JUDAISM

Sefer Yetzirah (Book of Creation)

A foundational text of Jewish Kabbalah outlining an esoteric creation cosmology through Hebrew letters and numbers, distinct from mainstream rabbinic commentary. Presents Wm. Wynn Westcott's 1887 translation of the short recension, with his appended "Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom."

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Contents

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

The Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom

Chapter 1

[1] In two and thirty most occult and wonderful paths of wisdom did JAH the Lord of Hosts engrave his name: God of the armies of Israel, ever-living God, merciful and gracious, sublime, dwelling on high, who inhabiteth eternity. He created this universe by the three Sepharim, Number, Writing, and Speech.

[2] Ten are the numbers, as are the Sephiroth, and twenty-two the letters, these are the Foundation of all things. Of these letters, three are mothers, seven are double, and twelve are simple.

[3] The ten numbers formed from nothing are the Decad: these are seen in the fingers of the hands, five on one, five on the other, and over them is the Covenant by voice spiritual, and the rite of Circumcision, corporeal (as of Abraham).

[4] Ten are the numbers of the ineffable Sephiroth, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Learn this wisdom, and be wise in the understanding of it, investigate these numbers, and draw knowledge from them, fix the design in its purity, and pass from it to its Creator seated on his throne.

[5] These Ten Numbers, beyond the Infinite one, have the boundless realms, boundless origin and end, an abyss of good and one of evil, boundless height and depth, East and West, North and South, and the one only God and king, faithful forever seated on his throne, shall rule over all, forever and ever.

[6] These ten Sephiroth which are ineffable, whose appearance is like scintillating flames, have no end but are infinite. The word of God is in them as they burst forth, and as they return; they obey the divine command, rushing along as a whirlwind, returning to prostrate themselves at his throne.

[7] These ten Sephiroth which are, moreover, ineffable, have their end even as their beginning, conjoined, even as is a flame to a burning coal: for our God is superlative in his unity, and does not permit any second one. And who canst thou place before the only one?

[8] And as to this Decad of the Sephiroth, restrain thy lips from comment, and thy mind from thought of them, and if thy heart fail thee return to thy place; therefore is it written, "The living creatures ran and returned," and on this wise was the covenant made with us.

[9] These are the ten emanations of number. One is the Spirit of the Living God, blessed and more than blessed be the name of the Living God of Ages. The Holy Spirit is his Voice, his Spirit, and his Word.

[10] Second, from the Spirit he made Air and formed for speech twenty-two letters, three of which are mothers, A, M, SH, seven are double, B, G, D, K, P, R, T, and twelve are single, E, V, Z, CH, H, I, L, N, S, O, Tz, Q, but the spirit is first among these. Third, Primitive Water. He also formed and designed from his Spirit, and from the void and formless made earth, even as a rampart, or standing wall, and varied its surface even as the crossing of beams. Fourth, from the Water, He designed Fire, and from it formed for himself a throne of honor, with Auphanim, Seraphim, Holy Animals, and ministering Angels, and with these he formed his dwelling, as is written in the text "Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flaming fire." (Psalm civ. 4.)

[11] He selected three letters from the simple ones, and sealed them as forming his great Name, I H V and he sealed the universe in six directions. Five.- He looked above, and sealed the height, with I H V. Six.- He looked below, and sealed the deep, with I V H. Seven.- He looked forward, and sealed the

East, with H I V. Eight.-He looked backward, and sealed the West, with V H I. Nine.- He looked to the right, and sealed the South, with V I H. Ten.-He looked to the left, and sealed the North, with H V 1.

12 These are the ten ineffable existences, the spirit of the living God, Air, Water, Fire, Height and Depth, East and West, North and South.

Chapter 2

1 The foundations are the twenty-two letters, three mothers, seven double, and twelve single letters. Three mothers, namely A, M, SH, these are Air, Water, and Fire: Mute as Water, Hissing as Fire, and Air of a spiritual type, is as the tongue of a balance standing erect between them pointing out the equilibrium which exists.

2 He hath formed, weighed, transmuted, composed, and created with these twenty-two letters every living being, and every soul yet uncreated.

3 Twenty-two letters are formed by the voice, impressed on the air, and audibly uttered in five situations, in the throat, guttural sounds; in the palate, palatals; by the tongue, linguals; through the teeth, dentals; and by the lips, labial sounds.

4 These twenty-two letters, the foundations, He arranged as on a sphere, with two hundred and thirty-one modes of entrance. If the sphere be rotated forward, good is implied, if in a retrograde manner evil is intended.

5 For He indeed showed the mode of combination of the letters, each with each, Aleph with all, and all with Aleph. Thus in combining all together in pairs are produced these two hundred and thirty-one gates of knowledge. And from Nothingness did He make something, and all forms of speech and every created thing, and from the empty void He made the solid earth, and from the non-existent He brought forth Life. He hewed, as it were, immense column or colossal pillars, out of the intangible air, and from the empty space. And this is the impress of the whole, twenty-one letters, all from one the Aleph.

Chapter 3

1 The three mother letters A, M, SH are the foundations of the whole; and resemble a Balance, the good in one scale, the evil in the other, and the oscillating tongue of the Balance between them.

2 These three mothers enclose a mighty mystery, most occult and most marvelous, sealed as with six rings, and from them proceed primeval Fire, Water, and Air; these are subsequently differentiated into male and female. At first existed these three mothers, and there arose three masculine powers, and hence all things have originated.

3 The three mothers are A, M, SH; and in the beginning as to the Macrocosm the Heavens were created from Fire;nthe Earth from primeval Water; and the Air was formed from the Spirit, which stands alone in the midst, and is the Mediator between them.

[4] In the Year or as regards Time, these three mothers represent Heat, Cold, and a Temperate climate, the heat from the fire, the cold from the water, and the temperate state from the spiritual air which again is an equalizer between them. These three mothers again represent in the Microcosm or Human form, male and female; the Head, the Belly, and the Chest; the bead from the fire, the belly from water, and the chest from the air lieth between them.

[5] These three mothers did he create, form, and design, and combine with the three mothers in the world, and in the year, and in Man, both male and female. He caused Aleph to reign in the air, and crown it, and combined one with the other, and with these he sealed the Air in the world, the temperate climate of the year, and the chest (the lungs for breathing air) in man; the male with A, M, SH, the female with SH, M, A. He caused Mem to predominate in Water, and crowned it, and combined it with others, and formed Earth on the world, cold in the year, and the fruit of the womb in mankind, being carried in the belly. He caused Shin to reign in Fire and crowned it, and he combined one with the other, and sealed them, as heaven in the universe, as heat in the year, and as the head of Man and Woman.

Chapter 4

[1] There were formed seven double letters, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Pe, Resh, Tau, each has two voices, either aspirated or softened. These are the foundations of Life, Peace, Riches, Beauty or Reputation, Wisdom, Fruitfulness, and Power. These are double, because their opposites take part in life, opposed to Life is Death; to Peace, War; to Riches, Poverty; to Beauty or Reputation, Deformity or Disrepute; to Wisdom, Ignorance; to Fruitfulness, Sterility; to Power, Slavery.

[2] These seven double letters point out the dimensions, East, West, height, depth, North, South, with the holy temple in the middle, sustaining all things.

[3] These seven double letters He formed, designed, created, and combined into the Stars of the Universe, the days of the week, the orifices of perception in man; and from them he made seven heavens, and seven planets, all from nothingness, and, moreover, he has preferred and blessed the sacred Heptad.

[4] From two letters, or forms He composed two dwellings; from three, six; from four, twenty-four; from five, one hundred and twenty; from six, seven hundred and twenty; from seven, five thousand and forty; and from thence their numbers increase in a manner beyond counting; and are incomprehensible. These seven are Planets of the Universe, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars; the seven days are the days of creation; and these an the seven gateways of a man, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and a mouth, through which he perceives by his senses.

[5] [Supplement, found in some editions] He caused and produced Beth, predominant in wisdom, crowned, combined, and formed the Moon in the Universe, the first day of the week, and the right eye, of man.

[6] Gimel, predominant in health, crowned, . combined and formed Mars in the Universe, the second day of the week, and the right ear in man.

[7] Daleth, predominant in fertility, crowned, combined, and formed the Sun in the Universe, the third day of the week, and the right nostril in man.

[8] Kaph, predominant in life, crowned, combined, and formed Venus in the Universe, the fourth day of the week, and the left eye of man.

[9] Pe, predominant in power, crowned, combined, and formed Mercury in the Universe, the fifth day of the week, and the left ear in man.

[10] Resh, predominant in peace, crowned, combined, and formed Saturn in the Universe, the sixth day of the week, and the left nostril in man.

[11] Tau, predominant in beauty, crowned, combined and formed Jupiter in the Universe, the seventh day in the week, and the mouth of man.

[12] By these seven letters were also made seven worlds, seven heavens, seven lands, seven seas, seven rivers, seven deserts, seven days (as before), seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost, and every seventh year a jubilee.

Chapter 5

[1] The simple letters are twelve, namely: He, Vau, Zain, Heth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samech, Oin, Tzaddi, and Quoph; they represent the fundamental properties, eight, hearing, smell, speech, desire for food, the sexual appetite, movement, anger, mirth, thought, sleep, and work. These symbolize also twelve directions in space: northeast, southeast, the east above, the east below, the northwest, southwest, the west above, the west below, the upper south, the lower south, the upper north, the lower north. These diverge to all eternity, and an as the arms of the universe.

[2] These twelve letters, he designed, formed, combined, weighed, and changed, and created with them the twelve divisions of the heavens (namely, the zodiacal constellations), the twelve months of the year, and the twelve important organs of the frame of man, namely the right and left hands, the right and left feet, two kidneys, the liver, the gall, the spleen, the intestines, the gullet, and the stomach.

[3] Three mothers, seven double and twelve simple, these are the twenty-two letters with which I H V H Tetragrammaton, that is our Lord of Hosts, exalted, and existed in the ages, whose name is Holy, created three fathers, fire and spirit and water, progressing beyond them, seven heavens with their armies of angels; and twelve limits of the universe.

[4] [Supplement, found in some versions] God produced He, predominant in Speech, crowned, combined, and formed Aries in the world, Nisan in the year, and the right foot of man.

[5] God produced Vau, predominant in Mind, crowned, combined, and formed Taurus in the world, Yiar in the year, and the right kidney of man.

[6] God produced Zain, predominant in movement, crowned, combined, and formed Gemini in the world, Sivan in the year, and the left foot of man.

[7] He produced Heth, predominant in Sight, crowned, combined, and formed Cancer in the world, Tammuz in the year, and the right hand of man.

[8] He produced Teth, predominant in Hearing, crowned, combined, and formed Leo in the world, Ab in the year, and the left kidney in man.

[9] He produced Yod, predominant in Labor, crowned, combined, and formed Virgo in the world, Elul in the year, and the left hand of man.

[10] He produced Lamed, predominant in sexual desire, crowned, combined, and formed Libra in the world, Tisri in the year, and the gall in man.

[11] He produced Nun, predominant in smell, crowned, combined, and formed Scorpio in the world, Marchesvan in the year, and the intestines in man.

[12] He produced Samech, predominant in sleep, crowned, combined, and formed Sagittarius in the world, Kislev in the year, and the stomach of man.

[13] He produced Oin, predominant in Anger, crowned, combined, and formed Capricornus in the world, Tebet in the year, and the liver in man.

[14] He produced Tzaddi, predominant in Taste, crowned, combined, and formed Aquarius in the world, Sebat in the year, and the gullet in man.

[15] He produced Quoph, predominant in Mirth, crowned, combined, and formed Pisces in the world, Adar in the year, and the spleen in man.

Chapter 6

[1] In proof of these things, and witnessing faithfully are the Universe, the Year of time, and Man himself, the Microcosm. He fixed these as testimonies of the Triad, the Heptad, and the Dodecad; the twelve constellations rulers of the world, the Dragon (THELE) Tali which environs the universe, and the microcosm, man. The triad, fire, water, and air; the fire above, the water below, and the air in the midst. The proof of which is that air is a participator with both.

[2] Tali, the Dragon, is above the Universe, as a king on his throne; the sphere in the year as a king in his State, the Heart of man as a king in warfare. And our God made the states of opposition, good and evil, good from the good, and evil from the evil. Happiness is reserved for the just, and misery for the wicked ones.

[3] And out of the triad one stands apart; and in the heptad there are two triads, and one standing apart. The dodecad symbolizes war, the triad of amity, the triad of enmity, three which are life-giving, three which are death-dealing, and God, the faithful king, rules over all from the throne of his sanctity. One above three, three above seven, and seven above twelve, and all are linked together, and one with another.

[4] After that our father Abraham had seen, and pondered over, investigated, and understood these things, he designed, engraved, and composed them, and received them into his power (hands). Then the Lord of all appeared unto him, made a covenant with him, and kissed his head, and naming him after his own name, called him his friend; and as it is written, completed a covenant with him and with his seed forever, who then believed on God, the Tetragrammaton, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. God ordained a covenant between the toes of his feet, that of circumcision; and a covenant between the fingers of his hands, that of the Tongue. He bound the essences of the twenty-two letters on his tongue, and God disclosed to him the secrets of them. God has carried these through waters, He has borne them aloft through fire, and He has stamped them in the storms of the air; He has distributed them among the seven stars, and has assigned them to twelve celestial constellations. Amen.

The Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom

[1] The First Path is called the Admirable or the Concealed Intelligence (The Highest Crown) - for it is the Light giving the power of comprehension of that First Principle which has no beginning, and it is the Primal Glory, for no created being can attain to its essence.

[2] The Second Path is that of the Illuminating Intelligence it is the Crown of Creation, the Splendor of the Unity, equaling it, and it is exalted above every bead, and named by the Kabbalists the Second Glory.

[3] The Third Path is the Sanctifying Intelligence, and is the basis of foundation of Primordial Wisdom, which is called the Former of faith, and its roots, Amen; and it is the parent of Faith, from which virtues doth Faith emanate.

[4] The Fourth Path is named Measuring, Cohesive, or Receptacular; and is so called because it contains all the holy powers, and from it emanate all the spiritual virtues with the most exalted essences: they emanate one from the other by the power of the primordial emanation (The Highest Crown), blessed be it.

[5] The Fifth Path is called the Radical Intelligence, because it is itself the essence equal to the Unity, uniting itself to the BINAH or Intelligence which emanates from the primordial depths of Wisdom or CHOCHMAH.

[6] The Sixth Path is called the Intelligence of the Mediating Influence, because in it are multiplied the influxes of the emanations; for it causes that affluence to flow into all the reservoirs of the Blessings, with which these themselves are united.

[7] The Seventh Path is the Occult Intelligence, because it is the Refulgent Splendor of all the Intellectual virtues which are perceived by the eyes of intellect, and by the contemplation of faith.

[8] The Eighth Path is called Absolute or Perfect, because it is the means of the primordial, which has no root by which it can cleave, nor rest, except in the hidden places Of GEDULAH. Magnificence, which emanate from its own proper essence.

[9] The Ninth Path is the Pure intelligence so called because it purifies the Numerations, it proves and corrects the designing of their representation, and disposes their unity with which they are combined without diminution or division.

[10] The Tenth Path is the Resplendent Intelligence, because it is exalted above every bead, and sits on the throne of BINAH (the Intelligence spoken of in the Third Path). It illuminates the splendor of all lights, and causes a supply of influence to emanate from the Prince of countenances.

[11] The Eleventh Path is the Scintillating Intelligence because it is the essence of that curtain which is placed close to the order of the disposition, and this is a special dignity given to it that it may be able to stand before the Face of the Cause of Causes.

[12] The Twelfth Path is the Intelligence of Transparency, because it is that species of Magnificence., called CHAZCHAZIT, which is named the place whence issues the vision of those seeing in apparitions. (That is, the prophecies by seers in a vision.)

[13] The Thirteenth Path is named the Uniting Intelligence and is so called because it is itself the essence of Glory. It is the Consummation of the Truth of individual spiritual things.

[14] The Fourteenth Path is the Illuminating Intelligence, and is so called because it is itself that CHASHMAL which is the founder of the concealed and fundamental ideas of holiness and of their stages of preparation.

[15] The Fifteenth Path is the Constituting Intelligence, so called because it constitutes the substance of creation in pure darkness, and men have spoken of these contemplations; it is that darkness spoken of in scripture, Job xxxviii. 9, "and thick darkness a swaddling band for it."

[16] The Sixteenth Path is the Triumphal or Eternal Intelligence, so called because it is the pleasure of the Glory, beyond which is no other Glory like to it, and it is called also the Paradise prepared for the Righteous.

[17] The Seventeenth Path is the Disposing Intelligence, which provides Faith to the Righteous, and they are clothed with the Holy Spirit by it, and it is called the Foundation of Excellence in the state of higher thing.

[18] The Eighteenth Path is called the House of Influence (by the greatness of whose abundance the influx of good things upon created beings is increased) and from the midst of the investigation the arcana and hidden senses are drawn forth, which dwell in its shade and which cling to it, from the cause of all causes.

[19] The Nineteenth Path is the Intelligence of all the activities of the spiritual beings, and is so called because of the affluence diffused by it from the most high blessing and most exalted sublime glory.

[20] The Twentieth Path is the Intelligence of Will, and is so called because it is the means of preparation of all and each created being, and by this intelligence the existence of the Primordial Wisdom becomes known.

[21] The Twenty-first Path is the Intelligence of Conciliation, and is so called because it receives the divine influence which flows into it from its benediction upon all and each existence.

[22] The Twenty-second Path is the Faithful Intelligence, and is so called because by it spiritual virtues are increased, and all dwellers on earth are nearly under its shadow.

[23] The Twenty-third Path is the Stable Intelligence, and it is so called because it has the virtue of consistency among all numerations.

[24] The Twenty-fourth Path is the Imaginative Intelligence, and it is so called because it gives a likeness to all the similitudes, which are created in like manner similar to its harmonious elegancies.

[25] The Twenty-fifth Path is the Intelligence of Probation, or is Tentative, and is so called because it is the primary temptation, by which the Creator (blessed be He) trieth all righteous persons.

[26] The Twenty-sixth Path is called the Renovating Intelligence, because the Holy God (blessed be He) renews by it, all the changing things which are renewed by the creation of the world.

[27] The Twenty-seventh Path is the Exciting Intelligence, and it is so called bemuse by it is created the Intellect of all created beings under the highest heaven, and the excitement or motion of them.

[28] The Twenty-eighth Path is the Natural Intelligence, and is so called because through it is consummated and perfected the nature of every existent being under the orb of the Sun, in perfection.

[29] The Twenty-ninth Path is the Corporeal Intelligence, so called because it forms every body which is, formed beneath the whole set of worlds and the increment of them.

[30] The Thirtieth Path is the Collecting Intelligence, and is so called because Astrologers deduce from it the judgment of the Stars, and of the celestial signs, and the perfections of their science, according to the rules of their revolutions.

[31] The Thirty-first Path is the Perpetual Intelligence; and why is it so called? Because it regulates the motions of the Sun and Moon in their proper order, each in an orbit convenient for it.

[32] The Thirty-second Path is the Administrative Intelligence, and it is so called because it directs and associates, in all their operations, the seven planets, even all of them in their own due courses.