

Sefer Yetzirah

BOOK OF FORMATION

"The Letters of Our Father Abraham"

The **Book of Formation** (*Sefer Yetzirah*) attracts heated debate about its authorship and date of origination. Many scholars attribute a medieval or Hasmonean date to the book. It is not in the scope of the present work to delineate the varied opinions that attribute a medieval date to the book's inception. The references to the "Book of Abraham" in the *Qu'ran* (see Surahs 87:19 and 53:37) may allude to this book or some version of it. If that is the case, since the *Qu'ran* predates the medieval period by centuries, it would at least substantiate that the Book of Formation is not of medieval origin.

The Work of the Chariot Trust (WC) version was made using all six known textual sources. Some of the versions contain considerable addenda whose language points to the Hasmonean period, circa 130 BCE, and later. The additional material was left out of the redaction the WC used as the basis for its translation. Based upon astronomical information in the book itself, the WC translator attributes authorship of the **Book of Formation** to Master Abraham in the nineteenth century BCE. An adjunctive note to the WC translation points out that the Procession of the Equinoxes acts as an unforgeable clock, allowing us to determine that the correspondence of the constellations given in the sixth chapter to the twelve Hebrew months (with no variations in the six texts considered) occurred during the time of Abraham, circa 4000 years ago. Allowing for an optimal variation of plus or minus 800 years ago, it is still not anywhere within the range of medieval times. A check on the data logs of the old Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Greeks indicated that no one had astronomical knowledge of the Procession (until about 1700 CE).

The **Book of Formation** is the first mystical manual on, and possibly the source text for, the original Hebrew alphabet. Its chapters explain the significance of the twenty-two letters, and ascribe various attributions to them. It is second only to the **Sefer HaShmoth** (**Book of the Names**) as the most prolific source of distinct forms of the Tree of Life. The first chapter of the book is the earliest known textual source for the six-pointed symbol known as the Star of David." The Six-Pointed Star has come to be seen as a flat, two-dimensional symbol of two interlocking triangles. The **Book of Formation**, however, presents the Star as a three-dimensional, six-pointed form of the Tree of Life comprised of two interfacing pyramids. The **Book of Formation** provides one of the two vastly different sets of names commonly found in the Qabalah for the spheres (called Sefiroth) on the Tree (the other set comes from the *Sefer HaZohar*, the **Book of Splendor**). The names for the Sefiroth in the **Book of Formation** are based on elements (Spirit of Living *Elohim*, Air, Fire, Water), on four "Celestial Heads of Messiah," and on the six directions.

Like the three innermost core texts of the **Book of Splendor**, the **Book of Formation** stands out within primary qabalistic literature for the depth, terseness, and obscurity of its language, and for its wealth of mystical allusions. For a Mystical Qabalist, the book's power and value are valid independent of academic considerations regarding its origins. The full range of ideas and allusions presented in the Book of Formation will be discussed in the course of this book.

Sefer Yetzirah

Book of Formation

"The Letters of Our Father Abraham"

Chapter One

1. By means of thirty-two wonderful paths of wisdom YH, YHVH of Hosts, *Elohim* of Israel, Living *Elohim*, and Eternal King, *El Shadhai*, merciful and gracious, high and uplifted, who inhabits Eternity, exalted and holy is His Name engraved. And He created His universe by three signs: by border, and letter, and number. (see **Figure**)

2. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** (*Eser Sefiroth Belimah*) and **Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation** (*Esrin Ooshtayim Autiyot Yesod*): three are Mothers, and seven Double, and twelve Simple.



3. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth**, the number of the ten fingers, five opposite, and in the center is set the Covenant of Unity like the Organ of the Tongue, and like the Organ of Nakedness. (see **Figure**)

4. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth**, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven; understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding; test them and explore them, and understand the matter thoroughly, and restore the Creator to His Place.

5. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** whose measure is ten without end:

Depth of First and Depth of Last
Depth of Good and Depth of Evil
Depth of Above and Depth of Below
Depth of East and Depth of West
Depth of North and Depth of South.

Lord, Only One, *El* Faithful King, rules all of them from His Holy Dwelling-Place unto Eternity.

6. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** whose appearance is like lightning and whose limits are without end. And they speak with each other to and fro, and they run at His Word like the whirlwind, and before His Throne they bow down.

7. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** whose end is fixed in their beginning (and beginning fixed in their end), as the flame is bound to the coal. For the Lord YHVH is the Only One, and He has no second, and before One how can you count?

8. There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth**, shut your mouth from speaking and your heart from thinking. And if your mouth runs to speak and your heart to think, return to the Place, for thus it is said: "And the Living Creatures ran and returned," and upon this Word a covenant is cut.

There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth**.

One: Spirit of Living *Elohim*, blessed and blessed is the Name of Him who lives forever, Voice and Spirit and Word. This is the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaQodesh*).

Two: Air from Spirit. He engraved and hewed out through it twenty-two letters as a foundation: three Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Simple; and they are of One Spirit.

Three: Water from Air. He engraved and hewed out through it Emptiness and Void, Mud and Mire. He engraved it like a kind of garden bed; He raised it like a kind of wall, He surrounded it like a kind of ceiling.

Four: Fire from Water. He engraved and hewed out through it the Throne of Glory, Fiery Angels, and Ofanim, and Holy Beings, and Ministering Angels. And from the three of them He established His Dwelling-Place; as it is said: "Who makes winds His messengers, the flaming fire His ministers." Three letters from the Simple ones - He sealed Air through three, and set them into His Great Name YHV , and sealed through them the six extremities:

Five: He sealed Above, and He turned upward and sealed it with YHV.

Six: He sealed Below, and He turned downward and sealed it with YVH.

Seven: He sealed East, and He turned forward and sealed it with HYV.

Eight: He sealed West, and He turned backward and sealed it with HVY.

Nine: He sealed South, and He turned right and sealed it with VYH.

Ten: He sealed North, and turned left and sealed it with VHY.

09: These **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** are ONE –
Spirit of Living *Elohim*
Air from Spirit
Water from Air
Fire from Water
Above and Below,
East and West,
North and South. (**See Figure**)

Chapter Two

1. **Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation: three Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Simple.**

Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin: their foundation is the scale of merit and the scale of guilt, and the tongue of the statute balances the scales between them. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin:** Mem stands still, Shin hisses, Alef is Air of Spirit balancing the scale between them.

2. **Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation:** He engraved them, He hewed them out, He combined them, and He set them at opposites, and He formed through them everything that is formed and everything that is destined to be formed.

3. **Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation:**

He engraved them through Voice, He hewed them out through Air, and He set them through the mouth in five places:

Alef (a), Chet (ch), Heh (h), and Ayin (o) in the throat;
Gimel (g), Yod (y), Kaf (k,kh) and Qof (q) on the palate;
Dalet (d, dh), Tet (t), Lamed (l), Nun (n), and Tav (t,th) with the tongue;
Zayin (z), Samek (s), Shin (s,sh), Resh (r,rh), and Tzade (tz) with the teeth;
Beyt (b,bh), Vav (v), Mem (m), and Pey (p,f) with the lips.

4. **Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation:**

He set them in a cycle like a kind of wall with two hundred and thirty-one gates (**see Figure**). And the cycle rotates forward and back. And the sign of the thing is:

- there is Nothing (*Ayin*) in goodness above pleasure, and
- there is Nothing (*Ayin*) in evil below pain.

5. How did He combine them, weigh them, and set them at opposites? Alef with all of them, and all of them with Alef, Beyt with all of them and all of them with Beyt. And it rotates in turn, and thus they are in two hundred and thirty-one gates, and thus everything that is formed and everything that is spoken goes out from One Name.

6. He formed substance from emptiness, and made what is from Nothing (*Ayin*). And He hewed out great columns from Air , which is not tangible. And this is the sign:

He covers and sets at opposites, and He makes everything that is formed and everything that is spoken with One Name. And the sign of the thing is twenty-two countings like One body.

Chapter Three

1. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin,** their foundation is the Scale of Merit (Mem) and the Scale of Guilt (Shin), and the Tongue of Statute (Alef) balances the scales between them.

2. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin-** a great secret, wonderful and concealed, and He seals them with six rings. And from Him go out Fire and Water, dividing into male and female. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin** are their foundation, and from them are born Fathers, from which everything is created.

3. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin** - He engraved them, He hewed them out, He combined them, He weighed them, and He set them at opposites, and He formed through them:

Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin in the universe, and
Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin in the year, and
Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin in the body of male and female.

4. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin** are in the universe:
Air, Water, and Fire. Heavens were created first from Fire, and Earth was created from Water, and the Air balances the scales between the Fire and between the Water.

5. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin** are in the year:
Fire and Water and Air, and Heat was created from Fire, Cold was created from Water, and Temperate-state from Air balances the scales between them.

6. **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin** are in the body of male and female: Fire and Water and Air. Head was created from Fire, and Belly was created from Water, and *Geviyah* was created from Air, balancing the scales between them.

7. He caused the letter Alef to reign over Air, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Air in the universe, and the temperate state in the year, and the *Geviyah* in the body of male with Alef, Mem, Shin and female with Mem, Shin, Alef.

8. He caused the letter Mem to reign over Water, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Earth in the universe, and Cold in the year, and the Belly in the body of male with Mem, Alef, Shin and female with Mem, Shin, Alef.

9. He caused the letter Shin to reign over Fire, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Heavens in the universe, and Heat in the year, and Head in the body of male with Shin, Alef, Mem, and female with Shin, Mem, Alef.

Chapter Four

1. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav behave with two sounds: Beyt Beyth, Gimel Ghimel, Dalet Dhalet, Kaf Khaf, Pey Fey, Resh Rhesch, Tav Thav, a construction of soft and hard.

2. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav: their foundation is Life, Peace, Wisdom, Wealth, Grace, Seed, and Dominion.

3. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav are such in speech and as opposites: The opposite of Life is Death; the opposite of Peace is Evil; the opposite of Wisdom is Folly; the opposite of Wealth is Poverty; the opposite of Grace is Ugliness; the opposite of Seed is Desolation; the opposite of Dominion is Slavery.

4. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav are opposite seven extremities, from them six extremities: Above and Below, East and West, North and South and the Holy Temple is set in the middle and it supports all of them.

5. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav seven and not six, seven and not eight, test them and explore them, and understand the matter thoroughly, and restore the Creator to His Place.

6. **Seven Double Letters:** Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav are the foundation. He engraved them, He hewed them out, He combined them, He weighed them, He set them at opposites, and He formed through them: Seven Stars in the universe, Seven Days in the year, Seven Gates in the body of male and female. And from them He engraved seven heavens, and seven earths, and seven Sabbaths. Therefore He cherished the seventh under all the heavens.

7. And these are the Seven Stars in the universe: Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars. And these are the Seven Days in the year: the seven days of Creation. And Seven Gates in the body of male and female: two eyes, two ears, and the mouth, and the two apertures of the nose. And through them He engraved seven heavens, seven earths, and seven hours, therefore He cherished the seventh of every object under the heavens.

8. He caused the letter Beyt to reign over Life, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Saturn in the universe, the first day in the year, and the right eye in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Gimel to reign over Peace, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Jupiter in the universe, the second day in the year, and the left eye in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Dalet to reign over Wisdom, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Mars in the universe, the third day in the year, and the right ear in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Kaf to reign over Wealth, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Sun in the universe, the fourth day in the year, and the left ear in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Pey to reign over Grace, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Venus in the universe, the fifth day in the year, and the right nostril in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Resh to reign over Seed, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Mercury in the universe, the sixth day in the year, and the left nostril in the body of male and female. He caused the letter Tav to reign over Dominion, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them: Moon in the universe, the seventh day in the year, and the mouth in the body of male and female.

9. Seven Double Letters: Beyt, Gimel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, Resh, Tav through which He engraved seven universes, seven heavens, seven earths, seven seas, seven rivers, seven deserts, seven days, seven weeks, seven years, seven Sabbatical years, seven Jubilees, and the Holy Temple. Therefore, He cherished the seventh ones under all the heavens.

10. Two stones build two houses, three stones build six houses, four stones build twenty-four houses, five stones build one hundred and twenty houses, six stones build seven hundred and twenty houses, seven stones build five thousand and forty houses. From here go out and think what the mouth is unable to speak, and the ear is unable to hear.

Two Stones: ba ab
 Three Stones: gba bga gab bag abg
 Four Stones: dgba gdga dbga bdga gbda bgda
 dgab gdab dagb adgb gadb agdb
 dbag bdag dabg adbg badg abdg
 gbad bgad gabd agbd bagd abgd and so forth...

Chapter Five

- 1. Twelve Simple Letters:** Heh, Vav, Zayin, Chet, Tet, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samek, Ayin, Tzade, Qof.
 Their foundation is speech, thought, movement, sight, hearing, work, sexual intercourse, smell, sleep, wrath, taste, laughter.
- 2. Twelve Simple Letters:** Heh, Vav, Zayin, Chet, Tet, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samek, Ayin, Tzade, Qof.
 Their foundation is the twelve borders of a diagonal: East-Above border, East-North border, East-Below border, South-Above border, South-East border, South-Below border, West-Above border, West-South border, West-Below border, North-Above border, North-West border, North-Below border. And they continually become wider for ever and ever, and they are the arms of the universe. (see **Figure**)
- 3. Twelve Simple Letters:** Heh, Vav, Zayin, Chet, Tet, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samek, Ayin, Tzade, Qof.
 He engraved their foundation, He hewed them out, He combined them, He weighed them, and He set them at opposites, and He formed through them: twelve constellations in the universe, twelve months in the year, twelve organs in the body of male and female.
- The twelve constellations in the universe are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.
- The twelve months in the year are: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishri, Cheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar.
- The twelve organs in the body of male and female are: two hands, two feet, two kidneys, gall, small intestines, liver, maw, stomach, spleen.
- He caused the letter Heh to reign over speech, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Aries in the universe and Nisan in the year, and the right foot in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Vav to reign over thought, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Taurus in the universe, and Iyar in the year, and the right kidney in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Zayin to reign over movement, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Gemini in the universe, and Sivan in the year, and the left foot in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Chet to reign over sight, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Cancer in the universe, and Tammuz in the year, and the right hand in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Tet to reign over hearing, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Leo in the universe, and Av in the year, and the left kidney of the body in male and female.
 He caused the letter Yod to reign over work, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Virgo in the universe, and Elul in the year, and the left hand in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Lamed to reign over sexual intercourse, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Libra in the universe, and Tishri in the year, and gall in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Nun to reign over smell, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Scorpio in the universe, and Cheshvan in the year, and the small intestines in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Samek to reign over sleep, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Sagittarius in the universe, and Kislev in the year, and the stomach in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Ayin to reign over wrath, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Capricorn in the universe, and Tevet in the year, and the liver in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Tzade to reign over taste, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Aquarius in the universe, and Shevat in the year, and the maw in the body of male and female.
 He caused the letter Qof to reign over laughter, and He tied a crown to it, and He combined them with one another, and He formed through them Pisces in the universe, and Adar in the year, and the spleen in the body of male and female.
 He made them like a kind of sunset, (see **Figure**)
 He put them in order like a kind of wall, (see **Figure**)
 He set them in order like a kind of battle. (see **Figure**)

Chapter Six

- These are **Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin**, and there went out from them three Fathers, and they are Air, Water, Fire, and from the Fathers are descendants, three Fathers and their descendants, and Seven Stars and their hosts, and twelve borders of a diagonal. As proof of the thing are faithful witnesses in the universe, year, body, and twelve statutes, and seven, and three. He assigned them in the axis, and cycle, and heart.
- Three Mothers Alef, Mem, Shin**, Air, Water, Fire; Fire above and Water below; and Air of Spirit, statute balancing the scales between them. And this is the sign of the thing: the Fire lifts the Water, the Mem stands still, the Shin hisses, the Alef is Air of Spirit, statute balancing the scales between them.
- The axis is in the universe like a King on His Throne, the cycle is in the year like a King in the province, and the heart is in the body like a King in battle.
- Also *Elohim* made every object, one opposite the other: good opposite evil, evil opposite good, good from good, evil from evil, the good delineates the evil and the evil delineates the good, good is kept for the good and evil is kept for the evil.

5. Three: each one stands by itself, one acquits, one condemns, and one balances the scales between them.

Seven: three opposite three and one is statute balancing the scales between them.

Twelve: stand in battle, three love, three hate, three preserve alive, and three kill.

Three love: the heart and the ears,

Three hate: the liver and the gall and the tongue,

Three preserve alive: the two apertures of the nose, and the spleen

Three kill: the two orifices and the mouth. (see **Figure**)

And *El*, the Faithful King, rules over all of them from His Holy Dwelling-Place unto Eternity. One is above three, three above seven, seven above twelve, and all of them connected with each other.

6. These are the twenty-two letters through which *Ehyeh*, YH, YHVH *Elohim*, *Elohim*, YHVH, YHVH of Hosts, *Elohim* of Hosts, *El Shadhai*, YHVH, *Adonai*, engraved: and made from them three signs, and created from them all His universe, and He formed through them everything that is formed, and everything that is destined to be formed.

7. When Abraham our father, may he rest in peace, came, he: looked, and saw, and understood, and explored, and engraved, and hewed out, and succeeded. The Lord of All was revealed to him in His bosom, and He kissed him on his head and He called him "Abraham, my beloved," and He cut a covenant with him and his seed forever, as it is said, "And he believed in the Lord YHVH, and He considered it to him for righteousness."

And He cut a covenant with him between the ten fingers of his hands, and that is the covenant of the tongue (Alef), and between the ten toes of his feet, and that is the covenant of the circumcision (Ayin), and He tied the twenty-two letters of the Torah on his tongue, and He revealed to him His secret.

He drew them through Water,

He burned them in Fire,

He shook them through the Air,

He kindled them in the Seven,

He led them through the twelve constellations.

End of the Book of Formation