

## Sample Spells from the Ancient World

### Swarm of Bees Charm

Settle down, victory-women,  
never be wild and fly to the woods.  
Be as mindful of my welfare,  
as is each man of border and of home.[8]

### Nine Herbs Charm

The Nine Herbs Charm is an Old English charm recorded in the 10th-century[1] Lacnunga manuscript.[2]  
The charm is intended for the treatment of poisoning and infection by a preparation of nine herbs

The poem contains one of two Old English mentions of Woden in Old English poetry; the other is Maxims I of the Exeter Book. The paragraph reads as follows:

A snake came crawling, it bit a man.  
Then Woden took nine glory-twigs,  
Smote the serpent so that it flew into nine parts.  
There apple brought this pass against poison,  
That she nevermore would enter her house.[1]

### Merserberg Charm I

The Merseburg Incantations or Merseburg Charms (German: die Merseburger Zaubersprüche) are two medieval magic spells, charms or incantations, written in Old High German. They are the only known examples of Germanic pagan belief preserved in this language.

Once sat women,

They sat here, then there.

Some fastened bonds,

Some impeded an army,

Some unraveled fetters:

Escape the bonds,

flee the enemy![1]

### Merserberg Charm II

Phol and Wodan were riding to the woods,

and the foot of Balder's foal was sprained

So Sinthgunt, Sunna's sister, conjured it.

and Frija, Volla's sister, conjured it.

and Wodan conjured it, as well he could:

Like bone-sprain, so blood-sprain,

so joint-sprain:

Bone to bone, blood to blood,

joints to joints, so may they be mended.[10]

## Book of the Dead spells

The purpose of this spell was to ensure the owner could demonstrate his knowledge of religious secrets if challenged in the afterlife.[10] It is first known as Spell 335 of the Coffin Texts.[9] Part of the spell, as found in the Papyrus of Ani, reads:

“All the evil which was on me has been removed.

What does that mean? It means that I was cleansed on the day of my birth in the two great and noble marshes which are in Heracleopolis on the day when the common folk make offerings to the Great God who is therein.”

What are they? 'Eternity' is the name of one; 'sea' is the name of the other. They are the Lake of Natron and the Lake of Maat.

Otherwise said: 'Eternity governs' is the name of one; 'Sea' is the name of the other.

Otherwise said: 'Seed of Eternity' is the name of one; 'sea' is the name of the other. As for that Great God who is therein, he is Ra himself

—Book of the Dead, spell 17.[11]

O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my different forms! Do not stand up as a witness against me, do not be opposed to me in the tribunal, do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance, for you are my ka which was in my body, the protector who made my members hale. Go forth to the happy place whereto we speed, do not make my name stink to the Entourage who make men. Do not tell lies about me in the present of the god. It is indeed well that you should hear!

—Book of the Dead, spell 30B[20]

To stop the dead being harmed by crocodiles in the afterlife.

Get back! Retreat! Get back, you dangerous one! Do not come against me, do not live by my magic; may I not have to tell this name of yours to the Great God who sent you; 'Messenger' is the name of one, and Bedty is the name of the other. The crocodile speaks: 'Your face belongs to righteousness. The sky encloses the stars, magic encloses its settlements, and my mouth encloses the magic which is in it. My teeth are a knife, my tusks are the Viper Mountain. The deceased replied: 'O you with a spine who would work your mouth against this magic of mine, no crocodile which lives by magic shall take it away'

—Book of the Dead, spell 31[6]