

The Lost Word

The Lost Word is the genuine secret of a Master Mason said to be lost with the death of Hiram Abif. It is our opinion that "The Lost Word" is the guest to know your own nature.

The mythical history of Freemasonry informs us that there once existed a Word of surpassing value, and claiming a profound veneration; that this Word was known to but few; that it was at length lost; and that a temporary substitute for it was adopted. But as the very philosophy of Freemasonry teaches us that there can be no death without a resurrection-no decay without a subsequent restoration-on the same principle it follows that the loss of the Word must suppose its eventual recovery.

Now, this it is, precisely, that constitutes the myth of the Lost Word and the search for it. No matter what was the Word, no matter how it was lost, nor why a substitute was provided, nor when nor where it was recovered. These are all points of subsidiary importance, necessary, it is true, for knowing the legendary history, but not necessary for understanding the symbolism. The only term of the myth that is to be regarded in the study of its interpretation, is the abstract idea of a word lost and afterward recovered.

The Word, therefore, may be conceived to be the symbol of Divine Truth; and all its modifications- the loss, the substitution, and the recovery-are but component parts of the mythical symbol which represents a search after truth. In a general sense, the Word itself being then the symbol of Divine Truth, the narrative of its loss and the search for its recovery becomes a mythical symbol of the decay and 1088 of the true religion among the ancient nations, at and after the dispersion on the Plains of Shinar, and of the attempts of the wise men, the philosophers, and priests, to find and retain it in their secret mysteries and initiations, which have hence been designated as the Spurious Freemasonry of Antiquity.

But there is a special or individual, as well as a general interpretation, and in this special or individual interpretation the Word, with its accompanying myth of a loss, a substitute, and a recovery, becomes a symbol of the personal progress of a candidate from his first initiation to the completion of his course, when he receives a full development of the mysteries.

The Lost Word

By Bro. Arthur C. Parker, New York

There are many who can kindle the emotions, and more still who can arouse the passions, but few who know how to set the mind aglow. Brother Parker, who contributed a memorable article to THE BUILDER last May, is one of these. The present article is one of a series of three bearing the general title "Secrets of the Temple," and is here printed by permission of Brother George K. Staples, 33 degree, Commander of Buffalo Consistory, who arranged to publish the series in book form. The same series has been translated into Italian and is now appearing under the imprint of the Grand Lodge of Italy. The two companion studies will appear in these pages in due time, and will be followed by a discussion of the Swastika, now being written especially for THE BUILDER. The Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction, has signaled its appreciation of Brother Parker's services in leading his brethren to think Masonically by electing him to receive the 33 degree next September. Brother Parker is now an associate editor of THE BUILDER.

Upon a clay tablet found amid the ruins of an ancient city upon the Euphrates was found the words of a hymn - a hymn about a Word. The song is old, five thousand years old, and perhaps twenty-five centuries older than any Hebrew scripture, and, in any event, it antedates the final development of those writings. Shall we pause to listen?

The Word that causes the heavens on high to tremble,
The Word that makes the world below to quake,
The Word that bringeth destruction to the Annunakis,
His Word is beyond the diviner, beyond the seer!

His Word is a tempest without a rival.

The Word of the Lord the heavens cannot endure,
The Word of Enlil the earth cannot endure,
The heavens cannot endure the stretching forth of His hand,
The earth cannot endure the setting forth of His foot!

Here we have an ancient hymn of Babylon in which the wise priesthood of a great religion sang praises to a word. But what this word is we are not told, yet the word is mighty. The adjustment and the readjustment of the Babylonian pantheon was nothing else than an effort to discover the key-word of the world. Nor was the effort of Egypt with its grotesque procession of zoomorphic deities anything less.

And so religions have come and gone, through darkness, superstition and ignorance, striving to find the great secret of welfare and the magical potency that once possessed should be the secret that would unlock the doors of the invisible.

The mystic's search for the great name that shall open all things is as old as man. The mystic still believes that there is a divine mystery concealed in some word, and all through the ages he has thought that he should discover that name. The Hindoo sage pronounces the word AUM, and in it feels that he has a key-word to paradise. Even when, by revelation, the gods tell their names, man has believed that the real name was concealed either totally or within the enigma of the name or in its numerical value. Thus within the name Elohim (Elhim) the mystic finds the number 3.1415, and asserts that Elhim is the master word by which the circle of eternity may be measured.

All ancient names are studied by the Kabbalists for their esoteric numerical value. The letters of the alphabet are also given values in other terms. Thus the sacred word spelled Aleph-Vau-Mem (AUM) would mean: A = Man + Power; U = Creation + Passage; M = Woman + Mother. This word is a mystic triad by which creative energy is invoked, but in a spiritual sense.

The mystic name makers, therefore, in making names sought to choose letters that had certain values and certain numbers. Now the numbers of a name might be added so as to produce another number, for example: Solomon would in Graeco-Egyptian have the literal value of S-L-M-N. S=60; L=30; M=40; N=50. These numbers added give 180. This reduced becomes a series of 20 nines. Nine is the perfect number and is three times three. "The sound of the voice" - such is the meaning of 180, but nine means "My shield and protection". Again let us interpret each letter of this word S-L-M-N. S=60, means a circle commenced. L=30, means the expansion of the circle. M=40, means an uninterrupted continuation (feminine passivity). N=50, means a final extension, a conclusion.

Let us still further examine this mystical name of Solomon. The word plainly says, I am a circular line, extended, continued and concluded. It says, moreover, that it consists of four parts, of the following measures: 60, 30, 40, 50. These total 180, or the number of degrees in a half circle. Therefore, the circle is divided into the number of degrees indicated; i.e., $60+30=90$; $40+50=90$. Whether this is geometrical or astronomical matters little, for from a study of these angles we can work out, if we have the taste, a whole scheme of Solomonic wisdom. The best interpretation is that the word represents the rising of the sun in the east (Sol), that it passes the morning of S and L and arrives at zenith between L and M (OM), and sets in the west beyond M and N, or ON, and ON is the city or abode of the Sun, the Egyptian name for Heliopolis.

This example is not introduced to mystify or to create the idea that some mysterious doctrine lies behind every name, for most names are so corrupted from the original forms that they cannot easily be analyzed Kabbalistically now. We merely introduce this name to emphasize that the ancients had meanings back of names, and that these meanings might often be discovered. Yet, if a mystical name of a god did conceal a secret, it was so devised that a key-name was used before the real name could be discovered. Thus a man named Solomon might have hidden his name under a substitute word and called himself Davidson, Wiseman, or Jedidiah or some similar name, by which it might be harder to divine the mystery of his "Word" or to "get his number".

Masons are given a new name at the beginning of their initiation into the mysteries, but this name only suggests the real new name that they are to have. The real name comes only to him who overcometh and who hath eaten of the hidden manna. It is then that he receives a white stone and in the stone a "new name" written. (Rev. ii, 17.)

Nor must it be thought that there are not those who have eaten of the "hidden manna" and who know their new names.

Veneration of names has not entirely ceased even in civilization. Each of us desires to keep his name "good", for "a good name is rather chosen than fine ointment", "but the name of the wicked shall rot".

Many men labour "to make their names known". Men are willing to expend millions of dollars to spread their names over the face of the globe, as advertisers do, while others by doing great deeds are pleased to see their names become household words.

Our names are a part of our personality, and this extends even to our signatures. This is true to such an extent that there are those who pretend to read the character of a man by his handwriting.

But, how vain it is to strive for the immortality of our names to the neglect of the immortality of our souls.

And still the search for the unknown Word goes on, and man seeks to discover his Deity by name. How easily the truth might be known if we would but interpret aright the text: IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. The nations of the earth since the first awakening of man's religious instinct have turned their minds toward heaven and inquired, "Who is it that has made the earth and all things thereon?" And likewise men have inquired, "Who shall protect me and give me power, who shall deliver me, and whom shall I call upon for favour?"

To answer this men evolved names of spirits, of gods, of duads and triads, and sought by means of these names to discover Deity. Thus it is that man's great quest is to find God and to know Him. To depict this quest is a task that tempts the author's pen, for it is a subject of thrilling interest.

Before going far afield, let us look toward the Hebrew Bible, to see how these scriptures depict the search. Let us scan the first line of Genesis and read from the Hebrew, itself, "In the beginning Gods created-". But let us be more specific; the word translated here "gods" is the Hebrew plural word Elohim (Alohim). Let us pause; why should the scriptures say "gods"? The answer is not afar off; the ancient Hebrews had more than one god!

Every critical scholar admits this and seeks to enlighten us upon the ancient Hebrew pantheon. But we need not go afar to see that even the scriptures as we have them also admit this.

But in this word El (o) him we have the root Al, El, Il, and in that word we have the whole religious history of Babylon and Semitic Asia Minor of antiquity.

This word al means "turning toward" and further elucidation, as suggested by Professor Delitzch, shows that it means "that which a man, turns toward as a goal."

The ancient thought of their gods as dwelling up above in the place toward which man turns his eyes in and above the sky. A Babylonian hymn calls the sun-god "the goal toward which all the eyes of the inhabitants are turned". (Cf. Job xxxvi, 25.) So, following this idea, the oldest of Semites gave to the God-one who dwelt above and ruled the sky world the name il or el. It was He to whom they looked.

The worship of Il or El by the early North Semitic tribes as well as to the south was an established fact as early as 2500 B.C., 1300 years before the rise of the religion of Yahwe [Jehovah].

In later times these Els or Elohim were conceived as plural beings, duads and triads and more. Suffice to relate that the names of the early Hebrew gods were many and all of the local gods or baals, and particularly Ashtar and Yerahme'el. These to the Hebrews were all Elohim, just as to the northern Semites of Palestine they were Baalhim or baals. The word El, or Al, was a far-spread name and from it the Arabians took the name of their Deities, and later the Mohammedans used it in constructing their word for God - Allah.

Cheyne points out an interesting origin for the name El and ascribes it to the Phoenician alm. This word was used as the title of the chief god of the Phoenician trinity who was Yerahme'el. The title may have been thus applied but as a word it was used far earlier than this special application of it.

In the historical fragments that we have given we have only indicated the world search, age-long, for the "lost word". In the new dispensation we are given a clear vision of how we may discover that word and apply it. Lost? Why should it ever have been lost? In all ages there have been those who possessed that word, but these have been the few who had paid the price of learn. It was folly, to think that this "word" could ever be communicated by word of mouth or by outward sign, for it can be known only from one source and by one means.

In ancient Freemasonry under the old operative system there were three masters sitting in the west, "thereby better enabling them to observe the rising of the sun in the east". Each master bore a rod as the symbol of his office. Each rod was of different length, as follows: Solomon's rod was five units in length, Hiram of Tyre's four units, and Hiram Abiff's three units.

According to Masonic tradition upon each rod was a name, just such sort of names as Chapter Masons use, though not the same names by any means.

By the use of the rods, placed end to end, a right angle triangle can be formed. For example, rods of three inches, four inches and five inches placed end to end in the form of a triangle will form a perfect right angle at the point where rod 4 meets rod 3. Rod 5 makes the hypotenuse.

Now according to our ancient traditions upon the slain Hiram's rod was the full name of Deity, or perhaps the first and most important syllable. His rod was essential not only in forming the ineffable word but in completing the right angle.

It was Hiram Abiff's rod for which the Craftsmen were instructed to search, and not a square. The early ritual makers have erred, I think, in making a square the implement discovered.

Thus is explained the calamity that is depicted in our third degree, but the ritual as evolved since 1717 has obscured and even mutilated the secrets as well as the meanings of more ancient rites.

An actual word was lost and with it one of the three standards of Solomon's system of mensuration. Little wonder that Adonairarn received a place of honour succeeding Hiram, for only Adonairarn could make another metal rod equal to that which was lost, but even he could not engrave upon it the lost syllable Yah or word Yabweh.

It is the philosopher who points the way by which we may recover that word, for it is the real word and not any substitute that makes men and Masons good men and true. And when we have given ourselves as the price, the name enters our hearts; and when it so enters it becomes an impulse that translates itself in the expression of a life.