

The Stone Which the Builders Refused

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BACKGROUND

In the Ancient Mysteries, the quest for Gnosis or self-discovery was central to the doctrines and teachings. Across the portico of the Temple at Delphi (dedicated to the God Apollo and seat of the celebrated Oracle), were the words *GNOTHI SEAUTON*, meaning “Know Thyself.”

The journey of Freemasonry is the ongoing search for Light. Underlying all of our rituals, symbols, and teachings is this one essential element. The ongoing journey takes many forms to as many different people, but this journey for Light is arguably one of self-discovery, a search for Gnosis.

Countless systems of meditation and mysticism have developed across the world to address this eternal search for Light, to answer the great questions of existence. Whatever the origins of Freemasonry, it is clear that within our rituals is contained a remarkably vast ark of the worlds philosophies, mysteries, and systems of self-discovery. The rituals contain keys to the Royal Art, which if applied in earnest may help to attain the common goal of further Light.

WORDS AND NUMBERS

One of the techniques for mining the depths of symbolism in our rituals is that of applying the doctrines of the literal Kabbalah in an examination of some of the key words and symbols presented in the rituals.

In many ancient languages, numbers were represented by letters of the alphabet. Mystics concluded that the numerical value of words could be of significance, particularly when two or more seemingly unrelated words had an identical numerical value. The literal Kabbalah is a set of techniques that meditatively explore the relationships between letters of ancient alphabets, such as Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and their numerical equivalents.¹

In S.L. MacGregor Mather’s introduction to his 1888 translation of *Kabbalah Unveiled* (Knorr von Rosenroth, 1684) one provenance of these techniques is given:

The Kabbalah was first taught by God himself to a select company of angels, who

¹ Although the Hebrew Kabbalah is perhaps the most celebrated, there is a rich tradition of Greek *isopsephy* which utilizes similar techniques, and the Latin alphabet is filled with many examples. Masonry is treasure trove of Kabbalistic wisdom, Albert Pike perhaps being the champion of this research in Masonry.

formed a theosophic school in Paradise. After the Fall the angels most graciously communicated this heavenly doctrine to the disobedient child of earth, to furnish the protoplasts with the means of returning to their pristine nobility and felicity. From Adam it passed over to Noah, and then to Abraham, the friend of God, who emigrated with it to Egypt, where the patriarch allowed a portion of this mysterious doctrine to ooze out. It was in this way that the Egyptians obtained some knowledge of it, and the other Eastern nations could introduce it into their philosophical systems. Moses, who was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, was first initiated into the Qabalah in the land of his birth, but became most proficient in it during his wanderings in the wilderness, when he not only devoted to it the leisure hours of the whole forty years, but received lessons in it from one of the angels. By the aid of this mysterious science the law-giver was enabled to solve the difficulties which arose during his management of the Israelites, in spite of the pilgrimages, wars, and frequent miseries of the nation. He covertly laid down the principles of this secret doctrine in the first four books of the Pentateuch, but withheld them from Deuteronomy. Moses also initiated the seventy elders into the secrets of this doctrine, and they again transmitted them from hand to hand. Of all who formed the unbroken line of tradition, David and Solomon were the most deeply initiated into the Kabbalah. No one, however, dared to write it down, till Schimeon Ben Jochai, who lived at the time of the destruction of the second temple After his death, his son, Rabbi Eleazar, and his secretary, Rabbi Abba, as well as his disciples, collated Rabbi Simon Ben Jochai's treatises, and out of these composed the celebrated work called ZHR, *Zohar*, splendour, which is the grand storehouse of Kabbalism.

The literal Kabbalah consists of three techniques: Gematria (numerical value of words and their relationship); Notarikon, in which the individual letters of a word are taken as the initials of another word (or the reverse – a sentence may be reduced to a word); and Temurah, or permutation of letters according to specific rules.

Each of these techniques may yield rich results when applied to the rituals and symbols of Freemasonry. Albert Pike made great use of gematria and isopsephy in his many examinations of the words of the degrees of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite. In *Morals & Dogma* Pike refers to Kabbalah as the “key of the occult sciences.”

A CONCEALED KEY

An example of Kabbalistic insight may be applied to the celebrated insignia in Chapters of Royal Arch Freemasonry -- the Triple Tau. The Ritual gives several mottos which seem to allude to a concealed treasure or hidden truth:

Templum Hierosolyma (“The Temple of Jerusalem”)

Clavis ad Thesaurum (“A key to a treasure”)

Theca ubi res pretiosa deponitur (“A place where a precious thing is concealed”)

Res ipsa pretiosa (“The precious thing itself)

There continues to be much speculation about this “treasure” and connections with the Knight Templar and mystic Rosicrucians. Perhaps these riches are much closer than we think, and of a decidedly different nature.

Kenneth Mackenzie, in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*, describes the Triple Tau:

Anciently the Tau was a mystical sign, not at all like the square letter Hebrew, but more cruciform, and almost identical with the ankh of the Egyptians, otherwise known as the Crux ansata. It was a mark in use among many ancient nations, and not peculiar to the Jews; and it is found among the Hindus, and these last placed it on the foreheads of their disciples. It was a symbol of salvation and consecration, and as such has been adopted as a Masonic symbol in the Royal Arch and in some other degrees of high Masonry.

General Albert Pike, writing from his office as Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in his monumental tome *Morals & Dogma*, further adds:

The triple Tau, in the center of a circle and a triangle, typifies the Sacred Name; and represents the Sacred Triad, the Creating, Preserving, and Destroying Powers; as well as the three great lights of Masonry. If to the Masonic point within a Circle, and the two parallel lines, we add the single Tau Cross, we have the Ancient Egyptian Triple Tau.

A column in the form of a cross, with a circle over it, was used by the Egyptians to measure the increase of the inundations of the Nile. The Tau and Triple Tau are found in many Ancient Alphabets.

With the Tau or the Triple Tau may be connected, within two circles, the double cube, or perfection; or the perfect ashlar.

The *Crux Ansata* is found on the sculptures of Khorsabad; on the ivories from Nimroud, of the same age, carried by an Assyrian Monarch; and on cylinders of the later Assyrian period.

As the single Tau represents the one God, so, no doubt, the Triple Tau, the origin of which cannot be traced, was meant to represent the Trinity of his attributes, the three Masonic pillars, Wisdom, Strength, and Harmony.

The One God alluded to above is further described in *Exodus* 3:13 – 15:

¹³ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou

say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

¹⁵ And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Other considerations of the nature of this hidden treasure aside, there is concealed Kabbalistically the very Triple Tau itself within these passages of the Bible.

The Hebrew name of the Great Architect of the Universe that is translated as “*I Am That I Am*” is אהיה אשר אהיה .

The *Atbash* cipher of Hebrew notariqon is a simple substitution cipher that takes the Hebrew alphabet and splits it in half and reverses it, substituting the corresponding letters; א transmutes to ת, ב changes to ש, ג to ר, and so on; essentially reversing the entire alphabet.

Applying the Atbash cipher to this Name of the Highest God, the three initial א’s of the phrase are transformed into three ת’s, thus revealing the Triple Tau.²

Through the application of Kabbalistic inquiry, this symbol may thus be seen as a representation of the name of the Most High, showing that the *true* hidden treasure of the Freemasonry is not necessarily buried underneath the Temple of Solomon (or Rosslyn Chapel!), but is concealed in the hidden chambers of our hearts.

SOLVE ET COAGULA

A lesson of the Royal Arch degree demonstrates another application of gematria which may unlock mysteries pertaining to the central doctrine of the ancient mysteries which is encoded in Freemasonry, the idea of Light in Extension.

A passage from Psalm 118:22 reads:

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

In Hebrew, the phrase “the Stone which the Builders refused” is Ehben Masu Ha-Bonaim (ABN MASV H BVNIM). An interesting connection to Alchemy occurs here, in that the reference to a rejected stone recalls the idea of the Philosopher’s Stone, made up of materials that are commonly rejected or abhorred, but praised as the roots of philosophical gold by the alchemists. The root of the Hebrew *masu* means “to despise,

² According to Dr. Hugh Schonfield also be applied to a spelling of Atbash may , (בפומת Baphomet), which gives שופיא, a possible attempt in Hebrew of the transliteration of the Greek word *sophia*, meaning “wisdom”. (See <http://www.templarhistory.com/atbash.html>).

reject, refuse.” Using the techniques of gematria, the numeration of the entire phrase is 273.

Other Hebrew words which have this same numerical value:
ChVRM ABIV, Khurum Abiv – “Hiram Abiff”

AVR GNVZ, Aur Ganuz, -- “hidden light”

Qabalistically one may intuit a connection between the Widow’s Son, the Stone which the Builders refused, and the concept of Hidden or Concealed Light. The cornerstone takes on a new, profound meaning with these added levels of symbolism encoded into it.

The Substitute for the Ancient Master’s Word may be a notariqon of this phrase:

MAsu **HA** **BON**aim

Thus, the word becomes indicative of the Light of Masonry in a very direct sense, referring to Hiram Abiff, the Cornerstone of the Temple, the Hidden Light. The symbols build upon one another, each taking one deeper into the heart of the matter.

Looking to the Greek language, there are two words of particular relevance that also enumerate to 273:

Anthanasia, “immortality.” Perhaps a further reference to the doctrine of the Third Degree.

Heh Kleis, “the key.”

The Key... Hiram Abiff... The Stone which the Builders Refused... The Cornerstone... Immortality... Hidden Light... all encoded into the substitute for the Word of a Master Mason, and the symbolism of the Sublime Degree of Masonry.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the original provenance and impetus of Freemasonry, it seems clear that encoded within the rituals is a profound doctrine of spiritual illumination or Gnosis. With the application of tools such as gematria, isopsophy, temurah and notariqon, a wealth of otherwise hidden wisdom begins to reveal itself. Applying the lamp of focused consciousness on these symbols, the treasure chest opens.

Symbols may be thought of as living, dynamic centers of energy. By focusing on them and taking them into deep contemplation, this energy is unlocked from within, revealing the Royal Art as a series of signposts in consciousness. By following these signs into meditation, we may eventually come away with a further, profounder understanding of ourselves and our position in the universe.

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