

LETTERS OF LIFE

A GUIDE TO THE HEBREW ALPHABET

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The Hesed Association.

Exploring God's Creation and His Holy Word, beginning with the words of the Bible in their original context and seeking their relevance and application for our lives, the church, and the world today. No formal membership or fee required. New papers are issued, and people invited to meet every few months.

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Introduction to the Hebrew Alphabet

The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. The names of the Greek letters alpha and beta which give us the word alphabet themselves derive from the first two Hebrew letters, **aleph** and **beth** (or **beit**, as is sometimes pronounced), so **aleph** + **beth** give us the progenitor of “alphabet”.

Hebrew reads from right to left.

Of these 22 letters, five (**kaf, mem, nun, Peh, tzaddi**) have a different shape if they come at the end of a word rather than in the middle. There are also six letters which change their pronunciation from soft to hard when a dot is placed in the middle – **beth** (B or V sound), **gimel, dalet, kaf, peh** (P or F sound), and **tav** (T or Th sound).

Shin or **sin** (**ש**) is the same letter, with the pronunciation being **shin** if a dot is above the right leg or **sin** if it is over the left one.

All the letters are consonants, and the pointing which is added to the letters to indicate accompanying vowel sounds only began to be added just over 1,000 years ago. Hebrew readers before then had to memorise the vowels of every word. The same combination of letters, when pronounced with different vowel sounds, can therefore be a different word with a different meaning.

In addition, the ancient Rabbis (teachers) believed that every letter has four main levels of meaning. These are:

1. Its name.
2. Its numerical value.
3. Its form.
4. What it symbolises.

Important clues to letter symbolism come from the first point the letter appears in Genesis, and often the word that the letter is first used in.

The symbolic meaning of the letter can be shown by its context, and some letters can symbolise a range of different things, sometimes in a “positive or negative” kind of way. Letter symbolism can illuminate and give depth to the basic meaning of a word, but without changing that primary meaning.

The ancient Rabbis also believed that each letter had “body soul and spirit”, that every part of the word of God is indeed alive, that the scriptures are truly living words, speaking fresh to every age. The Torah (or “Law”), the name given to the first five books of the Bible, itself was viewed as what we would now describe as the “source code” of creation, containing depths of knowledge much of which still lies beyond our comprehension.

What follows is no more than a précis of the large amount of information available on this subject. Rabbi Michael L Munk’s “The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet” is highly recommended for those who want to dig deeper, also the Chabad and Hebrew for Christians websites:

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/137068/jewish/Letters-of-Light.htm

[The Hebrew Alphabet \(hebrew4christians.com\)](http://hebrew4christians.com)

**“The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we may do all the words of this law.*”
Deuteronomy 29:29**

Alphabet Overview

Letter	Name		Meaning	Symbol	No.
א	Aleph	אלף	Master, Ox	God's oneness & Mastery	1, 1000
ב	Beth	בית	House, In	Blessing, Creation, Duality	2
ג	Gimel	גמל	Ripen, Camel	Kindness, Culmination	3
ד	Dalet	דלת	Door	Dimensions & Concern	4
ה	Hei	הא, הי	To exist, Behold!, The	Divinity, Gentleness, Femininity	5
ו	Vav	וו, ויו	Hook, And	Completion, Redemption, Transformation	6
ז	Zayin	זין	Sword, Weapon	Spirit, Sustenance Struggle	7
ח	Chet	חית	Broken, terror	Transcendence, Grace, Life	8
ט	Tet	טיט	Mud, Clay	Goodness	9
י	Yod	יוד	Hand, Power	Creation, The metaphysical	10
כ	Kaf	כף	Palm of hand	Crowning accomplishment	20, 500

Letter	Name		Meaning	Symbol	No.
ל	Lamed	למד	Learn, Ox goad	King of kings, Teaching	30
מ	Mem	מים	Water	Revealed and concealed, Moses & Messiah	40, 600
נ	Nun	נון	Sprout, Inheritance	Faithfulness, Soul,	50, 700
ס	Samek	סמך	Support, Protection	Support, Protection Memory	60
ע	Ayin	עין	Eye, Fountain	Sight, Insight	70
פ	Peh	פה	Mouth, Blow	Speech, Silence	80, 800
צ	Tzaddi	צדי	Righteous	Righteousness, Humility	90, 900
ק	Qof	קוף	Monkey, Holiness	Holiness, Growth cycles	100
ר	Resh	ראש	Head, Chief, Poverty	Choice between Greatness & Degradation	200
ש	Shin	שין	Year, Tooth, Stedfast	Divine love, Corruption, Falsehood	300
ת	Tav	תאו	Sign, Mark	Truth, Perfection	400

⌘ **Aleph.** Number 1, also 1,000.

Aleph means: = Master; Ox; Thousand.

Form: a **vav** slanting sideways, two letter **yods**, either side.

Some words beginning with aleph: **Aretz** = earth, **Owr** = light, **Ab** = father, **Elohim**, **El** = God, Adonai = Lord.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in **B'reshith** = Beginning.

Symbolises: God's oneness and mastery.

From its form we can see the upper **yod** representing the waters above the firmament, the **vav** the firmament, and the lower **yod** the waters below. This shows creation united all in one (God all in all, 1 Corinthians 15:28). We can also see the Trinity, with the **vav** representing Christ as the mediator, with the top **yod** showing our Father in heaven above and the bottom **yod** the Holy Spirit active on earth below (**yod** here represents the invisible power of God).

Spelt backwards **aleph** reads: **peh** + **lamed** + **aleph** it gives **peleh** = wondrous.

The fact that **aleph** appears six times in Genesis 1:1 underlines (as number 1) the six days of creation, but also indicates (as number 1,000) that creation will last for 6,000 years.

From the component letters of its form we have **vav** = 6 and **yod** = 10, The form of the **aleph** equals 10+6+10=26, the same as the value of the divine name **YHWH**:

yod (10) + **hei** (5) + **vav** (6) + **hei** (5) = 26.

So **Aleph** equals **YHWH**, as in Deuteronomy 6:4 (lit.) "...**YHWH** our God **YHWH** is one". This numerical "coincidence" is reinforced:

aleph (1) + **lamed** (30) + **peh** (80) = 111, digit sum = 3. God is three and God is one.

Aleph as Ox also points to the animal nature, when man is making himself "Number One", in his own strength.

ב *Beth*. Number 2.

Beth means: House; In (as prefix).

Form: composed of three *vavs*.

Some words beginning with *beth*: *Berakah* = Blessing; *Bara* = Create, *Boqer* = Morning.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *B'reshith* = Beginning.

Symbolises: blessing and creation, duality thus diversity in all parts of creation.

The family is based on the principle of two – husband and wife – making the household, *beth*, with the third *vav* representing *YHWH*, who binds them together.

The three *vavs* also stand for *Torah* (God's word), prayer, and charity (kindness), which are the three pillars on which the world stands. Three *vavs* total 18, the number of *Chay* = Alive. As the first letter of *Boker* = Morning it brings the daylight, as the last letter of *Ereb* = Evening it ends the night. *Beth* thus links to the light of creation throughout all time.

Its form also shows the principle of hospitality – the house is open on one side (North), to welcome guests, with the other three sides representing the track of the sun each day, from East to South to West.

As the first letter of the *Torah*, it shows the purpose of creation was to make a home for mankind, and a "house" (the family of God). The woman is symbolized by the house. The high priest could not enter the Holy of Holies unless he was married. The glory of the wife and mother is to "hold court" in her own house, as if her royal palace.

The fact that *aleph* is not the first letter of the *Torah* indicates that God (*aleph*) existed prior to creation (In the beginning was the Word, John1:1).

ג *Gimel*. Number 3.

Gimel means: Nourish; Camel.

Form: a *vav*, with a *yod* leading forward (towards *dalet*, the next letter in the alphabet).

Some words beginning with *gimel*: *Gadol* = Great; *Gan* = Garden; *Ga'al* = Redeem, *Goy* = Nation.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:16 in *Gadolim* = Great.

Symbolises: Kindness, culmination. The form represents a rich man running to bestow good on a poor man (the *dalet*, next in the alphabet), so *gimel* symbolises God's *Chesed* = lovingkindness.

As *Gamul* = Nursing Infant, it shows care for the helpless.

Gamal, the camel, is a beast of burden, and also a symbol of portable wealth. The poor man could not afford to own a camel, it was for the wealthy man, the trader.

In Aramaic, *gimel* becomes *gamla*= bridge. The righteous man is under a duty to be benevolent to the poor because his wealth is not his own, it belongs to God. It is the duty of the righteous to make a bridge to reach the poor man, he must not stay separated.

Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mark 10:21-22

The *gimel* in *Goy* = nation is followed by the successively smaller letters *vav* and *yod* which themselves form *Gimel*, showing the purpose of a nation is that the strong should protect the weak.

As the number 3 it shows that two opposing factors must be blended to form a third, more perfect entity, so "a threefold cord is not easily broken" *Ecclesiastes 4:12*.

ד *Dalet*. Number 4.

Dalet means: Door, Poor Man.

Form: Two *vavs*, at right angles, illustrating an open door

Some words beginning with *dalet*: *Dabar* = Word, Speech; *Da'ath* = Knowledge.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:5, at the end of *Echad* = First (One).

Symbolises: Dimensions and concern.

Its form illustrates the 3 dimensions of space; and as number 4 the addition of Time, the fourth dimension.

The bent-over shape reveals a poor, humble man = *Dal*. It stands for both love of God and our fellow man. The poor = *Dal* knock on the door = *dalet* and beg for alms:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8.

The pillar of the *dalet* is on the side of the previous letter *gimel*, showing that the poor man has to make himself available to receive the kindness of his benefactor, but the top bar reaches towards the *hei*, showing he must always be reaching towards God.

However, *Dalah*=lift up, reminds us that we are all poor before God, and need to be lifted up:

I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me. *Psalms 30:1.*

As number 4 it reflects (among many “fours”) the four major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel), the four beasts of Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 1), the four gospels, and the four creatures around the throne in Revelation 4:7.

ה *Hei*. Number 5.

Hei means: To Be, Here is. As *Ha* = The.

Form: a *daleth* and a *yod*.

Some words beginning with *hei*: *Hallel* = Praise; *Hineh* = Behold!

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *Elohim*.

Symbolises: divinity gentleness and femininity.

The *dalet* part of the form represents the material world, while the *yod* represents God and spiritual power. The horizontal top line shows we are all equal, and represents thought, while the vertical represents hierarchy, showing how a king rules through his speech. The *yod* represents action, completing the sequence: thought – speech – action. Therefore *hei* reflects thoughts, speech, and actions.

Hei is pronounced as a gentle exhalation of breath, and in the first two places where it is used as “The”, it introduces the heavens and the earth. This indicates how God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence.

Hei as number 5 is also connected with *owr*, light, as light is mentioned five times on the first day of creation, in Genesis 1:3-5.

Five also signifies the five levels of the soul: *nephesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah* and *yechidah*. *Yechidah* means union, representing the presence of God in the believer.

Hayah (*hei* + *yod* + *hei*) means to be, and as *Yahiy* (*yod* + *hei* + *yod*) = Let it be, It became, it appears twice in Genesis 1:3.

This shows how *hei* links closely with *yod* revealing the power of God in creation, while *YHWH* (*yod* + *hei* + *vav* + *hei* = *YHWH*) with *hei* used twice also comes from this root.

1 **Vav**. Number 6.

Vav means: Hook, And.

Form: A vertical line.

Some words beginning with vav: *Valad* = child.

First Occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in ***Vueth Ha eretz*** = And the earth

Symbolises: completion, redemption, transformation.

Its form represents a pillar; a man standing upright. Its name represents connections.

The first **vav** in the **Torah** is in the sixth word in the bible, linking the creation of Heaven and Earth. It is also the 22nd letter in the **Torah**, thus representing the connection of all the letters in the alphabet, connecting the whole word of God. In grammatical use, **vav** can change verb tenses, and connect past to future and vice-versa, for to God there is neither past nor future.

An enlarged **vav** is found in the word **Gachon** = belly in Lev 11:42, where it is the centre letter of the whole **Torah**. These connections reveal the secret of the Mediator:

For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus. *1 Timothy 2:5.*

Vav is the name for the hooks connecting the pillars of the tabernacle with the curtains (Exodus 27:9-10), which shield the holiness of God from the gaze of the unrighteous while the pillars show the separation of heaven from earth, but also their connection, and themselves represent the Messiah.

So **vav** is the “Hook”, a link connecting heaven and earth, and thus the “upright man”, **Yeshua** = Jesus, who came to be our mediator between heaven and earth. **vav** is the middle of the five letters of **Yeshua** (also = salvation), showing its role at the centre.

Number 6 is the number of man, because **vav** marks the creation of mankind on the sixth day as number 6.

ז *Zayin*. Number 7.

Zayin means: weapon, sword.

Form: a *vav* with a crown.

Some words beginning with *zayin*: *Zan* = Sustenance, Food; *Zera* = Sow/seed; *Zahav* = Gold.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:11 in *Zera* = Seed.

Symbolises: Spirit, sustenance, and struggle.

The form represents either a sword, with the top being the handle and the vertical the blade, or similarly a crown and sceptre. This reflects power and authority.

As number seven, *zayin* represents the completion of creation on the seventh day, a rest from work, a day for Godly matters, things of the Spirit.

Seven is the first complete measure of the passing of days, so *zayin* represents time. God blessed the seventh day (Genesis 2:3) and all He had created.

The Sabbath (seventh day) reminds us that the entire universe is waiting for the Seventh Millennium, when Messiah will reign over an era of peace and tranquillity.

The root word of *zayin* = Sword is *Zan* = Sustenance, Food. This indicates that we may have to fight and struggle to achieve nourishment and rest, both in a spiritual and physical sense, as a result of Adam's sin.

This gives us the paradox that *Zan* = Sustenance, which then with the insertion of a letter *yod* in the middle, gives us *zayin*, the sword. The millennial sabbath, the seventh 1,000-year period of creation is, of course, a time of rest from our struggles.

ח **Chet.** Number 8. (Ch pronounced. as 'ch' in loch)

Chet means: Broken, Terrified (**chet** + **tav**).

Form: a **zayin** with a **vav** (the previous 2 letters of the alphabet) In the full form of the letter (at the side), you can see the break between the two parts, connected by the inverted "v" of a **chatoteret** = yoke, to resemble a gateway, or a wedding canopy.



Some words beginning with chet: **Chay** = Living, **Chayyim** = Life; **Chesed** = Lovingkindness; **Chen** = Grace.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:2 in **Choshek** = Dark.

Symbolises: Transcendence, divine grace, and life.

The gateway form shows the power to enter a higher realm (number 8 symbolises man's ability to transcend the limitations of physical existence).

Two transcendent gateways are: John 10:7-10, where Jesus says "I AM the door; and Revelation 4:1-2, the door opening in heaven. The wedding canopy indicates the ultimate union between God and man, the ultimate expression of God's grace.

Chet is the final letter in the word **Moshiach** = Messiah:

mem + **shin** + **yod** + **chet**. Read backwards, this gives two words **Chay** = alive, and **Shem** = name, which together read "The Living Name". This reveals that secret of the divine power of the Messiah will be to resurrect the dead.

As the **zayin** part of the form of **chet** represents time, and the **vav** part represents people, thus **chet** symbolises time in community, fellowship. And life, because **Chayyim** = Life is the ultimate gift of God to us.

ט *Tet*. Number 9.

Tet means: Mud, mire.

Form: A *zayin* on the left, with a curved *vav* to the right.

Some words beginning with *tet*: *Tob* = Good; *Tahor* = Clean.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:4 in *Tob* = Good, Best.

Symbolises: God's goodness.

The form of the *tet* can be viewed either as reflecting man's predilection for evil, with the head as the *zayin*, and the *vav* as the coil of the serpent; or with the *zayin* as the man crowned with the Sword of the Spirit, and the curved *vav* showing his submission before God. Thus, our choices are goodness or mud.

The form of *tet* and its number 9 also represents a womb, with the inward coil the embryo/foetus, which grows concealed in the womb for 9 months. We are brought to birth only by the grace and goodness of God.

Job 14:4 asks: "who can bring clean = *Tahur* out of unclean = *Toma* (both begin with *tet*) not one?" – only the creator:

So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.
Philippians 2:15.

Tob = Good is also a synonym for beauty, e.g. *Rebekah* in Genesis 24:16 and *Bathsheba* in 2 Samuel 11:2 are both *Tob* = beautiful.

Nine is the number of truth because the sum of the letters in *Emet* = truth is 441, the digits of which add up to 9.

י *Yod*. Number 10.

Yod means: Hand, arm.

Form: a dot, or tiny hand, so small it cannot be divided into component parts.

Some words beginning with *yod*: *YHWH* = Yahweh, *Yisrael* = Israel, *Yerushalayim* = Jerusalem, *Yeshua* = Jesus.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *B'reshith* = Beginning.

Symbolises: creation and the metaphysical, including the hand of God and thus God's supply: "What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand (*yod*), they are filled with good". Psalm 104:28.

As number 10 it reminds us of the ten "utterances" of God in creation "... God said" by which all creation came into being, and also the ten commandments at the heart of the law = *Torah*. This shows it is the symbol of creation and of God's infinite will and ability to sustain the creation, with the invisible power of his "hand". There are also the ten plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7 - 11), and a tenth part (tithe) is to be given as holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:32).

Yod in its form is a one-dimensional point, symbolising the ability of God to direct energy in a concentrated and purposeful way.

The name *yod* comprises *yod* + *vav* + *dalet*, showing the sequence of the one dimension of *yod*, two dimensions of *vav* and the three dimensions of *dalet*, revealing God's power entering the material creation.

Yod can also represent intelligence, the ability of the hand of one's mind to grasp a new idea. A clenched fist signifies ownership; an open hand signifies giving. Ten is also the number of fingers of both hands.

כ ך **Kaf.** Number 20, 500.

Kaf means: Palm of hand, and thus (because of the shape of a cupped hand) = Spoon.

Form: three **vavs**, bent into a receptacle.

Some words beginning with kaf: **Cabod** = Glory; **Kise** = Throne; **Kune** = Established, faithfulness.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:4 **Kiy**, in **Kiy Tob** = That *it was* Good.

Symbolises: crowning accomplishments.

The position of the **kaf**, next to the **yod** shows how God opens his hand = **yod** into our palm = **kaf**. God says to Zion:

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me. *Isaiah 49:16*.

Kaf denotes accomplishment:

When you eat the labour of your hands **kaf**, You *shall be* happy, and it *shall be* well with you. *Psalms 128:2*.

The “clean of palms” will stand and serve before the throne:

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

Psalms 24:3-4.

Kether = Royal Crown is used 3 times in Esther (1:11; 2:17; 6:8). This reveals three crowns: of Priesthood, Kingship, and **Torah**. The gold topping; the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:11) is the crown of the Torah; the table of showbread (Exodus 25:24) is the crown of kingship; and the incense altar (Exodus 30:3) is the crown of priesthood.

Kaf symbolises us, in bent submission, to the throne of God, our hands open to receive his blessings.

§ *Lamed*. Number 30.

Lamed means: Teach, learn. Preposition: To, Towards, At Near.

Form: A *vav* attached to the top of a *kaf* (Numerical values *kaf* 20 + *vav* 6 = 26 = *YHWH*).

Some words beginning with *lamed*: *Lechem* = Bread; Lashon = Tongue; *Laylah* = night.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *Elohim* = God.

Symbolises: Teaching and purpose.

The tallest of the letters, *lamed* stands above all the others as a beacon, representing the King of Kings.

Lamed represents learning as “a heart that understands wisdom”.

The word for heart, **Leb**, reminds us that two *lameds* face to face give a diagram of the heart. The two *kafs* form the left and right chambers of the heart. while the two *vavs* represent the blood vessels connecting with the brain. The *lamed* on the right represents the one who learns in order to teach, the *lamed* on the left represents the one who learns in order to do.

Milmad (*lamed* in middle) = Ox Goad, and *lamed* is a similar shape to an ox goad. (Shamgar uses one to slay 600 Philistines in Judges 3:31). The power to direct and control animal instincts will subdue the animal in man and enable him to defeat evil, so also should godly learning prompt the student into action. True learning results in doing good.

Lamed is flanked in the alphabet by the *kaf* (alluding to *Kise* = Throne) on one side, and the *mem* (standing for kingship). Together they spell *Melek* = King.

מ מ Mem. Number 40, 600.

Mem means: Water, waters.

Form: A **vav** joined to a **kaf**. In normal form, there is a gap at the bottom left, in end-word form there is no gap (Numerical values **kaf** 20 + **vav** 6 = 26 = **YHWH**).

Some words beginning with mem: **Messiah, Melek** = King.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in **Elohim** = God.

Symbolises: revealed and concealed, Moses and Messiah.

In Genesis 1:2 “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” shows water as the foundation of all creation. The three letters of **Mayim, mem + yod-+ mem** reflects the structure of the water molecule H₂O, with **yod** standing for oxygen at the centre of two hydrogen atoms (Oxygen is a highly reactive element, vital for life, transported by blood).

Mayim is a dual noun, with no singular form. This reflects the waters on the surface of the earth and the waters hidden by the “firmament” Genesis 1:6.

The open **mem** stands for Moses, bringing God’s word revealed, the closed form for the Messiah, God’s concealed word. Fountain of divine wisdom

Number 40 reminds of the days and nights of rain in Noah’s flood (Genesis 7:12), the days the flood kept rising (Genesis 7:17), and the days Noah waited before opening the Ark (Genesis 8:6). It was the number of days Moses spent on the mountain, and the number of years of wandering in the wilderness for the children of Israel (Numbers 32:13, and the number of days Jesus fasted in the desert (Matthew 4:2), among more than one hundred forties in scripture.

Mem represents the womb. 40 is also the number of weeks of human gestation when the foetus is hidden “in the waters”. Forty therefore represents metamorphosis and transformation.

נ ן **Nun.** Number 50, 700.

Nun means: To increase, propagate.

Form: A bent **vav** in normal form, straightened and elongated in end-word form.

Some words beginning with nun: **Nabi** = Prophet; **Nuach** = Rest; **Nephesh** = Soul.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:2 in **Paniy** = face.

Symbolises: faithfulness, soul, and emergence.

His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue (**ya nin, ya nun**; lit. "descend descendants") as long as the sun... Psalm 72:17

Ne'eman (**nun** first and last letters) is translated faithful:

Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments: *Deuteronomy* 7:9

From **Naphal** = Fall **nun** is linked to Israel's desolation (Amos 5:2). It links to lies (Adam's fall) and miscarriage, because as a suffix (final letter of **Itzabon** = labour, pain) in Genesis 3:16, 17 it reveals the long-term pain in bearing and rearing children, the consequences of the fall.

God's faithfulness is eternal and trustworthy. People should approach God as bent over in humility, aware of their poverty and need to receive. The two forms of **nun** give a picture of the heavenly court, with the bent form representing the Lord sitting on his throne and the end letter form the angels standing before him.

Fifty years was the period of Jubilee, when slaves were freed and land returned to its rightful owners (Leviticus 25), and also the age at which Levites ceased serving in the Tabernacle or Temple (Numbers 8:25).

◊ **Samek.** Number 60.

Samek means: Support (divine), Protection.

Form: *yod* touching a circle.

Some words beginning with samek: **Seah** = Measure of flour; **Sodom**; **Sa'ad** = Sustain, Support.

First occurrence: Genesis 2:11 **Sovev** = Surround.

Symbolises: Protection and memory.

Divine support, God's invisible nature (inner) sustaining whole earth (outer). The circle represents infinity, having no beginning or end. The blank inner area represents God's invisible nature, while the round, closed frame alludes to the whole earth, filled with his glory. The closed circle also indicates that God protects his children as with a surrounding ring of fire, and He has no beginning and no end.

Following **nun** in the alphabet, which represents one who has fallen, **samek** comes next shows support for the fallen. It is the only letter which does not appear in the first creation account (Genesis 1:1 -2:3).

Its first appearance describes the rivers emerging from the Garden of Eden (**Ha Sovev** = Which Surrounds; Genesis 2:11). The second appearance, in Genesis 2:21, is in regard to Eve's creation: "And he closed flesh in its place" (**samek** in middle of **Vayisgor** = closed).

So God provides Adam with support in his wife. **Samek** therefore represents the wedding ring which, having no distinct points shows the different aspects of marriage do not need to conflict and can be ultimately bound together within that circle.

The priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 contains 60 letters (number of **samek**) in 15 words (**samek** is the fifteenth letter). This links **samek** to the divine light (from the Lord's face/countenance) and his power to protect.

𐤀 **Ayin**. Number 70.

Ayin means: Eye, colour, fountain.

Form: A **yod** linked to a **zayin**, shape of one eye looking upwards, or alternatively two eyes, at top of each part of **Ayin**, connected by their optic nerves.

Some words beginning with ayin: **Ebed** = Servant, Slave; **Eden**; **Olam** = Forever; **Ereb** = Evening.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:2, **Al** = Upon (the face of the waters)

Symbolises: sight and insight.

Ayin as eye, revealing more to us than any of the other four senses.

Ayin represents colour because the physical eye perceives reality through a Kaleidoscope of colour. Each colour is referred to in Hebrew as an “eye”.

Ayin also refers to our personality: “The lamp of the body is the eye...” Matthew 6:22. Our possibilities range between either **Ana** = meek (**ayin** is first letter), or **Rasha** = wicked (**ayin** is last letter).

The sinful eye open to desire loses innocence, beginning with Eve:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. *Genesis 3:6.*

Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin.
2 Peter 2:14.

Ayin = fountain is found a few times, e.g. Genesis 16:7, for Hagar; Deuteronomy 33:28 Jacob’s fountain; and Nehemiah 2:14 the Fountain Gate.

Interestingly, there is a “fountain” inside the eyeball known as the ciliary body, where fluid is produced which then flows through the pupil and is drained outwards.

פ ף *Peh*. Number 80, 800.

Peh means: Mouth.

Form: A *kaf* with a *yod* attached; end-letter form elongated.

Some words beginning with *peh*: *Panim* = Face; Philistine; Pharaoh;
Parah = Bear fruit.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:2 *Paniy* = Face of (the waters).

Symbolises: speech and silence, the power of the tongue. The *yod* here resembles the tongue in the mouth.

The order of the letter in the alphabet following *ayin* demonstrates seeing comes before speaking, the eye perceives and the mouth expresses. The inner space of *peh* is the shape of the letter *beth*, the first letter of creation. This reveals that God spoke creation into being.

The mouth, with its ability to speak, makes man a human being, able to fulfil the ultimate purpose of creation, to sing the praises of God. The ability to speak is from God:

The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say." *Exodus 4:11-12*.

The first form of *peh* is closed, the second open, indicating there is: "...A time to keep silence, and a time to speak". *Ecclesiastes 3:7*.

Everyone should hear first, then open the mouth to preach and teach. "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." *Exodus 4:12*

Peh is the 17th letter, which is also the numerical value of *Tob* = Good. The first words spoken by God were: "Let there be light", upon the creation of light which was subsequently seen (by "His eyes") to be Good.

צ ץ *Tzaddi*. Number 90, 900.

Tzaddi means: Righteous

Form: a bent *nun* with a *yod* attached. End-letter form has the *nun* straightened out.

Some words beginning with *tzaddi*: *Tzedakah* = Righteousness;
Tzavah = Army, host.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 last letter of *Eretz* = Earth.

Symbolises: Righteousness, Humility.

Tzaddi as final letter of *Eretz* in Gen 1:1 shows that the creation as completed was “righteous”. God reveals his mind through the *Tzaddik* = Righteous One.

The great righteous one is God himself:

He is the Rock; His work is perfect; for all His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice; righteous *tzaddik* and upright is He. *Deuteronomy 32:4*

This alludes to the upright end-letter form of *tzaddi*, reminding us of *eretz* in Genesis 1:1. True righteousness can only exist in God and is an integral part of Him. Those who are in His image should emulate God’s righteousness.

Tzaddi’s form is the bent *nun* representing the faithful, with the *yod* as a hand reaching upwards. This shows a person kneeling in prayer with arms raised, or in end form someone standing upright arms raised praising God.

The *Tzaddikim* = Righteous Ones are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). In Genesis 1:4, God declared “the light it was good”. the first thing in all creation to be declared “good”.

Therefore, the *Tzaddikim* are the light of God in the world, so:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. *Matthew 5:16*.

ק *Qof*. Number 100.

Qof means: Monkey, To surround, Orbits;

Form: A *vav* and a *kaf* (Numerical values *kaf* (20) + *vav* (6) = 26 = *YHWH*).

Some words beginning with *qof*: *Qodesh* = Holy; *Qol* = Sound, voice; *Qadad* = Bow down.

First occurrence: Genesis 1: 5 *Yiqra* = He called out.

Symbol: Holiness and growth cycles.

To be holy is to keep oneself without defilement from the world (Exodus 22:31). *Qof* represents holiness, but also means monkey. It mimics holiness (mankind in the image of God), but the monkey is a counterfeit of the man.

In *Naqaf* (e.g. Joshua 6:3) *qof* is used to describe circuits, such as those around Jericho, which became known as the *Haqafos* = circuits performed round the altar in the temple.

In *Tequfah* = Circuit of time or space (e.g. Exodus 34:22), *qof* points us to the circuits of the sun and moon. As the 19th letter it marks the lunar 19-year cycle, but all the orbits of the celestial objects point to the glory of creator God.

Redemption, raising from the dead is illustrated by the form of *qof*. Its *vav* descends below any other letter of the alphabet, as to the depths of the grave (*Qevurah* = Sepulchre) for the reason of reviving the dead and raising them through the resurrection (*Qum* = To Raise), to offer them (*Qorban* = Offering) so they can stand in the presence of the Lord.

Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? *Acts 26:8*

7 *Resh*. Number 200.

Resh means: Head; as *Rash* = Poor man.

Form: bent letter *vav*.

Some words beginning with *resh*: *Rachaph* = Hover; *Ra'ah* = Evil; *Raqia* = Firmament, *Ruach* = Spirit.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *B'reshith* = Beginning.

Symbolises: The choice between greatness and degradation.

The contrast lies between *Resha* = Wicked, and *Rosh* = head. A choice between God and Idols.

Rash, the poor man, bowed down by the pressures of the world, risks enslavement by the worldly source of his sustenance. This one is destitute, even poorer than the poor man implied by *Dalet*:

But the poor man *rash* had nothing... *2 Samuel 12:3*

At a deeper level, this poverty and servitude is shown by the bowing of the head to accept the yoke of conforming to society's culture and values. He needs to lift his head to the Lord; Wisdom is the key:

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding. *Proverbs 9:10*.

Adding the *aleph* into the middle of the word *resh* makes it *Rosh* = head. Without the *aleph* there is no wisdom, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

If we introduce *ayin* (human desire) instead of the *aleph* we can get *Roa* = Evil and *Rasha* = Wicked which will make us *Rash* = Poor in spiritual (and ultimately earthly) riches.

ש *Shin*. Number 300.

Shin means: = Tooth, steadfast, change, return, year.

Form: Three *vavs* joined at the base. A dot over the left *vav* means it is pronounced “S” (*sin*), over the right *vav* means it is pronounced “Sh” (*shin*).

Some words beginning with *sin/shin*: *Shaddai* = Almighty, *Shamayim* = Heavens, Sky; *Shemesh* = Sun.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *B’reshith* = Beginning.

Symbolises: divine power but also corruption.

It is the letter of fire (= *Esh*, *aleph* + *shin*) because it resembles flames, and so also divine revelation and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4). The Holy flame can symbolise divine love, as God is love (1 John 4:7-10). Song of Songs (the book of love) starts with a very large *Shin* : *Shir ha Shirym* = The Song of Songs.

In *Shein* it means tooth, and resembles teeth; and *Shaniy* = Red, the colour of blood. The “bite” of *shin* comes from lies and deception.

When *shin* joins with *qof* = Monkey, and *resha* = Wickedness, the three letters (adjacent in the alphabet) become *Sheker* = Falsehood. Because the letters of *Sheker* are adjacent in the alphabet (in reverse sequence) it symbolises society. When people gather together they are often eager to impress others, hence lies and deception are nearby.

Sheker - שקר

Each of the letters of *Sheker* rest on a single point, with *qof* below the other two, so they are therefore unstable, and deception will ultimately fail.

The numerical value of *shin*, 300, is the same as that for *kaphar* = atonement, the “covering over” of sin and the result of God’s love for us through Jesus – *Yeshua*, our salvation.

ת *Tav*. Number 400

Tav means: Sign, Impression, Mark

Form: A *dalet* joined to a *nun*.

Some words beginning with *tav*: *Tohu* = Formless; *Tehom* = Abyss; *Torah* = Teaching, Law.

First occurrence: Genesis 1:1 in *B'reshith* = Beginning.

Symbolises: Truth = *Emet* and perfection = *Tamiym*.

Emet ends with *tav* but, unusually, this is the most symbolic letter in the word. This is because *tav* is the letter that concludes the alphabet, therefore summing up the whole of the word of God. This shows that truth will ultimately be demonstrated, and endure.

Also, that truth is throughout the whole of creation, because *Emet* comprises *aleph* + *mem* + *tav* the first, middle, and last letters of the alphabet. The letters of *Emet* all have broad bases, so it is intrinsically stable, and Truth will always stand secure.

In Ezekiel 9:4 *tav* is the mark set on the righteous people, protecting them from judgment. The form of a *dalet* and a *nun* spells *Dan* (= A Judge), the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. *Dan* were the tribe that brought up the rear when Israel moved camp (Numbers 2:31). *Tav* therefore affirms that true judgement will come at the end.

Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah for 400 pieces of silver (Genesis 23), vastly more than the "going rate" for a piece of land that size at the time, showing he had faith in God's promise, that he and his offspring would inherit the land (Genesis 23:16). This tomb may still be seen today, nearly 4,000 years later. Hence the *tav* is also the secret of eternal inheritance.

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