

# Between Judaism and Freemasonry

## The Dual Interpretation of David Rosenberg's Kabbalistic Lithograph, *Aperçu de l'Origine du Culte Hébraïque* (1841)

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### Abstract

The article addresses a highly detailed and complex lithograph with the title *Aperçu de l'Origine du Culte Hébraïque* ("Survey of the Origin of the Hebrew Worship"), which was designed and executed in Paris in 1841 by a Hungarian rabbi, David Rosenberg. The iconographic programme of the elaborate print, also conceived by the rabbi, is based on the Kabbalistic understanding of the system of the universe and Judaism, and is presented in an explicative booklet to the lithograph.

However, in a separate publication Rabbi Rosenberg offered a different interpretation: a Masonic reading of the tableau, in which the symbolic numbers of Kabbalah and the various scenes in the lithograph were associated with the symbols, degrees, office-bearers, and ceremonies of Freemasonry, including the physical arrangement of the Masonic lodge and its furnishing. Thereby the rabbi wished to prove that Freemasonry originated with the Hebrews. The true protagonist in both readings is the divine order, embodied in the universal harmony and the laws of nature, which manifested itself in Judaism, the source of Freemasonry.

The article explains the Kabbalistic meaning of the lithograph and its application to Freemasonry. Rosenberg's endeavour will be analysed within the wider Masonic historical context. The probable reasons behind the reinterpretation of the lithograph from a Judaic into a Masonic work will be explored, including Rosenberg's possible personal motives. It will be argued that the rabbi used Kabbalah as a tool to gain higher recognition within the Masonic lodge.

### Keywords

David Rosenberg, Kabbalah, Freemasonry, Art, Iconography, Jewish-Christian Relations

## Rabbi David Rosenberg—Artist and Freemason

Rabbi David Rosenberg was an artist, a scribe, and a Freemason who made a number of Kabbalistic-Masonic lithographs, complemented by his explications. Among other things, he published almanacs and contributed to Masonic publications and journals. Rosenberg was born in Tokaj, Hungary in 1793. In his early twenties he moved to London, and then, for ten years, he lived in Oldenburg (Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, German Empire). In the community of about eighty Jews, Rosenberg was a teacher, a reader (*Vorleser*), a *shamash*, a *shochet* and a scribe.<sup>1</sup> He was intent on opening a drawing school for poor children, and although his request for a licence was rejected, he gave private drawing lessons.

Rosenberg's most important years as a Freemason and most productive years as a lithographer were connected to Paris.<sup>2</sup> As attested by the files of various Masonic lodges and the French police, Rosenberg was living in Paris already in the early 1830s. To supplement his slender means, he time and again presented his works in lodges and offered them for sale. Although he failed to obtain a licence for a lithographic press in 1835, he managed to secure an assistant position at the Royal Library, most probably through his Masonic connections.<sup>3</sup>

Rosenberg became admitted to the Lodge *Les Chevaliers Croisés* ('The Knights of the Cross'), where he rapidly advanced within the Masonic hierarchy, and in 1838 the rabbi became a Templar.<sup>4</sup> His remarkably fast career ascent, still not explored in full detail, is so much the more astonishing as this lodge was a very aristocratic one. In the 1840s, thirteen out of its twenty-three members were adorned with titles: a prince, two dukes, six counts, three marquises, and a baron, amongst them notables of the July Monarchy and a peer of France.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of Rosenberg's works were created in these years, including the one which is the subject of this article: *Aperçu de l'Origine du Culte Hébraïque* ('Survey of the Origin of the Hebrew Worship').<sup>6</sup> (See fig. 1.) The lithograph

<sup>1</sup> Leo Trepp, *Die Oldenburger Judenschaft. Bild und Vorbild jüdischen Seins und Werdens in Deutschland* (Oldenburg: Heinz Holzberg Verlag, 1973), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Pierre Brach and Pierre Mollier, "Kabbale et Franc-Maçonnerie : les planches théosophico-maçonniques du Frère David Rosenberg (circa 1830)," *Renaissance Traditionnelle*, no. 143–144 (July–October 2005): 204–13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 208–10.

<sup>4</sup> A degree in a high degree system of Freemasonry. Cf. Pierre Mollier, "Freemasonry and Templarism," in *Handbook of Freemasonry*, eds. Henrik Bogdan and J. A. M. Snoek (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 82–99.

<sup>5</sup> Brach and Mollier, "Kabbale et Franc-Maçonnerie," 210–11.

<sup>6</sup> Jewish Museum London, "Kabbalistic *Mizrach*," C 1986.7.10, paper, coloured lithograph, dimensions: 889 mm (h) x 631 mm (w). Image courtesy of the Jewish Museum London.

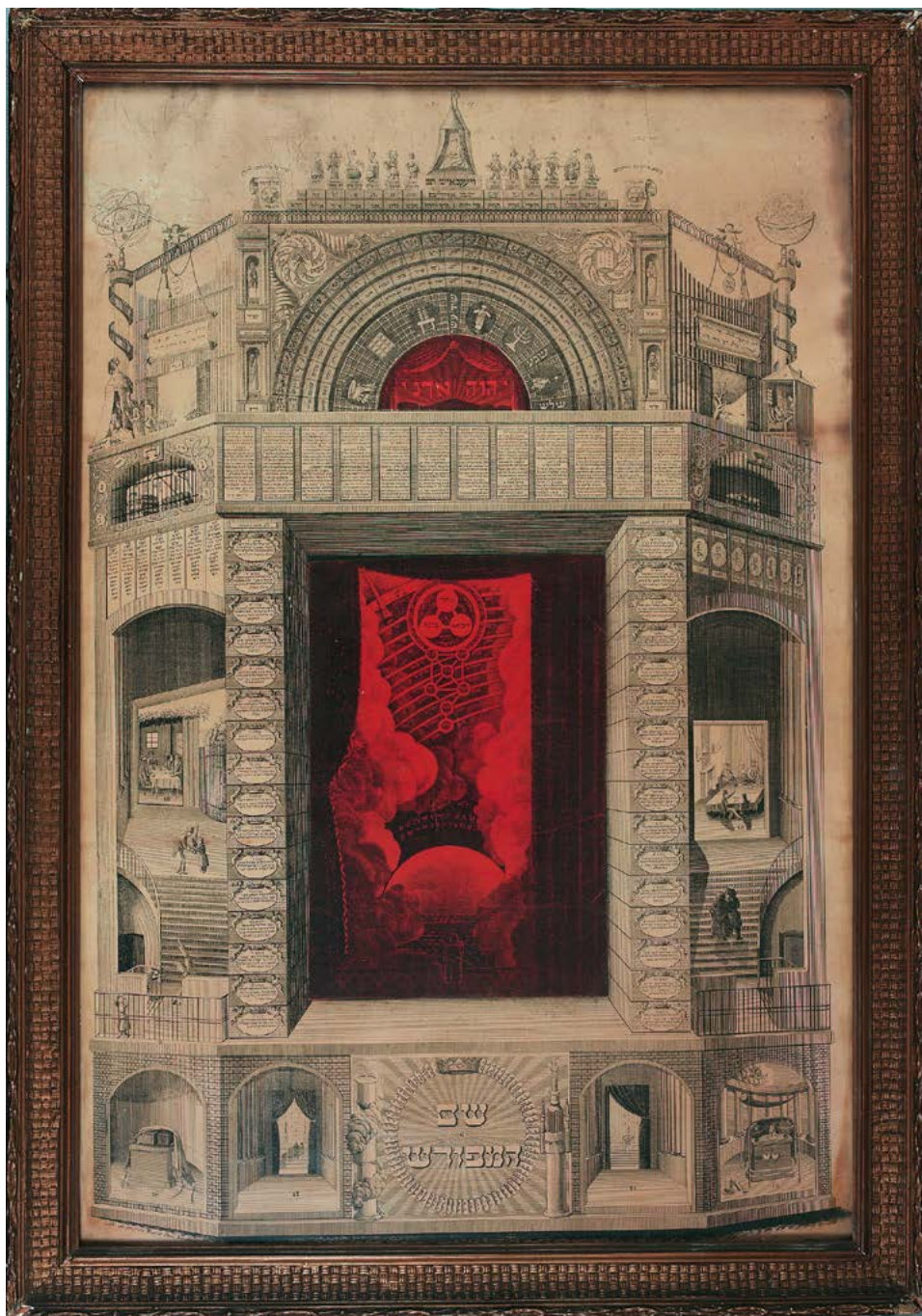


Figure 1. David Rosenberg, *Aperçu de l'Origine du Culte Hébraïque*, 1841.

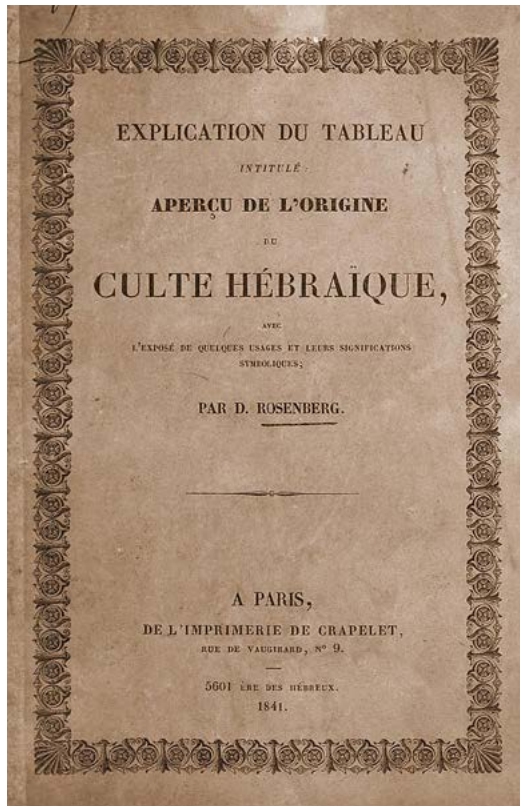


Figure 2. David Rosenberg, *Explication*, 1841—title page.

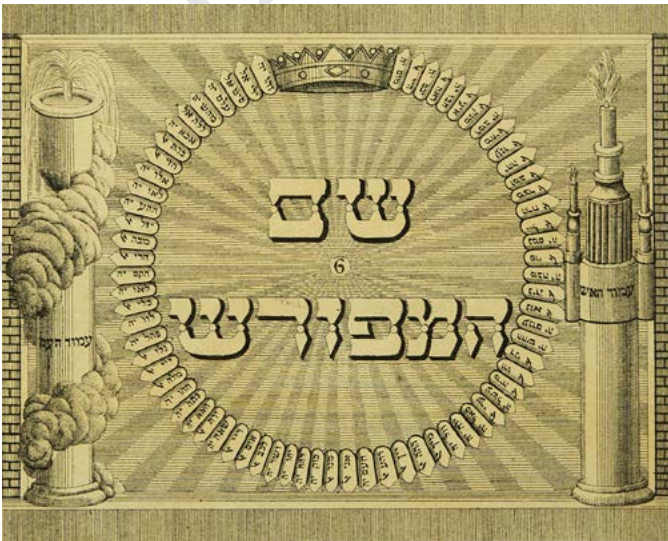


Figure 3. *Shem haMephorash* & Jachin and Boaz (detail).

was published in 1841 together with a seventy-page explicatory book titled: *Explication du tableau intitulé : Aperçu de l'Origine du Culte Hébraïque, avec l'exposé de quelques usages et leurs significations symboliques* ('Explication of the tableau entitled: Survey of the Origin of the Hebrew Worship, with presentation of certain usages and their symbolic meanings').<sup>7</sup> (See fig. 2.) As the title suggests, the lithograph and the booklet deal exclusively with Judaism.

### The Kabbalistic Lithograph

The ornately decorated architectural construct of the artwork is an allegorical representation of the Temple of the Universe (see fig. 1). The edifice is broken up by a remarkable array of openings, on various levels, and by a plethora of other architectural details. The central opening, which resembles the proscenium of a theatre stage, is framed with texts in a frieze-like row of blocks and medallions, topped by an arch, and surrounded with a multitude of recesses containing narrative scenes. The whole composition is populated with figures, Jewish religious items, and overbound with Kabbalistic symbols.

The Jewish Museum London describes and refers to the lithograph as a "Kabbalistic *Mizrach*." The word *mizrach* (מזרח) means "east," literally "the splendour of the rising sun,"<sup>8</sup> and indicates the direction of prayer: towards the Temple of Jerusalem. It is also an acronym of מצד זה רוח חיים, meaning "from this direction the spirit of life."<sup>9</sup> In Ashkenazi Jewish homes the custom of hanging *mizrach* plaques can be traced back to the eighteenth century, and papercuts were the most popular genre.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Paris: L'imprimerie de Crapelet, 5061 ère de hébreux, 1841. The lithograph was reproduced without mentioning Rosenberg in Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, *Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 55. Rosenberg's work was translated into English in the United States by Max Wolff who republished it in New York in 1859 with the title, *Origin of the Rites and Worship of the Hebrews*. The accompanying book, amended by Wolff with his own remarks and notes, bears the title: *Explication of an Engraving Called the Origin of the Rites and Worship of the Hebrews; Together with Remarks on Creation, and a Brief Account on Some Observances and Their Symbolical Signification. From the Original French of D. Rosenberg, of Paris* (New York: Office of the Jewish Messenger, 1859; 2n edition: New York: J. A. H. Hasbrouck & Co. Printers and Stationers, 1861). The US edition of the work will be dealt with in a forthcoming article by the author. (The quotations from the original French work will be given in Wolff's translation.)

<sup>8</sup> The verb לירוח (from the root ז.ר.ח) means to shine, to dawn, to glow, to illuminate.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph and Yehudit Shadur, *Traditional Jewish Papercuts: An Inner World of Art and Symbol* (Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 2002), 106.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

And indeed, although the word 'מזרח' does not appear on the lithograph, it is tempting to situate the artwork within this category of Jewish religious art for several reasons. Rosenberg himself produced a Kabbalistic-Masonic *mizrach* table in 1834 (*Le Miroir de la Sagesse*), where the word 'מזרח' is clearly displayed on a structurally similar edifice. Central to these visual "compasses for the heart" is the Temple symbolism:<sup>11</sup> the building, its implements, the Temple worship, and the city of Jerusalem as well.<sup>12</sup> There are numerous allusions, both overt and covert, to the Temple of Solomon. The architectural structure is a plausible pictorial allusion to the Temple in Jerusalem (e.g. Wolff himself refers to it in his Editor's Preface as an allegory with the form of the Temple<sup>13</sup>), and as such it readily offers an association with the east and the genre of *mizrach*. Also, the design resembles the *aron bakodesh* (the Torah ark), especially with the curtain framing the central opening (see fig. 4), which justly invokes the *parochet* (the curtain of the *aron bakodesh*). More obvious allusions to the Temple are the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, the utensils of the Temple, and the costume of the high priest. Covert reference to the east can be found in the Kabbalistic symbolism. Some of the *sefirot* are associated with the points of the compass. The *sefirah Tiferet* is the east, whereas *Yesod* and *Malkhut* are the west.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the Sefirotic tree itself directs the table towards the east. Finally, in conformity with the function of the *mizrach* tables, if the lithograph was hung in a Jewish house, no doubt, it was on the eastern wall.

Accordingly, the artwork can be broadly categorised as a Kabbalistic *mizrach*, notwithstanding the fact that there is no indication of any sort in the *Explication* to the lithograph that the latter would have been intended to be a *mizrach* table. And indeed, as we will see, the intention of the author was other than composing a *mizrach* table. But before delving into the iconographic programme and the examination of the symbolism of the artwork, for the sake of better understanding, Rosenberg's motivation and aim, and the conceptual framework of the tableau will be considered briefly.

<sup>11</sup> *Mizrah: Compass for the Heart* (New York: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> For an overview on the manifold and complex importance of the Temple of Jerusalem in Judaism see Dalia Marx, "The Missing Temple: The Status of the Temple in Jewish Culture Following Its Destruction," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 46, no. 2 (Autumn 2013).

<sup>13</sup> The "lithograph-pictorial [represents] the holy temple in Jerusalem." Wolff, *Explication*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, vol. 1 (Oxford: The Littman Library & Oxford University Press, 1949), 284.

### ***Primary Motive and Aim***

The central notion of the lithograph is that Judaism is the manifestation of the divine law that governs nature. In his *Explication* to the tableau, Rosenberg states that his motive for embarking upon the work was to uphold the worship of the Hebrews. His reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, Judaism is the parent religion of all, hence worthwhile to investigate,<sup>15</sup> on the other hand,

there is a sort of conspiracy in our hearts, an active and powerful rebellion, against what is called Religion. ... [T]he real object of a great many of our customs and ceremonies are not clearly explained.—The priesthood have lost the primitive idea with which it was animated two thousand years ago; the ideas of former ages not being well understood have become unintelligible, and a great many of us wish to get rid of them altogether.<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, the motivation of Rosenberg for undertaking this work is nothing other than to educate his audience. Without religion we are left without any restraints, and we will resist all laws and morality. “Rise up then, and let us make a last appeal to the few hearts that still remain firm and faithful. It is in this point of view, that the author has composed a Table or Engraving.”<sup>17</sup>

### ***Conceptual Framework***

The main conceptual framework on which the iconographic programme of the lithograph rests is the universal harmony of the macrocosm-microcosm worldview with its intricate correspondences, in which the right concordances have been determined between the celestial bodies, the elements, the living creatures, and man. This overall scheme is basically the organic worldview which is deciphered with the help of Kabbalah.

Judaism is the imprint of the divine harmony which is synthetized into the laws of the universe. “From the beginning, there was harmony throughout creation, and...consequently there must have been laws for the physical government of the universe....Moses was but the individual appointed to recall...the institutions sacred and eternal, which had fallen into desuetude while the Jews were enslaved by [the Egyptians].”<sup>18</sup> In Rosenberg’s work this

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> David Rosenberg, “Origin of the Mosaic or Jewish Religion. Large Engraving in Paris, on Grand Eagle Paper,” *Freemasons’ Quarterly Advertiser* (30 June 1841): 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 3.

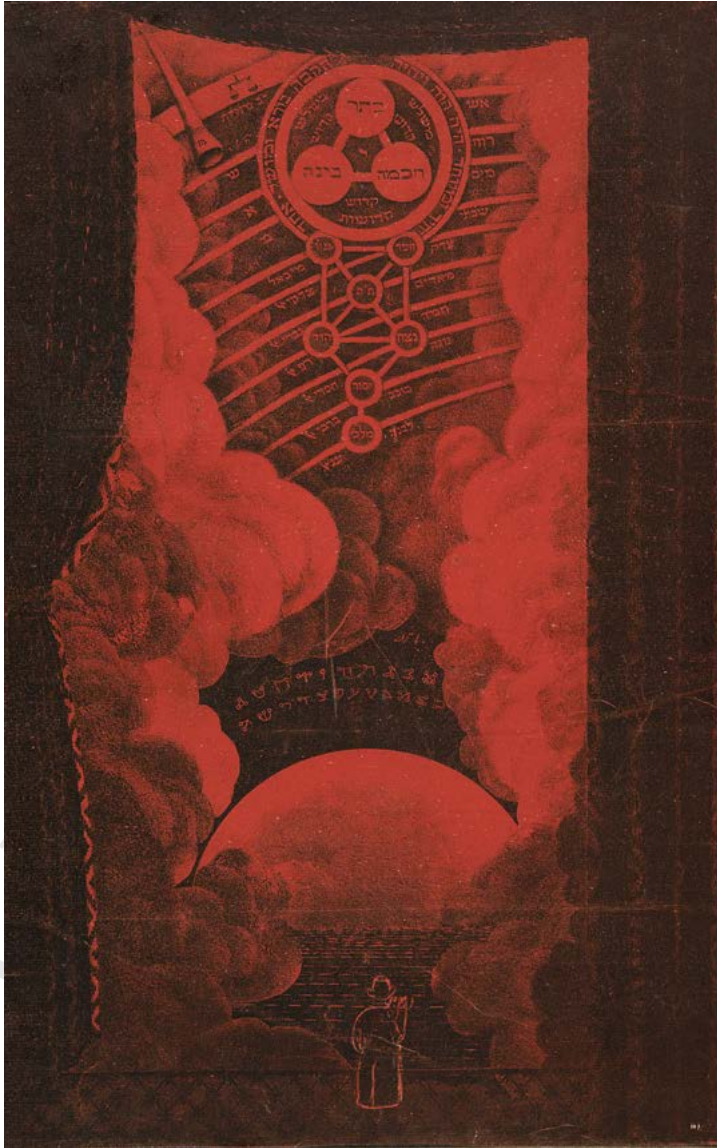


Figure 4. Creation & Kabbalistic tree (detail).



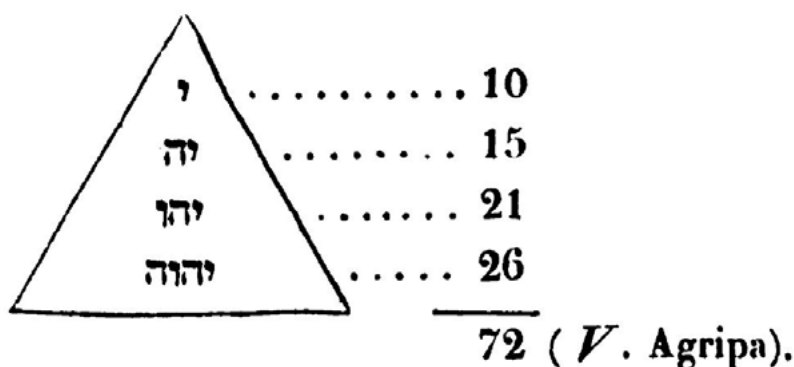


Figure 5. Agrippa's Tetractys. Rosenberg, *Explication*, 15.

view is based on a Kabbalistic reading of creation, nature, and Judaism, and his sources include the *Sefer Yetzirah*, its commentary by Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi,<sup>19</sup> the *Sefer Raziel*, the *Zohar*, the *Tikkunei haZohar*, and the *Sha'arei Orab*. Beyond Jewish sources, Rosenberg also relies on Christian Kabbalah.<sup>20</sup>

### *Iconographic Programme and Graphic Layout*

The Kabbalistic content is presented visually in a carefully calculated and didactic way, and displayed through a refined and thoughtful design. The pictorial exposition of the conceptual framework is arranged along the vertical axis of the lithograph. The visual and conceptual foundation of the table is the *Ein Sof*, the Infinite God, surrounded by the *Keter*<sup>21</sup> and the *Shem haMephorash*, the seventy-two hidden names of God (see fig. 3). God is the central point of all centres, the necessary first cause of the accidental existence of the active elements: fire, water, and air—symbolised by the three mother letters: *ו.מ.א*—which are the promoters of all the phenomena in the world.<sup>22</sup> The enclosing two pillars—Jachin and Boaz of the Temple of Solomon—are the pillars of cloud (i.e. water and fire), to which comes the third element, air, in the form of the strong east wind.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Erroneously attributed to Rabbi Abraham ben David (Ra'avad), hence commonly referred to as Ra'avad's commentary. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), 29.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. on Agrippa, see below.

<sup>21</sup> For the inextricable link between *Ein Sof* (lit. "no end") and *Keter* (lit. "crown") see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 242-46.

<sup>22</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 9. The three Hebrew letters *alef*, *mem*, and *shin* are of central importance in *Sefer Yetzirah* which will be addressed shortly. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenberg's interpretation is based on *Sefer Raziel*, see his *Explication*, 69.

In the centre of the engraving we see a balcony with a view of creation. The eyes of the onlooker are immediately drawn to the scene with a Kabbalistic tree, and the terrestrial globe emerging from the clouds (see fig. 4). The bond between the celestial and the terrestrial spheres is displayed prominently in an allegorical manner. The upper world is revealed through four sets of systems: the Sefirotic tree represents the emanation of the Supreme Being (the Godhead is symbolised by the Hebrew letter *yod* in the middle of the upper three *sefirot*<sup>24</sup>), the angelic world is indicated by the names of angels (Michael, Barachiel, Gavriel, Raphael, Tzadkiel, Chasdiel, and Anael), the universe is exhibited through the planets (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon), while the celestial sphere is illustrated by the zodiac.

In connection to the visually pronounced chief *sefirot*, it is interesting to note how Rosenberg relies on Christian Kabbalah, notably on Agrippa, but interprets it through Jewish Kabbalah.<sup>25</sup> He refers to Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*, in which the tetragrammaton is intertwined with the Trinity within the framework of Pythagorean mathematical numerology. Agrippa presents the ten-letter name of God in the famous Tetractys.<sup>26</sup> Rosenberg reproduces the Tetractys in his *Explication* (see fig. 5),<sup>27</sup> for the numerical values of the letters add up to seventy-two, equivalent to the number of hidden names of the above-mentioned *Shem haMephorash*. Beyond this, Rosenberg also makes use of the trinitary aspects of Agrippa's Christian Kabbalistic theory. He explains how the thrice holy threefoldness is represented by the letter *yod* (the three primitive dots connected) which is situated on the lithograph in the centre of the three upper *sefirot*—*Keter*, *Chochma*, *Binah*—surrounded by the script: "The Holy One Blessed be He, Creator and Ruler; One, Unique, and Sole; He was, He is, and He will be. Thrice Sanctified with Three Sanctifications; Holy, Holy, Holy."<sup>28</sup> (See fig. 4.) Rosenberg's emphasis on the oneness of this trinity is well illustrated by his statement in a letter he sent to the editor of the Masonic journal, *Freemasons' Quarterly Review*: "the cabalistic Jewish religion had, and have perpetually a Triad, in which a Triple holiness is contained, יחשי [*sic*]<sup>29</sup> but which fundamentally

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 8–9, footnote (b) and Chapter III, 13–15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Chapter III, 13–15.

<sup>26</sup> Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Geschichte der christlichen Kabbala, Band 1: 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. Clavis Pansophiae* 10.1. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2012), 468–76.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup> It is highly probable that Rosenberg originally wrote יחשי which stands for בינה – חכמה –



Figure 6. Arch of correspondences (detail).

means one Godly holiness.”<sup>30</sup> The trinity is displayed visually several times: the upper three *sefirot* are connected by a triangle (fig. 4), and the celestial *yod* has the form of a triangle, figuring thrice on the lithograph: amidst the clouds of the creation scene (fig. 4), on the arch of correspondences (fig. 6), and in the middle of the upper left rosette (fig. 6).

The connectedness of the divine and profane worlds becomes even more conspicuous as we ascend further up along the vertical axis of the lithograph. In the upper section of the table an arch is presented with a scene at the centre, which is connected to the creation motif. Light is emanating from behind the shapeless *tobwabobu*, in front of which the tetragrammaton and the word *Adonai* are displayed. In the *Sha'arei Orab*, Gikatilla deals with the divine names, and when the Ineffable Name appears together with the divine appellation *Adonai*, special significance is attributed to it. Then, posits Gikatilla, the heavens impart

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כתר (*Keter*, *Chochma*, *Binah*) and the י (*yod*) as a reference to the Godhead. And just as on the lithograph, he used the final form of letters in abbreviations and acronyms. A plausible explanation for the corruption of the text is that most probably the typesetter did not know Hebrew (well), hence, he mistook Rosenberg's ך for ך—the final form of the letter *kaf* for that of the letter *pe*. And when it comes to the letter *bet*, this is Rosenberg's cursive: ב. It is surmised that the typesetter, struggling to decipher Rosenberg's handwriting, could not make anything of his *bet*, hence, he chose the Hebrew square letter closest to it; by turning it ninety degrees clockwise, he got the letter *shin*.

<sup>30</sup> David Rosenberg, “Tableau Cult de Hébraïque,” letter to the editor, *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1844): 29. Rosenberg adds that “I make my ideas reluctantly known through emblems” which is a clear reference to his Kabbalistic-Masonic art in general, and to the three upper *sefirot* in particular.

Figure 7. *Sefer Yetzirah* (detail).

their influence and bestow their blessings on the earthly realm.<sup>31</sup> This flow we can find in the *Zohar* as well. The divine names are applied to the *sefirot*: the tetragrammaton and *Adonai* are the *Binah* and *Malkebut*, respectively.<sup>32</sup>

The divine emanation is embraced by the arch where the correspondences between the heavenly order in nature and Judaism are summarised (see fig. 6).<sup>33</sup> Surmounting the names of God we see four concentric semicircles spanning across the facade, dedicated to four themes:

<sup>31</sup> See the Fifth Gate: “Know and comprehend that when [the names] YHVH ADNY are mentioned in this order, the effluence descends upon the *sefirot* in their entirety—from beginning to end, from above to below—until the effluence of blessing and emanation reaches the name ADNY. The entire world is then blessed with complete blessing.”

(ודע והבן כי בהזכיר יהוה אדני כסדר זה, השפע יורד עד הספירות כולן מראש ועד סוף מלמעלה למטה עד שמגיע שפע הברכה והאצילות לשם אדני, ואז כל העולם כולו מתברך ברכה שלימה.)  
Joseph Ben Shlomo, *Joseph Gikatila: Shaare Orab* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1970), 181.

<sup>32</sup> Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 293–95.

<sup>33</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 19–21.

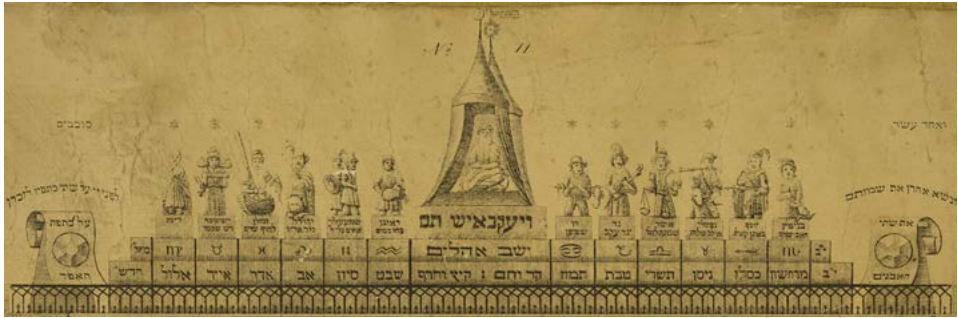


Figure 8. Jacob and his children (detail).

- I) the celestial and original letters of the Hebrew alphabet;
- II) the celestial phenomena, elements, planets, and the zodiac;
- III) the heat and cold and their accidents, the days, and the months; and
- IV) the parts of the human body.

Their harmony with the celestial sphere is demonstrated by the division of the semicircles into three cross-sections correlating to the numbers three, seven, and twelve (starting from the outer semicircle):

- 3: I) the three mother letters *ש.מ.א.*; II) fire, water, and air; their Hebrew names and Kabbalistic characters; III) heat, cold, and the product of their accidents; IV) the head (product of the igneous principle), the womb (product of the aqueous principle), and the trunk (product of both of these potencies).
- 7: I) the seven double letters; II) the seven planets; III) the seven days of the week; IV) the seven apertures on the head.
- 12: I) the twelve simple letters; II) the signs of the zodiac with their Kabbalistic characters and their names; III) the twelve months; IV) the twelve parts attached to the human body.

Below the semicircles we see an additional section pertaining to the objects of the divine worship in the Temple of Jerusalem, arranged again according to the numbers three, seven, and twelve: the three elements; the seven-branched menorah; the twelve loaves of show-bread, the breastplate of judgement with its twelve precious stones, and the brazen laver with its twelve heads.

These numbers bring to light the core correlations that hold the divine and the mundane worlds together, as revealed in *Sefer Yetzirah*, the Book of Creation (or Formation), the earliest esoteric book in Judaism, which is

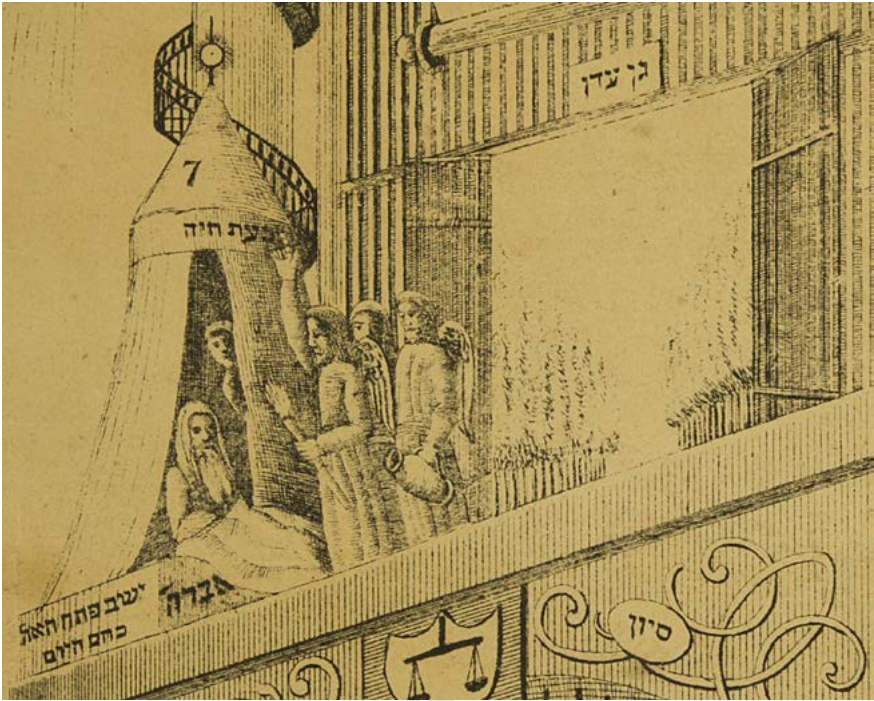


Figure 9. Abraham in his tent (detail).

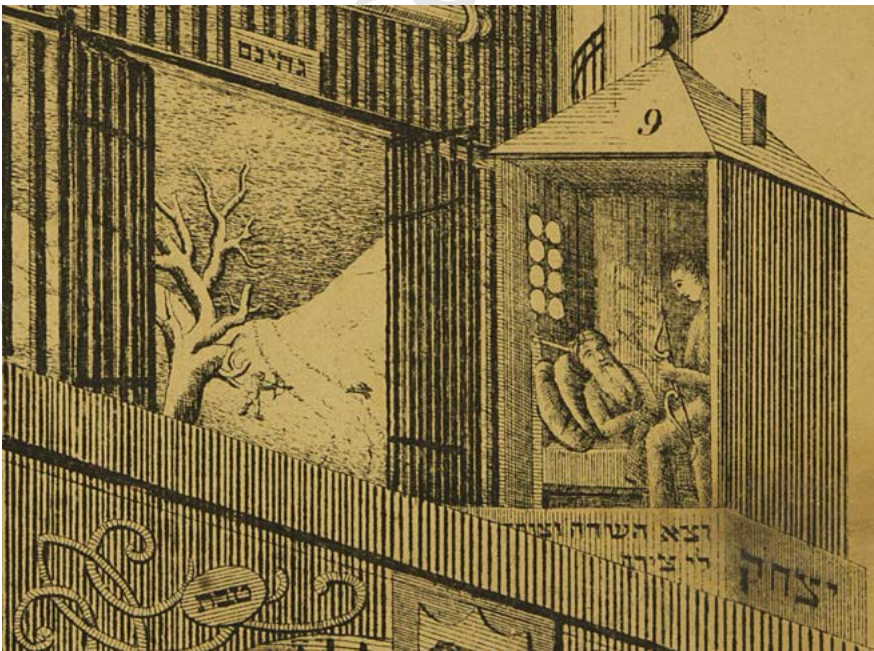


Figure 10. Isaac in his tent (detail).

ascribed to Abraham by oral tradition.<sup>34</sup> The cosmological and cosmogonic book tells the story of how God created the world using the ten *sefirot* and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet (altogether the thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom). The classification of the lower three semicircles follow the categories of *Sefer Yetzirah*, as indicated at the beginning of the sections of the vaults: in world, in time, and in man's body (בעולם, בשנה, בנפש—literally “in the world, in the year, in the soul”).<sup>35</sup> And this is exactly the reason why Rosenberg places the *Sefer Yetzirah* (see fig. 7) as a visual connecting element between the universal heavenly order and our created world: it is inscribed into the twelve frames on the lintel linking the central opening and the vault. (The thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom are represented by the thirty-two medallions flanking the central scene on both sides, containing commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*.) (See fig. 1.) The number symbolism of *Sefer Yetzirah* represents the conceptual thread running through the iconographic programme of the entire lithograph.

As can be seen, the iconographic programme is implemented by way of a carefully designed graphic layout that provides for a gradual unfolding of the conceptual framework along the vertical axis, from *Ein Sof* up to the arch of correspondences. The narrative scenes are arranged according to, and provide further confirmation for, the overall organizing principle. As a crowning element, along the roofline, we see a row of statuary (see fig. 8): Jacob symbolizes the two halves of the year (sitting in two tents), while his thirteen children the twelve months (Simeon and Levi, receiving their blessing from Jacob at once, represent the Gemini), paired up with the signs of the zodiac. The seasons are symbolised by the matriarchs in the niches (see fig. 1).<sup>36</sup> Abraham and Isaac are symbolic of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and identified with the *sefirot Chesed* and *Gvura*, respectively, based on the *Zohar*. Abraham sits in the tent of summer, while the three angels standing adjacent to it represent the three elements (see fig. 9). Next to the tent is the gate of the Garden of Eden, above which a good genie holds a scroll with words associated with the scenes: sun, day, light, heat, summer, seed, dew, good, sweetness, and life (see fig. 1). On the opposite side, Isaac rests in his bed in the tent of winter, with Jacob standing next to him. The beholder is offered a glimpse into Gehenna with Esau's hunting scene which is set in a barren

<sup>34</sup> For English translation and text variations see Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 22, 25–26.



Figure 11. Celestial globe (detail).



Figure 12. Terrestrial globe (detail).



Figure 13. Passover Seder night (detail).



Figure 14. Sukkot (detail).

wintery landscape (see fig. 10). On this side, we see a scroll held by a bad genie, with the words: moon, darkness, night, cold, winter, barrenness, snow, evil, bitterness, and death (see fig. 1).<sup>37</sup> The celestial and terrestrial globes in the upper left and right corners (see figs. 11 and 12) are representative of the celestial influence on earth and that of man on woman.<sup>38</sup> Just above the arch of correspondences, next to the matriarchs, the two rosettes (see fig. 6) are yet again designed with references to the numbers three, seven, and ten in mind. On the right-hand side, the ten commandments are enclosed by the ten *sefirot*, and the law is symbolised by the scale of justice and a sword together with the inscription “in measure and weight.” A scroll is depicted with a line from the Jewish hymn *Yigdal*, “God gave His people a Torah of truth,” (the eighth article of faith). The rosette on the left embraces the blessing hands of the high-priest, pronouncing the benediction over the people of Israel, splitting the fingers into two sets of two, while forming a triangular space between the touching index fingers and the thumbs. Situated within this enclosed space is the letter *yod* inside the celestial *yod*. The blessing hands are encircled by the ten angelic classes. The cornucopias represent plenty.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 24, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 26-29.





Figure 15. Marriage (detail).

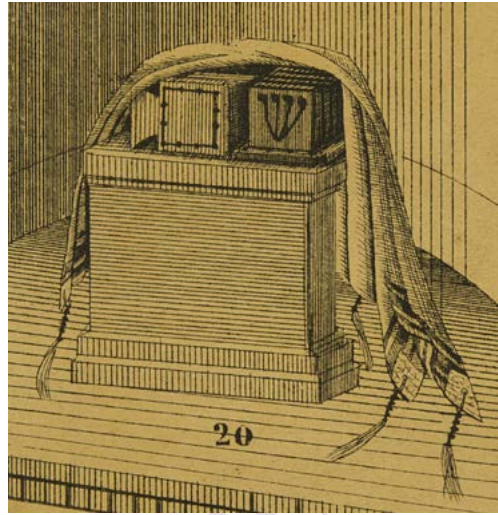


Figure 16. Tefillin, tallit, and tzitzit (detail).

The rest of the narrative scenes, as the title of the work suggests, are connected to the worship of the Hebrews. In the bottom, to the right of the *Shem haMephorash*, the day of rest, the Sabbath is symbolised (see fig. 1).<sup>40</sup> On the opposite side, we find the Shabbat Shabbaton, the Shabbat of Shabbats or Yom Kippur (see fig. 1).<sup>41</sup> Next to the creation scene, on the right, the Passover Seder evening is depicted (see fig. 13), above which inscribed are the seven items to be placed on the Seder table.<sup>42</sup> On the other side of the central scene, the holiday of Sukkot is represented by the tabernacle with the seven exalted guests (see fig. 14)—their names are inscribed on the façade above the vault—while in the foreground a man is depicted handing over the Lulav to a child.<sup>43</sup> The scene in the bottom right corner symbolises the marriage ceremony (see fig. 15): the canopy is the emblem of heaven, and the bridegroom and the bride are represented by the celestial and terrestrial globes, the altar, and the fire of love together with two hearts transfixed by an arrow. The seven pillars that ornament the semicircle around the altar represent the seven nuptial benedictions, the seven days of the marriage feast, and the seven lower *sefirot*.<sup>44</sup> The scene at the opposite side presents religious articles—*tefillin*, *tallit*, and *tzitzit* (see fig. 16)—in the description of which number symbolism figures

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 37–38.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 42–44.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 45–49.

prominently.<sup>45</sup> Following this short overview, it can be concluded that the didactic content of Rosenberg's work is expressed by way of a sophisticated graphic layout that justly impresses the onlooker.

### Rosenberg's London Connections

Before turning to the Masonic reading of the lithograph, a couple of words need to be said about Rosenberg's Masonic ties to London. The reason for this is that although the lithograph, together with its explication written in French, was published in Paris by Rosenberg, its Masonic interpretation, also by Rosenberg, appeared in an English Masonic periodical. Not only had he made his first known Masonic lithograph in London while living there in 1813,<sup>46</sup> but throughout his Parisian years he had close contacts with British Freemasons. The most notable of all was Prince Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex, who was the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England.<sup>47</sup> The Duke was a great admirer of the Hebrew language (his extensive library included twelve thousand volumes on theology, amongst them fifty-one Hebrew manuscripts), and he read the Tanakh in Hebrew.<sup>48</sup> In 1839 he appointed Louis Loewe, a Jewish linguist of Prussian origin, as his lecturer on the oriental tongues.<sup>49</sup>

Rosenberg embraced the Masonic ideas of tolerance, equality, and brotherly love to the fullest. This is well illustrated by his exalted lines about the epoch, the spirit of which is materialized in the splendid institution of Freemasonry:

The doctrine of reason, truth, and liberty is spreading; education, order, virtue follow suit; charity erects its altars, justice recovers its balance, and philosophy, regaining its faith in the midst of ruins, declares as principle: submission to the laws! Respect for the wise kings and for the enlightened religions! Political and religious tolerance for all pure consciences! But to that end education for the people!!!<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, 51-57.

<sup>46</sup> *Myticum Sapientiae Speculum* ("The Mysterious Mirror of Wisdom"), lithograph, London, 1813.

<sup>47</sup> P. R. James, "The Grand-Mastership of H.R.H. The Duke of Sussex, 1813-1843," *Arts Quatuor Coronatorum. Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*, 75 (1962): 37-45.

<sup>48</sup> Mollie Gillen, *Royal Duke: Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773-1843)* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978), 178.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Samuel Morais, *Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Edward Stern, 1880), 209.

<sup>50</sup> David Rosenberg, *Explication du tableau maçonnique intitulé le Miroir de la Sagesse* ("Explication of the Masonic table entitled the Mirror of Wisdom") (Paris: Imprimerie de Migneret, 1834), 5-6. ("La doctrine de la raison, de la vérité et de la liberté se propage ; l'instruction, l'ordre, la vertu marchent à leur suit ; la charité relève ses autels, la justice reprend sa balance, et la

Rosenberg worked tirelessly on the reunification of the fraternity, which had developed into separate branches throughout the years. He acted as a pacificator between the two French Grand Lodges, the Rite Ecossais and the Grand Orient, and a reunion took place on December 24, 1841.

That indefatigable and intelligent mason Brother D. Rosenberg has thus far been successful in the great object of his laudable ambition, and has merited the approbation and gratitude of the Brethren of both Societies; and as some reward for unceasing labour, we should be delighted to record some general acknowledgement from each section of French Masons, of his instrumentality in thus effecting an object that promises to be happily blended into a united fraternity.<sup>51</sup>

Working towards universality, Rosenberg was delegated to the Duke of Sussex as a representative of the Grand Lodge of France “with the purpose of bringing about some alliance between the Grand Lodges of France and England.”<sup>52</sup> During the interview, the Duke expressed unqualified approval of Rosenberg’s lithograph.<sup>53</sup>

Beyond the personal contacts, Rosenberg’s presence in British Masonic periodicals is also quite considerable—close to fifty appearances from 1835, including reviews of literature, popularisers, correspondences, news items, notes and queries, and Masonic musings. His works were advertised and sold in England, some of which were even translated into English.

## The Transformation of the Lithograph

When it comes to the Masonic reading of the tableau, it is interesting to see how Rosenberg’s Jewish reading of it gradually turns into a Masonic interpretation. In June 1841, a promotional article by Rosenberg appeared

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philosophie retrouvant son culte, debout au milieu des ruines, proclame pour principe : Soumission aux lois ! respect aux rois sages et aux religions éclairées ! tolérance politique et religieuse pour toutes les consciences pures ! mais pour cela instruction au peuple !!!”

<sup>51</sup> “Paris,” Foreign, *Freemasons’ Quarterly Review* (31 March 1842): 97. In the same number, 8: “In Paris, the distinction of ‘Le Rite Ecossais,’ and ‘Grand Orient,’ no longer exist—a union of the two Grand Lodges have been effected chiefly by the perseverance of Brother D. Rosenberg,—and the happiest results may be expected.”

<sup>52</sup> Fidus, “The Library and Museum. Science Aided by Poverty,” *Freemasons’ Quarterly Review* (30 September 1844): 283. The Boston *Freemasons’ Monthly Magazine* also reported on the event, referring to Rosenberg as “an intelligent and influential French Brother, and author of several popular works on Masonry.” *Masonic Intelligence, France* (1 May 1842): 219-20.

<sup>53</sup> “An Emblematical Tablet on Freemasonry,” *Review of Literature, &c. Freemasons’ Quarterly Review* (30 September 1841): 368.

in the *Freemasons' Quarterly Advertiser* with the title, *Origin of the Mosaic or Jewish Religion*.<sup>54</sup> It was a translation of his article published the previous year in the French Jewish monthly magazine, *Archives israélites de France*.<sup>55</sup> In explaining the reasons that led to the composition of the artwork, Rosenberg writes that “our religion is paralysed” and, as mentioned above, “the priesthood have lost the primitive idea.”<sup>56</sup> Three months later, in September 1841, in the “Review of Literature” section of the *Freemasons' Quarterly Review*, the tableau is referred to as an *Emblematical Tablet on Freemasonry*. Here, Rosenberg is quoted saying that “the royal art [i.e. Freemasonry] is paralyzed” and that “the existing usages [are] losing their original meaning.”<sup>57</sup>

Rosenberg's actual Masonic explication to the lithograph, to which he himself refers to as his supplementary explanations,<sup>58</sup> appeared the following year, in 1842, in the March issue of the same Masonic publication.<sup>59</sup> And it came with the title, *Explanation of an Engraving on the Origin of the Jewish Religion, as Connected with the Mysteries of Freemasonry*. Here Rosenberg spells out at length just how the tableau in general, and its Kabbalistic content and the Jewish rituals in particular, are actually the allegorical renderings of the Masonic ceremonies, words, signs and grips of the degrees, the places occupied by the office-bearers in the Lodge, and the banquets and toasts held by the Masons. After this gradual reinterpretation, the Jewish composition emerges as a Masonic table.

### The Masonic Lithograph

Although Rosenberg promoted his lithograph as a Masonic table, we are still left with the question as to whether or not the symbolism of the artwork is indeed Masonic. It is beyond the scope of this article to address this

<sup>54</sup> Rosenberg, “Origin of the Mosaic or Jewish Religion,” *Freemasons' Quarterly Advertiser* (30 June 1841): 4.

<sup>55</sup> News item in the *nouvelles littéraires* (de France) section, *Archives israélites de France* (October 1840): 575–76.

<sup>56</sup> Rosenberg, “Origin of the Mosaic or Jewish Religion,” *Freemasons' Quarterly Advertiser* (30 June 1841): 4.

<sup>57</sup> “An Emblematical Tablet on Freemasonry,” Review of Literature, &c. *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (30 September 1841): 368.

<sup>58</sup> Rosenberg, “Tableau Cult de Hébraïque,” letter to the editor, *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1844): 29.

<sup>59</sup> David Rosenberg, “Explanation of an Engraving on the Origin of the Jewish Religion, as Connected with the Mysteries of Freemasonry,” *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1842): 26–29. The article was republished in Boston in the same year: “Masonic Tableaux, an Engraving, Illustrating the Origin of the Jewish Religion, as Connected with the Mysteries of Freemasonry,” *Freemasons' Monthly Magazine* (1 September 1842): 330–33.

interesting issue; therefore, the discussion will be confined to Rosenberg's interpretation—doubtless, he would have answered the question in the affirmative. As an underpinning for the Masonic interpretation, Rosenberg cites the Bible where “in the book of Leviticus, chap. XXV. verses 25, 35, and 39, it will be clearly observed, that Moses in enjoining assistance to the poor, uses the expression, ‘We must assist our brethren,’ and not, according to his usual phraseology, ‘Children of Israel,’ from which it may be concluded that Moses was also initiated in Masonic rites.”<sup>60</sup>

In presenting the Masonic allegories, the rabbi addresses the “initiated,” implying that the interpretation is not conceivable to the profane. By way of example, here are some of the Masonic allegories that are to be found on the artwork when it is read through Masonic glasses. The curtain of the Temple symbolises that the office-bearers are separated from the common members, just as how the Holy of Holies is separated by a curtain in the Temple of Jerusalem from other parts of the Temple (see fig. 4). The three superior officers are in the east of the Lodge, and are placed so as to form a triangle, just as the three superior *sefirot* and corresponding to the three primitive points of the celestial *yod* (see fig. 4). The seven other office-bearers are placed in accordance with the disposition of the seven lower *sefirot* (see fig. 4). The three candlesticks (the Three Lights of the Lodge) are placed in a triangular form in conformity with *Tiferet*, *Netzach*, and *Hod*. The vernal and autumnal equinoxes are connected to the fraternal celebrations, for example, the seven exalted guests are equated with the seven officers of the lodge and the seven glasses represent the seven obligatory toasts during the Masonic banquet (see fig. 14). The thirty-two medallions (again an allusion to *Sefer Yetzirah*) together with the large circle (*Shem haMephorash*) represent the thirty-three degrees of the Scottish Rite Masonry (a high-degree system of Freemasonry). (See fig. 1). And last but not least, there are Jachin and Boaz (see fig. 3), the two columns flanking the entrance of the Temple, which are so fundamental to Masonry, wherefore they occupy an important place both in the lodge furnishing and in the rituals.<sup>61</sup> With time, in Masonic iconography the pillars became surmounted by a terrestrial and a celestial globe, representing creation.<sup>62</sup> Hence,

<sup>60</sup> Rosenberg, “Explanation of an Engraving on the Origin of the Jewish Religion, as Connected with the Mysteries of Freemasonry,” *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1842): 28.

<sup>61</sup> Harry Carr, “Pillars and Globes, Columns and Candlesticks,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum. Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076* 75 (1962): 205–6.

<sup>62</sup> Yasha Beresiner, “Globes (and Maps) in Freemasonry,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum. Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076* 102 (1989).

Jachin and Boaz with the celestial and terrestrial globes are distinctively and unmistakably Masonic symbols.<sup>63</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the *Freemasons' Quarterly Review*, Brother T. of Grantham made some objections to Rosenberg's theory of Freemasonry originating with the Hebrews. He holds against the rabbi that Masonic remains are found in "Turkey, Arabia, Egypt, Tartary, China, and Japan," and that ancient ecclesiastic buildings were built by Freemasons, a proof for which is the double triangle still to be observed on the windows of several cathedrals and churches in England and on the continent.<sup>64</sup> In furthering his case, Rosenberg begins with respectfully allowing for a shared heritage (the basis of all religions is a form of triality) but then counters the opinion of "his illustrious Brother" along two lines of argument.<sup>65</sup> First, Rosenberg reminds his adversary that long before the Flood, "Anusch and Enoch erected two pillars...which were inscribed in Hebrew, with Hebrew characters....Solomon erected these two known pillars in the great temple of Jerusalem."<sup>66</sup> Second, concerning the double triangle on ecclesiastical buildings, Rosenberg submits that symbols may appear the same only by form, and he goes on to explain that the triad with the apex upward is the sign for fire, while the reverse is for water. The two together, with a 'G' in the centre, were used to mark property for protection: "God protect the goods from fire and water."<sup>67</sup>

Another interesting discussion, reported by the *Freemasons' Quarterly Review*, is worth citing—it took place between Rosenberg and a French bishop on the question of whether the sun *passed* or *crossed* the equator at the vernal equinox. Rosenberg argued that the sun *passed* the equator and that "the 'pacque' or Passover—the solemn festival of the Jews, as instituted in remembrance of their departure from Egypt—had also an allusion to the time of the sun passing the equator."<sup>68</sup> The bishop countered that "the 'sun traversed the equator in the form of a cross, for in its course it described a rose croix, illuminated by its own lustre,' observing that at the vernal equinox the rose begins to bloom—and

<sup>63</sup> This is the reason why Wolff identifies the columns with the celestial and terrestrial globes in the upper two corners (see figs. 11 and 12) with Jachin and Boaz: "Those two columns were placed by Solomon at the entrance of the Temple." Wolff, *Explication*, 108.

<sup>64</sup> Bro. T. of Grantham (R.T.G.), "Some Reflections on Freemasonry," letter to the editor, *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1842): 29–30.

<sup>65</sup> Rosenberg, "Tableau Cult de Hébraïque," letter to the editor, *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (31 March 1844): 29.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Fidus, "Rose Croix. A Masonic Musing," *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (30 September 1844): 285.

hence the derivation of the Rose Croix; also, that the period was a typical allusion to Christ and the Easter Feast.”<sup>69</sup> This phenomenon, besides many others, was used by Rosenberg in his *Explication* in support of his thesis that Judaism is rooted in nature. He writes that the “theology of the Hebrews divided the year into two halves” and the passing over from winter to summer is the time of transition, the Passover which “was to be celebrated as of divine origin.”<sup>70</sup>

In summing up Rosenberg’s explication, the proof that he puts forward for the origination of Freemasonry in Judaism is the organic worldview. In his correlative thinking the cosmic harmony translates into the numbers of Kabbalah. Thus, Kabbalah holds the key to the occult causality: the living network of correspondences. Rosenberg sees the point of connection between Judaism and Freemasonry in the laws of nature, but whereas Judaism mirrors the celestial order because it is rooted directly in the divine system, Freemasonry reflects these laws because it originates from the Hebrews. “It is an error to suppose that Masonry has come down to us from the Egyptians, while, on the contrary, its true source takes its rise from the Hebrews.”<sup>71</sup> That is, the divine system is the blueprint for Judaism, which in turn is the source of Freemasonry.

### Masonic Historical Context

Rosenberg rebranded his product (to borrow terms from the field of marketing) by giving it a new title and a new interpretation: his purely Jewish composition was turned into a Masonic one. Furthermore, he marketed his product separately to different target audiences. Thereby he divided his potential consumers into subgroups based on their interests and characteristics: Jews and Freemasons (not to mention Jewish Freemasons).

But what interest could Freemasons have in Judaism? The Temple of Solomon occupies a central place both in the mythology and the symbolism of Freemasonry.<sup>72</sup> The story of the construction of the Temple and the murder and resurrection of its chief architect, Hiram Abiff, were part of the degree work since the first half of the eighteenth century. The Temple

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication*, 35-36.

<sup>71</sup> Rosenberg, “Explanation of an Engraving on the Origin of the Jewish Religion, as Connected with the Mysteries of Freemasonry,” *Freemasons’ Quarterly Review* (31 March 1842): 29.

<sup>72</sup> See Guy L. Beck, “Celestial Lodge Above: The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem as a Religious Symbol in Freemasonry,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 4, no. 1 (October 2000).

itself, its stones, and the working tools of the masons all have multifaceted symbolical and allegorical meanings in Masonry, and references to them are prevalent equally in the oral and written traditions, the rituals, and the material culture such as Masonic temple architecture, lodge furnishing, and regalia. Rosenberg recognized the craving of Freemasons for a long and established pedigree, and he positioned his product accordingly: basing himself on the shared importance of the Temple of Solomon both in Judaism and Masonry, he delivered the narrative that provided support for the ancient and noble roots of Masonry, reaching back at least to the building of the Temple of Solomon, if not to creation. And this leads us to the next question, which goes beyond the practicalities of attracting a wide audience: what interest could Rosenberg have in presenting Judaism as the source of Freemasonry?

### *Masonic Polemics on the Jewish Question*

The answer is to be found in the larger Masonic historical setting. The reinterpretation of Rosenberg's lithograph from a Jewish tableau to a Masonic table raises interesting questions and offers important new insights into the political and social aspects of Freemasonry in Europe in the 1830s and 40s.<sup>73</sup> In German lands, where Jews were largely excluded from Masonry, it was during these decades that a growing number of assimilated Jews started seeking admittance to Masonic lodges. The controversy over the Jewish participation in Masonic life was prompted by a request to the three Mother Lodges in Berlin, in 1836, to lift the restriction against Jews. The petition was submitted by twelve brethren of *Die Loge zum goldenen Schwert* in the city of Wesel in the Rhineland.<sup>74</sup> The request was turned down by the Mother Lodges. The debate continued to reverberate well into the 1840s and beyond German lands: it provoked sharp responses from Dutch, French, and English lodges, and eventually even American lodges became involved in the matter.

The question of the status and admissibility of Jews sparked an ideological debate on the character of Freemasonry.<sup>75</sup> Depending on the attitude of the author, the neutral or Christian character of Freemasonry was emphasized: either it was presented as a universal human institution, the quintessence of all religions, hence open to Jews as well, or it was depicted as a fraternity with

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<sup>73</sup> Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723–1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 96–114.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–97.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 115–27.



inherent Christian character which justified exclusion. The debate shifted to theological grounds, and ancient Christianity was set as the foundation of Masonry. Even where universality was held up as the fundamental tenet of Freemasonry, it was taken as a principle rooted in Christian doctrine, hence the “Masonic emancipation of the Jews” was to happen through Christianity.<sup>76</sup> It was during the 1840s that Jewish writers began cautiously hinting at the connection between Masonry and Judaism. By way of example: “In 1844, in another address on ‘Current Masonic Problems,’ delivered before the Frankfurt lodge, Jacob Weil quoted from King Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple, and referred to him as *unser grosser Obermeister*.”<sup>77</sup> Rosenberg had begun this trend a decade earlier in 1834 when he wrote that the symbols of the Jewish religion were transplanted into Freemasonry, and the rites, secret words, calendar, and perhaps even the origin of which are rooted in Judaism.<sup>78</sup>

Although further research is to be done on Rosenberg’s place within this polemic, I shall probably not go wrong in assuming that Rosenberg was one of the first in this debate to come up with a full-fledged Kabbalistic theory on just how and why Judaism was the source of Freemasonry. The question arises, though, is why did Rosenberg bother taking stand in such a rather German-specific debate when he had already been initiated into an aristocratic lodge in Paris? Besides the fact that the 1830s and 40s witnessed the above-mentioned Europe-wide debate on the Jewish question in relation to Masonry, by which Rosenberg, being a Jewish Mason, was naturally affected, he also had first-hand experience in the matter. Thus, one part of the answer, no doubt, is rooted in his German years, when he was excluded from the ranks of Masonry. This is attested by his bitter remark against German lodges: “What?! It is in the temple of tolerance that they dare to be so intolerant!?”<sup>79</sup> The other part of the answer leads to my last point: the instrumentalization of Kabbalah.

### ***Instrumentalization of Kabbalah***

Rosenberg’s choice to use Kabbalah, the repository of Jewish mysticism and lore, to posit the Hebrews as the originators of Freemasonry seems to have a double purpose. In a clever way it not only provided additional confirmation for this

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<sup>76</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Brothers or Strangers? Jews and Freemasons in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *German History* 18, no. 2 (1 April 2000): 143–61.

<sup>77</sup> Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe*, 124.

<sup>78</sup> Rosenberg, *Explication du tableau maçonnique intitulé le Miroir de la Sagesse*, 17.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. (“Quoi ! c’est dans le temple de la tolérance qu’on ôse être si intolérant !”)

theory in order to further the egalitarian and cosmopolitan cause for the benefit of Jewish brethren, but also served as a tool for a more personal aspiration.

In Rosenberg's hands Jewish Kabbalah became a means with which he secured his position as an authentic representative of the wisdom that proves the ancient Jewish origins of Freemasonry, and this bestowed him with a stronger status within the Masonic *milieu*. This article has argued that his knowledge of Kabbalah was turned into a tool that enabled Rosenberg to gain recognition and in a way be treated as equal member of the Masonic lodge. Or perhaps more than that: Kabbalah could even be a source of pride, for, in a sense, being a rabbi versed in the mystical lore of Kabbalah, he was the representative of the "mythic aristocracy" of Freemasonry. That is, Jewish Kabbalah could not only provide legitimacy for Jews to become full-right members of Masonic lodges, but also could offer respectability and pride on a personal level. Therefore, Rosenberg had a vested interest in applying Jewish Kabbalah to Freemasonry.

## Conclusions

The transformation of Rosenberg's work happened against the background of a debate that encompassed much of Europe's Masonic community. The rabbi, for obvious reasons, sided with the liberal camp of Freemasons. Rosenberg's contribution to the polemics on the status of Jews within Freemasonry was an elegant and skilfully executed composition, in which Judaism and Freemasonry are intertwined in an ingenious way. The arguments he put forward in proving the undeniable connection of Freemasonry to Judaism, and hence the right of Jews to gain full membership to Masonic lodges on equal terms, were unique and innovative. Instead of basing himself on rational reasoning within an egalitarian legal framework, he relied on esoteric Kabbalistic lore to further the Jewish cause and to confer aristocratic dignity on himself in a lodge of aristocrats.

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