

# Kabbalah, Symbolism and Metaphysics in Russian Freemasonry of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> – XIX<sup>th</sup> centuries

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## Palabras clave

Cábala, masonería, rosacrucismo, teosofía, sofilogía, Sephiroth, Ein-Soph, Adam Kadmon, emanación, alquimia, la estrella llameante, columnas Jaquín y Boaz

## Keywords

Kabbalah, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Sophiology, Sephiroth, Ein-Soph, Adam Kadmon, emanation, alchemy, Flaming Star, Columns Jahin and Boaz

## Resumen

Este trabajo considera algunas conexiones entre la Cábala y la masonería en Rusia como se refleja en los archivos del Departamento de Manuscritos de la Biblioteca Estatal Rusa (DMS RSL). El vínculo entre ellos se basa en la comprensión tanto de la Cabala y la masonería como la filosofía simbólica y “verdaderamente metafísica”. En el artículo se muestra cómo los masones rusos adoptaron doctrinas cabalísticas de Ein-Soph, Sephiroth, Adam Kadmon y los mezclan con la teoría del neoplatonismo de la emanación, el misticismo cristiano apofática, la cosmovisión hermética, la alquimia y la sofilogía cristiana. Esta adaptación ecléctica se basa en la interpretación de estos símbolos masónicos como punto en un círculo, columnas Jaquín y Boaz, y la estrella flameante. El simbolismo masónico permitió la combinación de diferentes doctrinas esotéricas en una cosmovisión unificada para hacer símbolos masónicos más atractivos para la “medio educada” nobleza rusa.

## Abstract

This paper considers some connections between Kabbalah and Freemasonry in Russia as reflected in the archives of the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library (DMS RSL). The link between them was based on the understanding of both Kabbalah and Freemasonry as symbolic philosophy and “true metaphysics”. In the article we show how Russian Freemasons adopted Kabbalistic doctrines of Ein-Soph, Sephiroth, Adam Kadmon and mixed them with Neoplatonism’s theory of emanation, Christian apophatic mysticism, hermetic and alchemical worldview, and Christian sophiology. This eclectic adaptation was based on the interpretation of such masonic symbols as the point in a circle, Jachin and Boaz columns, and the Flaming Star. Masonic symbolism allowed for the combination of different esoteric doctrines in one unified worldview to make masonic symbols more attractive to the “educated milieu” of Russian nobility.

## Introduction: concept of Kabbalah in Russian Freemasonry

In the last decade we have learned much more about the Kabbalistic elements in esoteric doctrines of Russian Freemasons and its basic aspects: views on Nature, Man

and God. Thanks to the heuristic works of Konstantin Burmistrov, Maria Endel and Marina Aptekman we obtained new and intriguing information on both the ideas and sources of esoteric, mystical, hermetic and Kabbalistic teachings of Russian Freemasons<sup>1</sup>.

There were masonic lodges of different rites in Russia, most of them European systems adopted by Russians, but there were also some original Russian systems, for example Melission Rite. Some lodges were a kind of clubs, others were a sort of political parties while others were preoccupied with esotericism, metaphysics and mysticism. Among the last type Rosicrucian system of Freemasonry was rather notable. It was established in Russia in the year 1781 by I. G. Schwarz and N. I. Novikov and borrowed from German Order of Gold and Rosy Cross<sup>2</sup>. The main degree of this system in Russia was so-called Theoretical Degree, medium degree of initiation between three classical degrees of English Masonry, degree of Scottish Master and the highest degrees of Rosicrucian Freemasonry. Lodges of that degree were rather few in number, but their importance, authority and popularity in Russia hardly can be overestimated. In the archives of Theoretical Degree (funds 14 and 147, Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library – DMS RSL) one can find different texts on mystical and esoteric topics.

These texts reflect esoteric speculations developed by Russian Freemasons between the years 1781-1822, the latter date which was that of the official prohibition of masonic lodges in Russia. Some of them (treaties, lectures, letters, speeches, and conversations) have authors and are ascribed to the spiritual leaders of Russian Masons: I.G. Schwartz, S.I. Gamaleya, I. A. Pozdeev. Some of them are anonymous: extractions from different books, commentaries, speeches and conversations in the lodges and so on. All these sources are bound by their authors' membership of the one and the same masonic system and their personal acquaintances, common ideology, common textual tradition, common concepts, images and symbols. This ideology was a kind of mixture of different esoteric doctrines on the basis of the Christian Kabbalah, which attracted many spiritual followers from the Russian nobility. That's why these archives are so representative and of interest to the researchers.

During our study of masonic texts we found different definitions of Kabbalah ("Cabala" in masonic spelling)<sup>3</sup>: Jewish mystical tradition, perennial wisdom of

<sup>1</sup> See: Konstantin Burmistrov and Maria Endel, "Kabbalah in Russian Masonry: Some Preliminary Observations", *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 4 (1999): 9-59; Konstantin Burmistrov and Maria Endel, "The Place of Kabbalah in the Doctrine of Russian Masons", *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* (2004): 27-68; Marina Aptekman, *Jacob's Ladder: Kabbalistic Allegory in Russian Literature* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> For the history of this Order in Europe and Russia see: Christopher McIntosh, *Rose Cross at the Age of Reason* (Albany N.-Y.: SUNY-Press, 2011); the ideas of the Rosicrucian circle of Freemasons are considered in: Raffaella Faggionato, *A Rosicrucian utopia in eighteenth-century Russia: the masonic circle of N.I. Novikov* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> *Brief Notion on the Cabala* (DMS RSL. F.14. 992), 1-3; *Concerning the ten Sephiroth* (DMS RSL. F. 14. N. 1116), 2; *Arts and knowledge magical and cabalistic* (DMS RSL. F. 14. N. 991), 3.

humankind, exegetical technique, magical practice. But the one of utmost interest is the following definition of Kabbalah as symbolic philosophy:

Wisdom of humankind in general and of Jews particularly, mysterious by its profoundness and validity and symbolic by its form. For just a symbol or hieroglyph can represent something supersensible through its interpretive connection with something visible and natural and by this way give deep observation of things, exhausting their essence<sup>4</sup>.

Rather similar definitions can be found in one of the masonic magazines: “Cabalists call their science True Metaphysics and Holy Teaching, which by some miraculous and divine art through some symbols, leaving all earthly things and separating from all matter, teach us to extract one form from another”<sup>5</sup>.

This type of definitions is rather valuable for it agrees with definitions of “Masonic Science”:

One is not an Order Brother if he doesn't know Hieroglyphic Language. This language requires knowledge of correspondences. Hieroglyphic Masonry is training in this language”<sup>6</sup>. Such equivalence between definitions of Kabbalah and Freemasonry leads to the unification and identification of these two traditions: “If we address ourselves to Solomon, Great Master of the Sciences we will see how he describes Wisdom and division of her talents. Let's think: what is the essence of Solomonic sciences? These are cabalistic sciences<sup>7</sup>.

Such a close connection between Kabbalah, Metaphysics and Freemasonry based on the concept of symbolic or hieroglyphic language obliges the researcher to ask a new question: What were the Kabbalistic interpretations of masonic symbols and what metaphysical concepts of such symbols denote? In this article we are going to contribute into solving this problem by dealing with only two masonic symbols (Columns Jachin and Boaz and Flaming Star) and two aspects of masonic metaphysics (namely, philosophy of nature and theosophy).

The main principle of the philosophy of nature in Russian Freemasonry was the hermetic principle of the reflection of the divine world's reflection in the terrestrial one. In one of the sources this principle is related to the topic of Wisdom (Sophia) through a kind of midrashic exegetics:

All that is Divine Wisdom, with which God created and established all things. For in Hebrew first verse means not “In the beginning”, but “In Wisdom, God created Earth and Heaven”. In the outward temporal nature, its formations and arrangements, Wisdom of God is staying at the gates and calling us, so that we

<sup>4</sup> Brief Notion on the Cabala, 3.

<sup>5</sup> “Concerning the Science called Cabala”, *Pokoyashiysya trudolubetz* 3 (1785): 95.

<sup>6</sup> *Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 2* (DMS RSL. F.14. N. 616), 116.

<sup>7</sup> *Selected orations for the Theoretical Degree* (DMS RSL. F.147. N 97), 25.

may learn from temporal example how to conclude that something existed from eternity up to this moment. Thus Divine Wisdom teaches us to learn from outward Nature the way of being before creation<sup>8</sup>.

So in the reconstruction of masonic philosophy of nature we should briefly describe their theosophy.

### **Basic concepts of masonic theosophy and their connections with Kabbalah**

Theosophy of Russian Freemasons is concentrated around the emanation theory, which combines some neoplatonic, alchemical, Kabbalistic and Christian concepts. There are four main phases of divine emanation. The first phase is Divine Nothingness which can be called also “Eternal Nature”, “Prima Materia”, “Foundation of all things” and “Ein-Soph”, the latter obviously refers to the Kabbalistic notion of infinite and eternal essence of God<sup>9</sup>. So this nothingness is a kind of positive nothingness, which is an essence of God, from which all the world is created.

Second phase of emanation – appearance of duality in God, described in Bohmean terms: “One light is dark, another bright, one cold and another warm, one who wishes and another who brings delight, the light of Father and the light of Son”<sup>10</sup>. This duality in God could be also expressed in Kabbalistic terms and correlated with masonic symbolism: “Charity and Justice of God can be compared to two semi-compasses...in such a way these two highest properties of God always touch each other, combining inseparable compass”<sup>11</sup>. In this fragment two properties of God refer to the two of ten sephiroth from Kabbalistic theosophy – Hesed (Charity) and Gebura (Justice). In turn these properties and their fundamental unity is symbolized by one of the main masonic symbols – compass.

Finally the duality of God can be characterized in erotic terms, images and symbols. From the idea of creation of man in the image of god Russian Masons concluded that in God himself there were two aspects – male and female, active and passive, fire and water, Logos (Verbo) and Sophia (Wisdom)<sup>12</sup>. I. G. Schwartz in his lectures on the history of philosophy considered the idea of divine androgyny as the key Kabbalistic concept. In his exposition of Kabbalistic ideas the Fall of Adam and Eve symbolized divorce of male and female aspects of man and God, meanwhile salvation was understood as reunification of these two aspects and restoration of Gods image in human being, and namely this plot according to him was the main topic of Song of

<sup>8</sup> *Oration concerning the creation of the world* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 315), 91-92.

<sup>9</sup> *Oration concerning the creation of the world*, 88-89.

<sup>10</sup> *Conversations* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 263), 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part I* (DMS RSL. F.14. N. 615), 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Conversations*, 11-12.

Songs.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, all these topics could be found in Kabbalistic literature, especially in theosophical kabbalah<sup>14</sup>.

The third stage of divine emanation was the appearance of Trinity in God. The third face of Trinity could be interpreted as the synthesis of divine duality: “God allowed creatures to comprehend Him, when he disclosed His properties through the Revelation in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or, in another words, in desire, delight and gladness”<sup>15</sup>.

These three faces of God also got Kabbalistic connotations and were correlated with masonic symbolism. First of all, each of the faces had a Hebrew name besides Christian name: “All the creation was illuminated firstly by Adonai, then by Elohim and after all by YHWH, who from his center illuminates all the things by his radiuses”<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless in Kabbalah we can not find a direct correspondence of these names for sephiroth Hesed, Gebura and – hypothetically – Tiphereth, that could correlate with three faces of Trinity in masonic texts. The principle of correlations between divine names and properties is quite Kabbalistic in itself. We can find this principle for example in classical Kabbalistic work of Joseph Gikatilla “The Gates of Light” that was translated by Russian Freemasons and constructed as exegetics of correspondences between divine names in the Bible and ten sephiroth.

Kabbalistic connotations of the third stage of emanation can be traced also through masonic symbolism. In one of the masonic texts Father is compared to the point, Son – to the radius and Spirit to the circle<sup>17</sup>. At the same time point in a circle is the basic masonic symbol designating Order on the whole. In another text we find new meanings of this symbol – it designates Gold as the pure metal, Sun as the perfect shine and Heart as the center of human being and source of its perfection.<sup>18</sup> One more masonic text reports that Sun and Heart are symbols of sephira Tipheret.<sup>19</sup> In the text called “Ten cabalistic depictions or figures and ten cabalistic divine names” a point in a circle is the first figure in correspondence with name Yud<sup>20</sup>. So we can compare all these facts: point in a circle as a symbol of Trinity, Order, Sun, Heart and Gold; Tiphereth as Heart and Gold and as possible correlation for the third face of Trinity (if the first and second can be compared with Hesed and Gebura, for both Tiferet and Spirit are synthesis of dual properties); a point in a circle as a Kabbalistic symbol in views of Russian Freemasons. All these facts allow us to conclude, though not precisely, that there were some connections between Kabbalah and masonic doctrine of Trinity.

The last stage of divine emanation was the appearance of fourth face of God – Divine Wisdom, Sophia. Divine Wisdom was understood by Masons as the

<sup>13</sup> Johann George Schwartz, *Lecture on philosophy by the year 1782* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 682), 15.

<sup>14</sup> See: Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (London and New Haven, 1988), 128-138.

<sup>15</sup> Conversations, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Theses from the conversations. Part 1, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Conversations, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Selected orations for Theoretical Degree, 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Concerning the oral tradition of Jews* (DMS RSL. F.147. N 204), 18.

<sup>20</sup> *Ten cabalistic depictions or figures and ten cabalistic divine names* (DMS RSLF.14. N 989), 2.

manifestation of Trinity in natural, material world; as a kind of mediator, assistant or instrument in creation of the world; as the Law of Nature; as the substance of the creation and as the Eternal Nature. All these characteristics were not originally invented by Russian Freemasons but adopted from doctrines of European theosophists such as Bohme, Pordege, Gichtel and Arnold. Kabbalah was another source for masonic doctrine of Wisdom, as we will see later on.

## Philosophy of Nature in Russian Freemasonry

For Russian Freemasons Nature was a reflection of God: “For as it is in heaven, so it is on earth and as on the earth below, so in the heavens above. This is an ancient Hermetic and Solomonic rule”<sup>21</sup>. So, all the stages of divine emanation from divine monad to tetrad and all the aspects of divine world were reflected in nature and its alchemical structure: “All things take its natural origin from four elements, that give birth to the three principles, from which two central fires flow, and in their connection all of them are one, and for this reason number ten is named by magicians perfect number”<sup>22</sup>.

Divine nothingness was reflected in primordial darkness and also in blackness of the earth: ‘The best and the most appropriate for birth of different fruits is the black, rank and fertile Earth, as a Darkness is mother of Light. In a word, Ensoph couldn’t be understood well than by comparison with Darkness. This is a backing, from which all the colors appeared”<sup>23</sup>. As we can see, Kabbalistic term Ensoph in this text is applied to the terrestrial sphere as a reflection of heavenly area.

Duality of God was reflected in Nature in duality of Fire and Water, Heaven and Earth, Humid and Dry, Warm and Cold, Living and Dead, Visible and Invisible, Sun and Moon. These opposites were bonded together by the cosmic law of attraction: “All separated things thirst and strive for their second half according to their irresistible sympathetic attraction. In such way Fire thirsts for Water, Heavenly for Inferior, Sun for Moon, Stars for Earth... This is a unshakeable law in all the Nature for all times”<sup>24</sup>. Russian freemasons described these two principles of all being not only in metaphysical terms, but also in terms of science (as, for example, powers of attraction and repulsion) and theosophical myth (Angelic powers and powers of Lucifer).

Two main principles of Nature could be described also in Kabbalistic terms as manifestations of the two sephiroth:

In visible world the law of balance is the common physical law and derives from equilibrium of two powers that are seemingly opposites. This physical law reminds us of metaphysical balance, for in God... there are two properties

<sup>21</sup> Oration concerning the creation of the world, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Johann George Schwarz, *Concerning the Nature* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 690), 39.

<sup>23</sup> *Oration for Rosicrucian Degree concerning the freedom of will* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 305), 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Reflections on the Science of Freemasonry* (DMS RSL. F.14. N197), 17.

wanting one another: stability and movement, necessity and freedom, justice and love or strictness and charity. These two properties of God are personified by some cabbalists by names Geburah and Hesed or Gedulah<sup>25</sup>.

Natural duality gives birth to natural trinity: “These two central fires together with their moving power create in upper elementary world three spiritual principles...They are components of all the substances and are called Salt, Sulphur and Mercury”<sup>26</sup>. These three main alchemical principles are reflections of three faces of God: “Mercury, Salt and Sulphur, and these three are one, as John the Saint told, there is Trinity in Heaven and there is Trinity on the Earth, and this one on the Earth is likeness of that in Heaven”<sup>27</sup>. They were symbols designating some metaphysical and physical concepts, for example powers of generating, nutrition and conservation or electricity, galvanism and magnetism correspondingly.

Three aspects of Divine World were reflected also in three “kingdoms” of nature, namely mineral, vegetable and animal or angelic, heavenly and elemental worlds. These three worlds could be connected with some Kabbalistic ideas and interpretations. For example, in one of the anonymous masonic texts on Kabbalah three worlds were brought in correlation with letters of Hebrew alphabet.<sup>28</sup> Angelic world included ten letters from Aleph to Yud corresponding to ten orders of angels and ten sephiroth. From Kaf to Ayn astral world was situated, which included seven planets and seven spirits. Elemental world consisted of letters from Pay to Waw and included formed and unformed substances, both animated and unanimated. These conceptions derive not strictly from Jewish Kabbalah, but from its Christian interpretations, for example, by Afanasius Kircher.

Finally, divine tetrad also was imprinted in Nature in form of the four elements:

As it (divine hexagon) contains 4 essences, namely 3 of Trinity and 4<sup>th</sup> of Wisdom, so these 4 essences began to work. The first active principle or desire expressed in spiritual fire; second one, food or suffering one – in spiritual water; third one, Spirit of comforting satisfaction, - in spiritual element of penetrating light air and fourth one, containing and coagulating essence of Wisdom, - in spiritual earth<sup>29</sup>.

As in the case of divine tetrad, terrestrial one also was symbolized by hexagon that got in masonic interpretations had some Kabbalistic meanings.

<sup>25</sup> Alexei Filosofov, *Notes religious-mystical* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 676), 41.

<sup>26</sup> Schwarz, *Concerning the Nature*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Materials for Freemasons* (DMS RSL. F.147. N 138), 112.

<sup>28</sup> Concerning the oral tradition of Jews, 11-15.

<sup>29</sup> *Selected conversations for the Theoretical Degree of Freemasonry* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 247), 14.

## **Kabbalistic connotations of masonic symbols in relation to Philosophy of Nature**

### **Columns Jachin and Boaz**

Columns Jachin and Boaz are the basic symbols of masonic ritual. Their place in the masonic Lodge is determined by the fact that the same columns made of copper with the same names stood on the parvis of the Temple of Solomon on the right and left side accordingly. These columns symbolize in Freemasonry quite different things: 1) two pillars from Exodus story - fiery one, which illuminated way of Israel in the desert, and cloudy one, which concealed Israel from their enemies; 2) Strength and Power of the Order; 3) degrees of Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, for the names of the columns are also passwords of these two degrees, and the first letters of these names usually are depicted on the images of columns portrayed on masonic carpets of proper degree. During his initiation neophyte had to pass between Jachin and Boaz on his symbolic way from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from the state of viciousness to the state of virtue, from the state of outsider to the state of Brother. So these columns were a kind of symbolic border, which both separated neophyte from secular world and introduced him to the sacred world of the Lodge.

Russian Freemasons gave to this columns also some metaphysical meanings. For example, they projected on them metaphysical principle of duality of God and Nature, for the Lodge itself was a symbol of the world in whole. We can see this projection in words of I. A. Pozdeev: "On the question about two columns in front of the altar, if they are columns of Fire and Water, it is answered: All things in this world are made of two powers, attracting one and expanding one. Light and Darkness"<sup>30</sup>.

We remember that natural and divine duality was represented in masonic texts by Kabbalistic terms Hesed and Geburah. If so, perhaps there was also some symbolic association between these two sephiroth and two columns of masonic temple? I think that such Kabbalistic association one can find in another fragment of I. A. Pozdeev: "Two columns J and B, that is corporeality and spirituality, heaven and earth, Magic and Kabala, are two legs of Astronomic Man"<sup>31</sup>. The same symbolism we meet in the same text a little later: "Two columns, Magic and Kabala, or two legs, on which Theosophist stands like on two pillars, or two powers of material and spiritual world"<sup>32</sup>. Kabbalah is mentioned in cited fragments directly in connection with one of the columns. But more important is the association of columns with legs of some Astronomic Man, for these legs are the symbols of Hesed and Geburah: "Compass

<sup>30</sup> *Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev Part 3* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 617), 20.

<sup>31</sup> *Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 2*, 163.

<sup>32</sup> *Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 2*, 167.



designates God Himself, for its apex designates eternity, whose dimensions or so to say rays or legs designate two divine properties, namely Justice and Charity”<sup>33</sup>.

Masonic interpretation of two legs of Astronomic Man as sephiroth Hesed and Geburah differs strongly from original Jewish ideas. If we suppose that this mysterious Astronomic Man is masonic term for Adam Kadmon, eternal and primordial universal human being of Jewish Kabbalah, so such an association is false, for in Jewish Kabbalah legs of Adam Kadmon symbolize sephiroth Nezah and Hod. Classic formula is given in text of Joseph Gikatilla “Gates of Light”, which was translated by Russian freemasons: “The “Legs” refer to Net Zach and HOD, which are the pillars of the Spheres and corresponding to them are the two pillars of Solomon, YaGiN and BOAZ”<sup>34</sup>. For truth's sake we should note that in this fragment legs of Adam Kadmon also corresponds to columns. We also should mention, that Russian Freemasons knew traditional correlations, for example reflected in masonic text “On ten sephiroth” with reference to Afanasius Kircher. Nezah is compared with right leg and column and Hod with left.<sup>35</sup> These facts show high degree of eclecticism of masonic world-view and symbolism, but they don't exclude Kabbalistic connotations of masonic symbols in interpretations of Russian Freemasons with their specific notion on Kabbalah and its basic concepts.

In connection with the topic of two pillars and their relation to Kabbalistic symbolism we should mention their erotic symbolism: “Circle with vertical line – Earth – First column – Wife. Circle with horizontal line – Heaven – Second Column – Husband”<sup>36</sup>. On one hand erotic connotations could be hypothetically connected with initial meaning of two columns as symbols of Semitic gods Melkart and Astarta, adopted by Jews and used in construction of Solomon Temple. On the other hand we remember that eroticism of divine duality from the point of view of Russian Freemasons was strongly connected to eroticism of Kabbalah as Jewish mystical tradition. Two columns were the symbols of erotic duality in Nature as a reflection of God and perhaps this meaning was indirectly connected with kabbalah in eclectic masonic worldview.

Resting upon examined facts we can draw a conclusion that for Russian Freemasons two pillars of their Temple or Lodge were symbols of natural and divine duality connected in some way with Kabbalistic symbolism through references to some of the ten sephiroths and their erotic connotations.

<sup>33</sup> Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 2, 170.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Gikatilla, *Gates of Light* (London; Harper Collins Publishers, 1994): 125.

<sup>35</sup> Concerning the ten Sephiroth, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Oration for Rosicrucian Degree concerning the freedom of will, 6.

## Flaming star

Evolution of the symbolism of six-pointed star is one of the most intriguing and complicated problems of the history of symbols<sup>37</sup>. In this article we deal with this symbol just in the context of Russian Freemasonry and its connections to Kabbalah.

Hexagram star, also known as Shield of David, Seal of Solomon or Flaming Star, could be replaced in masonic ritual also by five-pointed star or pentagram, both of these forms were widely spread among the masonic lodges and had many esoteric interpretations. In rituals of Russian Freemasons of Rosicrucian system Flaming Star had special importance in the ritual of Scottish Master, transitional to Theoretical Degree:

Scottish Master should put his leg on Flaming Star for fulfillment of works. Until man enters his heart he couldn't travel in the image of Scottish Master along all four sides of the world. For just if he knows center of the point in the circle he can travel everywhere without losing his way<sup>38</sup>.

In this text Lodge and Order are compared to the whole world, human heart is the center of the world that can be comprehended just by self-knowledge, and this process of knowing macrocosm through mediation of microcosm is symbolized by flaming star. So the first aspect of its meaning is cosmological, strongly connected with anthropological one.

Cosmological aspect got in its interpretation by Russian Freemasons interesting development. Two triangles of which hexagram consisted were understood as symbols of fire and water, two main elements, principles or powers of creation: "Flaming Star on the Carpet should be six-pointed for it consists of fire and water and therefore forms the highest creation"<sup>39</sup>.

This idea was common for all Russian Freemasons and borrowed from one of the basic canonical texts of Theoretical Degree: "Chaos is shamaim, aesh we maim, fire and water"<sup>40</sup>. In this conception three basic elements are combined:

- 1) Masonic and alchemical Philosophy of Nature with its idea of Chaos or Primal Matter consisting of two opposites combined together:

That was unformed dark mass without an image and Jews called it by word Shamaim; and from this mass through almighty Divine Word all the things of

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<sup>37</sup> Gershom Scholem, "The Star of David: history of a symbol", in Gershom Scholem, *Messianic idea in Judaism* (London, 1971), 257-282.

<sup>38</sup> Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 3, 93.

<sup>39</sup> Theses from the conversations of I. A. Pozdeev. Part 2, 170.

<sup>40</sup> Selected conversations for the Theoretical Degree of Freemasonry, 13.

the world were created; that was matter in which all the forms and images were contained and then through the Will of Creator were disclosed<sup>41</sup>.

- 2) Jewish exegetical idea that word “Shamaim” (Heavens) should be read as “aesh we maim” (fire and water). For example in treatise Hagiga 12 A of Talmud one can read: “What does word “shamaim” mean? Baraita teaches: fire and water. This teaches us that Holy One, Blessed be He, took them and mixed together and made of them heavenly arch”. The same idea one can find in early Kabbalistic text of the 12-th century “Bahir” (§ 59): “Why Heaven is called Shamaim? This teaches us that God mixed fire, water and combined them together. From this mixture He created “foundation of His Word”. This fragment is very close to masonic fragment cited above. It is important to note that such an interpretation of word “Shamaim” were understood by Russian Masons not just as Jewish, but exactly as Kabbalistic one: “Light is called by the cabalists Shamaim, fiery water; and Haaretz is name for Earth or Darkness”<sup>42</sup>. Although here Shamaim is name for Heaven or Light as one of two creative powers and not as the name for mixture of such powers, exegetical conception itself is considered as Kabbalistic.
- 3) Alchemical symbols of fire and water are triangles with apex above and triangle with apex below accordingly, so their mixture is exactly six-pointed star. Russian masons widely used alchemical symbols, they never wrote words “fire” and “water” but replaced them by alchemical triangles.

From cosmological interpretation symbolism of hexagram moves to theosophical one: “Trinity and Wisdom also combine hexagram, for Wisdom contains in itself three faces in descent”<sup>43</sup>. Connection of cosmological and theosophical interpretations is based on hermetic principle, for as there are fire and water below so there are fire and water above, namely Trinity and Wisdom, and essences from below are the channels of essences from above: “Fiery water of Eternal Nature became first receiver of all the powers and essences ...of super heavenly hexagram for it contains in itself four essences, namely three essences of Trinity and fourth essence of Wisdom”<sup>44</sup>. Actually, Wisdom and Trinity could be seen by Masons as two triangles. Trinity is triangle with apex above as a symbol of its supernatural and the highest essence. And Wisdom is triangle with apex below for it is reflection of the highest Trinity in world in manner acceptable for human perception and comprehension, for human reason cannot understand Trinity itself.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Theoretical Degree of Solomonian Science* (DMS RSL. F.14. N 227), 20.

<sup>42</sup> Shwartz, *Lecture concerning philosophy by the year 1782*, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Selected conversations for the Theoretical Degree of Freemasons, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Selected conversations for the Theoretical Degree of Freemasons, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Conversations, 6.

Was there any Kabbalistic trace in this theosophical interpretation of Flaming Star? We can suppose that yes, there was. For exactly on the next page of the last source, from which we took explanation of Trinity and Wisdom as two triangles, one finds an idea of Trinity and Wisdom as masculine and feminine aspects of God based on exegesis of biblical text about creation of man in image of God as unity of man and woman. And as we already know, for Russian Freemasons this idea was a central Kabbalistic idea. Together with the fact that hexagram itself was perceived as symbol of Kabbalistic “Shamaim”, these connections allow us to speak about some Kabbalistic connotations of hexagram in doctrine of Russian Freemasons.

One more fact for this thesis is depiction of letters A and K above the Flaming Star in some variants of this symbol. Although commonly above the hexagram their flames of fire, in manuscript of “Oration concerning the creation of the word” we find picture with letters A and K, designating Adam Kadmon, one of the main Kabbalistic symbols of perfect creation (remember words cited earlier about hexagram as symbol of perfect creation). And if we take in attention fact that Stanislav Eli was baptized Jew and expert in Kabbalistic texts, whose books were extremely influential in Russian Freemasonry, these pictures become part of Kabbalistic symbols of Russian Masons.

## Conclusion

Russian Freemasons borrowed from Kabbalah different notions and symbols: Ein-Soph, Sephiroth, Adam Kadmon, divine androgyny and creation of the world by letters of Hebrew alphabet. Sure, they adopted these conceptions through Christianized interpretation. They connected doctrine of Sephiroth with the doctrine of Trinity. This was an idea of Adam Kadmon combined with ideas of Jacob Bohme and his followers on the duality and androgyny of God and Man. We can also find their Kabbalistic interpretation of the fall - with Sophiology of Christian Theosophists. In their views on relations between God and Nature they mixed Neoplatonism, alchemical, Christian and Kabbalistic elements. All these doctrines were bond together with help of masonic symbolism and its interpretation. Understanding of both Kabbalah and Freemasonry as symbolic philosophy allowed to generate eclectic interpretations of such symbols as point in a circle, columns Jachin and Boaz, Flaming Star. In this way masonic symbols got a deep esoteric dimension and different esoteric doctrine became unified in perennial philosophy style. Such symbolic esotericism attracted Russian spiritual seekers, and we hope, that this research of Kabbalistic symbolism in Russian Freemasonry could help to understand better the inner world of Russian Masons of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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