

ספר יצירה א:ב

SEFER YETZIRAH 1:2

עשר ספירות בלי מה ועשרים ושתים אותיות יסוד
שלש אמות ושבע כפולות ושתים עשרה פשוטות:

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness, and 22 Foundation Letters: Three Mothers, Seven Doubles, and Twelve Elementals.

☞ The word Sefirah literally means “to count”, which is different from the word Mispar which means “number.” The ten Sefirot represent ten basic digits, however they are not the actual numbers, but the sources from which numbers originate.

☞ The names of the Sefirot all come from the Tanach.

וַאֲמַלֵּא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה וּבִתְבוּנָה וּבְדַעַת

And I have filled him with the spirit of Elohim, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, (Shemot 31:3)

They list three qualities: Wisdom (Chochmah), Understanding (Binah), and Knowledge (Da-at). Da-at is not a Sefirah but simply a point of convergence between Chochmah and Binah. There are many ways it behaves like a Sefirah and for that reason it is often included among them. The Sefer Yetzirah states in 1:9 that “the spirit of Elohim” refers to Keter.

☞ The remaining Sefirot are named in this verse:

לְךָ יְהוָה הַגְּדֹלָה וְהַגְּבוּרָה וְהַתְּפָאֶרֶת וְהַיְנָצַח וְהַהוֹד כִּי־כֹל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ

Yours, O Hashem, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is yours; your is the kingdom, (I Chronicles 29:11)

The sixth Sefirot is called Yesod, not “Chol” (All), but in older Kabbalistic texts both terms are used. The Ten Sefirot parallel the ten nikudot (vowel points).

כֶּתֶר
Keter

בִּינָה
Binah

חֹכְמָה
Chochmah

דַּעַת
Da-at

גְּבוּרָה
Gevurah

חֶסֶד
Chesed

תִּפְאֶרֶת
Tiferet

הוֹד
Hod

נֶצַח
Netzach

יְסוּד
Yesod

מַלְכוּת
Malchut

B'LIMAH - OF NOTHINGNESS

☞ B'limah can be translated as closed, abstract, absolute or ineffable. According to many Kabbalists, B'limah is derived from two words, B'li which means "without", and Mah which means "what" or "anything." So B'limah literally means "without anything," or "nothingness." So "Of Nothingness" means that the Sefirot are purely ideal concepts, and they do not have any substance whatsoever. There is only one time that the word B'limah occurs in the entire Tanach, in the Book of Job:

נִטָּה צָפוֹן עַל־תְּהוֹ תִלָּה אָרֶץ עַל־בְּלִימָה׃

He stretches out the north over the void, and hangs the earth upon nothing. (Job 26:7)

☞ Another interpretation states that B'limah comes from the root word Balam which means "to bridle." This interpretation might be suggested by the Sefer Yetzirah in 1:8 when it says "Bridle your mouth from speaking of them." In this case B'limah would translate as "ineffable." Referring to the Ten Sefirot as ineffable indicates that they cannot be described in any manner. Through both interpretations we see that the Sefirot are distinguished from the letters. The letters are primary modes of expression, the Sefirot are inexpressible.

22 FOUNDATION LETTERS

☞ The reason these are called Foundation Letters is because it was through the letters of the Hebrew alefbet that the entire universe was created. Not only did these letters create the universe, they also sustain it. If the Creator were to withdraw the letters, everything would cease to exist.

Three Mother Letters:

These letters are called "Mothers" because they are primary and because they are derived from Binah.

Letter	Hebrew Name	Placement
א	Alef	Beginning
מ	Mem	Middle
ש	Shin	2nd to Last

Seven Double Letters:

These letters are called "Doubles" because they can express two different sounds, hard and soft.

Letter	Hebrew Name	Hard/Soft Sound
ב	Bet	B like boy / V like very
ג	Gimel	G like gift / J like corsage - <i>The soft sound was dropped from usage after the destruction of the 2nd Temple.</i>

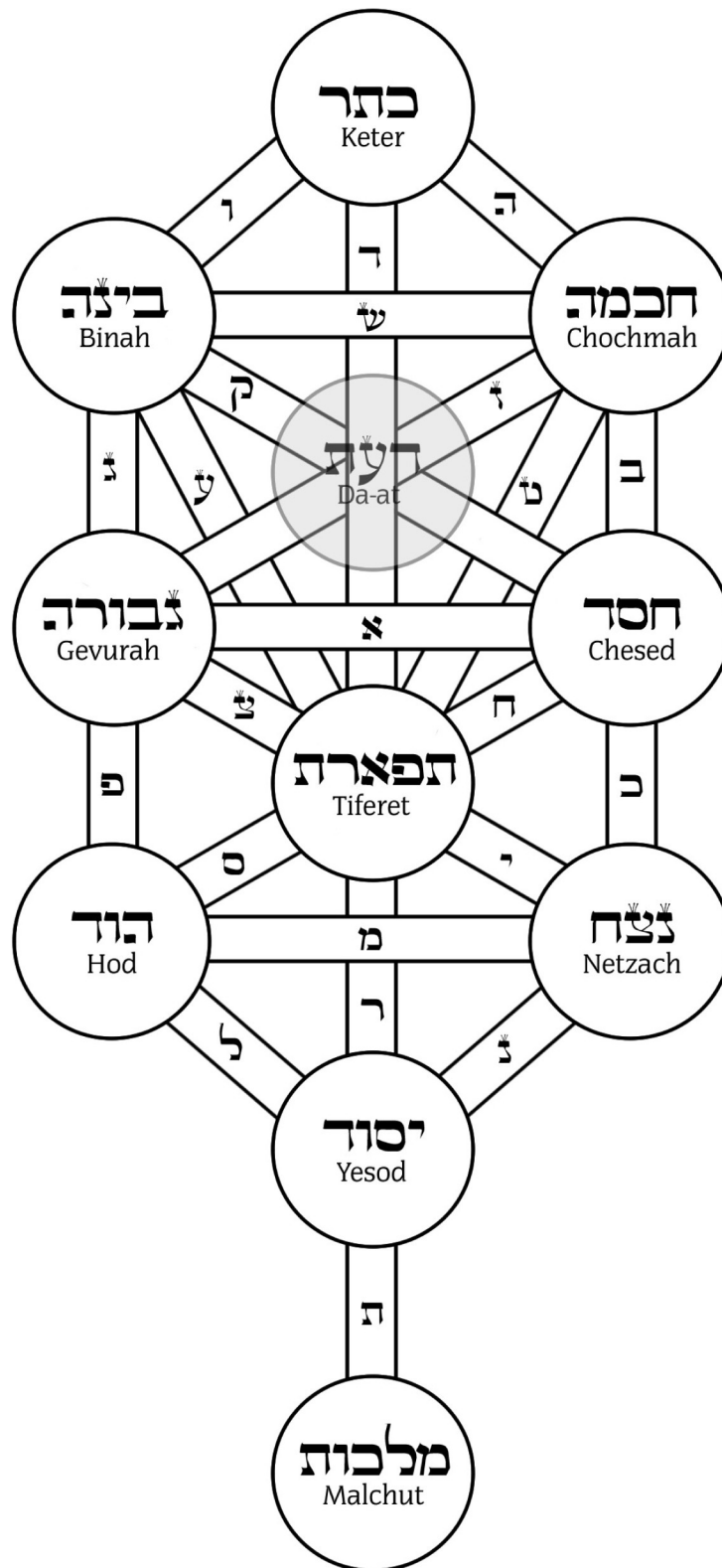
ד	Dalet	D like door / DTH like breadth
כ	Kaf	K like king / CH like Bach
פ	Pei	P like pet / F like fig
ר	Reish	R like a Spanish rolled R / R like a French R, in modern usage it is simply R as in rock.
ת	Tav	T like title / S like sorry. In the Ashkenaz tradition, these two sounds are still used, however most synagogues today in the USA use the sound according to the Sefardic tradition, which is simply T like title.

Twelve Elemental Letters:

The elementals are the remaining twelve letters.

Letter	Hebrew Name
ה	Hei
ו	Vav
ז	Zayin
ח	Chet
ט	Tet
י	Yud
ל	Lamed
נ	Nun
ס	Samech
ע	Ayin
צ	Tzadi
ק	Kuf

When we add the letters as paths between the Ten Sefirot from the diagram on page 2, we see they form 22 links: 3 are horizontal, 7 are vertical, and 12 are diagonal.



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