

# The Origin of Masonic Symbols from.

23

## THE MYSTERIES OF FREEMASONRY

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To determine the origin of Freemasonry, it becomes necessary to take a transient view of the dogmas and customs of Egypt in the remotest periods of its history, for it appears evident that this country was the salient point from which the religious observances of the ancient world commenced.

Whatever may be thought of the doctrines of the mysteries, they enforced the principles of morality by the most terrific scenic representations of the torment of the wicked on the one hand, and of the most pleasing spectacles of the happiness of the righteous on the other, in a future life.

The Anubis or Dog Star, so useful to the Egyptians in anticipating the overflowing of the Nile is the <sup>or "all seeing eye"</sup> Blazing Star of Masonry, <sup>which and</sup> ~~The Blazing Star~~ represents that prudence which ought to appear conspicuous in the conduct of every Mason.

Webb in his "Monitor" says The Mosaic pavement is emblematic of human life, chequered with good and evil; the beautiful border which surrounds it, those blessings and comforts which surround us, and which we hope to obtain by a faithful reliance on Divine Providence, which is hieroglyphically represented <sup>with the letter "G"</sup> by the blazing star in the centre.

This symbol is peculiarly, if not exclusively, applicable to the Egyptians who inhabited the Delta, who, by placing a reliance upon the warning providentially given by this star, and in consequence retiring to the high ground with the produce of their agriculture, might enjoy the comforts that surrounded them.

Sir John Marsham in his "Rule of the Times" maintains that the laws and ceremonies of the Hebrews were an imitation of the customs of Egypt and the neighbouring nations, but adapted to the worship of one God. This is easily appreciated when we remember that the Israelites sojourned in Egypt nearly three centuries from B.C.1700 to B.C.1486 (approx.)

Dr. Adam J. Clarke in his "History of the Ancient Israelites" relates as follows:-

"As the Moon regulates the months, so does the Sun the year. The division which we make of the year into twelve months has no relation to the motion of the moon. But it was not so with the Hebrews; their months are lunar, and their name sufficiently shows it. They call them Jachin, which comes from Jarach, which signifies the Moon."

"The Masonic Pillar J, which represents Isis, the figure of whom was exhibited by the Egyptians at each new moon, is undoubtedly derived from the name given by the Hebrews to their months". (It may also be observed that, as one of the three lesser lights, the S.W. is referred to as the Moon in the Masonic Ritual).

"Ham, or Hammon was commonly called God, Jehov, or Jehov-Ammon; the City of Thebes, where he had dwelt longest, and which they anciently called Ammon's Wood (Ammonno) was afterwards called the City of God (Diospolis). The word Jehov, in its primitive use, signified the Father of Life, the Supreme Being." (We have here presumably the origin of the Hebrew word Jehovah).

"The rural works not being resumed in Egypt till after the Nile had quitted the plain they for this reason gave the public sign of husbandry the name of Moses, or Museus, (saved from the waters); compare Moss the name given to the Hebrew child saved from the waters of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter.

"In the Masonic Lodges, the Master is stationed in the East, representing Osiris the Sun; and the Senior Warden in the West, representing Isis (the Moon), the sign of harvest; his duty is to pay the Craft their wages, which alludes metaphorically to the reward the husbandman receives in the produce of his labour, when the sun arrives at this sign. The pass-word of the fellowcraft at this station, to entitle him to pay, is S - , the reddening ear of wheat. Can anything more conclusively point out the astronomical cast of Freemasonry?"

The signs of the Zodiac portrayed in the centre of the roof of the Freemasons Hall, London are in accordance with the astronomical decorations of the ancient temples of Egypt. Celestial and terrestrial globes also compose a part of the masonic emblems.

The great name of the Deity, which is termed by Josephus, incommunicable, is said to be preserved in Freemasonry. Calmet observes that when we pronounce Jehovah, we following the crowd, for we do not know distinctly the manner wherein this proper and incommunicable name of God should be pronounced, which is written in Hebrew, "Iod, Hi, Vau, Hi." The Tetragrammaton (or sacred word) was preserved and transmitted by the Essenes by whom it was always communicated in a whisper. The letter Shin was adopted by the Jews as a mysterious emblem to designate the Tetragrammaton and was deeply engraved on their phylacteries, both before and behind.

The chief varieties of this sacred name among the inhabitants of different nations were Jah or Jehovah of the Hebrews and the corruption of Jupiter, Jove, Evone, etc. of the Greeks; Bel, Bul, Belus and Belinus of the Chaldeans, Babylonians and Celts; and On, Oannes and Drag-On of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Philistines.

In the peculiar lectures of Masonry, much importance is attached to the great symbol of the glory of God, the cherubim. When the true invisible God was renounced and forgotten, this symbol furnished mankind with plausible substitutes; and hence in almost all the heathen nations of which we have any account, the Supreme Being was worshipped under the corporeal form of one or other of its component parts.

The Ox was adored in Egypt, India, Britain, China, Japan, Persia, Greece and Peru. The Ox was the predominating figure in the cherubim, and it became the most universal symbol of idolatry.

The Lion was adored in the East and West by the Egyptians and the Mexicans, as a most powerful divinity.

The Eagle was sacred to the sun in many countries, particularly in some parts of Egypt, Greece and Persia. In the Scriptures, the king of Babylon is termed an Eagle, and with the British Druids it formed a symbol of their Supreme God.

The Man, or idol in human shape, was worshipped all over the World.

The Cherubim, according to the author, consists of the figures of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle. This combination which is depicted in H.R.A. is considered sacred and sublime.

Thus the Masonic Cherubim is derived from the representation of the sun under various figures of the Zodiac.

In a German work by C.L.Reinhold, entitled "The Hebrew Mysteries or The Oldest Religious History of Masonry", it is affirmed that the whole Mosaic religion was an initiation into mysteries, the principle forms and regulations of which were borrowed by Moses from the secrets of the Egyptians.

Josephus, to the same purpose, says that that high and sublime knowledge, which the Gentiles with difficulty attained, in the rare and temporary celebration of their mysteries, was habitually taught to the Jews at all times. So that the body politic seems, as it were, one great assembly, constantly kept together, for the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

The two great mysterious secrets of the Egyptians, it has been seen, were the existence of one Supreme Being, implying the error of polytheism, and a future state of rewards and punishments for acts committed in this life. the former of which only, it appears, was taught to the Jews. This is likewise communicated to the Masons of the Royal Arch degree, and is the only secret of the Order.

It is true it was formerly enjoined upon the Jews to observe certain rites and ceremonies, which were then adapted to their peculiar circumstances, but which, by the coming of Christ, were rendered vain and useless, and were accordingly abrogated by the new dispensation.

In Warburton's "Divine Legation of Moses" (1742) we read, "We have no profane records that can reach, by many hundred years, so high as the ancient state and constitution of the religion and priesthood of Egypt, <sup>in</sup> and before the days of Moses. But as the Mosaic Constitution itself was accommodated to the natural temper and bias of a people perfectly Egyptianised, and who knew nothing but the language, religion, laws and customs of Egypt; and as this people could never be brought off from the religion and customs to which they had been naturalised, the history of Moses and the prophets gives one almost as just and adequate notion of the religion, priesthood and worship of Egypt, as if their own history had been handed down to us. Though Moses attempted, in his law, to reform the religion of Egypt, with regard to their symbolical polytheism, or idolatrous worship by images, yet this could never be effected: the gross of the people still continued in the symbolical worship of Egypt, except when restrained from it by force and compulsion under some of their kings. But they immediately fell back again to the same sort of religion, as soon as that restriction and legal persecution were relaxed or taken off".

In the Egyptian Mysteries, in order to recommend civil life, and to excite men to promote its advantages, a lively picture is given of his miserable condition, and how obnoxious he was, in the unenlightened state, at the mercy of the elements, of which there was a scenic representation at their ceremonies. This is claimed to be the origin of the forlorn condition in which the C. for Freemasonry is placed when prepared for initiation.

The first book on Freemasonry published by Dr. Jas. Anderson in 1723 purports to give a history of the original establishment of the Craft which bears a striking similarity to the fragment of Sanchoniatho which describes the description given to the initiate into the Egyptian Mysteries of the origin of those rites.

The two capital corruptions of the Mysteries were magic and impurities; yet, so late as the age of Apollonius Tyan, the

Eleusinian Mysteries kept so clear of the first imputation, that the hierophant refused to initiate that impostor, because he was a magician.

The early Christians spoke of the Mysteries as gross impieties and immoralities in their very original, but the truth is they bore a secret grudge against them for their injurious treatment of Christianity on its first appearance in the world. We are to observe that atheism, by which was meant a contempt of the Gods, was reckoned in the Mysteries, among the greatest of crimes; consequently the Christians, for their contempt of the national gods, were, on their first appearance, deemed Atheists by the people.

When the Fathers of the Church found it to be an easier way of bringing over minds corrupted by superstition to the love of truth, they first adopted many terms used in these rites, and after thus treating several heads of the true doctrines, they further adopted some of their ceremonies.

The final conclusion of the author is that the Mysteries were invented by the Egyptian legislators to affirm and establish the general doctrine of a Providence, by inculcating the belief of a future state of punishments and rewards.

In describing the life <sup>and</sup> doctrines of Pythagoras he relates, that the arctic disciples of Pythagoras were taught after the Egyptian manner, by images and symbols, obscure and almost unintelligible to those who were not initiated into the mysteries of the school; and those who were admitted to this privilege were under the strictest obligation of silence with regard to the recondite doctrines of their master. The wisdom of Pythagoras, that it might not pass into the ears of the vulgar, was committed chiefly to memory; and when they found it necessary to make use of writing, they took care not to suffer their minutes to pass beyond the limits of the school.

Brucker states that the aim of the philosophy was to free the mind from those incumbrances which hinder its progress towards perfection, and to raise it to the contemplation of immutable truth, and the knowledge of divine and spiritual objects.

Besides arithmetic and music, Pythagoras cultivated geometry, which he had learned in Egypt. He seems to have done more than any other philosopher of his time towards reducing geometry to a regular science, and his theorems on the triangle are widely used in the ceremony of Royal Arch Masonry.

The three pillars Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, representing the great emblematical Triad of the Deity, are common to the British and other Mysteries, and as with us they also represent the three principal officers. The corresponding pillars of the Hindu Mythology were also known by the same names and were placed in the East, South and West. In like manner the Persians, who termed their emblematical Mithraic cave, the Empyrean, feigned it to be supported by three intelligent Cornices, Mithra and Mithras. So also were the horns of the Egyptian Deity, designated by the attributes of wisdom, power and goodness. It is remarkable that every mysterious system practised on the habitable globe contained this Triad of the Deity.

The tribes contiguous to Judea, placed a Jod (J) in the centre of a circle, as a symbol of the Deity, surrounded by eternity of which he was said to be the inscrutable author, the ornament and support. The Samothracians had a great veneration for the circle, which they considered as consecrated by the universal presence of the Deity. The Chinese used a circle bounded North and South by two serpents, equivalent to the two perpendicular parallel lines of the masonic symbol, and was emblematical of the universe, protected and supported equally by the power and wisdom of the Creator. The Hindus believed that the Supreme Being was correctly represented by a perfect sphere, without beginning and without end. The first settlers in Egypt transmitted to their posterity an exact copy of our point within a circle; expressed in emblematical language. The temples of the British Druids were

circular with a single stone erected in the centre, some of which are still in existence and demonstrate the proof of the theory. The author offers the following solution of the origin of this symbol:- the point in the centre represents the Supreme Being; the circle represents the annual circuit of the sun, and the parallel lines mark out the solstices within which that circle is limited. The Mason, by subjecting himself to due bounds, in imitation of that glorious luminary, will not wander from the path of duty.

The origin of Jacob's ladder is thus described in Bailey's "Ancient Astronomy". In factitious caves, which priests everywhere constructed, they celebrated mysteries which consisted in imitating the motion of the stars, the planets and the heavens. In the cave of Mithras, was a ladder of seven steps, representing the seven spheres of the planets, by means of which souls ascended and descended; this is precisely the ladder of Jacob's vision, and shows that at that epoch the whole system was formed.

The pillars B and J are described <sup>in 1 Kings 11.15</sup> as eighteen cubits high, twelve in circumference and four in diameter. The eighteen cubits refer to the inundation of the Nile, being the highest elevation it is known to have attained. The twelve cubits relate to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, through which the sun passes; and the four cubits have reference to the tetractys, which comprehends the principles of geometry - point, line, superficies and solid.

The final phase of the Egyptian Mysteries dealt with the emblematic representation of the conquest of the sun by the winter, the consequent death of vegetation, the return of the sun at the Spring equinox and the re-birth of nature. This was symbolically described as the death of Osiris, his descent into the lower regions (the tomb) and his subsequent resurrection. This conception was preserved by the Israelites and was adapted by them in the symbolic loss of the sacred and omnific word at the destruction of King Solomon's Temple, which, according to Josephus was recovered in the Royal Vault (or tomb) at the building of the second temple.



in the Craft ceremony of the third degree, whilst the Hebrew adaptation finds its place in the ceremony of the Royal Arch .

In this very exhaustive work the author maintains that whilst modern Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, relying on a Biblical story as its basis, it is, in regard to its ceremonies and symbols, unquestionably derived from the Egyptian Mysteries of Osiris. These Mysteries he asserts had their exoteric as well as esoteric doctrines; the former being called the lesser mysteries, being such teachings as might with safety be communicated to the ignorant masses; whilst the latter or greater mysteries consisted of the initiation of the intelligent to the doctrine of the Supreme Being, and the teaching of profound moral truths. This dual system was, together with many of the symbols, adopted by the Israelites, and communicated by them through the Essenes and Phoenicians to the British Druids; and so via the Culdees to the early English Freemasons.

The corruption of the mysteries to pagan idolatry was a natural consequence of the incapacity of the masses to comprehend the symbols used by the priests, and also no doubt to the cupidity of the priesthood, leading them to take advantage of the ignorance <sup>and</sup> superstition of the people. In the same way did the Israelites return again and again to idolatry, and in like manner do many pagan practices and observances persist in the Church of to-day.