The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram

One of the most constant and enduring symbols of the occult is the five pointed star, the pentagram. Indelibly marked as the embodiment of arcane magick powers; the pentagram is perhaps the most used and yet the least well understood of all occult glyphs. There are a variety of myths and legends surrounding the pentagram and its occult uses but for the practical magician most of these fall well short of the arcanum of hermetic teaching that is actually associated with this symbol.

The Evolution of the Pentagram as an Occult Symbol

The pentagram is a very old symbol as are most simple lineal figures of this sort. While it does have a long history its use as an occult symbol dates to the works of Agrippa who, in his Three Books of Occult Philosophy, seized upon the Pythagorean idea of the Pentagram representing a geometric expression of perfection because the intersection of its angles can be shown to represent the golden ratio of 1.6:1, considered by Pythagoreans to be the key to perfected harmony.

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century Francis Barrett published his Celestial Intelligencer, often called The Magus, in which he reproduced in modern format the works of Agrippa which, of course, included the pentagram which now began to take on some of its modern magickal interpretations. It still hadn't completely taken its modern form and remained a relatively unimportant part of the magician's bag of tricks. As in the Lemegeton, the Greater Key of Solomon, Barrett uses the pentagram as a lamen, a protective weapon of magick art and its use forms no part of the preparations of the magician's temple.

The next significant development of the pentagram as a practical, working symbol of ceremonial magick is found in the Key of the Mysteries by Eliphas Levi. It is the work of Levi that has come to connect the pentagram forever with demonic forces in the minds of most people because he connected the so called 'inverse' pentagram with the goat headed god Baphomet. Although Levi doesn't indicate a practical use of the pentagram in either this or his opus Dogma and Ritual his influence on the other magicians of the time was profound and led to the pentagram being elevated to one of the central symbols of modern occultism.
The Pentagram and the Golden Dawn

It was in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that the pentagram, like so many of the other symbols employed in modern occultism, came to its ultimate prominence. This occurred at the hands of one of the Victorian Occult Revival's most talented magicians, Samuel Liddell MacGregor-Mathers. In the early 1860s William Woodford claimed to have found a set of manuscripts in a cipher alphabet that described the details of the teachings of a Rosicrucian magickal order in Germany. Regardless of the authenticity of this story and the 'Cipher Manuscripts' (in a letter dated 25 March 1910 from A E Waite to Dr R W Felkin, then the head of the Stella Matutina, Waite claims that MacGregor-Mathers was paid to write them and in other letters points out the 1809 watermark on papers that were supposed to be 30 years older) it is certain that Woodford colluded with MacGregor-Mathers to construct a set of magickal instructions based upon these MSS and it was using these documents that Woodford, MacGregor-Mathers and Wynn Westcott founded what may be the most influential working group in the history of modern occultism.

Either way the result was that MacGregor-Mather produced the Lesser and Greater Pentagram Rituals from these MSS and they went on to become a core part of the Golden Dawn system of Hermetic magick. In this form the pentagrams have gone on to be connected with 'casting a circle' but this aspect of the Hermetic ceremonial use of the pentagram is only a small part of its importance to modern magickal practices.

The Pentagram and the Microcosm

A fundamental truth, without error; perfect and complete. As above, so below; the lesser and greater; microcosm and macrocosm: they are the same. Following this principle, all things were made from the One.- Hermes Trismegistus, The Emerald Tablet

A fundamental teaching of the Golden Dawn was that the object of the Great Work was to unite the microcosm with the macrocosm. The consummate symbol of the macrocosm is the six pointed star, the Hexagram which is attributed to the solar deific forces inherent in the planets. As the Star of David the Hexagram has been associated with the six planetary Sephiroth on the Tree of Life since at least the 3rd Century C.E. and, as these spheres of the heavens form the Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance, the Hexagram came to be considered as a symbol of the divine influence in the material universe. The Microprosopus conceals the Macroprosopus, the Greater Countenance which is the perfected unity of Kether, the Forst Sephiroth. In this way the hexagram represents the unity of the divine being.
Counterpoint to this is the human experience of that material universe which perceives (erroneously) the Microprosopus as the macrocosm and the upper reflection of our own microcosm. This microcosm is anchored in the Sphere of the Elements in the tenth Sephirah and so Malkuth is a reflection in matter of the Sephiroth that have preceded it in the progression of the Lights on the Tree of life. In this way the microcosmic pentagram has come to be the partner to the macrocosmic hexagram and their unification has come to symbolize the completion of the Great Work.

The pentagram first became associated with the form of the body in Agrippa's Three Books of Occult Philosophy in which he intimates this union of the macrocosmic forces of the planets with the elemental symbol of the pentagram. By illustrating that the pentagram is an ideographic representation of the elemental man he established a symbolic connection that the Golden Dawn magicians developed into a complex series of rituals used for invoking the spiritual influences of those elements.

**Pentagrammaton and the Elements**

The key to the Golden Dawns use of the pentagram as an active magickal tool is the association of its representation of the elements with Pentagrammaton. The magickal ceremonies of the Golden Dawn were based on a set of magickal formulae that express the two powers of the magician; to purify and to consecrate. The confluence of these two formulae results in the activation of the third major formula of ceremonial magick, initiation, represented by many triune glyphs including IAO and LVX.

The formulae of consecration, also called the Formula of the Wand corresponds to the four lettered name of God, Tetragrammaton-", while the formula of purification, the Formula of the Dagger, is attributed to the five lettered name Pentagrammaton-. Tetragrammaton represents a progression of the elements from the most active to the most passive and invokes the entirety of the Tree of Life as it corresponds to the progression of the Four Worlds. This
recounts the archetypal sequence of the union of the Father and the Mother resulting in the production of the Son and Daughter. Pentagrammaton celebrates the other half of this sequence as the Son and the Daughter are transformed into the Father and the Mother in their own right as a preparation for their own union and the production of a new Son and Daughter.

This, of course, assigns each of the letters of Pentagrammaton to an element and so also to one of the points of the pentagram and, with such a strong symbolic connection, makes the pentagram the perfect symbol to use in the purification that the magician uses to prepare his temple for the invocation that forms the focus of the ceremony.

**Ritualizing the Pentagram**

Merely connecting the pentagram to the elements in this way was only the beginning of creating the Pentagram Rituals that are commonly used today. The genius of MacGregor-Mathers was in the way that he combined all of the essential components that are required to employ the Pentagram as a ceremonial tool. The Ritual of the Pentagram is actually a composite of smaller rituals that collectively combine all of the components required to perform an effective ceremony.

Every ceremony must have three active components that engage the breath, the body and the mind and the Pentagram Rituals employs all three. The pentagrams are inscribed and the circle is navigated to engage the body, the divine names are recited and call the breath into play while the invoked archangels are visualized as a focus for the mind. In this way the Pentagram Rituals are complete operations in themselves.

In addition to this the Pentagram Rituals follow the formula of Tetragrammaton, having four distinct parts. This makes the performance of the Pentagram Rituals works of invocation even if the stated purpose of the magician is to banish the influences that are adverse to the operation at hand. To understand exactly what the Pentagram Rituals do it is necessary to examine the component parts to analyze their intentions.

**The Components of the Pentagram Ritual**

The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram is made up of four portions which are composed of three different actions with the first step being repeated at the end. Each step in the ritual invokes the elements in a slightly different form with the overall intention of calling the divine Light from the highest into the lowest via the established hierarchy of heaven.
The first step is to perform the Qaballistic Cross which is intended to harmonize the elements of the magician into a single focused self. Beginning by facing to the East, the place where the Light will arise in the temple, the magician crosses himself as he invokes the Crown with the word Ateh, Thou, identifying his highest self with the unity of the Divine. This is followed by Malkuth, the Kingdom or the Sphere of the Elements which connects the magician physically with the Divinity that has been identified. Touching the right shoulder as he says ve Geburah, the power, and upon his left ve Gedulah, the greatness, thereby placing himself on the Tree of Life with his right hand on the Pillar of Severity and his left upon the Pillar of Mercy. Finally the magician invokes his eternal and undying soul with the words Le Olam, to eternity, Amen, so be it.

This vital preparation of the magician connects him with the unity that he (ultimately) seeks and places him bodily and spiritually within the symbolic system that is employed in the temple. He has aligned himself for the operation of magick (and so of his Great Work) that is being undertaken. The next portion is to invoke that same Light into the temple.

To do this the magician next performs the Inscription of the Pentagrams. This is the portion of the Pentagram Ritual that most people identify with as it is at this stage that the pentagrams are traced in the air at the circumference of the magick circle. The performance of this portion of the ritual takes the greatest care as it is the least forgiving and requires that several intricate actions be performed in concert. Taking the appropriate weapon (usually the Magick Dagger but often the Magick Wand and never the Magick Sword) in his right hand the magician traces the banishing Earth pentagram which begins at the lowest point on the left of the pentagram and proceeds to the topmost point and continues around. As he does this the magician must visualize the pentagram as it is traced, seeing it as being traced in blue light and holding the images of each of the pentagrams in his mind as he progresses.

The inherent symbolism in this inscribed pentagram is that the magician is moving away from Earth towards Spirit and thence to the devotion of Water and the discrimination of Air invoking the conscious mind to be united with the force of spirit once it is removed from earth. This is the 'banishing' portion of the ritual and on each occasion it is immediately followed by the invocation of Tetragrammaton.

Starting in the east the magician invokes Tetragrammaton, the unpronounceable name of God Jehovah which generically means the Lord. In doing this the magician is not only invoking the motive force but also the overall method that he will employ in his ceremony, invocation. Next, moving to the south, that is to the right and so in the active direction of the Pillar of Severity, the magician invokes his higher self Adonai, specifically meaning Lord, the divine solar part of his own consciousness. Following this he invokes Eheieh, meaning 'I am' in the west, the quarter of the fall of the light to invoke the divine Light into even the darkness of his deepest self. Moving to the north the magician invokes the composite word AGLA, which is Notariqon, or an acronym for the phrase Ateh Gibor LeOlam Amen, Thou art the power to the ages so be it, once again invoking his own elements which have been previously unified by the Qaballistic Cross.
The third portion of the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram is the **Invocation of the Archangels** which places the temple among the elements and invokes the protective powers of the Archangels of the Quarters. The Archangels are the immediate agents of the divine Light and also have very manifest forms being messengers of the Word. Thus Gabriel was sent to inform Mary of her child and Michael is depicted as marshalling God's forces in the world for the Apocalypse. It is these manifest forms of the Archangels that the magician is invoking to stand guard over his temple and to witness in it his solemn oaths of his Great Work.

The Archangel of the east is Raphael, מַרְפֵּאmeaning 'God has healed' and he should be visualized as a towering angelic figure in the colors of Briah (Queen Scale) for air (sky blue), in the south is Michael, מִיכָאֵל, meaning 'Who is God?' in the colors of fire (vermillion), in the west is Gabriel, גַּבְרִיאֵל, meaning 'Hero of God' and finally in the north is Auriel, אוֹרִיאֵל meaning 'God is Light'.

Standing facing the East to invoke the Light again the magician throws his arms out to form a cross, recalling the Qaballistic Cross and enlarging upon his own unified elements with the invoked influence of the Archangels that he places around his magick circle. To assert his authority to call these great angels the magician recalls the pentagrams, referring to them flaming about the circle and then finally invokes the Light of the divine unity of Kether from above, calling the Macrocosm to be unified, at least in part, with his microcosm.

Finally the magician finishes the ritual by repeating the **Qaballistic Cross** to unify the invoked elemental forces into a single, focused will which is at one with his True Will, the Will of the creator. The final performance doesn't unify the base elements of the magician as it did the first time it unifies the invoked elements of the macrocosm and unites the magician with the illumination of the One. It is this that makes the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram a suitable preparation for every type of ceremonial performance from the simplest to the most high.

**The Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram**

1 **The Qaballistic Cross**

   Touching the forehead say *Ateh* (Unto Thee).
   Touching the breast say *Malkuth* (The Kingdom).
   Touching the right shoulder, say *ve-Geburah* (and the Power).
   Touching the left shoulder, say *ve-Gedulah* (and the Glory).
   Clasping the hands upon the breast, say *le-Olahm, Amen* (To the Ages, Amen).

2 **The Inscription of the Pentagrams**
Turning to the East make a pentagram (that of Earth) with the proper weapon (usually the wand).

Say (ie. vibrate) I H V H.

Turning to the South, the same, but say A D N I.
Turning to the West, the same, but say A H I H.
Turning to the North, the same, but say A G L A.

3 The Invocation of the Archangels

Extending the arms in the form of a Cross say:
Before me Raphael;
Behind me Gabriel;
On my right hand Michael.
On my left hand Auriel;
For about me flames the Pentagram,
And in the Column stands the six-rayed Star.

4 The Qaballistic Cross

Touching the forehead say Ateh (Unto Thee).
Touching the breast say Malkuth (The Kingdom).
Touching the right shoulder, say ve-Geburah (and the Power).
Touching the left shoulder, say ve-Gedulah (and the Glory).
Clasping the hands upon the breast, say le-Olahm, Amen (To the Ages, Amen).

Translation of the Qaballistic Cross

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ateh (Aa-the)</td>
<td>Thou art (literally: the essence of being)</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>אַחַה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkuth (Mal-kooth)</td>
<td>Kingdom (The Sphere of the Elements)</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>מַלְכֻת</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geburah (Geb-oo-rah)</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>גֶּבְרוּה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gedulah (Ged-you-lah)</td>
<td>Greatness, Glory</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>גֶּדוּלָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LeOlahm (Lee-Oh-lahm)</td>
<td>To eternity</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>לוֹלוֹם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amen</td>
<td>So be it</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>אַמְּנָן</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Translations of the Four Lettered Names of the Quarters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YHVH (Yee-ho-wah)</td>
<td>Tetragrammaton</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADNI (Ad-oh-nigh)</td>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>אָדָנִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHIH (Eh-he-yay)</td>
<td>I am</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>אָהִיה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGLA (Ah-gla)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>עַלְגָּה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* אָהִיה נבּוֹר לֻעָלָם אָמֲנָן
Ateh Gibor LeOlahm Amen- Thou art the power to the ages so be it (401+211+176+91=879).

### Meanings of the Names of the Archangels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael (Mee-kay-el)</td>
<td>Who is like god?</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>מִיכְּמָל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel (Gay-bree-el)</td>
<td>Hero of God</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>גָבִיאל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raphael (Ra-fay-el)</td>
<td>God has healed</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>ראַפִּיאַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auriel (Au-ree-el)</td>
<td>God is Light</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>אוֹרִיאַל</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>