

amulets and talismans

Allison Parrish

apotropaic (adj). intended to ward off evil

from Ancient Greek ἀπό- (apó, “away”) + -τρόπος (trópos, “turn”)





<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mezuzah-RS.jpg>



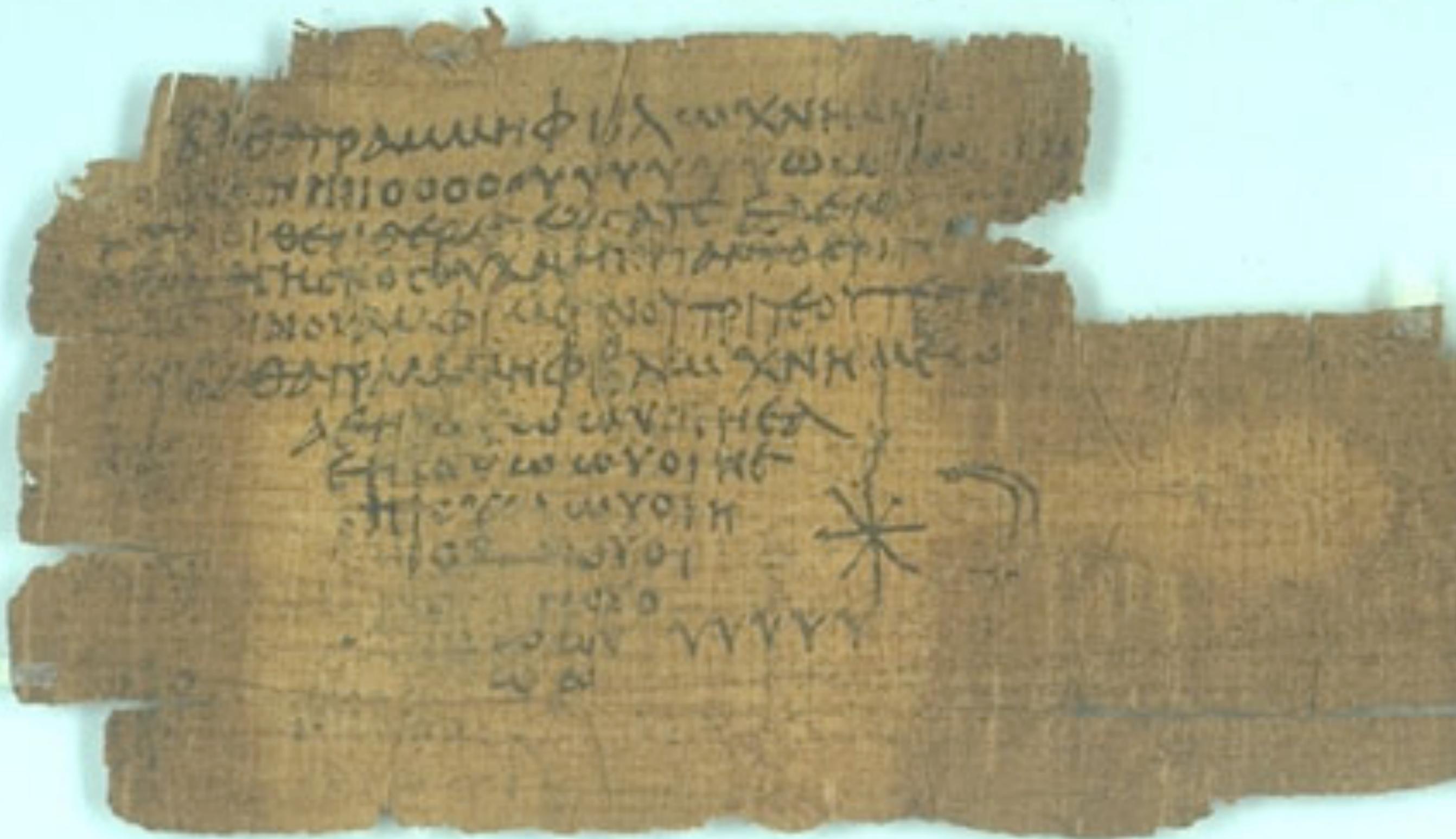
amulet (n). "[a] small magical object carried, worn on the body, or kept in one's home... to protect people against evil spirits... enemies... [and] misfortune... [and to] cure specific maladies, or alleviate pain..." (p. 7)

from French *amulette*, Latin *amulētum* (in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*), maaaaybe from Arabic *ḥāmala(t)*, plural of *ḥāmil*, lit. 'carrier, bearer, pregnant' (but the OED says "the history of this word shows that the resemblance [...] is purely fortuitous, and there exists no ground for ascribing [it] to an Arabic origin.")

Skemer, Don C. *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*. Penn State Press, 2010.

ligatura, phylactery; charta, lamina (on a metal sheet), lettera, brevis, breve, pistol (from Latin *epistola*), writ

Skemer, Don C. Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages. Penn State Press, 2010.



Egypt, 3rd century A.D., Papyrus

<https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/108169/def1.display.html>

[ia]rbath agrammê fiblô chnêmeô

[a e]e êêê iiiii ooooo uuuuuu ôôôôôô[ô]

Lord Gods, heal Helena, daughter of [...]
from every illness and every shivering and [fever],
ephemeral, quotidian, tertian, quar[tan],

iarbath agrammê fiblô chnêmeô

aeêiouôôuoiêea

eêiouôôuoiêe

êiouôôuoiê

iouôôuoi

ouôôuo

uôôu uuuuu

ôô

"Instructions [in this manuscript] call for writing *characteres* on flexible supports that are to be worn on the body. The *characteres* include magical script as well as cryptic series of ordinary letters of the Latin alphabet. [...] One recipe calls for the *characteres* to be written with the left hand ("*in manu sinistra*")....

Skemer, Don C. *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*. Penn State Press, 2010, p. 81



Pestblätter

'A plague cross with St. Sebastian, St. Roch and St. John Nepomuk. Coloured woodcut.' . Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY

via <http://blog.wellcomelibrary.org/2016/10/deciphering-a-central-european-plague-amulet/>

talisman (n). any object held to be endowed with magic virtue; a charm (OED)

From Arabic ṭilsam < Greek τέλεσμα < Ancient Greek τελειν 'perform (rites), initiate (in the mysteries)' < τέλος 'end'

The word talisman is derived from the Greek root *teleo* which means "to consecrate." And it is precisely the act of consecration which gives a talisman its alleged magical powers. For contrary to the amulet [...] the talisman must be "charged" with magical power by the person preparing it. Also, while the amulet is used for general purposes, such as averting evil or attracting good luck, the talisman is always prepared for a definite reason. (p. 203)

González-Wippler, Migene. *The Complete Book of Amulets & Talismans*.
Llewellyn Worldwide, 1991.



CBd-1. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (2010-), developed at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, editor-in-chief: Á. M. Nagy. Retrieved from: classics.mfab.hu/talismans/cbd/1 on 12-04-2018.

magic squares



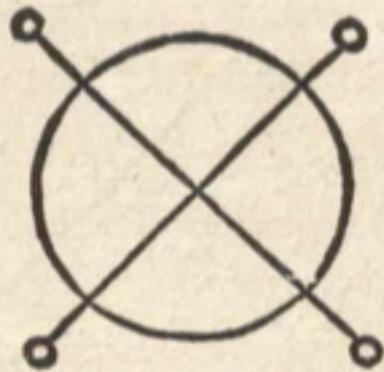
Tabula Iouis in abaco.

4	14	15	1
9	7	6	12
5	11	10	8
16	2	3	13

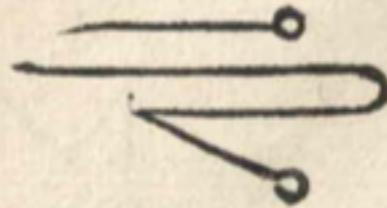
In notis Hebraicis.

ד	ד'	ד''	ז
ט	ז'	ז''	ז'''
ה	ז''''	ז'''''	ה
ו'	ב	ב'	ב''

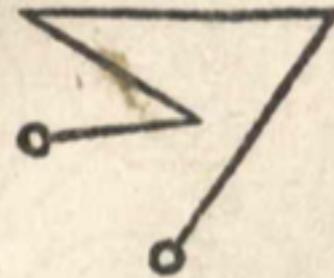
Iouis.



*Signacula siue characteres,
Intelligentie Iouis.*



Demonij Iouis.



n iii

Saturn=15		
4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Jupiter=34			
4	14	15	1
9	7	6	12
5	11	10	8
16	2	3	13

Mars=65				
11	24	7	20	3
4	12	25	8	16
17	5	13	21	9
10	18	1	14	22
23	6	19	2	15

Sol=111					
6	32	3	34	35	1
7	11	27	28	8	30
19	14	16	15	23	24
18	20	22	21	17	13
25	29	10	9	26	12
36	5	33	4	2	31

Venus=175						
22	47	16	41	10	35	4
5	23	48	17	42	11	29
30	6	24	49	18	36	12
13	31	7	25	43	19	37
38	14	32	1	26	44	20
21	39	8	33	2	27	45
46	15	40	9	34	3	28

Mercury=260							
8	58	59	5	4	62	63	1
49	15	14	52	53	11	10	56
41	23	22	44	45	19	18	48
32	34	35	29	28	38	39	25
40	26	27	37	36	30	31	33
17	47	46	20	21	43	42	24
9	55	54	12	13	51	50	16
64	2	3	61	60	6	7	57

Luna=369								
37	78	29	70	21	62	13	54	5
6	38	79	30	71	22	63	14	46
47	7	39	80	31	72	23	55	15
16	48	8	40	81	32	64	24	56
57	17	49	9	41	73	33	65	25
26	58	18	50	1	42	74	34	66
67	27	59	10	51	2	43	75	35
36	68	19	60	11	52	3	44	76
77	28	69	20	61	12	53	4	45

- More on mezuzas as apotropes: Kosior, Wojciech. “‘It Will Not Let the Destroying [One] Enter.’ The Mezuzah as an Apotropaic Device According to Biblical and Rabbinic Sources1.” *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1977, pp. 7–8.
- On Joseph Smith's talisman, see: Quinn, D. Michael. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Revised, Subsequent edition, Signature Books, 1998.
- The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database <http://www2.szepmuveszeti.hu/talismans/>
- On magical gems: http://classics.mfab.hu/antik_gyujtemeny/evszak_mutargya/evszak_en.php?id=624