

COMPARING EGYPTIAN OBELISKS & THE BRAZEN PILLARS

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The Brazen Pillars have much in common with the obelisks (Egyptian, *tekhenu* – Greek, *obeliskos*) of Dynastic Egypt, as pairs of obelisks could regularly be found flanking the portals of the pylons in ancient Egyptian temple architecture. Like the Brazen Pillars, obelisks were not load-bearing or necessary for any material support. Ergo, it may be assumed that these objects were meant to symbolize a concept, action or phenomenon. It has been suggested that the impetus behind the design of obelisks was to create a microcosmic representation of the effects of macrocosmic astronomical phenomena such as zodiacal light and sun pillars. [Gary and Talcott, *Stargazing in Ancient Egypt, Astronomy*, June 2006, pp. 62–67] This sort of terrestrial mirroring of celestial events was evidently very common in the region. [see: Robert Bauval's Orion correlation theory] Another possible scenario necessitating the erection of a pair of perpendicular columns could be that of orienting the edifice solstitially or equinoctially. There is a method by which the shadows produced by two closely-arranged poles (raised perpendicularly by means of a *plumb* line to stand at a *right angle* to a *level* plane – which may be accomplished by means of the Working Tools of a Fellowcraft Mason) may be observed in diurnal sunlight – or, more accurately, by the biannual solstitial events – to produce the north/south axis. Then, by the square-producing application of a 3:4:5 triangle [see: Pythagorean Triangle, 47th Proposition of Euclid], the north/south axis may be intersected by the east/west axis, thus producing the cardinal directions. Once this orientation is established, the foundation of the edifice may be surveyed and geometrically demarcated. Because of their employment in temple orientation, these non-load-bearing obelisks – and, by extension, the Brazen Pillars on the porch of King Solomon's Temple – may have been left as monuments or *proofs* that the builder's work was indeed square and true.

It is in their most solstitial context that the Brazen Pillars relate to both the Saints John and, thereby, to the Point Within A Circle diagram. The diagram is of a circle with a point at its center, bordered by two parallel, perpendicular lines. If the circumpunct is thought of as a solar symbol – which it usually is, outside of Freemasonry – then these parallel lines which are appended to it may be thought of as solstitial markers, like the Brazen Pillars. That the parallel lines are explicitly associated with Saint John the Baptist (whose feast is held on June 24th, very near the summer solstice) and Saint John the Evangelist (whose feast is held on December 27th, very near the winter solstice), [Knoop, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, Manchester University Press, 1947] does much to support the diagram's interpretation as representing an annual solar circuit. As we've already mentioned, the pillars, like their Egyptian obelisk predecessors, may have also been used to mark the solstices in ancient temple construction – thereby meriting our examination as to their relationship to the two perpendicular lines in the Point Within A Circle diagram. Analogues to this motif may also be found in the Royal Arch banner, where the fixed zodiacal signs (Taurus, Leo, Aquila-as-Scorpio-proxy, and Aquarius) are flanked by two androsphinxes representing the solstices, and also in the Mithraic tauroctony, wherein Mithras, as a personification of the vernal equinox in Taurus, is flanked by *Cautes* and *Cautopates*, themselves representing the solstices.