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978-1-108-04421-9 - The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)

Edited and translated by S. L. MacGregor Mathers

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The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)

This book, translated and edited by the occultist Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918) and published in 1889, introduced to Victorian England an important work of Renaissance esoterica. Purportedly the deathbed testament of King Solomon to his son, distilling all the angelic wisdom he received in his lifetime, it provided its readers with detailed instructions in conjuring, divining and summoning God's power to work 'experiments', or spells. For Mathers, it represented 'the fountain-head and storehouse of Qabalistical Magic' and formed a central part of his efforts to lend scholarly respectability to occult research. Mathers edited the text using available manuscripts at the British Museum, and it continues to offer authoritative and fascinating insight into both Renaissance occultism and its Victorian revival. Features of this edition include introductions from three distinct manuscripts, a table of the planetary hours and their magical names, and spells for producing invisibility, creating magic carpets and identifying thieves.

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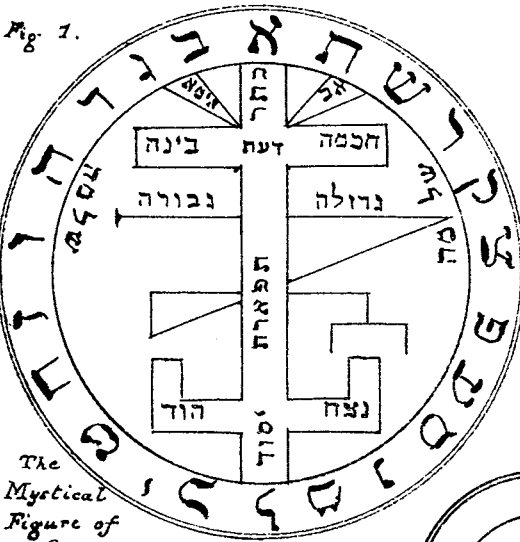
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PLATE I.



The Mystical Figure of Solomon.

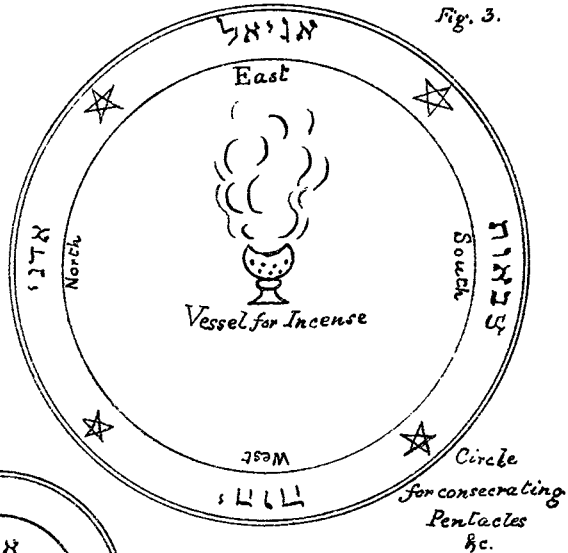


Fig. 3.

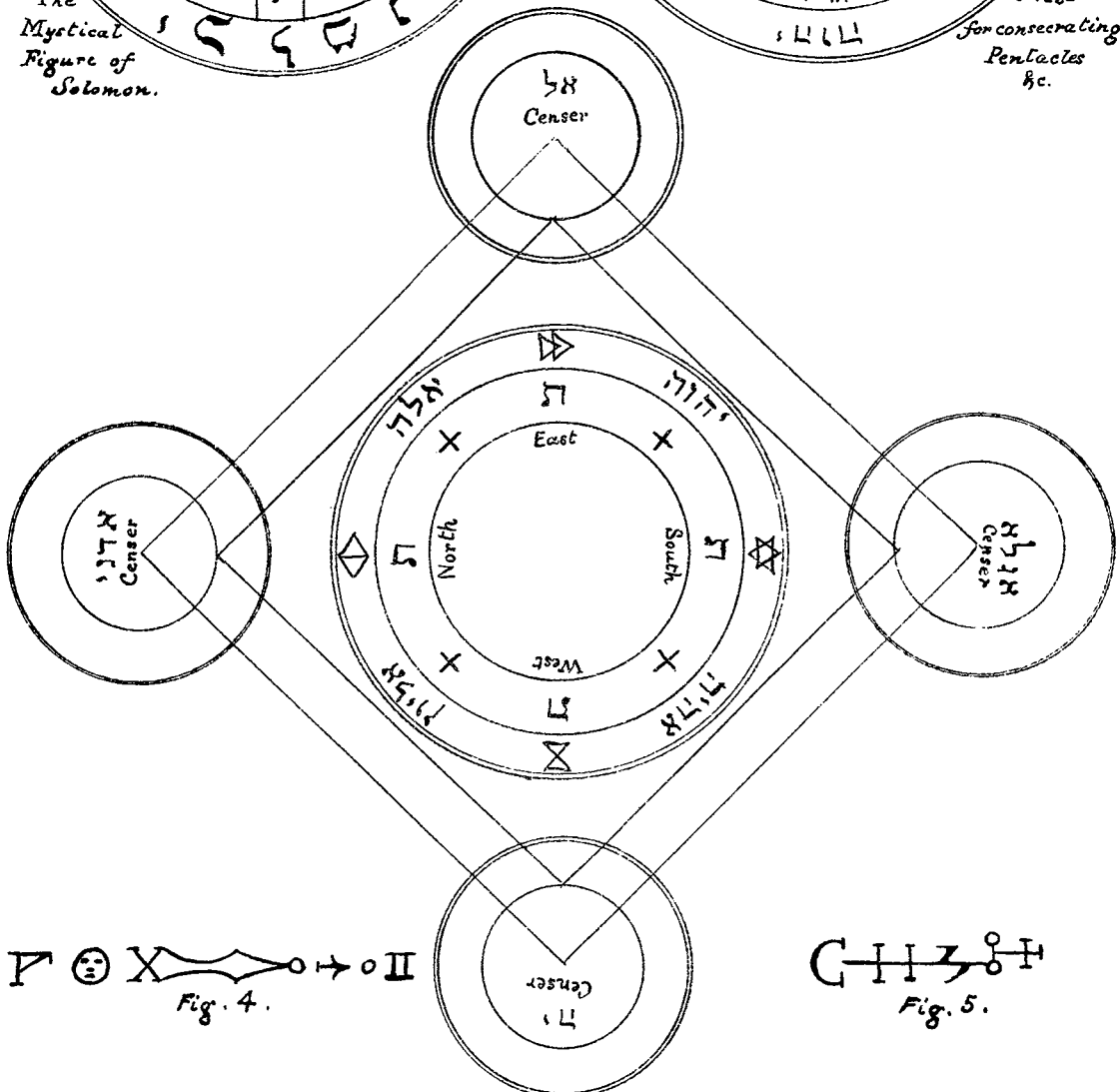


Figure 2.

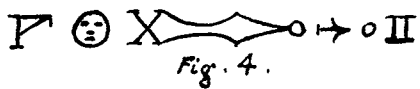


Fig. 4.

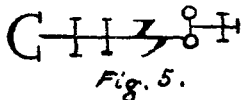


Fig. 5.

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THE
KEY OF SOLOMON THE KING

(*GLAVICULA SALOMONIS*)

Now first Translated and Edited from Ancient MSS. in the
British Museum

BY

S. LIDDELL MACGREGOR MATHERS

Author of "The Kabbalah Unveiled," "The Tarot," &c.

WITH PLATES

LONDON
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YORK STREET COVENT GARDEN
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THE
KEY OF SOLOMON THE KING.

PREFACE.

IN presenting this celebrated magical work to the student of occult science some few prefatory remarks are necessary.

The Key of Solomon, save for a curtailed and incomplete copy published in France in the seventeenth century, has never yet been printed, but has for centuries remained in Manuscript form inaccessible to all but the few fortunate scholars to whom the inmost recesses of the great libraries were open. I therefore consider that I am highly honoured in being the individual to whose lot it has fallen to usher it into the light of day.

The fountain-head and storehouse of Qabalistical Magic, and the origin of much of the Ceremonial Magic of mediæval times, the "Key" has been ever valued by occult writers as a work of the highest authority; and notably in our own day Eliphaz Lévi has taken it for the model on which his celebrated "*Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*" was based. It must be evident to the initiated reader of Lévi, that the Key of Solomon was his text book of study, and at the end of this volume I give a fragment of an ancient Hebrew manuscript of the "Key of Solomon," translated and published in the "*Philosophie Occulte*," as well as an Invocation called the "Qabalistical Invocation of Solomon," which bears close analogy to one in the First Book, being constructed in the same manner on the scheme of the *Sephiroth*.

The history of the Hebrew original of the "Key of Solomon" is given in the Introductions, but there is every reason to suppose that this has been entirely lost, and Christian, the pupil of Lévi, says as much in his "*Histoire de la Magie*."

I see no reason to doubt the tradition which assigns the authorship of the "Key" to King Solomon, for among others Josephus, the Jewish historian, especially mentions the magical works attributed to that monarch;

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this is confirmed by many Eastern traditions, and his magical skill is frequently mentioned in the Arabian Nights.

There are, however, two works on Black Magic, the "*Grimorium Verum*," and the "*Clavicola di Salomone ridolta*," which have been attributed to Solomon, and which have been in some cases especially mixed up with the present work; but which have nothing really to do therewith; they are full of evil magic, and I cannot caution the practical student too strongly against them.

There is also another work called "Lemegeton or the Lesser Key of Solomon the King," which is full of seals of various Spirits, and is not the same as the present book, though extremely valuable in its own department.

In editing this volume I have omitted one or two experiments partaking largely of Black Magic, and which had evidently been derived from the two Goetic works mentioned above; I must further caution the practical worker against the use of blood; the prayer, the pentacle, and the perfumes, rightly used, are sufficient; and the former verges dangerously on the evil path. Let him who, in spite of the warnings of this volume, determines to work evil, be assured that that evil will recoil on himself and that he will be struck by the reflex current.

This work is edited from several ancient MSS. in the British Museum, which all differ from each other in various points, some giving what is omitted by the others, but all unfortunately agreeing in one thing, which is the execrable mangling of the Hebrew words through the ignorance of the transcribers. But it is in the Pentacles that the Hebrew is worst, the letters being so vilely scribbled as to be actually undecipherable in some instances, and it has been part of my work for several years to correct and reinstate the proper Hebrew and Magical characters in the Pentacles. The student may therefore safely rely on their being now as nearly correct in their present reproduction as it is possible for them to be. I have therefore, wherever I could, corrected the Hebrew of the Magical Names in the Conjurations and Pentacles; and in the few instances where it was not possible to do so, I have put them in the most usual form; carefully collating throughout one MS. with another. The Chapters are a little differently classed in the various MSS., in some instances the matter contained in them being transposed, &c. I have added notes wherever necessary.

The MSS. from which this work is edited are:—Add. MSS., 10,862; Sloane MSS., 1307 and 3091; Harleian MSS., 3981; King's MSS., 288; and Lansdowne MSS. 1202 and 1203; seven codices in all.

Of all these 10,862 Add. MSS. is the oldest, its date being about the

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end of the sixteenth century; 3981 Harleian is probably about the middle of the seventeenth century; the others of rather later date.

Add. MSS. 10,862 is written in contracted Latin, and is hard to read, but it contains Chapters which are omitted in the others and also an important Introduction. It is more concise in its wording. Its title is short, being simply "The Key of Solomon, translated from the Hebrew language into the Latin." An exact copy of the signature of the writer of this MS. is given in *Figure 93*. The Pentacles are very badly drawn.

3981 Harleian MSS.; 288 King's MSS.; and 3091 Sloane MSS.; are similar, and contain the same matter and nearly the same wording; but the latter MS. has many errors of transcription. They are all in French. The Conjurations and wording of these are much fuller than in 10,862 Add. MSS. and 1202 Lansdowne MSS. The title is "The Key of Solomon King of the Hebrews, translated from the Hebrew Language into Italian by Abraham Colorno, by the order of his most Serene Highness of Mantua; and recently put into French." The Pentacles are much better drawn, are in coloured inks, and in the case of 3091 Sloane MSS., gold and silver are employed.

1307 Sloane MSS. is in Italian; its Title is "La Clavicola di Salomone Redotta et epilogata nella nostra materna lingua del dottissimo Gio Peccatrix." It is full of Black Magic, and is a jumble of the Key of Solomon proper, and the two Black Magic books before mentioned. The Pentacles are badly drawn. It, however, gives part of the Introduction to 10,862 Add. MSS., and is the only other MS. which does, save the beginning of another Italian version which is bound up with the former MS., and bears the title "Zecorbenei."

1202 Lansdowne MSS. is "The True Keys of King Solomon, by Armadel." It is beautifully written, with painted initial letters, and the Pentacles are carefully drawn in coloured inks. It is more concise in style, but omits several Chapters. At the end are some short extracts from the *Grimorium Verum* with the Seals of evil spirits, which, as they do not belong to the "Key of Solomon" proper, I have not given. For the evident classification of the "Key" is in two books and no more.

1203 Lansdowne MSS. is "The Veritable Keys of Solomon translated from the Hebrew into the Latin language by the Rabbin Abognazar (?Aben Ezra). It is in French, exquisitely written in printing letters, and the Pentacles are carefully drawn in coloured inks. Though containing similar matter to the others, the arrangement is utterly different; being all in one book, and not even divided into chapters.

The antiquity of the Planetary sigils is shown by the fact that, among the

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Gnostic talismans in the British Museum, there is a ring of copper with the sigils of Venus, which are exactly the same as those given by the mediæval writers on Magic.

Where Psalms are referred to I have in all instances given the English and not the Hebrew numbering of them.

In some places I have substituted the word AZOTH for “Alpha and Omega,” *e.g.*, on the blade of the Knife with the Black Hilt, *Figure 62*. I may remark that the Magical Sword may, in many cases, be used instead of the Knife.

In conclusion I will only mention, for the benefit of non-Hebraists, that Hebrew is written from right to left, and that from the consonantal nature of the Hebrew Alphabet, it will require fewer letters than in English to express the same word.

I take this opportunity of expressing my obligations to Dr. Wynn Westcott for the valuable assistance he has given me in the reconstruction of the Hebrew of the Pentacles.

S. LIDDELL MAC GREGOR MATHERS.

LONDON, *October*, 1888.