

I

א | *Aleph*

In God's Image

“Hear, O Israel! Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

For centuries, Jewish scholars have perceived the individual letters of the Hebrew alphabet as containing important spiritual lessons, and *aleph* (א), in its exalted position at the head of the alphabet, is considered to be the repository of all the alphabet's wisdom. *Aleph* (א) is much more than merely the Hebrew equivalent of the letter 'A' – the first in a series of letters. It is considered by Jewish theologians to actually be made in the image of God and is thus the holiest of all the letters. *Aleph's* name means 'lord' or 'master' thus making it the lord of all the letters – a father with twenty-one children.¹ In fact, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet – *aleph* and *beit* – together spell אב (*av*) 'father', thus teaching that all things begin with God, the *Father* of all.

The One-In-Three

The cornerstone of Jewish theology is “*Hear O Israel! Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!*” However, the writings of the Sages acknowledge that *aleph* (א, the letter which traditionally represents God) consists of three parts. In turn, these three parts are

¹ Rabbi Michael L. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, pg. 43.

themselves individual letters of the alphabet.² The three letters that comprise the *aleph* (א) are two *yuds* (י) separated by a slanted *vav* (ו) as shown below.



Thus, it can be seen how *aleph* (א), which consists of three parts, nevertheless has a numeric value of one. Some will see this as support for the idea of a “Trinity”, whereas others will see this as an illustration that God manifests Himself in both the physical and spiritual realms. Regardless of your particular point of view, the day is coming when such notions will become moot since we will all know God as He is, and not how we imagine Him to be. As John stated, “*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*”³ In other words, there will be no need for further discussion as to God’s “make up”. We will know Him as He is.

John may have based his statement above on Zechariah prophecy: “*And Adonai will be king over all the earth; in that day Adonai will be one, and His name one.*”⁴ In a similar vein, Paul prophesied: “*When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.*”⁵

Unlike the English alphabet, each Hebrew letter has a numeric value: א = 1, ב = 2, ג = 3, etc. Therefore, if we calculate the numeric values of the letters comprising *aleph* (א), we find that they have a total value of twenty-six (י + י + ו = 10 + 6 + 10 = 26). But what is the significance of twenty-six? It is the numeric value of God’s name – יהוה (י + ה + ו + ה = 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26) – which we denote with the letters YHVH. This once again demonstrates how *aleph* (א), the first letter of the alphabet, represents God.

God’s Name — YHVH

The name of God, יהוה (YHVH), is the Bible’s grandest example of the principle: “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.*”⁶ There is much

² Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, *The Alef-Beit*, pgs. 24, 378.

³ 1 John 3:2

⁴ Zechariah 14:9

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:28

⁶ Proverbs 25:2

in God’s great name for us to explore, and to do so is to walk on holy ground. Moreover, the name יהוה is regarded so holy that Jews dare not speak it. Whenever the Torah is read aloud and the name of יהוה is encountered, the word *Adonai* (‘Lord’) or *Hashem* (literally ‘the Name’) is substituted in order to avoid uttering this holy name – which is just as well since no one knows with certainty its correct pronunciation.⁷ Also, a scribe exercises the utmost caution when printing God’s name in a Torah scroll. Before printing the letters יהוה, he says aloud, “I am about to write the name of God in honor of His holy name.” If a king should address him as he writes the name of God, he is not permitted to pause for a reply, but must first complete the printing of these four sacred letters. And, should a scribe make the slightest error in printing God’s name, he is forbidden to correct his mistake. The sheet of parchment must be set aside, and the scribe must begin again with a new sheet.⁸

Bible translators have long struggled with how to translate יהוה (referred to as the *tetragrammaton* – a Greek word meaning “the sign of the four [letters]”). The King James Version of the Bible makes no attempt to translate the word יהוה, but simply substitutes the word LORD printed in capital letters.⁹ Other translations use ‘Jehovah’ or ‘Yahweh’, but the accuracy of these translations is dubious at best. The difficulty arises from the fact that the consonants comprising יהוה (YHVH) may be pronounced in various ways and we do not know how God pronounced His name when He revealed it to Moses. For instance, depending upon the speaker’s accent, the *yud* (י) may be pronounced as a ‘y’, or, some think, a ‘j’. And *vav* (ו) may be pronounced, depending on the speaker’s accent, either as ‘v’ or ‘w’, or as the vowel ‘u’ or ‘o’. *Hei* (ה), on the other hand, is always pronounced with an ‘h’ sound. Thus, there are many possible pronunciations for יהוה, but no one knows which one is correct.

To further complicate the matter, we do not know what vowel sounds should be inserted between the consonants. Though vowel markings (in the form of dots and dashes placed above or below the letters) were later developed and added to all of the other words of the Torah, no vowel symbols were added to יהוה since no one knew how this word was originally pronounced. In recent times, however, some printed

⁷ Even the word *Adonai* is not used conversationally among the orthodox because of the holiness it derives from being a substitute for YHVH.

⁸ Each sheet of parchment in Torah scroll normally contains three to four columns of print.

⁹ There are four exceptions to this rule in the KJV: Ex. 6:3/Ps. 83:18/Is. 12:2/26:4.

editions of the *Tanach* will add the vowel markings from the word *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי) and apply them to the word יהוה as in the illustration below.

וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֱלֹהִים אֲלֹמֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַזֶּה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְהָשִׁמְנִי לְעֵלְמִ וְזֶה זְכָרִי לְדֹר דֹּר :

Exodus 3:15

What's in a Name?

The name יהוה was first revealed to Moses when God commissioned him to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In the Biblical account, Moses argued with God that he was not the man for the job.¹⁰ Among Moses' excuses for not wanting to return to Egypt is his question, "When the Israelites ask who sent me, what shall I tell them is His name?" God gave a rather lengthy answer to this seemingly simple question. Let's read the entire passage, and then we shall examine God's answer to Moses' question phrase by phrase.

God said to Moses, אֱלֹהֵי אֱשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה ("I AM THAT I AM"); and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, אֱלֹהֵי (I AM) has sent me to you." God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'יהוה (YHVH), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

A cursory glance at this passage reveals three names in Hebrew with their translations within parenthesis. Let's now look at each of these in turn.

In the first part of His answer God reveals His name as "I AM THAT I AM".¹¹ In Hebrew, this phrase consists of only three words:

¹⁰ Exodus 3:14-15

¹¹ Biblical Hebrew does not have a verb form for 'I am', thus this is not an entirely accurate translation of this phrase. Some translators render this phrase as "I shall be as I shall be", but this still does not capture the nuances expressed in the Hebrew. A more accurate English rendering might be "I shall forever be as I am". For the sake of convenience, I have used the traditional translation "I AM THAT I AM".

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה
ehyeh asher ehyeh
 I AM THAT I AM

Notice that each word of the phrase begins with the letter *aleph* (א). Note also the pattern made by these three words. The first and last words are identical, separated by a third, dissimilar word. This is the same pattern used in the construction of the א as discussed earlier: two identical letters (י) separated by a third (ו).

Continuing, God repeats the first word of the phrase giving it as His name. He says, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, אֶהְיֶה [*ehyeh* – “I AM”] has sent me to you.”¹²

He then alters אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh*) to יְהוָה (*YHVH*) when He says, “Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, YHVH, the God of our fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...”¹³ What is the purpose of this last change? And, what exactly does the name YHVH mean? Most scholars believe that YHVH is a peculiar form of the verb ‘to be’ (basically meaning ‘I am’). It would be natural to assume that this is the case simply because יְהוָה closely resembles these verb forms:¹⁴

הָיָה, *ha’yah* = he was
 יִהְיֶה, *yi’yeh* = he will be
 הוּא, *ha’vah* = he is
 יְהוָה, *YHVH* = ?

Others believe that the four letters of God’s name were chosen for reasons known only to God and their similarity to any verb form is merely coincidental. But one thing is certain – the name YHVH means more than simply “I am”. God’s name is a verb. We do not pronounce it with our lips, but with our lives. God is the ultimate ‘Be-er’ and we are His ‘be-ings’. Hence, we are not be parrots who merely mouth sounds, but we are to proclaim God’s name with deeds. May God have mercy on us for taking His name in vain by using our mouths instead of our bodies to proclaim it.

A thorough discussion of God’s name is too vast a subject for one chapter, so we will continue our discussion in future chapters as the Hebrew letters provide further

¹² Exodus 3:14

¹³ Exodus 3:15

¹⁴ Biblical Hebrew does not have a verb form for “I am”.

insights into the mystery of יהוה. But I must interject one additional comment at this point. We have learned that God's name expresses His unchangeability – I AM THAT I AM. He is perfect, and perfection does not require alteration. Therefore, be careful that you never say, “It’s just the way I am. I can’t change.” Only God can say that. You and I, on the other hand, can change ... and must change. Do not try to make yourself God’s equal by claiming immutability.

⌘ Marks the Spot

The very structure of the Torah’s opening verses in the book of Genesis affirms in an amazing way the connection between *aleph* (⌘) and God’s various names and titles. As mentioned above, יהוה has a numeric value of 26 ($\text{י} + \text{ה} + \text{ו} + \text{ה} = 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26$), as do the component parts of the letter *aleph* (⌘). Interestingly, if we start with the first letter of the Genesis 1:1 and count twenty-six letters, we arrive at another ⌘. Also, if we take the shortened form of יהוה that is frequently used in the Bible – יה (*Yah*) – which equals fifteen ($\text{י} + \text{ה} = 10 + 5 = 15$) and count fifteen letters, we once again come to an ⌘. Verify the results for yourself by examining the passage below. (Remember to count from right to left.)

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ
 והארץ היתה תהו ובהו ורוח פני תהום ורוח
 אלהים מרוזפת על פני המים ויאמר אלהים יהי
 אור ויהי אור וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב
 ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין הרושך ויקרא
 אלהים לאור יום וכוושך קרא לילה ויהי ערב
 ויהי בקר יום אחד

After *Yah* (יה) and YHVH (יהוה), the two most common names for God are *El* (אל) and *Elohim* (אלהים). *El* (אל) has a numerical equivalent of 31 ($\text{א} + \text{ל} = 1 + 30 = 31$), and *Elohim* (אלהים) has a numerical equivalent of 86 ($\text{א} + \text{ל} + \text{ה} + \text{י} + \text{ם} = 1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40 = 86$). Once again, counting thirty-one letters from the beginning of Genesis, we arrive at an ⌘. And the same result is achieved when we count to the eighty-sixth letter.

Notice also that the names *El* and *Elohim* both begin with an ⌘. These are the earliest titles by which God is identified in the Torah. But of all His titles, the one used most by Yeshua is *Father*, which, in Hebrew, is אב (*av*). The numeric value of this

word is three (א + ב = 1 + 2 = 3), and the third letter in Genesis 1:1 is, once again, an א. The box below summarizes our discussion of these five names of God and how each one is identified with an *aleph* (א) in the Torah.

יה <i>Yah</i> ,	10+5=15	The 15 th letter of the Torah is א
יהוה YHVH	10+5+6+5=26	The 26 th letter of the Torah is א
אל <i>El</i>	1+30=31	The 31 st letter of the Torah is א
אלהים <i>Elohim</i>	1+30+5+10+40=86	The 86 th letter of the Torah is א
בא <i>av</i>	1+2=3	The 3 rd letter of the Torah is א

What about other names of God, such as *Adonai*, and “I AM THAT I AM”? Do the numerical values of these names also point to *aleph* (א)? No. However, if we investigate the numerical values of these names, they too will lead us to some amazing discoveries.

The title *Adonai* is spelled אדני and has a numerical value of 65 (א = 1, ד = 4, נ = 50, י = 10; 1+4+50+10 = 65). Counting 65 letters from the beginning of Genesis we arrive at the letter *yad* (י). From the name אהיה אשר אהיה (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*) “I AM THAT I AM” we derive a numerical value of 543, and *hei* (ה) happens to be the 543rd letter of the Torah. The name to which these two letters point – י and ה – spell יה (*Yah*), which is a name the Bible frequently uses as a shortened form of יהוה.

The name *Yah* (יה) can be brought to completion to form יהוה only by the addition of a *vav* (ו) and another *hei* (ה). These letters are supplied by the names *Mashiach Yeshua*. *Mashiach* (משיח) has a numerical value of 358, and *Yeshua* (ישוע) equals 386.¹⁵ The 358th letter of Genesis is a *vav* (ו), and the 386th letter is a *hei* (ה), thus bringing to completion the name יהוה as summarized below.

<i>Adonai</i>	אדני	= 65	The 65 th letter is	י ה ו ה
<i>I WILL BE...</i>	אהיה אשר אהיה	= 543	The 543 rd letter is	
<i>Mashiach</i>	משיח	= 358	The 358 th letter is	
<i>Yeshua</i>	ישוע	= 386	The 386 th letter is	

¹⁵ *Mashiach*, משיח, מ = 40, ש = 300, י = 10, ח = 8; 40+300+10+8=358. *Yeshua*, ישוע, י = 10, ש = 300, ו = 6, ע = 70; 10 + 300 + 6 + 70 = 386. *Mashiach* is the Hebrew pronunciation of *Messiah* (or ‘Christ’).

The unifying of the letters הײ with the letters הױ is a common theme in Jewish thought. The following is a standard part of the morning prayers in the *siddur* (Jewish prayer book):

*For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He, and His Presence, in fear and love to unify the Name – yad-hei with vav-hei – in perfect unity, in the name of all Israel.*¹⁶

What does this prayer mean? The footnote in the prayer book explains:

*The first half of the Divine name, formed of the letters yud and hei, symbolizes the Attribute of Judgment, while the second half, formed of the letters vav and hei, symbolizes the Attribute of Mercy. The blend of both attributes leads to His desired goal for Creation.*¹⁷

Do you grasp the significance of this? According to Jewish theology, the two halves of God’s four-letter name represent His two complimentary attributes – Judgement and Mercy. It was demonstrated above that the first two letters (הײ, *Yah*, a shortened form of God’s name) point to the letter *aleph* (א) as do so many other of God’s titles. But, the remaining two letters of His name – ם and ה – are derived by counting the numeric value of *Mashiach Yeshua*, representing God’s attribute of Mercy. This reminds us of Zechariah’s words that someday “YHVH will be King over the whole earth. On that day there will be one YHVH, and His name one.”¹⁸ Only through the revelation of Yeshua can the character of God’s name – יהוה – be known in its fullness.

The Gospel Ladder

God’s purpose in drawing us unto Himself is so that we may become more like Him. He is not interested in making us gods, but in making us fit for fellowship *with God*. He created man in His own image so that fellowship with Him would not only be possible, but natural. However, when sin entered the picture fellowship with God was greatly hindered, and only through the mediation of Yeshua has fellowship been restored. This is expressed in the passage: *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Messiah Yeshua, who gave himself as a ransom for all...*¹⁹

¹⁶ The Expanded Artscroll Siddur (2010), pg. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Zechariah 14:9

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 2:5-6

This, the basic message of the gospel, is also illustrated by the letter ⌘. Jewish theologians see in *aleph*: “a ladder placed on the ground reaching heavenward... [consisting] of an upper *yud* and a lower *yud* (י), the upper one denoting the celestial and the lower one the mundane.”²⁰ This parallels Yeshua’s statement,

“...*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*”²¹

The picture is made complete when we realize that *yud* is not only the name of a letter but is also the word for ‘hand’. Thus, the message of the gospel can be seen in the construction of *aleph* by the leaning *vav* which, like a ladder, connects the hand of God (the upper *yud*) with the hand of man (the lower *yud*).

A Holy Reversal

A truly amazing insight involving the letter *aleph* (⌘) is found in the story of Israel’s battle with Amalek. Unlike the battle with Egypt where God did all the fighting,²² God required Israel to do the fighting against Amalek. However, an unusual strategy was involved in this battle. Here is the story:

*Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.*²³

Many wonderful teachings have been done on this story, but I wish to bring out something that is revealed in the Hebrew names of the three men who were on the hilltop overlooking the battle – Moses, Hur and Aaron.²⁴ Moses held up his staff (over

²⁰ Munk, p.54.

²¹ John 1:51

²² Exodus 14

²³ Exodus 17:8-12

²⁴ The correct pronunciations are *Mosheh, Aharon* and *Chur*.

his head, we assume) and was flanked by Hur and Aaron who helped support his hands. Here are their names in Hebrew:

אֶהָרֵן	מֹשֶׁה	חֹר
Aaron	Moses	Hur

Now, notice what is revealed if we spell each of these names backward:²⁵

נְרֵהָא	הַשֵּׁם	רוּחַ
<i>Ner-ha-aleph</i>	<i>Hashem</i>	<i>Ruach</i>

So, what do these new words mean? When Moses' name (מֹשֶׁה, *Mosheh*) is spelled backward, it becomes הַשֵּׁם – *Hashem* – which, you may recall is a term that means ‘the Name’ and is used to refer to God. Do not misunderstand. This is not to say that Moses is God! No. Moses had revealed *Hashem* to an extent that no one had done before him. But, here we are simply revealing a picture as you will see.

When Hur's name (חֹר, *Chur*) is spelled backward, it becomes רוּחַ (*ruach*), which means ‘spirit’ as in *Ruach Hakodesh* (רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ) ‘Holy Spirit’.

And, when Aaron's name (אֶהָרֵן, *Aharon*) is spelled backward (נְרֵהָא) it does not create a Hebrew word. However, the first two letters – נר (*ner*) – spell the word for ‘lamp’. The third letter – ה (*hei*) – is the Hebrew prefix that means ‘the’. And the last letter – א (*aleph*) – is, as we have learned, the letter that represents God. Putting these together, we derive נר-ה-א (*ner-ha-‘aleph*) ‘lamp of the *aleph*’.

²⁵ Though it may seem strange to reverse the spelling of a word, biblical Hebrew sometimes renders amazing insights into a name or word when this is done. For example, if we reverse the name ‘Noah’ – נֹחַ – it becomes חֵן ‘grace’. And, as we know, “Noah (נֹחַ) found ‘grace’ (חֵן) in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:8)

Could the picture be more obvious? It provides a representation of God in the center, with the spirit and the Word (the lamp of God) in their supporting roles of service to Him.

But, there is a fourth character in this picture. He is the one ‘on the ground’ doing the fighting and leading his army in battle against Amalek. His name is Joshua (יְהוֹשׁוּעַ, *Yehoshua*), and he is the one in whom the efforts of Moses, Aaron and Hur find fulfillment. Joshua’s name is practically the same as Yeshua’s (יֵשׁוּעַ), whose name means ‘salvation’, and through Yeshua the things of God find their focus in the world.

Paul wrote, “For in Him all the fullness of *θεοτεϊτος* (*theoteitos*) dwells in Bodily form.”²⁶ What is *theoteitos*? This unusual Greek word is used only here in the Bible, and can be translated ‘deity’, ‘divine nature’ or ‘godhead’. In other words, all the things portrayed by the reversed spelling of ‘Moses’, ‘Aaron’ and ‘Hur’ are encapsulated in the person of Yeshua our Messiah.

Man – Made in God’s Image

The Torah states, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created



him...”²⁷ Though the letters of God’s name – יהוה – can be arranged in descending order to produce the form of a man (see illustration), this does not mean that God looks like a man, complete with arms, legs and head. The word translated ‘image’ is צֶלֶם (*tzelem*), a word which refers to the essence of a thing and not just its outward appearance. God has made man *in essence* like Himself. He created us with emotions because He has emotions. He created us with a sense of humor because He has a sense of humor. And He created us with the ability to love because He is love.

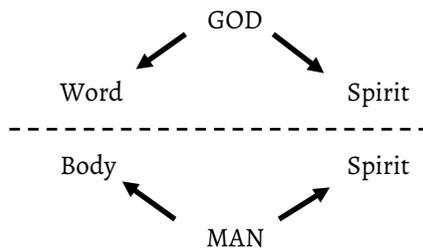
Unfortunately, man’s ability to reflect God’s image has been terribly marred because of sin. Furthermore, our spiritual enemy hates us because of the One whose image we bear. Though we sometimes fail to see God’s image in one another, Satan sees it clearly and hates us as a result. Because his consuming hatred drives him to destroy any reminder of his enemy, he seeks to make us suffer as he made Yeshua suffer. His intent is thwarted, however, because Yeshua was our ransom, suffering Satan’s wrath in our place. And because of Messiah’s resurrection, new life is

²⁶ Colossians 2:9

²⁷ Genesis 1:27

available to all who place their faith in Him, making it possible for God’s image to be restored. This is the intended purpose of spiritual growth – growing up *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah.”*²⁸

Though reaching the *“measure ... of the fullness of Messiah”* is a tall order, God has already laid the foundation for this work by creating man with the basic internal structure to make this objective attainable. God’s essence – His personality, power, wisdom, love, character – are expressed through God’s Word (which later *“became flesh and dwelt among us”*²⁹) and God’s spirit. So, to make man in His own image, He followed the same pattern, creating man as a soul that can express himself through his body and through his spirit.



An understanding of the body, soul, and spirit is vitally important for achieving a better understanding of how God relates to the physical realm and is a subject that is rarely understood today. It is beyond the scope of this chapter (and this book) to fully explore this important subject, but a brief excursion into this topic will help us derive further insights into the letter *aleph* which will in turn provide insights into the relation of body, soul, and spirit.

In the Image of God

Since man is made in God’s image, many aspects of *aleph* (א) apply to us. Before we go further with this discussion, we must first realize that God does not have a ‘makeup’, so to speak. God is spirit. Period. However, He manifests Himself in both the physical and spiritual realms. Likewise, the soul receives information from the physical and spiritual realms. Just as God is God, you *are* a soul. Our spirit

²⁸ Ephesians 4:13

²⁹ John 1:14

corresponds to God's, and our bodies correspond to the various ways God speaks into the world – through the Scriptures as well as through His Son, the Word made flesh. Nevertheless, God is one. But, we broken human beings are fragmented (a dilemma which we will discuss further in the next chapter).

The three parts of *aleph* (⌘) illustrate the internal relationship of man's body, soul and spirit as it reflects God's expression of Himself through the spirit and the Word – His Son. As the *vav* (ⱱ) stretches between the upper *yud* (י) and the lower *yud*, the soul dwells between the spirit and the body. Likewise, as the *vav* is the dominant figure of the *aleph* (⌘), the Father is the dominant figure of the godhead and the soul is the dominant part of man.

Though each of us is a soul, we cannot see one another's souls with physical eyes. When you behold a person, you do not literally see the person himself, but only his body. The real person is inside that body looking back at you through the eyes – the windows of the soul.³⁰ We can think of our bodies as our 'earth suits' which allow our souls to interact with the physical world. Thus, the soul expresses itself through the body by means of words, deeds, and gestures. In other words, the flesh expresses the personality of the soul in the same way that Yeshua expressed the personality of the Father. As God's physical expression, Yeshua was literally the Word of God made flesh. His every word and action were expressions of the Father's personality, thus fulfilling Yeshua's constant desire to do the will of the Father.³¹

Since all communication between individuals takes place through the expressions of the body (speech, gestures, writing, etc.), is it any wonder that God's physical expression, Yeshua, is called 'the Word'? The writer of Hebrews expresses this as follows:

*God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in his Son ...*³²

When Yeshua spoke of Himself as the Alpha and Omega,³³ He was not merely saying that He was the First and the Last. He was also proclaiming that He is God's alphabet – from A to Z – through whom the Father speaks.

³⁰ Though "windows of the soul" is not a biblical phrase, it is nonetheless an accurate concept. (Compare Matthew 6:22-23 and Revelation 1:14.)

³¹ John 8:28

³² Hebrews 1:1-2

³³ Revelation 22:13-16

Not only does the soul express itself through the body, but it is through the body's five senses that the soul, in turn, experiences the surrounding world. If these senses were to somehow be turned off, the soul would be completely insulated from physical sensation. You would have no way of knowing if it were light or dark, hot or cold, or if you were alone or in a crowd.

In the same way that our bodies are sensitive to the physical realm, our spirits are sensitive to the spiritual realm...that is, they *should* be. Paul emphasized this when he wrote,

...Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the spirit, for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.³⁴

In other words, eyes and ears are incapable of perceiving things which are spiritual in nature. For perceiving those things, the spirit is necessary.

Our enemy is fearful of the believer who is mighty in spirit and has his spiritual eyes open. It has been Satan's tactic to tempt us either to ignore the spirit altogether, or to pursue spirituality by occult means or in other unhealthy ways. On the other hand, God would have us develop spiritually by means of obedience to His Word, prayer, and community.

In short, God expresses Himself in the physical realm through Yeshua (the Word made flesh) and through His spirit. Having been created in God's image, the soul of man is clothed in a body of flesh, while also having a spirit by which he may commune with God.

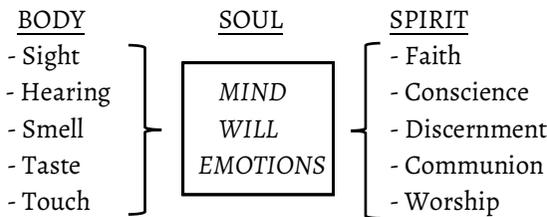
Let's apply what we have learned about *aleph* (א) to what we have learned about the body, soul, and spirit. As mentioned, א is constructed from a slanted *vav* (ו) surrounded by two *yuds* (י). Just as the *vav* (ו) represents the Father – the person of God Himself – so also the *vav* (ו) can be seen to depict the soul – the person of the human being. The soul (comprised of the mind, will, and emotions), is what makes you distinctly *you*. This is the essence of your personality, because the way you think (mind), the way you make choices (will), and the way you feel and respond to situations (emotions) are what make *your* soul unique from all others.

The lower *yud* (י) is the body – the lowest and earthiest part of a person wherein all physical sensations reside. The body provides the soul's contact with the physical

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

realm, and its five senses are five gates through which physical sensations reach the soul. Through the body we interact with others and learn many of the object lessons God has placed in nature for our instruction.

The upper *yud* (י) is the spirit – the loftiest part of a person wherein the five spiritual sensitivities reside. If you recall, the word *yud* means ‘hand’. As the hand has five fingers, so the lower *yud* – the body – has five senses by which we may ‘grasp’ the physical realm. The upper *yud* – the spirit – also has five senses by which we may interact with the spiritual realm. Let us briefly consider each of these five spiritual senses.



The Five Functions of the Spirit

Faith | We are to walk by faith and not by sight.³⁵ This does not mean that we are to go through life with our eyes closed. It means that in maneuvering through the physical realm we use our eyes (highly recommended when driving), but for those things which we cannot see God has given us faith. Like physical sight, faith allows us to *see* the spiritual realm. Faith is a gift from God³⁶ and the Word of God, like a pair of glasses, helps focus faith upon His truth. Faith is not wishful thinking. It is the “*assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*”³⁷ In fact, faith is more dependable than physical sight, “*...For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*”³⁸ But even the eyes of faith require a light by which to see, and

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:7

³⁶ Ephesians 2:8

³⁷ Hebrews 11:1

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:18

Yeshua, the 'light of the world', has placed His light in a lantern called the Bible, a *"lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*³⁹

Conscience | The conscience is a moral alarm system located in the spirit. It goes off when we go wrong. If we heed it, we avoid a great deal of remorse and guilt. Even when unbelievers obey their consciences, they *"show the work of the Torah written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."*⁴⁰ But if we violate the conscience often enough, it becomes seared as if covered with scar tissue, growing numb to things which should cause pain. Society is reaping the consequences of having taught children behaviors that run contrary to their consciences, thus making their consciences dysfunctional and insensitive to the pleadings of God's spirit.

Discernment | Yeshua commands us to be *"wise as serpents, but innocent as doves"*.⁴¹ If we obey the conscience, we will maintain our innocence; and if we exercise discernment we will be wise as serpents. This spiritual sense complements the conscience in that while the conscience warns me of error in myself, discernment can warn me of error in others. By error I do not mean the doctrinal hairsplitting that has often plagued faith communities, but rather the discernment of the spirit and motive which underlies another's words or actions.

Satan is an accomplished deceiver and is able to counterfeit legitimate workings of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, discernment is valuable in differentiating between God's spirit and demonic spirits. John advises us to *"test the spirits"*⁴² so that we will not easily be led astray by those who employ deception in order to appear godly. Discernment is similar to the sense of smell in that both are useful in detecting hidden rotteness.

In his comparison of the spiritual and carnal man, Paul wrote *"But the spiritual man discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no man."*⁴³ He is referring here to the ability of the spiritually perceptive person to sense what resides in the spirit of another, as well as the inability of the spiritually dead person to sense what resides in the spirit of the believer. As we grow in spiritual maturity, may we become ever more discerning so that we may more effectively minister to others, as well as protect ourselves from wolves in sheep's clothing.

³⁹ Psalm 119:105

⁴⁰ Romans 2:15

⁴¹ Matthew 10:16

⁴² 1 John 4:1

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 2:15

Communion | “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”⁴⁴ Such spiritual tasting occurs only as we spend time feeding upon God’s Word and conversing with Him in prayer. This is the archetype of all food and fellowship. I use the word communion instead of prayer because we tend to think of prayer as strictly one-way. We talk, God listens. Communion, on the other hand, is a two-way activity – a living relationship between man and God. Prayers can be written in a book, but communion can’t. It is through communion that we intimately connect with God and He directs our paths. In communion we become prayerfully still so as to hear Him say, “*This is the way; walk in it.*”⁴⁵ Communion is the attitude of prayer Paul had in mind when he said to pray without ceasing.

Worship | We tend to confuse worship with praise. Praise is a function of the soul and is expressed through the body, but worship is a function of the spirit. Yeshua said as much when He stated, “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*”⁴⁶ Since God is spirit, we cannot touch Him physically. However, we can indeed touch God with that part of us that is like Him – our spirit. This occurs through worship.

Many congregations have so-called “worship teams” which can lead people in praise and singing, but only God’s spirit can truly direct worship. Worship is the quiet contemplation and adoration of God born out of communion with Him. Only when we have followed His command to “*Be still and know that I am God*”⁴⁷ can we begin to worship Him in spirit and truth. Too often we work backward, attempting to arrive at worship by beginning with praise, with the result that we become spiritual cheerleaders who are attracted to praise itself instead of worshipping the One who is the object of our praise. Praise of God is the natural fruit of worshipping God. Praise should be an expression of worship, not the cause of it.

In summary, we see that *conscience* and *discernment* are especially useful in one’s relationship with others, whereas *communion* and *worship* are necessary in one’s relationship with God. But, all four must operate from the starting point of *faith*.

As a result of examining the distinctions which exist between the body, soul, and spirit it is easy to forget that they are closely united and that what affects one affects the other two as well. We have seen an example of this as it applies to worship: when

⁴⁴ Psalm 34:8

⁴⁵ Isaiah 30:21

⁴⁶ John 4:24

⁴⁷ Psalm 46:10

I worship God (spirit), I begin to rejoice in my mind and emotions (soul) and may choose to sing with my mouth, clap, or raise my hands (body). Conversely, if I accidentally drop the garage door on my toe (I speak from personal experience), my mind, will and emotions (soul) direct their full attention on the injured member (body), and I begin to call out to the Lord for help in this time of trouble (spirit).

The soul is the self. It is central to the body and spirit and responds fully to both. It is equally able to direct its full attention to an injured toe, or to worship of the King of Kings. This truth is reflected by the *aleph's* slanted *vav* (ו) which descends to the level of the lower *yud* (י), representing the body, and also ascends to the level of the upper *yud* (י), representing the spirit.

Keep the א in Adam

The name of the first man, *Adam* (אדם), begins with *aleph* (which again demonstrates that man is created in God's image). Realizing that the *aleph* represents God's presence, one Jewish Sage wrote that when *Adam* (אדם) sinned, the *aleph* (א) fled and only *dam* (דם, 'blood') was left.⁴⁸

$$\text{אדם} - \text{א} = \text{דם}$$

Adam - א = 'blood'

History has repeatedly demonstrated the truth of this statement. Mankind's propensity for bloodshed has been a perpetual reminder of Adam's sin in departing from God.

The same principle can be applied to a common Hebrew word for 'man' – איש (*ish*). When the *aleph* (א) is removed from this word, we are left with *yesh* (יש), a word meaning mere 'substance'.

$$\text{איש} - \text{א} = \text{יש}$$

'man' - א = [mere] substance

This attribute earmarks the life of the fleshly person who cannot see beyond his physical existence. He fills his life with material possessions and physical sensations

⁴⁸ R' Yeshayah Hurwitz (1560-1630) in Shnei Luchos Habris, Part Three, 13b.

in an attempt to satisfy the emptiness in his soul – an emptiness caused by the absence of God (א) in his life. However, Yeshua said, “...not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”⁴⁹

An examination of *aleph*'s name (spelled אָלֶפֶת) also offers some rich insights. As we have seen, the first letter, *aleph* (א), represents God. The name of the second letter, *lamed* (ל), means ‘to learn’. The last letter is *peh* (פ or פּ), which means ‘mouth’. Together, the three letters which spell *aleph* teach us that:

א - We must meet *the Lord*,...
 ל - ... *learn* from Him, then ...
 פ - ... *speak* of Him.

As we learned in the last section, *vav* (ו) represents the soul. If we place a *vav* (ו) inside the word *aleph* (אָלֶפֶת), we form the word *aluph* (אָלֶפֶתוֹ) which means ‘lord’ or ‘master’. Do you see the picture this creates? By entrusting one’s soul (ו) to God (אָלֶפֶת), one makes God his Lord and Master (אָלֶפֶתוֹ). How much more effectively we can speak for and to our God if we have entrusted our lives to Him by making Him our Lord and Master.

In Conclusion

There is much more to be said about the letter *aleph* (א), and we will encounter it many times in chapters to come. *Aleph* (א), lord and master of the alphabet, is the first in a holy pageant of deep truths and rich insights that will be taught by the letters that follow. Although many secrets remain hidden within *aleph* which await discovery, I will end this chapter with one final insight.

In three places the Bible states that “*God is...*”, followed by something to which He can be likened. The three instances are:

God is a consuming Fire	Deuteronomy 4:24	אש
God is Light	1 John 1:5	אור
God is Love	1 John 4:8	אהבה

⁴⁹ Luke 12:15

Note that each of these three words begins with the letter *aleph* (א), the letter which, more than any other, symbolizes God's nature and character.

Our God is a *consuming fire*; He is *light*; He is *love*. How can we begin to understand the magnitude of His nature? A good place to begin is by visiting God's 'house', which is the meaning of the next letter's name – *beit* (ב).