

SEFER YETZIRAH 2.1



משנה א': עשרים ושתיים אותיות יסוד שלש אמות ושבע כפולות ושתיים עשרה פשוטות. שלש אמות אמ"ש יסודן כף זכות וכף חובה ולשון חק מכריע בינתיים. שלש אמות אמ"ש מ' דוממת ש' שורקת א' אויר רוח מכריע בינתיים:

2.1: Twenty-two Foundation Letters: Three Mothers Seven Doubles and Twelve Elementals The Three Mothers are Alef Mem Shin Their foundation is a pan of merit a pan of liability and the tongue of decree deciding between them. [Three Mothers, Alef Mem Shin Mem hums, Shin hisses and Alef is the Breath of air deciding between them.]

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation)

2.1: Twenty-two letters of foundation, three mothers and seven doubles and twelve plain. Three mothers aleph-mem-shin. A scale of credit and a scale of debit, and a tongue of decree decides between them. Three mothers aleph-mem-shin. Mem is still, shin is a strident hiss, aleph is the air spirit/breath that decides between them.
(Doc Benton translation)

In this passage we are presented with the image of a traditional balance scale with a pan on each side, one side representing credit and the other side debit. The tongue of the scale is the vertical shaft in the center, and it is interesting that it is called the *tongue of decree*. This is a reminder that it is our own decrees, our own choices, that result in us being on one side or the other. Also, we are starting to see illustrations of how the pattern of three manifests itself in different situations.



The letters *shin* and *mem* spell *shem* which means *name* and which is often used as a reference to *God, The Name*. Recall, too, that the letter *aleph* is a silent letter that represents air, and it is the unheard air that connects the *shin* with the *mem* when we say *name*. Furthermore, remember from our discussion of the first passage in our text that the *gematria* of *shem* is 340 which is the same as the three letter root *samach-peh-resh* that is used to form the words for *story, number, and communication* in this same passage. Thus, once again we are shown how the pattern of three shows up in creation, and we receive another hint that the creation is the *Name of God*.