

SEFER YETZIRAH 2.4



משנה ד': עשרים ושתים אותיות יסוד קבען בגלגל כמין
חומה ברל"א שערים וחוזר הגלגל פנים ואחור וסימן לדבר אין
בטובה למעלה מענג ואין ברעה למטה מנגע:

2.4: Twenty-two Foundation Letters: He placed them in a circle like a wall with 231 gates. The circle oscillates back and forth. A sign for this is there is nothing in good higher than delight (ONeG), there is nothing in evil lower than plague (NeGA).

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation)

2:4 Twenty-two letters of foundation. IT established them in a circle like a type of wall with 231 gates, and IT repeats the cycle front and back, and a sign for this thing is that there isn't in good anything more elevated than joy (oneg), and there isn't in evil anything beneath affliction (negah).

(Doc Benton translation)

This passage is a hint at how we can create greater complexity and variety in our world through combinations, permutations, and substitutions. At the end of the passage what is important, though, is that the Hebrew words for joy and affliction use exactly the same letters. Thus, by merely permuting the letters, we can turn joy (*ayin-nun-gimmel*) into affliction (*nun-gimmel-ayin*). This is a form of *something-from-something creation*, and it is also a reminder of how we can transform sorrow into joy and disorder into order by merely rearranging things in our environment in either the right or wrong way.

Also, we should point out that mathematically the number of combinations we can make from twenty-two letters, if we pick two at a time, is equal to 231. Additionally, since we are picking only two letters at a time, this can refer to a code or cipher being created, and this type of coding by substitution is also going to be found in the very next passage. And in conclusion, let us not forget that coding is a form of *transformation* in which the pattern of one word is carried forward into the coded word. Hence, the text also wants us to know that simple patterns can generate complexity by being repeated over and over again in a variety of different situations.