

# Chapter 1

## ALEPH

### *In God's Image*



*For there are three that bear record in heaven:  
the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit,  
and these three are one.*  
— I John 5:7 (KJV)

For centuries, Jewish scholars have perceived the individual letters of the Hebrew alphabet as containing important spiritual lessons, and *aleph* (א), in its exalted position at the head of the alphabet, is considered to be the repository of all the alphabet's wisdom. *Aleph* (א) is much more than just the Hebrew equivalent of the letter "A" — merely the first in a series of letters. It is considered by Jewish theologians to actually be made in the image of God, and is thus the lord and master of all the letters — a father with twenty-one children.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet — *aleph* and *beit* — together spell אב (av) "father", thus teaching that all things begin with God, the *Father* of all.

#### א, The Three-In-One

The cornerstone of Jewish theology is "Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is One!" However, the writings of the Sages acknowledge that *aleph* (א, the letter which traditionally represents God) consists of three parts. In turn, these three parts are themselves individual letters of the alphabet.<sup>2</sup> The three letters that comprise the *aleph* (א) are two *yods* (י), separated by a slanted *vav* (ו), as shown below.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Michael L. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, p43.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, *The Alef-Beit*, p24, 378.



Thus it can be seen how *aleph* (א) — which consists of three parts but has a numeric value of one — is symbolic of God, the Three-in-One.

Unlike the English alphabet, each Hebrew letter has a numeric value: א = 1, ב = 2, ג = 3, etc. Therefore, if we calculate the numeric values of the letters comprising *aleph* (א), we find that they have a total value of twenty-six (י + ו + י = 10 + 6 + 10 = 26). But what is the significance of twenty-six? It is the numeric value of God’s name — YHVH, יהוה (י + ה + ו + ה = 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26) — once again demonstrating how *aleph* (א), the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, represents God.

☞ **God’s Name — YHVH**

What kind of name is YHVH? The name of God, יהוה (*YHVH*), is the Bible’s grandest example of the principle: “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.”<sup>3</sup> There is much in God’s great name for us to explore; and to do so is to walk on holy ground. In fact, the name YHVH is considered so holy that the Jews dare not speak it. Whenever the Torah is read aloud and the name of YHVH is encountered, the word *Adonai* (“Lord”) is substituted in order to avoid uttering this holy name — which is just as well since no one knows with certainty its proper pronunciation.<sup>4</sup> Also, when copying Torah scrolls, a scribe exercises the utmost caution when printing God’s name. Before printing the letters יהוה, he says aloud, “I am about to write the name of God in honor of His holy name.” If a king should address him as he writes the name of God, he is not permitted to pause for a reply, but must first complete the printing of these four sacred letters. And, should a scribe

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 25:2

<sup>4</sup> Even the word *Adonai* is not used conversationally among the orthodox because of the holiness it derives from being a substitute for YHVH. When referring to YHVH in daily conversation, they use the word *HaShem*, which means “the name”.

make the slightest error in printing God’s name, he is forbidden to correct his mistake. The entire sheet of parchment must be replaced.

Bible translators have long struggled with how to translate YHVH (referred to as the *tetragrammaton*, a Greek word meaning “the sign of the four [letters]”). The King James Version of the Bible makes no attempt to translate the word YHVH, but simply substitutes the word LORD, printed in capital letters. Other versions use “Yahweh”, or “Jehovah”; but the accuracy of these translations remains doubtful at best. The difficulty arises from the fact that the consonants comprising יהוה (YHVH) may be pronounced in various ways, and we do not know how God pronounced His name when He first revealed it to Moses. For instance, depending upon the speaker’s accent, the *yod* (י) may be pronounced as a “y”, or a “j”. And *vav* (ו) may be pronounced — once again, depending on the speaker’s accent — either as a consonant (“v” or “w”) or as a vowel (“u” or “o”). *Hei* (ה), on the other hand, is always pronounced with an “h” sound. Thus there are many possible pronunciations for יהוה, but no one knows which one is correct.

To further complicate the matter, no one knows what vowel sounds should be inserted between the consonants. Though vowel markings (in the form of dots and dashes placed above or below the letters) were later developed and added to all of the other words of the *Torah*, no vowel symbols were added to יהוה since no one knew how this word was originally pronounced.

לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנֵי אֲלֵיכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֱלֹהִים  
אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כֹּה-תֹאמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב  
שְׁלַחְנֵי אֲלֵיכֶם זֶה-שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זְכוֹרִי לְדָר דָּר: לָךְ

Note the lack of vowel signs in the word יהוה (YHVH) which is shown above in the small rectangle.<sup>5</sup> The actual pronunciation of God’s name was a secret known only to some of the Levitical priests, and was

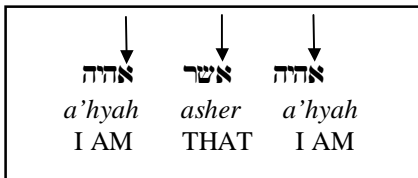
<sup>5</sup> This passage is taken from Exodus 3:15

passed down secretly from generation to generation. Considering this fact, imagine their shock when some of the priests heard Yeshua pronounce this sacred name correctly — and in public!<sup>6</sup> Tradition suggests that Yeshua knew how to properly pronounce the holy name of God,<sup>7</sup> so they must have wondered how Yeshua, from the tribe of Judah, could have known the secret which belonged only to the priests of the tribe of Levi. Of course, it does not seem strange to believers in Yeshua that He should know how to pronounce His Father’s name.

☞ **What’s In a Name?**

The name YHVH was first revealed to Moses when God commissioned him to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In the Biblical account, Moses argued with God that he was not the man for the job.<sup>8</sup> Among Moses’ excuses for not wanting to return to Egypt is his question, “When the Israelites ask who sent me, what shall I tell them is His name?” God gave a rather lengthy answer to this seemingly simple question. Let’s examine God’s answer phrase by phrase.

In the first part of His answer God reveals His name as “I AM THAT I AM”<sup>9</sup>. In Hebrew this phrase consists of only three words:




Notice that each word of the phrase begins with the letter *aleph* (א). Note also the pattern made by these three words. The first and last words are identical, separated by a third, dissimilar word. This is the same pattern


<sup>6</sup> John 8:58. It is generally believed that when Yeshua said, “Before Abraham was, I AM”, He was actually invoking the name YHVH.

<sup>7</sup> *The Archko Volume*, pp98-99.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 3:14-15

<sup>9</sup> Biblical Hebrew does not have a verb form for “I am”, thus this is not an entirely accurate translation of this phrase. Some translators render this phrase as “I shall be as I shall be”, but this still does not capture the nuances expressed in the Hebrew. A more accurate English rendering might be “I shall forever be as I am”. For the sake of convenience, I have used the traditional translation “I AM THAT I AM”.

used in the construction of the  as discussed earlier: two identical letters (") separated by a third (").

אֲהִיָּהּ	אֲשֶׁר	אֲהִיָּהּ	
<i>a'hyah</i>	<i>asher</i>	<i>a'hyah</i>	
I AM	THAT	I AM	
'	+	ן	+ ' = 

Continuing with our passage, God repeats the first word of the phrase giving it as His name. He says, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, אֲהִיָּהּ [*a'hyah* — “I AM”] has sent me to you.”<sup>10</sup>

He then alters אֲהִיָּהּ (*a'hyah*) to יְהוָה (*YHVH*) when He says, “Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, ‘YHVH, the God of our fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...’”<sup>11</sup> What is the purpose of this last change, and what exactly does the name YHVH mean? Most scholars believe that YHVH is a peculiar form of the verb “to be”, basically meaning “I am”. It would be natural to assume that this is the case simply because יְהוָה closely resembles these verb forms:<sup>12</sup>

הָיָה, <i>ha'yah</i>	= he was
יִהְיֶה, <i>yi'yeh</i>	= he will be
הוּא, <i>ha'vah</i>	= he is
יְהוָה, <i>YHVH</i>	= ?
יְה, <i>YH</i>	= (shortened version of YHVH)

Others believe that the four letters of God’s name were chosen for reasons known only to God and their similarity to any verb form is merely coincidental. But one thing is certain — the name YHVH means more than simply “I am”. The discussion of God’s name, יְהוָה, is too vast a subject for one chapter, so we will continue our discussion in future chapters as the Hebrew letters provide further insights into the mystery of God’s name

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 3:14

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 3:15

<sup>12</sup> Biblical Hebrew does not have a verb form for “I am”.

☞ **⌘ Marks the Spot**

The very structure of the Bible's opening verses affirms in an amazing way the connection between *aleph* (⌘) and God's various names and titles. As mentioned above, יהוה has a numeric value of twenty-six ( $\aleph + \eta + \nu + \eta = 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26$ ), as do the component parts of the letter *aleph* (⌘). Interestingly, if we start with the first letter of the Bible (Gen.1:1) and count twenty-six letters, we arrive at an ⌘. Also, if we take the shortened form of YHVH, יה (Yah) which equals fifteen ( $\aleph + \eta = 10 + 5 = 15$ ), and count fifteen letters, we once again come to an ⌘. Verify the results for yourself by examining the passage below. (Remember to count from right to left.)

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ  
 הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וְנָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים  
 מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי־אֹר וַיְהִי־  
 אֹר: וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין  
 הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר יוֹם וְאֶת־הַחֹשֶׁךְ  
 קִרְא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

Genesis 1:1-5

After *Yah* (יה) and YHVH (יהוה), the two most common names for God are *El* (אל) and *Elohim* (אלהים). *El* (אל) has a numerical equivalent of thirty-one ( $\aleph + \aleph = 1 + 30 = 31$ ), and *Elohim* (אלהים) has a numerical equivalent of 86 ( $\aleph + \aleph + \eta + \nu + \eta = 1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40 = 86$ ). Once again, counting thirty-one letters from the beginning of the Bible, we arrive at an ⌘. And the same result is achieved when we count to the eighty-sixth letter.

Notice also that the names *El* and *Elohim* both begin with an ⌘. These are the earliest titles by which God is identified in the Bible. But of all His titles, the one used most by Yeshua is *Father*, which, in Hebrew, is אב (*av*). The numeric value of this word is three ( $\aleph + \nu = 1 + 2 = 3$ ), and

the third letter in Genesis 1:1 is, once again, an **א**. The box below summarizes our discussion of these five names of God and how each one is identified with an *aleph* (**א**) in the Torah.

יה <i>Yah</i> ,	10+5=15	The 15th letter of the Torah is <b>א</b>
יהוה YHVH	10+5+6+5=26	The 26th letter of the Torah is <b>א</b>
אל <i>El</i>	1+30=31	The 31st letter of the Torah is <b>א</b>
אלהים <i>Elohim</i>	1+30+5+10+40=86	The 86th letter of the Torah is <b>א</b>
אב <i>av</i>	1+2=3	The 3rd letter of the Torah is <b>א</b>

What about other names of God, such as *Adonai*, and “I AM THAT I AM”? Do the numerical values of these names also point to *aleph* (**א**)? No. However, if we investigate the numerical values of these names, they too will lead us to some amazing discoveries.

The title *Adonai* is spelled אדני, and has a numerical value of 65 (**א**=1, ד=4, נ=50, י=10; 1+4+50+10=65). Counting 65 letters from the beginning of the Bible we arrive at the letter *yod* (י). From God’s full name — אדני אשר אדני (*a’hyah asher a’hyah*) “I AM THAT I AM” — we derive a numerical value of 543, and *hei* (ה) happens to be the 543rd letter of the Bible. The name to which these two letters point — י and ה — spell יה (*Yah*), which (as has been mentioned above) is a name the Bible frequently uses as a shortened form of YHVH (יהוה).

The name *Yah* (יה) can be brought to completion to form יהוה only by the addition of a *vav* (ו) and another *hei* (ה). These letters are supplied by the names *Mashiach Yeshua* — Messiah Jesus. *Mashiach* (משיח) has a numerical value of 358, and *Yeshua* (ישוע) equals 386.<sup>13</sup> The 358th letter of the Bible is a *vav* (ו), and the 386th letter is a *hei* (ה), thus bringing to completion the name יהוה as summarized below.

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<sup>13</sup> *Mashiach*, משיח: מ=40, ש=300, י=10, ח=8; 40+300+10+8=358. *Yeshua*, ישוע: י=10, ש=300, ו=6, ע=70; 10+300+6+70=386.

<i>Adonai</i>	אדני	=65	The 65th letter is	י
<i>I WILL BE...</i>	אדני אשר אדני	=543	The 543rd letter is	ה
<i>Mashiach</i>	משיח	=358	The 358th letter is	ו
<i>Yeshua</i>	ישוע	=386	The 386th letter is	ה

The unifying of the letters “יה” with the letters “יה” is a common theme in Jewish thought. For many orthodox Jews, the following is part of the morning prayers:

For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He,  
and His Presence, in fear and love to unify the Name — *yod-hei*  
with *vav-hei* — in perfect unity, in the name of all Israel.<sup>14</sup>

What does this prayer mean? The footnote in the prayer book explains:

The first half of the Divine name, formed of the letters *yod* and *hei*, symbolizes the Attribute of Judgment, while the second half, formed of the letters *vav* and *hei*, symbolizes the Attribute of Mercy. The blend of both attributes leads to His desired goal for Creation.<sup>15</sup>

Do you grasp the significance of this? According to Jewish theology, the two halves of God’s four-letter name represent two of His attributes — those of Judgement and Mercy. It was demonstrated above that the first two letters (יה, *yah*, a shortened form of God’s name) point to the letter *aleph* (א) as do so many other of God’s titles. But the remaining two letters of His name are derived by counting the numeric value of *Mashiach Yeshua*, representing God’s attribute of Mercy. This reminds us of Zechariah’s words that someday “**YHVH will be King over the whole earth. On that day there will be one YHVH, and His name one.**”<sup>16</sup> Only through the revelation of Yeshua can the character of God’s name — יהוה — be known in its fullness.

<sup>14</sup> The Complete Artscroll Siddur, p4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.


<sup>16</sup> Zechariah 14:9 (emphasis mine)



 , The Gospel Ladder

God's purpose in drawing us unto Himself is so that we may become more like Him. He is not interested in making us gods, but in making us fit for fellowship *with* God. He created man in His own image so that fellowship with Him would not only be possible, but natural. However, when sin entered the picture fellowship with God was greatly hindered, and only through the mediation of Yeshua has fellowship been restored. This is expressed in the passage:

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men,  
the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all  
men...<sup>17</sup>

This, the basic message of the gospel, is also illustrated by the letter . Jewish theologians see in *aleph*: "a ladder placed on the ground reaching heavenward... [consisting] of an upper *yod* and a lower *yod* (\*), the upper one denoting the celestial and the lower one the mundane."<sup>18</sup> This parallels Yeshua's statement,

"...truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened,  
and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of  
Man."<sup>19</sup>

The picture is made complete when we realize that *yod* is not only the name of a letter, but is also the word for "hand". Thus, the message of the gospel can be seen in the construction of *aleph* by the leaning *vav* which connects the hand of God (the upper *yod*) with the hand of man (the lower *yod*).

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<sup>17</sup> I Timothy 2:5-6

<sup>18</sup> Munk, p.54.

<sup>19</sup> John 1:51

**☞ Man, Made in God's Image**

The Bible says “God made man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.”<sup>20</sup> Though the letters of God's name — יהוה — can be



arranged in descending order to produce the form of a man (see the illustration), this does not mean that God looks like a man, complete with arms, legs, and a head. The word translated “image” is צֶלֶם (*tzelem*), a word which refers to the essence of a thing, not just its outward appearance. God has made man *in essence* like Himself. He created us with emotions because He has emotions. He created us with a sense of humor because He has a sense of humor, and He created us with the ability to love because He *is* love.

Unfortunately, man's ability to reflect God's image has been terribly marred because of sin. Furthermore, Satan hates God so much that he also hates any reminder of Him. Though we sometimes fail to see God's image in one another, Satan sees it clearly and hates us as a result. Like a raging fiend whose consuming hatred drives him to destroy any reminder of his enemy, he would like to do to us what was done to Yeshua. His intent is thwarted, however, because Yeshua was our ransom, suffering Satan's wrath in our place. And because of Messiah's resurrection, new life is available to all who place their faith in Him, making it possible for God's image to be restored. This is the intended purpose of spiritual growth — growing up “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Messiah.”<sup>21</sup>

Though reaching the “whole measure of the fullness of Messiah” is a tall order, God has already laid the foundation for this work by creating man with the basic internal structure to make this objective attainable. God's essence — His personality, power, wisdom, love, character— are expressed through the trio of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, to make man in His own image, He followed the same pattern, creating us with a body, a soul, and a spirit.

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



<sup>20</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 4:13



An understanding of the body, soul, and spirit is vitally important for achieving a better understanding of God, and is a subject that is rarely understood today. It is beyond the scope of this chapter (and this book) to fully explore this important subject, but a brief excursion into this topic will help us derive further insights into the letter *aleph*, which will in turn also provide insights into the relation of body, soul, and spirit.

### In the Image of God

Since man is made in God’s image, many aspects of *aleph* () also apply to us. For example, the three parts of the *aleph* illustrate the trinity of man as well as the trinity of God. As the *vav* () stretches between the upper *yod* () and the lower *yod*, the soul dwells between the spirit and the body. Likewise, as the *vav* is the dominant figure of the *aleph* (), the Father is the dominant figure of the godhead, and the soul is the dominant part of man.

But we cannot see the soul of another person with our physical eyes. When we behold a person, we do not literally see the person himself but only his body. The real person is inside that body looking back at us through the eyes, the windows of the soul. We can think of our bodies as our “earth suits” which allow our souls to interact with the physical world. Thus the soul expresses itself through the body by means of words, deeds, and gestures. In other words, the flesh expresses the personality of the soul in the same way that Yeshua expressed the personality of the Father. As God’s physical expression, Yeshua was literally God-in-the-flesh. His every word and action was an expression of the Father’s personality, thus fulfilling Yeshua’s constant desire to do the will of the Father.<sup>22</sup>

Since all communication between individuals takes place through the expressions of the body (speech, gestures, writing, etc.), is it any wonder

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<sup>22</sup> John 8:28

that God's physical expression, Yeshua, is called "the Word"? The writer of Hebrews expresses this in its opening verses:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son,<sup>23</sup>

When Yeshua spoke of Himself as the Alpha and Omega,<sup>24</sup> He was not merely saying that He was the First and the Last. He was also proclaiming that He *is* God's alphabet — from A to Z — through Whom the Father speaks.

Not only do we express ourselves through the body, but it is through the body's five senses that we, in turn, experience the world around us. If these senses were to somehow be "turned off", we would be completely insulated from physical sensation. We would have no way of knowing if it were light or dark, hot or cold, or if we were alone or in a crowd.

In the same way that our bodies are sensitive to the physical realm, our spirits are sensitive to the spiritual realm. Paul emphasized this when he wrote,

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him — but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, eyes and ears are incapable of perceiving things which are spiritual in nature — for those the spirit is necessary. Satan is fearful of the believer who is mighty in spirit and has his spiritual eyes open. It has been Satan's tactic to tempt us either to ignore the spirit altogether, or to pursue spirituality by means of occultic practices. On the other hand, God would have us develop spiritually by means of obedience to His Word, fellowship, and prayer.

In short, God the Father expresses Himself in the flesh through Yeshua (the Word-made-flesh) and through His Spirit (the Holy Spirit). Having been created in God's image, man *is* a soul clothed in a body of flesh, having also a spirit by which he may commune with God.

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<sup>23</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>24</sup> Revelation 22:13-16

<sup>25</sup> I Corinthians 2:9-10

<u>BODY</u>	<u>SOUL</u>	<u>SPIRIT</u>
-Sight -Hearing -Smell -Taste -Touch	MIND WILL EMOTIONS	-Faith -Conscience -Discernment -Communion -Worship

Let’s apply what we have learned about *aleph* (8) to what we have learned about the body, soul, and spirit. As mentioned above, 8 is constructed from a slanted *vav* (1) surrounded by two *yods* (\*). Just as the *vav* (1) represents the Father — the dominant figure of the Godhead — so also the *vav* (1) can be seen to depict the soul — the dominant figure in the image of God created in us. The soul, made up of the mind, will, and emotions, are what make you distinctly *you*. This is the essence of your personality, because the way you think (mind), the way you make choices (will), and the way you feel and respond to situations (emotions) are what make *your* soul unique from all others.

The lower *yod* (\*) is the body, the lowest and earthiest part of a person wherein all physical sensations reside. The body provides the soul’s contact with the physical realm, and its five senses are five gates through which physical sensations reach the soul. Through the body we interact with others and learn many of the object lessons God has placed in nature for our instruction.

The upper *yod* (\*) is the spirit, the loftiest part of a person wherein the five spiritual sensitivities reside. If you recall, the word *yod* means “hand”. As the hand has five fingers, so the lower *yod* — the body — has five senses by which we may “grasp” the physical realm. The upper *yod* — the spirit — also has five senses by which we may “grasp” the spiritual realm. Let us briefly consider each of these five spiritual senses.

**☞ The Five Functions of the Spirit**

**Faith:** We are to walk by faith and not by sight.<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that we are to go through life with our eyes closed. It means that in the physical realm we use our eyes (highly recommended when driving), but for those things that we cannot see, God has given us faith. Like physical sight, faith too is a gift from God<sup>27</sup> and the Word of God, like a pair of glasses, helps focus faith upon His truth. Faith is not wishful thinking. It is the “*substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen.”<sup>28</sup> In fact, faith is more dependable than physical sight, “For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”<sup>29</sup> But even the eyes of faith require a light by which to see, and Yeshua, the Light of the world, has placed His light in a lantern called the Bible, a “lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”<sup>30</sup>

**Conscience:** The conscience is a moral alarm system located in the spirit. It goes off when we go wrong. If it is heeded, we can avoid a great deal of remorse and guilt. Even when unbelievers obey their consciences, they “show the work of the law [*Torah*] written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.”<sup>31</sup> But if we violate the conscience often enough, it becomes seared just as if covered with scar tissue, growing numb to things which should cause pain. Society is reaping the consequences of having taught children behaviors that run contrary to their consciences, thus making their consciences dysfunctional and insensitive to the pleadings of God’s Spirit.

**Discernment:** Yeshua commands us to be “wise as serpents, but innocent as doves”.<sup>32</sup> If we obey the conscience, we will maintain our innocence; and if we exercise discernment we will be wise as serpents. This spiritual “sense” complements the conscience in that while the conscience warns me of error in myself, discernment can warn me of error in others. By “error” I do not mean the doctrinal hairsplitting that has often plagued the church, but rather the discernment of the spirit and motive which lies behind a person’s words or actions.

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<sup>26</sup> II Corinthians 5:7

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 2:8

<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 11:1 (emphasis mine)

<sup>29</sup> II Corinthians 4:18

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 119:105

<sup>31</sup> Romans 2:15

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 10:16

Satan is an accomplished deceiver and is able to counterfeit legitimate workings of the Holy Spirit. Therefore discernment is valuable in differentiating between the Spirit of God and demonic spirits. John advises us to “test the spirits”<sup>33</sup> so that we will not easily be led astray by those who appear to be godly but are not. Discernment is similar to the sense of smell in that both are useful in detecting hidden rottenness.

In his comparison of the spiritual and carnal man, Paul wrote “The spiritual man *discerns* all things but ... he is *discerned* by no man.”<sup>34</sup> He is referring here to the ability of the spiritually perceptive person to sense what lies in the spirit of another, as well as the inability of the spiritually dead person to sense what lies in the spirit of the believer. As we grow in the Lord, may we become ever more spiritually sensitive so that we may more effectively minister to others, as well as protect ourselves from wolves in sheep’s clothing.

**Communion:** “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”<sup>35</sup> This “spiritual tasting” occurs only as we spend time feeding upon God’s Word and conversing with Him in prayer. This is the archetype of all food and fellowship. I use the word “communion” instead of “prayer” because we tend to think of prayer as strictly one-way — we talk, God listens. Communion on the other hand, is a two-way activity — a living relationship between man and God. Prayers can be written in a book, but communion can’t. It is through communion that we acknowledge God and He directs our paths. In communion we become prayerfully still so as to hear Him say, “This is the way; walk in it.”<sup>36</sup> Communion is the attitude of prayer Paul had in mind when he said to pray without ceasing.

**Worship:** We tend to confuse worship with praise. Praise is a function of the soul and is expressed through the body, but worship is a function of the spirit. Yeshua said as much when He said, “God is spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.”<sup>37</sup> Many congregations have “worship teams” which lead people in praise and singing, but only the Holy Spirit can truly direct worship. Worship is the quiet contemplation and adoration of God born out of communion with Him. Only when we have followed His command to “Be still and know that

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<sup>33</sup> I John 4:1

<sup>34</sup> I Corinthians 2:15 (emphasis mine)

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 34:8

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 30:21

<sup>37</sup> John 4:24

I am God”<sup>38</sup> can we begin to worship Him in spirit and truth. Too often we work backward, attempting to arrive at worship by beginning with praise, with the result that we become spiritual cheerleaders — falling in love with praise itself, instead of worshipping the God we praise. Praise of God is the natural fruit of worshipping God. Praise must always be an expression of worship, not the cause of it.

In summary, we see that *conscience* and *discernment* are especially useful in one’s relationship with others, whereas *communion* and *worship* are necessary in one’s relationship with God. But all four must operate from the starting point of *faith*.

As a result of examining the distinctions that exist between the body, soul, and spirit, it is easy to forget that they are closely united and that what affects one, affects the other two as well. We have seen an example of this as it applies to worship: when I worship God (spirit), I begin to rejoice in my mind and emotions (soul) and may choose to sing with my mouth, clap, or raise my hands (body). Conversely, if I accidentally drop the garage door on my toe (I speak from personal experience), my mind, will, and emotions (soul) engage their full attention on the injured member (body), and I begin to call out to the Lord for help in this time of trouble (spirit).

The soul *is* the self. It is central to the body and spirit and responds fully to both. It is equally able to direct its full attention to an injured toe, or to worship of the King of Kings. This truth is reflected by the *aleph’s* slanted *vav* (י) that descends to the level of the lower *yod* (י), representing the body, and also ascends to the level of the upper *yod* (י), representing the spirit.

### ☞ Keep the “א” in Adam

The Hebrew name for the first man, *Adam* (אָדָם), also begins with *aleph* (which again demonstrates that man is created in God’s image). Realizing that the *aleph* represents God’s presence, one Jewish Sage wrote that when Adam (אָדָם) sinned, the *aleph* (א) fled and only *dam* (דָם, “blood”) was left.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Psalm 46:10

<sup>39</sup> R’ Yeshayah Hurwitz (1560-1630) in *Shnei Luchos Habris*, Part Three, 13b.



אדם - א = דם Adam - א = blood
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History has repeatedly demonstrated the truth of this statement. Mankind's propensity for bloodshed has been a perpetual reminder of Adam's sin in departing from God.

The same principle can be applied to a common Hebrew word for "man" — איש (*ish*). When the *aleph* is removed from this word, we are left with *yeesh* (יש), a word meaning "substance".

איש - א = יש man - א = [mere] substance
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This characteristic earmarks the life of the carnal person who cannot see beyond his physical existence. He fills his life with material possessions in an attempt to satisfy the emptiness in his soul — an emptiness caused by the absence of God (א) in his life. However, Yeshua said, "...a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."<sup>40</sup>

An examination of *Aleph's* name (spelled אלה) also offers some rich insights. As we have seen, the first letter, *aleph* (א), represents God. The name of the second letter, *lamed* (ל), means "to learn". The last letter is *peh* (פ), which means "mouth". Together, the three letters that spell *aleph* teach us that:

א - We must meet <i>the Lord</i> ,... ל - <i>learn</i> from Him, then ... פ - <i>speak</i> of Him.
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As we learned in the last section, *vav* (ו), represents the soul. If we place a *vav* (ו) in *aleph* (אלה), signifying the entrusting of one's soul to God, we get *aluph* (אלוה), which means "lord" or "master". How much more effectively we can speak for and to our God if we have entrusted our lives to Him by making Him our Lord and Master.

<sup>40</sup> Luke 12:15

☞ **In Conclusion**

There is much more to be said about the letter *aleph* (א), and we will encounter it many times in chapters to come. *Aleph* (א), lord and master of the alphabet, is the first in a grand parade of deep truths and rich insights that will be taught by the letters that follow. Although many secrets remain hidden within *aleph* that await discovery, I will end this chapter with just one final insight.

Three times, the Bible states that “God is...”, followed by something to which He can be likened. The three instances are:

God is a consuming <b>Fire</b>	Deuteronomy 4:24	אש
God is <b>Light</b>	I John 1:5	אור
God is <b>Love</b>	I John 4:8	אהבה

Note that each of these three words begins with the letter *aleph* (א), the letter which, more than any other, symbolizes God’s nature and character.

Our God is a *consuming fire*; He is *light*; He is *love*. How can we begin to understand the magnitude of His nature? A good place to begin is by visiting God’s “house”, which is the meaning of the next letter’s name — *beit* (ב).