

SEFER YETZIRAH 3.7



משנה ז': (בבא א') המליך אות א' ברוח וקשר לו כתר וצרפן
זה בזה וצר בהם אויר בעולם ורויה בשנה וגויה בנפש זכר באמ"ש
ונקבה באש"ם:

3.7: He made the letter Alef king over Breath And He bound a crown to it And He combined them one with another And with them He formed Air in the Universe The temperate in the Year And the chest in the Soul: The male with AMSh And the female with AShM.
(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation)

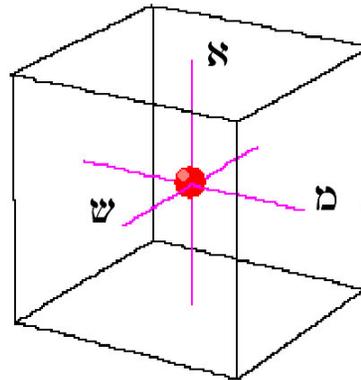
*3:7 IT made ruler the letter aleph in spirit/breath and connected to it a surrounding circle and combined this with this and formed with them air in the world and moderate in the year and chest in the person, male with aleph-mem-shin and female with aleph-shin-mem.
(Doc Benton translation)*

The phrase *surrounding circle* is more frequently translated as *crown*. However, I like my translation better because it suggests that there is going to be a space delineated by this circle or sphere where the properties of *aleph* rule or dominate. In particular, *aleph* dominates with regard to the air in the atmosphere (space), the temperate seasons of the year (time), and the lungs of a person.

Recall that we saw earlier in *Chapter 1:13* that *aleph-mem-shin* corresponds to *yud-hey-vav*, that *yud-hey-vav* corresponds to *up*, and that *yud-vav-hey* corresponds to *down*. We also associate *up* with *male* (*Father Sky*) and *down* with *female* (*Mother Earth*).

We can now, by replacing *yud* with *aleph* & *hey* with *mem* & *vav* with *shin*, recode *yud-hey-vav* as *aleph-mem-shin* and *yud-vav-hey* as *aleph-shin-mem*, and then this gives us "male with *aleph-mem-shin* and female with *aleph-shin-mem*."

Male = aleph-mem-shin



Female = aleph-shin-mem

Also, at this point, we have now seen how the pattern of three repeats itself in a variety of settings such as space, time, and the person. This is one way in which the text shows how complexity can arise from simple origins. In other words, take a basic pattern and use it over and over again by exchanging or transforming the surrounding circumstances. Mathematical instances of this sort of thing can be found in those images that we call *fractals*.

In a *fractal*, there are also certain patterns that are repeated over and over again at different levels of scale in order to create a final image that is quite complex. For example, if you study the *elephant's head* below, you will see that it is composed of smaller and smaller *elephant's heads*. In a similar way, the *Sefer Yetzirah* shows us how repetition of simple patterns such as those formed by the three mother letters can lead to the richness and complexity of the world as we know it today.

