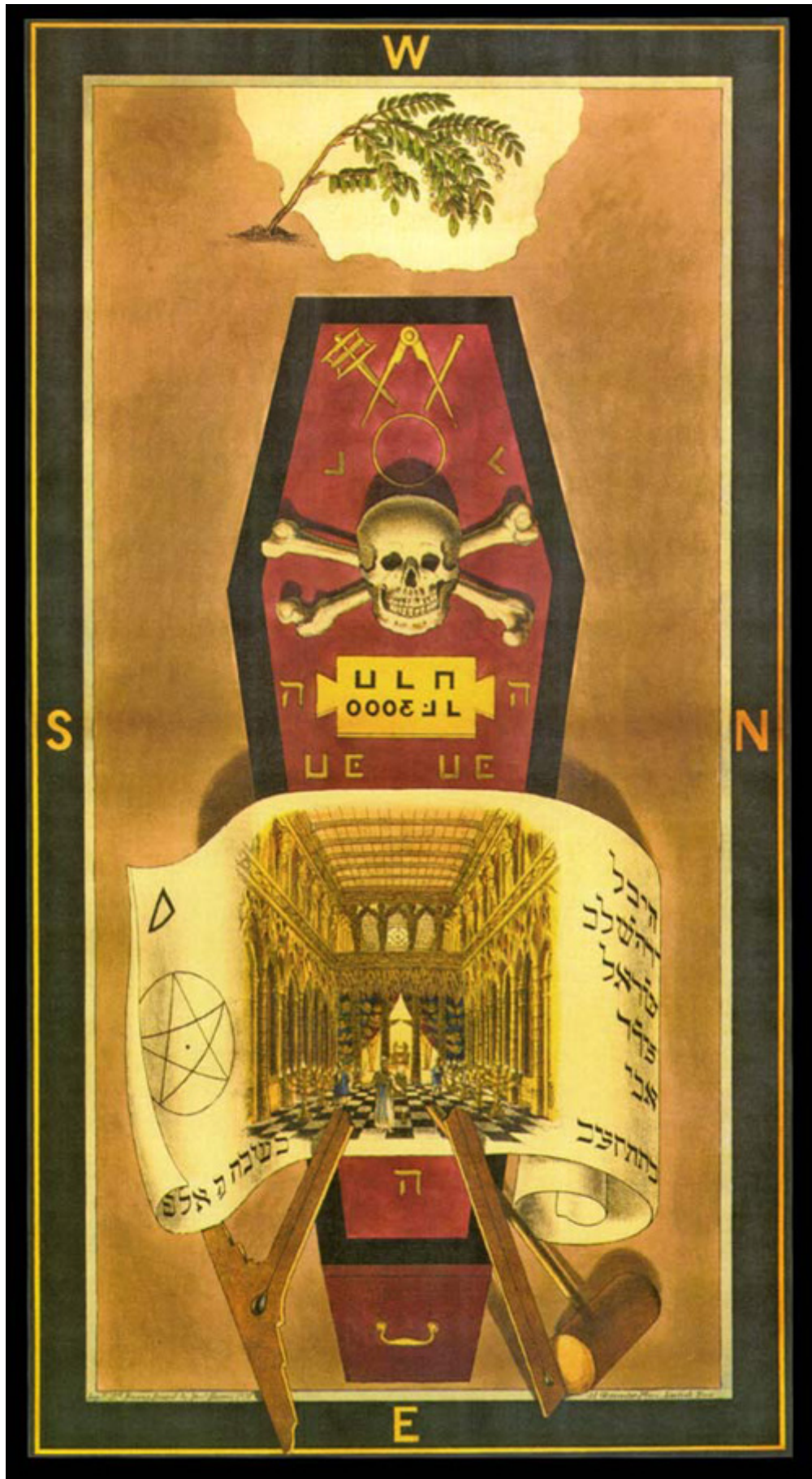


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3° Tracing Boards by John Harris



3° Tracing Board
W.: Bro.: John Harris
1845

This board represents a key development of the classic Bowring "closed coffin" board. The coffin design seems to have been the preferred way, in most jurisdictions, to represent the body of Hiram Abiff. Here, the coffin is dramatically delineated in red.

The symbolism is fascinating. At the top, the Square and Compass is transmuted. The Compass remains, but the Square is replaced by the Skirret and Pencil. The Skirret is an ancient device which was used to draw large circles at construction sites. It consisted of a rope wound around a pin. When the pin was firmly in the earth, an individual holding the rope at any given distance could draw any size circle, or perform other necessary geometrical tasks. Thus, the Point within the Circle which we also see there is the result of both the Compass and also the Skirret and Pencil. This could be interpreted as ideal (Compass) and earthly (Skirret and Pencil) powers in perfect union of purpose.

The ciphered text on the picture is similar to that on other boards. The Hebrew text is somewhat garbled, and the artist of this particular copy clearly was not familiar with Hebrew orthography. We see, however, that it was based originally on the accurate Hebrew found on Harris' original.

The Blazing Star (pentacle) is here united with the Point Within the Circle. Both are images of the Sun, and the triangle above them is the traditional symbol for fire.

The central panel offers a view into Solomon's Temple, with the High Priest apparently emerging from the Holy of Holies.

The Open Grave Design

The oldest 3° boards often feature the corpse of Hiram, and a rare 1850 board by John Harris' returns to this tradition. In this powerful tracing board design, the body of Hiram Abiff is discovered in a rough grave, with an emotional starkness not possible from the representation of a mere casket.

The symbolism is pared down to an elaborate tombstone, a Temple plan, and the Gavel, Plumb and Level.

In the tombstone we see the 47th Problem of Euclid (the Pythagorean Theorem), the Skull and Bones, and the Pentacle within a Circle.

Below these, we see a cameo showing the Sanctuary of the Temple, with the High Priest offering incense before the curtain of the Holy of Holies, surrounded by golden menorahs.

The text around the image is in Hebrew and coded English. The somewhat obscured Hebrew text reads:

Beyt haMikdash ba-Yerushalaym nivnah
alyedey Shlomoh melek Yisra'eyl, Khiram
melek Tzur, ve-Khiram shevet Naftali
haboney ba-shnat G alafim.

"The House of the Temple in Jerusalem was
built under Solomon the King of Israel, Hiram
the King of Tyre, and Hiram of the tribe of
Naphtali, the builders, in the year 3000."

The cipher on the left side of the board reads:

T C	
H A B	[Hiram Abiff]
A L 3000	
M B M B	(interestingly represented twice!)
C C C	[chalk charcoal clay]
F F Z	[freedom fervency zeal]

Notes by Shawn Eyer, P.:M.:



IN VIAM
INITIATORVUM

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