 BCE) but another fateful moment arrived in 705 BCE, upon the death of Sargon, Emperor of Assyria. King Hezekiah decided to enter into an anti-Assyrian coalition which was backed by Egypt. This move went awoul, just like that of King Hoshea, and with a similar result. The Assyrians won again devastating the countryside, but not to such a degree that it hurt their own economic interest. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh (698-642 BCE), reigned over a period of peace and rebuilding, but, he is raked-over in the Bible for allowing idolatry to return to the country-side, which his father had banished; earning Hezekiah the honor of being favorably compared to Solomon. The Biblical account of the siege of Jerusalem, indicating that the Assyrian army just up and walked away, does not square with history. "For all the Bible's talk of Hezekiah's piety and YHWH's saving intervention, Assyria was the only victor. Sennacherib fully achieved his goals: he broke the resistance of Judah and subjugated it. Hezekiah had inherited a prosperous state, and Sennacherib destroyed it."

Manasseh is followed by his son Amon, who is killed in a coup d'etat within two years and is replaced by Amon's eight year old son Josiah (639-609 BCE). "Josiah would reign in Jerusalem for thirty-one years and be praised as the most righteous king in the history of Judah, rivaling the reputation of even David himself. And during his reign the 'YHWH-alone' camp would once more come into power."

"This time, too, their passionate religious convictions and single-minded vision of the power of YHWH to protect Judah and Davidic dynasty against all earthly opponents would founder on the hard realities of history. But this time they would leave behind them a brilliant testament that would keep their ideas alive. Their great monument would be a timeless collection of Hebrew texts expressing their view of history and their hopes for the future. That collective saga would be the unshakable foundation for the Hebrew Bible we know today."

The reforms of King Josiah did not last, he was slain by the Pharaoh Necho II and Josiah's successor let the idolaters back into business. A few years later the kingdom of Judah was overrun by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (597 BCE). This Neo-Babylonian empire did not last long, it was conquered in 539 BCE by the Persians, led by Cyrus the Great. Cyrus allowed, in several waves, the return of exiled Judeans back to their homeland. "This is the moment in our story when we must change our terminology: the kingdom of Judah becomes Yehud—the Aramaic name of

the province in the Persian empire—and the people of Judah, the Judahites, will henceforth be known as Yehudim, or Jews." The returning exiles, lead by Sheshbazzar, carried with them the Temple treasures, settled in their homeland and laid the foundation for a new Temple. There were still hard times to be overcome but Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, sent Ezra the scribe, in about 458 BCE, to assist in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Once his task was completed, Ezra disappeared from the scene. "Yehud remained in the hands of the Persians for two centuries, until the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. It was then incorporated into the empires established by Alexander's successors, first that of the Ptolemies of Egypt, then that of the Seleucids of Syria. For more than 150 years after Alexander's conquest the priestly leaders of the province now known as Judea maintained the customs and observed the laws that had first been formulated in the time of King Josiah and that had been further codified and refined in the exilic and post-exilic periods.

"The American biblical scholar Frank Moore Cross long ago identified what he believed to be two distinct redactions, or editions, of the Deuteronomistic History, reflecting the difference in historical awareness before and after the exile. The earlier version, which is known in biblical scholarship as Dtr¹, was presumably written during the reign of Josiah and was, as we have argued, entirely devoted to furthering that monarch's religious and political aims. According to Cross and the many scholars who have followed him, the first Deuteronomistic History, Dtr¹, ended with the passages describing the great destruction of idolatrous high places throughout the country and the celebration of the first national Passover in Jerusa-



**Wear a smile
and have
friends;
wear a frown
and have
wrinkles.**

Calendar of Events

Oct. 17th is our stated meeting, at 6:30 PM we'll have a light meal. Lodge will begin at 7:30 PM. Noted item is Election of Officers for 2003.

Nov. 7th is our Special-6:30 PM, finger food and goodies to go along with your favorite card or board game.

Nov. 21st is our stated meeting. Come to the Open House from 4:30 -6:30 for food and then stay for Br. Mike Davis' Third Degree. The degree's first section will begin sharp at 7 PM. We'll pause briefly at 7:30 PM then continue the degree until finished.

lem." The second version (Dtr²) of Deuteronomistic History was written to account for later failures of the Jews to obey the LORD's commands and the earliest it could have been composed, based on Dtr¹, would have been 560 BCE. To be sure there were additional refinements made to these Five Books of Moses but the fundamental core books were in place by the end of King Josiah's reign.

"The Judeans, or Jews, became known throughout the Mediterranean as a community with a unique devotion to their God. At its heart were not only the shared laws, codes and rules of sacrifice, but the saga of national history that began with the call of Abraham in distant Ur and ended with the restoration of the Temple community by Ezra and Nehemiah in the post-exilic period....Nowhere else in the ancient world had such a powerful, shared saga been crafted: the Greek epics and myths spoke only by metaphor and example; Mesopotamian and Persian religious epics offered cosmic secrets but neither earthly history nor a practical guide to life. The Hebrew Bible offered both, providing a narrative framework in which every Jew could identify both family and national history. In short, the saga of Israel that had first crystallized in the time of Josiah became the world's first fully articulated national and social compact, encompassing the men, women, and children, the rich, the poor, and the destitute of an entire community." The End

A new book begins next month—j browne

To contribute to this newsletter please send your letter, comment, historical fact, poem or calendar announcement, by the 2nd Monday of each month, to:

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