

NOTES ON THE “ARK OF TESTIMONY” ALSO CALLED THE “ARK OF THE COVENANT”

By Robert Ambelain (1946 – Appendix from “Le Martinisme”)

We have always suspected that the “Cubic Stone”, that central monument around which all symbolic masonry turns, is not only the common emblem of the goal sought by material Alchemy, or the symbolic image of spiritual Alchemy, or symbolic of the powers imparted by the Creator to the Mage; but also – and above all – a real Ritual Object, which allows the Forces summoned by the Mage to be set in motion, behind the veil of immediate reality.

That is why, as Masonry knows, the four sides of this Cubic Stone are covered with a compact network of Numbers and Letters, from which, with recourse to traditional keys, one can recover “passwords” and “mysterious diagrams”. Understanding what is being concealed behind the “Cubic Stone”, and knowing how to put this into practice, is the necessary proof of a true Mage.

To begin with, in the presence of letters and numbers, arranged on the sides according to strict laws, we can reflect on the possible connection with the Hebraic Kabbalah. The fact that this Stone, improperly called Cubic, is frequently finished with a Pyramidal shape on its top surface, evokes the idea of a “gushing forth” of something towards the heavens. Also, the presence in a number of figures and engravings (in the Tarot, for example) of a “divinity” represented as sitting upon this Stone, suggests the secret “manifestation” of a Force imprisoned within this mysterious monument, and its exteriorization by appropriate means.

In another sphere, the Ark of the Covenant of Israel, under its true name of the “Ark of Testimony”, has often given birth among those Occultists who are fascinated by this historical enigma, to the idea of the possible “condensation” within the sides of the Ark – a simple box of gold-plated wood – of a formidable and intelligent Unknown Force. Certain Occultists have even put forward the rather simplistic hypothesis that the gold-plated wooden box and the gold-woven vestments of the pontiff, suggest a parallel with Volta’s battery! The reality is completely different. The Ark of Testimony is the first and unique “cubic stone” of Israel. This “Cubic Stone” is represented in the very heart of the masonic Lodge because the Lodge is the symbolic representation of the Temple at Jerusalem (including the columns of Jachin and Boaz, particularly Solomonic symbols, etc... Same tradition regarding the building: Hiram, etc). And herein lies its enigma.

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To begin with, the Eternal One did not communicate and manifest Himself directly to Moses and his successors. It was His agent, the Angel:

“Behold, I send an Angel to you, to protect you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Take guard in his presence, listen to his voice, and do not resist him, for *he carries* my Great Name...” (Exodus, Ch. XXIII, vv. 20, 21 and 22).

The Angel in question can therefore be evoked by the Name of the Lord, since he also carries this name. But he is not the Eternal One Himself.

God came to dictate His laws to Moses at Sinai, and at this time He did not hand over the Tablets of the Law. Quite the contrary. Moses himself wrote down all that God commanded him:

“Moses wrote down all the words of the Eternal One..” (Exodus, Ch. XXIV).

Then the text continues later on as follows:

“The Eternal One then said to Moses: Climb up towards me upon the mountain, and remain there. I will give you tablets of stone, the law and the ordinances which I have written with their instruction...” (Exodus, Ch. XXIV, v. 12).

One can see that the Tablets and the Ordinances are different things. We will see later what the Tablets really contained...

Then comes the description of the Ark with Moses must have constructed:

“You will make an ark of acacia wood. It is to be two-and-a-half cubits long, its breadth one-and-a-half cubits, its height one-and-a-half cubits.

“You will cover it with pure gold, you will cover it without and within and you will make an edging of gold all about. You will forge four golden rings for it and you will put these at the four corners, two on one side and two on the other. You will make poles of acacia wood, and you will cover these with gold also. You will pass the poles through the rings of the ark, and these will serve to carry it. The poles will remain in the rings and they shall not be removed.

“You will place the “Testimony” which I shall give you in the ark.

“You will make a mercy-seat of pure gold, its length shall also be two-and-a-half cubits, its breadth one-and-a-half cubits. You will make two Cherubim of gold, you will make them of beaten gold, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. Make one Cherub at one end, and one at the other. The Cherubim will stretch forth their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and will face one another. The Cherubim will have their faces towards the mercy-seat. You will place the mercy-seat on the ark and will place the “Testimony” which I shall give

you in the ark. It is there that I will meet with you, above the mercy-seat, between the Cherubims placed upon the ark of "Testimony".

Later (Ch. XXXII, v. 18), the long discourse and its prescriptions being ended, we then read:

"When the Eternal One had finished talking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."

The Golden Calf was the reason that Moses broke these two first tablets. Here is the consequence:

"The Eternal One said to Moses, hew two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write there the words which were on the first tablets which you broke..."

"Moses was there with the Eternal One forty days and forty nights...And the Eternal One wrote on the tablets the words of covenant, the ten words...Moses descended from Mount Sinai, having the two tablets of Testimony in his hand".

Then come the chapters related to the elaboration of the ritual furniture, prescribed by God, and their installation:

"As the Eternal One has ordained...He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, he took the rods of the ark, and he placed the mercy-seat upon the ark. He carried the ark into the tabernacle, he put up the veil of separation, and he covered the ark of Testimony as the Eternal One had commanded Moses. He placed the table in the tent of assignation, on the northern side of the Tabernacle." (Exodus, Ch. XL).

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How were the "Tablets of Testimony" placed in the Ark?

All depends upon their dimensions. The ark being two-and-a-half cubits long and one-and-a-half cubits broad, the Tablets could not be larger than these dimensions. But let us allow that they were as long and wide as this. Then what use would it be that the ark was one-and-a-half cubits high? These plaques of stone couldn't have been as thick as that, since Moses wouldn't have been able to carry them in his hands because of their weight! On the other hand, how can we allow that they were thin and that all that space in the ark was of no use? And why make the ark so large, and above all so high? And how can we allow that these plaques of stone might be thus left unsecured, and risk their surfaces being smashed by shaking about when the ark was carried?

Only one arrangement is possible, that outlined in the diagram. The Tablets are as tall and broad as the ark: they are thus each square in form, being one-and-a-half cubits wide and one-and-a-half cubits tall. They are now upright, with a groove cut into the vertical sides. And when the singular cover of the ark which is the mercy-seat is properly placed on the box, an empty space is thus created between them.

The respect demanded by the holiness of these tablets required that they be thus maintained upright, and that their surfaces didn't touch. For the holy text which they carried was distributed on both sides of each tablet, as is detailed in Exodus (Ch. XXXII, vv. 15 and 16):

“Moses returned and descended from Mount Sinai, the two Tablets of Testimony in his hands. The two tablets were written on both sides, they were written on one and on the other side...”

A significant error spread abroad suggests that they carried the commandments of God. This is false, since all the descriptions which carried *the message of the Eternal One at Sinai were written in Moses' hand, and in a separate book*:

“Moses wrote all the words of the Eternal One...He took the book of the Covenant, and read it in the presence of the people. They said: We will do all that the Eternal One has said, and we will obey...”

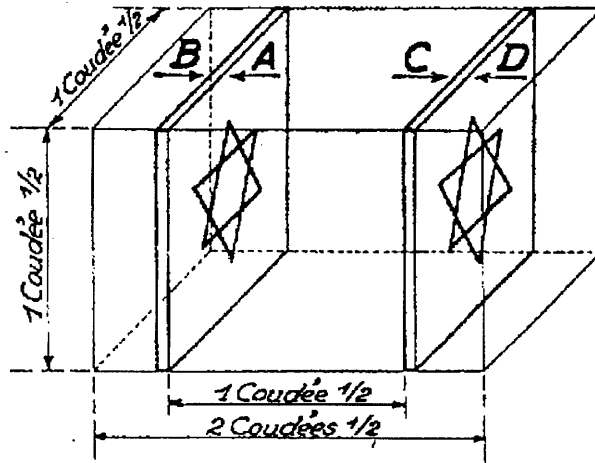
This is from Exodus, Chapter XXIV, verses 4 to 8. *And it is several verses later* that the following is finally said:

“Climb up again to Me on the mountain. And remain there. I shall give you the tablets of stone...” (Ch. XXIV, v. 11).

Finally we see that, following the assent of the people to the prescriptions, it is the mark of the Covenant, the “Testimony”, which God gave to His people.

So we may conclude that, as in all Theurgic operations, where the Power which is evoked, registers its “seal”, its mark upon a metal plaque or on the virgin parchment of the Grimoire, as a sign of agreement, the God of Israel finally gave him his signature, his agreement, by a “Testimony”, mysteriously engraved upon these Tablets of stone...

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THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

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The ultimate question still remains: what was engraved on those Tablets? The agreement, the “pact” between the invoked Intelligence and the Magician is manifest by the former communicating its magical “seal”, and the revelation of its “name”. These are the two principal elements of the ritual of evocation. And this revelation is the “testimony” of trust which is afforded to the aforementioned Magician. The magical possession of the Name and Sigil is, for the Magician, the key ingredient of his success. All universal traditions agree on this fact.

In our opinion, the “words” that the Eternal One engraved upon these Tablets were *His Ten Names*, keys to his personal evocation by Moses, Aaron and their legitimate successors. *This is why there could only be one ark of the Covenant, and why one could only worship Elohim there, where the ark was situated.* Later on, all other places of worship, both ancient and modern, would be condemned by the priests, closed in the name of the Law, *as not intended for the true God of Israel...*

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These stone Tablets, engraved on both sides, were giant Talismans! A talisman is always covered with symbols on both sides. Magical equilibrium requires that one of the sides be attractive, the other repulsive. Is there not a question of the right and the left of the Eternal One in the Scriptures?... Was not God (as Genesis tells us) both male and female, besides? (“God made man in His own image, male and female created he them” – Genesis, Ch. I)...

The double Divine force is symbolized by the two Tablets, and each of the two aspects of these divine “personalities” is represented by one of the two sides of each stone.

For who knows how to turn the ineffable Name contained in the Tetragrammaton, Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh, neuter in itself, into the masculine or feminine state (see the paper on “*Elohim: He-the-gods*”, attached)? These things will become clearer another day, intuited from the Kabbalistic magic being practiced today.

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In popular magical tradition of old Russia, there is a ritual called “Gadania”, which is usually performed during the night of 9th of January. It consists of putting two completely identical mirrors facing each other, separated by two candles. The light from the candles is reflected to infinity in the mirrors, and the frames the same way. This causes a play of perspective allowing one to believe one sees a series of brightly-lit rooms. Right at the back, at the meeting of the progressively diminishing lights, a brilliant halo is formed. At midnight, young girls sit facing the magical mirror, and stare at the halo with beating hearts. After a short time, a miniscule silhouette appears, far away. It slowly approaches, and soon the girls recognize the image of the man they will later marry. One must refrain from drawing near to the image, and above all not to allow it to pass the next-to-last frames, for it is in reality a Demon who, led towards the real world, would enter our three dimensional universe, materialized by imprudence, and strangle the summoner in his talons in order to take possession of their soul.

This ritual of “Gadania” is the key to the Ark of Testimony.

It is *in the empty space* between the two Tablets of stone, that the Occult Force evoked by Hebrew theurgy was generated and materialized. It resided in the Divine Names and the Holy Letters, contained within them. But through the mysterious combinations which henceforth these hidden “Names of Power” and “Glyphs” offered, thus opposed and face to face, the Ark became a true psychic battery. The Tablets of stone acted as “poles”, and between them, by this very opposition was born what the Eternal One called the *Angel* which led Israel. The Absolute was revealed, manifested, and the hidden vehicle, the fluid required for this materialization, was born between the Tablets of “Testimony”.

Can the reader now understand why, in our opinion, these Tablets were face to face? And what was the spacing between them, if not that which would generate a perfect Cube? It was necessary that the other sides of the Tablets did not touch the front and back sides of the Ark, since these Tablets were written on both sides.

The common die, by reason of its six faces, the two opposing sides will always give a total of *seven*, is a simplistic image of the properties of the two Talismans aligned face to face.

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The problem remains: what Names were engraved on the Tablets, and how were they divided up?

Here traditional Kabbalah gives us the key, by taking into account the Sephirotic Tree: the “pillars” named for Severity, Mercy and Equilibrium, the properties of the Hebrew Letters, and the combinations they present side by side, as the Zohar explains to us.

That constitutes the ultimate Hidden Knowledge, and we will save that for purely oral transmission...