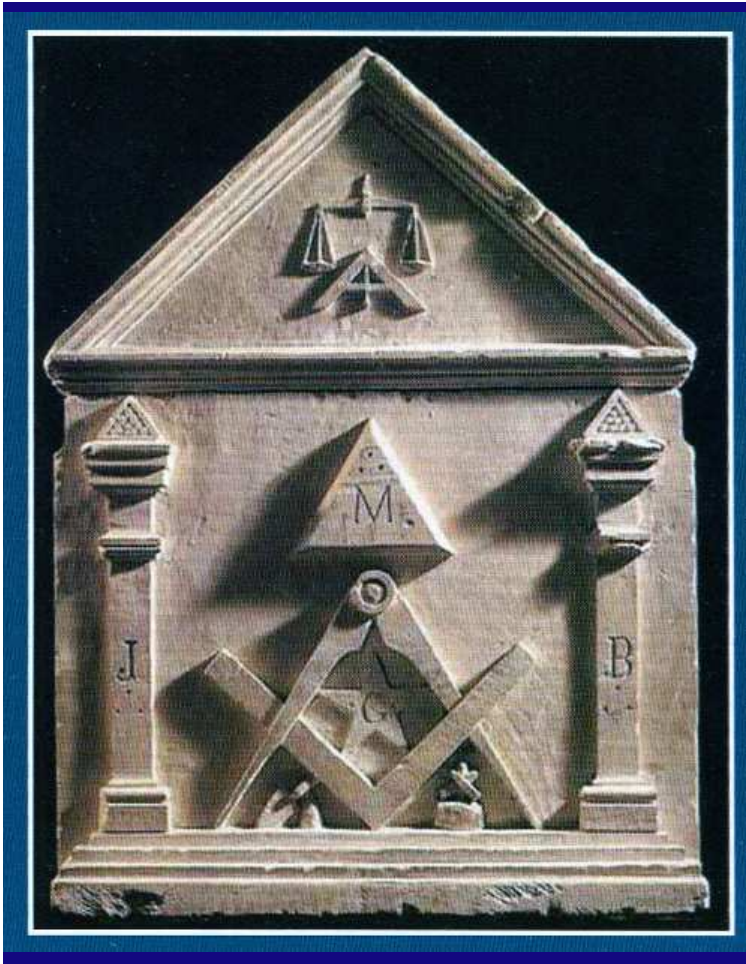


MASONIC HIEROGLYPHICS

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This image adorns the front cover of the Italian magazine/booklet *Hiram* (January 2015). Unfortunately, for the most part it is in Italian, so I cannot read it. Nevertheless, I can read the symbolism associated with the image, and will discuss it.

Firstly, what is it? It is a Masonic mortuary sculpture. It would have been found in a cemetery in a mausoleum and associated with the death (remains) of an important Freemason.

Secondly, what does it represent? It represents a little temple, symbolizing a Freemason's temporal temple.

Thirdly, What does the symbolism say? Here, I need to address each symbol separately:

1. The scales and letter "A" at the top represent justice and God (Alpha). They mean that God is just and judges all men in a equitable manner.

2. On either side are the two columns familiar to all Freemasons. However they are surmounted with equilateral triangles instead of spheres. As such they represent the Deity. In other words, "I recognize the GATU as the supreme creator."

3. In the center top, there is an equilateral triangle with the letter "M". This says, HERE LIES THE BODY OF OUR GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIFF. Every Mason since the beginning will remember when he was addressed three times as "GRAND MASTER HIRAM!" For that little period of time he was Hiram Abiff and carries that distinction for the rest of his life, and after death.

4. In the direct center are the compasses and square. Their symbolism is fully known to all Masons. There is an issue with the sculpture because these working tools are in the FC Degree. They should definitely be in the MM degree.

5. In the center of the compasses and square there is a 5-pointed star with the letter G. The 5-pointed star was adopted later (mid 1800s) in Freemasonry, and given to represent the 5 Points of Fellowship. It essentially replaced the Blazing Star which has other significance. In this sculpture, it would represent the 5 Points of Fellowship, so the deceased brother is reaching out to you. The letter "G" is well-known to all Masons who believe in a Supreme Being, as the departed brother believed.

6. Under the left (facing) leg of the compasses there is a setting maul and a shovel. The setting maul symbolizes the "striking down" of a man at some point (no matter the cause). The shovel says that his body will be returned to the earth as God commanded (we must bury the dead).

7. Under the right (facing) leg of the compasses there is what appears to be an ashlar and other working tools—square and perhaps a level. Their significance is also known to Masons. The image is not clear enough to make a firm identification. If what is seen is an ashlar, then it is not quite right (should be perfect).

8. The front part of the image shows steps. They represent the three degrees of Craft Freemasonry. Unfortunately, four steps were sculptured—everything was put on a platform, which is not quite right, forming the fourth step.

Perhaps I need to address why I am being critical on what is really an excellent piece of Masonic art. I am taking my direction from Bro. Albert Mackey who is my teacher in essentially everything Masonic. He definitely says what he thinks or sees as an issue without reservation. Nevertheless, I might be wrong on some things, and definitely welcome any criticism or contrary opinions.