



THE SACRED GEOMETRY OF SOMATIC ATTUNEMENT

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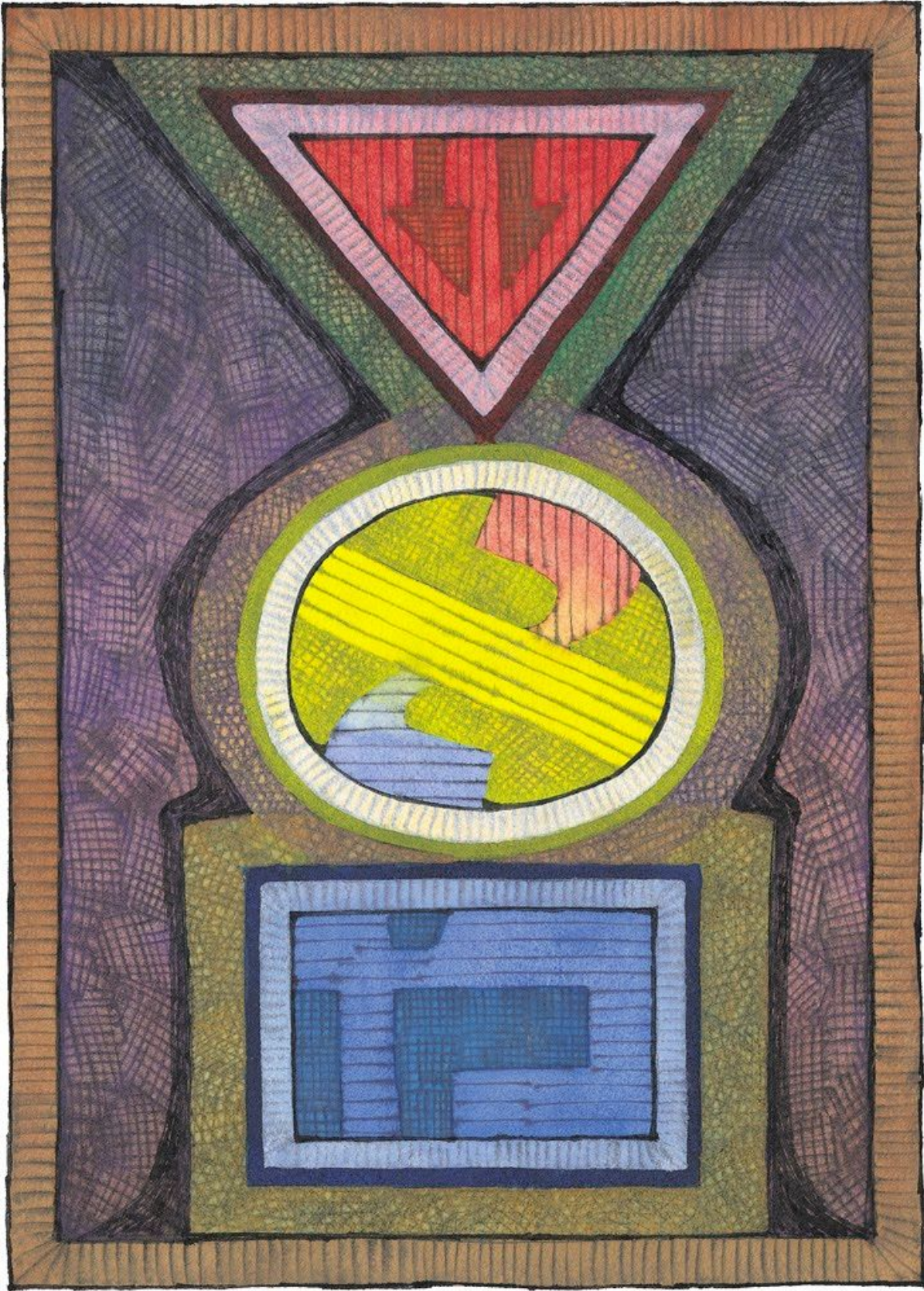
Three Mothers, Alef Mem Shin
in the soul, male and female,
are the head, belly, and chest.
the head is created from fire,
the belly is created from water
and the chest, from breath,
decides between them.

Three Mothers: Aleph Mem Shin
Mem hums,
Shin hisses
and Alef is the Breath of air
deciding between them.
– Sefer Yetzirah

Japanese Calligrapher Sengai made the mystery of the Circle/Square/Triangle visible to the world throughout history. They represent the grounding of consciousness in the human body and are the spiritual dimensions of embodied consciousness in Aikido (head/heart/hara.) The mysticism of these

cornerstones of sacred geometry also associates the shapes with the energies of fire/water/spirit, written about as The Three Mothers, the energies that bring forth creation. These notions are expanded in [Kabbalah of the Mother Letters, in Tiferet: Journal of Spiritual Literature \(#11, 2009.\)](#)

Artwork of David Friedman, Sfat: <https://www.kosmic-kabbalah.com>





When Abraham's children sit in a circle,
their unity is formed from their uniqueness.

The Mother Letter Alef teaches that
the shape of Our Oneness is Infinite.
And that it is Silent.

Our Oneness, known only in extraordinary ways.
Ways that are mysterious,
ways that are mystical.

Abraham taught, "Mem humms, Shin hisses,
and Alef is the Breath of Air deciding between them."

We know Our Oneness through diversity and connection.
We communicate through quality and quantity,
letters and numbers,
See context through colors and shapes.

These are the Circle Square and Triangle, Alef Mem and Shin.

By Yitzak Ahron

http://theamericanmuslim.org/2003jan_comments.php?id=P246_0_17_30

Three Mothers: Universal Kabbalah of Abraham

The Sounds of Healing Peace

by Yitzak Aaron

“Islam relates itself to Jews and Christians on three levels: as humans, as heirs of the Semitic religious tradition, and as Jews and Christians. This relationship is on this account built into Islam’s very nature and core. There is no Islam without it.”[1]

“Abraham - the friend of God - is spiritually the shared ancestor of half the people alive today - Jews, Christians and Muslims. In the story of Abraham we can find justification for continued suspicion and mistrust, or we can find in Abraham the point of contact, the cornerstone for a new relationship.”[2]

“There needs to be a paradigm shift in Muslim priorities.”[3]

Sheikh Yusef Abu Sneina, imam of El-Aksa Mosque, told Bruce Feiler, that if Muslims, Christians and Jews follow what is said about Abraham in the Koran and the Bible respectively, then we can reach unity. “You have a true heart, you have to believe there is one God. Maybe we have different approaches, but the destination is the same.”[4]

There appear to be many different stories about the life and times of Abraham, and many more about his descendants. Most Muslims will identify with Ishmael; Isaac is my namesake. I read Torah to suggest that God’s blessing to Abraham, which was offered to his seed before either was conceived, inured to all his descendants. If the word sets creation in motion, man’s contentious interaction with the blessing began with Sarah asking Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael. Our rabbinical tradition interpreted Torah to disinherit, not simply exile Ishmael, as I would read the story. As a descendant of Isaac, I apologize to the descendants of Ishmael for how their ancestor was treated in the tents of Abraham, and by the rabbis who have interpreted this story.

I say this out of a deeply felt pursuit of healing as a Jew, not as I was wrongly interpreted by some when I expressed these feelings recently in welcoming Ibrahim Abu El-Hawa from the Mount of Olives to a dialogue event here in Sonoma County, California.[5] These were emotionally charged sentiments for all who heard them, so I can imagine how a director of the Jewish Community Agency who co-sponsored the event presenting Ibrahim and Eliyahu McLean,[6] might have wrongly heard my words as, “I was ashamed

to be Jewish.” The director, himself a holocaust survivor, used his misinterpretation to persuade the Board of Directors to vote against co-sponsoring any future peace/dialogue related events, characterizing them as “politically” inappropriate.[7]

I’ve been seeking the voices of Jewish survivors of oppression in dialogue work for over a year, so it appeared that the very thing I had been reaching out for had bit me from behind. I want to listen to the feelings and the stories of Holocaust survivors and their children along side the stories of Palestinian exiles. We all perpetuate pain and suffering in the same manner.

I’ve observed that both Palestinian and Jewish exiles carry their fears, anger and pain for generations, suffering them self destructively as depression, then inflicting them on loved ones and others, often unconsciously, as expectation, judgement and rejection. There is healing in telling the stories that emerge from suffering oppression in any form, and in expressing the feelings they precipitate. We learn compassion and understanding by listening to them. Muslims are understandably withdrawn in response to dialogue invitations. The potential remains to initiate efforts with your neighboring Jewish and Christian communities in creating forums for healing dialogues to begin. You can make listening happen.

One brief story will end my prelude to the spiritual work that I was invited to contribute to this essential journal. An Israeli soldier was given leave to be with his dying mother, an Israeli citizen and Holocaust survivor. After expressing gratitude to the State for relieving him, she sends him away. She’d rather die knowing he was working so that, “what the Nazi’s did should never happen to us again.” It took me a while to get over the weight of her emotional transference. Later, I understood the deeper tragedy that we all endured. Her feelings about Nazis were stronger than the desire to be near her son as she lay dying. Even now, I can’t willingly begin to think about where the son might have gone from there, and what he might have done with his feelings after that.

Consider the possibilities if only she had previously found a constructive outlet for her pain and her rage.

I wonder the same thing about my Jewish Community Agency.

Palestinian and Jewish refugees (and their children) are each essential elements in dialogue work. Their voices will channel constructively the powerful needs for emotional healing that they have in common, more so than they can imagine. Their work together is to refrain from discussing their positions and the reasons for having them. The dialogue must begin about feelings: fears, angers, pain and guilt. That's another level, where our left-brain will go only by intention and mutual agreement.^[8] However, doing so opens the gate to a third and deeper level, where one can share the stories behind the feelings. Only after we have considered our own emotional identities, we can begin to contemplate how the contentious history of religious teachings has shaped our fears and insecurities as separate beings, and deprived us all of earlier opportunities to identify with our collective Oneness.

Sefer Yetzirah

Return with me now to the many stories we've inherited about Abraham and his descendents. In addition to those, we also have (several versions of) Abraham's inner works, his creative powers and their process. Not written by Abraham, but containing teachings attributed to him, Sefer Yetzirah may be translated both in the third person past tense, describing his creative process, and also in the present tense imperative, suggesting a meditation or guide to inner work. Read in this manner, the text is an instruction manual, appearing to empower the reader with an inner framework for receiving inspiration.

Inner Torah

Torah counts time (years) from the birth of Adam, not from the Creation story. From this we learn that its teachings are for mankind, and should be read in a manner that sheds light upon our Inner Self in this moment, a perspective we may have lost sight of in light of traditional doctrine and authorities from another time. From this perspective, an inner Torah enables us to see traditional religious doctrines in a new light, more relevant to today's pressing issues. The concept of inner teachings contemplates religious and mythological stories as metaphors for personal experience.^[9]

Our religious leaders have inherited a history of competing claims to exclusivity in relation to Abraham's legacy. Our traditions each claim that they are the only real

descendants from Abraham. An example of an outer Torah question is whether the God of Torah intended the disinheritance of Ishmael. An inner Torah question is what must I do now as a Jew to make peace between my Isaac and my Ishmael within. Or can we now share God's blessing to Abraham's seed with all who claim to be his descendants? Another inner Torah question is whether Christians and Muslims today can accept Jesus/Mohammed as their path and not the only path for all people.

It's the outer teachings that we fight about, those teachings and religious doctrines that are removed from us in time and space. Whereas these teachings define our separateness, the inner teachings are universal. When we embody the inner teachings of Abraham, we won't fight about the outer teachings any more.

Sounds and Silent Meditation

“Looking at the entire field of meditation from a historical viewpoint, we find that the closer one gets to the present, the less dangerous and more universal the methods become.”[10]

Do meditative practices evolve historically like other arts and sciences? Is his characterization of the historic trend fairly described? In Jewish Meditation, Rabbi Kaplan suggests working with the Shema as a meditative focus,[11] and elaborates this theme in greater detail discussing the Mother Letters in his translation of and commentary on Sefer Yetzirah. The teachings of Sefer Yetzirah, foundation stone of Kabbalah, are attributed to Abraham.[12]

The commonly accepted translation of Shema Yisrael is “Hear, O Israel, God is One.” But if we translate the phrase, “Listen, Yisrael, to God's Oneness” or “to your Oneness with God,” where might this lead us? To what might we be inclined to listen? And what might we expect to hear?

The sounds of Shema are in the common greeting “Manishma?” which usually is intended as “how are you?” Literally it means “what do you hear?” Could a deeper level of this be asking “what are you listening to...what are you attuned to?”

Most vocal sounds wake us up in one way or another. Two sounds call us to quiet down. Shhh, don't tell anyone yet. They create the energetic context from which other sounds derive their power. The sounds of The Mother Letters, Shin and Mem, contain universal messages that quiet our minds and evoke listening. Shushing gets attention in many languages. It calls upon the stream of thoughts to cease. Humming states the single letter that we pronounce without opening our mouths. It implies, "I am listening." It is the only sound we make that doesn't interrupt someone else's train of thought. Notice how just thinking these sounds affects you.

Neshama means soul. The name contains the sounds of shema. Neshama also means breath, the awareness of which is universal among meditation practices. (We say in Psalm 150, "Every soul (breath) praises God's Name.") There is also something special about the sounds of shema, which beckons us to pay attention more deeply. They are also the sounds of other fundamental Jewish names, shalom and Hashem . Kaplan relates that "the mystery of shema is in the name shem."^[13] Shem refers also to our name, even the very concept of identity. Shalem means healthy, complete and whole.

The Hebrew letters Shin and Mem also correspond to the Yud and Hey of the Divine Name YHVH, and are associated with the basic interplay of divine expansion and contraction. Kabbalah teaches that Mem and Yud the are of the sphere of Chochmah (Wisdom,) representing right brain consciousness, or the awareness of similarities. They are associated with water and with cold. Shin and Hey, on the other hand, reflect Binah(Understanding,) the left brain which does our ordinary thinking, that of language, distinctions and reasoning. They are associated with fire and with heat. Shin relates to the head, while Mem lives "in the belly."^[14] Chochmah is in our center or hara/dan'tien and its Wisdom is known through feelings and intuition.

The sounds of Shema on our breath move us from ordinary thinking to Chochmah and prepare us to go beyond into the silent stillness that unifies all. Meditating with the interplay between Shin and Mem elicits awareness of Alef:

*Three Mothers: Aleph Mem Shin
Mem hums, Shin hisses
and Alef is the Breath of air
deciding between them.[15]*

Alef is One. Even its structure, which can be viewed as two Yuds separated by a Vav, add up to 26 (10+10+6) which is the same as YHVH (10+5+6+5.) Since Mem and Shin relate to the Yud and Hey, listening to these sounds is focusing our attention (if we are aware) on the Divine Name, not by articulating the letters themselves, but the “garments” which clothe them. The three letters of the Divine Name parallel The Three Mothers.

*He chose three letters from among the elementals
in the mystery of the three Mothers, Alef, Mem, Shin.*^[16]

Rabbi Kaplan clarifies, "As Sefer Yetzirah explains in 3:4, Mem is water, Shin is fire, Alef is breath/air. Yud also represents Chochmah, which is the archetype of water, and Hey represents Binah, which is fire. We therefor have a relationship between Yud and Mem, as well as between Hey and Shin."^[17]

APPENDIX

The Three Mothers

Mem	Water	Chochmah	Yud
Shin	Fire	Binah	Heh
Alef	Air Breath	The Six	Vav

Hashamayim (heaven) contains fire (ayish,) water (mayim,) and shema. The Great Mantra (Hamsa/Soham) teaches that these sounds are the inner sounds of our breathing. Shalem is health and wholeness; shalom/salam mean peace. Shin is behind the entire left column of the Tree of Life headed by Binah/Understanding, our left brain manner of distinctions, boundaries and judgments. Mem is behind the entire right-hand column, headed by Chochmah/Wisdom, our right brain manner of feeling and intuitive and unbounded knowing. The sounds suggest the basic polar dynamics of the Ten Sefirot.

Sushing and humming oscillate our minds back and forth between Binah and Chochmah consciousness.

*Understand with Wisdom
Be wise with Understanding
Examine with them
and probe from them.*^[18]

What are you listening to? to what are you attuned? Manishmah?

Shin and Mem: Gateways into The Silence

**Shema Hashem Shalom
Salam Shalem Shalom**

**Hear the sounds,
the sounds of peace,
the sounds of healing peace.**

**Issmao issim,
issim il salam,
issim shifa il salam.**

These words can be sung as a prayer of peace and healing, or chanted as a quieting meditation.^[19] When the six basic words are used as a meditation, or to establish a context for silent meditation, they may be followed by breaths that speak just the sounds of sushing and humming, as a sound/springboard into the inner sounds of silent breathing.

Sometimes it suffices just to Shhh Hmm.

Hear the sounds of Shhh on the silent exhale with mouth closed. Let Hmms come spontaneously upon the flow of thought or feelings. Listen for the sounds within silent breathing.

Often, only the thought comes. The sounds are always there.

It's only the awareness that we are developing.

Quieting Down the Awareness of the Physical

“The lowest part of the soul interfaces with the physical body. It is on the level of Nefesh that a person gains awareness of the body as a receptacle for the spiritual. This is only possible, however, when one is able to isolate himself from the constant stream of internal and external stimuli that occupy his thoughts. Awareness of the spiritual thus necessarily begins by quieting down the awareness of the physical.[20]”

The transition from Binah to Chochmah involves staging down the awareness of our thoughts. The sounds of Shin & Mem, by themselves allow our minds to step back from the complexity of words and meanings to the sounds and the feelings they evoke.

We all live on one planet. All beings are connected to the Earth’s core by gravity. We actually perceive gravity in our ears! So, to follow literally the suggestion to “listen” puts our attention into the nerves that carry both the perception of sound and our kinesthetic sense of balance. This increases our awareness of both the (inner) sounds of our breathing, and our felt sense of oneness. Follow the sounds into your silent breathing. Listen for the sounds within your silent breathing.

The sounds themselves represent opposite qualities. Shin contains many vibrations, like white noise; Mem, on the other hand, is a pure tone. It’s no wonder that they are for us a gateway into The Silence.

Manishma?

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[1] A Call to Bridge the Abrahamic Faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Ph. D. The American Muslim, Nov/Dec'02.

[2] The Legacy Of Abraham Sheila Musaji, The American Muslim, Nov/Dec'02.

[3] A Better Future for Our Children: a Muslim-American's reflections post 9/11/01 Dr. Javeed Akhter, The American Muslim, Nov/Dec'02.

[4] Bruce Feiler, Abraham, p.182, Morrow

[5] Ibrahim began our healing tikkun (fixing) by welcoming me into his home in 1991.

[6] Director, Peacemaker Community-Israel/Middle East

[7] I do feel ashamed that our resident leaders in Israel haven't dealt more wisely with their neighbors (and cousins) in the half a century since their statehood, but I didn't say that either.

[8] An summary of four levels of deepening in dialogue and exercises facilitating their exploration is available by email request to yitzak@medagree.com

[9] This concept will be familiar to readers of Kaplan, Kook, Luzzatto, Aviva Zornberg, Ken Wilber, Joseph Campbell, and others.

[10]Meditation and Kabbalah, Aryeh Kaplan, p. 306.

[11] Jewish Meditation, Aryeh Kaplan, p.130-131, 175-177

[12] Aryeh Kaplan, Sefer Yetzirah, xii, S. Weiser

[13] Meditation and Kabbalah, Aryeh Kaplan, p.

[14]Sefer Yetzirah 3:6, Aryeh Kaplan

[15]Sefer Yetzirah: 2:1, *ibid*. The Mother Letters are instruments in divine creation. "In the mystery of the three Mothers" there was formed the letters of His great Name, the six directions (1:13), the Sefirot (3:12), good &evil (3:1), air, fire & water (3:4) and male & female (3:6.)

[16]Sefer Yetzirah 1:13.

[17]*ibid* at p. 81.

[18]Sefer Yetzirah is instructing "a deliberate oscillation between Understanding and Wisdom, between verbal Binah conscious, and nonverbal Chochmah consciousness. One invokes a strong state of Binah consciousness by pronouncing the Shin, and then swings to Chochmah consciousness by voicing Mem." Aryeh Kaplan, Sefer Yetzirah 1:4, *ibid*

[19] Melody, movements, and a three-fold flyer containing a summary of this article are available by email request to yitzak@medagree.com

[20]Aryeh Kaplan, Inner Space, p.18

[21] Wilhelm/Baynes, The I Ching, p.3-20.

Unpublished APPENDIX

Shin Mem Words

Common words that bring us from Shin to Mem and suggest a focusing of awareness or an elevation of consciousness:

shema	listen
Hashem	The Name
shalom	peace
salam	peace
shalem	healing, wholeness
sham	there
shem	identity, name
geshem	blessings, rainshowers
shamayim	heaven
shomer	to watch
sim	to give or put
shamash	server
manishmah	hearing what
mashmia	causing to be heard
ahimsa	non-violence

Shin Mem Relationships:

SHIN	MEM
fire	water
heat	cold
limitation	expansion
judgement	loving-kindness
Binah/Understanding	Chochmah/Wisdom
mother	father
left brain	right brain
reason	tuition
distinctions	similarities
sound	weight

exhale

inhale

Universal Spiritual Forms

Regardless of technique or form, the regular practice of meditation trains the development of universal skills; concentration, relaxation, breath awareness, sensory awareness, visualization, centering and grounding. Traditions offer common images in a cultural and religious context which have meaning for large populations over many generations. Skills learned in one tradition may be developed and practiced in another. However, it is also true that striking similarities exist between esoteric traditions of different religions and spiritual practices. Let's consider other expressions of these universal concepts.

Buddhism

Tibetan Buddhists visualize a purified state of existence in which everything is dissolved into the nature of emptiness. This is sought through the integration of the practice of Method and Wisdom. In Kabbalah, the mystery of Infinite Oneness is known in the interplay between Chochmah and Binah. Chochmah (Wisdom) represents right brain consciousness, or the awareness of similarities, intuition, and our sense of connection. Binah (Understanding) is the left brain which does our ordinary thinking, that of language and distinctions, and reason. The term Method also seems to fit the idea of Binah. Compare also the Chinese Trigram #1. The Creative / Ch'ien, (Heaven,) which suggests Chochmah with the Trigram #2 (suggesting Binah) The Receptive / K'un (Earth.)^[21]

Left Brain

Right Brain

Buddhist

Method

Wisdom

Emptiness

Jewish

Understanding
(Binah)

Wisdom
(Chochmah)

Infinite Oneness

Shin

Mem

Aleph

Chinese

The Receptive / K'un Creative / Ch'ien

Aikido

The martial art Aikido teaches that it is with the breath that we align ourselves with Ki, which creates all things. The founder of the art also spoke of spiritual energy in terms of the three basic shapes. The circle represents adaptability and unity. The triangle is focus and direction, and the square is balance and stability. Aleph is the number one, whose geometry is a circle. Shin is a triangle, and the number 300. Mem is a square and the number 40. In addition, both Kabbalah and Aikido associate the triangle with the head, the square with the belly (pelvis) and the circle with the breath (chest.)

Yoga

Another universal spiritual practice from Eastern cultures teaches the interplay of these sounds on the breath. Siddha Yoga draws the So'ham mantra from the teachings of Kashmir Chaivism. The sounds of "Ham" and "Sa" are the "inner sounds of breathing" - the sounds when the breath is given no audible sound. They translate from Sanskrit as "I Am That I Am," the name of the Infinite One. Every breath praises God's name (Psalm 150.) The practice teaches awareness of the sounds in silent breathing and attention to the infinite spaces in between the breaths. In Aikido, Kotodama, sound-spirit, holds that "su" (Word) is the mid-point of being, giving forth ka-mi, fire/water, yin/yang, spirit/matter. "Su" and "Om" are complements, leading us to unity.

The Six Directions

Shin

Fire (*aysh*)

UPWARDS (*ma'aleh*)

place of climbing
sprouting beings

Mem

Water (*mayim*)

DOWNWARDS (*mahtah*)

the tribal place
still beings, stones, mountains

Alef, The Silent Oneness, is the seventh direction, and it is within.

Air (*avir*)

NORTH

(tzafon)

vision

eagle

Uriel

WEST

(ma'arav)

blending, healing

bull

Raphael

EAST

(mez'rach)

shining, balance

lion

Gavriel

SOUTH

(negev)

reflection

human

Michael

May I speak in right angles,

think in three,

emote in spirals,

and remember that I am One with Thee

Cosmic Embodied Thought Maps

Alef Mem Shin statements are statements that come from:

<i>Shin</i>	<i>Alef</i>	<i>Mem</i>
left	center	right
head	heart	hara
distinct	holistic	similar
diversity	totality	connection
quality	unity	quantity
power	light	expansion
fire	air/spirit	water
shapes	context	colors
red	yellow	blue
hot	temperate	cold
tip	core	root
up	within	down

And statements that suggest:

Shin

boundaries, judgements, channels, diversity, triangular

Mem

grounding, connecting, fluid, merging, quadrangular

Alef

inspiring, enlightened, awake, awesome, bright, circular

Greens are blues
Containing yellow
Light of the sun.

Supernal Light
Is Ever-present
Always implied.

Red is above
Fire burns up
Blue sinks low
As waters flow.

Wishh is in my head
Humm in my belly.
And the Breath of Spirit
Decides between them.

Yitzak

Eight Verses from Sefer Yetzirah

1:4

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness

ten and not nine

ten and not eleven

Understand with Wisdom

Be Wise with Understanding

examine with them

and probe from them

Make each thing stand on its essence

and make the Creator sit on His base.

1:13

Choose three elemental letters and place them in His great Name: YHV

With them, seal the six extremities.

Seal “above.” Face upward and seal it with YHV.

Seal “below.” Face downward and seal it with HYV.

Seal “east.” Face straight ahead and seal it with VYH.

Seal “west.” Face backward and seal it with VHY.

Seal “south.” Face to the right and seal it with YVH.

Seal “north.” Face to the left and seal it with HVY.

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.
Mem hums, Shin hisses
and Alef is the Breath of air
deciding between them.

3:2

Three Mothers: Alef Mem Shin
a great mystical secret
covered and sealed with six rings
and from them emanated air, water and fire
and from them are born the Fathers,
and from them everything was created.

3:4

Three Mothers, Alef Mem Shin
in the universe are air, water, fire.
Heaven was created from fire
Earth was created from water
and air from Breath decides between them.

3:5

Three Mothers, Alef Mem Shin
in the year are
the hot
the cold
and the temperate.

The hot is created from fire
The cold is created from water
And the temperate, from Breath,
decides between them.

3:6

Three Mothers, Alef Mem Shin
in the soul, male and female,
are the head, belly, and chest.
the head is created from fire,

the belly is created from water
and the chest, from breath,
decides between them.

6:7

And when Abraham looked, saw, understood, probed, engraved and carved,
He was successful in creation
He made with him a covenant
 between the ten fingers of his hands
 this is the covenant of the tongue
 and between the ten toes of his feet
 this is the covenant of circumcision
and when He bound the 22 letters of Torah into his tongue
and He revealed to him His mystery
He drew them in Water
 He flamed them with Fire
 He agitated them with Breath