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Introduction

The Kabbalistic influence in sixteenth-century Europe is undoubted. A major element in Christian circles was interest in the Divine Name as found in Kabbalistic sources. The main focus of this study compares the way in which four authors in sixteenth-century Europe treated one particular Kabbalistic expression of the Divine Name. This is the seventy-two divine names attributed to angels as primarily derived from three verses in the fourteenth chapter of Exodus, each of which has seventy-two letters in Hebrew.

The four authors, as they dealt with material that derived from Jewish sources, wrote from different Christian perspectives. Not only did the authors have widely differing backgrounds and readerships, but their own perspectives shifted. Sometimes, those shifts, notably in regard to Jewish-Christian matters, were dramatic.

The material considered below derives from the start of the European Reformation and concerns the overarching issue of Jewish-Christian relationships. Moreover, the long shadow cast by some of those writings continues to our own days.

The author is indebted to many digital resources as will be seen from the numerous illustrations. In addition, the inclusion of QR-codes allows the reader immediate access to a fuller investigation of those resources.

CHAPTER ONE

The Four Authors

The first of the four authors is Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who was also known as Rabbi Capnion. In 1510 he had been asked, as a lawyer in Pforzheim with a well-informed knowledge of Hebrew, to pronounce on a bitter argument about Jewish books. Reuchlin's main opponent, Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469–1523), who had converted from Judaism, sought confiscation and destruction of the Talmud. One of Pfefferkorn's early books was the 1507 *Der Juden Spiegel*, published in Nuremberg. Images of Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, Munich Res/4 Polem, 3340,6 are available at the QR-code below.¹



A similarly anti-Jewish book—*Handt Spiegel*—followed four years later. It is *Handt Spiegel* (Mainz: Johann Schöffner, 1511, published under the title *Handt Spiegel Johannis Pfefferkorn/wider vnd gegen die Jüden/vnd Judischen Thalmudischen schrifften*). The digital British Library version is available at the QR-code below.²



Reuchlin, as is well known, followed a more appreciative approach. He decided that a few Hebrew works that were overtly polemical, such as *Toledot Jeshu* (The Generation of Jesus), should be destroyed. However, Reuchlin willingly accepted the value of many Hebrew works. That appreciative stance

was to cause him years of controversy. The opposition was led by Johannes Pfefferkorn and the Cologne Dominicans. They persuaded Emperor Maximilian I to order the destruction of Hebrew books in 1509. Four years later, the Dominican inquisitor Jacob Hochstraten (Hoogstraten) (c. 1460–1527) took action against Reuchlin for heresy, who appealed to Pope Leo X. Finally, in 1516, a papal commission acquitted Reuchlin. The origin of the accusation that Reuchlin was a Judaizer may be traced back to his *De Rudimentis Hebraicis, liber primus (-tertius)* (Phorce: In aedib. Tho. Anselmi, 1506). A selection of digitised copies is available at the website of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and they can be accessed via the QR-code below.³



Reuchlin's first work concerning the Divine Name was his first Kabbalistic work. It is *De Verbo Mirifico* (On the Wonder-Working Word, Basle: J. Amerbach, 1494?). A digitised copy of the 1514 edition is available at the website of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek via the QR-code below.⁴



Reuchlin was to give significant coverage to the seventy-two names in his second Kabbalistic work—the 1517 *De Arte Caballistica Libri tres* (On the Art of the Kabbalah—Three Books). This is considered in detail below.

The second author is Martin Luther (1483–1546). Initially, Luther was favourably inclined towards the Jews, as discussed more fully below and as shown by his 1523 *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei* (That Jesus Christ was born a Jew).

Later his attitude hardened, as discussed more fully below and as shown by his January 1543 *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* (About the Jews and their Lies). Merely two months later he published *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* (About the Ineffable Name and about the Generation of Christ). This book is available online at the QR-code below.⁵



At Dii v° Luther states that the seventy-two names are derived from Exodus 14. Dii r° and v° are as below following *Es stehet Exodi am 14. ein Text der lautet also* (“There is in Exodus 14 a text which states”).

Vnd der Engel Gottes/ der fur
dem Meer Jsrael her zog/erhub sich/ vnd
macht sich hinder sie / Vnd die Wolcken
seule macht sich auch von irem angesicht/
vnd trat hinder sie / vnd kam zwischen das
Meer der Egypter / vnd das Meer Jsrael /
Es war aber ein finster Wolcken / vnd er
leuchtet die gantze nacht / Das sie die ganz
ze nacht / diese vnd jene / nicht zusamen kom
men kundten. Vnd Mose recket seine hand
aus vber das Meer / Vnd der N S R lies
es hinweg faren / durch einen starcken Ost
wind / die gantze nacht / vnd machet das
D ij Meer

Meer trocken / Vnd die wasser teiletten sich
voneinander.

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In Hebrew Exodus 14:19–21 have:

וַיֹּסֶע מִלֶּאֱפֶי הָאֱלֹהִים הַהַלֵּף לִפְנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְךָ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיֹּסֶע עִמּוֹד
הָעֲנָן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֵד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם:¹⁹

וַיָּבֵא בְּיוֹם מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבִיּוֹם מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הָעֲנָן וְהַחֲשֵׁה וַיָּאָר אֶת-הַלְּלִיָּה וְלֹא-
מָרַב יָהּ אֶל-יָהּ כָּל-הַלְּלִיָּה:²⁰

וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-הַיָּם וַיִּזְלַח יְהוָה אֶת-הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׂם
 אֶת-הַיָּם לְחַרְבָּה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם:²¹

New International Version has the following text of Exodus 14:

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ...

He then explains how verses 19–21 reveal the seventy-two names as follows:

Dieser Text/hat im Ebreischen 216. Buchstaben/die teilen sie in drey riege: oder Vers/ So kriegt ein jglicher Vers 72. Buchstaben. Man kñnd wol sechs guter Vers draus machen/Aber die Kabinen wollens nicht so haben. Die mercke nu die hohe kunst Schem Hamphoras. Wenn du die drey riege vnter einander schreibst/ das gerade ein Buchstabe vnter dem andern stehet/ So thu also. Nim den fñdersten Buchstaben jnn der ersten riege/ vnd den hindersten jnn der andern riege/ vnd den fñdersten jnn der dritten riege/ setze sie zu samen/ so hastu ein wort von drey Buchstaben/ Solcher weise nach/ thu mit allen Buchstaben/ jnn den drey zeilen oder riegen/ So findestu 72. wort/ da ein jglichs drey Buchstaben hat.

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This text in Hebrew has 216 letters which are divided into three rows or verses. Thus each verse has seventy-two letters. One can indeed make them into

six verses, but the Rabbis do not accept that. We see that these make the *Schem Hamphoras*. When one writes the three rows under one another and takes the first letter of the upper row and the last letter of the middle row and the first letter of the third row and then put them together you have a three-letter word. Do the same for all the other letters in the three parts or rows. So you get seventy-two words, each of which each has three letters.

Luther does not list the seventy-two names.

The third author is a French Franciscan, Jean Thenaud (1474–1484?–1542?). His birthplace was Melle, near Poitiers, and his upbringing was in the company of the family of Francis I (1494–1547) who reigned from 1515. Thenaud, who entered the Cordeliers d'Angoulême possibly before 1494, remained a trusted friend to Francis I and dedicated manuscripts to him and to the three female members of his family in line with his belief in the significance of the number four. This is typified by the travels recorded in his *Explorateur des quatre fleuves—Triumphes de Vertuz*. Thenaud customarily described himself in terms connected with his travels, such as “poor pilgrim” (*pauvre pèlerin*), and “explorer of the earthly Paradise” (*explorateur de Paradis terrestre*). He was often represented in the illustrations as such a traveller. These images are prominent in his monumental (non-kabbalistic) manuscripts which were destined for the four leading members of the household of Francis I. Moreover, Thenaud did not overlook other members of the household. He even used the occasion of the death of the three-months-old Louise, the oldest daughter of Francis, in September 1518 to convey his message to the royal family. In 1519 the imperial ambitions of Francis I were prominent, and Thenaud used the occasion of Louise's death to bolster them up. Thenaud imagined Charles VIII giving a heavenly reception to the little Louise arriving in paradise under the leadership of Saint Michael and in the company of ten thousand angels. Thenaud imagined God using the occasion to announce not only that Francis I would soon become emperor (*de bref empereur*), but that the new arrival would herself be enthroned and able to intercede on behalf of the royal family and of France.

The four living recipients—Francis himself, his sister Marguerite, the dauphin François (1518–1536), and his mother Queen Claude (1499–1524)—each had one treatise dedicated to them. Each treatise proclaimed the triumph of the virtue appropriate to the recipient. Marguerite had Prudence, Francis had Force, the dauphin had Justice, and Claude had Temperance. The first two treatises of *Explorateur des quatre fleuves* are in one volume. The presentation copy is in St. Petersburg (ms. Fr. F. V. XV), but two scribal copies are in

Paris—one is in the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN ms. Fr.443) and the other in the Arsenal (ms. 3358). The third and fourth treatises of *Explorateur des quatre fleuves* are also in one volume, and the only known copy is in Paris (BN Fr. 144.).

Dating of the various copies of *Explorateur des quatre fleuves* is not straightforward. Despite the mention of the very first, the *Triumph of Prudence*, in the 1508 *Margarite*, there is no doubt that the end of Thenaud's voyage is the earliest possible date for these works. The three extant copies of the first volume all give different dates according to internal evidence. The latest is the Arsenal manuscript which refers to Francis's twenty-seventh year (between September 12, 1519 and September 12, 1520).

It is sufficient for our purposes here to make some general observations about *Explorateur des quatre fleuves*. The first point to make is that all four works are of enormous length and have numerous full folio illustrations, which would have rendered them unsuited for publication. Moreover, the intended readers were the members of the royal household, so the works may have had relatively limited appeal beyond that circle.

Secondly, and notwithstanding the observations just made above, the works do have significance from the literary point of view. *Explorateur des quatre fleuves* contains the first French translation of Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*. Thenaud's admiration of Erasmus led him to make this translation. It also served as a vehicle for Thenaud's views on Reformation, which was to be mediated by the personification of Prudence and her daughter. Thenaud was equally outspoken on clerical folly. For example he included sections on the folly of those who carried images and relics—"La folie des porteurs d'images et de Reliques," the folly of Bishops—"La folie des Euesques," and the folly of Popes—"La folie des Papes."

Thirdly, it is to be noted that there are no evident connections with the Kabbalah. On the other hand, there are evident similarities in style between these works and the overtly kabbalistic ones. First, women play a prominent role in all of them. Secondly, high value is placed on the number four, which in various citations is related to the four members of the family, the four rivers of Paradise, the four worlds, and the Tetragrammaton.

The *raison d'être* of these monumental works was that the souls of the members of the royal household may return safely to God. This motivation was inspired by Ficino's description in his *Commentary on Plato's Banquet* where God, having infused his light into the soul, desires to lead it to the state of blessedness. Ficino describes how this was to be achieved by means of the four virtues of Prudence, Force, Justice, and Temperance. Prudence was the

prime virtue and the one that enabled the others to have effect. Individuals, according to their peculiar constitution which was a function of the infusion of the divine light, would be lead to the state of blessedness by means of these virtues, with Prudence the first among equals. Thenaud adopted this same intent not only in the four non-kabbalistic treatises but also in his kabbalistic ones. Furthermore, he employed the same methodology for both sets of works.

Only one of Thenaud's works was printed.⁶ It records his journey to Egypt, Sinai, and Israel, but the content has no direct bearing on his consideration of the seventy-two names.

Thenaud's first manuscript (1508) traced the history of France from the Kings of Israel.⁷ Some of the content reveals his attitude to the Jews and will be duly considered below. The only known copy is in the British Library.

Thenaud's last known manuscript, a horoscope for his beloved Francis I, has no direct input into a consideration of the seventy-two names.⁸ It does, however, reflect the Europe-wide interest in linking royalty with the occult, magic, and the esoteric, which commonly included the Kabbalah.

There are two specifically Kabbalistic works by Thenaud. Both were commanded by Francis I and were dedicated to him. The first is *La sainte et très chrestienne cabale metrificée*. The only known copy of this manuscript, which is in verse, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It is dated between September 12, 1519 and September 12, 1520. The manuscript is available online at the QR-code below.⁹



The second is Thenaud's 1522 *Traité de la cabale*. The original is in Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 5061, available at the QR-code below.¹⁰



The second copy of this second Kabblistic manuscript is in Nantes, known as *Introduction en la Cabale. Divisée en sept traictes et par chapitres*, Nantes Médiathèque ms. 521, Fr. 355. It is undated, but my watermark-based research strongly suggests the first quarter of the seventeenth century. In the following image of 108, Courtesy of Nantes Médiathèque, the original has been flipped, inverted, and enhanced.



Ville de Nantes—Bibliothèque municipale: Ms 521

The three compasses which can be discerned in the image were the arms used by two papermaking families, the Leclerc and the Denise. In the opinion of Mr. J. S. G. Simmons, formerly of All Souls College, Oxford, the watermark seems to be more “Denise than Leclerc” and the paper is “second quarter of the seventeenth century.” This has been confirmed by reference to Louis Leclert,

Le Papier. Recherches et notes pour servir à l'histoire du papier (Paris: À l'Enseigne du Pégase, 1926), and by detailed analysis of the watermark.

It is immediately evident from the enhanced image above that the watermark incorporates the name "NICOLAS DENISE." There were two such men. The first Nicolas was the son of Edmond Denise and Anne Nivelles and it is known that he died about 1628–1630. The second Nicolas was baptized on August 4, 1594 and it is known that by 1662 he was already dead (*ne vivait plus*).

It is therefore clear that the late date suggested by Simmons for the Nantes ms. 521 is well-founded, though it could be first quarter of the seventeenth century. The annotations given above are to be considered in the light of the comments in *Le Papier* which concern two images, both of which closely resemble the Nantes ms. 521 watermark under consideration here. There are some small but significant differences. The first image in *Le Papier* which concerns us is Plate XXXIV No. 119. This is not a watermark, but was found printed in red on a ream-wrapper. It includes a crescent, it has numerous jewels in the crown, it is use-dated 1629 and it has "NICOLAS DENISE." The second image is Plate XXXV No. 118 and this is a watermark. However, it shows no crescent, there are three jewels in the crown, it is use-dated 1636–1637, it has "NICOLAS DENISE," but the N is reversed. The conclusion to be drawn is that the Nantes ms. 521 watermark shown above is undoubtedly the one used by Nicolas Denise and that although it shows minor differences from No. 119 in *Le Papier* it is datable to the second quarter of the seventeenth century. This discovery rules out the possibility that Nantes ms. 521 was used by the scribe in the preparation of ms. 5061. The significance of this late date is recognized *infra* in the full treatment of the lists of angels' names.

Additionally, it is to be noted that the front cover of Nantes ms. 521 bears the note: "Ce livre appartient a Claude de Bourges conseiller Secretaire du Roy maison courone de france de ses finances, ancien echevin de la ville de Paris 1654."

To summarize, then, the latest possible date for Nantes ms. 521 is 1654, and the most likely date, based on the watermark study, is second quarter of the seventeenth century. This is a significant discovery, because hitherto no reliable date has been given for Nantes ms. 521.

The third copy of the second Kabbalistic manuscript is in Geneva and dated 1536. It is *Introduction à la Cabale*, ms. Fr. 167 Gen. 1045, available online from Bibliothèque de Genève at the QR-code below.¹¹



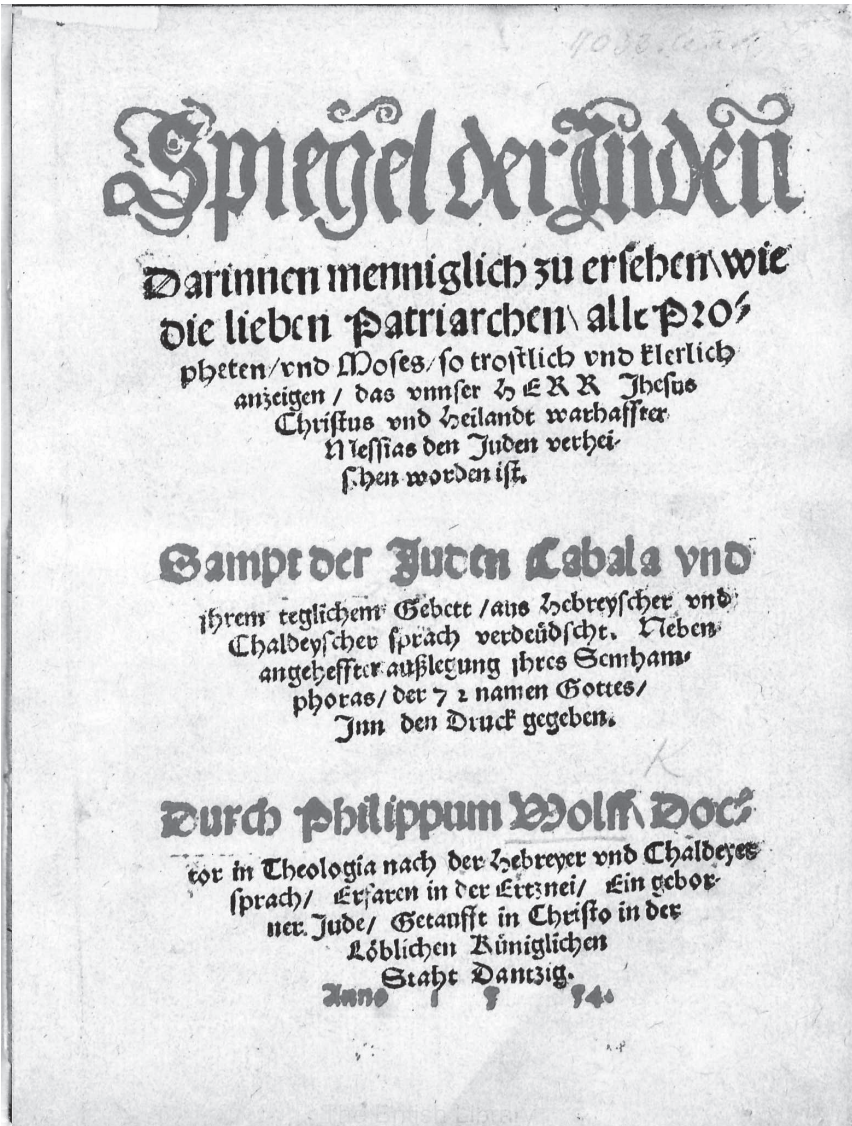
The spine has “OEUURE CABALIS.” The back cover has “Ce liure a escript francoys gryuel demoua Angiers Pour reuerend pere en Dieu FI Tenaud Abbe de Mellynays 1536 le 19e de May.”

All Thenaud’s Kabbalistic manuscripts contain full lists of the seventy-two names and are fully discussed below.

The fourth author is Phillipp Wolff of Danzig. The book concerned is *Spiegel der Juden darinnen menniglich zu ersehen wie die lieben Patriarchen alle Propheten und Moses so trostlich und klerlich anzeigen, das unnser Herr Jhesus Christus und Heilandt wahrhaffter Messias den Juden verheischen worden ist : sampt der Juden Cabala u. ihrem tegl. Gebett, aus hebreyscher u. chaldeyscher sprach verdeutsch ; neben angeheffter außlegung ihres Semhaphoras, der 72 Namen Gottes / inn d. Dr. geg. durch Phillippum Wolff* (Danzig: Hans Weinreich, 1555). The writer has used the British Library General Reference Collection 4033.aa.17 as below. A PDF version up to f. n iii v^o is downloadable from Frankfurt-am-Main university library website at the QR-code below.¹²



In his *Spiegel der Juden* Wolff describes himself on the title page, shown below, as “Doctor in the Theology of Hebrew and Chaldee / Experienced in Medicine / Born a Jew / Baptized in Christ in the Praiseworthy Royal City of Danzig.”



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Note that, although the date on this title page is 1554, the colophon has 1555.

Gedruckt inn der König-
 lichen Stadt Dantzig
 durch Hans Wein-
 reich \ im Jahr
 M. D. LV.
 Mertz im 23.
 (3)

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He not only lists the seventy-two names but the tri-literal basis of each one is also printed in Hebrew. Wolff's list of, and comments on, the seventy-two names are discussed fully below.

The languages used are notable: Reuchlin's manuscripts are in Latin, Luther's early works were in Latin but his later works, such as those noted above, are in German. Thenaud wrote in French, and Wolff wrote in German.

CHAPTER TWO

Comments on the Lists of the Seventy-Two Names

There was widespread use of the number “seventy-two” in Kabbalistic circles and beyond.

The interplay of letters and numbers was central to the Kabbalah. Seventy-two was one of the most commonly cited numbers. In one instance (see Reuchlin, *De Arte Caballistica Libri tres*, referred to below, at L v^o) the value of seventy-two was the sum of the fifty gates and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

At uero illud literarum collegium si quinquaginta portis diligēter applicuerimus, inde septuaginta duorum angelorum fœlicem seriem comperiemus quibus Semhamaphores id est nomen expositorium illud magnum summi dei constare perhibetur. Nā ad quinquaginta uiginti duo addita lxxii. procreabunt.

If we diligently apply ourselves to combine that alphabet to the fifty gates, we find the happy band of the seventy-two angels of the Semhamaphoras, the expository name of the great high God. For fifty and twenty-two come to seventy-two.

In another instance (see Reuchlin *De Arte Caballistica Libri tres* Lii r^o) the value of seventy-two was the sum of the letters of the Tetragrammaton—יהוה (yhyh). The numerical values of individual letters are the following: ה = 5; י = 6; ך = 10.

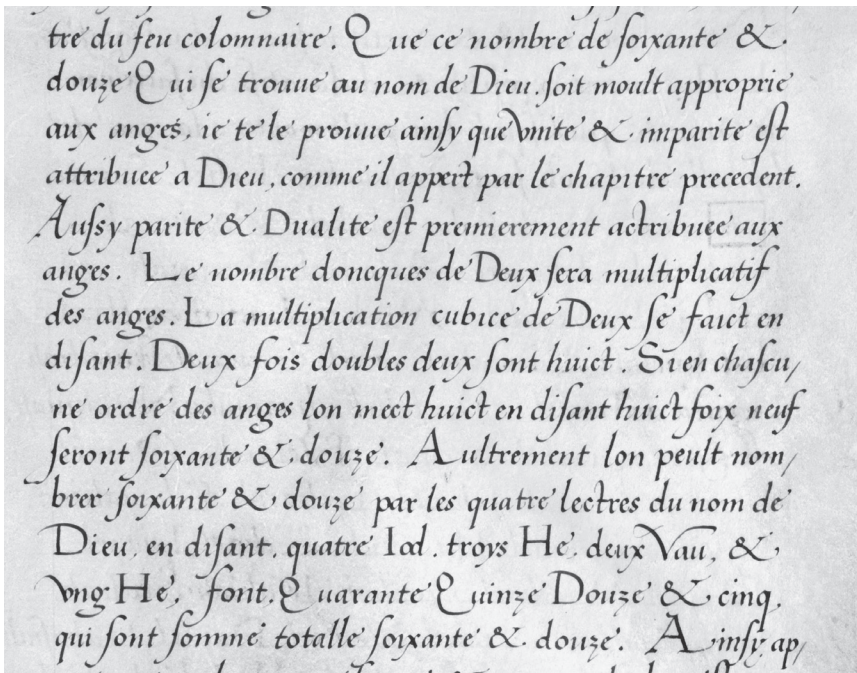
If ך = 10	ה + ך = 15	י + ה + ך = 21	ה + י + ה + ך = 26
so 10	+15	+ 21	+ 26 = 72.

In another instance (see Jean Thenaud, *Introduction à la Cabale*, Geneva reference given below, f. 174 r^o), the number seventy-two has three justifications.

The first justification follows the customary explanation from Exodus 14 based on the seventy palms plus the cloud and the fire. The second justification, as shown in the upper part of the image below, is

that this number of seventy-two is found in the name of God [and] is most appropriate for the angels. I shall prove this because unity and unequality are attributed to God, as is shown in the previous chapter. Thus, parity and duality are primarily attributed to the angels. Therefore, the number of God will be the result of multiplication of the angels. The cubic multiplication of God is made in this way. Twice double two is eight. If in each order of angels there are eight, then eight times nine makes seventy-two.

The third justification, as shown in the lower part of the image below, is: “Alternatively, one can derive seventy-two from the four letters of the name of God by saying, four Iod, three He, two Vau and one He make forty, fifteen, twelve and five which, in sum, come to seventy-two.”



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