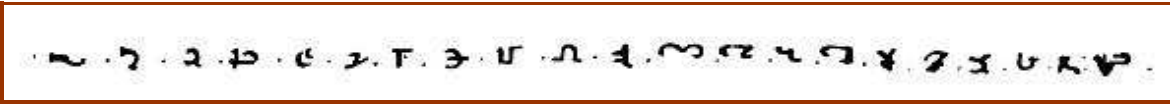

THE TRUTH ABOUT MAGIC ALPHABETS



(Less common cursive or script Enochian alphabet, received by Dee and Kelley on March 26, 1583)

There are two reasons why magicians used special alphabets in the past, and continue to use them today.

The most important reason is to infuse our magic with greater potency. Words or names of power written in letters of a magic alphabet are thought to hold a greater charge of force than those same words or names written in common letters used for everyday communication.

The second reason is for concealment. Magic alphabets are usually unreadable to the average person. A charm can be written in a magic alphabet, and anyone who happens to see the charm, unless he or she is a magician, will have no idea what it means, or even that it is a talisman.

To some degree, this second consideration adds weight to the first, since magical power is heightened by mystery. The word "occult" means hidden or unseen. The ritual secrets of the Greek Mystery schools were held to be of great magical efficacy in large measure because they were forbidden to be disclosed to the uninitiated. Part of the power of a magic alphabet comes from its strangeness. Strange is equated with otherworldly, and it is in other worlds than ours that magic thrives.

Not all magic alphabets were invented by individual magicians. In ancient times it was the practice to regard old and largely forgotten forms of writing as occultly powerful. The Greeks looked upon the hieroglyphic writing of Egypt as magic writing -- at the time the Greeks ruled Egypt, the use of hieroglyphs had largely been forgotten, even by the educated. The Greeks also looked upon Hebrew as magical. Greek Gnostic charms contain Hebrew letters.

Greeks living in Alexandria during the reign of the Ptolemies employed the vowels of the Greek alphabet as power sounds in Gnostic amulets and charms. Greek invocations of the period contain long, unintelligible strings of Greek vowels. These invocations came alive when the vowels were vibrated on the breath by the magician.

Hieroglyphs were looked upon as magical even by the ancient Egyptians themselves. This is why they were always used to decorate the interior of tombs. The Egyptians used a cursive form of writing for their everyday communication -- hieroglyphs took too long to make to record daily events such as business transactions and social happenings.

Similarly, Hebrew letters were always regarded as magical by the Jews. The esoteric system known as the Kabbalah has at its base the premise that each Hebrew letter is a living spirit or angel. For the Jews, the power of God was the power of his voice, which shaped and transformed the world. Hebrew letters are the vital expression of the voice of God in written form.

During the Dark Ages in Europe, when the writing of Hebrew and Greek had largely been forgotten, both alphabets were used by magicians to embody names and words of power. Often these names were treated as graphic images -- those using them had no knowledge of the sounds of the Hebrew or Greek letters. The most famous of these graphic power words was the Tetragrammaton, the supreme name of the Jewish god that is

composed of four Hebrew letters (*tetra* means four and *gramma* means letter).

Because the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek had been lost by most of the magicians of Europe during the Dark Ages and Middle Ages, the occult diagrams preserved in manuscript copies of various grimoires (grammars) of magic contain cryptic symbols that have a vague resemblance to Hebrew and Greek letters, but are often unreadable. This has led some who view them to regard them as occult symbols in their own right. Occult symbols, called sigils, do exist for the names of demons and stars, among other things, but many of the obscure symbols in the grimoires began life as letters, and only through copying and recopying were they corrupted to the point that they could no longer be deciphered.

The ancient Celts in what is now Ireland used a magic script called Tree Ogham that was composed of groups of straight lines marked or cut at right angles to an edge or ledger line. Originally this ledger line was vertical and represented the trunk of a tree. The Ogham letters were each named for a different species of tree or shrub, and represented the branches of the tree. Ogham was cut into the edges of squared stone blocks and the corners of squared staffs in the form of groups of between one and five parallel notches. These notches might be on the left side of the ledger, the right side, cut horizontally across the ledger, or cut diagonally across it. In this way twenty Ogham letters, called *feews* were distinguished. It is likely the ancient druids knew of Ogham, which had numerous forms besides Tree Ogham, and used it in their magic.

In pagan northern Europe a completely separate group of magical alphabets evolved over a span of two thousand years. These were the rune alphabets of the regions now known as Germany, Scandinavia and England. There is debate among scholars as to whether the first rune alphabet north of the Alps began life as an instrument of magic or of communication, but as runes evolved and diversified into several alphabets, there is no question that they were used for occult purposes such as divination and the making of charms. In my opinion, magic was the primary use of runes in their early and middle history, and only in their late history when their magical use began to be forgotten did they become predominantly an alphabet of writing.

It may be that runes began as a psychic communication to a shaman of the cult of Woden around 500 BC. Their origins have been lost to history, but there is a legend that describes the psychic reception of the runes by Woden during a rite of voluntary sacrifice.

This is certainly the way the magic alphabet known as Enochian was communicated to the Elizabethan magus John Dee. The alchemist Edward Kelley saw the 21 Enochian letters written down by an angel within Dee's crystal ball. When he complained that he could not copy them accurately, the angels caused the letters to appear before Kelley on a page in front of him in a light yellow color. Kelley carefully traced the shapes of the Enochian letters with his pen before they faded from the page, thus preserving the forms of the Enochian letters.

The Enochian angels also communicated a magic alphabet to Aleister Crowley that is composed of groups of daggers. Crowley received the vision of this alphabet when he was invoking the Enochian angel of the Nineteenth Call or Air -- it is illustrated in his book *The Vision and the Voice*, which describes his experiments with Enochian magic. While studying Crowley's Dagger Alphabet, I was inspired to create an [Original Magic Alphabet](#), which you can view by clicking on this link.

It is likely that individual magicians created their own magic alphabets to disguise their magic from prying eyes. Usually they based it on an existing alphabet such as Hebrew. Several examples of this type of magic alphabet are preserved in Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* -- see Book Three, Chapter 29 and 30. The early nineteenth century magician and plagiarist Francis Barrett reproduced these alphabets in his book *The Magus*, which is largely made up of a portion of an old English translation of Agrippa's work.

Words of power were not only written in the letters of magic alphabets, but were also made into graphic charms by combining these letters in visual ways to create unique symbols or emblems. When this is done with runes, it is

known as a bind-rune charm. Bind-runes are composite rune characters composed of two or more runes. Similar charms were created by magicians using Latin and Hebrew letters.

It was also sometimes the practice to substitute symbols for letters, and in this way to create a graphic symbol based upon the letters in a name or word. The best known of these is the Kabbalistic technique know as *Aiq Beker*, the Kabbalah of Nine Chambers. the 22 letters of Hebrew, along with their 5 final forms that occur only at the ends of words, are written right to left in the nine cells of a tic-tac-toe grid. Each cell thus receives three Hebrew letters. Not only are the letters in each cell assumed to be occultly related to each other, and thus interchangeable during Kabbalistic manipulations of words and names, but the letters were also represented by the angles of the grid itself. For example, the first letter *Aleph*, written in the upper-right cell, could be represented by an L-shaped angle. The second Hebrew letter in this same cell, the tenth letter, *Yod*, could be represented by this same L-shape with a single dot in its angle. The third letter in this cell, the nineteenth letter, *Qoph*, was represented by the L-shape with two dots in its angle.

In modern Western occultism the most popular magic alphabets are the German and English rune alphabets, the Hebrew alphabet, the ancient Celtic magic alphabet known as Tree Ogham, and the Enochian alphabet.

[Return Home](#)

THE THEBAN ALPHABET



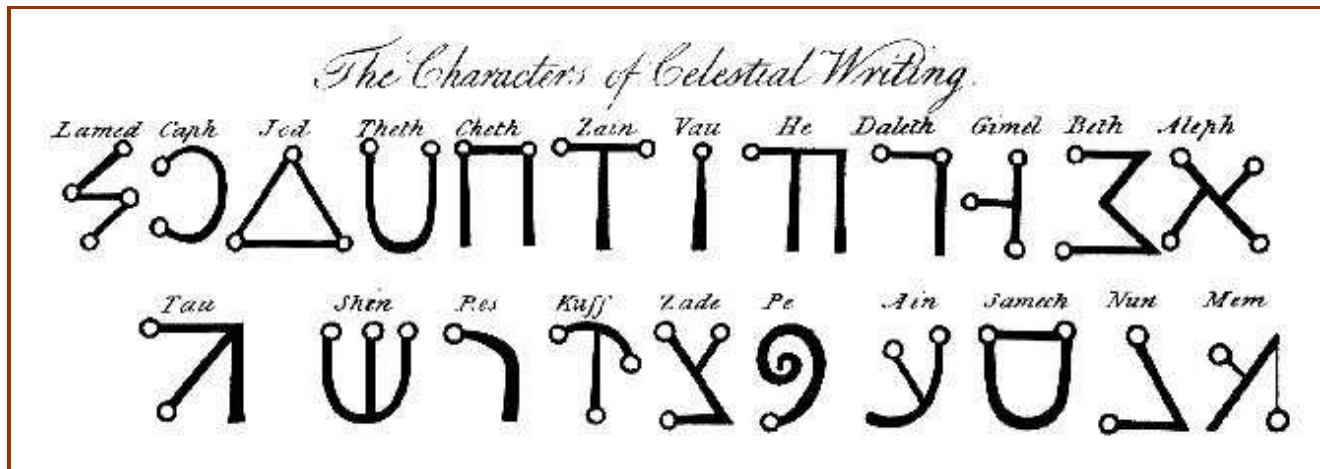
The Theban Alphabet is supposed to have been created by the magician Honorius, author of the grimoire known as *The Sworn Book of Hornorius*, where, curiously enough, this alphabet does not appear. Note that it is based on the Laten alphabet rather than on the Hebrew alphabet.

This alphabet appeared in Book III, Chapter XXIX of *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Cornelius Agrippa, published in Latin in 1533. Agrippa mentions that the alphabet was attributed to Honorius by the magician Peter of Abano (or more properly Petrus de Apono), an Italian writer whose dates are 1250-1316.

The English writer on magic, Francis Barrett, reproduced the Theban Alphabet in his book *The Magus* -- see Book II, Part I, Chapter XIV of that work.

[Return Home](#)

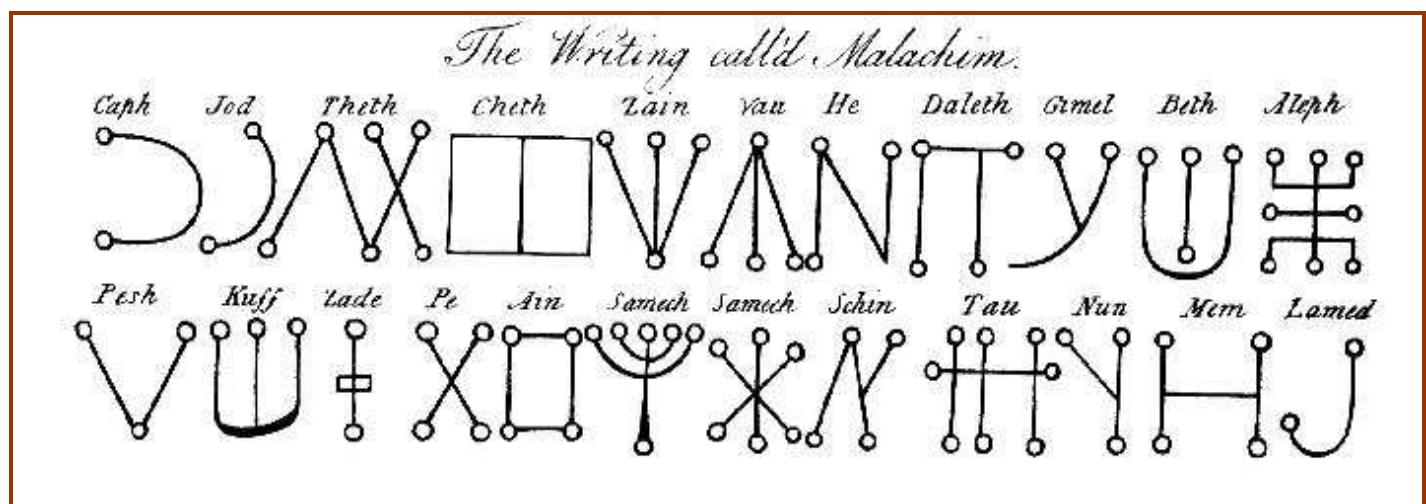
THE CELESTIAL ALPHABET



The Celestial Alphabet was given by Agrippa in Book III, Chapter XXX of his *Occult Philosophy*. Agrippa wrote that it is named Celestial because the Jews "shew it placed and figured amongst the Stars, no otherwise than the other Astrologers produce images of signs from the lineaments of Stars." Agrippa's meaning is that the Jewish Kabbalists discerned the shapes of the Celestial letters in the pattern of the stars in the heavens, just as astrologers saw the outlines of the signs of the zodiac such as the Ram and the Crab. Each letter would thus have been occultly connected with specific stars, and with the constellation containing those stars. Every major star had its own occult history and virtues in magic. Francis Barrett reproduced this alphabet, which he derived from Agrippa, in his *Magus*. For a more comprehensive exposition of Celestial Writing, go to the [Celestial Alphabet](#) page, where the letters are pictured among the stars of the heavens.

[Return Home](#)

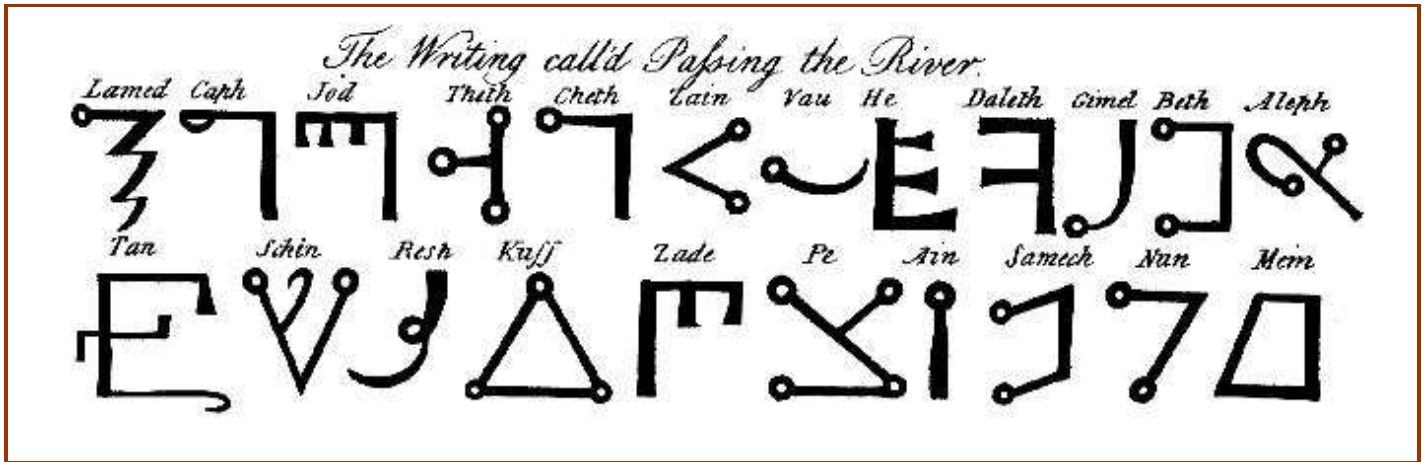
THE MALACHIM ALPHABET



The Malachim Alphabet was given by Agrippa in Book III, Chapter XXX of his *Occult Philosophy* and copied from this source by Barrett in his *Magus*. Agrippa had little to say about it, other than that its name means "of Angels or Regal." Like the Celestial Alphabet, it is based on the twenty-two Hebrew letters.

[Return Home](#)

THE "PASSING THE RIVER" ALPHABET



Passing the River is yet a third magic alphabet based on Hebrew that was included by Cornelius Agrippa in Book III, Chapter XXX of his *Occult Philosophy*. Barrett derived the alphabet from Agrippa (along with much of the text of Agrippa's book) and presented it in his *Magus*. Unfortunately Agrippa wrote nothing at all concerning Passing the River.

[Return Home](#)

MAGIC ALPHABET FROM THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

1	p	T	3	,	7	∞		
Zayin	Vau	He	Daleth	Gimel	Beth	Aleph		
T	B	L	O	L	4	9		
Nun	Mem	Lamed	Kaph	Yod	Teth	Cheth		
&	4	m	9	8	P	J	>	□
Tau	Shin	Resh	Qoph	Tzaddi	Pe	Ayin	Samekh	

The magic alphabet above was used to write the Hebrew text from the Dead Sea Scrolls that has been titled "Admonitions To the Sons of Dawn" (4Q298). It appears in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*, edited by

Eisenman and Wise (Penguin Books, 1993, page 160, plate 10). I have redrawn the letters of the alphabet to make their shapes clearer, and have rearranged them so that they are in sequence from right to left, the normal ordering of the Hebrew alphabet. The final character on the lower left is not connected with any Hebrew letter. The editors of *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* speculate that it was used as a null character, merely to confuse those attempting to decipher the coded text. If this magic alphabet were to be employed in modern magic, this extra character would be put to best use by making it stand for a period at the end of sentences.

[Return Home](#)
