

The Hebrew Alphabet

by Dirk Gillabel, 1983

Before we start with the Hebrew alphabet, I want to say here that as written language arose, people wrote down what they intuitively felt the sound looked like. Those with psychic vision could see the form of sounds and wrote them down too. That is why there are a lot of similarities between the form of letters of different languages. When I met the Hungarian shaman Joska Soos (see my article of the light-sound beings) he explained to me that he can see the form of sound and of letters and words in the spiritual worlds. Some of his paintings contain these sound forms.

I am giving a short explanation about the Hebrew letters, their meaning and value, primarily in relation to the Tree of Life. The numerical system of the Hebrew Alphabet and Gematria is much more complex. If you want to know more about it, I refer you the many websites of skilled kabbalists. There are also signs that the Hebrew alphabet has undergone changes over the many centuries and does not reflect the original alphabet.

So, what is this system of the Hebrew alphabet? The Hebrew alphabet contains twenty-two letters or Authioth. It is said that the Hebrew language came directly from God. It contains secrets that were preserved by the initiated. They contain the precise plan of the principles of creation. Each letter (or auth) is a crystallization of one of the aspects of manifestation of the divine word. Each letter corresponds to a number which places it in a numerical hierarchy, a hieroglyph as a visual representation in form, and a symbol that makes it connect to other letters.

NAME		NUMBER
Aleph	א	1
Bet /Vet	ב	2
Gimel	ג	3
Dalet	ד	4
He	ה	5
Vav	ו	6
Zayin	ז	7
CHet	ח	8
Tet	ט	9
Yud	י	10
Kaf/ Chaf	כ	20

Lamed	ל	30
Mem	מ	40
Nun	נ	50
Samech	ס	60
Ayin	ע	70
Pe/Fe	פ	80
Tzadi	צ	90
Kof	ק	100
Resh	ר	200
Sin/ Shin	ש	300
Tau	ת	400

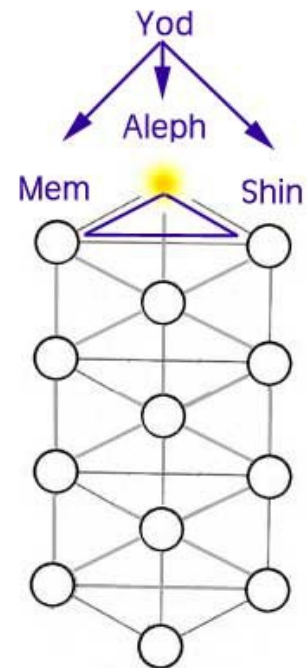
Each letter is thus connected to the creative forces in the universe. They express themselves on three levels: one level is archetypical and runs from the first to the ninth letter; the second level is one of manifestation and runs from the tenth to the eighteenth letter, and the third is a cosmic level and runs from the nineteenth to the twenty-second letter.

The primal vibration of the universe is symbolized by the letter Yod. Yod is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and symbolizes the point in movement and turning around itself. From the movement of Yod the other letters came forth in a structured order.

The Letter Yod is used both as a point of origin and as an alphabetical letter. Yod, the smallest letter, functions as a symbol for the point of origin in the triad Yod, Mem and Shin. However, Yod also appears as a simple letter and is one of the 12 simple letters. This is passed on to us by tradition. How to interpret it? Yod as the point of origin is more like a primal vibration than a clear spoken letter in human language. It is a vibration that can be heard (like the Om of the Buddhists), a primal vibration ever present. As a simple letter Yod is part of the Hebrew alphabet, and thus like the other Hebrew letters it is a manifestation of an archetype, which also can be spoken. Yod as a simple letter is a reflection of the original Yod. The way I see it, the Yod of the point of origin is unmanifest, while Yod, as a simple letter, is created in the manifested world. The point of origin Yod is the center of everything that came forth, and it is the center of cosmic existence. The simple letter Yod is the center of individual existence which provokes an eternal becoming of the individuality.

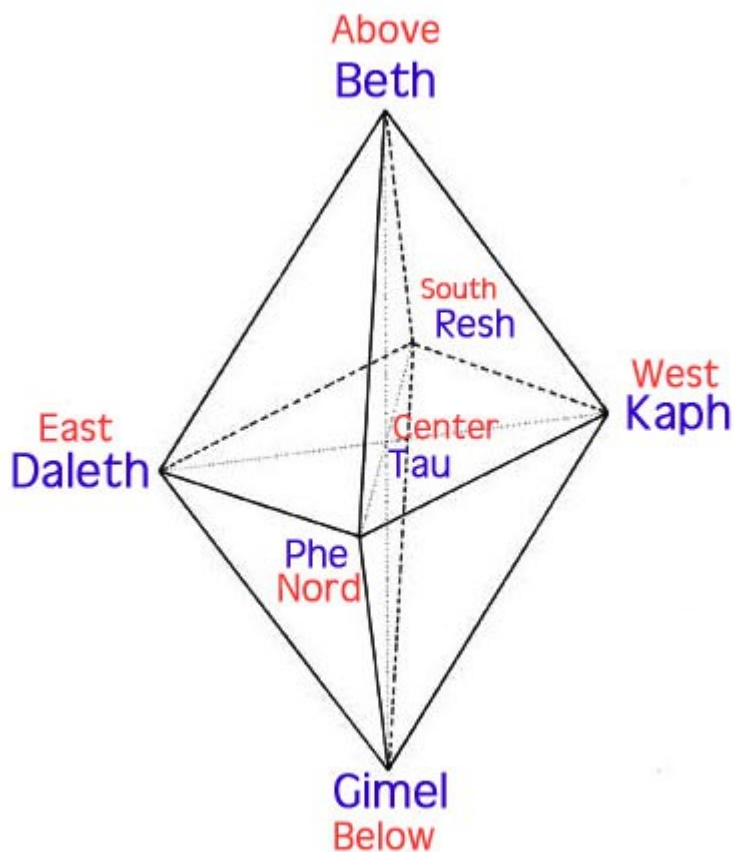
First there are three mother letters, or Immoth: Aleph, Mem and Shin. They form the prime trinity that came from the Divine. They represent the three dimensions of space. They act as a prism which transforms the divine light into seven more letters which are the double letters or Kaphouloth: Beth, Gimmel, Daleth, Kaph, Phe, Resh and Tau. They are called double letters because they have two ways of pronunciation.

Traditionally, the three mother letters are associated with the first three Sephiroth, but they are also representative of the three pillars of the Tree of Life. The seven double letters are associated with the next seven Sephiroth.



As the seven double letters place themselves on different levels of manifestation, they symbolize the formation of space. They represent the seven extremities of the world, the seven planets, the seven days of creation, the seven days of the week, and so on.

As the seven double letters form an octahedron structure, the twelve vertices are equal to the twelve simple letters, see next.



The fabric of space in which the seven double letters evolve, is divided into twelve parts, which are the twelve remaining letters, called Phashoutoth: He, Waw, Zain, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Noun, Sameck, Ain, Tzade and Quip. These twelve letters symbolize the twelve directions in space, the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve months of the year.

Heh	Aries
Vau	Taurus
Zain	Gemini
Heth	Cancer

Teth	Leo
Yod	Virgo
Lamed	Libra
Nun	Scorpio
Samekh	Sagittarius
Ain	Capricorn
Tzaddi	Aquarius
Qoph	Pisces

The numerical value of the letters is interesting when one understands the meaning of numbers. For example, Aleph א the first letter stands for unity, for origin, for power, stability. Its shape reflects this. The shape of the letter Aleph is made of two Yods divided by a slash what actually is the fifth letter Vau ו. As we mentioned in the above, Yod י is the primal vibration, the point of light out of which everything came. Emanation arose when the Divine Light, as Yod, reflected upon itself, that is, mirrored itself into the lower world, hence the two Yods divided by a slash.

In Gematria, the system of where every word is analyzed numerologically according to the numeric value of each letter, the numerical value of Aleph is $1 + 30 + 80 = 111$. We can interpret the number 111 in different ways.

There are three ones reflecting the Trinity.

$111 = 1 + 10 + 100$: In Gematria, the unities in numbers relate to the divine world, the tens relate to the spiritual world, and the hundreds relate to the physical world. Thus 111 contains unity in each of the three worlds.

The symbolic value is more problematic, as the symbol for a letter can often be stretched or interpreted in the way you want. The symbol for the letter Aleph is the Ox. This is usually interpreted as patience, the steady but difficult progress when ascending the Tree of Life.

Moreover, some of the letters have symbols of which the relationship with the letter has been lost over time, that is, we don't know anymore why that letter has

that symbol. Overall I think that the symbols of the letters are not that useful.

Some letters have clearly defined values. Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet, Tau is the last one, they are like the Alpha and Omega of the Greek Alphabet. Tau **ת**, being the last letter, is the perfection of creation, it is summary of everything in everything, it is the mystery that reveals itself directly to the soul. Tau is also the symbol for furthest development of creation, that the physical world.

Aleph, Mem and Shin, the three mother letters are also strongly defined.

Aleph **א** as first letter is attributed to Kether, the origin of the Tree of Life.

Mem **מ**, the thirteenth letter, has water as symbolic value, and is attributed to Binah, the Sephirah which has for symbols the primal waters and mother archetype. The letter Mem also stands for the mother, fertility, the earth, the sea. The shape of the letter Mem has an enclosing form, reflecting the female enclosing, harboring, nurturing values.

The letter Shin **ש** is the dynamic movement of the element Fire, the active, expansive and vivifying forces in the universe. It is also the symbol of the vivifying spirit. Its shape reflects three raised flames in the shape of three Vaus's. Shin, the twenty-first, letter is attributed to Chockmah, the Sephirah of the father archetype and has male, fiery characteristics.

Then we have the letter Heh **ה**, the fifth letter of the alphabet, in general meaning universal life, clarity, the breath of existence, the act of feeling and willing, transcendental knowledge, and universal magnetism. But Heh is also part of the name of YHVH **י ה ו ה** (Jehovah) in which it appears twice, and with the many meaning and attributes of these word and its letters to for example parts of the Tree of Life, the letter Heh also takes on the corresponding values. For example each letter stands for each of the four Worlds and elements: Yod for Atziluth and Fire, Heh for Beriah and Air, Vau for Yetzirah and Water, and the second Heh for Assiah and Earth.

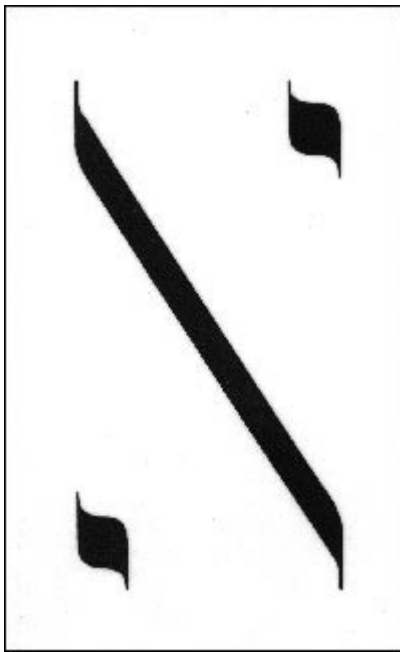
We already mentioned Yod **י** as the primal vibration of the universe out of which all the other letters came forth. Thus Yod also contains the seed of the Tree of Life, of all the Sephiroth and the Paths. Its symbol is the hand. When the hand is open it represents the microcosm, and man in the lower worlds; when the hand is closed, it represents unity, the source. Yod is the tenth letter, and two hands have ten fingers. Its numerical value is $10 + 6 + 4 = 20$, which is two times ten, or just two, pointing to duality.

Shin **ש** is the twenty first letter, and symbolizes the Spirit, the Spiritual Fire, The Flaming Sword. It is said that when Shin is not in the middle of a word it turns to anger and resentment. When in the middle of a word, it is the central equilibrating fire. For example is the word Moses, which is M Sh H, or Yeheshuah,

which is Y H Sh V H. Shin also stands for the Shekinah.

The letter Shin, which we mentioned in the above as one of the Mother Letters, is the dynamic movement of the element Fire, the active, expansive and vivifying forces in the universe. It is also the symbol of the vivifying spirit. Its shape reflects three raised flames in the shape of three Vau's, reflecting the trinity. The three flames also represent the three qualities of Shin: active, passive and equilibrating.

Here are all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet with their symbol and meaning. Don't see this as a doctrine. It is only a means for further exploration.



Aleph

The image of the Hebrew letter Aleph is an ox. The ox indicates plowing, the penetration of the earth (the female) by the plow (the male). It has a clear sexual meaning. The penetration can also be seen as the Divine Spirit descending into the primeval waters, which it penetrates and impregnates.

As a symbol Aleph represents unity, origin, power, continuity and stability.

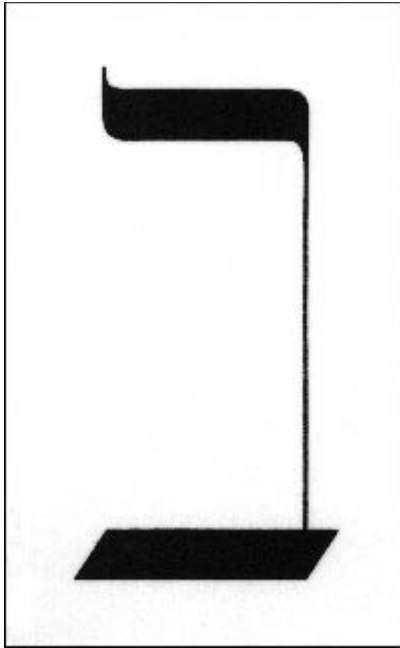
On the human level Aleph represents Divine Man. By the form of its letter it indicates its function as a link between the upper and lower world, heaven and earth.

Aleph as unity contains in itself duality, as it is also seen in its form. It links the primeval source with everything that emanates from it.

The numerical value of Aleph is 111 (Aleph + Lamed + Peh: $1 + 30 + 80 = 111$). The number 111 contains the trinity; and it is also the constant of the magic square of six. $111 = 1 + 10 + 100$. In this sense Aleph contains the one in units, in tens and in hundreds. Symbolically this means that Aleph combines the divine, the spiritual and the physical world. Or, 1 is the Point, the Ain Soph Aur (= the Unlimited Light); 10 is the Tree of Life with its 10 Sephiroth (= the power vessels in which consciousness of the Universe expresses itself); and 100 is physical man in the physical world.

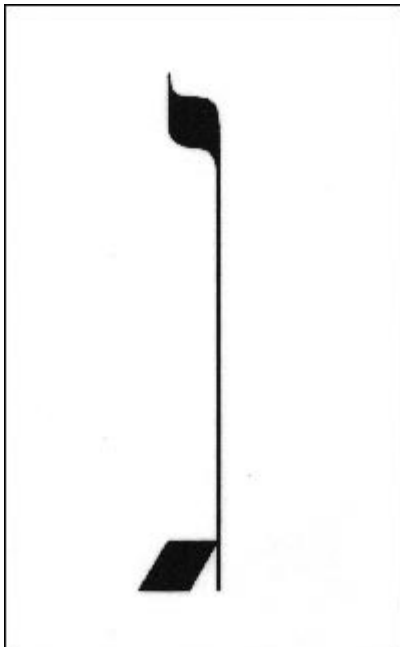
The shape of Aleph is composed of two Yods and

a dividing line which stands for the letter Vau). This gives another numerical value: $10 + 10 + 6 = 26$. The number 26 is the value of the tetragrammatron YHVH, or Jehovah, the name of the Lord



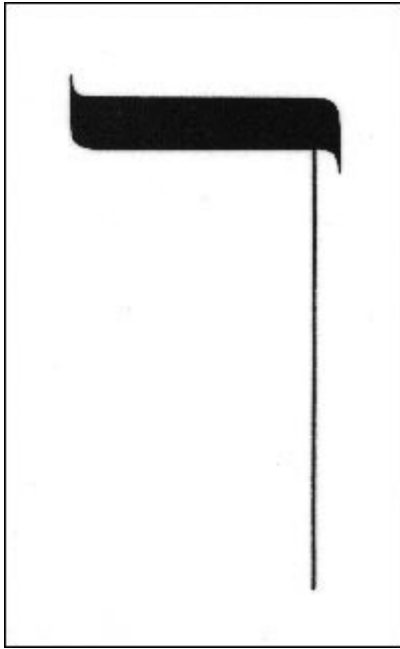
Beth

The image of the Hebrew letter Beth (Baith, Beith) is a house, a tent, a dwelling. The house is the dwelling of (the body of) man in the world of duality and illusion. A house also gives protection and shelter. A house is a containing form. In the spiritual sense it contains the Light, the Spirit. Beth as a house also is the Sanctuary, the Temple, the Gnosis (Knowledge).



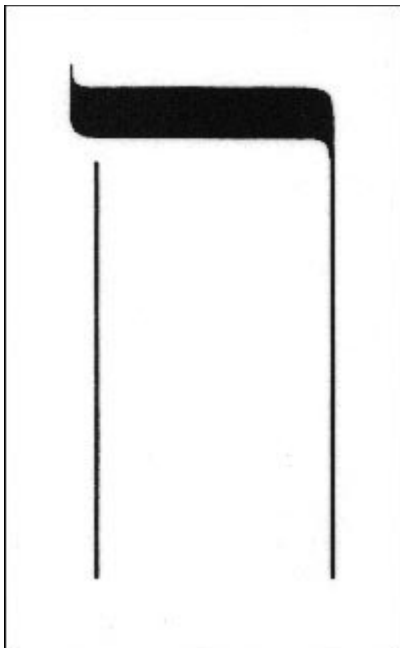
Gimel

The image of Gimel (Gimmel, Guimel) is a camel. The camel is the riding animal for the desert. It brings the traveler from one place to another, thus linking those two places together. It links Kether and Tiphereth which are connected by the longest path on the Tree. As the camel moves steadily forward, Gimel allows for continuity of movement and form.



Daleth

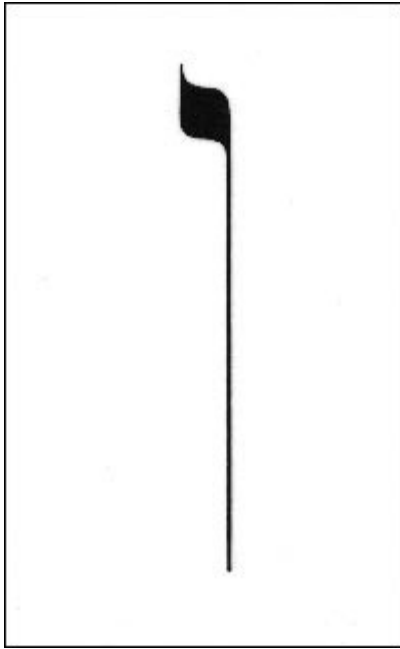
The image of Daleth is a gate, an entrance, and an exit. For the initiated person Daleth is the gate or entrance to the inner Light, to Knowledge and Wisdom, to order and structure, and to a new foundation on which new life can be built.



He

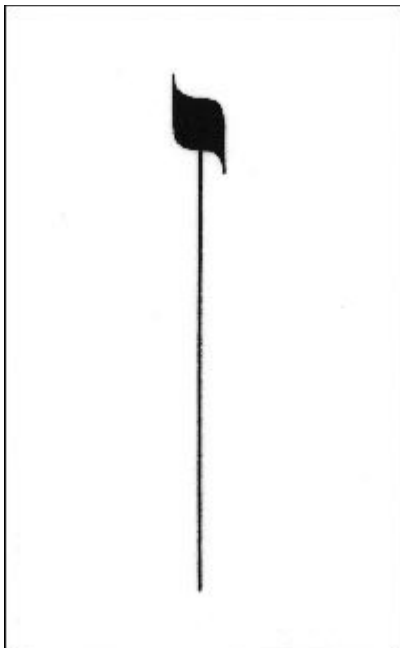
The image of the letter He is a window. The letter stems from a root that means "to breathe" in the sense of allowing air and light. To see and to breath are two vital aspects of life.

A window allows light and air to come in. It is an opening by which the light outside can reach us.



Vau

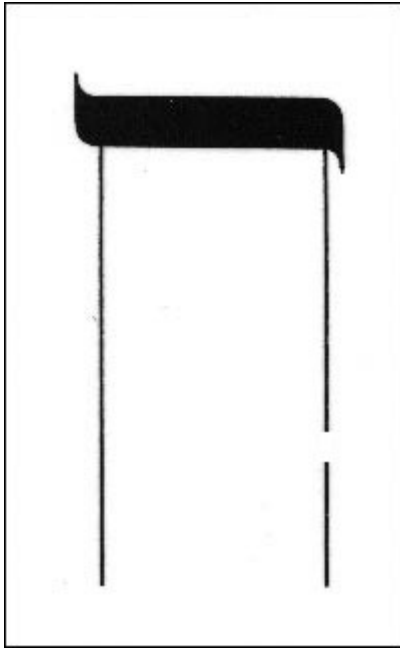
The image of the letter Vau (Vav, Wav, Waw) is a nail or hook. Both have the function of fixing something. The nail's function is joining two parts together.



Zayin

The image of the letter Zayin (Zain, Zein) is a sword. The sword is a weapon to attack, to defend, to cut into.

Zayin is regarded as the generating and ruling principle over universal movement. In this movement it learns to control its opposites by function of the will.

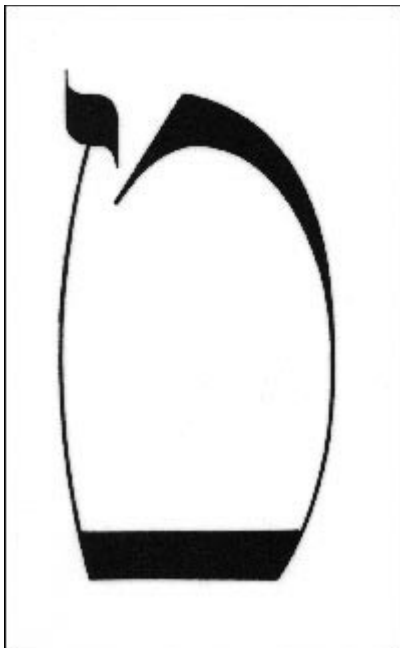


Cheth

The image of the letter Cheth (Hheth, Hhaith) is a hedge, a fence.

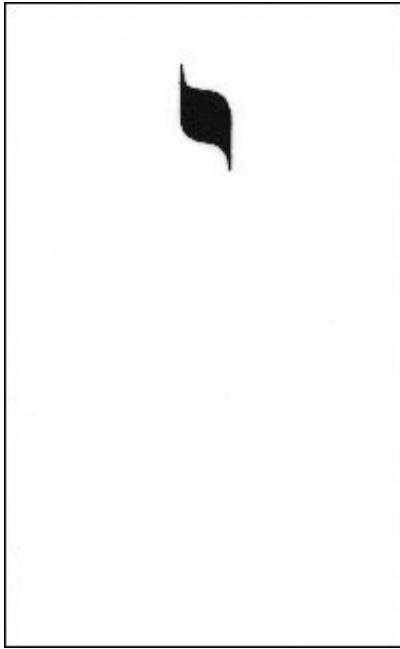
Hhaith is the term for the profession of a tailor; and hiyeth is the action of sewing. Both words imply the making of a garment. In the spiritual sense a robe is the symbol of the physical body. The soul has taken on a physical body like man dresses himself with a garment.

Cheth also symbolizes universal equilibrium, the reservoir of energy, the action of breathing the vital breath, the law of attraction and repulsion.



Teth

The image of the letter Teth (Theith, Teith) is the coiling of a serpent. It represents potential power, like a serpent just before striking. The power has been built up, is contained, and then is released. The power we are speaking of here is spiritual awareness which builds up in man, and is then released to create an heightened awareness in order to remind him of his divine origin.

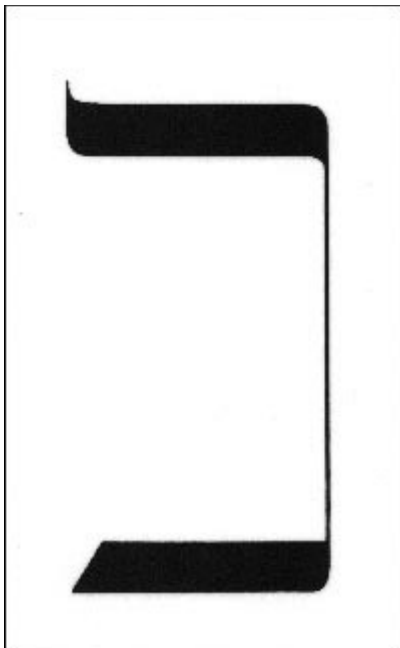


Yod

The image of the letter Yod (Yood) is hand with stretched fingers. The hand is the symbol of power, of creative and directed energy that maintains individual existence.

The open hand is the symbol of the microcosmos and microcosmic man. The closed hand is the symbol of the Center, The Unity out of which everything has emanated, and around which everything revolves.

The Yod is the smallest letter, and as a point it refers to the primal vibration of the universe.

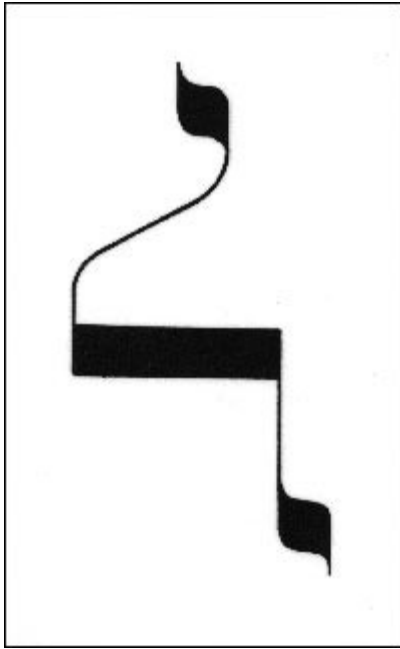


Kaph

The image of the letter Kaph (Caph, Kaf) is the palm of a hand. It refers to the acceptance of whatever is coming to you. When you have studied the cycles of the Wheel of Life, and of good and bad luck, you will accept them both because you know that good and bad are only relative terms and have no existence on their own.. It is important to understand their inherent energies or power, and why they arise in life.

Acceptance of both the good and bad things in life gives the opportunity to not spill any energy, as would be done by going against the laws of the universe. It brings you more power. By holding your own power, or strength, in (the palm of) your hand, you can learn how to use it in the most appropriate way.

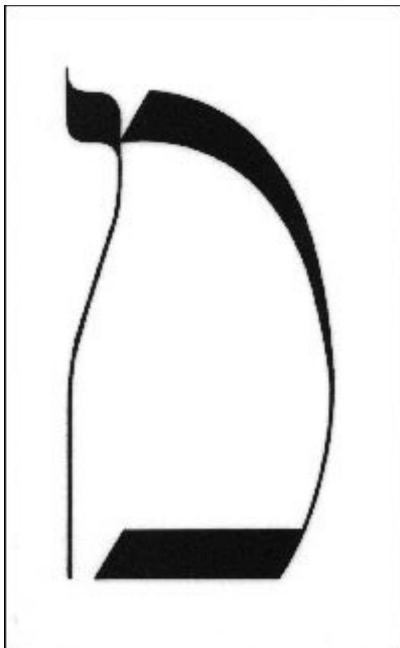
Kaph also stands for the divine force we receive, hold and channel or direct through ourselves.



Lamed

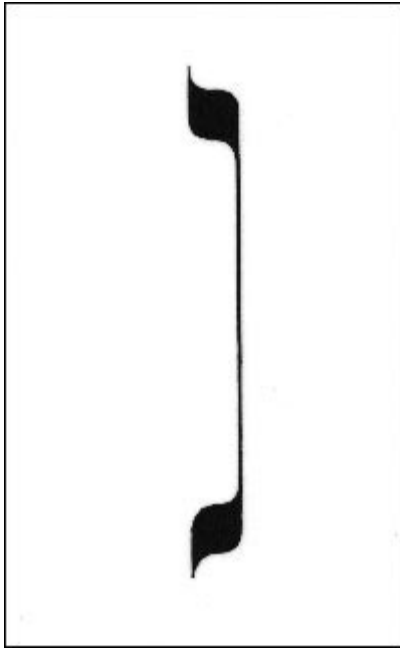
The image of the letter lamed is an ox-goad, and is considered to have no further meaning.

To me, Lamed refer to knowledge of all experiences on the physical plane. This is the knowledge that is necessary to attain detachment from this world, making a bridge to the Other World by means of sacrifice.



Mem

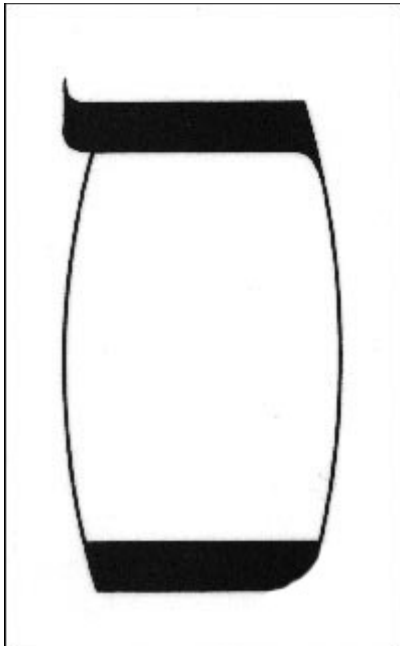
The image of the letter mem is water. He traditional meaning of Mem is the mother, the origin, the sea, the waters, and everything that is fertile. Mem is the reformer of life by successive transformation and by the changes it causes. Mem assures movement of life.



Nun

The image of the letter Nun (Noon, Noun) is a fish. A fish is one with its environment and has a spherical way of perception. This is a reference to the astral body and astral world which symbol always has been the element Water. (By contrast the element Earth refers to the physical plane.)

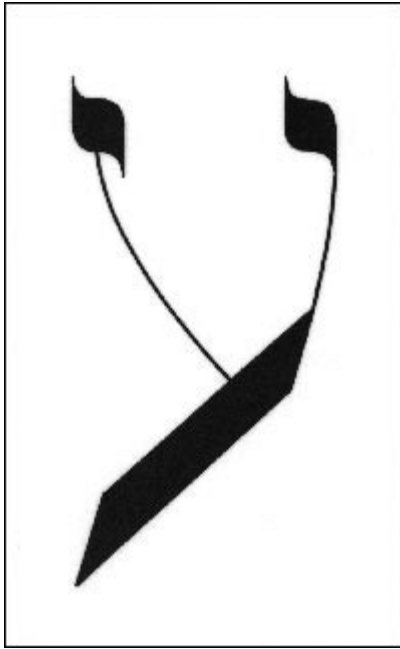
Nun refers to universal life, changing continuously but always remaining the same, just as the flowing of water.



Samech

The image of the letter Samech (Sameck) is a prop, a support. Samech is both that what strains the string of the bow, and the humming of the string. Samech is also the hissing of a snake, the physical life force, the egotistic impulses, and the seductive instincts. Giving way to the lower energies and the snake pulls you down. However they can be transformed, and then the snake will pull you upwards.

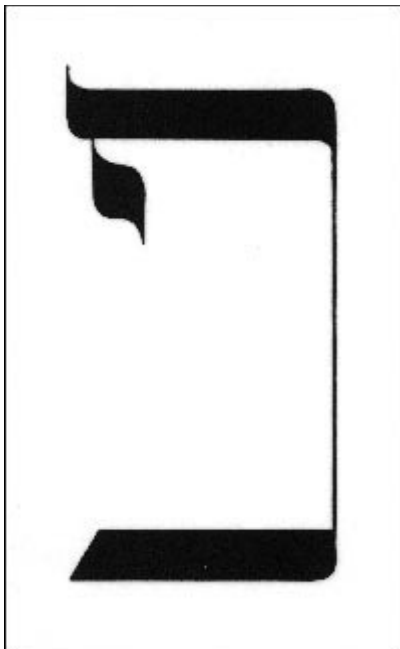
As a prop it is the life force that sustains everything, through that process it links the above with the below. The prop is also the spinal column through which the life fluidum flows and the Kundalini serpent rises.



A'Ain

The image of the letter A'ain (Ain) is an eye. It signifies the Source and the Nothingness out of which everything has emanated. It is also destruction by antagonism. It is expressed by wind and heavy sounds, and especially the image of emptiness.

A'Ain is the principle of the individual's revolt through materialism and putting importance on sensory satisfaction.



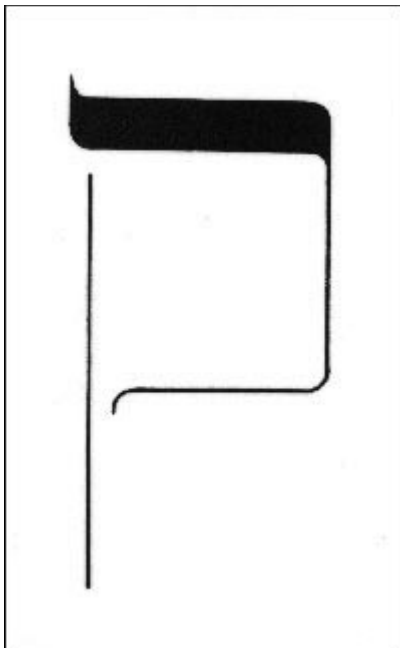
Pe

The image of the letter Pe (Pay, Phe, peh) is a mouth which is usually considered to be nothing more than a resemblance of the shape of the letter, with no special meaning. But the mouth can be considered as an opening out of which breath comes, or the Breath of Life. Thus Pe can be seen as an opening through which the Light of the Higher Self shines forth. Here man finally perceives his higher being and brings his consciousness in alignment with it. When consciousness remains in this brilliant light, the light itself becomes a well out of which energy, light, knowledge and wisdom are flowing. A well is like a mouth in the earth, giving us the water of life.



Tsade

The image of the latter Tsade is a small swath. Tsade symbolizes both the hierarchical distribution and the universal matter in its crystallization. It is also the refuge of the being towards which the hopes are directed. Tsade can be considered as the creation of the physical, the senses and the illusions. Sometimes it is shown as the expression of the Divine Mother.



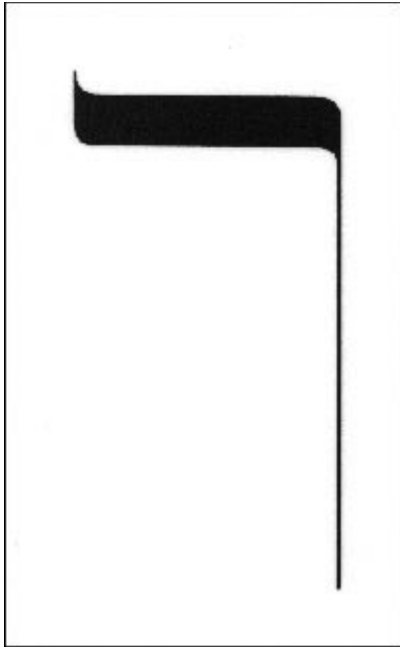
Qoph

The image of the letter Qoph (Koof, Qof) is the back of the head. When the last wall has been torn down, the last veil torn away, the last spot of darkness removed, the Kundalini will rise up along the spine to the back of the head. Then illumination happens. The Light shines from within.

Another image of Qoph is the ax. The ax has always been regarded as a divine tool because the ax is used for splitting. In the spiritual sense splitting releases energy which lies in or behind the split object. Therefore the ax, and especially the double headed ax, was used to indicate divine revelation or enlightenment.

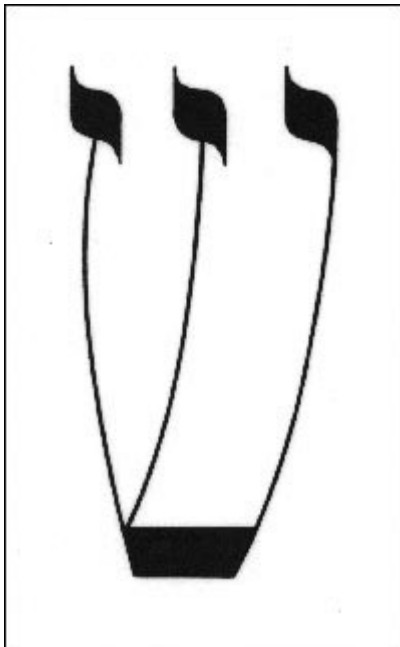
The Greek god Zeus once swallowed Metis (whose name means wisdom). It was said that she would one day give birth to a son who would be greater than Zeus, who would depose him as he himself had done with Kronos. But, after Zeus had swallowed Metis, he got a terrible headache. Hepheastos, the smith god, relieved him by splitting open his cranium with an ax. When the skull burst open, a fierce maiden in armor holding a spear suddenly jumped out. This was Athene.

This story is about the opening of the head or crown chakra.



Resh

The image of the letter Resh is a head. The head is where illumination takes place. Resh refers to the divine forces, the totality of the universe, to cosmic life everywhere and in everything. Resh is the movement of things by destruction and generation. The old is left behind and the new comes forth.



Shin

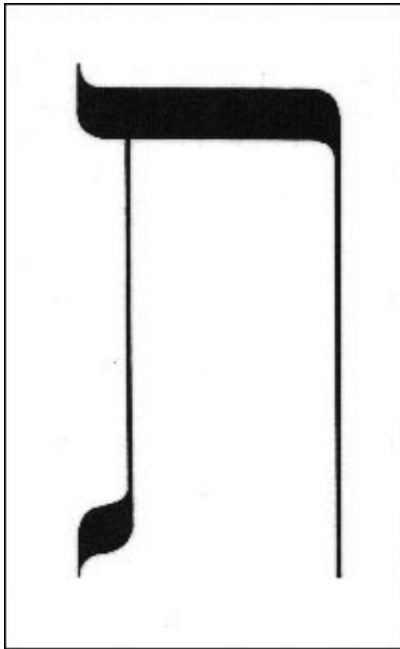
The image of the letter Shin is a tooth. The form of this letter refers to the three roots of the molars. Shin has also its traditional meaning of the Cosmic Fire or the Fiery Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Because the tooth or the molar refers to the taking of food, to eating, to taking in, it indicates, in combination with its other meaning, the reception of Cosmic Fire. It is the influx of the Holy Spirit that flowed into the heads of the Apostles, shown as a flame above each of their heads.

The body has taken in the Fiery Spirit. This Fire or Shin is the dynamic movement in the Universe and its active and expansive forces. With this fire one dances on the World. Shin is the movement of everything that exists. Shin vivifies all beings great or small. It is the Cosmic Snake or the Cosmic Dragon.

The shape of Shin also refers to the Trintiy, here in its fiery aspect, the descending Dove. Its

shape is composed of three Vau's, placed next to each other, giving the number 666, which is the number of the Sun, and also of the Beast of the Book of Revelation of John. The number 666 is not evil as it is often thought, it is a number of mystery.

The three flames in the letter Shin are also explained as being representations of the Od or the active force of life, the Ob or the passive force of life, and the Aur or the balancing force of life.



Tau

The image of the latter Tau (Tav) is a cross mark. The cross is a very ancient symbol, its most basic meaning is that of the division of the universe into four directions, by this it encloses the universe in its entirety.

Tau is regarded as a symbol for the absolute, the perfection of creation. Tau is the summary of everything in everything.

As the hundreds in the Hebrew alphabet represent the physical world, Tau, as the last letter, represents the furthest development in the physical world. Its numerical value is 400, and it is used to indicate infinity.
