Essenes, Freemasons and the Great Architect of the Universe
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The Great Architect of the Universe as described in Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, is:
“The title applied in the technical language of Freemasonry to the Deity. It is appropriate that a society
founded on the principles of architecture, which symbolizes the terms of that science to moral purposes,
and whose members profess to be the architects of a spiritual temple, should view the Divine Being,
under whose holy law they are constructing that edifice, as their Master Builder or Great Architect.”

The name God is derived from the Anglo Saxon word Gott, or the Good One. The English word itself is
derived from the Proto-Germanic * ǥuđan. The Germanic words for god were originally neuter—applying
to both genders—but during the process of the Christianization of the Germanic peoples from their
indigenous Germanic paganism, the word became a masculine syntactic form. God is a generic name for
deity; when capitalized it relates to the supreme-being, but this is a descriptive term and not the name of
the Most High. Webster’s defines God as “the Being perfect in power, wisdom and goodness whom men
worship as creator and ruler of the universe”. The earliest written form of the Germanic word god comes
from the 6th century Christian Codex Argenteus. As such the word was not used in any of the original
Biblical writings. The name for Deity, as it was originally written in Hebrew, consisted of numerous
appellations each representing an aspect of the “Great Architect”.

·.EL - (God singular) Signifies God as the “First Great Cause of all, the Mighty One, the Most High”. (occurs about 250 times in the Bible)
·.ELOAH - (God singular “Presents God as the supreme object of worship” (occurs about 56 times)
·.ELOHIM - (God, plural of Eloah) “In the beginning Elohim created the Heavens and the Earth” “And
Elohim said, Let Us make man in Our image male and female let us make them. (occurs about 2500
times)
·.YaHWaH - Signifies “That which always was, that always is, and that ever is to come.” (occurs about
7000 times)
·.EHYAH ASHER EHYAH - (I am that I am) Literally “I will be that I will be” “The Ever-existing One”
·.EL SHADDAI - “God Almighty or God All Sufficient” (occurs 48 times)
(Sacred Names)
To take these many names with their variations of meaning and change them all to Lord and God, seems
akin to changing everybody’s name to Skippy, easy to remember but relatively uninformative.

The Essenes felt that the Sacred Name was ineffable and spoke it only in their holiest ceremonies. In the
Dead Sea Scrolls, in the writings identified as particularly Essene, the names El and Elohim are used most
often for the name of the Creator.

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1 “Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry” by Albert Gallatin Mackey copyright 1873, Revised by Robert
Ingham Clegg copyright 1929, page 422.
2 Wikipedia “God”
3 “The Restoration of Original Sacred Name Bible” Missionary Dispensary Bible Research 3rd Edition Copyright
1973
Yahwah, also found mispronounced Jehovah, is by far the most widely used name for Deity in the Bible. Yet this complex and meaningful collection of Hebrew letters has been rendered most commonly as Lord in the modern Bible. Yahwah is the fourfold name of the Most High, also known as the Tetragramaton, and may be described as follows.

In the Qabalistic table of correspondences relating to the Hebrew alphabet \(^4\), \textit{Yod} is “the Virgin man. Secret seed of All. Secret of the Gate of initiation.” the Father. \textit{He’} is - “The Mother is the Daughter.” \textit{Vau}- “The Sun. Redeemer. The Son is but the Son.” and the final \textit{He’}- “The Daughter is the Mother. In the Hermetic writings of A.E. Waite, “Unity is the father, the duad is mother, the triad is child…One is Being, two is Movement, three is Life - one is Mind, two is Thought, three is Word.”\(^5\) The four resumes the second (feminine) principle and brings about the first whole and perfect number, bringing balance and Unity to the Tetragramaton. The name then equates numerically to the four elements and the four cardinal directions. Here then is the Father, Mother, Son and Daughter a representation of the balance of creation.

It is common in Freemasonry, and many religions, to refer to the Creator as the Father, and with the pronoun he. There is value in this terminology as it represents that causative force, and the principle of first action. The conceptualization of the Good Father who protects and teaches his children is a functional analogy. However, to use the term according to our understanding of gender on a physical level is highly misrepresentative. In the first principle is contained the All. In the creative aspect, or Elohim, the balance of the principles male and female are required as coequals. Both are necessary together to make our dualistic reality possible. Nothing in nature comes into being without this balance. Unfortunately our language does not have very good neuter gender pronouns. To call the Creator “it” is inappropriate. The writings of a Greek philosopher turned Christian can be found in the volumes of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. He repeatedly used the pronoun he while speaking about the Deity, yet he concludes by saying we know that God is neither male nor female, but both and far greater. The same can be said for many Masonic and religious writers who speak in this gender specific language, but understand that the reality runs far deeper.

“The Kabalists considered God as Intelligent, Animated, Living Infinite. He is not, for them, either aggregate of existences or existence in the abstract, or a being philosophically definable. He is in all, distinct from all, and greater than all. His name even is ineffable; and yet this same name only expresses the human ideal of His divinity. What God is in Himself, it is not given to man to comprehend.”\(^6\)

“What is certain, even for science and reason, is that the idea of God is the grandest, the most holy, and the most useful of all the aspirations of man; that upon this belief morality reposes, with its eternal sanction.”\(^7\)

Ultimately the Creator is beyond our understanding. Our definitions only serve to put limitations on the unlimited. To consider the Great Architect in terms of form and gender is to recreate deity in our own image. We have a highly imperfect understanding of the unknowable and to pretend otherwise serves our

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\(^4\) “Liber 777 and other Qabalistic Writings” Aleister Crowley Table of Correspondences 40-41, Samuel Weiser 1973 reprinted 1987.


\(^6\) “Morals and Dogma, Ancient and Accepted Rite” by Albert Pike, published 1871, revised edition 1950, page 97.

\(^7\) ibid, page 98
ego and agenda and nothing else. To strive to understand is a part of our reason for being, but to fully accomplish the task is beyond our ability. Science is not separate from religion, but is the ongoing discovery of the workings of the Creator. Religion and Philosophy formulate ideas and concepts of Deity, but can only approximate. Faith fills the gap between what we feel and know and what can be demonstrated. Our religious books impart faith in something greater. But that faith should not be focused on the myth and story but in the meaning of the message. Jesus taught by parables in hopes we might understand, yet at every corner stands the literalists ready to twist the meaning to their own ends.

“Pythagoras enveloped doctrine with symbols, but carefully eschewed personifications and images, which he thought, sooner or later produced idolatry.”

“There are dangers inseparable from symbolism, which afford an impressive lesson in regard to the similar risks attendant on the use of language... Names which stand for things are confounded with them; the means are mistaken for the end; the instrument of interpretation for the object; and thus symbols come to usurp an independent character as truths and persons. Though perhaps a necessary path, they were a dangerous one by which to approach Deity; in which many, says Plutarch, “mistake the sign for the thing signified, fell into a ridiculous superstition; while others, in avoiding one extreme, plunged into the no less hideous gulf of irreligion and impiety.”

 “…Masonry wisely requires no more than a belief in One Great All-Powerful Deity, the Father and Preserver of the Universe. Therefore it is she teaches her votaries that toleration is one of the chief duties of every good Mason, a component part of that charity without which we are mere hollow images of true Masons”.

 “…a belief in the one True God, and a moral and virtuous life, constitute the only religious requisites needed to enable a man to be a Mason.”

“Love of Truth, justice and generosity as attributes of God, must appear in a life marked by these qualities; that is the only effectual ordinance of Masonry.”

“The religion of Freemasonry is cosmopolitan, universal; but the required belief in God is not incompatible with this universality; for it is the belief of all peoples.”

In his writings, the great Jewish historian Josephus relates that the Greeks had a penchant for changing Hebrew names into Greek format without concern as to the loss of meaning. Apart from literal meaning, Hebrew words are designed as mathematical constructs which set off vibrational patterns relative to the nature of the words. This is called Gematria. The Greek’s also used the ideas of Gematria, but the numerical values were not the same. The Greek format, therefore, did not necessarily represent the same meaning as the replaced Hebrew words. For example let’s take the name Jesus. Remembering that there was no J in our alphabet until about 500 years ago, we have Io the healer-savior, and the name distinguished by the sound sus, sous, or Zeus. “We find other related names, all of them variants of the same name, Iasus, Iasion, Iasius, in ancient Greek religion, as being sons of Zeus”. Jesus then would be the - healer and son of Zeus. Older bibles, for a time, replaced the part of the Profit’s names which

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8 “Morals and Dogma, Ancient and Accepted Rite” by Albert Pike, published 1871, revised edition 1950, page 97.
9 ibid page 64.
10 ibid page 166.
11 ibid page 164.
12 ibid page 162.
13 “Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry” by Albert Gallatin Mackey copyright 1873, Revised by Robert Ingham Clegg copyright 1929, page 407
14 G. Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology Folklore and Symbols, under Iasion, as found in “The Final Reformation” C. J. Koster page 68, Promedia Publications.
represented the Creators name Yah with Seus, thus Elijah became Eliasus, Jeremiah-Jeremius and ect. That corruption was later rectified except the name of the Messiah. In the Old Testament that same name remains Joshua, which is the English variant of the Savior’s name, while in the New Testament it is inexplicably rendered Jesus. In Hebrew the name is Yahushua, and in the name Yahushua we find the first principles of the Tetragramaton; Yod the Father, and He the Mother. The Shin and Ayin represent the word Shua, or Savior. Therefore the name Yahu-shua should be translated; the Divine child of the All-Parent, who is Savior and Redeemer. Faced with this translation it is a wonder that Christianity, generally deemed anti-pagan, would replace the Messiah’s name with that of the son of Zeus, who is not, incidentally, the creator god. Likewise the mathematical equation, based on the value of the letters is not the same. (Joshua=371, Yahoshua=387, Jesus=800, Ioseus/Iosus=880) Alteration of the original terminology can have a significant effect on that which is being said, and often leads to conflicts of interpretation. In the end terms like Most High, Creator and Great Architect point to that which we can agree on without getting lost in dogmatic separation.

Although it is understood the opinions on the nature of Deity are as varied as the membership. By nature and philosophy Freemasonry expresses the idea that the Creator is the Creator. The name under which one worships the Creator is irrelevant. As Shakespeare once wrote "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." It is apparent that the Essenes understood this, but certainly as in all groups there are those who understand and those who do not. It is the focus on the universal truth that has drawn my attention to both the Essenes and Freemasonry.

Essenes and Freemasons
Like the Freemasons, the origins of the Essenes are veiled in mystery. Historically it can be traced to the 2nd century B.C.E. and the Teacher of Righteousness, from the time of the Maccabees. In legend they are the children of Seth, who remembered their connection to the Creator and were always faithful. They lived on the mountain, “below the garden” they ate of the fruit of the trees, and among them was only harmony. They were the followers of the wisdom of Enoch which were placed on the great pillars, from which Hermes, the “Father of Wisdom”, and Plato found their inspiration. The same pillars which influenced the tablets of the Law, and Jachin and Boaz the pillars of Solomon’s Temple. It was these people who stood aside and waited faithfully for Moses, while the others worshiped the golden calf. The Essenes represent the children of the Creator who have always stood strong in the Way, both in word and deed. Whether such a group can be traced in an unbroken line is uncertain, but this spirit has shown itself throughout our recorded history, and has been represented in every era.

Most of our knowledge of the Essenes came from three contemporary sources,

16 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet (II, ii, 1-2)
Josephus (AD 37 – c. 100), also known as Yosef Ben Matityahu (Joseph, son of Matthias) and, after he became a Roman citizen, as Titus Flavius Josephus, was a first-century Jewish historian and apologist of priestly and royal ancestry who survived and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. His works give an important insight into first-century Judaism.

Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE), known also as Philo of Alexandria (gr. Φίλων ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεύς), Philo Judaeus, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, Yedidia and Philo the Jew, was an Hellenistic Jewish philosopher born in Alexandria. He had contact with the Therapeutae, an Essene group of healers living in Alexandria, Egypt.

Gaius Plinius Secundus (23 CE – August 25, 79), better known as Pliny the Elder, was an author, naturalist, and natural philosopher as well as naval and army commander of the early Roman Empire and personal friend of the emperor Vespasian. He was active around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

We will focus on Josephus who lived among the Essenes, noting the Philo and Pliny act as verification having made many of the same points.

"The sect of the Essenes maintain that Fate governs all things, and that nothing can befall man contrary to its determination and will. These men live the same kind of life which among the Greeks has been ordered by Pythagoras."

"The Essenes are Jews by race, but are more closely united among themselves by mutual affection, and by their efforts to cultivate a particularly saintly life. They renounce pleasure as an evil, and regard continence and resistance to passions as a virtue. … Therefore neither the humiliation of poverty nor the pride of possession is to be seen anywhere among them. … In their various communal offices, the administrators are elected and appointed without distinction. They are not just in one town only, but in every town several of them form a colony. They welcome members from out of town as coequal brothers, and even though perfect strangers, as though they were intimate friends. For this reason they carry nothing with them when they travel: they are, however, armed against brigands. … They give to each other freely and feel no need to repay anything in exchange. … On the whole they do nothing unless ordered by their superiors, but two things they are allowed to do on their own discretion: to help those 'worthy of help', and to offer food to the needy. … They are very careful not to exhibit their anger, carefully controlling such outbursts. They are very loyal and are peacemakers. They refuse to swear oaths, believing every word they speak to be stronger than an oath. They are scrupulous students of the ancient literature. They are ardent students in the healing of diseases, of the roots offering protection, and of the properties of stones. Those desiring to enter the sect are not allowed immediate entrance. They are made to wait outside for a period of one year. … Having proved his continence during the first year he draws closer to the way of life and participates in the purificatory baths at a higher degree, but he is not yet admitted into intimacy. His character is tested another two years and if he proves worthy he is received into the company permanently.

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20 Josephus refers to himself in his Greek works as Ἰώσηπος Ἰοσῆπος Matthiou pais (Josephus the son of Matthais). Although Josephus also spoke Aramaic and most probably also Hebrew, no extant sources record his name in these languages. However, his Hebrew/Aramaic name has gone down in Jewish history as יוסי בן מתייהו (Yosef ben Matityahu) and thus he is commonly known in Israel today.
21 Wikipedia online encyclopedia, Josephus, Philo, Pliny.
They are sworn to love truth and to pursue liars. They must never steal. They are not allowed to keep any secrets from other members of the sect; but they are warned to reveal nothing to outsiders, even under the pain of death. They are not allowed to alter the ‘books of the sect, and must keep all the information secret, especially the names of the angels. The name of the Lawgiver, after God, is a matter of great veneration to them; if anyone blasphemed the name of the Lawgiver he was sentenced to death. Those members convicted of grave faults are expelled from the order. In matters of judgment, Essene leaders are very exact and impartial. Their decisions are irrevocable. … They always give way to the opinion of the majority, and they make it their duty to obey their elders. They are divided into four lots according to the duration of their discipline, … They despise danger: they triumph over pain by the heroism of their convictions, and consider death, if it comes with glory, to be better than the preservation of life. They died in great glory amidst terrible torture in the war against the Romans. They believe that their souls are immortal, but that their bodies are corruptible. They believe the soul is trapped in the body and is freed with death. They believe that there is a place ‘across the ocean' where just souls gather, a place reserved for the immortal souls of the just. The souls of the wicked, however, are relegated to a dark pit, shaken by storms and full of unending chastisement. Some of the Essenes became expert in forecasting the future."

Philo writes: "Of natural philosophy … they study only that which pertains to the existence of God and the beginning of all things ["ma'ase merkabah" and "ma'asch bereshit"], otherwise they devote all their attention to ethics, using as instructors the laws of their fathers, which, without the outpouring of the divine spirit ["ruah ha-kodesh"], the human mind could not have devised. … One takes up the holy book and reads aloud, another one from among the most learned comes forward and explains whatever may not have been understood—for, following their ancient traditions, they obtain their philosophy by means of allegorical interpretation" 22

"Thus they are taught piety, holiness, righteousness, the mode of governing private and social affairs, and the knowledge of what is conducive or harmful or indifferent to truth, so that they may choose the one and shun the other, their main rule and maxim being a threefold one: love of God, love of manhood (self-control), and love of man. Of the love of God they exhibit myriads of examples, inasmuch as they strive for a continued, uninterrupted life of purity and holiness; they avoid swearing and falsehood, and they declare that God causes only good and no evil whatsoever [comp. "kol de-abed Rahmana le-ṭab ' Abed," "What the Merciful does is for the good," Ber. 60b]. Their love of virtue is proved by their freedom from love of money, of high station, and of pleasure, by their temperance and endurance, by their having few wants, by their simplicity and mild temper, by their lack of pride, by their obedience to the Law, by their

22 The Jewish War (Greek: Ἰουδαϊκὸς πόλεμος, Ioudaikou polemos), in full Flavius Josephus's Books of the History of the Jewish War against the Romans (Greek: Φλαυίου Ἰωσήφου ιστορία Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίους βιβλία, Phlauiou Iōsēpou historia Ioudaikou polemos pros Rōmaious biblia), also referred to in English as The Wars of the Jews and The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem, is a book written by the 1st century Jewish historian Josephus.
*Antiquities of the Jews (Antiquitates Judaicae in Latin) was a work published by the important[1] Jewish historian Flavius Josephus about the year 93 or 94. Antiquities of the Jews is a history of the Jewish people, written in Greek for Josephus’ gentile patrons. Beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve, it follows the events of the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, but sometimes omits or adds information.
*The Life of Josephus ("Iosepou bios"), also called the "Life of Flavius Josephus", is an autobiographical text written by Josephus in approximately 94-99 CE – possibly as an appendix to his Antiquities of the Jews (cf. Life 430) – where the author for the most part re-visits the events of the War, apparently in response to allegations made against him by Justus of Tiberias
equanimity, and the like. Of their love for man they give proof by their good will and pleasant conduct toward all alike [comp. Abot i. 15, iii. 12: “Receive every man with a pleasant countenance!”], and by their fellowship, which is beautiful beyond description.23

“They distributed all their surplus possessions among the poor. They healed, without reward, all the sick who came to them. Besides the poor and sick, they also helped the old and orphans… They lived on terms of perfect equality between men and women, contrary to the customs and social structure of their period.”24

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has given new insight into the Essenes, but has also brought many new questions. The biggest problem is the idea that one explanation can inform us of the nature of the Essenes. As studies continue to open new doors it becomes obvious that to look at Qumran for understanding of the Essenes, is like looking at a Jesuit and saying now I understand Catholicism. Joseph (Yossi) Patrich, associate professor of archaeology at the University of Haifa, put it this way. “The question has to do partially with archaeology but mainly with comparing what we know from literary sources about the Essenes—Josephus, Philo, Pliny—and what we know about the sect reflected in the scrolls. Altogether, there are many similarities, and I would say that the Dead Sea sect residing in Qumran was a kind of Essene group.” Hanan Eshel, senior lecturer in archaeology at Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan University states; “I always use the term “Qumran sect.” If you ask me if I believe that the Essenes were connected with the Qumran sect, I think they were. If you compare what Josephus wrote about Essenes with what appears in the scrolls, especially the Damascus Document and the Community Rule [also known as the Manual of Discipline], you will see that most of the things Josephus mentions appear in the scrolls. The problem is that some things seem to be different… But Josephus himself says there are two kinds of Essenes. In teaching my students, I try to show them that Qumran was probably one group within a broader movement of Essenes. So it’s not one to one; it’s not that the Qumran sect is the Essenes. The Qumran sect is one group of the Essenes.25 It is important to note that Essene is not necessarily a term they used for themselves and that there seems to be a variety of names affiliated into an overall group, which for simplicity we call Essene, ie. Zadokites, Hasidem and Nazirenes to name a few.

Although often thought of as a sect of celibate monks Josephus tells us; “There is also a different order of Essenes. Though agreeing with the others about regimen and customs and legal matters, it has separated in its opinion about marriage. For they hold that those who do not marry cut off the greatest part of life, the succession, and more: if all were to think the same way, the line would very quickly die out.” This group was the Nazirenes, which like the Hemerobaptists were Essene healers par excellence. They had both celibate and married folk among them. They revered in the Lawgiver (Moses) and the Law, but believed the Temple priests had corrupted it to their own ends. Before entering into marriage men and women alike followed certain practices of purification and for a full yeart special meals prescribed by the elders. There were yet other prescriptions for women during the period of pregnancy. They had a special book called “Traditions of the Fathers on the Immaculate Conception” which they followed strictly.26 This is the group that the Messiah Yahshua/Jesus was born into, and to which he was the heir apparent to the line of David. This was obscured by saying he was from the town of Nazareth. It should

23 Philo (“De Vita Contemplativa,” ed. Conybeare, pp. 53, 206)
http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=478&letter=E#ixzz0gZNatmOD

24 “The Essenes by Josephus and his Contemporaries” Translated from the original Latin and Greek by Edmund Bordeaux Szekely, copyright 1981, page 26


26 “The Essenes by Josephus and his Contemporaries” Translated from the original Latin and Greek by Edmund Bordeaux Szekely, copyright 1981, page 27.
be noted, that no historian of the time mentions anything about a town of Nazareth, this includes Josephus who carefully mapped the entire area during the revolt of 64-73 A.D. In fact no such town was known until the 8th century. Archaeology shows that there was habitation of this site before and after the 1st century, but not during. Professor Szekely in his book “The Essene Origins of Christianity”, points out that “the Greek text says Nazeraios or Nazarenos,” inhabitants of a town would be called, “Nazarethanus”. The Professor goes on to say that “ecclesiastical scribes knew the origin of the word and were well aware that it was not derived from Nazareth. On the contrary, they knew very well that Nazareth was taken from the word Nazir.” Nazir-holy ones, Nasi-prince, Nasar-obedient ones, Nozrei ha-Brit the keepers of His Covenant, and Nozrim, the Hebrew terminology denoting the followers of Yahshua, all are sect names for a holy people, indicating that later scribes were trying to cover the connection between Yahshua and his Essene predecessors. “Like the Gnostics, the Essenes were emanationists. One of their chief objects was the reinterpretation of the Mosaic Law according to certain secret spiritual keys preserved by them from the time of the founding of their order. It would thus follow that the Essenes were Qabbalists and…were awaiting the advent of the Messiah...Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus, are believed to be members of the Essene order.” The teachings of Yahshua/Jesus were derived from the Essenes, whose various communities had already put into practice the life style which the Master taught. There is no doubt that the Messiah brought originality to the teachings, and deviations from mainline Essene thought, but the Way underlying his message was well established. It is not without question that Jesus was an Essene, but the parallels in the teachings are clear, and so it is not unreasonable to state that Christianity sprung from an Essene source. Neither is it unreasonable to say that Freemasonry also sprung from that same source. The three come together in the “Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ” where Jesus teaches; “These tools remind me of the ones we handle in the workshop of the mind where things were made of thought and where we build up character. We use the square to measure all our lines, to straighten out the crooked places of the way, and make the corners of our conduct square. We use the compass to draw circles round our passions and desires to keep them in the bounds of righteousness.”

For the studious Mason the similarities should be seen from what has already been mentioned about the Essenes. For the non mason a list is herein included:

They believe in the one true Creator
They believe that their souls are immortal
Strive for a Saintly Life – to be better men
Resistance to passions as a virtue-keeping their passions within due bounds
The administrators are elected and appointed without distinction.
They are not just in one town only, but in every town several of them form a colony.
They welcome members from out of town as coequal brothers, and even though perfect strangers, as though they were intimate friends

They give to each other freely
Help those 'worthy of help', and to offer food to the needy
They are very careful not to exhibit their anger
They are very loyal and are peacemakers
Healers – in the case of Masons building and funding hospitals
Care for the old, the widowed and the orphan
Rise in degrees as found worthy
They Love Truth and don’t steal-operating on the level
They are warned to reveal nothing to outsiders, even under the pain of death.
They are not allowed to alter the 'books of the sect, and must keep all the information secret
Those members convicted of grave faults are expelled from the order.
In matters of judgment, Essene leaders are very exact and impartial.
Their decisions are irrevocable.
They always give way to the opinion of the majority, and they make it their duty to obey their elders.

There are probably even more parallels that could be drawn, but this is enough to illustrate the point.
There are of course differences. Essenes were not generally builders with stone, but neither are speculative Masons. Both are making a Temple not made by hands. Masons do not hold all of their possessions in common and are not predominately agriculturists. But such differences are not enough to negate the connections. There are many among us, including myself, who find sufficient evidence to believe that the Knights Templar, are the direct ancestors of Freemasonry. The details of this will be left for another lecture, but here again a connection with the Essenes comes into view. Remove non-violence and add back in community of goods and again many parallels can be drawn between the Essenes and the Templars. Unlike the debatable direct connection between the Templars and the Freemasons. The line from the Essenes to the Templars and on to the Freemasons is more circumspect and indirect. Many Masonic authors have written about the connection to the Essenes, some find the similarities as proof of an Essene Masonic ancestry. Manly Hall writes, “The fact that so many artificers were listed among their number is responsible for the order’s being considered as a progenitor of modern Freemasonry. The symbols of the Essenes include a number of builder’s tools, and they were secretly engaged in the erection of a spiritual and philosophical temple to serve as a dwelling place for the living God.\textsuperscript{30}
Others reach a different conclusion. Albert Mackey and Arthur Waite typify that school of thought.

A.E. Waite after making three basic points of similarity states; “On the basis of this skin-deep likeness, the points of which are in no sense above challenge, it has been affirmed that the Essenes were actually

\textsuperscript{30} Secret Teachings of All Ages, Manly P. Hall, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. Los Angeles, California, Golden Anniversary Edition 3rd printing 1979, page CLXVIII-CLXXIX.
disguised Masons, or that Masonry originated either with or through the contemplative sect of Judea."  

His conclusion was to show skepticism relating to the connection.

Mackey writes: “I think, from what has been said, that there can be no hesitation in pronouncing the theory of the descent of Freemasonry to modern times through the Assideans and the Essenes to be wholly untenable and unsupported by historical testimony. In relation to what has been called the "remarkable coincidences" to be met with in the doctrines and usages of this Jewish sect and the Freemasons, giving to them all the weight demanded, the rational explanation appears to be such as I have elsewhere given, and which I may repeat here.”

“The truth is that the Essenes and the Freemasons derive whatever similarity or resemblance they may have from that spirit of brotherhood which has prevailed in all ages of the civilized world, the inherent principles of which, as the natural results of any fraternization, where all the members are engaged in the same pursuit and governed by one common bond of unity, are brotherly love, charity, and generally that secrecy and exclusiveness which secures to them an isolation, in the practice of their rites, from the rest of the world. And hence, between all fraternities, ancient and modern, these "remarkable coincidences" will be apt to be found.”

I find these viewpoints to be short sighted. First, Waite obviously did not look deep enough, for there is far more than a “skin-deep likeness”. Mackey on the other hand is perhaps being too technical. Although in certain respects he is probably correct, there are points of contention I might make. First the idea of "remarkable coincidences" seems unlikely. Although the Essenes are unknown to most people in the modern world, as well as knowledge of the works of Josephus, neither, are unfamiliar to the scholar and student of religion. The works of Josephus have long been with us and available to the serious student. Although Josephus' credibility as a historian has been questioned overall he has provided a great service to our understanding of the times. Since his writings on the Essenes do not seem to serve an alternative agenda, like some of his other works, it remains useful. For many years, the works of Josephus were printed only in an imperfect Latin translation from the original Greek. It was only in 1544 that a version of the Greek text was made available, from which modern translations derive. However, both the Greek and Latin works have been available, along with the writings of Philo and Pliny, since their origins. It would seem more logical that rather than coincidence, that the example of the Essenes is the foundation upon which later fraternal and monastic societies were built. Here than is the link. Rather than a direct line of information passed like a genetic descent, the Essene model has appeared and been adapted by brotherhoods along the way. Is the link any less significant because it has not been passed from hand to hand in an unbroken chain? I would concede that it is likely, that this type of descent does not exist, although it remains possible. But it is not any less connected if the information lay dormant for a time, to be rediscovered and applied by later generations seeing and adapting their beauty. I therefore conclude by saying that the Essenes were the forbearers of Freemasonry at the very least by their philosophy passed down from ancient times. At whatever point Masonic ritual was developed, an available copy of the

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writings on the Essenes is all that would be necessary for our order to be descended from those wise teachers. Their example is one of beauty which our organization, in many respects has chosen to emulate.