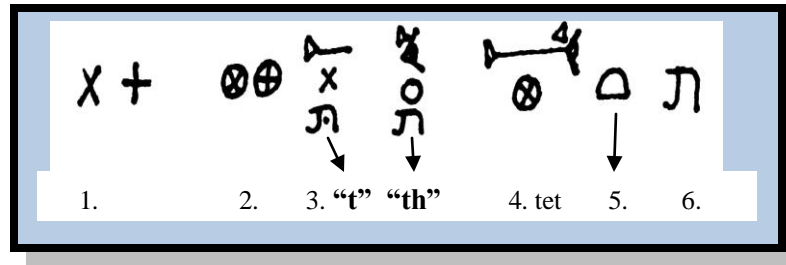




(Part I)



Tov - final letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Tov is full of mystery. Also, pronunciations vary. Some say *tov*, *tav*, *taw*, *tau*, *taf* and some *th*. Modern dictionaries use *tav* or *tov*. Proto-Canaanite/Phoenician cuneiform's earliest form (figure 1) was X or +. One text translates *tov* (+ or ת) as "room," another says it means "in the midst of," or an *enclosed space*.ⁱ

Ancient Symbol.

Although the cross symbol is almost universally associated with Jesus' crucifixion, it appeared thousands of years earlier in the

*"most widely separated places and remote corners of the earth. It was used by primitive man as an emblem and reappears in the many civilizations that followed. Whether in China, Egypt, Peru, or Patagonia, its symbolism is always associated with reverence and spiritual power."*ⁱⁱ

The Heavens

Early civilizations were in awe of the sun, moon and stars. Unfortunately, this *awe* often devolved into *worship of the creation*, instead of the Creator. But imagine the first human "discovering" by observing nature that the cast shadow of a tall, vertical tree daily encircled it horizontally. Later, someone "discovered" by erecting a pole or stone, he could observe "scientifically" the sun's path. These crude clocks, slowly becoming more sophisticated, were founded on the sun's consistent, circular path - day in, day out, month in, month out, year in and year out. By mapping the sun and stars' paths with the waxing/waning moon, humans learned to accurately record times and seasons.

Signs, Seasons, Days and Years

Connect these concepts with God's stated purpose, "***Let there be lights in the firmament to divide the day from the night, ... for signs and seasons, ... for days and years, and let them give light on the earth***" *Genesis 1:14*). Easily, a whole field of study emerged around the idea that the *letters of the alphabet* developed from astronomical observations.

"In 1978 Alessandro Bausani, the brilliant orientalist who went on to specialize in History of Oriental Astronomy, suggested a new solution: on the basis of a study of lunar stations in Arab, Indian and Iranian astronomy, which have sometimes been *related to the signs of the Arab alphabet* according to its *ancient order (corresponding to the Phoenician one)*. Bausani came to the conclusion that the Phoenician alphabetical order depicts a sort of *calendar* where the signs 'aleph, tet, ayn and taw' represent, in that order, the autumn equinox, the winter solstice, the spring equinox and the summer solstice. All this is an astronomical situation where the full moon of the autumn equinox occurred near the Pleiades, that is about 2000 or 1600 B.C. The later date corresponds exactly to what we have said about the beginnings of the alphabet. In its

traditional order, the alphabet would then amount to a sort of *primitive calendar*...the religious character taken on by the alphabet in this context is evident.”ⁱⁱⁱ (*italics mine*)

Astrology

Many humans understood the Creator’s plan and purpose, rejected it and turned to astrology/occult sciences. The Chaldean system is an example. Chaldean is a name synonymous with “astrologer, soothsayer, enchantment...astrology and occult learning.”^{iv} Ur of the Chaldeans (with occult practices) was the land Abram was called to leave, even before he knew where he was going. In other words, God said, “Get out of Ur **now!** I’ll show you later where to go.”

Moses words from God are clear about astrological/occult practices,

“...lest you lift up your eyes unto heaven and when you see the sun, the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, and be driven to worship and serve them...” (Deuteronomy 4:19).

Like many of God’s commandments, the number of people today practicing what they consider “harmless” horoscope reading is staggering. Israel was disciplined by God many times for turning to astrology, a practice *totally forbidden* to God’s people, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Compare *Tov* and *Tet*

Compare early *tov* (+ figure 1) with an early form of the letter *tet* (cross within a circle, figure 2). *Tet* (cross within a circle) indicated a settlement, a place where people lived together, a “city” or walled compound for sheep and/or people. In other words, people drew a circle around their property (built circular stone wall), keeping their belongings in and uninvited people and/or animals out.

An Israeli scholar, Shifra Rin, agrees that the letter *tet* (𐤄) is a *taw* sign (X) encircled by an *ayin* sign (the original sign of the Hebrew letter 𐤀 was a circle, O).^v The final *tet* sign (+ circled by O) is not only *one of the world’s oldest known hieroglyphs* and *ancient Egypt’s symbol for city*, but everywhere it represented a round, walled settlement, divided by a network of roads.

There are two “t” sounding letters in Hebrew.

- *Tet* (𐤄), a dull “t” made by placing the tongue against the palate (9th letter).
- *Tov* (ת) the last letter, has two forms/pronunciations in classical Hebrew.
 - 1) one *without* a dot (called a *dagesh*), sounds a soft “t” and is found at the *head* of syllables (figure 3).
 - 2) one *with* a dot, found at the *end* of syllables, hardens to become the sound “th,” as in the word *think* (although this heads this English word) (figure 4) *Note*: “Th,” is similar to one of the “d” sounds of *dalet*, made by putting the tongue on the back of the top front teeth.

(To Be Continued) This is first of three articles on *tov*. Until then, recall Jesus said “I am the *alpha* and the *omega*,” which translates, “I am the *alef* and *tov*. Further, *tov* is the heart of “Urim and Thummim,” (תמים), the powerful instruments used to find God’s will (Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8).

ⁱ Daniels and Bright, *World’s Writing Systems*, Oxford Press, 1996), p. 104-6.

ⁱⁱ C. P. Hornung, *Designs and Devices*, Dover Pub. NY, 1932), p. 211.

ⁱⁱⁱ Moscati, Sabatino, *The Phoenicians*, (Abbeville Press Publishers, NY, 1989), p. 102.

^{iv} *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, (Random House, NY, 1967), p. 244.

^v Nelson, Broadberry, Chock, *God’s Promise to the Chinese*, (Read Books Publisher, Dunlap, TN, 1997), p. 27.