

ADDENDUM TO

Abraham the Jew on Magic Talismans

SINCE the 2011 publication by The Teitan Press of Frederick Hockley's *Abraham the Jew on Magic Talismans*, further evidence concerning the date and origins of the manuscript has come to light. Although not quite resolving all of the questions raised by the text, this new information reveals the period in which Hockley's manuscript was composed and the primary source on which it was based.

In 1829 Hockley's close friend, the bookseller John Denley, relinquished his shop at 13 Catherine Street near Covent Garden, announced his retirement from business and sold the bulk of his stock.¹ His retirement was to prove short-lived as by 1831 he had acquired new premises at 24 Brydges Street, then part of the same thoroughfare as Catherine Street and close to the entrance of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The business operated on a more modest scale. Hockley later testified that Denley did not acquire much in the way of new stock during this period, and the surviving evidence suggests he exploited the rarities in his personal collection by commissioning copies to be made for sale. In July 1831 Denley issued "A Catalogue of a most curious collection of Books and Manuscripts, of Astrology, Magic, Witchcraft, Alchymy, &c. including a number of rare prophetic and mystic works" which featured several manuscripts known to have been transcribed by Hockley. These included, amongst others, the *Complete Book of Magic Scicence*, *Journal of a Rosicrucian Philosopher*, *Magia de Profundis* and *The Clavis or Key to Unlock the Mysteries of Magic of Rabbi Solomon*. Alongside these items appeared a "manuscript with coloured drawings, finely written" bearing the title *Description of Talismanic Images, to be engraven in the Seals of Rings, made of various Metals, under the particular Influence of the 28 Mansions of the Moon*. The manuscript subsequently appeared under its familiar title of *Abraham, the Jew, on Magic Talismans to be engraven on the Seals of Rings* in Denley's 1833 "Catalogue consisting exclusively of Manuscripts and comprising a most curious collection on English History, Heraldry, Poetry, Divinity, the Arts, Medicine, Astrology, Magic, Alchymy [etc.]." The advertised price for this work—ten shillings—is broadly consistent with the prices of other manuscripts of similar length and decorative content produced by Hockley, which suggests these were copies rather than some original text. Quite how many copies were made and under what titles remains uncertain, although a manuscript bearing the earlier *Description of Talismanic Images* title was still being advertised in a catalogue issued in 1837. It is nevertheless possible to state with reasonable certainty that *Abraham the Jew on Magic Talismans* was compiled around 1831–3 as a commercial proposition for John Denley.

As for the source of the text, it is derived primarily from a short and untitled manuscript, of six unpaginated leaves, bound up with the holograph of Francis Barrett's *The Magus* (now London, Wellcome Library, MS. 1072). It is not clear whether this manuscript is in Barrett's hand: although *The Magus* appears to be the work of a single scribe, the handwriting throughout varies to such an extent that a degree of uncertainty remains; but it appears to be of similar age. The manuscript of *The Magus* was once owned by Denley, who advertised it for sale, with the original copper plates and woodcut blocks, in 1837; Hockley reported that it was also in his possession for some years.² Wellcome MS. 1072 appears to retain its original binding which suggests the volume is in the same substantial condition as it was in the 1830s and thus included this short work on the fixed stars and lunar mansions.

The manuscript, which precedes *The Magus*, is in three distinct parts. The image that serves as the frontispiece to Hockley's *Abraham* manuscript is a fairly crude version of a more elaborate diagram that now forms the front pastedown of MS. 1072. [This diagram can be viewed online at Wellcome Images <<http://images.wellcome.ac.uk/>> by entering the search parameter 'L0037435.'] This is followed by a single leaf titled "Talismans made from under The Influences of the fixed Stars." Hockley's version (*Abraham* MS. pp. 2–8) follows this closely, but with minor changes of wording and some adjustments for clarity: replacement of "traveller" with "man walking" as an image under "the Vulture," for example. The third part is a quire of four leaves headed "Here follows a description of talismanic Images to be engraven in the seals of Rings made of various metals, under the particular influence of the 28 mansions of [the moon]."

Again, Hockley follows the text closely, for the most part. There is a single reference to Abraham in the Wellcome MS: “Note every one of these mansions according to the opinion of the learned Abraham the Jew contains 12 Degrees 51 Minutes & almost 26 seconds whose names & also beginnings in the Zodiac of the 8th Sphere are these following.” Having appropriated “Abraham the Jew” for the title of his manuscript, Hockley abbreviates this sentence to “Each Mansion contains 12 degrees 51’ & almost 26”” (*Abraham MS.* p. 11). The remaining leaves contain details of the mansions and their images; there are some omissions and minor adjustments in Hockley’s version, but generally it follows the Wellcome manuscript. The principal source is, as Silens Manus suggests in his Introduction, the 1656 English translation of Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Confirmation may be found in the word “silom” in the description of the seventh mansion (*Abraham MS.* p. 19). This is a misprint for “silver” which is actually corrected in the errata to *Three Books* (sig. A8v) but overlooked by whoever compiled the Wellcome MS., an error faithfully copied by Hockley.³

One final point settles the Wellcome manuscript as Hockley’s source: its omission of Scheliel as the angel governing the seventh mansion and consequent errors in the angels attributed to mansions eight to sixteen. Silens Manus refers to this in his transcript (p. 11 n. 4) in which he suggests, quite reasonably, that Hockley was responsible for this error; whereas the fault lay in fact with the manuscript on which Hockley relied. There is one addition in Hockley’s *Abraham* manuscript that does not appear in the Wellcome MS: the Hebrew letters attributed to each Mansion. There are several possible sources for this, although Hockley’s version matches none of those precisely. The scheme, which maps the twenty-seven characters of the Hebrew alphabet (the twenty-two letters and their five final forms) plus an additional character to the lunar mansions, appears in various texts including Claude Duret, *Thresor de L’histoire Des Langues de cet Univers* (Yverdon, 1613) p. 212 and Jean Belot, *L’Oeuvre de Oeuvre, ou le plus parfaict des Sciences Steganographiques, Paulines, Armadelles, et Lullistes* (Lyons, 1654) pp. 187–190. But the most likely source, or at least the only one I can be certain that Hockley was familiar with, is the “Table des 28 Maisons de la Lune” in Lenain’s *La Science Cabalistique* (Amiens, 1823) pp. 119–125. Hockley’s version departs from Lenain’s scheme in one significant respect. Lenain attributes the twenty-seven Hebrew characters to the mansions in order, adding the character “O” to the twenty-eighth mansion to represent a circle and the end of the moon’s orbit. In his version Hockley reverses the positions of the letters yod and teth (ninth and tenth mansions respectively) and duplicates the letter resh (twentieth and twenty-first mansions), as a result of which the letters shin to final tsadi shift position and are attributed to the twenty-second through twenty-eighth mansions respectively. Either Hockley simply made a mistake or he was copying this scheme from a different, as yet unidentified, source.

Some questions therefore remain and other researchers may be in a position to reveal more on this subject, but I shall conclude with a supposition. Hockley recorded that one of the items of real value in *The Magus* was from ‘an ancient Work on Telesmata of great rarity which only exists in MS. of which, however, there are a large number of copies extant.’⁴ Could the short treatise bound up with Barrett’s manuscript be the “ancient work” to which Hockley refers, and if so, was Hockley responsible for producing the “large number of copies” which may or may not be extant?

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NOTES

1. The stock was auctioned by Southgate in three sales between March 1829 and January 1831.
2. Letter to *The Zoist* xxvii (October 1849), reproduced in John Hamill (ed.), *The Rosicrucian Seer* (York Beach, ME: The Teitan Press, 2009) p. 183 n.253. When Hockley disposed of the manuscript is unknown, but it subsequently emerged in a catalogue of “Occult Works” for sale, issued by the bookseller George Bumstead in 1852.
3. See Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Book II, Chapter XLVI, p. 304, reproduced in facsimile on p. 37, of this volume. Silens Manus helpfully corrects “silom” to “silver” in his transcription of the manuscript, *ibid.* p. 11. I should also add, for the sake of completeness, that an error has crept in to this transcription of Hockley’s manuscript: the angel of the fifth mansion is “Gabel” (*Abraham MS.* p. 17), not “Gabriel” as transcribed on p. 10.
4. Quoted in Hamill, *The Rosicrucian Seer*, p. xx.