

2006/1527



THE FIVE PLATONIC BODIES.

Copyright Worcestershire Masonic  
Library and Museum Trust



## THE FIVE PLATONIC BODIES.

THE FOUNDATION OF THIS TALK AND A GOOD DEAL OF THE SUBJECT MATTER COMES FROM A LECTURE GIVEN BY Ex.Comp. SHEPHERD JONES AND REPORTED IN THE FREEMASON'S CHRONICLE, SINCE REPLACED BY THE MASONIC RECORD. SHEPHERD JONES WAS A RECOGNISED AUTHORITY ON THE ROYAL ARCH AND WE SHOULD ALL BE GRATEFUL TO HIM, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT EVERYTHING HE SAID WAS NECESSARILY CORRECT. THOSE WHO DEAL WITH THE DEEPER MEANING OF MASONRY ARE EXPRESSING A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW AND ARE SOMETIMES INCLINED TO READ TOO MUCH INTO THE SYMBOLISM; WHICH IS HOWEVER PROBABLY BETTER THAN READING TOO LITTLE INTO IT.

When the Children of Isreal left Egypt and proceeded towards the Promised Land, they advanced in a form of a square, three of the tribes on each side of the square, protecting the tribe of LEVI and the women and children in the centre. The most vulnerable parts of the square were the four corners and therefore at the corners were put the most powerful tribes: in the NORTH EAST 'JUDAH': in the SOUTH EAST 'REUBEN'. in the SOUTH WEST EPHRAIM and in the NORTH WEST 'DAN': These are the tribes whose banners appear in the EAST of the Chapter and which are referred to in the Symbolic lecture as representing, JUDAH, The Lion: REUBEN The Man : EPHRAIM The Ox : and DAN The Eagle.: They are also supposed to represent the four evangelists: MATTHEW, The Man : MARK, The Lion ; LUKE, The Ox : and JOHN , The Eagle,; In Ezekial and Revelation they are provided with wings and represent Cherubin and it is presumably in that capacity that they appear on the arms of United Grand Lodge, and prior to that on the arms of the Ancients. they also represent the four princable signs of the Zodiac : JUDAH The Lion, =LEO : REUBEN The Man =AQUARIUS (the water carrier) EPHRAIM The OX =TAURUS, and DAN The Eagle =SCORPIO. JACOB refers to DAN as the "Adder in the path", which seems in time to have become the SCORPION and the the EAGLE, bearing an adder in its talons. The reference to the Zodiac is interesting, The centre-piece of the Royal Arch is the double cube with its plate of gold, surrounded by the twelve tribes; thus representing GOD in the Centre of Isreal, However, a more univeral significance would well be represented by the signs of the Zodiac, so that the centre piece of the Royal Arch would show GOD in the centre of His Universe.



We have seen the four corner tribes are connected with the Zodiac, it would be interesting study to find out if the other tribes are also connected with the Zodiac. Many writers have attempted to show that the twelve tribes of Israel were really symbolic names for the signs of the Zodiac, but most of the references differ in themselves.

To return to the Banners; we have seen that the twelve tribes were in the form of a square. In our ritual, the square is turned into an oblong, presumably in order that the M.E. on the one hand and the P.S. or the Candidate on the other can see each other and what is between them as they perform their parts. The order however is preserved. In the North East, we have JUDAH, whose two tribes ISSACHAR and ZEBULON have been placed in the South. : the comes Reuben and his two tribes, SIMEON and GAD, and EPHRAIM in his correct place in the South West, his two tribes MANASSEH & BENJAMIN have been placed in the NORTH.: the comes DAN and his two tribes ASHER and NAPHTALI to complete the triangle.

Shepherd JONES suggests that the exalte is entrusted with the staff of office representing JUDAH, not only because as one of the sojourners he has been accepted as a member of the princely tribe of JUDAH, but because the LION denotes more than strength and power as stated in the Symbolic Lecture, but the power and force of Holiness against Evil. He also says that if there are two exaltees, the second one should be entrusted with the ensign of DAN, which at one time was an Eagle with a viper in its talons, signifying the victory of Good over Evil.

Before the time of the Tabernacle, continued Shepherd JONES, there were in the centre of the square, symbols of the four elements.- FIRE, AIR, EARTH and WATER. I could find no verification of this statement in the Volume of the Sacred Law. so got in touch with and Ex. Companion who is a very good Mason and particularly interested in the history of the Old Testament. to assist, but although he could find nothing in his books of references, he had a feeling that it was correct. I would suggest that, as before the time of the Tabernacle, the Hebrews had nothing tangible to remind them of the presence of GOD, of whom they were not allowed to make any graven image the four traditional elements would remind them of GOD the Creator.



We have the four elements, continued Shepherd JONES, in the Chapter, near the centre of the rectangle, but we add to them a fifth. They are called the FIVE PLATONIC BODIES. representing correctly the four elements and incorrectly what is termed the SPHERE OF THE UNIVERSE Before dealing with this incorrect description, continues Shepherd JONES, let us consider the five regular Platonic Bodies as a whole, and reduce our ideas of their proportion and equality to a given standard. This quotation from the Symbolic lecture refers to the Compasses, but as all geometrical figures are mentioned, that must include the FIVE PLATONIC BODIES. What greatly interested me was Shepherd JONES statement that the given standard is the Triple TAU. We all know that the division of the triangle to form four triangles is a symbolic arrangement corresponding with the mysterious Triple TAU. for the 2nd. Princable goes on to show that the Triple Tau has eight right angles corresponding in number with those contained in the four triangles. He then turns to the WEST, approaches the candidate and says, " It also serves to illustrate the jewel", the "IT" being the Triple TAU. Hence when we reduce the angles in the jewel to their amount in right angles and find that they equal the FIVE regular Platonic Bodies. we are dealing with the Triple Tau. I will show you in a moment that the Platonic Bodies contains 60 right angles or 20 Triple Taus,, but let us first say something about these bodies.

They are called regular bodies, because all sides of any one body are equal. There are only five such regular bodies in existence, a mathematical fact of which PLATO must have been aware, as he used them to represent the four elements and the so called sphere of the Universe. Thus their names are in GREEK, the first part of the word denoting the number of sides, the second part "HEDRON" being the GREEK for "BASE" or "SIDE", taking them in their proper order, starting with the one nearest to the Scribe "E", we have: =

TETRAHEDRON	.....4 triangles.....	8 right Angles	.... 1 T.T.
OCTAHEDRON	.....8 triangles.....	16 right Angles	.... 2 T.T.
HEXAHEDRON	.....6 squares.....	24 right Angles	.... 3 T.T.
ICOSAHEDRON	.....20 squares.....	40 right Angles	.... 5 T.T.
DODECAHEDRON	.....12 pentagons.....	72 right Angles	.... 9 T.T.

(Formula for number of right angles in a polygon " $2n-4$ ") when "N" = number of sides ----- hence  $(2 \times 5) - 4 = 6$  for a pentagon.)



We now realise that the bodies are arranged in order of Triple Tau, Remembering from the mystical lecture that the "TAU" is the symbol of the 'LIVING GOD', a symbol that apart from the 'Plate of Gold' is the most treasured in the Royal Arch, and we wear it on our apron and on our sash. Moreover, the connection of the Triple Tau with the four elements emphasises the connection between the 'Living God' and the 'FIRE, EARTH AIR & WATER', symbolically used in the Creation.

We now come to the incorrect use of the Sphere of the Universe. Plato said, continues Shepherd JONES, that in addition to the four elements, there was another element, an astral element, uniting Heaven and Earth, permeating the whole sphere of the universe and purging souls from their contact with this physical life, as no soul could re-enter Paradise until it had been purged. Plato's philosophy was not understood and the belief arose that there really existed a FIFTH material element which would purify base metals and transmute lead into gold. From that belief arose the search for the Philosopher's Stone and the study of Alchemy in the Middle Ages.

When the rise of Chemistry in the 17th century killed 'alchemy' it is not impossible that those of our 'Speculative' ancestor's who were alchemists founded the elements of what is now the Third Degree.

Be that as it may, the application of the Triple Tau to the Great Lights, to the Jewel and to the Platonic Bodies gives the Symbolic Lecture some sort of unity which it greatly needs.

Why 1-2-3-5-6-9 Triple Tau ???? It is possible to give a partial explanation of 1-2-3. The Creative God is '1'-indivisible and infinite. But even an all powerful God philosophically requires something on which to create ----- hence the formation of something that will receive the seed, formulate it and eventually produce a new creation. This feminine aspect of GOD is '2'. The new creation is '3', sometimes known as GOD-MAN or the SON (this is much earlier than Christianity, though the later may have taken something from it).

1..... THE CREATIVE GOD.

2. THE FEMININE ASPECT.

3. THE NEW PRODUCTION.....=God-man or THE SON.



These ideas clarify the explanation of the Great Lights which refer to the the Sacred Word itself. and represents the Creative, Preservative and Annihilative powers of the Deity. 'Preservative' is obviously feminine and 'Annihilative', is not used in our destructive sense, but in the sense that all creatures produce their offspring and die, so that the new creation replaces the old.

It might also be of general interest to note that the 'Lesser Lights' refer to the Law and to the Prophets: the Law is the Pentateuch or Torah, canonised about 400 B.C. the Prophets are the ordinary books of the Prophets plus Judges, Samuel and Kings, canonised about 200 B.C. The other Old Testament writings contains the Psalms, some poetical books and Daniel were not canonised until the 1st century A.D.

NOTE. IN 'HALLEY'S' BIBLE HANDBOOK 4th PRINTING 1902 Under NUMBERS, CHAPTER 2,3,& 4. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE CAMPS AND ORDER OF THE MARCH ARE RECORDED AS SHOWN:.

EVERY DETAIL WAS ASSIGNED WITH MILITARY PRECISION, THIS WAS NECESSARY IN HANDLING SO VAST A MULTITUDE. THE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE TRIBES WERE AS FOLLOWS.

N.E. JUDAH. S.E. REUBEN S.W. EPHRAIM. N.W. DAN.

N. ASHER, N.N.E. NAFFALI, THEN JUDAH, E. ISSACHAR, S.S.E. ZEBULON, THEN REUBEN, S. SIMEON, S.S.W. GAD, THEN EPHRAIM, S.S.W. MANASSEH, N.N.W. BENJAMIN THEN DAN THEN BACK TO ASHER.

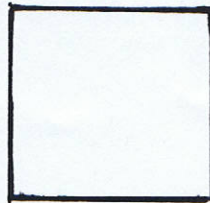
IN THE CENTRE WAS THE TABERNACLE. IN THE CENTRE EAST WAS MOSES AND IN THE CENTRE EAST WAS MOSES AND AARON, CENTRE SOUTH KOHATHITES, CENTRE WEST WAS GERSHONITES AND IN THE CENTRE NORTH, MERARITES.

WHEN THEY BROKE CAMP, JUDAH AND THE EASTERN TRIBES LED THE MARCH

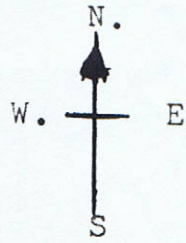


THE TRIBES.

DAN  
(N.W.)



JUDAH  
(N.E.)

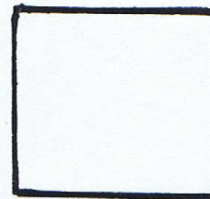


(S.W.)  
EPHRAIM

(S.E.)  
REUBEN

THE BANNERS

DAN  
The Eagle



JUDAH  
The Lion

EPHRAIM  
The Ox

REUBEN  
The Man

THE EVANGELISTS

The Eagle  
JOHN



The Lion  
MARK

THE OX  
LUKE

The Man  
MATTHEW.

THE ZODIAC

DAN  
The Eagle  
SCORPIO



JUDAH  
The Lion  
LEO

EPHRAIM  
The OX  
TAURUS

REUBEN  
The Man  
AQUARIUS

THE TRIBES

DAN

MANASSEH  
BENJAMIN.

JUDAH

SIMEON  
GAD



ASHER  
NAPHTALI

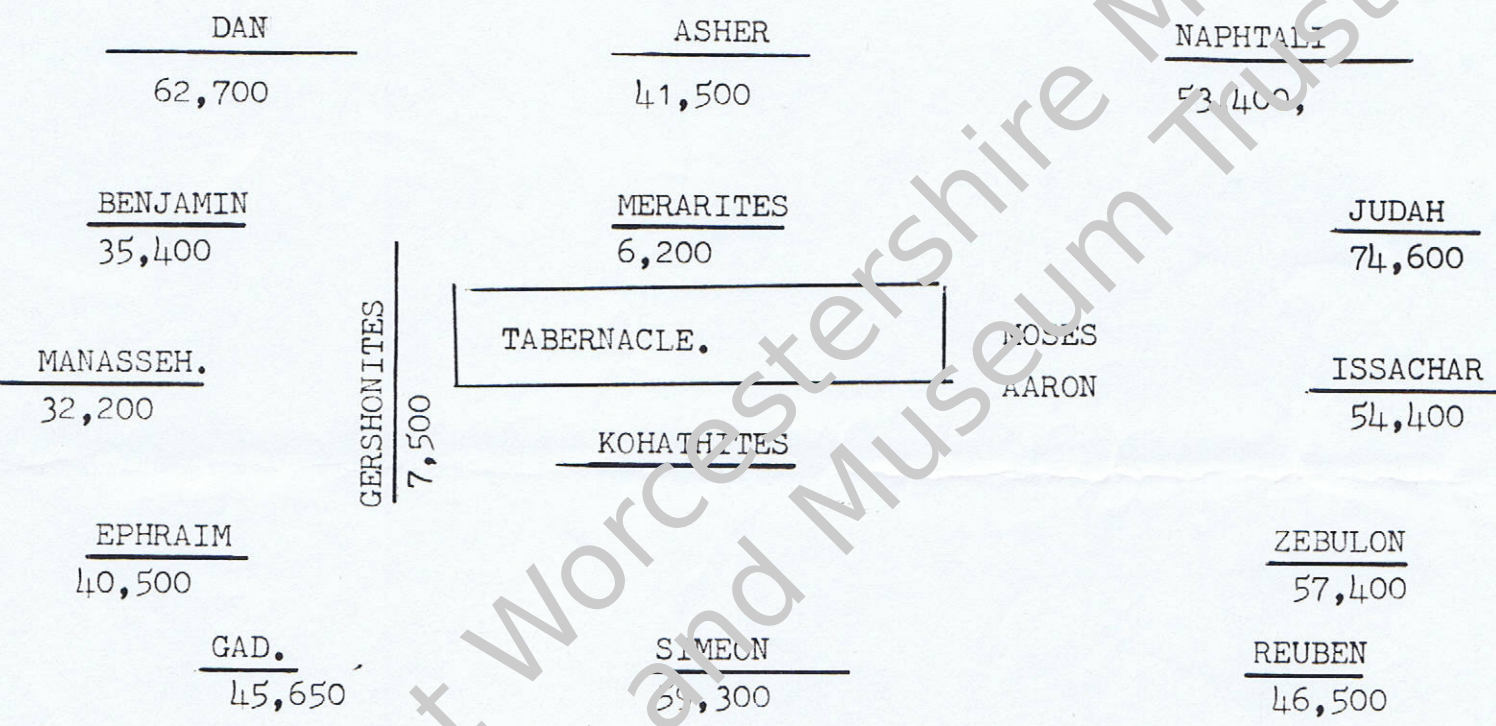
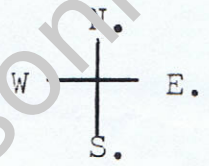
EPHRAIM

REUBEN

ISSACHAR  
ZEBULON.



THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE ACCORDING TO HALLEY'S, BIBLE HANDBOOK



Copyright Worcestershire Masonic Library and Museum Trust