

FDP HERALD

Fellowship of the Order of Dionysis and Paul Newsletter



Nativity Gostinopolye 1475 Banco Intesa

The Ox and the Ass

The Ox or Bull has been a symbol of worship for thousands of years. The Egyptians and the Romans as well as many other ancient civilisations built temples and statues in honour of this strong and valuable beast. For the Egyptians particularly, the Apis Bull may have had astrological significance, as the 'Age of Taurus' was said to run from about 4000 B.C. till around 1800 B.C., with the peak of the 'Old Kingdom' sitting snugly in the middle.

It is interesting that after Moses lead the Israelites out of the kingdom of Egypt, there is the incident with the Golden Calf (worshipping of false idols) Exodus 32. Historically, Moses is estimated to be at around 1400 B.C. Some commentators have suggested that the burning of the golden calf was symbolic of the end of the Age of Taurus (The old ways) and the beginning of the Age of Aries.

One might also wonder at the birth of Christ - The Lamb of God. As time passes, the symbol of the 'Ichthys' Fish starts to surface sometime in the first 300 years, as Christianity gains popularity. The Age of Pisces began at around 360 A.D.

The Ass, which Christ rode upon into Jerusalem, was said to be an unclean beast. In scripture it forbids to 'yolk an Ass and an Ox together'.

This may also have historical reference to the Egyptian Seth / Seti - God of Death, who was often portrayed with

the head of an Ass. It is possible that the Donkey headed deity was considered akin to the Devil by early Christians. Hence in Art, the symbol of both the Ox and the Ass at the feet of the infant Jesus would have been rather effective.

Other biblical scholars put forward the idea that the Ox, being a clean animal is representative of the Jewish faith. The Ass, considered as an unclean beast, was meant to symbolise the Gentiles. The Christ between them was seen as a symbol of unification between the two.

One might also consider the words in English - the first letters being 'O' and 'A', the Omega and the Alpha, the last and first letters of the greek alphabet. Which reminds me of Matthew 19:30 - "...many who are first will be last, and the last first."



Aleph: Means 'Ox' and has the numerical value of 1 (also 1000)

The original pictograph for this letter is a picture of an ox head (𐤀) representing strength and power from the work performed by the animal. This pictograph also represents a chief or other leader. When two oxen are yoked together for pulling a wagon or plow, one is the older and more experienced one who leads the other. Within the clan, tribe or family the chief or father is seen as the elder who is yoked to the others as the leader and teacher.

The Modern name for this letter is *aleph* and corresponds to the Greek name alpha and the Arabic name *aleph*. The various meanings of this root are oxen, yoke and learn. Each of these meanings is related to the meanings of the pictograph 𐤀. The root (אלף) is an adopted root from the parent root אל (el), written as אל in the original script, meaning, strength, power and chief and is the probable original name of the pictograph 𐤀.

The אל is a shepherd staff or Ox goad and represents authority as well as a yoke (see the letter *lamed*). When combined these two pictographs mean "strong authority." The chief or father is the "strong authority." The אל can also be understood as the "ox in the yoke." Many Near Eastern cultures worshipped the god *El* (אל) and was depicted as a bull in carvings and statues. Israel chose the form of a calf (young bull) as an image of God at Mount Sinai showing their association between the word אל and the ox or bull and is also commonly used in the Hebrew Bible for "God" or "god."

The concept of the ox and the shepherd staff in the word **ל** **ו** has been carried over into modern times as the sceptre (as a staff) and crown (as horns) of a monarch, the leader of a nation. These modern items are representative of the shepherd staff, an ancient sign of authority, and the horns of the ox, an ancient sign of strength.

In Modern Hebrew this letter is silent but was originally used as the vowels "a" and "e." The Greek letter *alpha*, derived from the *aleph*, is also used for the "a" sound.

The Early Semitic pictograph **ו** was simplified to **†** and **✱** in the Middle Hebrew script and continued to evolve into the **כ** in the Late Hebrew script. The Modern Hebrew letter **כ** developed out of the Late Semitic. The Middle Semitic was adopted by the Greeks to be the letter "A" (*alpha*) and carried over into the Roman "A."
The Middle Semitic **†** became the number "1" that we use today.

excerpt from ancient-hebrew.org



Nativity scene on a 4th century sarcophagus from Italy

Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel

23. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.

24. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides.

25. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam’s foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

26. Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left.

27. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff.

28. Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?”

29. Balaam answered the donkey, “You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.”

30. The donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?” “No,” he said.

31. Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

32. The angel of the Lord asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

33. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.”

Numbers 22 : 23 - 33

Proverbs 14:4

Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox



Uriel

Uriel ("fire of God") - one of the leading angels in noncanonical lore, and ranked variously as a seraph, cherub, regent of the sun, flame of God, angel of the presence, presider over Tartarus (Hades), archangel of salvation (as in II Esdras), etc. In the latter work he acts as heavenly interpreter of Ezra's visions. In Enoch I, he is the angel who "watches over thunder and terror." In The Book of Adam and Eve he presides over repentance.

Excerpt from: Dictionary of Angels by Gustav Davidson



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The Lion, Eagle, Ox & Man

"It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the "pillar and ground" of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. From which fact, it is evident that the Word, the Artificer of all, He that sitteth upon the cherubim, and contains all things, He who was manifested to men, has given us the Gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit. As also David says, when entreating His manifestation, "Thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth." For the cherubim, too, were four-faced, and their faces were images of the dispensation of the Son of God. For, [as the Scripture] says, "The first living creature was like a lion," symbolising His effectual working, His leadership, and royal power; the second [living creature] was like a ox, signifying [His] sacrificial and sacerdotal order; but "the third had, as it were, the face as of a man," - an evident description of His advent as a human being; "the fourth was like a flying eagle," pointing out the gift of the Spirit hovering with His wings over the Church. And therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated. For that according to John relates His original, effectual, and glorious generation from the Father, thus declaring, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Also, "all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made." For this reason, too, is that Gospel full of all confidence, for such is His person. But that according to Luke,

taking up [His] priestly character, commenced with Zacharias the priest offering sacrifice to God. For now was made ready the fatted calf, about to be immolated for the finding again of the younger son. Matthew, again, relates His generation as a man, saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham;" and also, "The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." This, then, is the Gospel of His humanity; for which reason it is, too, that [the character of] a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel. Mark, on the other hand, commences with [a reference to] the prophetic spirit coming down from on high to men, saying, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the prophet," - pointing to the winged aspect of the Gospel; and on this account he made a compendious and cursory narrative, for such is the prophetic character. And the Word of God Himself used to converse with the ante-Mosaic patriarchs, in accordance with His divinity and glory; but for those under the law he instituted a sacerdotal and liturgical service. Afterwards, being made man for us, He sent the gift of the celestial Spirit over all the earth, protecting us with His wings. Such, then, as was the course followed by the Son of God, so was also the form of the living creatures; and such as was the form of the living creatures, so was also the character of the Gospel. For the living creatures are quadriform, and the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord. For this reason were four principal covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel, raising and bearing men upon its wings into the heavenly kingdom."

St Irenaeus of Lyons (120 - 202 AD) - Adversus Haereses 3.11.8

The Traveller

The Traveller he wanders far and wide,
 Seeking for what mortal eyes cannot spy,
 Though he knows not the way,
 He is urged by the ancient of days.

In the days of his youth,
 The battles and conflicts by which he's confused,
 Lead on to the quest of his heart,
 For which very reason from earth,
 And from home did he part.

When all forlorn and bedraggled and lame,
 Should he pause but a moment to study his plight,
 His purest desire will serve as a beacon of light,
 Granting insight that 'tis love that leads him to
 heaven.

Now when all seems grim and darkness appears,
 And turmoil and tears are astir,
 As a cool fresh breeze, a guardian appears,
 Whispering peace and journeys with him.

Poor though he may be, without health nor kin,
 Yet he follows his destiny still,
 As his faithful companion leads,
 Further and deeper by a quiet mountain within.

Having rested sufficient at dusk he awakes,
 His courage and faith fortified,
 To continue his quest at love's behest,
 For union with the spirit above.

As he treads higher still he thinks to himself,
 Thoughts all filled with hope,
 "Perhaps" this mountain will lead,
 To that cause often missed and neglected by pride,
 By those who seek not its treasure,
 Hid deep inside.

And as he considers, he shudders and shivers,
 At the loss such bondage can bring,
 His footsteps he quickens with renewed
 determination,
 Till he spies a small doorway afar.

A steward awaits him in garments of glory,
 And greets the sojourner with "Peace".
 All wounds doth he tend;
 Fragments remove and quenches all that is parched.

Now when you have reached that most sacred of
 caverns,
 Pause sending prayers unto heaven,
 Soon all is still then follows that dove,
 Silently hovering above.

Urged by that Spirit trust her to guide,
 You deeper and deeper and deeper inside.
 Therein you will find, at the innermost shrine,
 What mystic and sages foretell.

Prostrate, give praise with heart,
 And soul and mind to Him who awaits you within,
 The quest of your soul,
 For whom you gave up earth, body and all.

Sr. Sophia

To Listen to the above poem (Mp4) read by the author and set to music [Click Here](#)



**The Bee is more honoured than other
 animals, not because she labours, but
 because she labours for others."**

St. John Chrysostom