

LESSON 1

The Hebrew Alphabet

The Hebrew Alphabet is something that all students should commit to memory. Later, as the Lessons progress, it will become an invaluable tool for opening up previously closed levels of documentation and insight for those who know how to apply it as a Key. The shape, sound, and numerical value of each letter of the Hebrew Alphabet will be extremely important throughout this study course. An easy method of learning the Hebrew Alphabet is to study a letter each day, and commit its particular characteristics to memory.

These letters are more than letters. They are, in fact, symbols which attract forces that the student can start to manipulate and control by simply visualizing each letter. The method of how to utilize the letters is covered in latter lessons, but the letters' importance can hardly be over-emphasized. They will be used as forces on Talismatic and Invocational work, and a great many other things. They are the first hurdle the student will have to get over before advancing to the next stage of the course.

From a psychological point of view, each Hebrew letter can affect the psyche in a different way when meditated upon, for these are real potencies of forces. In the Golden Dawn of the last century, one of the first requirements a student had to do was to memorize the Hebrew alphabet. The following table is given as a reference for work in future lessons.

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The Hebrew Alphabet and Basic Correspondences

Name	Letter	Value	Meaning	Power	Astrological Association
Aleph	א	1	Ox	A	♈
Beth	ב	2	House	B, V	♊
Gimel	ג	3	Camel	G, Gh	♉
Daleth	ד	4	Door	D, Dh	♊
He	ה	5	Window	H	♈
Vau	ו	6	Pin, Hook	O, U, V	♊
Zain	ז	7	Sword, Armor	Z	♈
Cheth	ח	8	Fence, Enclosure	Ch	♊
Teth	ט	9	Snake	T	♈
Yod	י	10	Hand	I, Y	♊
Kaph	כ	20	Fist	K, Kh	♈
Lamed	ל	30	Ox Goad	L	♊
Mem	מ	40	Water	M	♈
Nun	נ	50	Fish	N	♊
Samekh	ס	60	Prop	S	♈
Ayin	ע	70	Eye	Aa, Ngh	♊
Pe	פ	80	Mouth	P, Ph	♈
Tzaddi	צ	90	Fish-hook	Tz	♊
Qoph	ק	100	Ear, Back of Head	Q	♈
Resh	ר	200	Head	R	♊
Shin	ש	300	Tooth	S, Sh	♈
Tau	ת	400	Cross	T, Th	♊

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Table of Finals

Name	Letter	Value	Meaning	Power	Astrological Association
Kaph	ך	500	Fist	K, Kh	♄
Mem	ם	600	Water	M	♊
Nun	ן	700	Fish	N	♓
Pe	פ	800	Mouth	P, Ph	♂
Tzaddi	צ	900	Fish-hook	Tz	=

The lecture given below was written by Mrs. Felkin (her Order Motto was Maim Choth). This lecture was given out in the New Zealand Order, and thou written over 70 years ago, loses none of its potency today.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET
by M.C.

In giving our students the Hebrew Alphabet to study, we are taking them back to the foundations of the intellectual tradition of the present day. To understand this, it is necessary for us to glance back to the beginning of human history. We have reason to believe that humanity in its present form was evolved on the "Antedeluvian" continent of Atlantis, and that at the submergence of this continent, off-shoots of their civilization survived in those races which we know as the Egyptian, the Caucasian, and the Celtic. They were also the forerunners of the Mongolians. Here, then, we have those primitive races who first reduced the spoken word to the written symbol. Celtic origins are still veiled in obscurity, but the remaining three civilizations reveal themselves to patient investigation of the archaeologist and etymologist as unbroken streams descending and branching out in today's languages. With the Mongolian tongues, we have no concern. They are alien alike in sound, construction, and written form. But from the Sanscrit of the Caucasian, and the Egyptian are derived the modern tongues of the greater part of present civilizations.

There can be but little doubt that when the wandering tribes of the Hebrews first settled in Egypt they had practically no written language. We are told they spent 400 years in the land of Goshen; approximately as long as from the time of Queen Elizabeth the First to present day. When they first settled in the land of Goshen on the Eastern side of the Nile, there were 70 people, including women and children. When they fled, four centuries later, their number is said to have been over six hundred thousand. It is reasonable to conclude that in that interval, although they remained separate from the natives of the country, they imbibed most of the natives' customs and as much as possible of their language and learning. Moses, their leader, was brought up by the Egyptian Priests and initiated into their Mysteries. He was familiar with their system of hieroglyphics and there can be little doubt that when he set himself the stupendous task of recording the history of Israel, he availed himself of both the form of writing and much of the Cosmogony which he had acquired in his Temple training. By this means he was able to preserve the inner tradition while, at the same time, presenting an exoteric history. It is a peculiarity of the genius of both the Egyptian Hieroglyphics and Hebrew writing that they are capable of a three-fold interpretation: literal, symbolic, and spiritual.

In studying the actual Hebrew letters as we now possess them, we must, of course, admit that they have undergone considerable modification since Moses' days; the most important being their approximation to the Chaldean (owing to the exile). From the Chaldean was also borrowed the vocalization system by means of points placed above, below, or within a letter. Nevertheless, the hieroglyphic idea is retained in that each letter presents not only a sound, but also an object, and the name of the letter is also the name of that object: hence the list which you were given in the First Knowledge Lecture. That is to say —

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ALEPH (Arabic: **ALIF**), not only means the letter A or E (or more accurately, the opening of the mouth to make that sound), it also is the name of an Ox. The word **BETH** is not only the letter B or V, but it also is the name of a House.

There is another thing you have to bear in mind. In all ancient languages, there was only one system of notation for both sound and for numerals. Thus each letter is also a number, and each word has a numerical value equal to the sum of its letters. **למ** is not only the sound **EL** or **AL**, and a Divine Name, it is also $30 + 1 = 31$.

Moreover, a language like Hebrew had comparatively few words. Each word had numerous shades of meaning, indicated either by the context, or by inflection. Each individual letter had its own essential meaning also. It follows that the word was the sum of, or modification of, those meanings; just as numerically it was the sum of those individual numbers. Thus **למ**, which signifies the number 31, is formed from **מ**, the Sign of Power, and **ל** the Sign of Extension. Its Spiritual meaning is therefore "Extended Power," and hence God, the Power extended over all. Used in a restricted or materialized sense, it may be translated as towards, against, or upon. The same letters reversed, **מל**, Spiritually represent the prolongation of movement to infinity. Translated to a lower Plane, this becomes negative and may be rendered as no or not.

Let us now consider the abstract symbolism of each of the 22 Hebrew letters:

א is the Sign of Power, stability, or unity. It represents mankind as Ruler of the Earth. Aleph = an Ox.

ב is Interior Action. It represents virility, an interior, or a dwelling place. Beth = a House.

Uniting these two, **א** and **ב**, one has: **בא** or **אבא**, a Father.

ג is the Sign of Organic Development. Hence a throat, or a canal which organizes or controls the inflexion of sound; a glass of water. Gimel = a Camel.

ד is the Sign of Abundance from Division. Divisible nature, the source of physical existence; the Breast, the source of nourishment. Daleth = a Door, an Entrance, or an Exit.

ה merits special attention. It is the symbol of Universal Life — the Breath. It may be translated as either E or H, and is closely akin to **ו** in meaning as well as in form. It is frequently used as an article, and may be translated as the, this, that, or of. In this aspect, it is used as a prefix or as a suffix. When united with a vowel sound, it forms the principal Deity Names, and

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in this respect indicates an abstraction which no modern language can render adequately. Thus ה' is Absolute Life, Eternal, Immutable; אלהים can be adumbrated only as That Which Is — Was — Will Be. It is the root of the verb "to be"; to exist, and is used to denote the source of human life in the Name יהוה, which we translate as **EVE**, but which may also be given as **HUA** — the third person singular of the verb "to be", or simply as He. When the significant ' is added, it becomes Tetragrammaton, יהוה, the Inviolable Name which must not be taken in vain, and which was intoned only by the High Priest upon entering the Holy of Holies. Even today, no orthodox Jew attempts to utter it.

- י is equivalent to O, U, or V. It is therefore convenient to use the point to indicate the sound, since its symbolism differs widely according to its pronunciation. As a V, י is used as a conjunction, and is placed at the beginning of a word. It may be translated as and, also, thus, then, or afterwards; but it links words together more intimately than any of these. Used as a vowel, י = O, U, or OU. It is then a Sign of Action and has the peculiarity of transforming a verb from present to past tense, or from past to future tense. In this respects it no longer represents the junction of two things (as a hook and an eye; a knot; a link), it rather is the symbol of light, sound, air, or wind. Hence רוח = **RUACH** = the wind, breath, or soul, because ר = movement; ה = life, and י in their midst gives the peculiar human character to the word indicating expansion, or inspiration.
- ז is the hissing sound of something passing through the air, hence a sword or arrow; a javelin or a spear. It also denotes the refraction of light, suggesting the dazzling appearance of a ray of light falling on polished metal. It may be translated as Z, C, or S.
- ח is closely allied to ה in both form and significance. Because it is more closed in form, it is more guttural in sound, and of a material connotation. It signifies life, but on a lower Plane. It implies effort, labor, or care. In a concrete example, it indicates a field — an enclosure upon which labor must be expended.
- ש hieroglyphically shows the coiled Serpent protecting her eggs; hence the universal tradition of the Serpent guarding treasure. From that we get the idea of a shield, shelter, or a roof, protecting a man's family as the Serpent protects her eggs. Finally, we have a haven, refuge, or a goal.
- א is another symbol of deep significance. The hieroglyphic interpretation is that of the hand. But it is a hand held out in action; thus a symbol of creation. It is the symbol of a flame detached from any material base, free; the leaping creative impulse. By a natural transition we get the phallic symbol of Creative Power. On the abstract Spiritual Plane, we have the

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Divine Creator. This letter thus transmutes הוה, the feminine source of life, into יהוה, the Ineffable Supreme.

- ב hieroglyphically represents the closed or half-closed hand, a fist; hence a hollow; therefore a receptacle; the power of assimilation, reflection, and mediation. It forms a link between ה, the Sign of Manifest Life, and א, the Sign of Organization, and carries in itself something of the symbolism of both of these. Used as an article or preposition, it may be translated as similar or according to. Vocalized by ו, it signifies ו, which equals because, for, then, and when.
- ו suggests in a material sense any extension; the outstretched arm of man; the unfolded wing of a bird; hence the further symbolism of a whip-lash or an ox-goad. When these interpretations are raised to the Spiritual Plane, we perceive at once how significant this letter becomes. ו, therefore, represents an extension of power — omnipotence. Hence ואלהים, ELOHIM, is the extension of the Power of Life to the nth degree; that aspect of the Divine which is capable of creating without effort. Conversely, ו signifies an indefinite and therefore unknown and incalculable quantity, which brought down from the abstract to the concrete becomes negation, no, and not.
- מ is the Sign of Passive or Plastic Action; the genuine protective aspect of Creative Power. Vocalized as מים, it signifies water, always used in the plural since מ final is collective as water is the condensation of moisture. With the letter מ prefixed, we have מים, SHAMAIM, the Heavens, the Ethereal Water or atmosphere. Used as an article or a prefix, מ may be rendered as from, out of, with, or among. Hieroglyphically, we may say that מ indicates rough water, or sea waves; while מ (final) suggests rather still, calm water; silence, or peace.
- נ is the image of Produced or Reflected Existence; offspring, fruit, a child. It hieroglyphically represents a fish, the inhabitant of water. Joined to ב, the Sign of Interior Action, it becomes בן, BEN, a son. This is more clearly defined when we realize that נ (final) is augmentative and emphasizes the individuality. נ at the beginning of a word suggests passive action, contemplation folded in upon itself; נ at the end of a word is the converse: unfolding. Thus ננ represents inspiration, prophecy, or ecstasy. From this is derived נביא — a prophet.
- ז represents the development of the hissing sound of ז, so hieroglyphically it is the duplication; the duplicate link forming a prop, not merely joining, but supporting. It is the image of all circular and spiral movement; possibly a deduction from the peculiar movement of the Serpent.

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- γ hieroglyphically signifies an eye, and here we find one of the most curious and eurdite survivals of occult knowledge. Superficially, there seems to be but little likeness between the letter and the symbol. Considering it more carefully, we find that it is indeed an extraordinary glyph of the organs of vision. Externally, we have two eyes, " ", but inside our head lies a small body, one (or rather two closely connected) of the so-called "ductless glands" of modern physiology — the pineal and pituitary glands. These glands are connected to the external eyes by delicate nerves. When the external eyes are exercised in certain methods, they awake a definite response in the internal glands — the "Third Eye" of legend. The complete γ is an exact counterpart of the complete organism, and signifies the whole visual apparatus. One of the secondary results is the reaction upon our general muscular system.

Phonetically, γ represents the opening of the glottis (in the throat) to make a guttural sound. It is therefore transliterated as aa, oo, wh, or ng. It symbolizes interior hollow sounds or noises, and connotes materialism or emptiness, sometimes falsity or perversity. It is the physical aspect of ' ', and when used as a consonant almost always has an evil implication.

- δ is a hieroglyph of the open mouth, naturally symbolizing speech. It is transliterated either as p, in which case it closely resembles ρ in meaning as well as in form, or as ph, in which case it approximates rather the meaning of ϕ.
- χ represents all ideas of severance or solution. It concretely represents a hook by which something is caught or ended. In sound, it falls into the same group as ϑ and π, though it is harder and more abrupt. Placed at the beginning of words, it indicates the movement which carries us on towards an end; placed at the end of a word as γ (final), it indicates the end accomplished. On a higher Plane, it represents a refuge for man.
- ρ is another guttural, and like χ, suggests materialistic tendencies. Hieroglyphically, it represents an ear. Symbolically, it becomes an implement or instrument by which man may accomplish an act or defend himself. It marks at once force and restraint. It is significant of repression and decision. In sound it is the harder and more guttural sound of ρ. Abstractly, we may trace a regular succession of descent and development. Thus π = Universal Life, Pure Being; π = Life of Nature, Manifest Existence; ρ = Assimilated Life hiding Natural Form; and ρ = Material Existence giving the Means of Form.
- ⌒ is the Sign of Movement par excellence. Hieroglyphically, it is the head of

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man **רֶשֶׁת**, **RESH**, which directs the movements of his whole body, a captain, or by a slight alteration in focus, the initiative movement which predicates life and ultimate form; the culminating point of all things. Hence **רֶשֶׁת הַגִּלְגָּלִים**, **RASHIT HA-GILGALIM**, the vortex, the beginning of Primeval Movement, the Sphere of the Elements. It is the center unfolding to the circumference; the Creative Elemental Fire; the renewal of all by movement; the perpetual vibrations of ions building up matter. Hence **אֵשׁ**, **AUR**, fire, action, contrasted with **אֶשׁ**, **ASH**, potential fire.

שׁ is said to represent the teeth, by which its sound is produced. It completes the symbolism of **י** and **ק**, and is in a sense bound to them. For as **י** = the arrow, and **ק** = the bowstring, so **שׁ** symbolizes the bow itself. Thus we are told that the three Paths on the Tree of Life form **קֶשֶׁת**, **QESHETH**, the bow, the material sign of reciprocity between God and man. **שׁ** is the symbol of movement and duration. Used as a prefix, it communicates a double power of movement and of conjunction. It may be pronounced either **ss**, or as **sh**, and usually has a point above it to indicate which sound is to be used: **שׂ** = **ss**; and **שׁ** = **sh**. Geometrically, it represents the semi-arc of a circle, whereas **י** is the straight forward movement of a radius, and **ק** is a spiral. We find by analysis, that the Divine Name, **שְׁדַי**, **SHADDAI**, represents the over-arching heavens protecting the fecundity and abundance of nature — hence Providence.

ת is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and is a glyph of the Cross; the name being still retained to indicate the ancient form of the cross — the Tau, sacred to **THOOTH**. It is indeed probable that the letter was originally written as the Tau Cross, and gradually elaborated to distinguish it from **י**. It is the Sign of Reciprocity, of that which is mutual, interchanging, and sympathetic. Joined to the first letter of the alphabet, it indicates **אֵת**, **ATH**, the Essence; the inmost Self of a thing or a person. In this form, it is repeatedly used by Moses as a prefix in his account of Creation to indicate that he is not describing a material or individual, but an essential process which developed on a higher Plane preliminary to any physical manifestation.

In analyzing the various names occurring in the Knowledge Lectures and elsewhere, it must be remembered that each letter modifies as well as emphasizes the others; that the meaning of the whole word is the combination, not the simple addition of its constituents. An intelligent appreciation of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet will go far towards helping us gain an insight not only into the Hebrew, but also into all other languages, since every superstructure must conform to its foundations. I may add that each letter has also been attributed to a portion of the human body, but as Astrology has accepted this system with regards to the Zodiacal and Planetary Signs, it is better not to confuse the issue by dwelling upon this classification. Rather let us conclude with the saying of the

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Rabbi — "In the Beginning GOD took the 22 letters, and with them He formed, combined, and designed all that was made."