

SEFER YETZIRAH 6.5



משנה ה': שלשה כל אחד לבדו עומד אחד מזכה ואחד מחייב ואחד מכריע בינתים. שבעה שלשה מול שלשה ואחד חק מכריע בינתים. ושנים עשר עומדין במלחמה שלשה אוהבים שלשה שונאים שלשה מחיים ושלשה ממיתים. שלשה אוהבים הלב והאזנים שלשה שונאים הכבד והמרה והלשון שלשה מחיים שני נקבי האף והטחול ושלשה ממיתים שני הנקבים והפה ואל מלך נאמן מושל בכולם ממעון קדשו עד עדי עד. אחד על גבי שלשה, שלשה על גבי שבעה, שבעה על גבי שנים עשר וכלם אדוקים זה בזה:

6.5: Three: Each one stands alone one acts as advocate one acts as accuser and one decides between them. Seven: Three opposite three and one is the rule deciding between them. Twelve stand in war: Three love, three hate, three give life and three kill. Three love: the heart and the ears. Three hate: the liver, the gall, and the tongue. Three give life: the two nostrils and the spleen. Three kill: the two orifices and the mouth. And God faithful King rules over them all from His holy habitation until eternity of eternities. One on three three on seven seven on twelve, And all are bound, one to another. (*Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation*)

6:5 Three, each one stands alone. One exonerates and one convicts and one decides between them. Seven, three opposite three and one legislates a decision between them. Twelve stand in war. Three love, three hate, three of life, and three of death. Three love, the heart and the ears. Three hate, the liver, the bile, and the tongue. Three of life, the two tunnels of the nose and the spleen. Three of death, two orifices and the mouth. And God King of Faith, ruler of them all from a holy dwelling until forever of forever. One on the back of three, three on the back of seven on the back of twelve, and all of them adhering to one another, this with this.

(Doc Benton translation)

In this passage, we are again shown the universality of the *pattern of three*. The *pattern of seven*, for instance, may be decomposed into two opposing *patterns of three* with a *connecting principle* between them.

Similarly, the *pattern of twelve* may be decomposed into four *patterns of three* corresponding to *love, hate, life, and death*. The *heart* and the *ears* correspond to *love* because we *love* with the *heart* and we *hear* poetic words that set the *heart* afire. The *liver, bile, and tongue* correspond to *hate* because we spread *rumors* and *lies* with the *tongue*, and *full of bile* is used to this day to denote someone who is full of *hate*, and even in Chinese acupuncture, for example, *anger* is seen as a result when the *liver meridian* is out of balance.

The *nostrils* of the *nose* and the *spleen* give *life* because we breath through the *nostrils*, and today we understand quite well that a functioning *spleen* is an important part of a person's immune system. And finally, we read that the *mouth* and the *two orifices* correspond to *death*. In the *Talmud* we read not only that overeating is a primary cause of *death*, but if either of our excretory *orifices* are rendered nonfunctional, then we are in really big trouble!

*More people die from overeating than from hunger.
(B. Shabbat 33a)*

*Blessed is He who has formed man in wisdom and created in him many orifices and many cavities. It is fully known before the throne of Thy glory that if one of them should be improperly opened or one of them closed, it would be impossible for a man to stand before Thee.
(B. Berachot 60b)*

And finally, notice the opening statement that “*each one stands alone.*” This is a reminder that even though we seem to be immersed in duality, we really have only one perception at a time, and like the flame and the coal, the observed and the observer can never be separated from one another. Thus, when is there any more than just the One? As we move up to higher levels, we begin to better understand that there is only the One, that everything we call reality is contained within the One, that we have never and can never be separate from the One, and that the One’s existence is more real than our own.

It is paradoxical that our perception is generally focused on finiteness and limitation, but if this possibility were not contained within the One, then the One would not be everything. By definition, the totality of all things must contain, in a rather contradictory manner, even that which it is not. To quote Walt Whitman from *Song of Myself*, “*Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)*”