

SEFER YETZIRAH 1.14



משנה י"ד: אלו עשר ספירות בלימה (אחת) רוח אלהים חיים
רוח מרוח מים מרוח אש ממים רוס ותחת מזרח ומערב צפון
ודרום:

1.14: These are the Ten Sefiroth of Nothingness: The
Breath of the Living God Breath from Breath Water
from Breath Fire from Water Up down east west north
south.

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation)

1.14: *These are the ten sefirot/declarations of constraint.
Spirit/breath of the Living Elohim (God), spirit/breath
from spirit/breath, water from spirit/breath, fire from
water, ascent and beneath, east and west, north and
south.*

(Doc Benton translation)

In this passage, we get a sense of the original meaning of the word *sefirot*. They are declarations that define our 3-dimensional universe. The letter *aleph* corresponds to *spirit/breath*, the letter *mem* to water, and the letter *shin* to fire. Soon we will also talk about the *seven double letters*, seven letters in Hebrew that can take on either a hard or a soft sound. These are the letters *bet*, *gimmel*, *dalet*, *kaf*, *peh*, *resh*, and *tav*, and a later passage will identify these letters as corresponding to *up*, *down*, *east*, *west*, *north*, *south*, and *center*. The letter *tav*, which is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, corresponds to center, but in our passage above it also represents *breath from breath*.

Recall also the earlier passage that said that the *end is contained in the beginning and the beginning in the end*. Likewise, with the first letter of the alphabet, *aleph (breath)*, and the last letter of the alphabet, *tav (breath from breath)*. Ultimately, the beginning and the end are inseparable from one another and are one and the same. Again, it is only the mind that creates the false distinction between the two. And lastly, we also see in this verse that the *ten sefirot* are none other than ten letters from the alphabet, *the three mother letters plus the seven doubles* that we'll discuss soon. Of course, in later *Kabbalah*, the *sefirot* were divorced from the letters and given entirely new meanings.