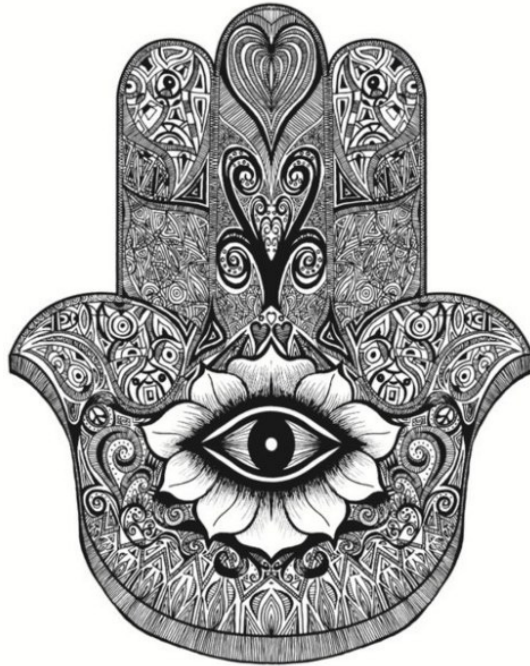


## *The Legend of the “Eye”*



*(The Chamsa hand. An Amulet against the ‘evil eye’)*

There are a many number of versions of the all Seeing Eye that we have not covered yet. Though firstly it is important to remind the reader that previously we have mention that as people and as cultures we make symbols in order to communicate ideas. We also make symbols to help communicate and understand things such as ‘higher truths’ that are not seen or hidden to ordinary consciousness. Some of these truths come from Buddhist and Hindu ideas which we have covered and related to the all Seeing Eye. With this installment, we will very briefly also look at the ‘hidden truths’ behind the Aztec ‘death eye’ and the Mexican ‘eye of God’ before focusing on the all seeing eye as a protective symbol or amulet against the ‘evil eye’. In ancient times when life expectancy was short, death was a constant companion to most people. Death and the all Seeing Eye sometimes intermingle.

The ‘death eye’ as illustrated below is shown as a straight line that dissects through circles. This symbol is a common Aztec one that is found on numerous depictions of their gods. The Aztec had a very strong belief in the afterlife and death was something that they generally didn’t fear. To die as a warrior or in a sacrificial rite was an honor. The death eye helped symbolize that belief.



*The Aztec Death Eye*



*The Mexican Ojo de Dios*

In Mexico you will find a fascinating amulet that is weaved usually made of colored yarn and wound around two crossed sticks at right angles. This is commonly known as the Mexican Ojo de Dios, or the ‘eye of God’. The amulet is a magical object symbolic of the power to see and understand things unknown to the physical eye. Traditionally it was also created for celebration and blessing. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that its diamond shape creates four points that represent the elements of earth, wind, fire and water. At this point we will stop and shift direction and take our story of the eye down another path. We unfortunately cannot afford to get caught up in every single story that there is about the all Seeing Eye.

My intent is to try to stay relevant and give you a general understanding of the legend of the eye without too much baggage. Therefore, we will now focus our attention on the legend of the ‘evil eye’ and three of the most celebrated amulets of protection against the evil eye. In many cultures around the world it is believed that good fortune sometimes attracts the jealousy of others. If you find yourself at the end of this jealously, you will inevitably receive a malicious gaze which will bestow upon you a curse. This ungrateful envious or ill wishing look is called the ‘evil eye’. Some people will deliberately go out of their way to bestow a curse on someone believing that their evil eye has magical properties that will do harm. Some cultures around the world report afflictions caused by the evil eye to be disease, wasting or even death. However, an envious person casting an evil eye, more commonly only means to bring its sufferer bad luck. With such fear and unease, it is no wonder that in many cultures around the world, from the Mediterranean to Central America, amulets of protection are used. (Amulets are also sometimes called or known as charms or talisman.) Amulets are objects that people believe have ‘magical’ powers of protection. People can wear amulets such as pendants, rings or bracelets, but they are also objects like stones, small figures, coins, animal teeth or anything else really that protects by magical properties rather than physical means.

During antiquity, Greeks and Romans strongly believed that there were certain people among them that had the ability to cast a curse upon any unfortunate person who was gazed upon. The evil eye was not feared equally, for example, in every corner of the Roman Empire but it was definitely felt the strongest in the East. (It is assumed that the belief in the evil eye was spread by thinkers and philosophers during Alexander the Great’s reign?) To combat against the ‘evil eye’, people of antiquity used all sorts of implements and animals as symbols of protection against the evil eye. We are fortunate enough to have an example of this in the below Roman era mosaic from Antioch. The evil eye depicted in the mosaic is being attacked by a multitude of implements and amulets that were relevant in the Greco-Roman world. Firstly the evil eye is being pierced by a trident and sword, then pecked by a raven and barked at by a dog. It is also being attacked by a centipede, scorpion, a cat and a snake and if that isn’t enough, a horned dwarf with an enormous phallus crossing two sticks together is also attacking the evil eye.



*Roman mosaic from Antakya, House of the Evil Eye. Hatay Archeology Müzesi, Antakya*



Staying in the Mediterranean but shifting our attention a little further east, you will sometimes come across a strange blue eye. This is a Nedr (Middle Eastern blue eye) or evil eye stone which dates back to times of ancient mythology. It is thought that the nazaar amulet originally derives from the Egyptian Eye of Horus amulet.



The use of the blue eye stone is widespread throughout countries like Greece, Turkey, Albania, Syria, and Lebanon and as far as Afghanistan.



*Image above of the Middle Eastern blue eye*

Travel across the Mediterranean Sea to the Middle East and you will find ‘The Chamsa Hand’. It is a hand or palm-shaped amulet popular throughout the Middle Eastern region and North Africa and very commonly used in both Jewish and Middle Eastern jewelry and wall hangings to protect against the evil eye. In Israel, Chamsas are simply used as a symbol of good luck. They are commonly decorated with fish or Hebrew prayers. In Islam, this symbol is known as the hand of Fatima, in reference to Muhammad’s

daughter Fatima Zahraa. Similar in appearance as the Chamsa, it too is a symbol of power, strength and protection. Many historians believe that the Chamsa symbol predates both Judaism and Islam, though no one is sure of its origin.



*The Chamsa Hand*

## ***ALL SEYING EYE IN FREEMASONRY***



An important symbol of the Supreme Being was borrowed by the Freemasons from the nations of antiquity. Both the Hebrews and the Egyptians appear to have derived its use from that natural inclination of figurative minds to select an organ as the symbol of the function which it is intended peculiarly to discharge. Thus, the foot was often adopted as the symbol of swiftness, the arm of strength, and the hand of fidelity.

On the same principle, the open eye was selected as the symbol of watchfulness, and the eye of God as the symbol of Divine watchfulness and care of the universe. The use of the symbol in this sense is repeatedly to be found in the Hebrew writers. Thus, the Psalmist says, Psalm xxxiv, 15: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry," which explains a subsequent passage (Psalm cxxi, 4), in which it is said: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

It is stated that in the Apocryphal Book of the Conversation of God with Moses on Mount Sinai, translated by the Rev. WT. Cureton from an Arabic manuscript of the fifteenth century, and published by the Philobibion Society of London, the idea of the eternal watchfulness of God is thus beautifully allegorized: "Then Moses said to the Lord, O Lord, dost thou sleep or not? The Lord said unto Moses, I never sleep: but take a cup and fill it with water. Then Moses took a cup and filled it with water, as the Lord commanded him. Then the Lord cast into the heart of Moses the breath of slumber; so he slept, and the cup fell from his hand, and the water which was therein was spilled. Then Moses awoke from his sleep. Then said God to Moses, I declare by my power, and by my glory, that if I were to withdraw my providence from the heavens and the earth, for no longer a space of time than thou hast slept, they would at once fall to ruin and confusion, like as the cup fell from thy hand."

On the same principle, the Egyptians represented Osiris, their chief deity, by the symbol of an open eye, and placed this hieroglyphic of him in all their Temples. His symbolic name, on the monuments, has represented by the eye accompanying a throne, to which was sometimes added an abbreviated figure of the god, and sometimes what has been called a hatchet, but which may as correctly be supposed to be a representation of a square.

The All-Seeing Eye may then be considered as a symbol of God manifested in his omnipresence---his guardian and preserving character to which Solomon alludes in the Book of Proverbs (xv, 3), where he says: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding or, keeping watch upon) the evil and the good." It is a symbol of the Omnipresent Deity.

Dr. Mackey interpreted the All-Seeing Eye as a symbol of God's omniscience, and in doing so had at the time (about 1870) the support of the Masonic students of his generation. The soundness of that interpretation need not be questioned in the sense that it represents the logical goal toward which any other possible interpretation may be aimed; but it is doubtful if it can be supported by Masonic history. Almost less is known about the symbol (and it is a symbol!) than any other; it did not once come into the purview of the studies on which this Supplement is based, and if any researcher has found anywhere solid data on the origin of the symbol it must be hidden in a book of more than average obscurity. There are a number of considerations based on other known data which throw some sidelights on the question:

During the long formative period of the Ritual from about 1717 to about 1770 Lodges were small, convivial, worked while seated about their dining table; they were serious, reverent, and the great majority of Masons were members of a church, but they were neither theological nor mystical, and they instinctively shrank from anything which bordered too closely upon the province of the Church. It is a sound rule in the interpretation of the symbols on the Tracing Boards used by those Lodges not to begin by assuming a theological meaning, because as a rule they shrank from theology. In Freemasonry before 1717 they shrank from it even more. They were a Brotherhood, a Fraternity, carrying on the traditions of the building craft, and they never had any consciousness of standing in the tradition of religion. Solemnity, seriousness, symbolism, ritualism, these do not betoken theology because they belong to man by nature and are found everywhere. Though the All-Seeing Eye is one of the religious symbols, it does not follow that the early Speculative Masons used it as a religious symbol.

The All-Seeing Eye may have denoted the Divine omniscience. Also, it may have symbolized any one or more of some five or six other truths or ideas. It may have denoted the sun originally, as it came up at dawn - it had been thus used by Shakespeare and many other writers. It may have meant the Grand Master or the worshipful Master, and been a reminder of the fact that wherever a man is and in whatever he may be doing he continues to be a Mason, and the eye of the Craft is on him. It may have stood for enlightenment, wisdom, intelligence; and it may have been the Tracing Board representation of the Blazing Star in the Tessellated Pavement, in which case it was again the sun, or day-star, which shines on through day and night. (Note: Until modern astronomy made a number of its difficult facts familiar to everybody the majority of men did not see any necessary connection between daylight and the sun, because the day begins before the sun appears, and remains after it has sunk.) There are much omniscience in addition to those known to theology and metaphysics-the omniscience of the law, the omniscience of the Government which keeps its eye on every citizen, etc.; if the first Freemasons had a symbol for omniscience it does not follow that it was therefore the Divine Omniscience that was meant.

If their symbol signified the Divine Omniscience it does not follow that it would have had for them a depressing meaning, as if that Omniscience were for no other purpose than a final Judgment Day. Omniscience needs not search a man out in order to condemn him for sins he has tried to hide; it may search him out to honor him for virtues he has tried to hide. The Sword Pointing at the Naked Heart is another emblem which need not have a depressing meaning; it should have, rather, a cheerful meaning, because when justice searches out every heart it means that men have security, live in civil order, and therefore can be happy. We could use the All-Seeing Eye as a symbol of the Divine Omniscience we could use it at the same time as a symbol for what ought to be the Fraternity's own omniscience in the sense that it never loses sight of a man once that man has become a member, not even if he does not attend Lodge, or is confined at home by illness or accident, or has moved away.