

The Magic Circle

Ceremonial magic is always performed within a circle, which is popularly supposed to be a means of protecting the magician against the incursion of hostile forces concentrated outside its limits by his evocations. In the Lemegeton, or Lesser Key of King Solomon, we read:

“This is the form of the magical circle of King Solomon, the which he made that he might preserve himself against the malice of these Evil Spirits. This magical circle is to be made 9 feet across, and the Divine Names are to be written around it, beginning at אֶחֶיָּהּ, Ehieh, and ending at לֵבָנָהּ, Levanah.”

The names referred to are those which are ascribed to the first nine Sephiroth. They are written around the circle from right to left, in Hebrew characters, as shown in the diagram. They are:

Names belonging to 1st Sephira;

1. AHIH, 2. KThR, 3. MTTRVN, 4. ChIVTh HQDSh, 5. RAShITh HGLGLIM

Names of 2nd Sephira;

6. IH, 7. ChKMH, 8. RTzIAL, 9. AVPNIM, 10. MSLVTh

Names of 3rd Sephira;

11. IHVH ALHIM, 12. BINH, 13. TzPQIAL, 14. ARALIM, 15. ShBThAI

Names of 4th Sephira;

16. AL, 17. ChSD, 18. TzDQIAL, 19. ChShMLIM, 20. TzDQ

Names of 5th Sephira;

21. ALHIM GBVR, 22. GBVRH, 23. KMAL, 24. ShRPIM, 25. MADIM

Names of 6th Sephira;

26. IHVH ALVH VDOTh, 27. ThPARTh, 28. RPAL, 29. MLKIM, 30. ShMSh (or ChMCh)

Names of 7th Sephira;

31. IHVH TzBAVTh, 32. NTzCh, 33. HANIAL, 34. ALHIM, 35. NVGH

Names of the 8th Sephira;

36. ALHIM TzBAVTh, 37. HVD, 38. MIKAL, 39. BNI ALHIM, 40. KVKB

Names of the 9th Sephira;

41. ShDI AL ChI, 42. ISVD, 43. GBRIAL, 44. KRVBIM, 45. LBNH.

Most of these names you have encountered in previous lessons. Their total number, 45, is the number of the extension of 9, and it is also the number of אדם, Adam, MAN. But in order to write these 9 x 5 names, more than 45 words are required. The total number is 56 words. This is a number with which you are by this time more or less familiar. It is a Pyramid number. It is related also to the mysteries of Osiris. It is a number, too, which is prominent in the Christian mysteries, as revealed in the New Testament, and as later set forth in the description of the Vault where the Founder of the True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order lay buried. Primarily the meaning of this number is: The expression of Beauty (6) through adaptation (5). It also sums up the totality of existence, for it combines the numbers of the Hexagram (sign of the Macrocosm) and the Pentagonagram (sign of the Microcosm).

Without going into a detailed account of the numerical symbolism, therefore, we may say that the names written around the magic circle signify:

1. The powers of the Sephiroth from the CROWN to the FOUNDATION.
2. A five-fold manifestation of those powers (since there are five separate names given for each Sephira).
3. The identification of those powers with MAN, inasmuch as the total number of names is the number of ADM.
4. A suggestion that these powers combine the forces of the Macrocosm with those of the Microcosm.

The names, moreover, are written upon a picture of the Serpent of Wisdom. Thus the whole suggestion of this arrangement to an instructed Qabalist Standing within the circle is: “In me, as a center of expression, are concentrated all the powers of the Microcosm. Wisdom is my protection against all appearances of hostility.”

Within the circle are drawn four Hexagrams, and in the center of each of these is inscribed a Tau-Cross. Most editions of the Lemegeton say that the name ADONAI should be written in the corners of the Hexagrams, but this is an obvious blind, inasmuch as ADONAI is spelt אֲדֹנָי in Hebrew. The correct name is a combination of two words, יְהוָה, Yah, the Divine Name of Chokmah, and אֲדֹנָי, Adonai, the Divine name of Malkuth. This compound name יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי is also particularly associated with Yesod and Malkuth in the creative world, Briah - the world in which every magical operation really begins. The number of this name is 80, the same as that of the letter Peh, and also of the word יְסוֹד, Yesod, the Foundation. Consequently the four Hexagrams, which by themselves signify the fourfold Macrocosmic manifestation of the Life-Power, when inscribed with the letters of this name signify also the fourfold operation of that fundamental energy which is represented in the Hebrew alphabet by the letter Peh.

At the center of the circle is a cubical altar, resting on a square, wherein are inscribed the letters of the Tetragrammaton, IHVH (in Hebrew). The arrangement of these letters is as shown in the diagram at the end of the lesson. This square is the symbol of the number 4 and of the ORDER which every magical operation seeks to realize. It is really a magic square of 4 x 4, the magic square of Jupiter, whose sphere is the fourth Sephira. Upon it is set the cubical altar, to be explained in the next lesson.

The circle is used by magicians in every part of the world. Its name, indeed, is traced by etymologists to the Sanskrit noun chakra, a wheel. From chakra, which has several technical meanings in Hindu occultism, among them being the circle within which are performed the ceremonials of the Tantrik magicians, is derived the Greek noun KYKLOE, whence, through Latin, comes our English word cycle.

Now, in Greek gematria KYKLOE is the number 740, or 20 x 37, and this numbering serves to identify it as a mystery word. The number 740 also represents in Greek Gematria the following words:

KTIEIE—Creation

H ΘEPMOTHE—Heat (that is vibratory force)

AIΘEPOEMEΛOE—Music of the Spheres.

In Hebrew Gematria the same number is represented by the noun כִּי' (reckoning final N at its value of 700), and this is the name of the Pillar of Mercy on the Tree of Life, the Pillar of the Sephiroth whose numbers, 2, 4 and 7 add to 13, the number of AChD, Unity and AHBH, Love. For the Magic of Light, or theurgy (god-working) proceeds in accordance with the magician's recognition of the One-ness of All, and succeeds in the measure that the ceremonial makes real and vivid the operator's knowledge that the magical force is essentially LOVE.

Magic is KTISIS or Creation. The vibratory force which it controls and directs is rightly named H Thermotes, Heat. The Great Secret of the practical occultist is the secret of the music of the spheres, the secret of sympathetic vibration, whereby impulses of what might be called a certain pitch induce the activity of cosmic forces far beyond the range of the limited powers of the physical man.

The magic circle symbolizes all these ideas, for it is the symbol of the whirling motion whence all the forces available to human use are generated, and it is also the primary geometrical figure which determines the construction of the Triangle, the Square, the Pentagon and the Hexagram, figures whose angles determine FORM throughout creation. The numbers expressed in these geometrical figures are basic in nature, and knowledge of them is the beginning of the science of measurement (geometry) without which no artistic adaptation of cosmic forces can be fully successful—least of all that special adaptation which we call the Magic of L.V.X.

The Greek word KUKLOS, and the other words related to it by Greek Gematria also hint at a mathematical fact about the circle which is of considerable importance. The number 740, besides being 20×37 , is 11 by reduction, and this is the number of AVD, Aud, the force used in the Magic of L.V.X. and of קו, which means “circularity of form or movement.” This number 11 is the number of units in the base-line of the Great Pyramid,

whose vertical axis is, in the same proportion, 7 units. Thus the four baselines of the Pyramid total 44 units, and the vertical axis is the radius of a circle whose circumference or perimeter would be 44 units in length.

We arrive at this conclusion by reason of the fact that according to a proportion much employed in occult writings, the perimeter of a circle is regarded as being $3 \frac{1}{7}$ times its diameter. Now, the radius of 7 would have a diameter of 14, and $3 \frac{1}{7} \times 14$ is 44, the number of units around the base of the Great Pyramid.

I have mentioned these facts about the Pyramid because it, like the magic circle, exemplifies those basic principles of measurement whose application to the control of nature's finer forces constitutes the art of magic. By the proportion here indicated, 11, which is the number of AVD, Aud, the magic force, is the perimeter of a circle whose diameter is $3 \frac{1}{2}$ units, because $3 \frac{1}{2} \times 3.5 = 11$.

By the same proportion a circle with a diameter of 7 will have a circumference of 22, one with a diameter of 14 will have a circumference of 44, a diameter of 21 will give a circumference of 66, and one of 28 will give a circumference of 88.

In the esoteric teaching whose elements you are receiving in these lessons, the circle having a diameter of 7 and a circumference of 22 is the geometrical symbol of the archetypal world, or ATZILUTH. The duplication or reflection of ATZILUTH is represented by the circle of 14 units diameter, corresponding to BRIA, the creative world. The formative world, YETZIRAH is represented by the circle having a diameter of 21 units. The circle of ASSIAH, the material world, has a diameter of 28 units.

When we compare these numbers with the Qabalistic words which correspond to them by Gematria, some very curious results are shown. At present they may seem to you to be remote from any practical application to magic; but it should be borne in mind that to be a magician one needs to do more than learn a formula. A magician is a person who has a particular quality of consciousness, and part of the training consists in the tracing out of the ideas which are brought into juxtaposition before the mind's eye by the fact that words whose everyday meanings are sometimes radically opposed to each other are identical in number. When you exercise your

ingenuity and patience in study of this kind, moreover, you are reproducing through the agency of your personal brain-cells ideas which have passed through the brains of adepts in the Ageless Wisdom. To think the same thoughts that have passed through the mind of an adept is to become like him. To work them out independently, or with such slight help as is afforded by the suggestions given in these lessons, is really a course in mental gymnastics, by means of which you may develop mental muscles which you will have need of when you attempt the actual practice of magic. I counsel you, therefore, to pay close attention to the paragraphs immediately following, and to develop the hints they contain as much as you can.

Reference to the Qabalistic dictionary will show you that the number 7 is represented by the following words: אֶבֶד, to scatter, to disperse; אָו, desire, either, or; בָּדָא, to invent; גֹּד, good fortune; דָּאב, to pine; דְּבֵא, influx, to flow in, riches; and דָּג, a fish. These words, then, are related to the number of the diameter of the archetypal world, and since the diameter is what determines the size of a circle, they may be expected to shed some light upon the Qabalistic conception of the characteristic or determining qualities of this plane of cosmic seed-thoughts, which corresponds to the letter YOD of יְהוָה, and to the element of FIRE.

אֶבֶד, to scatter, to disperse, suggests dissemination or sowing. The archetypal world is the great reservoir of seed-forms, these being the Platonic ideas. Its activity is on this account symbolized by YOD, the letter which is the symbol of the male, sperm-giving principle throughout the universe. Other words which are synonyms for dispersion will help you to grasp the fundamental meaning suggested by ABD. Among them are: diffusion, spreading, distribution, apportionment.

אָו, as meaning desire refers to a conception about the archetypal world which we find taught in all schools of the Ageless Wisdom. According to this conception, the motive power in the Life-Power's self-manifestation is its own desire to actualize its own possibilities. The other meanings of AV—either, and or—imply choice, selection, decision, the shaping of a course, the singling out of particular modes of expression. Thus AV denotes desire combined with decision. It is not mere vague longing which is behind the Life-Power's self-expression, but specific selection. Limitless in its potentialities, the Life-Power, in beginning a cycle of self-expression,

centers itself upon some particular possibility which it seeks to realize. Here is a hint for every magician, inasmuch as magic after all is but a personal application of the Life-Power's way of being and doing.

בדא, to invent, brings in the idea of imagination. In the passage from Thomas Vaughan quoted in the first lesson you will find the conception that the archetypal phase of the creative process in imagination. The opening words of Genesis, according to some Rabbis, convey the same thought. For instead of reading BRASHITH as "in principle," or "in the beginning," they understand it to be בראשית, Be-Rash-ith, "in the head." Thus they conceive the first step of the creative process to be one of contemplation, by which the Life-Power figures to itself the actualization of some one of its limitless possibilities; thus, too, striking out something new, or inventing a new form of self-expression. Invention, indeed, is practically a synonym for originality, and the archetypal world is held by Qabalists to be the plane of original ideas.

גד, good fortune, is a reminder that although the Life-Power is unlimited in its possibilities of self-expression, so that it may invent new forms of manifestation for itself, it is changeless in its own nature, and must therefore always seek self-expression in ways that are good, in forms that are beneficent.

דא is a metathesis of אדא, and both words mean "to languish, to pine." The idea here is that which is also expressed by AV. Boehme brings it out when he writes:

"Seeing then there is a craving in the nothing, it makes in itself the will to something. This will is a spirit, as a thought, which goes out of the craving and is the seeker of the craving, for it finds its mother or the craving. Then is this will a Magician in its mother; for it has found in the nothing something, viz. its mother, and so now has a place for its dwelling.

"And herein understand that the will is a spirit, and different from the desirous craving. For the will is an insensitive and incognitive life; but the craving is found by the will, and is in the will a being. Thus the craving is a Magia, and the will a Magus; and the will is greater than its mother which gives it, for it is lord in the mother; and the mother is dumb, but the will is a life without origin. The craving is certainly a cause of the will, but without knowledge or understanding. The will is the understanding of the craving.

“Thus we give you in brief to consider of nature and the spirit of nature, what there has been from eternity without origin. And we find thus that the will, viz. the spirit, has no place for its rest; but the craving is its own place, and the will is a band to it, and yet is not held in check.”

— Six Theosophic Points, p. 154

דבא, “influx, to flow in, riches,” indicates another detail in our conception of the archetypal world. This world is the sphere of the self-concentration of the Limitless Light, of its entry into the conditions of manifestation. And because the limitless possibilities of that Light are the seeds of all forms whatsoever, this influx, which is the MZLA, Mezla, or influence, is the source of all riches.

Finally, ג, the fish, is occultly a reference to the infinite potency of the archetypal world. The association of ideas is not read into the word by any means. It is part and parcel of the Hebrew language, for the verb דגה, to multiply, to become numerous, to grow is derived from ג, and has for its primary meaning “to spawn, like fish.” This verb is used in Genesis 48:16:

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

In the King James Version of the English Bible a marginal note to the verb “grow” says: Heb. as fishes do increase.

These, then, are the Hebrew words corresponding to the number 7, which represents the diameter of the archetypal world. They show us clearly what is the essential determining characteristic of this plane. It is an eager craving, a disseminating influence, limitless in potency, and able to multiply itself in forms innumerable.

The number 22, which corresponds to the perimeter of a circle whose diameter is 7, is represented in Hebrew by the following words: בידו, with his hand; ביוד, by Yod; חזוא (Aramaic) a magical vision; חטה, wheat; טובה, Good; and יחד, unity.

In the first two of these words some symbolists find a trace of a certain Egyptian idea concerning the beginning of things. Perhaps some readers of these pages may know it, and they will understand me when I say that

although I reject all the cruder explanations which writers like Inman, Payne, Knight and others have offered with respect to this particular detail of symbolism, there is, nevertheless, a certain truth (however repellent may be the way it is expressed) in the old Egyptian imagery.

Note that חזון, a magical vision, designates the mental activity which is the embodiment of desire or longing, that חטה, wheat, a seed-form, is symbolically expressive of the archetypal world, and that טובה declares the goodness of the primogenial ideas, while יחד affirms the unity of their source.

Passing now to the circle of the creative world, בריאה, we find that its diameter corresponds to the following words. (14) אטד, a thorn, a spine; דבח, a sacrifice, an offering; דוד, love, beloved (David); הדח, to stretch out, to direct; זהב, gold; יד, hand.

The first of these words, אטד, is from a verb spelt with the same letters, meaning “to pierce, to penetrate, to fasten in.” This shows us that the word “thorn” as used in Hebrew implies an idea probably borrowed from primitive custom. In many parts of the world thorns are used as pins or needles, and thus they become the symbols of union, connection, joining, fastening, association, accumulation and aggregation. These ideas are fundamental in relation to the creative world, BRIAH, which corresponds to Water, and to the second letter of Tetragrammaton, the creative letter Heh, assigned to בינה, the Mother. The creative world is the sphere in which the archetypal ideas are combined with each other, so as to make aggregated, conglomerations, accretions. And thus this world is represented by ATD, “the fastening, or the fastener.”

דבח, a sacrifice, an offering, refers to the fact that the Life-Power offers Itself in the act of creation. That self-offering is an act of love דוד, and it is also a self-extension (stretching out), or a self-direction, הדח, of which the hand (sometimes spelled יד) is a symbol.

The number corresponding to the creative circumference, 44, has the following words:

אגלי, drops (of fluid); אגם, to gather together; a pool, a pond; דלי, a vessel for drawing water (name of the sign, Aquarius); דם, blood. All these words, as you can see, are directly related to the watery nature of Briah. The noun

גולה, captivity, refers to the limitations which are the logical necessities of creation. טלה, a ram (name of the sign Aries) and להט, a flame, are words not only equivalent to each other in number, but also in the letters which form them, and further, in essential meaning, since the sign Aries is a fire-sign. In relation to BRIAH, however, both these words are technical mystery-terms, referring to the same idea that is expressed in the New Testament mention of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The sign Aries, as the beginning of the zodiac, is a symbol of the commencement of the creative activities in BRIAH which result ultimately in the Life-Power's self-expression in the names and forms of the physical world. The Ram and the Lamb are one, and as you have learned, they both correspond to the Hindu deity Agni, Lord of Flame להט.

The formative diameter expressed by the number 21 and the following words: אהיה, Eheieh, EXISTENCE, a Divine name particularly assigned to Kether, which refers to the formative power of the Primal Will; אך, a word having many meanings, but all representing some degree of restriction, such as "only," "this once," "indeed," and "certainly." The restriction is affirmative. It is the restriction of the specific, as opposed to the vague, of assurance as opposed to doubt; הגיג, deep meditation, which carries out the idea of contemplation we have seen to be related to the archetypal and creative worlds; זח, purity, referring to the unsullied state of the pattern-forms which exist in the plans of formation; חזו (Aramaic) a vision; יהו, the mystic Name of three letters which, the Sepher Yetzirah tells us, was used in sealing the six directions of space.

The circumference number of the formative world has these correspondences: (66) אכילה, food, victuals, which is of interest to students of magic because it so definitely indicates the source of "daily bread" as being, not in the plane of the material world, but in the pattern-world; ANIH, a ship, which symbolizes the formative world as the connecting medium which carries the powers of the higher worlds down into the external world of physical manifestation (and, conversely, is the means whereby, on the path of return, we may be ferried over from the physical world to those beyond); בחון, a trial, a test, a proof, a word which in its root-meaning is connected with the assaying of metal; גלגל, a wheel, a whirl, which reminds us of the rotary nature of all formative activity (a fact

attested to by modern physical science, and symbolized again and again by seers and occultists); all these words being plain hints of the characteristic manifestations or expressions of formative power in Yetzirah.

The diameter number of עשיה, Assiah, the material world, is 28. This, it is to be noted, is the extension of 7 as well as 4 times 7, so that it suggests the complete expression of the archetypal diameter through a four-fold manifestation. The corresponding words are: TIT, clay (but do not fail to study this word letter by letter, and with the help of the corresponding Tarot keys, paths, etc.); יחוד, union, or unity, indicates the fact that the material world, which we misinterpret as the sphere of many-ness or multiplicity, is fundamentally the ONE expression of ONE reality, in which there is no separation whatever, each of the seemingly separate parts being combined with all the others. This is a conception made understandable by modern rediscoveries concerning the electrical constitution of matter. Finally, 28 is KCh, Kach, power, and this locates for us in no uncertain way the place whence we shall draw the power used in magic and other forms of practical occultism. The power we are to use is, indeed, a physical power. It is not afar off. On the contrary, it is close at hand. We do not have to leave this world to find it. It is here, in plain sight, even as the alchemists tell us again and again when they intimate that the First Matter of the art is procurable everywhere, and without expense.

Does this mean that I am here reversing all that has been said in former lessons about not depending upon external things for supply? By no means. The intention of the closing words of the preceding paragraph is simply this, Do not make the mistake of looking upon the external world as separate from the One Life-Power. Do not think of it as being “material” in opposition to the “spirituality” of metaphysical planes. Understand that the forces you are using in magic are the very same forces which are the subjects of investigation in the laboratories of material science; but understand them as the appearances of the One Power. The external world is not a product of the One Power, different from and separated from its Producer. It IS that Power making Itself known in ways which are perceptible to our bodily senses. This is the inner meaning of what Jesus declared, “He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.” It is also what The Book of Tokens teaches in the words:

“All this am I. Therefore, though none may capture me in the net of thought, he shall speak truly who shall say, laying his hand on anything soever (whether men prize it, or scorn it as of no worth), ‘Dost ask me to show thee the Lord? Verily, in this shalt thou find Him, if thou hast eyes to see.’”

The words corresponding to the circumference number of the material world are those representing 88:

חכלל means ‘colored,’ and in this connection we may remember that the word “color” is derived from a Latin root, meaning “to conceal.” The same implication of concealment is connected with this word חכלל, which suggests that the material world is a veil of color, concealing the real nature of the Life-Power. חכם means ‘to be hot; to glow, to brood, to hatch.’ This word is closely related to the old name of Egypt, Khem חם, whence, by an interesting series of linguistic transmutations, we get our modern word chemistry—so that the name of that branch of science which is doing so much to establish the real unity of the material world is, literally, ‘The Wisdom of Egypt.’ חסך means ‘darkness,’ and suggests the fact that no matter how much we investigate it, the material world remains ever a great field of the Unknown. נחל, ‘something hollowed out, a valley’ may serve to remind us of the popular idea that this material world is a vale of tears; but there is a profounder meaning than this, which I trust you will discover for yourself.

In the magic circle, these four circles are implied, even though the actual diameters of 7, 14, 21 and 28 are not indicated. They are implied because within the outer circle of 9 feet is a second circle of seven feet (diameter), so that the figure of the serpent with the divine names is enclosed in a ring one foot wide.

Furthermore, to suggest the presence of the archetypal circle, the square before-mentioned is exactly 27 inches wide, so that it will enclose a circle whose diameter is also 27 inches. The diameter of a circle of 27 inches is to the diameter of a circle of 108 inches, as the diameter of a circle of 7 feet is to the diameter of a circle of 28 feet, that is 27 inches: 108 inches: 84 inches: 336 inches. Consequently, the square at the center of the magic circle implies the presence of a small circle whose proportion to the outer circle is as that of the circle of the archetypal world to the circle of the material world. Of this you will find further mention in the next lesson.

Going back now to the particular form of magic circle described in the Lemegeton, let us consider why it should be 9 feet in diameter, and not some other number. In the first place because 9 is the number of completion, the number whose extension is 45, (the number of ADM, Adam), and the number of the Sephira of FOUNDATION.

But aside from the mathematical fact that 9 feet corresponds to these ideas, this number also conceals another which we discover by expressing the feet of the diameter as inches. 9 feet = 108 inches, and thus the number of units in the diameter of the Magic Circle of ceremonial is the same as the number of units in the string of beads which you used for concentration.

This number 108 has been venerated by occultists for many reasons. It is the product of $2^2 \times 3^3$, and this fact has mystical interpretations which we need not enter into at present. The gematria of this number in the Hebrew tongue is very rich and suggestive, but this, also, is not the main consideration at present. What is of greater interest and importance for the magician is the fact that 108 is a key-number to the great time-periods which are the basis of the measurements in astronomy. It is, in other words the key-number of the rhythms of the music of the spheres.

In the precession of the equinoxes, 2160 years elapse in each of the twelve periods constituting what is known as the Great Year. One of these periods, then is 108 times 20 years, and the whole Great Year is 108 times 240 years. Again, by the traditional Hindu system of reckoning time, a Manvantara consists of 4,320,000 years, of 108 times 4000 years.

Such are the astronomical meanings of the number 108. But this same number has another important meaning which recurs again and again in nature and in art—especially in the art of magic. Each of the interior angles of a pentagon, or regular five-sided figure, is 108 degrees, so that this is the number which determines the growth of five-petalled flowers, (among which the rose is most prominent in symbolism) which is expressed in the structure of many shells, in the formation of diatoms, and in many other ways throughout the plant and animal kingdoms.

As the pentagon angle, moreover, the angle of 108 degrees determines the construction of that great magical symbol, the Pentagram, to which we shall presently devote considerable attention.

Thus the fact that this number is represented in the Magic Circle by the number of inches in its diameter is an indication that the whole circle is intended to express the basic numeral proportions in astronomy, in the construction of many living organisms, and in the symbolic representation of true magic, or human adaptation of cosmic law to practical results.

Earlier in this lesson I said that the Hebrew Gematria of this number is full of valuable indications, but passed it for the time being in order to give first place to the various details just mentioned. Yet I feel that many readers of these pages may profit by a consideration of this Gematria, which is not included in the Qabalistic dictionary in Section A. Here, then, are the Hebrew words corresponding to the number 108: אָזְנִים, the ears; בְּאֵבֵי הַנַּחַל, the fruit of a deep valley (The “valley” is the Abyss of the Ungrund, or Boundless Subsistence); חֵיָּץ, a wall (suggesting protection, as does the Magic Circle); חָמָס, to be sharp, bold, violent; חָנָן, to incline, to have mercy, to love; חָסַם, to close, to shut, to hinder; חֵזֶי, the middle, an arrow (compare with Greek kentron, an arrow-point, whence center); חָק, that which is inscribed; that which is appointed; revelation, divine (cosmic) law; and, finally, as the most important, מְנַחֵם, conductive (title of the thirteenth path.)

Study of these words will show that they have correspondences to the ideas symbolized by the Magic Circle. Thus Stenring says, in commenting on the thirteenth path:

“No magical work can be accomplished without communication with this path. It is the equilibrating power and the source of volition. It is the spiritual focus of gravitation and the directing force. The Conductive Intelligence is always accompanied by Responsibility. The two ideas stand in direct proportion to each other.”

— Sepher Yetzirah, page 61

The Magic Circle, moreover, is a continuous line, having neither end nor beginning. It symbolizes to the instructed operator the fact, which is lost sight of by the uninitiated, that all human activities are expressions of a cosmic process which continues forever. It is a symbol also of perseverance. These two ideas which are represented by the Magic Circle are conveyed in Eliphas Levi's remark that the magician should work as if he had all eternity in which to complete his operation. This means that he should

recognize the timelessness of his undertaking. For magic, or theurgy, as god-working aims to enable the operator to express the identical creative power which is the source of all cosmic manifestations. It is, so far as symbol and ceremonial are concerned, an intensive method for impressing upon the subconsciousness the suggestion that man is a center of the Life-Power's creative ideation. It aims to arouse in the subconsciousness an intense conviction of the actual, real presence of the creative power in the operator's life. In short, the purpose of the magic of Light is to establish in the subconsciousness of the operator, by scientific use of symbol, gesture, and other suggestive accessories, that very living faith of which Jesus spoke when he said: "Whatsoever things ye ask and pray for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them." And the circle, which is one form of the zero-sign helps the instructed operator to do this because it reminds him that he is the immediate expression of a Power with which all things ARE possible. ARE, not WILL BE. And we use the present tense, not in blind faith, but because hard intellectual study has enabled us to learn that the limitless potencies of the Life-Power are necessarily potencies existing at the present moment, in all perfection.

Again, the circle is a figure in which every point of the circumference is equidistant from the center. Thus is symbolized equilibrium, poise, adjustment, symmetry, and all such ideas. It is the emblem of the true magical work, which is the confirmation in thought, word and action of the magician's realization that he is a center of expression for the equilibrating power of the cosmos.

And because of this, the circle reminds the magician that his operation cannot possibly be any sort of hocus pocus for getting the best of somebody else. Better than most people, the competent magician knows that the Life-Power is no respecter of persons - that it cannot be invoked to give any one person an unfair advantage over another. This, indeed, is where the danger of Black Magic comes in. For when, in the presence of, and using, the symbols of cosmic unity, one attempts a magical operation directed against the welfare of another person, the only evil that is effected is the result of the operator's own miserable misinterpretation of the work.

It would be futile to deny that occult forces can be so directed by ill-disposed persons, that other people may be made to suffer temporarily in consequence. But the Ageless Wisdom is very definite in its declaration that

no victim of an evil magical operation suffers unjustly, or can possibly be hurt unless that particular experience is, to use the vernacular, “coming to him.” And the suffering of the victim of evil magic is nothing in comparison to the suffering which must be endured by the operator. That, too, not in some future life, but invariable in the same incarnation wherein the evil magic is performed. For the occult forces invoked by such operations work swiftly, and quickly return to their source. Hence it is written that he who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind.

The worst of black magic, as I have said, is the error of consciousness from which the impulse to perform it springs. No operation can possibly be evil when it is undertaken by an operator who recognized the unity of the Life-Power and the impossibility of invoking it to the disadvantage of another. The impossibility, I say, because the suffering caused to the victim is by no means to his real disadvantage, inasmuch as it educates him, and helps him to work off a Karmic debt. And because any seeming ascendancy which the black magician gains over other people is purely illusive, there is certainly no advantage gained by himself. With this let us dismiss black magic.

To summarize this lesson, then, the purpose of the Magic Circle is:

1. To remind the operator that he, as a living expression of the Limitless Light, actually occupies a central position in the cosmos.
2. To affirm symbolically and Qabalistically the idea that his magical operation is part of the eternal cosmic process of IDEATION, or creative imagination, in which manifestation proceeds from the archetypal to the material world by ordered, regular processes.
3. To affirm also the idea that this is a work of equilibrium, whose outcome must be beautiful or symmetrical.
4. To intensify the magician’s realization that he works to produce a specific result, as definite, and as accurate as his circle.
5. To remind him, also, that the success of his operation may be expected from the fact that even as he is standing in the center of a circle whose circumference is bounded by the Holy Names, so is he, as a human being, the center of expression for the correlated operation of all the cosmic aspects of the Life-Power symbolized by those names.

FIGURE 2A - The Magic Circle

[This image is unavailable.]

N.B. the limits of this paper, and the inadequacy of the mimeograph process to give clear copies of small work make the Hebrew names indistinct, on account of their size. In some codices of the Lemegeton the names are written upon the body of a yellow serpent, whose head is to the East, but this is not indispensable.

But the space between the outer and inner circle is bright deep yellow. The central square is red. In the Hexagrams, the outer triangles where the letters are written are filled in with bright yellow. The centers, or Hexagons, are green. All names are letters black.