

The Sons of the Great Mother
By Francine Bernier
The Steps of Zion, October 2003

All rights reserved. This article may not be reproduced in part or in full, in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval, without permission from the owner, Steps of Zion, nor without mention of all due source credit.

"The sun is my father, the earth my mother,
the world is my country and all men are my family."
- John Toland

The raising ceremony of a Master Mason is a symbolic re-enactment of Hiram Abif's death at the First Temple built by Solomon (10th century BC). According to legend, the great builder was murdered by three of his fellow craftsmen for refusing to divulge the secret word of the Master which the workmen wanted to use to get higher wages. His body, which was buried in a place marked with a branch of acacia, was discovered several days later by one of the Masters; as he tried to pull him out, the right hand and wrist parted from the arm. In astonishment, the Master cried out the Mason Word, "*Mac benac!*", an expression said to mean 'the flesh parts from the bones.' "This is in truth the only secret known to the public, and only consists in the word *mac-benac*, which has no relation to true masonry."¹ Then what does it relate to? And where does it come from?

As one can imagine, there has been an endless debate about the origin of the Third Degree raising ceremony, particularly regarding the Hiram legend and the two curious words. Many masonic historians believe most of it was invented shortly after the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England (1717) but that the materials of which the third degree ceremony is composed were borrowed from much older groups or traditions.

The first mention of the "Masone Word" was made in 1637 by John Leslie, the 6th Earl of Rothes in "A Relation of proceedings concerning the affairs of the Kirk of Scotland from August 1637 to July 1638"². The second mention was made in a 1638 poem entitled *The Muses' Threnodie* written by Henry Adamson who also claimed the metrical system of Lectures was of Culdee origin (Celtic Church): "*For we be brethren of the rosie cross. We have the Mason Word and second sight, things for to come we can foretell aright.*" Other references to the Mason Word are made in the Edinburgh Register House Manuscript of 1696 and the Trinity College Dublin Manuscript of 1711, but the (Hans) Sloane Manuscript No. 3329 dated 1700 (British Museum) reveals the Word was *maha byn*.

Regarding the legend of Hiram, the oldest Masonic manuscript, known as the *Regius Poem*, (ca 1410, discovered in 1839), also called the "Old Charges" (rules of the operative masonry), makes no mention of any Hiram Abif. Neither does the Cooke Manuscript (ca 1410), where Masonry is said to have been introduced to Britain by the Celtic, Irish-born hermit Saint Alban during the 2nd or 3rd century. The name of Hiram, in connection with Masonry, is mentioned for the first time in James Anderson's *Constitutions* of 1723. Yet, the Graham Manuscript of 1726 describes a Master Degree raising ceremony involving Noah and his three sons, not Hiram and three fellowcrafts. Was this an early ceremonial 'prototype' that was replaced with

¹ *The Grade of Perfect Elect Mason*, by Eric Serejski, 32° and S. Brent Morris, 33°, from Heredom, the transactions of the Scottish Rite Research Society, Vol. I, 1992, Scottish Rite Research Society

² *A Relation of proceedings concerning the affairs of the Kirk of Scotland from August 1637 to July 1638*, by John Leslie, ed. David Laing, Bannatyne Club, 1830

the legend of Hiram? It seems that all Freemasons did not agree at first on the proper ritualistic materials and sources to be used:

"Thus, as late as 1726, the Hiram legend had not yet made its official appearance. In the ceremony described, the three sons of Noah decide to exhume his body in order to determine if there was anything on or about it to give them a clue as to the secret of how Noah knew what things would be needed in the new world after the Flood and thus placed them in the Ark. After exhuming the body and raising it masonically, we find this statement: *Father of heaven help us now for our Earthly father cannot so laid down the dead body again and not knowing what to do - so one said here is yet marrow in this bone and the second said but a dry bone and the third said it stinketh, so they agreed for to give it a name as is known to free masonry to this day.*"³

Was the Mason Word associated with Noah or Hiram? Was it *Maha bone*? Or *Maha byn*? Was it always associated with the Master Mason Degree?

At this point, it is important to mention that although the Mason Word existed at least since 1637, the Third Degree raising ritual did not exist prior to the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England, nor was it part of Scotland's operative craft. As stated by Brother George Draffen of Newington, of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland, "The Third Degree ritual, as we know it today, was quite unknown in Scotland and the earliest record of it is in the year 1728."⁴ Actually, the earliest mention of the Master Mason Degree being conferred in Scotland is found in the minutes of 29th January 1726 of Dumbarton Kilwinning Lodge No.18, and soon after that, in the Graham Manuscript of October 1726 where it is associated with Noah. However, the Third Degree remained largely unknown in Scotland until about 1750, probably because it was an invention introduced by 'modern', speculative Freemasons. In fact, there were only two degrees in the 'antient' Scottish operative Craft: (entered) Apprentice and Fellow (*compagnon*). Although the Shaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599 reveal that no man was to be received as a fellow "without at least six masters" in attendance, it also states that there was only one Master Mason appointed by the King, not unlike Hiram Abif hired by King Solomon, to supervise the works of the lodges of Kilwinning, Edinburgh and Stirling. This may at least suggest 1) that the designation "Master Mason" was a complimentary title and not a Degree per se; and 2) that no matter what the Mason Word was, it was most likely either the Word of the Fellow, or that of the royal Master Mason.

Many Masons, particularly in the United Kingdom and in America, still use the expression *maha bone* ('rotten to the bones'), derived from *maha byn*, the Mason Word mentioned in the Sloane Manuscript No. 3329 of 1700 and associated with the "five points" of fellowship, usually symbolized nowadays by the five-point Blazing Star (a pentagram)— and perhaps these "five points" referred instead to the five letters MHMBN.

To the Scottish Freemason Richard Rowney Connell, *maha byn* is ancient Gaelic (Celtic): *maha* means "Earthly Mother" and *byn*, "Celestial Mother". In this sense, *maha byn* translates as Mother of All, the Queen of Heaven, the Mother Goddess, or Mother of Heroes, which in ancient Ogham script was written MHMBN, for *Maha Mabona*. Connell believes that "Time may have corrupted spelling, pronunciation, and certain details of our symbolism, but over the centuries the elimination of the MH pillar from the Craft, brought about the placing of Mah-hah (the earth) over Boaz, and Byn (the heavens) over Jachin in the way of spheres". He also writes that in every early culture, the Mother Goddess "was both male and female [...] She controlled the sun and was Nature and the Universal Mother. She was anything and everything. She was God in the beginning and she was the Word." And MHMBN could be the Lost Word of Freemasonry: "God was addressed as Maha Mabona Byn by the common ancestors of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the birthplace of

³ *The Mason Word*, by Richard B. Baldwin, PM, presented March 29, 1986, Vol. 1, 1982-1987, published by Douglas Smith, Jr., Lodge of Research #1949, AF&AM, on <http://www.bessel.org/>

⁴ *Freemasonry in Scotland in 1717*, by Brother George Draffen of Newington, Past Substitute Grand Master, article published on the website of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland 1996-2003, <http://www.grandlodgeScotland.com>

Antient Free and Accepted Masonry.”⁵ This was also *Mabon*, the Divine Child of Celtic mythology, a young god associated with the sabbat that celebrated the second harvest, wine and balance, and which was observed at the Autumn Equinox, when day and night are of equal length.

According to the 18th century historian Samuel Prichard, the true Mason Word was *mak benah* which he translated as “the Architect has been smitten” (hit).⁶ To the contemporary French masonic historian Daniel Ligou, the form *mak benah* given by Prichard is linked to the legend of Hiram and the last letter “h” in *benah* would correspond to the Hebraic *he*. In France, he writes, and probably in some lodges in England, it became *mac benac* and *macbenach*, perhaps under “the influence of exiled Scottish Masons [who were] in favour of an ‘esoterically Gaelic’ form”.⁷ In France, masonic researchers Régis Blanchet and Pierre Danlot⁸ believe the expression *mac benac* is purely Celtic in origin and means the “son”, or “divine son” (*mac*), of the “little woman” (*benac*), a term which reportedly designated a “woman diminished” by the loss of her husband.

Of course, the Freemasons are not the only ones who presumably lost their secret Word: The Hebrews also speak of the lost, “ineffable” and “All-creating” or “Omnific Name of God” associated with the four-letter Tetragrammaton - a name so sacred and precious that, for fear of profaning it, only the High Priest was allowed to whisper it once a year, on the day of Atonement, as he entered the Holy of Holies at the Temple and this, only while trumpets and drums were blown to drown the whisper. The rest of the year, other names, like Elohim, Adonai and Hashem, were used as substitutes (some believe MHBMN, or *Mahabone*, was one of them). We presume that the masons who built Solomon’s temple took the same measure. As a result, the sacred Name of God was lost, just like the Mason’s Word. In both cases, this lost word is supposed to be JHVH (Jehovah), or HWHY (Yahveh), four Hebrew characters that cannot be pronounced since there are no vowels – which means, in the end, that God is All, but also nameless.

“To find the lost Name became one of the great ambitions of Jewish priests and scholars, and this search became one of the principal subjects in the literature of the Cabbalah. To pronounce the Name of the Most High, some Cabbalists used the vowel sounds obtained from the full name of the mystical letter Beith. The sacred Names (the Name of the most High, Jehovah or Jahweh, and the mystical Seven-Letter Name, probably the Great Royal Arch Word) which the Cabbalists made much mystery of, were only communicated to such as pious (Chasidim), not easily provoked, not given to drinking, and not self-opinionated. He who holds these Divine Names and preserves them inviolate is beloved above, cherished below, and respected of every creature, and he is heir of both worlds, the world that is now and the world that is to come.”⁹

Several masonic researchers have advanced various theories regarding the origin of the Hiram legend and the Mason Word *mac benac* or *mah byn* used in the Master Mason’s raising ceremony. One who did was the 19th century French author and Freemason Gérard de Nerval. In his *Voyage en Orient* (1843), he wrote that the original passwords in ancient masonry, at the time the Temple of Solomon was built, were *Jakin*, for the Apprentices; *Booz* [sic] for the Fellows; and *Jehovah* for the Master Masons. According to Nerval, the day the Temple was finished, the passwords were changed to *Tubalkaïn* [sic], *Schibboleth* and *Giblim*, but following Hiram’s murder by greedy Fellowcrafts, the Master Masons changed their secret password to *Macbenach* [sic] for their own protection.¹⁰ This is perhaps a little too romantic...

⁵ *Masonic Stones*, by R. R. Connell, Philalethes Society, 1998, on <http://www.kena.org/hirams/1998/PHL-AU98.htm#Richard%20Rowney%20Connell>

⁶ *Masonry Dissected*, Samuel Prichard, 3rd edition, 1730

⁷ *Dictionnaire de la Franc-maçonnerie*, by Daniel Ligou, Presses Universitaires de France, 1987-1988

⁸ Authors of books published by the Éditions du Prieuré (France), such as *Entretiens avec un Druide nommé Gwenc’Hlan*, 1994; *Mystères et secrets des forgerons*, Coll. Le Jardin des Dragons no 17; *John Toland (1670-1722), un des Modernes*, Coll. Le Jardin des Dragons no 16; *La résurgence des rites forestiers*, 1997; and *De l’origine de la Franc-maçonnerie – Ouvrage posthume de Thomas Paine*, 1997 and many other titles.

⁹ *The Lost Word of Masonry*, by Dr Ali Ezzahi, 2003 on <http://www.geocities.com/aliezzahir/Introduction.htm>

¹⁰ *Voyage en Orient - Histoire de la Reine du matin et de Soliman, Prince des Génies*, Paris 1843, Chapter XII

It seems most likely the variation *mac benac* derived from a faulty transcription of *maha byn* as *maughbin*, and *match-pin*, as written in a 1711 Trinity College Dublin document by Sir Thomas Molyneux. Other uses included *magboe-and-boe*, *marrow-in-the-bone* and up to this day, *mah-hah-bone*. But if the original word was *maha mahona byn*, then there is every possibility the 'Lost Word' of Freemasons was Celtic, and before this, Hebrew or Phoenician in origin.



Ancient Hebrew letter "mah"

What?

It is interesting to note that "mah" (*Mem* in modern language) is actually the ancient Hebrew letter MH in feminine form, meaning "whose" or "what". In script, this letter looked like a wave, or flowing water (see picture), and designated the *flowing water* – blood - in men and animals. It refers to the blood passing down a line through generations, in other words, a bloodline, a succession of heirs, probably through the maternal side. Interestingly, *Mah* is also the secret name of Yetzirah, one of four worlds in the Jewish mystical Kabbalah. Yetzirah is described as the "breath of God", the feminine structuralizing process which allows creation to take form."¹¹

"The technical language, symbolism, and rites of freemasonry are full of Jewish ideas and of terms like "Urim and Thummim," "Acharon Schilton," "Rehum," "Sephiret," "Jachin," "Ish Chotzeb" (comp. I Kings v. 18), but these may have been derived, without any Jewish intermediation, from commentaries on the Old Testament. Many of these terms are derived from the Biblical account of the building of Solomon's Temple (I Kings v. *et seq.*), and the two pillars Jachin and Boaz take a predominant position in Masonic symbolism. In the Scottish Rite the dates of all official documents are given according to the Hebrew months and Jewish era, and use is made of the older form (Samaritan or Phenician) of the Hebrew alphabet. The impostor Cagliostro appears to have introduced some of the terms of the Cabala into his "rite of Misraïm," but this again might have been derived from the Christian Cabala."¹²

The Count of Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo) certainly had nothing to do with the Third Degree ritual of Modern Freemasonry since he was born in 1743. Then, was the ancient 'Art of Building' originally composed of ancient Jewish, perhaps Kabbalistic, and pagan references?

In the Bible, "Machbenah" (also Machbanai) was the name of the son of Sheva, of the line of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:49). The name means both poverty and "the smiting of his son", a definition that fits Samuel Prichard's interpretation of *mak benah* as "the Architect has been smitten". In Hebrew, *Macben* or *Mac-benah* was also a symbol of animal kingdom, most likely associated with the bear (in Basque, *benat* means bear, *ursus* in Latin).¹³ But in ancient Babylonian (Akkadian) language, which used a system of cuneiform writing, *benah* was the singular form of *benoth* (daughters), and the word meant both "to bring forth children" (child-bearing) and "to build houses", often a metaphor referring to "building a family". Again, this echoes the Art of building, and in this sense, the origin of the Lost Word of Freemasonry may well be Babylonian, or

¹¹ "The secret name of Atziloth is OB Aub; that of Briah is SG Seg; that of Yetzirah is MH, Mah; and that of Assiah is BN Ben ('son'). " From *The Kabbalah unveiled*, by S. L. McGregor Mathers, published on <http://essenes.crosswinds.net/mathers.html>

¹² Freemasonry, on <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=361&letter=F>

¹³ Index to *The Secret Doctrine of Helena P. Blavatsky*, by | John P. Van Mater , 1997

Akkadian, and go back to the 3rd millenium BC when this language was the *lingua franca* in the Ancient Near East.

Moabon and Mabon

Moabon is quite similar to *mac benac*. In the York Rite, it designates the candidate being elevated to the 'Chief Architect' (or Superintendent) Degree. Here, Moabon is said to be the name of the architect who brings plans of the third level of the Temple. In the Third Degree of the Memphis Misraïm Rite, the sacred word given to the new Master is *Moabon*, said to mean "begotten of the father". As it appears, Maobon is associated in all cases with a third degree or level.

A very similar name is *Mabon*, the "Great Son" and God of Light of Celtic mythology, the young god who was imprisoned in the Underworld - the realm of Death of the Celts. Known as *Mabon ap Modron*, which translates as the "Son of the Great Mother" (Modron), he was a son of divine origin, and Modron was the great Celtic Mother, (probably Irish goddess Danu or Anu), the Goddess of the Moon, of Death and Life. To the Celts, Mabon was the archetype of innocence, growing wisdom and strength of survival. At Beltane, having reached full maturity, the God of Light was crowned as the Oak King or King of the Forest (Cernunos). In the fall, as he is dying and defeated by his twin half, the God of Darkness, his mother Modron is mourning. The feast of Mabon, which marked the death of the land in the fall, was named after him. This was the lessor sabbat of Avalon ("land of apples"), the mysterious land of the Dead. The Druids, who called this feast *Alban Elved* or *Mea'n Fo'mhair*, celebrated the second harvest, of wine and balance, by offering libations to oak trees to honor the Green Man, the crowned God of the Forest and the dying God of Light.

According to author R.J. Stewart (*Celtic Gods, Celtic Goddesses*),¹⁴ the name appeared as "Mabonus" in ancient stone inscriptions found in Northern Ireland – very close to the Gaelic word "mabona" (*maha mabona*) that Richard Rowney Connell believes the Mason Word *maha byn* derived from. In fact, the Gaelic words *mabon*, *mabonus*, *maboni*, *maponus* and *mabyn* all designate the same deity associated with 'divine youth'.¹⁵ Stewart writes, "In a Romano-Celtic inscription, Mabon is equated with Apollo Citharoedus, Apollo the lyre-player. The connection points to Mabon's being a musician, a patron of the arts, and a god of light. His lamentation, then, at times becomes a song." The legend of "Mabon ap Modron" was published for the first time at Oxford by John Wilkins (a founding member of the Royal Society of London) in the Welsh tale collection *The Mabinogion* (1650). Mabon appears in the story *Culhwch and Olwen* as half-god, half-human, and as one of Arthur's warriors.

In the existing Third Degree masonic ritual, the words *Mac benac* designate the child born of putrefaction, the 'offspring' of the earth, born of decomposition. This is identical in meaning to *Mabon*, the son of "Modron", the Mother Goddess of Life and Death, associated with the Earth-Mother. It is most likely that *Mac benac* and *Mabon* are synonymous, one being a poor adaptation of the other. In any case, it seems that *Mabon* and *Mabyn* derived from *Moabon*, which in turn is clearly a Hebrew word.

Moabon was also the name given to the child of Lot and his daughter, the earth, a deity also called.... *Mac-benac*. Here, the name Moabon comes from *Moab*, which means both "of the father" or "beautiful land", a definition given in the Rite of Memphis Misraïm to "Moabon". Moab was the son and grandson of Lot, nephew of Abraham, and the father of the Moabite tribe. Therefore, Moab was of Abraham's bloodline. The Bible traces their story to the time of Sodom's destruction (Genesis 19:30-38). Lot was considered innocent by his uncle Abraham (Genesis 18:20, 23), who implored God to forgive the entire generation if just ten innocent people could be found. Abraham counted ten in the city, including Lot and his sons and daughters:

¹⁴ *Celtic Gods, Celtic Goddesses*, by R. J. Stewart, Blandford Press, London, 1990

¹⁵ See: <http://www.geocities.com/cas111jd/celts/celtrib.html>

"After escaping the Destruction Of Sodom, Lot and his two daughters [...] left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. . . One day the older daughter said to the younger, 'Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father' . . . So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today."

We might conclude that "Moabon" means "the Son of the line of Moab". Also, *Zoar* is apparently where Hiram came from for his name means "high son of Bela", a name that once designated the city of Zoar.¹⁶

The Art of Nimrod

The *Regius* poem of 1410 attributes the rules of Masonry, or Geometry, to Nimrod, the first king of Babylon, not to Solomon or Hiram, as wrote James Anderson in his *Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (1723). In fact, the *Regius* includes a section entitled the "Charges of Nimrod", which consist of 15 articles "for "ye maystur mason and 15 "points for felows and prentes" (prentices = apprentices) that were established at a "great assemblage of masons ordered by King Athelstan (ca 895-940), reputedly held at York in 926, though there is no known record of the event".¹⁷ The "Charges of Nimrod" mentions the Hebrew name "El-Shaddai" (God Almighty) as part of a ritualistic holy blessing, and relates the history of Masonry (Geometry), beginning with Lamech, the father of Jabal, Jubal and Tubal (or Tubal-Cain, the first master of coppersmiths and blacksmiths), all of the line of Cain (Gen. 4: 19-22), to the post-Flood kingdom of Cush and his son Nimrod, the mighty hunter and king who built the Tower of Babel at Borsippa, near Babylon:

"Marduk or Merodach was the Babylonian God that Nimrod was said to be in human form. Tradition records that masons were first made much of at the building of the Tower of Babel and that Nimrod, the great King of Babylon, was himself a Master Mason who loved the craft and made the masons Free Men and Free Masons in his kingdom. Tradition also records that when Nimrod sent sixty lodges of masons to build Nineveh and the other cities of the east, he gave them a Charter and the Charges of Nimrod, which reputedly are those set out in the Old Charges. When an apprentice was indentured in an English operative lodge, his obligation traditionally was called the "oath of Nimrod".¹⁸

It is only around the time King James' Bible was published (1611) that Hiram became a familiar name. The *Constitutions of Anderson* (1723) included a section called "The Charges of a Free-Mason, extracted from *The ancient Records of lodges beyond Sea, and of those in England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the Use of the Lodges in London.*" This section relates the history of the art of building beginning at the time of Noah's Ark with Jabal, and metal working, with his brother Tubal Cain. Nimrod and the Tower of Babel, a house of idolatry designed to unite all Humanity, are mentioned, as well as Abraham who taught the Liberal Arts to the Egyptians and to Euclid. This is evidently allegorical since Euclid was born around 330 BC. But Euclid was the first one who correctly formulated Pythagoras' geometry theorems as well as the Forty-seventh Proposition for a right-angled triangle.

¹⁶ The Columbia Encyclopedia, Fifth Edition, 1994, 1995 Columbia University Press. Note: the word Zoar is often spelled *Zohar*, perhaps mistakenly. Zohar was the name of the father of Ephron, the Hittite who owned, in Hebron, the "double cave" *Machpelah* (the Cave of the Patriarchs), that Abraham bought for a family burial place. Abraham and all his descendants were buried in this cave. The same name designates the "Book of Splendour", a series of mystical commentaries on the Pentateuch which was written in Spain by Moses ben Shem-Tov de Leon (13th c.), but attributed by him to Simon ben Yohai (2nd century).

¹⁷ *History – A Key Element in Freemasonry*, by Brother Don. Falconer, Sydney, Australia, 1998

¹⁸ *Ibid*

"The Old MS. Charges brought masonry, or geometry, from the children of Lamech to Solomon, and by various steps finally to England. But Anderson traces the art from Adam himself, who instructed his son Cain in geometry and made it possible for him to build a city. He introduces Noah and his sons and Grand Master Moses; he derives all civilized architecture from Solomon's Temple; he traces the progress of the science through Greece and Sicily to its culmination in Rome. All knowledge of the art is lost in Britain after the Romans retired, but Charles Martel of France helps England to recover the true art after the Saxon invasions."¹⁹

Charles "Martel", for "hammer", (688-741) was the natural son of Frankish/Carolingian Pépin of Herstal (Austrasia). The name is a typical one associated with metalworking and the Celtic Hammer god (Succellos, meaning "good striker"), both in Gaul and Britain (York), not with stone masonry. But most interestingly, James Anderson used, in his 1723 Constitutions, several terms that are strictly Scottish in origin, not English:

"Peculiarly important are Anderson's uses of Scots terms, which undoubtedly have had a lasting influence on masonic ritual, as already frequently mentioned in these pages. He took 'Entered Apprentice' from the Scots practice of entering each apprentice in the records, the apprentice then being known as an 'entered 'prentice.' Similarly, he uses for the first time in an English work the term 'Fellow Craft' or 'Fellow of Craft,' a constantly recurring phrase in Scots operative masonry."

James Anderson was obviously not alone when he did the research and wrote the first *Constitutions* of Modern Freemasonry. Several key founding members of the Grand Lodge of England were Scots who had already been initiated as operative masons in lodges claiming to have existed in Scotland since the 15th or 16th century. One of these men was Baron John Clerk (1676-1755) of Penicuik, Midlothian Scotland – and he was the main patron of James Anderson for about a decade beginning in 1720.

Although well known in public life as an attorney, architect and antiquarian, Sir John Clerk was secretly initiated into Freemasonry in 1710 at Mary's Chapel Lodge #2 in Edinburgh.²⁰ We are not sure what Rite was practiced at the time but it is possible it was the old Rite of Harodim-Rosy-Cross (later known in France as Rose Croix of Heredom). As an architect, gardener, historian, writer, musician and composer, he was recognized as an accomplished master in all the Liberal Arts. Clerk was also a Jacobite and a very active member of the Society of Antiquarians (revived around 1708), the Royal Society of London, the Gentlemen's Society of Spalding (founded in 1710), the "Cavalieri Scozzesi" (Scottish Knights) in Italy,²¹ the Society of the "Equites Romani" ("Roman Knights", founded in 1722), and more importantly, the Most Ancient Druid Order known as *An Druidh Uileach Braithrearchas*, founded in September 1717 by the Irish-born, spinozean pantheist John Toland, who also attended a Dutch masonic group called the Knights of Jubilation.

"The inaugural assembly was held in the Apple Tree Tavern, Charles St., Covent Garden, London, and the plan of The Unity, first suggested by John Aubrey of Old Mount Haemus to John Toland when they met at Oxford was accepted at this inaugural gathering. The work of organizing the

¹⁹ *Ancient and Moderns*, Education section, by Bro. Gene, San Diego, on www.mastermason.com/BrotherGene.

²⁰ *The Origins of Freemasonry*, by David Stevenson, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 199. Also, in 1748, Clerk gave to the Grand Lodge of Scotland a large piece of land in Penicuik (and a few buildings), with all ownership rights for 500 years, this in order to establish a local lodge in Penicuik, which is known today as Lodge St Kentigern Penicuik & West Linton No. 429 (chartered in 1864 as St. Kentigern Penicuik and Roslin No. 429, it was formed by masons from the Lodge Journeyman Masons Lodge No. 8 and Roslin St.Clair Edinburgh No. 349). See: <http://2mx.org/pglm/index.php?ID=penicuik>

²¹ Note: Did the 17th century "Scottish Knights" in Italy have anything to do with "Eccosism" or "Templar Masonry" that appeared when the British Isles were torn by strife and many Scots fled to France? This is reminiscent of to the 29^e Degree "Scottish Knights of St. Andrew" of the Council Knights Kadosh (19th to 30th Degrees) in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR); their aim is to possess "Virtue, Truth and Honor!" and "never proving false to your vows, you will be worthy to call yourself a Knight, to who Sir John Chandos might, if living, give his hand, and whom St. Louis and Falkland, Tancred and Baldassar Castiglione would recognize as worthy of their friendship." See <http://www.joplinaasr.org/DegreesK.htm>

assembly was undertaken by John Toland who was chosen by delegates from the Druid centres of York, London, Oxford, the Isles of Man and Anglesey, Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Britlany; and elected Chief of the newly reconstituted Order [...] It seems that disturbances in Scotland had caused many of its Druids, such as John Aubrey, to come south. John Toland of Londonderry had been sent to Scotland and there educated, and, as the custom was in education, he was sent abroad. On his return he linked with Scots Druids, then with those of York and finally with Aubrey's Mount Haemus Grove in Oxford, and thus achieving the union of five sections of Druids in 1717 which Aubrey had aimed at. Toland thus became the first of the modern Chosen Chiefs. He set forth the philosophical principles and he gives a full account of the Druids in his 1726 book. These, like other groups of philosophical inquirers, began meetings in London, this one at a Cheapside tavern; their meetings had royal approval and contacted similar-minded groups. [Robert] Boyle called the movement the Invisible College. Certainly an immense amount of learning was generated. It may have been John Aubrey's enthusiasm over Stonehenge as an 'observatory' that led Charles I to found Greenwich. From this background and influence Sir Isaac Newton developed his speculation, his inquiries being typically in the Druid tradition."²²

The Roman Link

When Toland died in 1722, Dr William Stukely, a well-known antiquarian, replaced him at the head of the Druid Order and became the "Archdruid Chyndonax of Mount Haemus". That year, Stukely founded the Society of Roman Knighthood, also known as "The Order of the Book",²³ a group of antiquarians "officially" dedicated to saving Roman remains from destruction in Scotland and England. In fact, the "Roman Knights", as they were called, were already all members of the Druid Order founded in 1717, the year Stukely settled in London.

Stukely was initiated into Freemasonry in 1721 at the Salutation Tavern but, as mentioned by Brother Chakravarthy Sampath Madhavan, there seems to have been profound disagreement during the years following the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England, all of which lead Stukely in 1723 to leave his masonic lodge. Was the disagreement about the Hiram legend or the true origins of Masonry?

"There is another school of thought that contends, with justification, that Brethren, who a few years later, split up on very simple points into Ancients and Moderns, would not have allowed an entirely new legend to be introduced into Freemasonry and believes that there is sufficient evidence to prove that some part of the story of Hiram was known to Masons before this period. For instance, we read that, at the installation of the Duke of Montagu as Grand Master in 1721, Dr. John Beal, Deputy Grand Master, was invested and installed into the chair of Hiram Abif, to the left of the Grand Master."²⁴

²² "The Mother Grove of London was named *Gairdeachas*. From: *The Ancient Druid Order*, by The British Circle of the Universal Bond, An Druidh Uileach Braithrearchas and The Druid Order (B.C.U.B.); Isaac Bonewits, NY 1984-1997; The House of Reflecting Shadows, 1998

²³ In his *Autobiography*, William Stukely wrote: "7 Novr. 1722. The Order of the Book instituted," and calls it 'Roman Knighthood.' "Bro. R. F. Gould has stated, in one of his papers, that in 1724 the *Daily Mail* published an advertisement announcing that a new Lodge was "to be opened at St. Alban's Tavern for regulating the modern abuses which had crept into the fraternity, and 'all the old real Masons are invited to attend. " From *The Arcane Schools*, by John Yarker, Chapter XI: The System Termed High-Grade Speculative Freemasonry, 2002

²⁴ *The Hiram Legend: Whence and Wherefore*, by W.Bro.Chakravarthy Sampath Madhavan, Lodge Jyothi #253, Salem Grand Lodge of India, 2003, Pietre-Stone Review of Freemasonry, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com>



Free for a Blast. The Clerks' coat of arms, with a hunter, a Druid, and a boar (a symbol of ferocious might to the Celts)

As antiquarians and Freemasons, the Roman knights went by the same Celtic names they used in the Druid Order. In this sense, we may say the Society of Roman Knighthood – or the “Order of the Book” - was the research group giving empirical substance and historical foundation to the Druid Order which, in turn, was directly connected, through most of its Mason members, with the new Grand Lodge of England, then desperately looking for validation. “Roman Knights” included Lord Thomas Herbert of Pembroke (“Carvitus”), Lord Winchelsea (“Cingetorix”), Lord Hertford (“Segonax”), Roger Gale (“Venutius”) James Hill (“Caradocus”), Samuel Gale (“Cunobelinus”), William Hulet (“Brenus”), Lord John Warburton (“Ascepiodotus”), Alexander Gordon (“Galgacus”), John Clerk (“Agricola”), Maurice Jonhson (“Prastagus”) and several others.

“The purpose of the Knights was to preserve Roman remains in England but one suspects they probably also dressed up as Romans, wore togas and spoke Latin to each other. Stukely was given a Druid name among his Antiquaries friends; and his house in Grantham was laid out as a Druid grove. He saw Avebury as a Druid temple while still involving half a dozen other disappeared societies in his fantasies. Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Moses and Plato, all featured in this eclectic vision of the past peopled by what we would call ‘noble savages’”.²⁵

Actually, the Roman Knights did meet in secret and dressed up as Romans, as suggested by John Clerk in his *Memoirs*.²⁶ When he drew up the plans of Mavisbank House in Loanhead, Midlothian, (the very year the Society of Roman Knights was founded), Clerk designed one of the three aisles to be “reserved for the men only”, and “high enough” for them to wear “helmets with feathers.” The entire estate of Mavisbank is considered today the finest example of palladian architecture in Scotland. In a letter dated 1739, the “Roman” Roger Gale described Mavisbank to William Stukely as being “one of the most elegant villas I ever saw for structure, situation, woods, and waters. Behind it on top of a small steep hill was an ancient trench or agger not big enough for a town or camp but probably a place for Druid worship. This he [John Clerk] has enclosed and made a winding ascent up to it with hedges planted from the bottom to the top.” It seems that Mavisbank House was designed especially to accommodate the ideals of this controversial groups of Druidic Freemasons.

John Clerk also made sure his other estate, Penicuik House (about 10 miles south of Edinburgh) incorporated all the elements necessary for Druidic worship away from nosy people, including a temple that he built about 1745 in a secret cave, with a Latin inscription on a wall still visible today that reads: *Tenebrosa*

²⁵ William Stukely – *Stonehenge and Avebury*, Logocrat, 2000, <http://www.lincolnshire-web.co.uk/hme.htm>

²⁶ *Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Clerk*, edited by John M. Gray, Scottish History Society, First Series, XIII, 1892.

Occultaque Cave ("Beware of dark and secret things"). To Clerk, his work was to be "dictated by Nature and enhanced by Art" and "there were to be green grasses, avenues lined with trees, parterres, shady walks, banks and water works, mazy groves and secret places for Gods and Goddesses."²⁷ A pantheist Mason in true spinozian style...

As mentioned earlier, the Society of Roman Knights was also known as "the Order of the Book", which we may interpret as "Sacred Book". It is likely that this Order founded by Stukely in 1722 was an attempt to create a new masonic degree or "priestly order" since the Druid Order was apparently losing support in Modern Freemasonry in favor of more 'suitable' Christian influence. The "Order of the Book" may well have been established as a separate, 'inner' lodge centered on Druidism that was to meet not only at the Fountain Tavern but also on Clerk's private properties. The fact that all members were also in the Druid Order does raise an interesting question: Could this "priestly order" be the basis of the Master Mason Degree?

"In discussing the visit of Dr. Désaguliers to the Lodge of Mary's Chapel, and his reception as a brother, fully 'qualified in all points of Masonry,' Murray Lyon says that the fact that the members of the lodge and the learned Doctor so thoroughly understood each other on all the points of Masonry, shows that either in their main features the secrets of the old Operative Lodges of the two countries were somewhat similar, or that an inkling of the novelty had already been conveyed into Scotland. Not impossible, of course, however unlikely it may seem, supposing a novelty to have existed. In this case some of those present who had received it might have assisted; but it is all guess-work, and guess-work founded on conjecture at that, for there is no proof that any new degree had then been invented. The very first known allusion to an invention is that in Dr. Stukely's diary, under Dec. 28 of the following year, 1722, where he speaks of making two friends members of the Order of the Book, or Roman Knighthood. Even if the Master's part was deliberately fabricated there seems no reason that has so far appeared to make us suppose it was done before August, 1721, the date of this occurrence."²⁸

There is one more point to raise here: knowing the new Druid Order was founded barely three months after the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, there is a possibility that these Freemasons revived or created what came to be known as the "Knight Templar Priest Degree" of the Chapter of Royal Arch Masonry in the York Rite: this degree was also known as the "Knight Templar Druid". It is said to trace back to Ireland around 1686 and it appeared in England about 1738 where it became the 13th Degree in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. In both Rites, this degree comes after the three-degree 'Blue Symbolic Lodge' (Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason); it is considered "the root and marrow of Freemasonry" and the "climax of Ancient Craft Masonry and Masonic Symbolism". In this Knight Templar Priest degree, the candidate relives the destruction and reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon and re-discovers the true and long-lost Word of the Master Mason – which means the Mason Word revealed in the Third Degree raising ritual (*mac benac* or *mahbyn*) would be only a substitute... Was this degree created because all Masons did not agree on the true Mason Word or on the origins of Masonry?

The 'Retainers' of the Art of Building

When the Grand Lodge of England was founded (1717), the English operative lodges had nearly all vanished because brick had become the 'modern' material of choice for house building. Meanwhile, in Scotland, stone was still popular, thus ensuring the prosperity of the stone mason trade. For this reason, most operative lodges in Scotland remained active much longer than those in England, but only until the number of non-operative members grew enough to found the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1736. It is believed that the first non-masons to be accepted (as early as 1636) were nobles and employers who had given substantial amount of work to the lodges. "Later it may have been curiosity or possibly an antiquarian desire to become

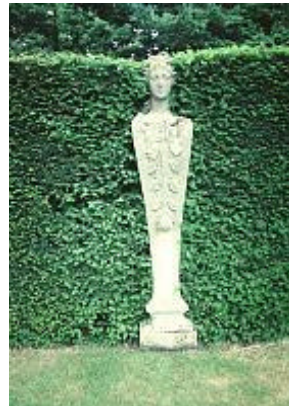
²⁷ *The Clerks of Penicuik and the patronage of architecture*, by James Simpson (architect), Doctorate thesis, appendix 1, Edinburgh, 1972

²⁸ *A Militia of Mercy*, By Bro. R. J. Newton (Texas), in *The Builder Magazine*, June 1928, Volume XIV, Number 6

a member of an organisation which was in some danger.”²⁹ In fact, the antiquarian, Roman Knight and architect John Clerk, who had employed a great number of operative masons to build his estates as well as the village of Penicuik, was in the best position possible not only to be initiated into the Craft in 1710, but also to collect information otherwise kept under the seal of secrecy among the operative masons.

Another key member of the “Order of the Book” was Freemason Richard Boyle (1694-1753), the 3rd Earl of Burlington and 4th Earl of Cork, Marquis of Halifax, Lord Treasurer of Ireland and Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire. Lord Burlington was a direct relative of Irish-born Robert Boyle (1627-1691), son of Richard the “Great Earl of Cork”, and a co-founder of the “Royal Society of London for improving natural knowledge” (1662). Lord Burlington is also believed to have been a Rosicrucian, like his uncle Robert before him, and like his close friend Alexander Pope, another “Roman Knight”, Freemason and antiquarian. Both men may well have been among those Masons whom Brother Ephraim Chambers described in his *Cyclopoedia* (1728),³⁰ the first modern encyclopaedia, as having “all the characteristics of Rosicrucians” and being the “retainers to the art of building”.

More importantly, it was Lord Burlington, then nicknamed “the Appollo of the Arts” by Horace Walpole and “the Art's Proper Priest” by William Kent, who in 1722-1725 built Chiswick House in London. This House, that Burlington called “the Temple of the [Liberal] Arts”, was quite an unusual building, with numerous masonic symbols inside (square, compasses, gavel, zodiac signs, etc.) and exquisite gardens, with an obelisk in a circle, two sphynxs and boundary stones carved as Celtic female figures with leaves. Interestingly, one of the earliest pieces Burlington built was “the Deer House”, with a Vitruvian or Serlian door (one that tapers upward) and which could easily be described as the ‘low, narrow door’ leading to the initiatic chamber where the candidate ‘died’ and ‘rose’ again as a new man – a Freemason. If indeed the “Deer House” was used for outdoor masonic initiations, then the ritual may well have been modeled after the story of Scandinavian god Odin who sacrificed himself at the foot of the Yggdrasil Tree (similar in symbolism to the Kabbalistic Tree of Life), or after the Celtic god Cernunos. Indeed, in Celtic mythology, the “deer” - as well as the tree - was the symbol of Cernunos, the horned god of the forest - with “two horns” (much like two pillars). In any case, everything in and about Chiswick House suggests it was the very first Masonic Temple of Modern Freemasonry, conceived and erected at the peak of the European Enlightenment as a monument to Natural Religion and Universalism.



Chiswick House (ca 1725); close up of one of the “herms”, or “therms” (boundary stone) carved as a female figure; obelisk within circle, in front of a small circular temple; Photos: Mary Ann Sullivan 2003, on <http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/england/london/chiswick/burlington3.html>

²⁹ *Freemasonry in Scotland in 1717*, by Brother George Draffen of Newington, Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland 1996-2003

³⁰ *Cyclopoedia, or an Universal Dictionary of arts and sciences* by Ephraim Chambers, 2 Vol., London, ed. James and John Knapton, 1728

Antiquarian and Freemason Alexander Pope wrote about Lord Burlington's mastery of the 'Art of Building' in his *Epistle IV to Lord Burlington* (1731).³¹ One line makes a clear reference to Anderson's *Constitutions*: "Erect new wonders, and the old repair; Jones and Palladio to themselves restore, and be whate'er Vitruvius was before." Several references are made about Burlington's interests and antiquarian friends: "He buys for Topham, drawings and designs; for Pembroke, statues, dirty gods, and coins; rare monkish manuscripts for Hearne alone, and books for Mead, and butterflies for Sloane." The expression "dirty gods" refers not to pagan gods but to Renaissance pseudo antiques, which Lord Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke, collected; Richard Topham (d. 1735) was a famous art collector; Thomas Hearne (1678-1735) was a mediaevalist specialized in English historical texts; Richard Mead (1673-1754) was a physician who owned some 30,000 rare books and ancient texts; Irish-born Hans Sloane (1660-1753) was a friend of Robert Boyle (Lord Burlington's relative) and the President of the Royal Society of London (1727-1740); it was in Sloane's personal collection (which helped found the British Museum in 1753) that the famous Manuscript #3329 of 1700 was found. Other lines are about the secret tradition of brotherhood: "Oft have you hinted to your brother peer, a certain truth, which many buy too dear [...] A light, which in yourself you must perceive; [Inigo] Jones and [André] Le Nôtre have it not to give." The poem contains several key masonic words, such as "Brother", "points", "Arch", "column", "the seven" (liberal arts) and "Temple", but most revealing is their association with clearly Celtic references such as "Grove" and "Nature", for instance: "Grove nods at Grove, each Ally has a Brother, and half the Platform just reflects the other." A verse speaks of Greek goddess Ceres, "Another age shall see the golden ear, embrown the slope, and nod on the parterre, deep harvests bury all his pride has plann'd, and laughing Ceres reassume the land." Another verse suggests that the 'Art of Building' was linked with the ancient "Great Mother of All", the goddess of the creative and generative powers of nature whose worship in Rome involved fertility rites and rites for the dead:

"To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the column, or the arch to bend,
To swell the terrace, or to sink the grot.
In all, let Nature never be forgot:
But treat the goddess like a modest fair,
Nor overdress, nor leave her wholly bare;
Let not each beauty ev'rywhere be spied,
where half the skill is decently to hide.
He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds."

It becomes obvious that the "Roman Knights" and Antiquarian Masons were only "officially" interested in Roman artifact. Some of these men, like Alexander Pope and Lord Burlington, were believed to be with the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. As Freemasons and antiquarians, the Roman Knights, all of whom used druidical or Celtic pseudonyms, were much more interested in the ancient Celtic religion. The Scottish historian Iain Gordon Brown wrote, "their interests appear to have concentrated on 'Antient Britains', and their chosen aliases, expeditions to Stonehenge, talk of mistletoe and general delight in much romantic nonsense, suggest that an alternative title for the group of the 'little College of Druids' is nearer to the truth."³² What Brown does not seem to know is the fact that all these men, including Clerk (who, in the foundation papers, signed "Clark"), were also members of the Druid Order, which Robert Boyle reportedly called "the invisible college, a name usually refering to the Rosicrucians and/or Masons."³³

³¹ Original title: *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington, Occasioned by his Publishing Palladio's Designs of the Bathes, Arches, and Theatre's of Ancient Rome*. See Library of University of Toronto, Representative Poetry Online, under 'Alexander Pope': <http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem1632.html>

³² *The Hobby-Horsical Antiquary: A Scottish Character*, by Iain Gordon Brown, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1980, pp. 34-35

³³ *The Ancient Druid Order*, by The Druid Order (B.C.U.B.) and The British Circle of the Universal Bond, An Druidh Uileach Braithrearchas; Isaac Bonewits, NY 1984-1997; The House of Reflecting Shadows, 1998

At the time, Stukely was already considered an authority on the Druids, megaliths and various sites like Avebury and Stonehenge. He studied at Oxford and knew the work of John Aubrey, the author of *Monumenta Britannica* (1670) that included a section entitled *Templa Druidum*. Beginning in 1710, Stukely traveled the British country on horseback until 1724, the year he published his famous "*Itinerarium Curiosum Centuria I: An Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art observed in Travels through Great Britain*".³⁴ These Roman Knights had researched and documented the history of the British Isles like no one else before, and were the experts not only on Roman antiquity but also the ancient Celts.

In this regard, we may ask, did John Clerk influence his *protégé* James Anderson in any way at the time he wrote the Constitutions around 1721? Was Celtic lore and druidic symbolism introduced into the Third Degree ritual by these Scottish and Irish antiquarian Masons?

It is most probable that the "Roman" members of the Druid Order discovered undeniable evidence that the Masonry tradition derived from Druidism, the religion of the ancient Celts who, in turn, were of Hebrew or Phoenician origin. Indeed, Stukely who saw marks of Israelite worship in Stonehenge was convinced not only that Druidism was akin to Christianity but that it was the true "Natural Religion", that of Abraham— and that it had reached Britain with the Phoenicians shortly after the biblical flood. Thomas Paine (1737-1809), who was most likely a Freemason, believed the same thing. In his book *On the Origin of Free-Masonry*, published post humously in Paris, Paine wrote:

"Masonry (as I shall show from the customs, ceremonies, hieroglyphics, and chronology of Masonry) is derived and is the remains of the religion of the ancient Druids; who, like the Magi of Persia and the Priests of Heliopolis in Egypt, were Priests of the Sun. They paid worship to this great luminary, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause whom they styled " Time without limits. The Christian religion and Masonry have one and the same common origin: both are derived from the worship of the Sun."³⁵

Numerous ancient writers like Diodorus, Iamblichus Ammianus, Hippolytus of Alexandria and Valerius Maximus have linked the Druids with the Pythagoreans, as "members of the intimate fellowship of the Pythagorean faith." Clement of Alexandria wrote that philosophy had been studied by the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and the Druids before the Greeks. "The similarities between the ancient Celtic ideas and those of the Pythagoreans may indicate that the Druids, rather than originating their beliefs, were descended from bearers of the ancient wisdom from the Near or Far East."³⁶

In this sense, if symbols observed in the modern Master Mason ritual are truly Celtic in origin, then they could be as old as Abraham who was thrown into a burning furnace by his enemy Nimrod, and who, according to most ancient Kabbalist texts (including the *Zohar*), was the author of the mystical tradition known as the *Hilkot Yetzirah*, or *Sefer Yetzirah* – the Jewish Kabbalah – about the 32 paths to wisdom and the ten sephiroth of the Tree of Life...

The Phoenician Link

Using various historical sources, Linda Keem (in the Encyclopedia Phoeniciana) comes to the conclusion that "the modern Freemasons' Society developed from the Phoenician masons, which is why their rituals are kept secret."³⁷ This seems a bit vague, perhaps too easy, but it also suggests the masonic tradition, or

³⁴ *Itinerarium Curiosum Centuria I: An Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art observed in Travels through Great Britain*, by Dr William Stukely, London, 1724

³⁵ *On the Origin of Free-Masonry*, By Thomas Paine, Paris, 1812; Éditions du Prieuré, Rouvray (France), 1997

³⁶ *Celts and Druids, Who Were They?* by E. A. Holmes, Ancient Wisdom of Wales Series, Reprinted from Sunrise magazine, August/September, 1976 by Theosophical University Press

³⁷ *King Solomon's Temple - Biblical Account and Commentary*, by Linda Keem and Salim George Khalaf, in "A Bequest Unearthed, Phoenicia," Phoenician (Canaanite & Punic) Encyclopedia, 2003 on <http://phoenicia.org/temple.html>

sense, of secrecy, more than secret knowledge, may go back to the time the Temple of Solomon was built. Indeed, in the ancient Phoenician tradition the knowledge (the art of geometry) of the Master Mason and the designated Architect was “known at any given time only to three people.” Also, the Phoenician masons had secret passwords but only to protect themselves from being robbed by impostors who would claim undue wages. Moreover, the beginning of periods of peace were traditionally marked in Phoenician sagas by the following ritual words: “*I have a tale and I will tell it, a word and I will repeat it, a tale of wood and a whisper of stone, a tale that mankind may know and that the multitudes of the earth may understand.*” The building of the Temple of Solomon marked the beginning of such a period of peace with David becoming the new king of Judah and Israel. The Temple itself included numerous elements symbolizing the union of the Phoenicians and the Hebrews. So how does the Hiram legend of modern Freemasonry fit into this context?

It is important to know that “Hiram” and “Haram”/“Huram” (meaning “of Bela”, the original name of the city of Zoar – Genesis 14:2) were synonymous, and designated some “sacred contents” – perhaps secret knowledge - that was “buried” or “hidden” in a place marked, metaphorically speaking, by the evergreen acacia. Also, the name Hiram was often referred to as *Adoniram*, a name possibly derived from Adon (Lord), or from Anon, *anonymous* – someone *whose name may not be divulged* (a basic rule in Freemasonry). In fact, the acacia was the symbol of ever-lasting life, of immortality of the soul. For this reason, the Jews planted Acacia on graves. Similarly, according to the masonic legend, Hiram’s body was discovered under a blooming acacia branch. More significantly, the word Hiram also signifies *high born, raised, or elevated*, epithets belonging to the sun rising from darkness, or to a man who incarnated such light and wisdom. The *Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary* (1999)³⁸ defines the words Hiram/Huram Abif as coming from Hebrew *Huram 'abiu* or *'abiv*, from *harah*, meaning ‘to burn with ardor’ [thus making “burning” a metaphor], to be “noble” or “free-born” (reminiscent of “free” masons); or *haram*, meaning to “devote, consecrate as to religion or destruction, be killed or destroyed.” These are all symbolic aspects found in the raising ceremony of the Master Mason which, according to the French Freemason Jean-Marie Ragon, derived from the ancient Egyptian third degree called “the Gate of Death”. Ragon wrote, “the Masonic initiation was modeled on that of the Lesser Mysteries of Egypt, also used in India from time immemorial.”³⁹

The legend of Hiram’s murder is just that – a legend, or rather a metaphor. His murder has no historical basis and nowhere in the Bible is there any mention of it. According to Jewish Encyclopedia.com (2002), the legend of Hiram is “a misunderstanding of II Chron. ii. 13”, and it “may possibly trace back to the rabbinic legend that all the workmen were killed so that they should not build another temple devoted to idolatry.” In the Bible, Hiram is simply described as a “craftsman living in the city of Tyre, who was skilled in bronze work. His father [...] was from Tyre, and had also been a skilled bronze craftsman; his mother was from the tribe of Naphtali,” (1 Kings 7:13-14), or tribe of Dan. He was “a wise and skillful master craftsman [...] He knows how to make things out of gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood. He can work with blue, purple, and red cloth, and with linen.” (2 Chronicles 2: 13-15). However, we know that Hiram was Phoenician – just like King-priest Melchizedek, another key character in the higher degrees of modern Freemasonry.

During the reign of King David, the Hebrews of the northern kingdom of Israel, then ruled by Ishbaal (or Ishbosheth), the son of Saul, venerated god Baal, but according to Linda Keem, they “later changed Hebrew names that included the Phoenician god Baal so that it looked as if the Hebrews had never worshipped the Phoenician gods.” (Baal is a Hebrew word meaning “husband” or “Lord”). Interestingly, King Ishbaal was assassinated by two of his own army officers – a story reminiscent of Hiram’s legend. Ishbaal’s legitimate heir to the throne was Mephibaal, Saul’s grandson, of the tribe of Benjamin, but he was a man “crippled in both feet” (2 Samuel 9:13), most likely a metaphor placing him as an unfit heir. Instead, King David was chosen by God as the new king of Israel, soon followed by his son Solomon. And when Hiram, King of Tyre, offered to send him 30,000 “foreigners” – actually Phoenician workmen from Judah and Israel - and all the necessary material to build his great Temple, he literally recognized David as the rightful head of both kingdoms. This may seem like an act of surrender, but in reality while the Hebrews in Egypt had never

³⁸ *The Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary*, Theosophical University Press, 1999

³⁹ *Orthodoxie Maçonique*, Jean-Marie de Bettignes Ragon, Paris 1863, p. 101

learned to master the art and science of building and metalworking, the Phoenicians had already proven their superior building skills with their Temple of Melqart in Tyre.

Not surprisingly, the Temple of Solomon was designed in true Phoenician style, and like all Phoenician temples it included two highly important pillars: the “Asherah poles”, symbols known today as the pillars Jachin and Boaz in masonic temples. Interestingly, “asherah” means literally “the groves”.

“There was a magnificent temple to Melqart/Baal right in the centre of Tyre. All Phoenician temples incorporated two pillars: originally a wooden one for Astarte and a stone one for Baal. According to the ancient historian Herodotus, the Tyrian temple had one emerald pillar and one of gold. The emerald one [...] had a candle inside so that it shone at night: the green obviously symbolises a tree so the emerald pillar must have represented Astarte’s wooden column. The gold one symbolised the wealth given by the earth, gold being then the most precious metal to come out of stone, just as it is now.”

Asarte (also Ashtoreth in the Old Testament) was also the Semitic goddess Asherah — the “Queen of Heaven” or “Mother of All”, which is also the meaning of the ancient Gaelic words *maha byn* mentioned in the Sloane manuscript No. 3329. Asherah was a deity closely related to Ishtar and Belili, and was worshipped by the ancient Hebrews and Canaanites. She was often depicted as a bull, like the horned god Baal, and was considered his feminine counterpart. In other words, she was the feminine “pillar”, the goddess of fertility, the mother earth, while Baal was the masculine divine aspect.

“Her cult included sacred prostitution and, before this use was dedicated to Baal, human sacrifice. It is believed that her cult, although forbidden by Hebrews lasted during the Roman occupation in Israel in the hidden form of houses of prostitution, until emperor Constantine closed those houses after converting to Christianity [...] Her idols were found also in forests, carved on living trees, or in the form of poles beside altars that were placed at the side of some roads. It was believed that her essence dwelled in trees or pieces of wood.”⁴⁰

To the ancient Celts, the tree was not just a key symbol representing the cycle of life, death, fertility and rebirth, much like the acacia to the Hebrews; it became Cernunos, the “horned god” of the forest, the Green Man, the crowned Oak Tree King. The tree itself was, shall we say, a natural pillar of strength and beauty. More importantly, pillars dedicated to the god Baal have been found in France and Ireland. And who founded Baal worship? Nimrod, the founder of Babylon who was usually represented with a headdress with horns (just like King-priest Melchizedek). And as we said earlier, the oldest Masonic manuscript, the *Regius Poem*, attributes the origin of Masonry and Geometry first to Abraham, then to Nimrod, the Hamitic-Cushite mighty hunter and the builder of the Tower of Babel (Babylon).

But were these Asherah poles of Semitic origin? Or were they the idolatrous legacy of the Phoenicians, or the Canaanites? Numerous cromlechs, menhirs, dolmens, and “gilgals” (piles of stones used as altars) have been found all over eastern Palestine and in Moab, and several scholars, like Eric William Heaton and H. R. Hall,⁴¹ believe they were erected not by Hebrews but by a previous people called Rephaim, a pre-Israelite, antediluvian race of Nephilim (“those who fell”, or “came down”) who once lived in Ashtaroth Karnaim,⁴² a name that means “of the two horns” (or pillars):

“Ashtaroth is the plural (or, rather, dual) form of the name Ishtar, Venus, with reference to the appearances of that bright shining planet as both morning and evening star. The fuller title Ashtaroth-Karnaim (of the two horns) suggests that even without telescopes they knew of the crescent

⁴⁰ Source: The Wikipedia Encyclopedia, on: <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asherah>

⁴¹ *The Ancient History of the Near East*, by H. R. Hall, Methuen & Co, London 1963

⁴² Easton’s Bible Dictionary, 1996

appearance of Venus. This name Ashtaroth is not to be confused with the Asherah (plural: Asheroth), commonly translated 'the groves'.⁴³

The Rephaim were said to be "of celestial seed". As the sons of Anak (which means "plumbline" or "lead", or, in Akkadian, "tin")⁴⁴, they were part of the "last generation of the Most Ancient Church before the Judgment of that Church known as the Flood".⁴⁵ Long after the Rephaim vanished, the Hebrews adopted these "gilgals" which were denounced in the Old Testament because they marked a place of idolatrous worship (Hosea 4:15; 9:15). In Egypt, according to Heaton, the same "gilgals" were prolonged into obelisks.

The word *gilgal* means "wheel", "rolling" and "heap of stone". It also designated an altar made of a heap of stones (as mentioned in Hosea 12:1-14). This word shares the same etymological root as "gilgul" ("reincarnation"), "gulgolet" and "golgotha", the last two meaning "skull" and all derived from the word *galal* ("wheel", "great"), as in Galilea and Galates. Another interesting variation of "gilgal" and "gilgul" is Gilgamesh, the name of the king of Uruk, or Babylonia, about 2700 BC, a great hero identified as King Nimrod: "*He saw the great Mystery, knew the Hidden, recovered the knowledge of all the times before the Flood, journeyed beyond the distant, beyond exhaustion, and then carved his story on stone...*"⁴⁶ In the legend, Gilgamesh (Nimrod) is said, allegorically speaking, to have found the secret of eternal life in a precious plant on an island after climbing to a sacred grove on top of a mountain and crossing the "waters of Death"...

The Celtic-Hebrew Link

Several scholars claim the Celts of Europe were Phoenicians. Many historians, anthropologists and philologists believe that a great number of Israelites and Phoenicians were forced to migrate during the Assyrian conquest, (8th century BC). "Conquered lands were literally plundered of everything of value - even people, who were taken to slavery in foreign lands [...]"⁴⁷ Historical evidence shows that many Israelites were "carried away captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians" and many more Hebrews and Phoenicians migrated to Europe for safety reasons.⁴⁸ And torture and human sacrifice were quite common: "Men were sometimes skinned alive, or impaled on poles to slowly die outside the gates of a city." Although human sacrifice was declared "un-Roman" and prohibited in 97 BC by senatorial decree under the consulship of Licinius Crassus, the Celts were not the only ones who performed human sacrifice in a ritualistic manner: the Romans had practiced it during centuries. "Plutarch (*Roman Questions* 83) noted the Roman attitude that disapproved of other peoples making human sacrifice to the gods, and wondered, "Did they [the Romans] think it impious to sacrifice human beings to the gods, but necessary to sacrifice them to the Manes?"⁴⁹

During the Third Degree ritual ceremony, before rising from 'death' as a new Master Mason, the Fellowcraft is "killed" in a symbolic manner reminiscent of Hiram's murder: he is given three blows, one on each shoulder and the third and final one on the forehead. Régis Blanchet and Pierre Danlot believe the three symbolic blows given to the candidate derived from the ancient Celtic ritual of human sacrifice, which only took place in the presence of a Druid. It is believed that, on some occasions, the victim was hit with three blows, one to each clavícula ("key") and the head, the 'seat of the soul', this in order to 'free' the spirit from the flesh and rib "cage". Celtic methods of sacrifice included shooting people with arrows, giving them a lethal blow on the

⁴³ *Judges And Ruth: The Theme of the Book (2:11-3:6)*, by Harry Whittaker Christadelphian Books Online, on http://www.bbie.org/chbooks/haw/judges_ruth/ch02.html

⁴⁴ Translation of 'anak in the Bible: Amos 7:7-8, by Tim Bulkeley, 1996-2002 on <http://www.bible.gen.nz/amos/tin.htm>

⁴⁵ Source: The Ancient Church Project, Lexicon, Glencairn Museum, Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, PA, USA

⁴⁶ Text found on ancient stones; see: <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/GILG.HTM>

⁴⁷ *The Hebrew-Celtic Connection*, by J. S. Brooks, Open Bible Ministries, Belfast, on <http://www.1335.com/othertopics.html>

⁴⁸ Dictionary of Christ & The Gospels, Vol. 1, p. 692

⁴⁹ *Human sacrifice in Ancient Rome*, by M. Horatius Piscinus, Collegium Religiums, Societatis Viae Romanae, on <http://www.societasviaromana.org>

head or neck, crucifying them inside or around their temples (either patriarchal pillars, oak groves or caves, depending on the period), and locking them up with animals inside a huge straw effigy that would be set on fire and turned "into a holocaust."⁵⁰ And while the Druid performed the sacrifice, bards played the drums and trumpets to cover the cries of the victims.

Drums and gongs were also played at the Temple of Solomon to cover the sound of the sacred Name of God that the High Priest was whispering as he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. In fact, drums were traditionally used in many 'sacred places' where sacrifices were offered to the Punic god Ba'al Hammon and the Ammonite god Moloch (also Molech). The ancient Canaanite place for sacrifice was called a *tophet*, which means either "the drum", "the sacred place" and "the fire-stove", depending on the source and period. There was such a *tophet* just south-west of Jerusalem. In the Bible, it is known as the "Valley of the son of Hinnom" (or "Ben-Hinnom" in Hebrew, also "Gehenna" in the New Testament, and "Jahannam" in the Qur'an). And Solomon himself had "built an altar to Molech at Tophet in the Valley of Hinnom."⁵¹ This valley is just at the end of the Valley of Rephaim (northward), named after those who reportedly built all the dolmens and "gilgals" of Moab and Palestine. Although it is believed that human sacrifice was an early custom in Israel and among the Ethiopians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Canaanites and Scythians, there is no evidence that suggests Solomon had the High-priest Sadoc perform human sacrifices at Tophet or at the Temple. Yet, the Bible denounces such idolatrous offerings:

"And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. [...] And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." (Jer. 7:31-32; 6; 35) For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." (Isaiah 30:33)

Were children really sacrificed or was this instead a ritual of purification that was not recognized by the majority of Hebrews? Based on the Keil-Delitzsch commentaries, the expression "passing through the fire" would be a metaphor about a rite of purification which the author defines in these terms:

"[...] going through the fire without burning, a februation, or purification through fire, by which the children were consecrated to Moloch; a kind of fire-baptism, which preceded the sacrificing, and was performed, particularly in olden time, without actual sacrificing, or slaying and burning. For februation was practiced among the most different nations without being connected with human sacrifices; and, like most to the idolatrous rites of the heathen, no doubt the worship of Moloch assumed different forms at different times and among different nations. If the Israelites had really sacrificed their children to Moloch, i.e. had slain and burned them, before the time of Ahaz, the burning would certainly have been mentioned before; for Solomon had built a high place upon the mountain to the east of Jerusalem for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon, to please his foreign wives."⁵²

Eventually, perhaps not knowing what really went on in this burning Valley, the idolatrous Jews associated it with the sufferings of the sacrificed victims, with corruption and therefore the abode – and later hell - for the damned of this world. After the Exile, "This valley became the common receptacle for all the refuse of the

⁵⁰ *Les sacrifices humains ont-ils existé?*, by Jean-Louis Cadoux, cahiers L'Histoire n° 176, France

⁵¹ *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill F. Unger, Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, page 416

⁵² *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Keil-Delitzsch), Vol. 1, Pentateuch Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980, pp. 416-417
p. 17

city. Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and all kinds of filth, were cast and consumed by fire kept always burning. It thus in process of time became the image of the place of everlasting destruction.”⁵³

The Cycle of Life

Was human sacrifice ever practiced in Europe? The French archeologists Jean-Louis Brunaux and Bernard Lambot have found undeniable evidence of such a ritual among the ancient Celts (Kelts/Keltoi, from Galates) of France. In Gournay-sur-Aronde in Oise, Brunaux discovered an ancient sanctuary (3rd century BC) with nine holes dug in the ground and a much larger one in the center. These holes contained the remains of sacrificed bulls (main hole) as well as sheep, pigs, birds and other animals. Once the animals had been killed, they were left to rot in open air for weeks until the *flesh separated from the bones*. At the Ribemont-sur-Ancre sanctuary, Brunaux found the remains of decapitated men with their weapons; some were Celt warriors who had died during battle, others were enemies. Their bodies had been suspended to dry on racks in three wood buildings, a process that took a year (Flavius reported the Celts in Hannibal's army practiced the same ritual: “For the soul to return to the gods, the flesh must be left to the hungry vaultour that will eat the flesh.”) Once the flesh had completely decomposed, the bones were cleaned, ground into powder and offered to the “chthonian” deities, the gods of the Underworld. Inside a polygonal temple, Brunaux found a hollow altar made of about 2,000 long bones of men and horses and cemented with clay; inside the altar, thousands more finely ground human bones were found to have been burned as offerings to the gods of the Underworld.

In Acy-Romance, Lambot discovered another sanctuary with similar traces of human sacrifice that took place between the 2nd and 1st century BC. Nineteen young men were found, hands tied behind their back; they had been left to rot in a deep pit under the altar inside the temple. Lambot estimates these sacrifices took place usually during the winter over a period of about 80 years. Some victims were killed after receiving a violent ax blow to the right side of the head as they were kneeling. In a separate area, three mummified skeletons were found buried in square graves in a seated position and facing the Orient (sun). The Celts believed the body fluids, or ‘waters’, of the victims fed the gods of the Underworld, while the soul returned to the great God. In this sense, human sacrifice was the ultimate, periodic offering deemed necessary to allow new generations of men to come. It was a question of perpetuating the cycle of life, of keeping the Great Wheel going.⁵⁴

Many scholars, including the French professor Jean-Louis Cadoux, of the University of Amiens, and the famous Celtic specialist Paul Jacobsthal have found evidence of another ancient cult: “Amongst the Celts the human head was venerated above all else, since the head was to the Celt the soul, center of the emotions as well as of life itself, a symbol of divinity and of the powers of the other-world.”⁵⁵ It was the most important symbol of divine power. The Celts would embalm human heads in cedar oil, store them in special trunks and only show them on rare occasions. Others were kept in niches carved into the three main columns inside their sacred temples – most likely ‘gilgals’, perhaps connected with ‘gilgul’, the belief of the “wheel” of life and reincarnation”. Jacobsthal wrote about the three pillars that he found inside a Druidic temple close to Roquepertuse, France; they were decorated with foliage and fishes (a symbol of the soul), and supported a lintel topped with a large bird, a symbol of the spirit moving on to the “other world”.

⁵³ <http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gehenna.html>; also The Easton's Bible Dictionary, on <http://www.bible.org/public/easton/t0001790.htm>

⁵⁴ *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois*, by Renée Grimaud. Ed Ouest-France, in Sciences et Avenir N° 662, April 2002

⁵⁵ *Early Celtic Art* by Paul Jacobsthal, 1944; see <http://www.bzh.com/keltia/galleg/histoire/celtie/tete-hum.htm>



Three ancient Celtic pillars with niches containing skulls (Photo: anonymous)

We find the same symbolism of pillars with green foliage and the severed head (103 in all, mostly of the Green Man) in the exquisite Rosslyn Chapel, originally named the Collegiate Chapel of Saint Matthew, in Midlothian, Scotland. Here, it is the Apprentice's head (whose carving, some believe was altered at some time),⁵⁶ as well as that of a bleeding angel found in the family crypt, that bears a scar on the right temple. Most interesting is the famous "Prentice's Pillar" (or "Prince's Pillar")⁵⁷: carved at the base of the pillar is a scene representing the sacrifice of Norse god Odin at the foot of a very special tree, the Yggdrasil Tree, which was the Norse Tree of Knowledge, similar to the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Also known under the name *Hangatyr*, the god of the hanged, Odin was a god of resurrection linked with two Celtic horned gods, Cernunos, the Oak King of the Forest, and the mighty hunter Herne (an earlier version of Jack O' the Green, the sacrificial king of harvest festivals). Odin was the one-eyed, cloaked King of the gods, a wanderer, like the Fool of the Kabbalistic Tarot who was always in search of knowledge.⁵⁸ This sacrificial scene of pagan mythology on the Prentice's Pillar could very well have represented to the operative masons the acquisition of knowledge - the Art of Building and Geometry - of the Apprentice and his raising through a symbolic death to the degree of Fellow of the Craft (equivalent to today's Master Mason Degree). Indeed, Odin sacrificed one eye and hung himself for nine days on the Yggdrasil Tree to find 'eternal youth' and 'second sight', a secret kept inside the severed head of Mimir, the Green Man, a head said to foretell the future – all of which brings to mind the 1638 poem by Henry Adamson, in which "second sight" is associated with the Mason Word: *For we be brethren of the rosie cross, we have the Mason Word and second sight, things for to come we can foretell aright.*

At the time Rosslyn Chapel was built, between 1446 and 1490, the owner Sir William St Clair (Sinclair) was the third and last Earl of Orkney, an earldom then part of Norway that was held by the Sinclairs for the Norwegian Crown until 1468. Following the Reformation, the altars were destroyed in 1592, and the Catholic chapel was left abandoned until 1736, "when James St Clair, glazed the windows for the first time, repaired the roof, laid the floor with flagstones", and added the boundary wall.⁵⁹ These restoration works, which were completed in 1740, were recommended and supervised by the Freemason and architect John Clerk, the

⁵⁶ *The Head of God*, by Kaith Laidler, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1998, p. 276

⁵⁷ Note: The "Prentice's Pillar" was referred to as the "Prince's Pillar" in *An account of the chapel of Roslin*, 1778. Source: Official website of Rosslyn Chapel, <http://www.rosslynchapel.org.uk/html/architecture.htm>

⁵⁸ Young Odin pawned one of his eyes to the giant *Mime* for the right to drink from the fountain of wisdom. Mime was later beheaded but Odin found the skull, anointed it with healing herbs and revived it.

⁵⁹ The Rosslyn Chapel Foundation, on <http://www.rosslynchapel.org.uk/history/history-pt3.htm#1736>

immediate neighbor and long-time friend of the Sinclair family.⁶⁰ This coincides with the foundation, in 1736, of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland, with its first Grand Master elected being Sir William St Clair of Rosslyn (1700-1778), the hereditary Grand Master Mason of Scotland (operative tradition) and a direct relative of James St Clair, Master of Caithness, who had bought the estate of Rosslyn in 1735. At the time, with the altars missing, Rosslyn Chapel was no longer consecrated as a legitimate place of worship; it would only be re-dedicated formally on April 22nd, 1862 by the Bishop of Edinburgh and the Bishop of Brechin at the request of James Alexander, 3rd Earl of Rosslyn. This suggests that the Chapel may have been restored during the first half of the 18th century not as a private family sanctuary, but rather as a purely Scottish masonic temple, one very different from those recognized by modern English Freemasonry.

Another Norse correspondence can be established in the modern Third Degree ritual: when the Warden tries to "raise" the candidate (as Hiram) from his grave by pulling him by the right hand, the latter is said to separate from the arm, and the Worshipful Master immediately cries out the Mason Word, "*Mac benac!*" In ancient Norse mythology, the youngest son of Odin was *Tyr*, the left-handed God of War and Victory, of divine order, law and justice in the Universe, who like Odin received sacrifices of hanged men. (In Anglo-Saxon mythology, Tyr was known as Tiu, Asshur, and Arthur.)⁶¹ According to legend, Tyr had lost his right hand while defeating the wolf Fenris, the great force of chaos who planned to devour the sun (the God of Light). By doing so, Tyr saved the Aesir, his own clan of gods who were said to live forever young by eating the golden apples of Idun, the goddess of youth, fertility and death...

Interestingly, Od(in) and Tyr/Ti//Tiu are synonymous and mean the "germ of flow", "outflow or "the lead."⁶² In Old English, Tyr was *Tw* (Twes), meaning *to shine*, with derivatives meaning "sky", "heaven", and "god". In Danish, the same word means "bull".⁶³ Both *Tw* and *Tr/Tyr* derived from Germanic *Twaz*, or *Tiwaz*. In very ancient cosmography, Tyr designated the westernmost region called the fortunate islands, the green islands, or, to the ancient Celts, Avalon (*Tyr na Og*). More importantly, Tyr/Tiwaz, was also the Celtic rune of self-sacrifice of the blacksmith who was "capable of forging a new life",⁶⁴ something one can easily associate with the 'sacrificed' master smith Hiram of Tyr, who was sent to Solomon by his namesake, the great Phoenician king of *Tyr*.⁶⁵

The legend of Odin, who sacrificed himself on the Tree of Knowledge to gain 'second sight', and his son Tyr who lost his right arm to save his 'eternally young' people are quite reminiscent of Moabon, the child of Lot; of Mabon, the young God of Light and divine son of Modron, the Great Mother of the Celts; of the young arthurian warrior who visited the Underworld, the patron of the arts and musician whose lamentation became a song... In other words, the Mason Word *mac benac* and *maha byn* may, in the end, mean *Divine Child* or *eternal youth*. This is the same secret that Gilgamesh (Nimrod) had found finally in a precious plant – reminiscent of the acacia, the symbol of soul immortality that marked Hiram's grave, of the Yggdrasil Tree, of the Green Man – but only after talking to the gods in a sacred grove atop a mountain and crossing the 'waters' of Death...

The Last Word

Norse mythology and Celtic sacrificial practices were not unknown to the 'modern' Freemasons, mainly those who were antiquarians, "Roman Knights" and active members of the Druid Order. The Third Degree raising

⁶⁰ *Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik Extracted by Himself from his Own Journals 1676-1755*, Edinburgh, 1892, in a footnote p. 250 (Scottish History Society)

⁶¹ The Collins English Dictionary, HarperCollins Publishers, 2000

⁶² *Odin and Try still going strong*, by Bengt Hemtun, Sweden 2003, on <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~catshaman/essays/odin.htm>

⁶³ The Wikipedia Dictionary, on <http://wiktionary.org/wiki/Bull>

⁶⁴ *Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic* by Edred Thorsson, Samuel Weiser, 1984; 1991

⁶⁵ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2000

ritual, with the non-Christian Hiram legend, contains obvious traces of various ancient traditions – Druidic, Celtic, Norse, Phoenician, Hebrew, Babylonian. As mentioned earlier, there was no Master Mason raising ritual in Scottish operative Masonry, but the complimentary title existed and was conferred by the King to a trusted Mason of great talent, much like Hiram who was chosen by the King of Tyr to supervise the work of his Fellows. The Third Degree, as it is known today, is a modern invention of English speculative Freemasonry. For this reason, we may ‘read’ various symbols in Rosslyn Chapel in a completely different light as they could very well represent the raising ritual of the Apprentice to the Degree of Fellow of the Craft in the ‘antient’ operative tradition. Indeed, the “Prentice” is represented not only as a head bearing the scar of ritualistic sacrifice on the forehead, but also, it seems, as the sacrificed Odin who had to die to gain knowledge, wisdom and “second sight”. This scene, therefore, may depict the symbolic ritual by which the Apprentice was ‘raised’ ‘from death’ as a Son of the “Great Mother” and acquired the Master Word *mah(a) byn* that identified him as a new Fellow.

Numerous scholars, including Charles Vallency, John Pinkarton, William Borlase and Thomas Moore⁶⁶ noticed great similarities between the Phoenician, Hebrew and the early Irish Celtic languages and religions. Pinkarton⁶⁷ wrote that the Druids were of Phoenician descent. Also, in his book *Etruria Celtica* (1842), Sir William Betham wrote:

"The principle deities of the Celtae were Phoenician Baal, who was their favorite deity...Tarmis, or Taran, (Taram, in Phoenician is thunder) from the Irish Tolne, a great noise, and Tolenac, thunder. The god of thunder, or king of gods, called also Moloch, by the Phoenicians, and by the Irish, Molc, fire, to whom the Phoenicians forced their children to pass through fire. So did the Gaels and Britons to Taramis, and so did the Irish...on the fires of the Baaltine, before alluded to, the children run and jump through them."⁶⁸

The Celts were the only other people known to have followed the seven-day calendar of the Hebrews. Moreover, as William Stukely had remarked, groves were commonly used as designated sites of worship in both Hebrew and Celtic culture. Indeed, the oak tree, like the acacia, was very important in Hebrew history. The Bible relates that Abraham called on the everlasting God from a *grove* planted by his own hand (Genesis 13:4), and that it was "beside the oaks of Moreh" that he erected his first altar (Gen. 12:6, 7). We also read that Gideon worshipped God under an oak tree (Judg. 6:19-24). In his *History of Ireland*, Thomas Moore writes:

"Not less ancient and general among the Celtic nations, was the circle of upright stones, with either an altar or tall pillar in the centre, and, like its prototype at Gilgal [ancient Israel], serving sometimes as a temple of worship, sometimes as a place of national council or inauguration [...] The rough, unhewn stone [...] used in their circular temples by the Druids, was the true, orthodox observance of the divine command delivered to Noah, *If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone* (Ex. 20:25) Dr Beauford, in *Druidism Revived* says, 'It is remarkable that all the ancient altars found in Ireland, and now distinguished by the name of Cromlechs or sloping stones, were originally called *Bothal*, or the House of God, and they seem to be of the same species as those mentioned in the Book of Genesis, called by the Hebrews, *Bethel*, which has the same signification as the Irish *Bothal*."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Essay On The Antiquity Of The Irish Language, Being A Collation Of The Irish With The Punic (Hebrew) Language*, by Charles Vallency, 1772; *History of Ireland*, by Thomas Moore, 1835-40; *Antiquities Of Cornwall* by William Borlase, 1754. See *The Hebrew-Celtic Connection*, on <http://www.1335.com/hebrew.html>

⁶⁷ *Enquiry into the History of Scotland*, by John Pinkarton, 1789

⁶⁸ *Etruria Celtica* (1842) by Sir William Betham, 1842, p. 224

⁶⁹ *History of Ireland*, by Thomas Moore, 1835-40, UK, pp. 40-42

Sir John Rhys, of Oxford, who was an authority on Celtic history, spoke of “an important group of Irish names formed much in the same way as Hebrew names are represented in the Old Testament.”⁷⁰ In *Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations* (1857), James Cowles Pritchard, founder of modern anthropology, stated there was “a remarkable analogy” between the Hebrew-Semitic languages and the Celtic. He suggested that the Celtic language was “an intermediate link between [the Indo-European] and the Semitic, or perhaps indicates a state of transition.”⁷¹ Pritchard wrote,

“[...] there were certain habits and superstitions among the Kelts which put the comparative mythologist in mind of certain things Semitic; the Bel-tane, or midsummer-day fire of the Highlands of Scotland... got compared with fire-worship of the Phoenician Baal. Then there were the words Bearla Fena, or language of Fene of the Irish annals - well translated by Lingus Pena, or Linge Punica – the language of Phoenicia.”⁷²

Pritchard concluded that “a common language is prima facie evidence in favor of a common lineage”, that “language is one of those signs of community of origin which is slow to be abolished.”

This may well be the case with the Mason Word, *mac benah* – a word whose true meaning and origin were lost or corrupted over time, like the pagan initiatic and symbolic ritual to which it was associated originally. It is most likely that the Druidic antiquarians and “Roman Knights” who contributed with so much research to the foundation of Modern Freemasonry had finally re-discovered it, along with the authentic sacrificial ritual, in the same manner the Royal Arch Knight Templar Druid finds the long-lost Word during the reconstruction of the Temple.

⁷⁰ *The Welsh People*, by John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, 4th edition, London 1906, p. 66

⁷¹ *Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations*, by James Cowles Pritchard, 1857, p. 349.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 75

Bibliography and other sources

- A Militia of Mercy*, By Bro. R. J. Newton (Texas), in *The Builder Magazine*, June 1928 - Volume XIV - Number 6
- A Relation of proceedings concerning the affairs of the Kirk of Scotland from August 1637 to July 1638*, by John Leslie, ed. David Laing, Bannatyne Club, 1830
- An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington, Occasioned by his Publishing Palladio's Designs of the Bathes, Arches, and Theatre's of Ancient Rome*. See: Library of University of Toronto, 'Representative Poetry Online' – under Alexander Pope, <http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem1632.html>
- Ancient and Moderns*, Education section, by Bro. Gene, San Diego, on www.mastermason.com/BrotherGene.
- Ancient' Masonry and the role of the Royal Arch*, from *The Arcane Schools*, by John Yarker, Chapter XI : The System Termed High-Grade Speculative Freemasonry, 2002
- Antiquities Of Cornwall* by William Borlase, 1754
- Celtic Gods, Celtic Goddesses*, by R. J. Stewart, Blandford Press, London, 1990
- Celts and Druids, Who Were They?* By E. A. Holmes, Ancient Wisdom of Wales Series, Reprinted from Sunrise magazine, August/September, 1976 by Theosophical University Press
- Columbia Encyclopedia, Fifth Edition, 1994, 1995 Columbia University Press
- Commentary on the Old Testament* (Keil-Delitzsch). Vol. 1, the Pentateuch Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980 on <http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gehenna.html>
- Cyclopoedia, or an Universal Dictionary of arts and sciences* by Ephraim Chambers, London, 1728
- Dictionary of Christ and The Gospels, Vol. 1
- Dictionnaire de la Franc-maçonnerie*, by Daniel Ligou, Presses Universitaires de France, 1987-1988
- Early Celtic Art* by Paul Jacobsthal, 1944; see <http://www.bzh.com/keltia/galleg/histoire/celtie/tete-hum.htm>
- Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations*, by James Cowles Pritchard, 1857
- Easton's Bible Dictionary, 1996, on <http://www.bible.org/public/easton/t0001790.htm>
- Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary*, Theosophical University Press, 1999
- Enquiry into the History of Scotland*, by John Pinkerton, 1789
- Essay On The Antiquity Of The Irish Language, Being A Collation Of The Irish With The Punic (Hebrew) Language*, by Charles Vallencey, 1772
- Etruria Celtica* (1842) by Sir William Betham, 1842
- Freemasonry in Scotland in 1717*, by Brother George Draffen of Newington, Past Substitute Grand Master, article published on the website of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland 1996-2003, <http://www.grandlodgescotland.com>
- Freemasonry, on <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=361&letter=F>
- Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic* by Edred Thorsson, Samuel Weiser, 1984; 1991
- History – A Key Element in Freemasonry*, by Brother Don. Falconer, Sydney, Australia, 1998
- History of Ireland*, by Thomas Moore, UK, 1835-40
- <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/GILG.HTM>
- Human sacrifice in Ancient Rome*, by M. Horatius Piscinus, Collegium Religiosum, Societatis Viae Romanae, on http://home.tiscali.be/mauk.haemers/collegium_religionis/human_sacrifice.htm
- Index to The Secret Doctrine of Helena P. Blavatsky*, by John P. Van Mater, 1997
- Itinerarium Curiosum Centuria I: An Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art observed in Travels through Great Britain*, by Dr William Stukely, London, 1724
- Judges And Ruth: The Theme of the Book (2:11-3:6)*, by Harry Whittaker Christadelphian Books Online, on http://www.bbje.org/chbooks/haw/judges_ruth/ch02.html
- King Solomon's Temple - Biblical Account and Commentary*, by Linda Keem and Salim George Khalaf, in "A Bequest Unearthed, Phoenicia," Phoenician (Canaanite & Punic) Encyclopedia, 2003 on <http://phoenicia.org/temple.html>
- Les sacrifices humains ont-ils existé?*, by Jean-Louis Cadoux, cahiers L'Histoire n° 176, France

Masonic Stones, by R. R. Connell, Philalethes Society, 1998, on <http://www.kena.org/hirams/1998/PHL-AU98.htm#Richard%20Rowney%20Connell>

Masonry Dissected, Samuel Prichard, 3rd edition, London 1730

Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Clerk Extracted by Himself from his Own Journals 1676-1755, edited by John M. Gray, Scottish History Society, First Series, XIII, Edinburgh, 1892

Nos ancêtres les Gaulois, by Renée Grimaud. Ed Ouest-France, in Sciences et Avenir N° 662, April 2002

Odin and Try still going strong, by Bengt Hemtun, Sweden 2003, on <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~catshaman/essays/odin.htm>

On the Origin of Free-Masonry, By Thomas Paine, Paris, 1812; Éditions du Prieuré, Rouvray, France, 1997

Orthodoxie Maçonnique, Jean-Marie de Bettignes Ragon, Paris 1863

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2000

The Ancient Church Project, Lexicon, Glencairn Museum, Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, PA

The Ancient Druid Order, by The British Circle of the Universal Bond, An Druidh Uileach Braithrearchas and The Druid Order (B.C.U.B.); Isaac Bonewits, NY 1984-1997; The House of Reflecting Shadows, 1998

The Ancient History of the Near East, by H. R. Hall, Methuen & Co. London 1963

The Clerks of Penicuik and the patronage of architecture, by James Simpson (architect), Doctorate thesis, appendix 1, Edinburgh, 1972

The Collins English Dictionary, HarperCollins Publishers, 2000

The Grade of Perfect Elect Mason, by Eric Serejski, 32° and S. Brent Morris, 33°, from Heredom, the transactions of the Scottish Rite Research Society, Vol. I, 1992, Scottish Rite Research Society

The Head of God, by Kaith Laidler, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1998

The Hebrew-Celtic Connection, by Pastor J. S. Brooks, Open Bible Ministries, Belfast, Ireland, on <http://www.1335.com/othertopics.html>

The Hiram Legend: Whence and Wherefore, by W. Bro. Chakravarthy Sampath Madhavan, Lodge Jyothi #253, Salem Grand Lodge of India, 2003, Pietre-Stone Review of Freemasonry, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com>

The Hobby-Horsical Antiquary: A Scottish Character, by Iain Gordon Brown, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1980

The Kaballah Unveiled, by S. L. McGregor Mathers, published on: *Order of Nazorean Essenes, A Buddhist Branch of Original Christianity*, on <http://essenes.crosswinds.net/mathers.html>

The Lost Word of Masonry, by Dr Ali Ezzahi, 2003, on <http://www.geocities.com/aliezzahir/Introduction.htm>

The Mason Word, by Richard B. Baldwin, PM, presented March 29, 1986, Vol. 1, 1982-1987, published by Douglas Smith, Jr., Lodge of Research #1949, AF&AM, on <http://www.bessel.org/>

The Origins of Freemasonry, by David Stevenson, Cambridge University Press, 1988

The Welsh People, by John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, 4th edition, London 1906

Translation of 'anak in the Bible: Amos 7:7-8, by Tim Bulkeley, 1996 on <http://www.bible.gen.nz/amos/tin.htm>

Unger's Bible Dictionary, by Merrill F. Unger, Chicago: Moody Press, 1957

Voyage en Orient - Histoire de la Reine du matin et de Soliman, Prince des Génies, by Gérard de Nerval, Paris 1843, Chapter XII

Wikipedia Encyclopedia, on: <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asherah>

William Stukely – Stonehenge and Avebury, Logocrat 2000, <http://www.lincolnshire-web.co.uk/hme.htm>

My special thanks to K. O. for his utmost patience.