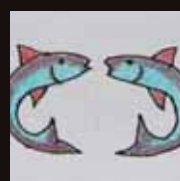
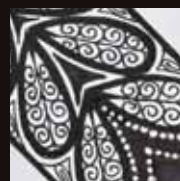
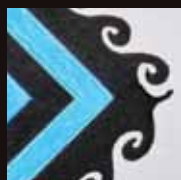


FROM THE BEGINNING



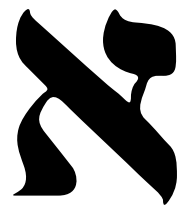
ILLUMINATIONS OF THE ALEFBET

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY LYLE GOORVICH



In loving memory
of my parents,
Saul and Sara Goorvich Z"L

Alef- The Ox



I am Alef- the Ox
Who takes the lead
Pulls the other letters
Into existence

Power
Strength
Oneness

Without Alef there is no Emet - *Truth*
And we would all sleep like a Man of Clay
from Jewish Folktales of the Golem



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



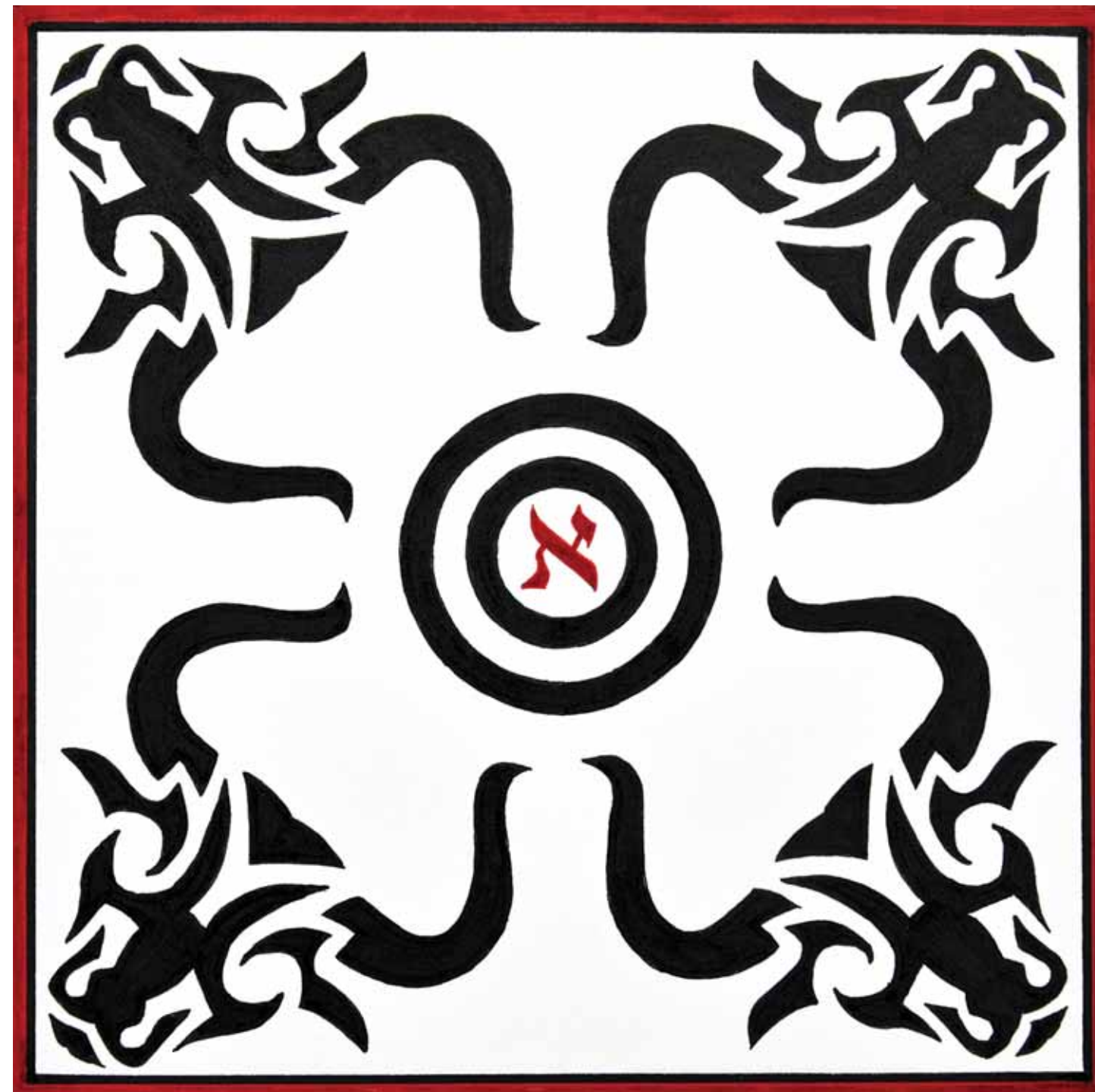
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Bet - the House



I am Bet
Enter
The tent, the house, the family

Cross the threshold into
The Tabernacle
The House of Prayer
Beit Kneset

In - Two
Duality, Division
Man/Woman
The Two Halves of the Law
Oral and Written
Mishnah



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Gimel - the Foot



I am Gimel
 I am motion
 A nation in pursuit of its destiny
 Shelter, Freedom, Sanctuary
 I have carried them from slavery
 And dispersal
 Across deserts, seas, mountains, and rivers
 I bore them all and brought them to
 A Promised Land
 Of milk and honey



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Dalet - the Door

ד

I am Dalet-the Door
Fastened shut and silent
Or left open to the mystery

I am the gateway, the entrance
I may be barred or unlatched
I may forbid your passage
Or summon you inward
I protect you from your enemies
Give admission to your allies

I may be ignored by throngs of passerby
But the Seekers are drawn to me

The Door of Creation



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



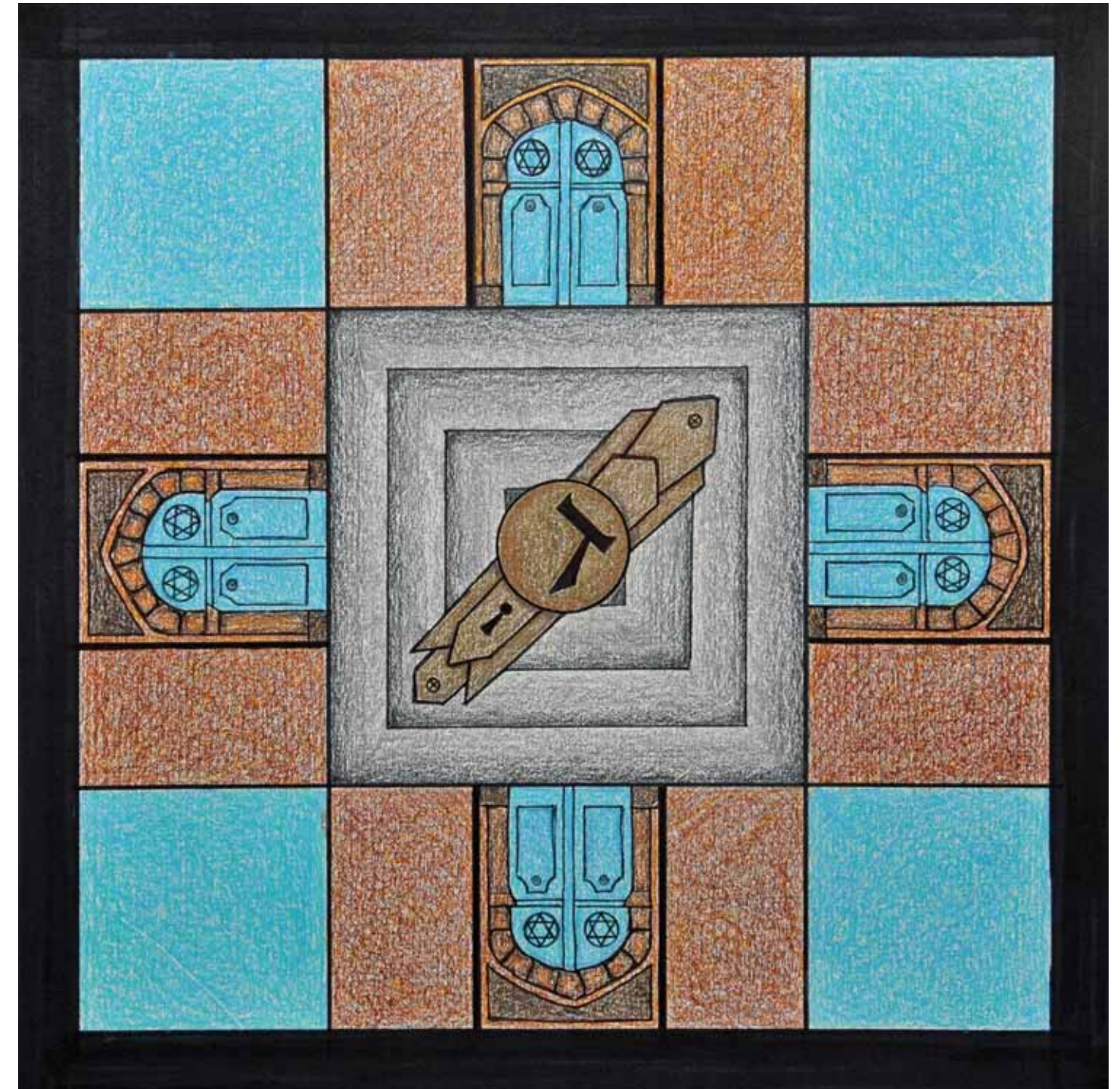
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Hey - Jubilation

ה

I am Hey
Jubilation
Celebration
Watch the people dance
With arms raised to heaven
Their spirits high

Lo!
Behold!
See the wonder
That encompasses us
Embrace it

Hallelujah!



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



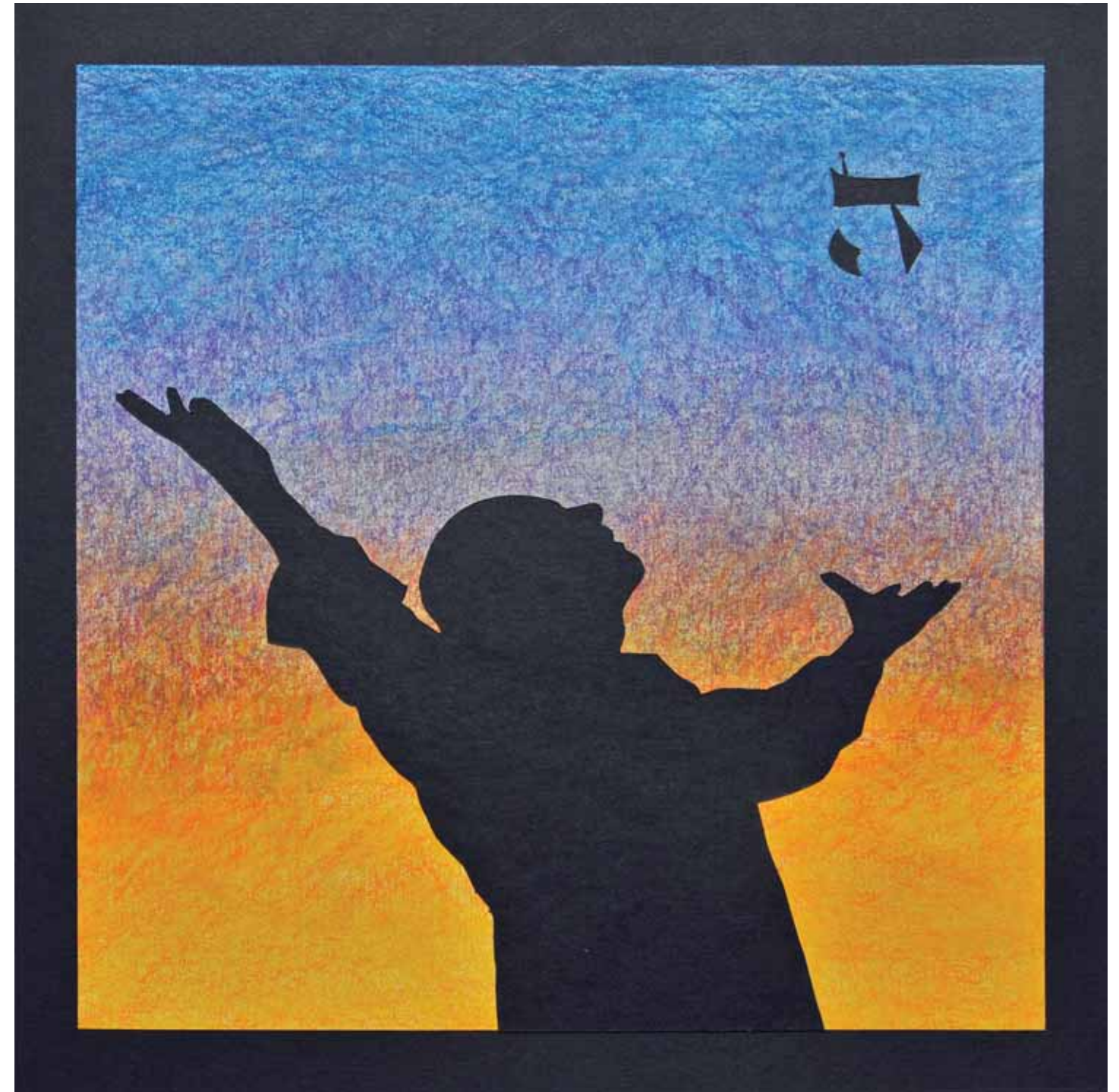
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Vav - the Tent Peg



I am Vav
A small device
But mighty
The nail that holds fast
The hook, the peg
That secures us in our place
Anchors us to the earth
Prevents our families and belongings
From being scattered to the wind

*"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob
Your dwelling places, O Israel"*

Numbers 24:5

UNKNOWN



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



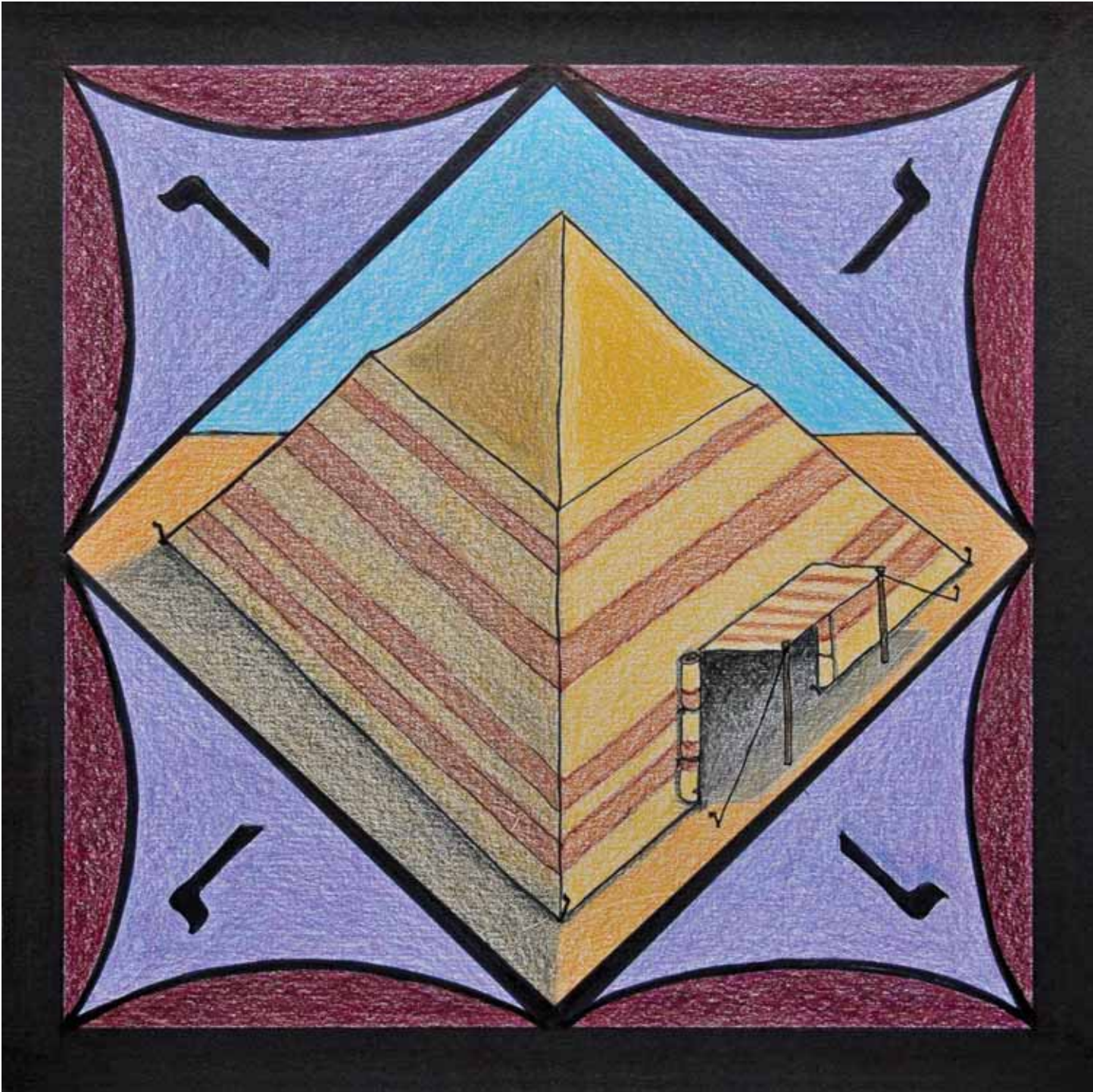
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive







Zayin - the Sword, the Mattock



I am Zayin
I am a tool meant for peace
A plough, a mattock, a scythe
To break ground, till soil, harvest crops

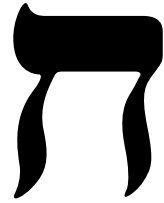
I am Zayin
I am a weapon meant to destroy
A knife, a sword, an axe
To slash flesh, pierce bodies, draw blood

I am Zayin
Am I to be the tool or the weapon?
Who shall decide?

UNKNOWN				
Hieroglyph	Proto-Semitic	Paleo-Hebrew	Aramaic	Cursive



Het - the Wall, or Courtyard



I am Het
Stones that are stacked for purpose
Walls that separate
A private chamber
A courtyard
A partition
A cell
A place where one is segregated
A place where one is private

Divide



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Tet - the Basket

𐤄

I am Tet
I weave and interweave
To fashion and fasten
To circle and splice
And knot together
I spiral, entwine, bind, and surround
Container

I am the basket
Filled to its brim with bounty

Abundance



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Yod - the Closed Hand



I am Yod
The closed hand
The fisted hand and arm
Raised
In defiance
In anger
In protest
In threat
As power
As weapon
As strength
As judgement

"And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm"

Deuteronomy 26:8



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



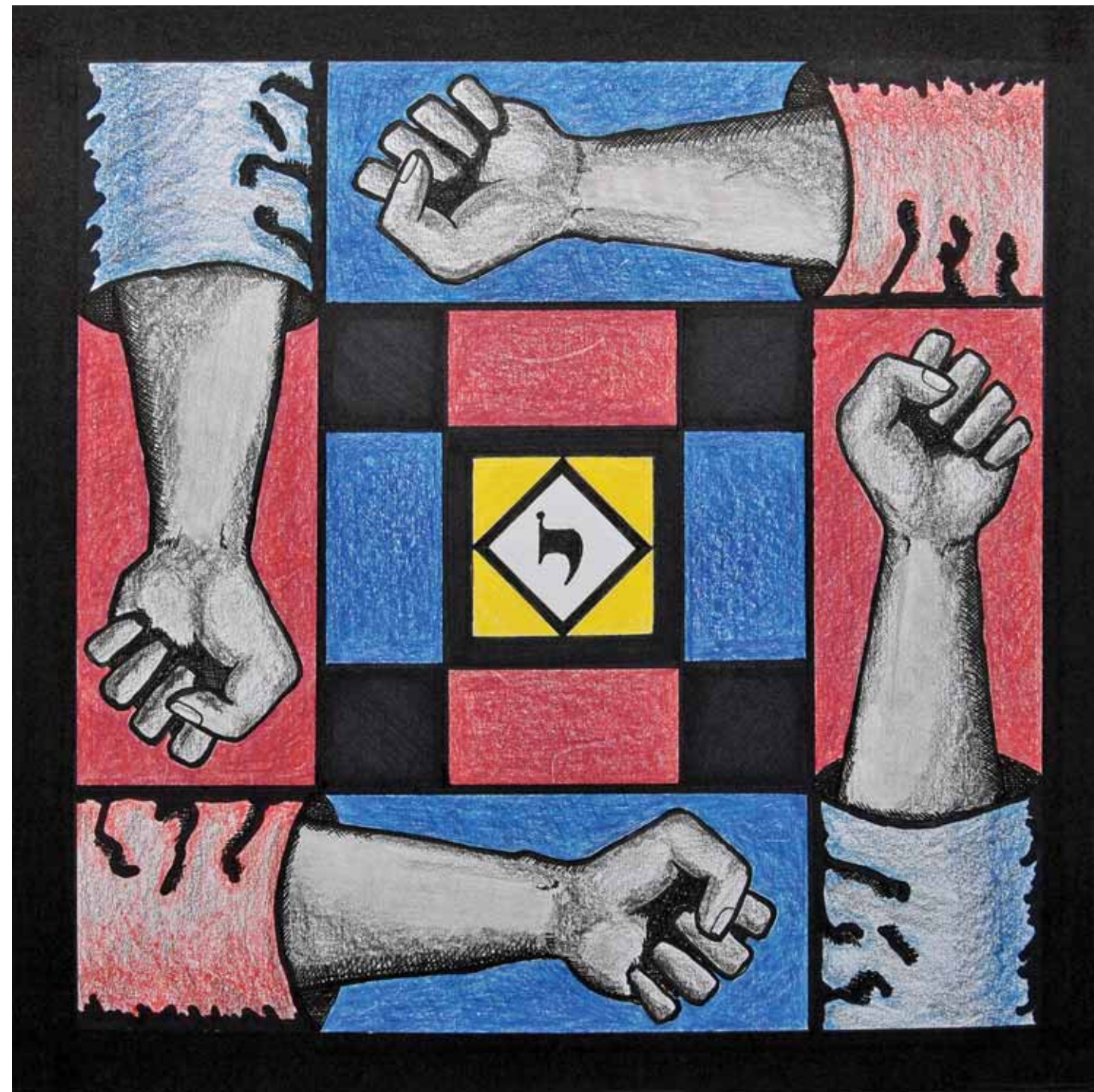
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Khaf - the Open Hand

כ

I am Khaf
The outstretched hand
The palm extended
I signal you to rise
Be uplifted

I am the talisman hand
To ward off evil
Subdue fate
Protect

I am the hand that tames
And gently bends a will to its own
The cupped hand that waits to receive
Or turns to offer

Open



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Lamed - the Shepherd's Staff



I am Lamed
The Shepherd's Staff
At times a guide
At other times a goad

Some choose learning for its own sake
Some must be guided to partake
The shepherd cannot choose for each sheep
His portion is to protect the herd
The teacher cannot choose for each student
Her portion is to impart the knowledge

When presented with wisdom we must each decide
Will we be goaded or guided
Or will we choose a portion of each?



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



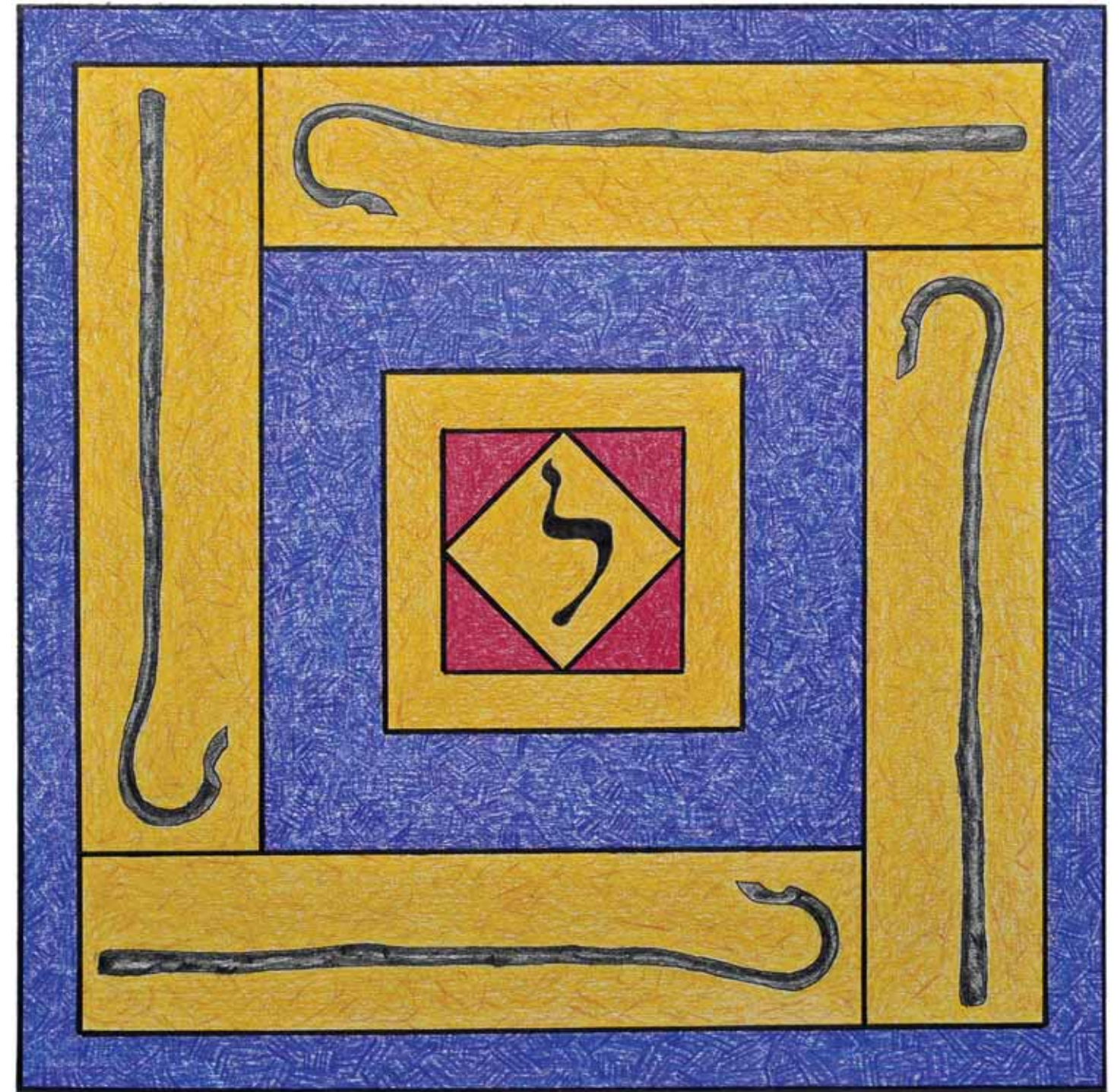
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Mem - the Water



I am Mem - the Water
Placid, orderly, and contained
Raging, chaotic, and boundless

I bear you and your cargo
To your destinations
Offer up my great bounty to you

I cleanse and I purify
Where there is water there is life
Safeguard and preserve me

Source



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Nun - the Sprout



I am Nun - the Sprout
I am that which grows and is renewed
I am the blossom
And the fruit thereof

I am the promise of a new generation
Of increase and abundance
I am the symbol of your descendants
And the desire of life to perpetuate

Heir



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



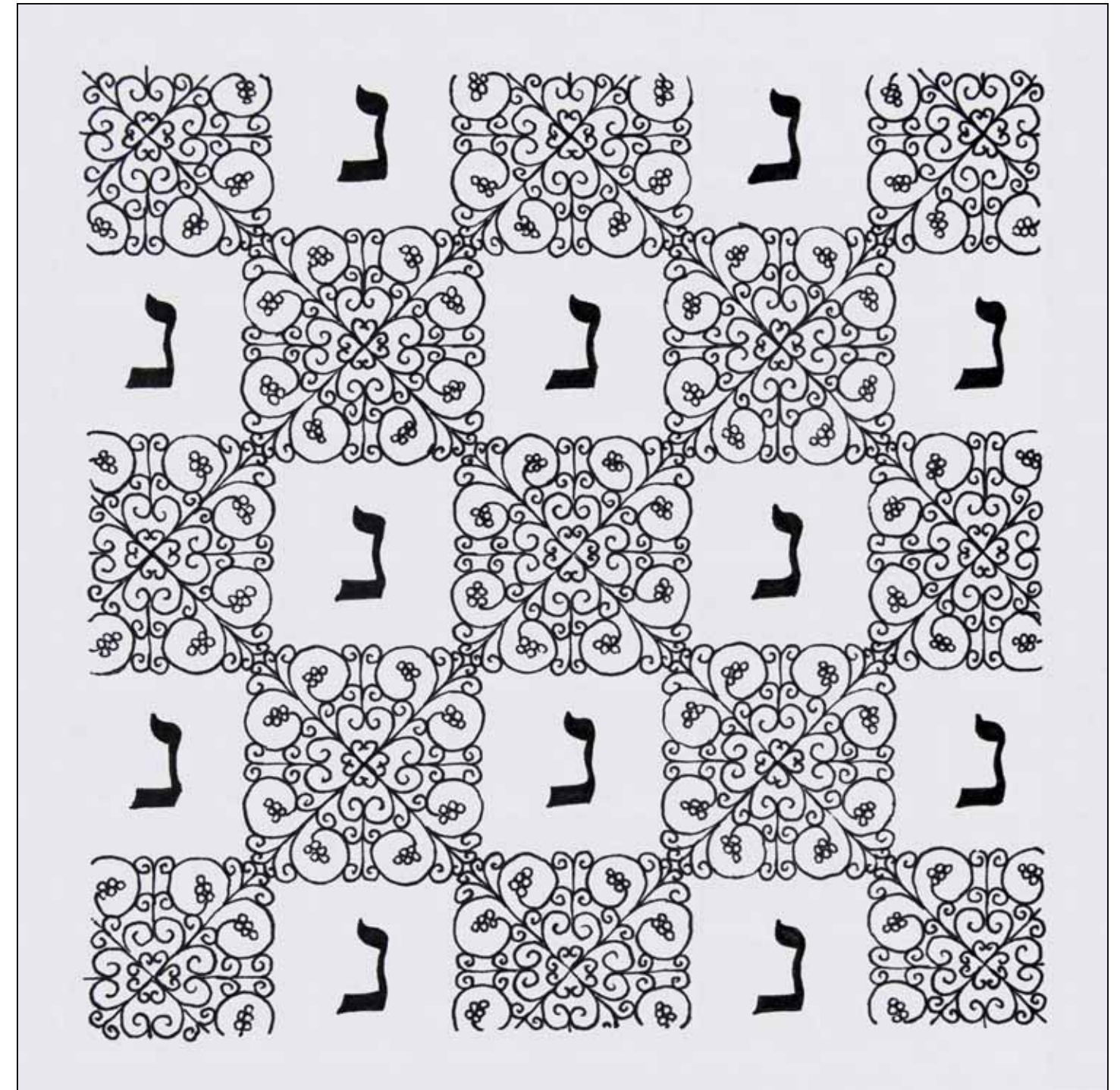
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Samech - the Column

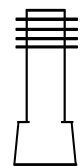
ס

I am Samech - the Column
I am static strength and reliability
I endeavour to support and sustain
I maintain and uphold
I am foundation and longevity

I remain steady
I remain your champion
Draw your strength from me

*"The pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and He has set the world upon them"*

1 Samuel 2:8



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



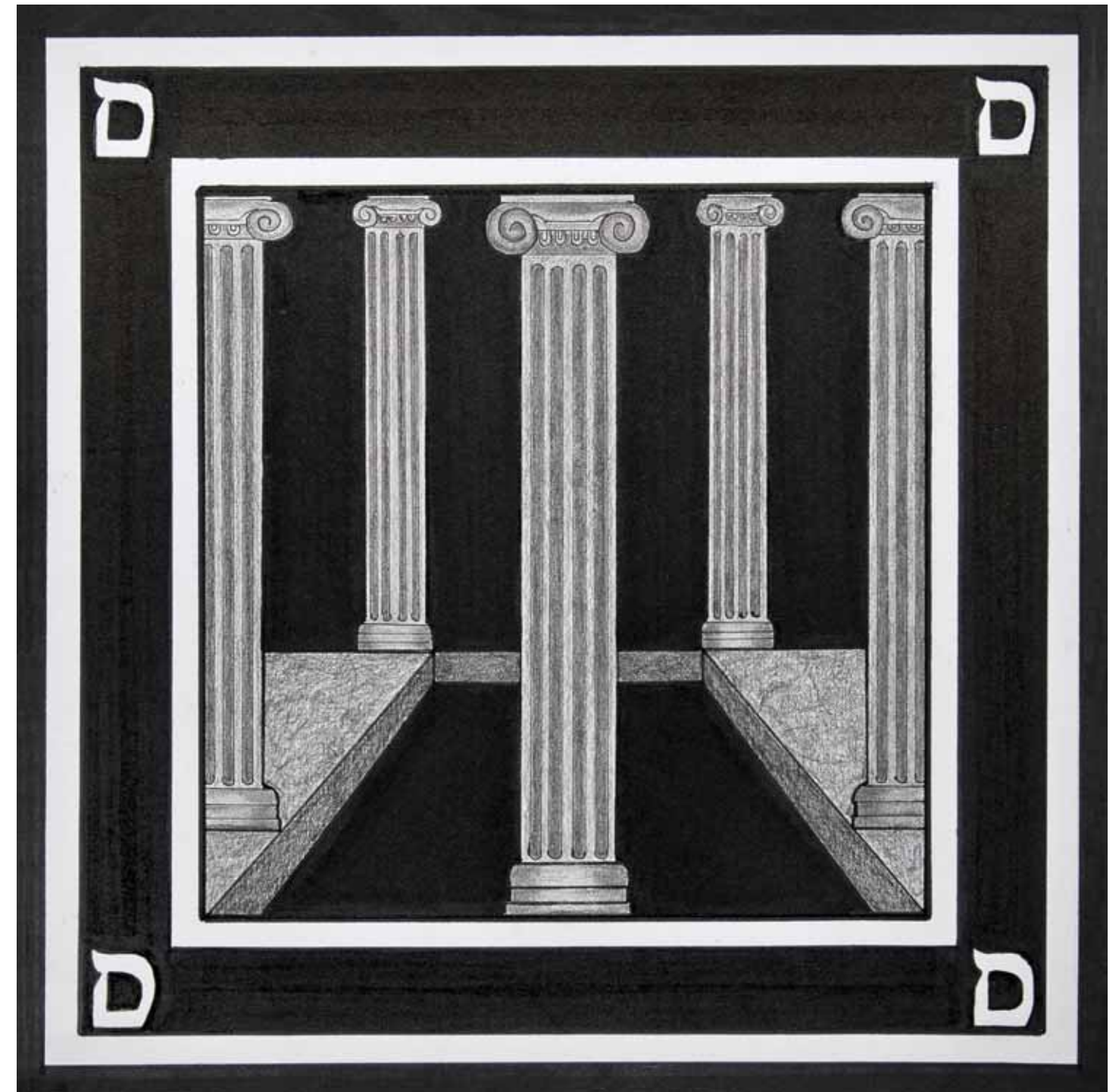
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Ayin - the Eye



I am Ayin - the Eye
I am silent and a sentinel
I examine, observe, and record
I look outward
Yet reveal what is inward

I am a window for expression
A fountain for emotion
A spring in the desert
A mirror for the soul



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



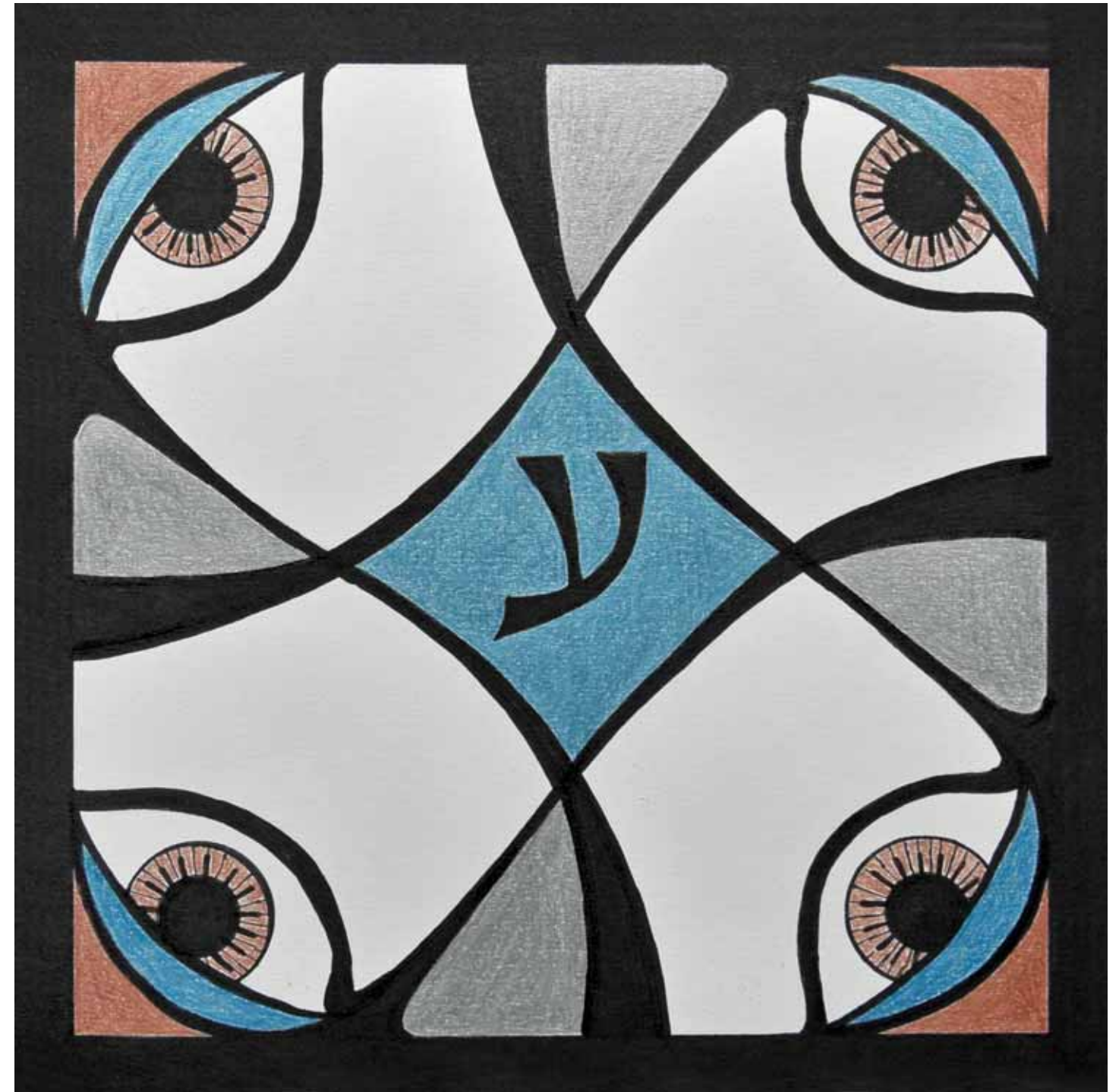
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Peh - the Mouth

פ

I am Peh - the Mouth
I animate your thoughts
Give expression to your emotions
Bring sustenance to your body
I draw your first breath in the light
Your last breath in the dark

I shape the words
And speak of love
Or speak of hate
I ascend to wisdom
Or descend to idle gossip
I am brother to the wind
Who scatters and blows
You make a wish
And hope to grow



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



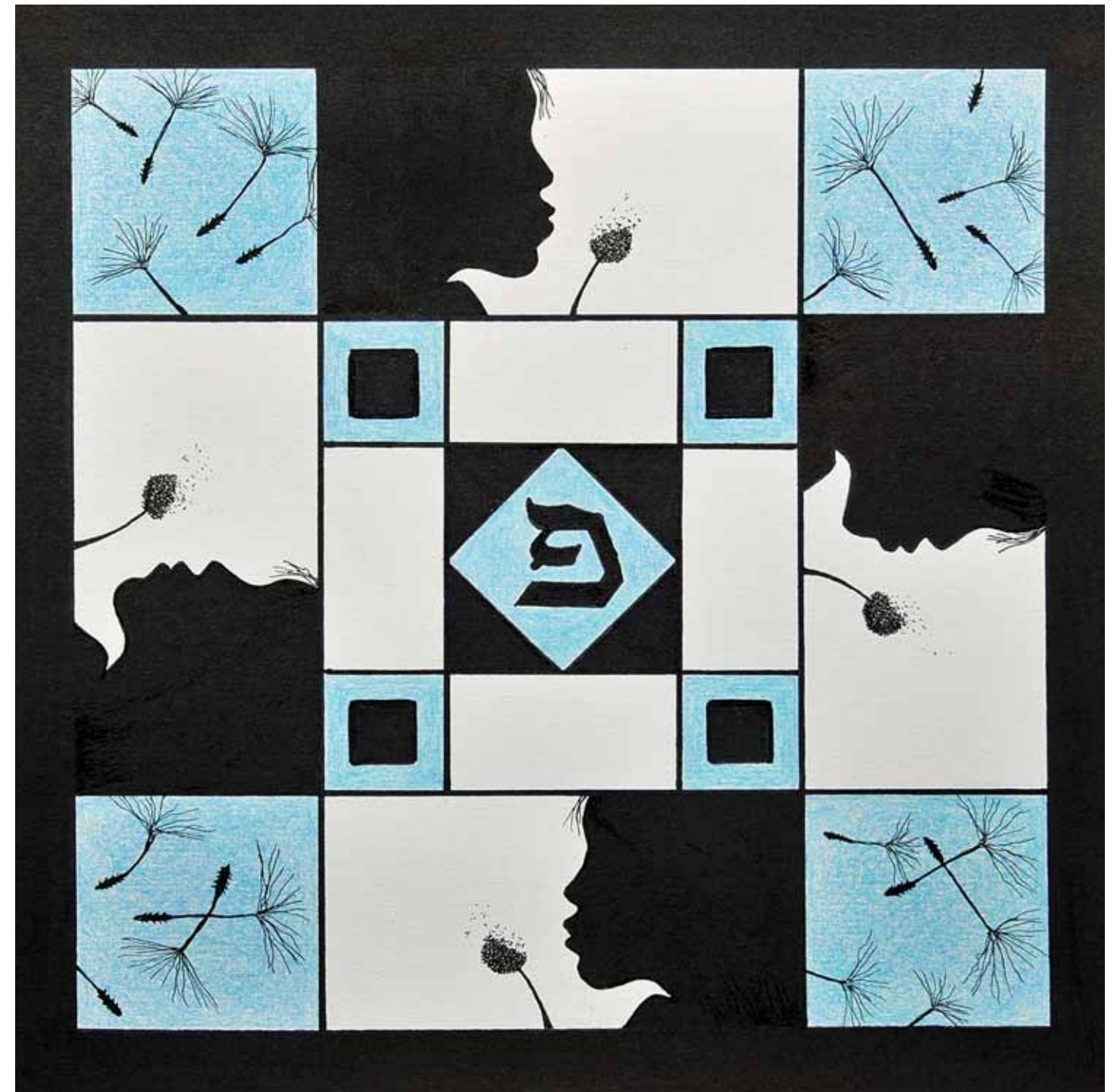
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Tsadi - the Fish Hook



I am Tsadi
The hook of the angler
The barb
I am the trawler of fish
I set my lines, my nets, my traps
I construct my weir
Wooden posts and wattle
Or stacks of stones

I tempt my prey with easy access
And secure it with difficult escape

By my labour
I bring home the bounty of
Rivers, lakes, and seas

I sustain



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



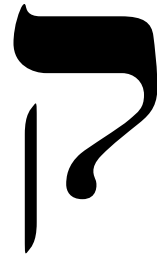
Aramaic



Cursive



Kuf - the Sun at the Horizon



I am Kuf
I am the sun at the horizon
I am the circuit of time
I am dawn
And I am dusk

I am the assurance of cycles renewed
I am the compass of the heavens
The rhythmic rise and fall
Ascent, Descent
I am forever new
Forever old

Eternal



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



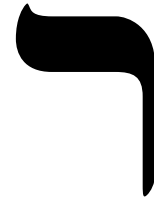
Aramaic



Cursive



Resh - the Head



I am Resh - the Head
Marked out from the crowd
The leader
The guide
The artist
The prophet
The first, the uppermost

Be wary if I am arrogant and boastful
Seek those
With wisdom and conviction

Chosen



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



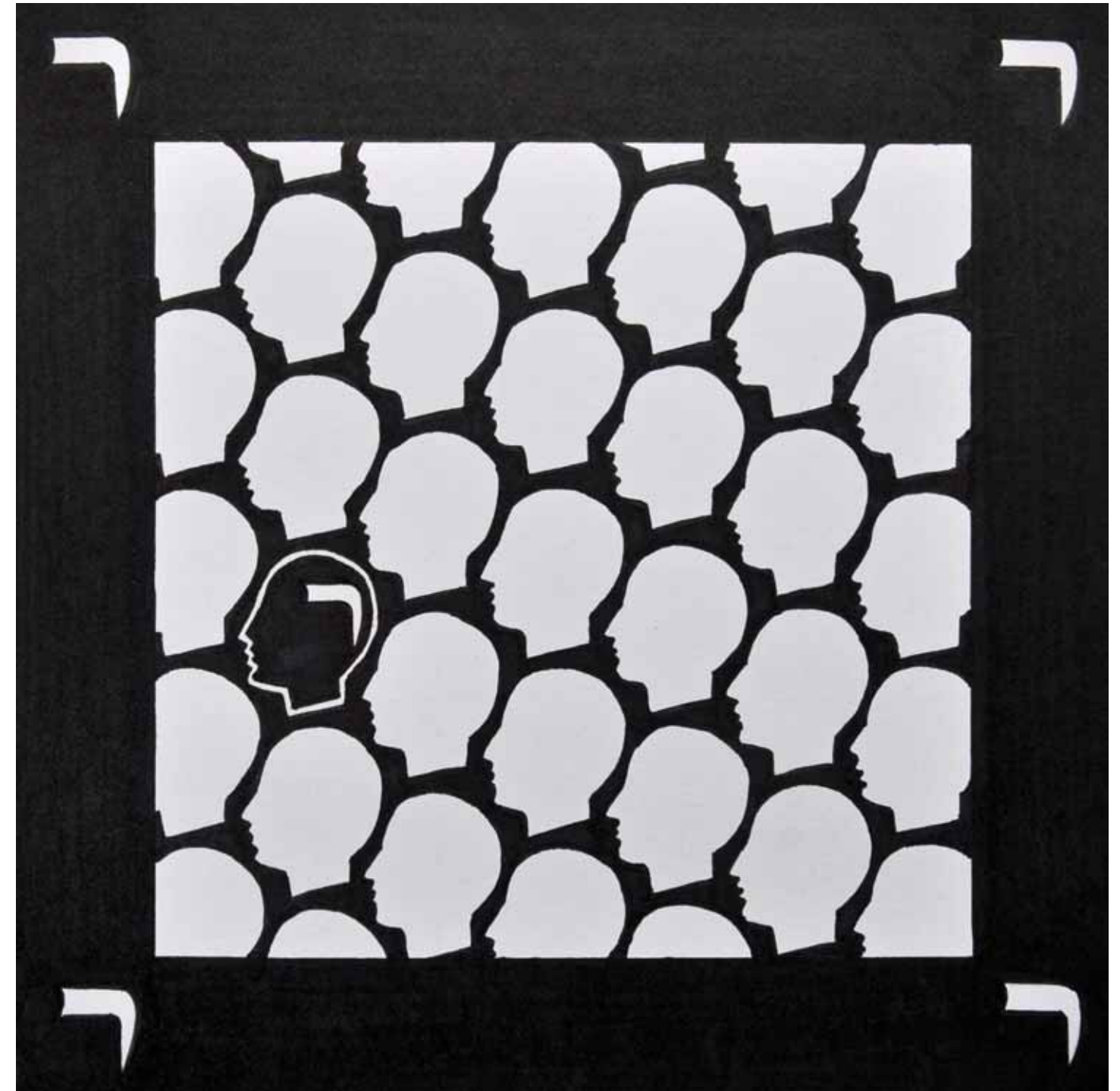
Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Shin - the Incisors



I am Shin
Symbol of the Shema
Upon your doorposts and gates
I remind you of its commands
And your vow
To bear the words in your heart
Bind them as a sign upon your hand
And as frontlets between your eyes
To speak them along the way
And when you lie down and rise up
I who cut and carve
Am your servant in this labour

"V'shinantam l'vanecha"
And you shall teach them incisively to your children

That they be engraved upon the generations

UNKNOWN



Hieroglyph

Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



Cursive



Tav - the Crossed Sticks



I am Tav - the Crossed Sticks
The sign of a destination
The mark of a journey completed
A place that was sought is found
A summit that has been attained
A limit defined
A conclusion reached

The symbol of a covenant sealed

UNKNOWN



Hieroglyph



Proto-Semitic



Paleo-Hebrew



Aramaic



The Alefbet Project

Language makes communication possible and written language ensures our communications will have a degree of permanence. The Hebrew language is an ancient one and its three thousand year old alphabet, it may be argued, is one of the oldest if not the oldest still in use.

The letters of the Hebrew alefbet had their origins in a time when common objects, ideas, and gestures were first represented as pictograms or hieroglyphs. These gradually evolved into simpler forms (letters) associated with specific sounds. Finally, these letters and their sounds evolved into the words of written language.

The Hebrew letters have been the subject of much dissertation and interpretation throughout history. Each letter has been ascribed its own mystical powers and symbolism as a building block of creation and the scaffolding of the Torah. The letters have long held mystery and meaning for both scholars and artists. Aesthetically I have always admired their form, but I wanted to know more about the primordial configuration of each letter. What was the pictogram from which it had it evolved, was there always a relationship between its form and its name, and how had that changed or evolved over time?

I had the rudiments of the answers I sought from my introduction to Hebrew as a child. It was then, sitting in my desk at school that I learned the literal meaning of certain letters. Bet was a house, Dalet a door, Yod, a fist, Peh, the mouth. I envisioned how the shapes of these letters were reminiscent of their namesakes. I could see the Bet had a roof and its open side was

an entrance. Dalet looked like a doorway missing one post. Yod was a clearly a clenched fist. Peh I imagined had a tongue wagging in an open mouth.

These early impressions stayed with me as I researched the letters' elemental origins. Soon my understanding and appreciation expanded. Letters which in my youth offered only a portion of their meaning became more complete. For example, Lamed, which I knew meant to learn was revealed to me as having evolved from a glyph of a shepherd's crook. This uncovered much about its form and made multiple interpretations of the nature of learning itself imaginable.

Research led me to the many concepts and speculations on the subject. Gradually, as I sketched and planned, each letter found its own expression. Working with the letters' physical properties and knowledge of their origins and attributes, I searched for a way to create a pictorial representation that might express their essence. As my work progressed I developed a relationship with each letter and the alefbet as a whole. I felt that each of the letters needed not only a pictorial illumination, but also its own narrative, and so a text accompanying each drawing evolved.

Finally, it seemed important to include a table illustrating the chronological evolution of each letter's form to assist the reader to visualize how both the letter and my depiction unfolded. With this book, I offer these images and their narratives as a tribute to these ancient, mysterious, and beautiful letters.

Numerical Values

	Alef	1		Lamed	30
	Bet	2		Mem	40
	Gimel	3		Nun	50
	Dalet	4		Samech	60
	Hey	5		Ayin	70
	Vav	6		Peh	80
	Zayin	7		Tsadi	90
	Het	8		Kuf	100
	Tet	9		Resh	200
	Yod	10		Shin	300
	Khaf	20		Tav	400

Acknowledgements

Thank-you to my wife Lisa Pearlman for her invaluable
input and support throughout this project.

Special thanks to Paul Miszczyk for his beautiful photography,
and Lionel Morise for his guidance, inspiration,
and talents as the graphic designer.

Thanks to my children Saul and Anna for their enthusiasm.

Finally, thank-you to, Shayona Panth, Sonia Halpern,
Lawrence Burden, Monda Halpern and Don Abelson,
for their positive feedback and professional counsel.

