# RUNES

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The term *Runes* can be used to describe any magical marking or form of writing, but is most often used to refer to the ancient Germanic alphabet. This alphabet, which is also sometimes called Futhark after its initial letters, or the Futhark Runes, was developed in Northern Europe sometime around the year 1 AD using the Latin and Greek alphabets as models. It is generally thought that the Runic alphabet was developed in Denmark, where the oldest-known inscriptions are found. The Runic alphabet was used throughout Scandinavia and Germania over a period of many hundreds of years. Viking adventurers carried the alphabet far and wide in their travels.

There are many variations on the Runic alphabet, as is to be expected in an alphabet so long in use. The form we are using here are the Germanic Runes. The Runes are very rectilinear in form, because they were developed to be carved, rather than written. And indeed, many Runic inscriptions carved in stone have survived; 3,000 in Sweden alone. Other inscriptions carved in more perishable materials such as wood or ivory are more rare. Often, the Runes appear to have been painted with red paint after being carved, presumably to magically empower them, for one of the chief uses of Runes was for magic.

The original Runes were divided into three *Aettir*, or groups of eight, whose meanings were considered to be related. The first of the Aettir belonged to Freya, the second to Hagal, and the third to Tyr.

In latter centuries, the Runes underwent a number of reorganizations and transformations. Beginning about 600 AD, two strikingly different traditions took shape. The Germanic tribes of England and western Europe began to expand the Runic alphabet to better fit the needs of their language, which would eventually become English. Meanwhile the Germanic peoples of Scandinavia were doing the opposite, reducing both the number and the shape of their Runes. However, the Scandinavians so simplified the Runes that they became inadequate for writing their language and so had to then create new Runes to replace the Runes they had discarded. The most extreme of these unwieldy “simplifications” are the so-called “Staveless Runes,” which removed the vertical elements (Staves) of many of the Runes, leaving them extremely difficult to read.
Those who worked with Runes were known as *Vitka* or *Witka*, a term which may possibly be related to the word *Witch*.

# Divination with Runes

In recent years, divination with Runes has become extremely popular. Though Runes were certainly used in magic by the ancient Germanic peoples, it is a subject of debate whether or not the Runes were used for divination. Most people feel that the use of Runes for divination is a modern practice, but that certainly does not make it in any way illegitimate.

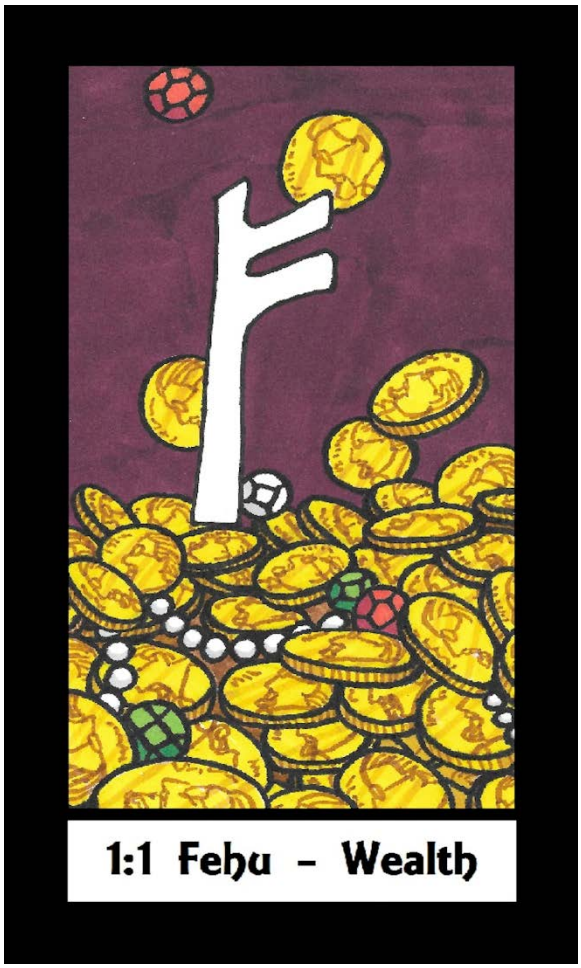
Most people who use Runes for divination have a set of Runestones, actual stones, or lots made from wood or plaster upon which the individual symbols of the Runic alphabet have been painted or carved. The querent may be asked to randomly draw these stones from a bag or basket to get the answer to their question. The Rune Reader may simply ask for a Runestone or number of Runestones, which are then read according to their meaning, or the Runestones may be laid out in patterns similar to Tarot spreads.

Today, Runes are also made in the form of cards as is the case here. This is definitely a modern innovation but no less effective than the more traditional Runestones and more convenient for many people.

As has been remarked, there are many versions of the Runic alphabet; here is a commonly encountered version of Germanic Futhark:

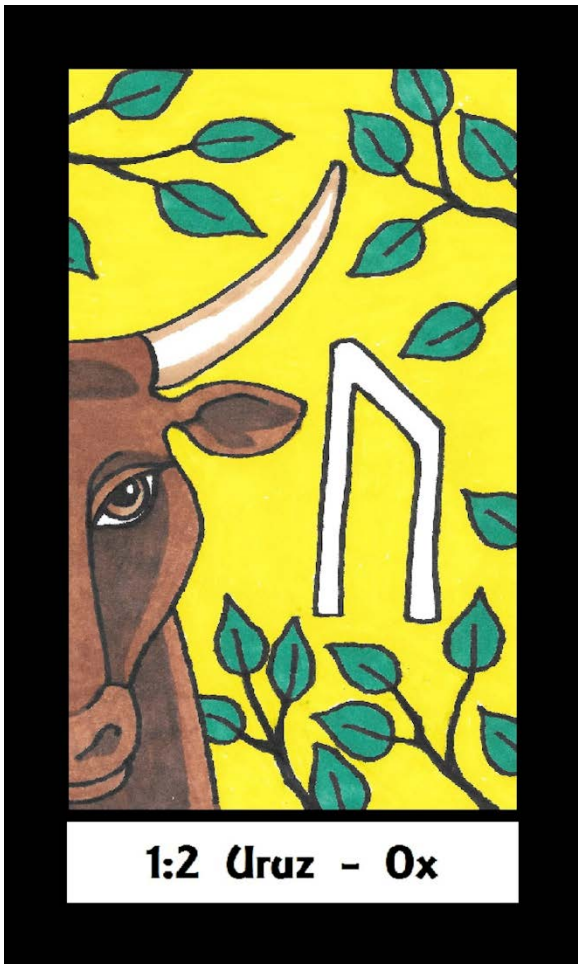
# The First Aett

## FEHU




(The letter “F”) Called Fehu, meaning “Cattle,” this Rune represents money, prosperity, and success.

# Uruz

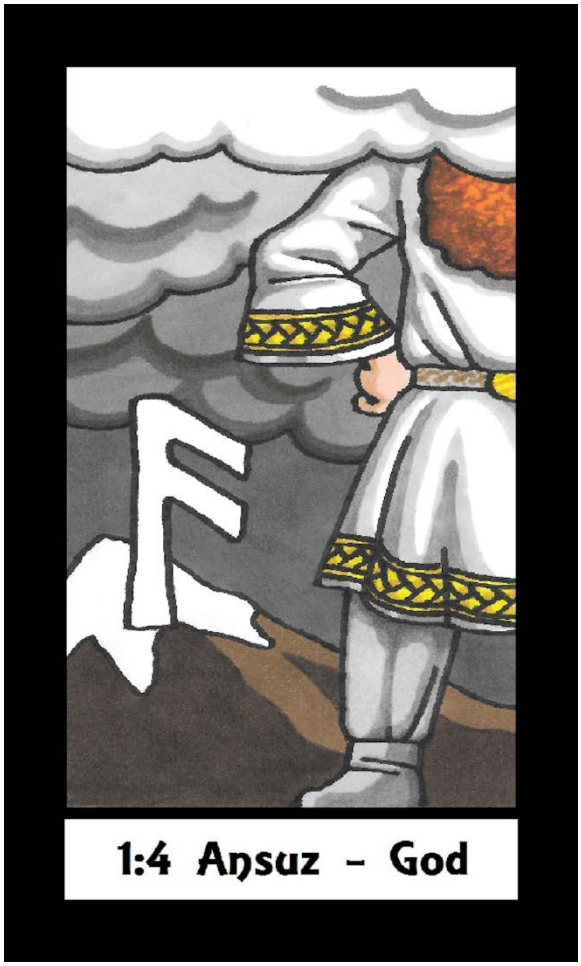



(The letter “U”) Called Uruz, referring to the “Aurochs,” an ancient kind of wild cattle, this Rune means strength of will, determination, and perseverance.

# THURISAZ

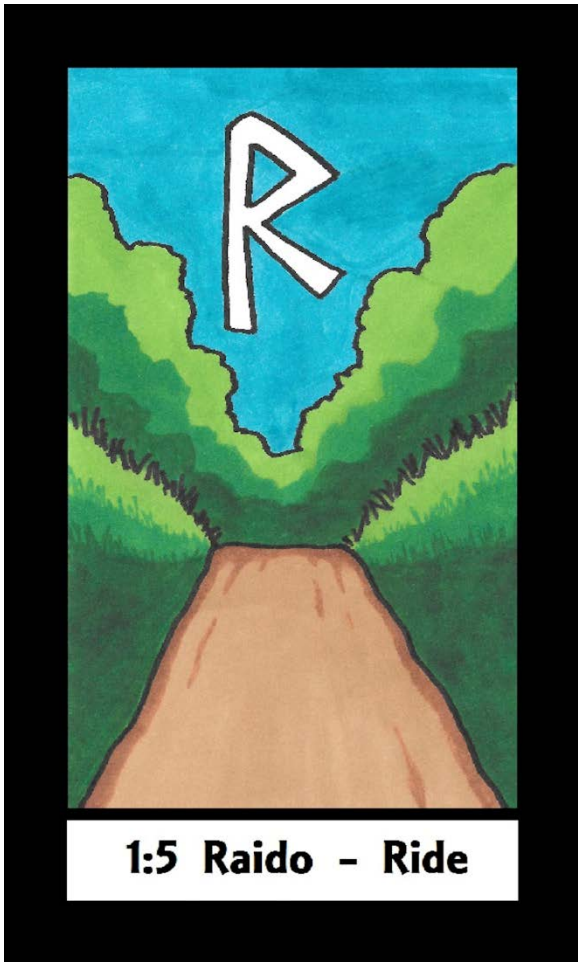
(The letter “Th”) Called Thurisaz, meaning “Giant,” this Rune indicates a time of waiting before progress can occur. A time to re-examine and re-assess our situations and to gather the tools we need for the time coming when things will move forward.

# Ansuz



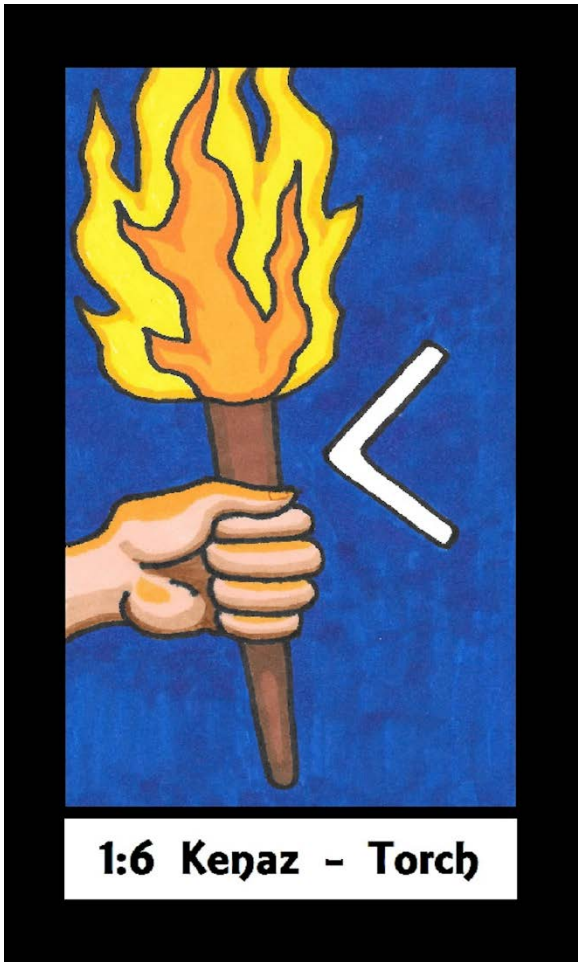

(The letter “A”) Called Ansuz, meaning “God,” a title of Odin, this Rune represents wisdom, insight, and self-mastery; Having within ourselves the knowledge we need to get what we want from the situation.

# Raido




(The letter “R”) Called Raido, meaning “Ride” or “Chariot,” this Rune indicates communication, messages, getting to the truth of situations, and constructive interaction with others.

# Kenaz




(The letter “K”) Called Kenaz, meaning “Torch” or “inflammation,” this Rune means disappointment or dissatisfaction with a situation, a need to heal or fix something.

# Gebo

(The letter “G”) Called Gebo, meaning “Gift,” this Rune represents receiving or achieving something we have wanted, having our desire, a goal accomplished.

# Wunjo

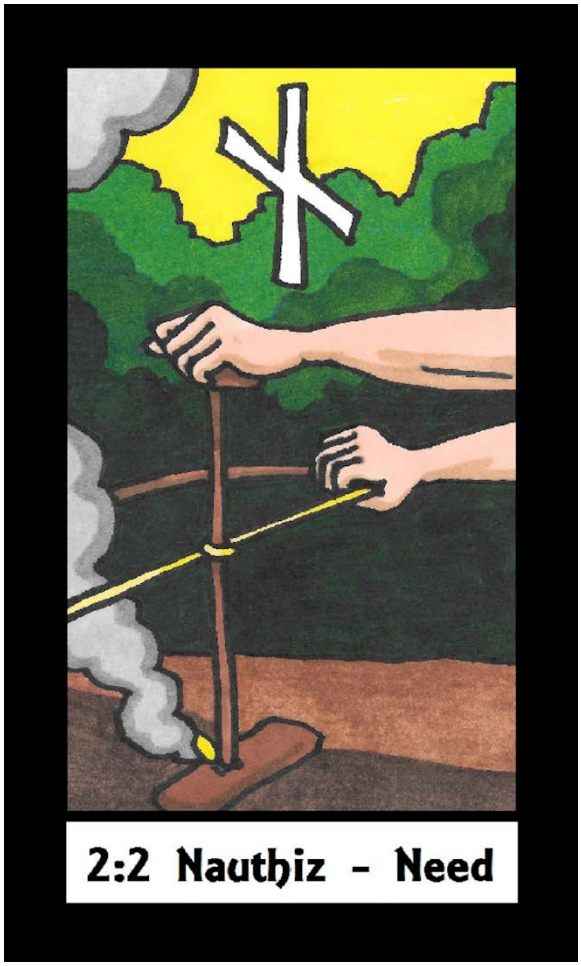
(The letter “W”) Called Wunjo, or “Joy,” this Rune represents happiness, pleasure, and having many blessings.

# The Second Aett

# Hagalaz

(The letter “H”) Called Hagalaz, meaning “Hail,” this Rune represents situations beyond our control, setbacks, delays, and the need for clearer understanding before proceeding.

# Nauthiz




(The letter “N”) Called Nauthiz, meaning “Need,” this Rune indicates the need not to be overwhelmed by our emotions and fears, but rather to step back and more coolly assess the situation –which may not be nearly as bad as it first seems.

# Isaz

(The letter “I”) Called Isaz, meaning “Ice,” this Rune represents lack of movement, situations at a standstill, and inability to move forward at this time.

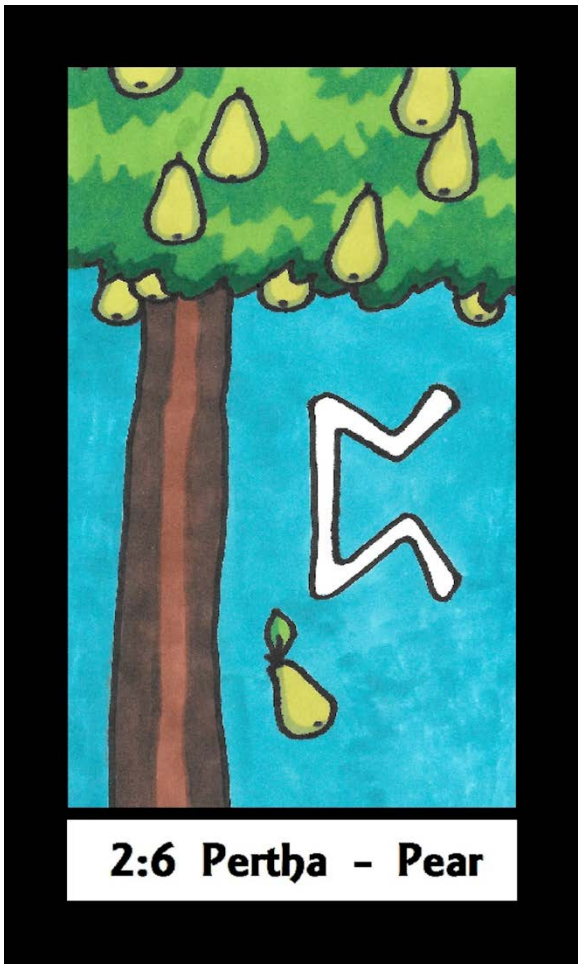
# Jera

(The letter “J”) Called Jera, meaning “Year,” this Rune represents prosperity and good fortune.

# Eiwaz

(The letter “E”) Called Eiwaz, meaning “Yew Tree,” this Rune represents the end of a problem, a positive change in situation, and overcoming adversity.

# Pertha




(The letter “P”) Called Pertha, meaning “Fruit Tree,” this Rune represents positive effects from fate, chance happenings, and unexpected benefit or gain.

# Algiz

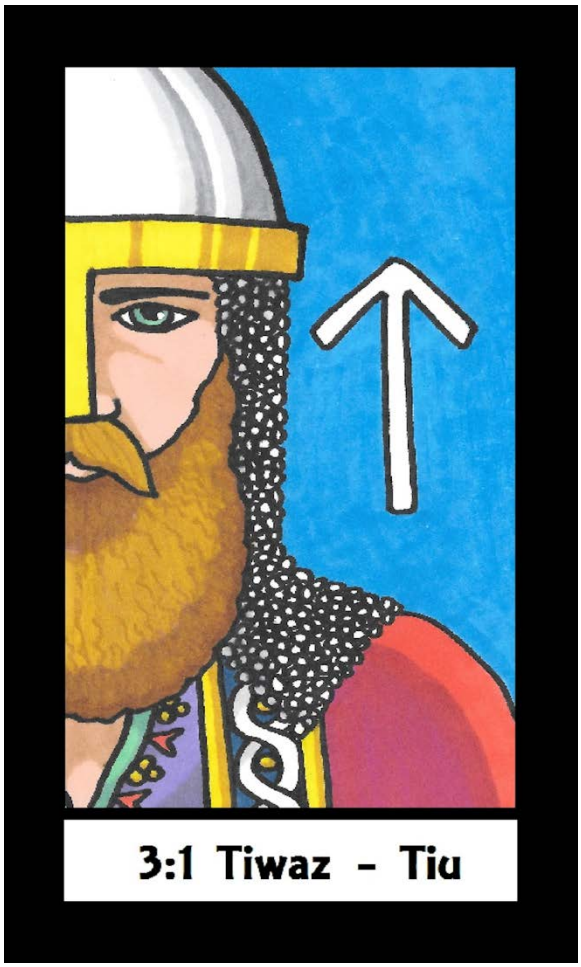
(The letter “Z”) Called Algiz, meaning the “European Elk” (which is also the American Moose), this Rune shows success through effort, the overcoming of obstacles, the achievement of our goals despite difficulty or opposition. It indicates that effort will be required, but success can be had.

# Sowelu

(The letter “S”) Called Sowelu, meaning “Sun,” this Rune represents change, reversal of circumstances, change of plans; current conditions will pass away and be replaced by very different, perhaps unexpected ones.

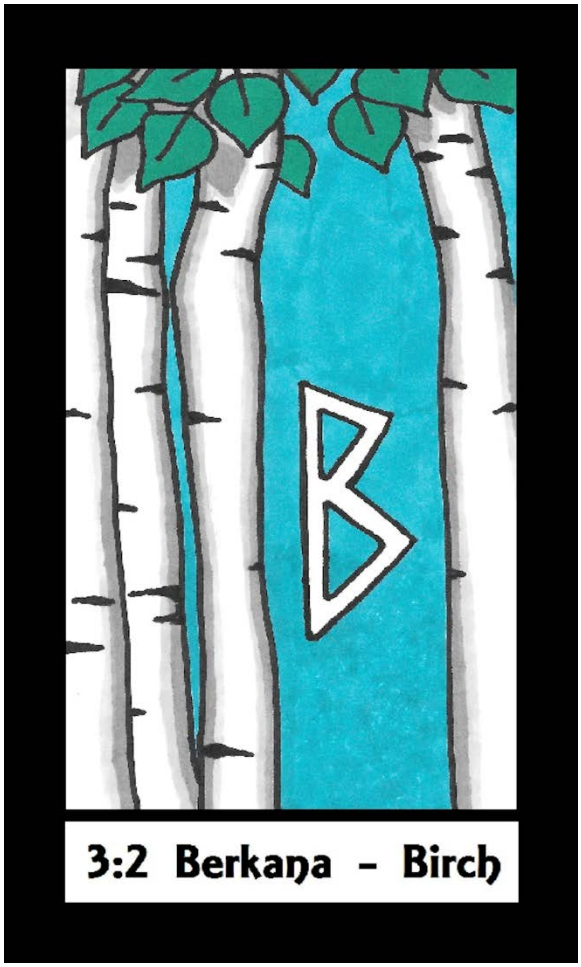
# The Third Aett

## Tiwaz



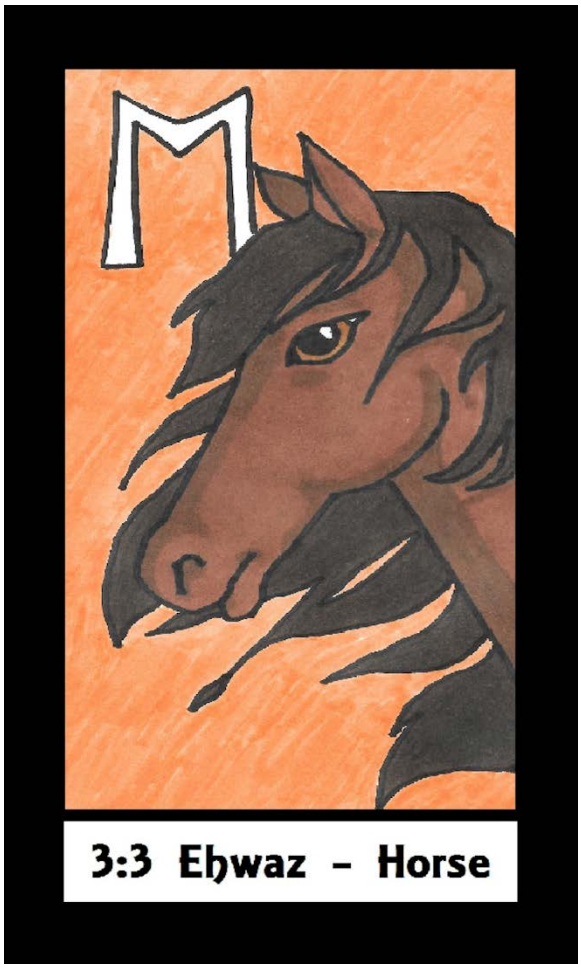

(The letter “T”) Called Tiwaz, the God of War Who gives His name to Tuesday, this Rune means victory, success in our situations, overcoming of opposition, and achievement of our desires.

# Berkana



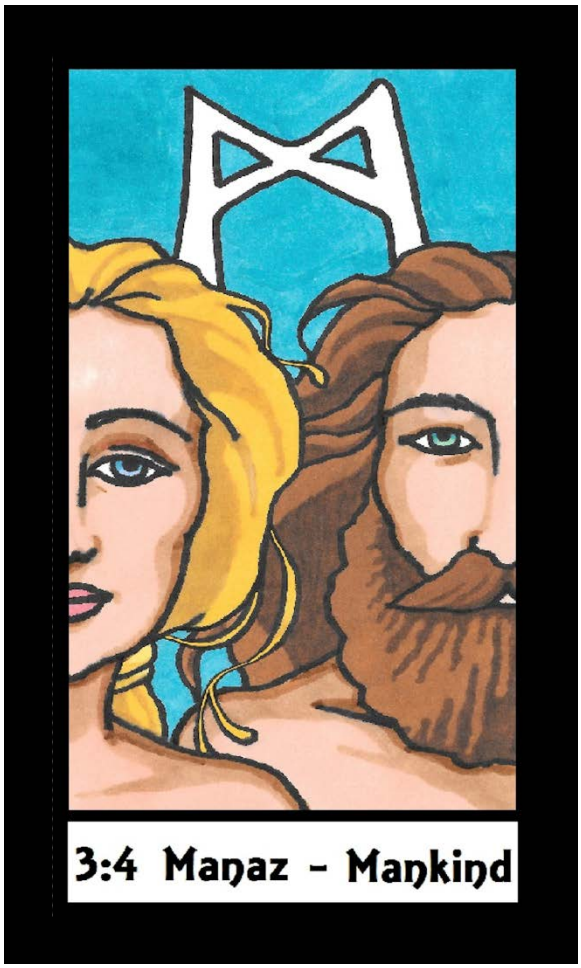

(The letter “B”) Called Berkana, meaning “Birch Tree” (a symbol of the Goddess), this Rune represents healing, regeneration, and new beginnings.

# Ehwaz



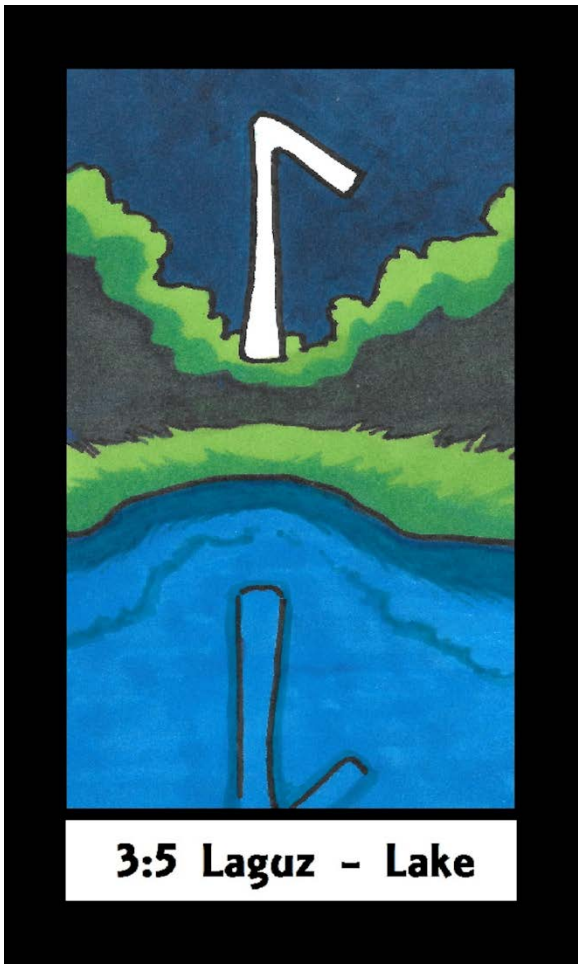

(The letter “E”) Called Ehwaz, meaning “Horse,” this Rune means travel and movement.

# Manaz



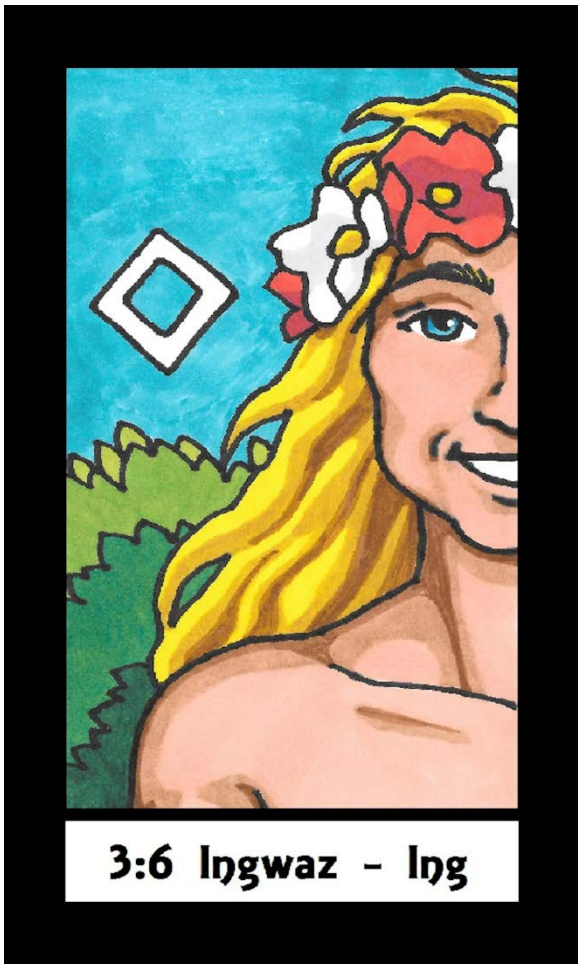

(The letter “M”) Called Manaz, meaning “Human,” this Rune indicates another person influencing the situation, giving advice or support, or perhaps offering opportunities.

# Laguz



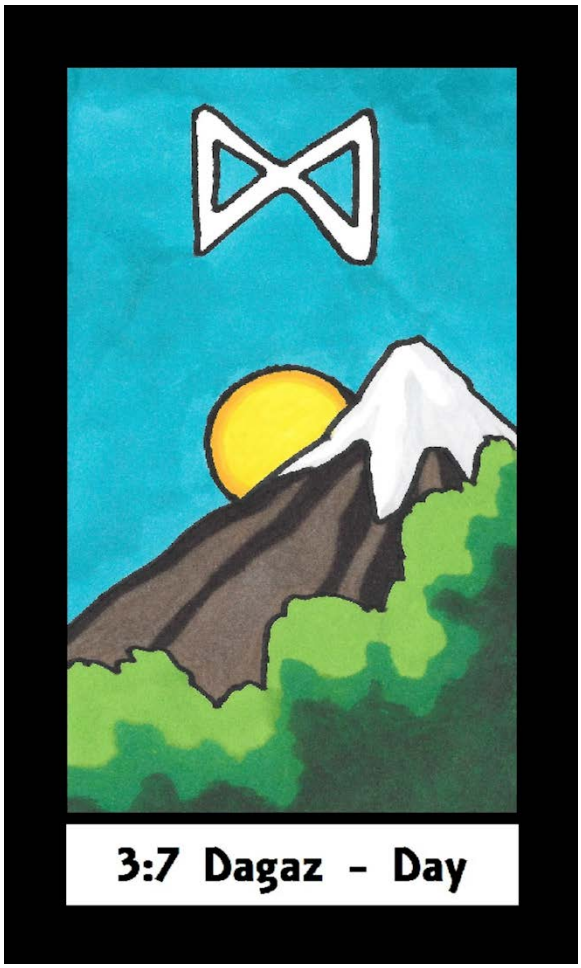

(The letter “L”) Called Laguz, meaning “Lake,” this Rune represents intuition, the ability to see below the surface of things, psychic guidance, and looking within. Some authorities, notably Dr. James Peterson, consider the original meaning of this Rune to have been not Laguz/lake but Lakz meaning “Leek,” giving the Rune a greater protective quality.

# Ingwaz




(The letter “Ng”) Called Ingwaz, a title of the God Freyr, this Rune means peace, prosperity, and support from those around us; Being in a good situation.

# Dagaz




(The letter “D”) Called Dagaz, meaning “Day,” this Rune indicates sudden realization or inspiration, new ideas or new opportunities.

# Othala

(The letter “O”) Called Othala, meaning “Ancestral Home,” this Rune means that we should rely on our own skills, tools, and qualities in dealing with the situation at hand, rather than looking for help from outside.

Rev. Don Lewis is the First Priest and Chancellor of the Correllian Tradition, Co-Founder and Chairman of Correllian Educational Ministries and the Correllian Seminary Witch School. (WitchSchool.com), Production Head for Magick TV (MagickTV.com), author of the Witch School book series, and a member of the Triad Union.