

Masons and Ancient Egypt

The Ancient Egyptian materialist philosophy continued to exist after this civilization disappeared. It was adopted by certain Jews and kept alive within Kabbalist doctrine. On the other hand, a number of Greek thinkers adopted the same philosophy, and reinterpreted it and perpetuated it as the school of thought known as "Hermeticism."

The word Hermeticism comes from the name of Hermes, the Greek counterpart for the Ancient Egyptian god "Thoth." In other words, Hermeticism is the Ancient Greek version of Ancient Egyptian philosophy.

Master Mason Selami Isindag explains the origins of this philosophy and its place in modern Masonry: In Ancient Egypt there was a religious society that bequeathed a system of thought and belief to Hermeticism. Masonry held something similar to this. For example, those who had come to a certain level attended ceremonies of the society, revealed their spiritual thoughts and feelings and trained those who were at a lower level. Pythagoras was a Hermeticist trained among them. Again, the organization and the philosophical systems of the Alexandrian school and of Neoplatonism had their origins in Ancient Egypt and there are some significant similarities between them and Masonic rites.⁶⁰

Isindag is much more overt about the influence of Ancient Egypt on the origins of Masonry when he declares, "Freemasonry is a social and ritual organization whose beginnings go back to Ancient Egypt."⁶¹

Many other Masonic authorities maintain that the origins of Masonry go back to secret societies of ancient pagan cultures, such as those of Ancient Egypt and Greece. A senior Turkish Mason, Celil Layiktez, stated in an article in Mimar Sinan magazine entitled, "The Masonic Secret: What is Secrecy and What is Not?":

In Ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman civilizations there were mystery schools (écoles de mystères) which met in the context of a particular science, gnosis or secret knowledge. Members of these mystery schools were accepted only after a long period of study and initiation ceremonies. Among these schools, the first is thought to have been the school of "Osiris" based on the events of this god's birth, youth, struggle against darkness, death and resurrection. These themes were ritually dramatized in ceremonies performed by clergy and in this way the rituals and symbols being presented were much more effective because of the actual participation...

Years later, these rites formed the first circles of a series of initiated brotherhoods that would continue under the name of Masonry. Such brotherhoods always established the same ideals and, when under oppression, were able to lead their lives secretly. They were able to survive to the present-day because they continually changed their names and their forms. But they remained faithful to ancient symbolism and their particular character and passed their ideas on to each other as a legacy.

In order to mitigate against the possibility that their established ideas may threaten the establishment, they established secret laws among themselves. In order to protect

themselves from the wrath of ignorant people, they took refuge in Operative Masonry which contained the discreet rules of their own trade. They inseminated this with their ideas which later influenced the formation of the modern Speculative Masonry we know today.⁶²

In the above quotation, Layiktez praises the societies that were the origin of Masonry, and claims they kept themselves hidden to protect themselves from "ignorant people." If we can leave aside this subjective claim for a moment, we can understand from the quotation above that Masonry is a present-day representation of societies that were founded in the ancient pagan civilizations of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Rome. Of these three civilizations, the oldest is Egypt; it is possible, therefore, to say that the main source of Masonry is Ancient Egypt. (We saw earlier that basic connection between this pagan tradition and modern Masons is the Templars.)

It is necessary to recall at this point that Ancient Egypt was one of the most referred to examples of a godless system as revealed by God in the Qur'an. It is the true archetype of an evil system. Many verses relate to us of the pharaohs that governed Egypt and their inner-circles, their cruelty, injustice, wickedness and excesses. Moreover, the Egyptians were a perverse people, that acquiesced to the system of their pharaohs, and believed in their false gods.

Despite this, Masons maintain that their origins lie in Ancient Egypt, and regard that civilization as praiseworthy. An article published in Mimar Sinan praises the temples of Ancient Egypt as the "source of Masonic craft":

...The Egyptians founded Heliopolis (the Sun City) and Memphis and according to Masonic legend, these two cities were the source of knowledge and science, that is, as the Masons would say "Great Light." Pythagoras, who visited Heliopolis, had much to say about the temple. The Memphis temple where he had been trained has historical significance. In the city of Thebes there were advanced schools. Pythagoras, Plato and Cicero were initiated into Masonry in these cities.⁶³

Masonic writings do not laud Ancient Egypt merely in broad terms; they express praise and sympathy for the pharaohs who governed that cruel system. In another article from Mimar Sinan magazine it is stated:

The basic duty of the pharaoh was to find Light. To exalt Hidden Light in a much more vivid and powerful way...As we Masons are trying to construct the Temple of Solomon, so did the Ancient Egyptians try to build Ehram, or the House of Light. The ceremonies performed in the temples of Ancient Egypt were divided into several degrees. These degrees had two sections, small and great. The small degree was divided into one, two and three; after these the Great degrees began.⁶⁴

It can be seen from this that the "light" which the pharaohs of ancient Egypt and Masons search for is the same. This can also be interpreted as suggesting that Masonry is a modern representative of the philosophy of the Egyptian pharaohs. The nature of this philosophy is revealed by God in the Qur'an in the judgment He passed over Pharaoh and his people: "They are a people of deviators." (Qur'an, 27: 12) In other verses, the godless system of Egypt is described in this way: Pharaoh called to his people, saying, "My people, does the kingdom of Egypt not belong to me? Do not all these rivers flow under my control? Do you not then see?..."

In that way he swayed his people and they succumbed to him. They were a people of deviators. (Qur'an, 43: 51-54)

Ancient Egyptian Symbols in Masonic Lodges

One of the most important things that establishes the relation between Ancient Egypt and the Masons is their symbol. Symbols are very important in Masonry. Masons reveal the true meaning of their philosophy to their members through allegory. A Mason, who advances stage by stage through the 33 degrees of the Masonic hierarchy, learns new meanings for each symbol at every stage. In this way, members descend step by step into the depths of Masonic philosophy.

An article in Mimar Sinan magazine describes this function of their symbols: We all know that Masonry expresses its ideas and ideals by means of symbols and stories, that is, allegories. These stories go back to the first ages of history. We can even say that they stretch back to legends of prehistory. In this way, Masonry has shown the antiquity of its ideals and has gained a rich source of symbols.⁶⁵

The conceptions of the Ancient Egyptians are the most prominent of these symbols and legends, that stretch back to the first ages of history. Everywhere in Masonic lodges, and frequently in Masonic publications, drawings of pyramids and sphinxes and hieroglyphs can be found. In an article in Mimar Sinan magazine, about the ancient sources of Masonry, it states:

If we choose Ancient Egypt as the "most ancient" I don't think we will be mistaken. Moreover, the fact that the ceremonies, degrees and philosophy found in Ancient Egypt are most similar to those in Masonry draws our attention there first.⁶⁶ Again, an article in Mimar Sinan entitled "The Social Origins and Aims of Freemasonry" says: In ancient times in Egypt, the initiation ceremonies in the temple of Memphis lasted a long time, were performed with the greatest attention and splendor, and showed many similarities to Masonic ceremonies.⁶⁷

Let us examine a few examples of the relationship between Ancient Egypt and Masonry:

THE PYRAMID UNDER THE EYE

The most well known Masonic symbol is found on the seal of the United States of America, also found on the one-dollar bill. On this seal there is a half pyramid above which sits an eye within a triangle. This eye within the triangle is a symbol constantly found in Masonic lodges and all Masonic publications. A great number of the writings that deal with the subject of Masonry stress this fact.

The pyramid below the eye in the triangle attracts relatively little notice. However, this pyramid is extremely meaningful and enlightening for the understanding of the philosophy of Masonry. An American author, Robert Hieronimus, wrote a doctoral thesis on the United States' seal in which he provided some very important information. The title of Hieronimus' thesis was "An Historic Analysis of the Reverse of the American Great Seal and Its Relationship to the Ideology of Humanist Psychology."

" His thesis shows that the founders of America, who originally adopted the seal, had been Masons, and that they, therefore, espoused the humanist philosophy. The connection of this philosophy with Ancient Egypt is symbolized by the pyramid placed in the center of the seal. This pyramid is a representation of the Pyramid of Cheops, the largest of the Pharaoh's tombs.⁶⁸

Another well-known symbol of Masonry is the six pointed star, formed by the imposition of one triangle over another. This is also a traditional symbol of the Jews, and today appears on the flag of Israel. It is known that the Prophet Solomon used it as a seal for the first time. Therefore the six-pointed star is a seal of a prophet, a divine symbol.

But, Masons have a different conception. They do not accept the six-pointed star as a symbol of the Prophet Solomon, but as a symbol of Ancient Egyptian paganism. An article in Mimar Sinan entitled "Allegory and Symbols in our Rituals" relates a number of interesting facts about this matter: An equilateral triangle with three points equidistant from one another show that these values are equivalent. This symbol adopted by the Masons is known as the Star of David; it is a hexagram formed by the imposition of one equilateral triangle on another.

Today it is known as the symbol of Judaism and appears on the flag of Israel. But actually, the origin of this symbol is in Ancient Egypt....This emblem was first created by the Templar Knights which they began to use as symbolism in wall decoration in their churches. This is because they were the first ones to discover in Jerusalem some important facts about Christianity. After the Templars were disposed of, this emblem began to be used in synagogues.

But in Masonry, we no doubt use this symbol in the universal sense that it had in Ancient Egypt. In this sense, we have combined two important forces together. If you erase the upper and lower bases of the two equilateral triangles, you will find this rare symbol that you know very well.⁶⁹

Actually, we must interpret all Masonic symbols in relation to Solomon's Temple in this way. As revealed in the Qur'an, Solomon was a prophet who some wished to slander and show as having been godless. In a verse of the Qur'an, God says, "They follow what the satans recited in the reign of Solomon. Solomon did not become unbeliever, but the satans did..." (Qur'an, 2: 102)

Masons have adopted this corrupt idea mistakenly attributed to the Prophet Solomon, regarding him as a representative of the pagan beliefs of Ancient Egypt. For this reason, they afford him an important place in their doctrines. In his book *The Occult Conspiracy*, the American historian Michael Howard says that, since the Middle Ages, Solomon (God forbid) has been regarded as a magician and as one who introduced some pagan ideas into Judaism.⁷⁰ Howard explains that the Masons regard the Temple of Solomon as a "pagan temple," and as important for this reason.⁷¹ This false image fabricated against the Prophet Solomon, who was a devout and obedient servant of God, shows the true origins of Masonry.

The Double Column

An indispensable part of the décor of a Masonic lodge is the double column in the entrance. The words "Jachin" and "Boaz" are inscribed on them, in imitation of the two columns at the entrance to Solomon's Temple. But actually, the Masons do not intend these columns as a memorial to Solomon; they are an expression of those corrupt insinuations against Solomon. The origins of these columns again go back to Ancient Egypt. In the article entitled "Allegory and Symbols in our Rituals," Mimar Sinan magazine states:

For example, in Egypt, Horus and Set were twin architects and supports of the heavens. Even Bacchus in Thebes was one too. The two columns in our lodges have their origin in Ancient Egypt. One of these columns was in the south of Egypt in the city of Thebes; the other was in the north in Heliopolis. In the entrance to the Amenta temple dedicated to Ptah, the chief god of Egypt, there were two columns as in the temple of Solomon. In the oldest myths associated with the sun, two columns are mentioned, named intelligence and power, erected in front of the gate of the entrance to eternity.⁷²

THE EGYPTIAN TERMINOLOGY OF THE LODGES

In their book, *The Hiram Key*, two British Masonic authors, Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, drew attention to the Ancient Egyptian roots of Masonry. One interesting point they reveal is that the words used in the ceremony in which a Mason is made to rise to the degree of Master Mason are:

Ma'at-neb-men-aa, Ma'at-ba-aa'.⁷³ Knight and Lomas explain that these words are used most of the time without any thought to their meaning, but they are Ancient Egyptian words and mean, "Great is the established Master of Freemasonry, Great is the Spirit of Freemasonry."⁷⁴

The authors state that the word "Ma'at" means the skill of wall building, and that the nearest translation is "Masonry." This means that modern Masons, thousands of years later, still conserve the language of Ancient Egypt in their lodges.

MOZART'S MAGIC FLUTE

One of the more interesting products of Masonry is the *Magic Flute*, an opera by the famous composer, Mozart. Mozart was a Mason, and it is an acknowledged fact that many parts of this opera contain Masonic messages. The interesting matter is that these Masonic messages are closely related to Ancient Egyptian paganism. Mimar Sinan explains it in this way:

It is known that there is a clear connection between Ancient Egyptian and Masonic rituals. No matter how much those who attempted to interpret the *Magic Flute* as "a story about the Far East," at its foundation are Egyptian rituals. It is the gods and goddesses of the Egyptian temples that influenced the creation of the characters of the *Magic Flute*.⁷⁵

OBELISKS

Another important symbol of Masonry is what was once an important element in Ancient Egyptian architecture-the obelisk. An obelisk is a tall, vertical tower with a pyramid as its peak. Obelisks were inscribed with Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, and lay

buried for centuries under the ground until they were discovered in the nineteenth century, and removed to Western cities such as New York, London and Paris. The largest obelisk was sent to the USA. This exportation was arranged by Masons. This was because obelisks, as well as the Ancient Egyptian figures inscribed on them, are claimed by Masons as being really their own symbols. Mimar Sinan avers this about the 21-meter high obelisk in New York:

The most striking instance of the symbolic use of architecture is the monument called Cleopatra's needle, given to the US as a gift in 1878 by the Egyptian Governor Ismail. This monument is now in Central Park. Its surface is covered with Masonic emblems. This monument was originally erected in the 16th century BC at the entrance to a temple of the Sun god, an initiation center in Heliopolis.⁷⁶

THE LEGEND OF ISIS-THE WIDOW

important symbolic idea in Masonry is that of the widow. Masons call themselves the children of the widow, and pictures of widows often appear in their publications. What is the origin of this idea? Who is this widow?

When we examine Masonic sources, we find that the symbol of the widow derives originally from an Egyptian legend. This legend is one of Ancient Egypt's most important myths-the story of Osiris and Isis. Osiris was a fertility god and Isis was his wife. According to the legend, Osiris was the victim of a crime of passion by which Isis became a widow. So, the Masonic widow is Isis. An article in Mimar Sinan explains the matter in the following way:

The Osiris-Isis legend is the topic of many articles and lectures and is the closest of the Ancient Egyptian myths to Masonry. The test to become a priest of the temple of Isis is the Masonic initiation itself. It would be tedious to have to repeat it. There, light was one of the most important elements; in order to be buried in the darkness of the East, the morning sun begins to descend after noon and takes on Osiris' duty every day, just like Horus who more brilliantly took the place of his murdered father. So, the "widow" whose children we are is none other than Osiris' widow Isis.⁷⁷

We see that Masonry, which portrays itself as being founded on reason and science, is actually a mythological doctrine full of superstitious beliefs.

THE COMPASS AND SQUARE

Among the most familiar symbols of Masonry is the compass superimposed over a square. If Masons are asked, they explain that this symbol represents the concepts of science, geometric order and rational thinking. However, the compass and square actually has quite a different meaning. We can learn this from a book written by one of the greatest Masons of all time. In his book *Morals and Dogma*, Albert Pike wrote the following about the compass and square: The square... is a natural and appropriate Symbol of this earth... The hermaphroditic figure is the symbol of the double nature anciently assigned to the Deity, as Generator and Producer, as Brahm and Maya among the Arians, Osiris and Isis among the Egyptians. As the Sun was male, so the Moon was female.⁷⁸

This means that the compass and square, the most well known symbol of Masonry, is a

symbol of Arian paganism and which dates back to Ancient Egypt or before the advent of Christianity. The moon and the sun, in the passage quoted from Pike, are important symbols in Masonic lodges, and are none other than a reflection of the false beliefs of those ancient pagan societies that worshipped the moon and the sun.

MASONRY'S PAGAN PHILOSOPHY

So far, we have learned that Masonry's origins lie in a pagan doctrine that stretches back to Ancient Egypt, and that it is there that the true meaning of its concepts and symbols are hidden. For this reason, Masonry is in conflict with the monotheistic religions. It is humanist, materialist and evolutionist. The American historian Michael Howard describes this secret that is only completely revealed to those Masons of the highest degree:

Why should Christians be so critical of Freemasonry...? ...[T]he answer to this question lies in the "secrets" of Freemasonry. If these secrets were readily available to the general public it is doubtful if their meaning would be understood to those who were not versed in the doctrines of occultism and ancient religion. In fact it is doubtful if many of the ordinary lodge members understand what its secrets represent. In the inner circle of Masonry, among those who have obtained higher degrees of initiation, there are Masons who understand that they are the inheritors of an ancient and pre-Christian tradition handed down from pagan times.⁷⁹

When we look at the writing of Turkish Masonry, we see that Masons of the highest degree are in possession of knowledge that they keep hidden from the other brothers. The Master Mason Necdet Egeran describes what higher degree Masons think about this matter:

Some Masons even understand Masonry as only a kind of half religion, half charitable fraternal institution where they can establish pleasant social relationships and treat it accordingly. Others think that the purpose of Masonry is only to make good people better. Still others think that Masonry is a place to build character. In short, those who do not know how to read or write the sacred language of Masonry understand the meaning of its symbols and allegories in this way or some such similar way. But for a few Masons who are able to go deeply into it, Masonry and its goals are quite different. Masonry means a revealed knowledge, an initiation and a new beginning. It means leaving an old way of life and entering a new and still nobler life....Behind Masonry's elementary and basic symbolism there is a series of revelations that helps us to enter a higher inner life and to learn the secrets of our existence. So, it is in this inner life and the entrance into it that it is possible to reach the Enlightenment of Masonry.

Only then does it become possible to learn the nature and conditions of progress and evolution.⁸⁰ This quotation underlines that though a few Masons of lower degree think that Masonry is a charitable and social organization, it is actually about the secrets of human existence. That is, the outward appearance of Masonry as charitable or social organization is actually a guise to hide the philosophy of the organization. In reality, Masonry is an organization that aims to systematically impose a specific philosophy on its members as on the rest of society.

As we said at the beginning, the fundamental element of this philosophy, one which has transpired to Masonry from pagan cultures, especially that of Ancient Egypt, is

materialism.