

"A B R A C A D A B R A"

"א ר ב ע ד א ח א ר ב ע"

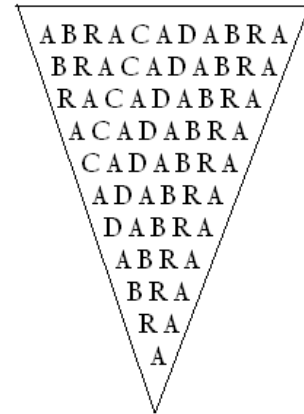
מאת: קהתי עמרם

¹(By: Amram Kehati)

This is a free form translation of the original Hebrew article written by the late Amram Kehati. It is mainly intended for people who don't speak and read the Hebrew language. However, most of the references mentioned in the original Hebrew article are referring to Jewish religious literature, dated back to the first centuries AD and even further back. Therefore, for the sake of accuracy, we kept those references written in Hebrew, especially, for Jewish scholars whom Hebrew is not their first language too. However, we urge scholars to refer to the Hebrew version for the sake of accuracy.

This article was translated by Or and Israel Kehati

The incantation word "ABRACADABRA" as a gradually diminishing words amulet was used as a magical incantation since the 2nd century AD. It was first mentioned in Serenus Sammonicus book called De Medicina Praecepta. Serenus was a physician to the Roman emperor Caracalla. Serenus prescribes, that the sufferer from the fevers and inflammations diseases, wears an amulet containing the word written in the form of an inverted cone. He explains: as the word diminishes, the hold of the daemon or evil spirit over the patient and the illness together diminish too.



The incantation, according to Serenus, is written on a piece of paper. The patient wears it for nine (9) days. In the morning of the 10th day before sunrise, the patient is standing with his back to a river flowing east and throws the amulet behind his back to the river.

As to the meaning of the incantation word "ABRACADABRA" and why the patient has to wear it for nine days, Serenus doesn't give any explanation.

Some thought that it was composed of the two Hebrew words "ברכה, דיבור" (Blessing, Speak) or other Aramaic words. However, any relevance of those words to the incantation procedure is unclear.

On the other hand in the ancient Hebrew mystic religious literature and especially in the Jewish Kabbalah we meet numerous examples of gradually diminishing words used in amulets and incantations for many purposes.

Let's examine few examples:

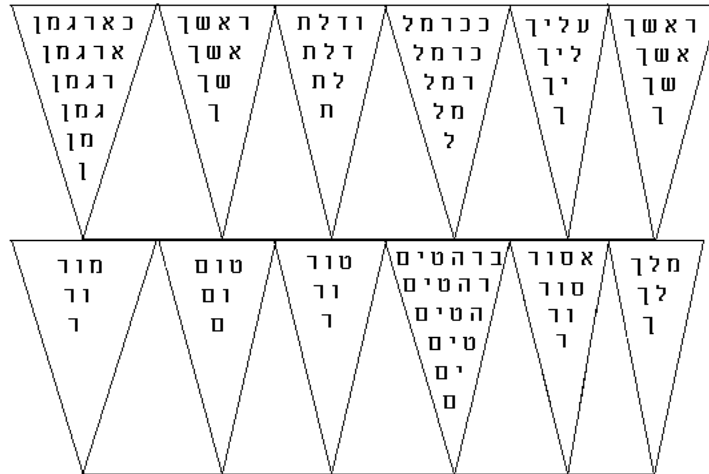
1. The Hebrew incantation word "שבירי" appears in the Talmud in few places², it is used for protection against blindness, caused by drinking rivers and lakes water in the nights. The word is written on an amulet in one letter gradually diminishing fashion as follows: רי, ירי, ברי, שברי.
2. Rashi (רש"י), the most famous Jewish Biblical and Talmud interpreter, says: "It is an incantation, and the daemon diminishes as it hears the diminishing words letter after letter until the "רי" last word³.
3. The "שבירי" word is the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew word "סנוורים"⁴ (Blindness). However, according to the Talmud⁵ "שבירי" is actually the name of the daemon that causes blindness.

² פסחים קי"א, א; שם, עבודה זרה י"ב, ב.
³ ומפרש רש"י שם, /עבודה זרה יב, ב/: לחש הוא, ומתמעט והולך משם השד כאשר הוא שומע מיעוט תיבות "אות אחר אות עד רי".
⁴ ראה, אונקלוס בראשית י"ט, י"א.
⁵ בבלי, גיטין ס"ט, א.

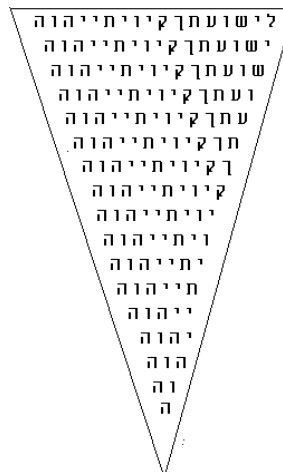
4. In the mystic book "רזיאל המלאך"⁶ (Raziel the angle) that is referenced to first man "Adam", the Hebrew incantation word "מאברית" appears as a diminishing words amulet as shown. According to the book, this incantation assists to get an answer to a question – problem that occupies the persons mind, using the night dreams. The incantation is written on vellum and is placed under the head during the night sleep.



5. In the same book⁷ appears an incantation which is an odd arrangement of the whole passage "ראשך עליך ככרמל ודלת ראשך כארגמן מלך אסור ברהטים"⁸ from the Hebrew Scriptures⁸ with some added words as shown here:



6. In the 16th century AD Hebrew book "נפתולי אלוהים"⁹, The verse "לישועתך קויתי יהוה" as a diminishing amulet, is good against daemons that dominate the nights, similar to the incantation against blindness "רי – ריי – ריירי – ברירי – שברירי". As to the book instructions, the verse is written in a form of an inverted cone as follows:



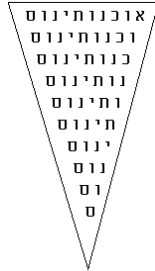
⁶ בעמוד קי"ד, /דפוס ירושלים תש"א, תבנית קטנה/.

⁷ עמוד קל"ט.

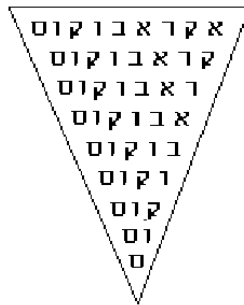
⁸ שיר השירים ז, ו.

⁹ לר' הירץ טריביש/המאה השש עשרה/ פרשת ויחי; בילקוט ראובני, ח"א, דף קע"ז, א.

7. Further on, the book describes another amulet to treat against fever and he quotes: "One that has a fever should write the following diminishing words amulet on an apple, eats it and the illness will immediately disappear".



8. A well know Hebrew amulet (see, **THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA**, Amulet subject) that contains the diminishing word incantation "אקראבוקוס" is:



9. Another famous incantation word in the Jewish Kabbalah is the word "ארמימס" which probably came from the word "ארמילוס" (**Romulus**) which, according to the Jewish religious literature, refers to the Rome (Esau's nation) – appointed angle in Heaven. The word diminishes as: "ס – מימס – ימס – מימס – רמימס – מימס – רמימס – מימס – ס"

Therefore, if we carefully look in those incantation examples, we see that all of them diminish from their head letter (most right letter). The first right letter first, then the second right letter and so on. The reason for that procedure is given by one of the most famous Jewish Rabbi¹⁰ in his interpretations for the ancient Hebrew book named "ספר יצירה" (the Book of Creation), and he quotes: "... all incantation words diminish same way as "שברירי – ברירי – רירי – ירי – רי" ... therefore, ends with "רי" which is the last diminished word...".

The **ABRACADABRA** word is exceptional in the way that it diminishes from its last letter (the most left letter) to its head (the most right letter). However, if we agree that the **ABRACADABRA** word is a Hebrew word written with Roman letters, it should diminish from its head (the most right letter) up to the most left letter, the same way as all Hebrew incantation words.

¹⁰ וטעם הדבר תמצא בפ' הגר"א מווילנא לספר יצירה, פרק ב' משנה ד', ושם: "... וכל הלחשים הולכין ומתמעטין כמו – שברירי – ברירי – רירי – ירי – רי וכן בכל הלחשים. שכל הלחשים שליטתן באחוריים ולא בפנים... ולכן מסיים בב' אותיות (רי) שהוא הצירוף האחרון".

Indeed, it appears that the **ABRACADABRA** word is a Hebrew word and it should read as: "א ר ב ע – ד א ה – א ר ב ע" from right to left. The **ABRACADABRA** word when read and pronounced from right to left is phonetically sounds exactly as composed of the three Hebrew words "א ר ב ע", "ד א ה", "א ר ב ע" where "ד א ה" is in fact the Hebrew word "א ה ד" with rearranged letters. The word "א ה ד" was written in purpose as "ד א ה", probably to confuse the daemon, or for some other witchery reasons. When the word was written with Roman letters instead of the Hebrew letters, the order of the diminishing letter procedure was somehow inverted.

The Hebrew word "א ר ב ע" is the word for the number "4" (four) and the Hebrew word "א ה ד" is the word for the number "1" (one).

Therefore, "א ר ב ע" + "א ה ד" + "א ר ב ע" = 4 + 1 + 4 = 9. The same number as the nine (9) days the patient has to wear the amulet, as Serenus testifies.

The number nine (9) which in Hebrew is called "תשעה" or the 9th letter in the Hebrew Alphabet, which is the Hebrew letter "ט" also called "טית", represents the daemons and dark forces kingdom in the Jewish Kabbalah. As the book "רזיאל המלאך"¹¹ (Raziel the angle) quotes: The "ט"... and from it the darkness and the abyss were created. From it the darkness comes upon the world and there the wicked will be judged...".

In the Hebrew book "התמונה"¹² (The Picture) under the letter "ט" subject, it said: "...and its name is "טית" (the Hebrew name for the Hebrew letter "ט") which represents: extermination, according to the Hebrew Scriptures.

The most holy Kabbalah book named "**The Zohar**" speaks on the number "תשעה" (nine) and its connection with the evil forces, too¹³.

The Hebrew book "מדרש במדבר רבה"¹⁴ speaks about the daemon named "קטב מריר" with relation to the number "ט".

Greater details as to the connection between the number "תשעה", the daemons and the destroyer angles, we find in the 11th century Hebrew book "ספר חסידים"¹⁵. The book quotes: "A person that was disturbed by a daemon should not speak about it to anyone for whole ten days, otherwise, he will be in great danger, because daemons are grouped ט, ט...and when the angle of death comes to the city...".

¹¹ כי על כן ט' הוא "אחרון לחשבון, וממנו נברא התהום והחושך, כי ממנו יצא החושך לעולם, ושם נידונים רשעי אומות העולם" /רזיאל המלאך, עמוד ק, — תבנית קטנה, ירושלים תש"א.

¹² תמונה א, אות ט, נאמר: "ושמה טית, לשון וטאטאיתיה במטאטא השמד (ישעיה י"ד, כ"ג)".

¹³ בספר הזוהר /חלק א, ריא, א — תבנית מנטובה/: בגין דכלהו שלטין על מה דאתפקדו, ושליחו דקוסטא דקופטרא /שלטון העונש והחבלה/ בהו. ואינון לכל סטר תשעה, לד' סטרין דעלמא...".

¹⁴ וכבר נאמר על השד קטב מרירי "דהוא בזא סוגיא דיומא מן ראשיהן דד' עד סופיהן דט' — במדרש במדבר רבה פר' יב, ג.

¹⁵ ספר חסידים, לרבי יהודה החסיד /המאה האחת עשרה/ בו אנו קוראים /בסימן תתשמ"ו/: "אדם שניזוק ש/הובהל ע"י שד/ אם יגיד מה שראה תוך עשרה ימים, סכנה. שמנין שדים ט, ט, וטאטאיתיה במטאטא השמד. ומלאך המות כשבא לעיר..."

Further on in the book¹⁶ it said: "and the branch of nut tree in the place where the nuts are hanging there are groups of nine "תשעה" leaves, ..., and the daemons stay there...and the daemons are grouped together ט, ט (nine, nine) and so the forest bandits are grouped ט (nine). Whom that was damaged by a daemon or an evil spirit, can be cured by daemon or an evil spirit and wants to be cured, shall silently chant the incantation ט times (9 times) ..."¹⁷. Or he can use "תשעה" (nine) wooden chips taken from ט (nine) bridges, each chip from a gate of a different city. The patient should wear the wooden chips on his neck"¹⁸. Because daemons are grouped together ט, ט (nine, nine) it is dangerous to sleeps under a nut tree...and the same danger is when one meets in the night, an unholy creature such as a dog, cat or a mice, etc. that are born blind and can't see for ט (nine) days...".

Rabbi Hirtz Tribish in his book "נפתולי אלהים"¹⁹ says: "...and some called the "טית" by the name "טיט" that is the same as the word "טיטא" which means: to kill" (he was referring to the German phonetic word T Ö T E which means to kill).

A common practice in Eastern Europe was to cancel the influence of the "Evil Eye" by the burning of nine wood chips and them in water, which the patient should drink. The same applies with nine bread pieces, at the same time, counting backward three times from nine to one (nine, eight, seven, etc.).

To summarize, with the gradually diminish of the number nine (9), the daemon whom it represents is gradually diminished and eliminated.

As regard to the debated incantation we could not use and diminish the Hebrew word "תשעה", because it contains only four letters. As Serenus testifies, only in the morning of the 10th day the patient gets rid of the incantation and the illness. Therefore, we need ten (10) diminishing actions, to diminish one letter each day, which means, one action each day.

Therefore, the "א ר ב ע – א ה ד – א ר ב ע" word was created. It sums up to the number nine (9), same as the Hebrew word "תשעה". It contains eleven (11) letters that enable the ten (10) diminishing actions, one letter for each of the ten days.

This may be the secret for the rule of the daemon named "קטב מרירי" as explained in the Hebrew book "מדרש במדבר רבה"²⁰ that was mentioned earlier.

¹⁶ בסימן תתשנ"ג, נאמר "ענף אילן אגוזים במקום שהאגוזים תלויים יש עליהם תשעה עליו. וראשו של זה בצד עקבו של זה, כתספורת בן – אלעשה. לפי שמזיקין שרוים עליו.

¹⁷ ושדים מתחברים יחד ט, ט. וגם אנשי היער פראים ט. ומי שרוצה לרפאות האדם הניזוק מן השד, יאמר הלחש ט פעמים, כמו שעושים באשכנז שמונין תשעה "קונמפליש" /עניינו; קשירת והתרת תשעה קשרים, ראה גם, בבלי, שבת ס"ו, ב./

¹⁸ או מרפאין אותו בתשעה עצים שקוראין, שטילוטיש", או "נאוון" שמתקנין ותולין בצואר החולה, לוקחים מתשעה גשרים, מתשעה שערי מדינה /ראה גם, בבלי שבת ס"ז, א./

¹⁹ ור' הירץ טריביש הנ"ל בספרו "נפתולי אלהים" פרשת יתרו ל"ג כ"ו – ת"ב: "ולפי דעתי לכן נעדרה /אות הטיט שהיא רמז למידת הדין, מלשון וטיאטאטיה במטאטא השמד. ויש קורין לטיט טיט, כמו שקוראין אלפא ביתא – אלפא ביטא.

וזוהו לשון טיטא, סימן הריגה לאומות /כוונתו למילה הגרמנית הפונטית T Ö T E שפרושה להרוג/.

²⁰ ואולי זה סוד שלטונו של השד קטב מרירי "מן ראשיהן דד' עד סופיהן דט' שבמדרש במדבר"ר, שהובא לעיל.

The incantation is definitely a Hebrew incantation and it was originated in the Holy Land (Israel). Serenus, probably learned about it while following his master, in one of the many Roman army invasions to Syria and Israel.
