

THE WISDOM IN THE

by
הרב יחיאל אריה הכהן מונק
Rabbi Michael L. Munk

Overview by
Rabbi Nosson Scherman

עולם האותיות





HEBREW ALPHABET

The Sacred Letters as a Guide to Jewish Deed and Thought

Published by

Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Table of Contents

	Letters of Approbation/הסכמות	8
	In Memoriam	10
	Author's Preface	13
Overview	Protoplasm of Creation	
	I. Primacy of Content	
	II. Letters and Utterances	
	III. World, Nations, Person	16
Prologue	The All-Encompassing Aleph-Beis: From Aleph to Tav	
	Completion / Complete Blessing and Tempered Curse / Consolation Amid Tragedy / Confession and Total Regret / Full Range of Praise / Power of the Aleph-Beis / The Letters and a Philosophy of Life	33
	Table of Scripts and Numeric Values	42
	God's Oneness and Mastery	
	Divinity (king of the letters) / Might / God, Torah and Israel are One / Adam / Abraham / From Aleph to Eleph to Aluph / Humility / Purity in Learning / Call to Teshuvah / Link between Heaven and Earth	43
	Blessing and Creation; Duality and Plurality	
	Two Torahs: Written and Oral / Two Tablets / Commandments and Prohibitions / Two Leaders: Moses and Aaron / Two Genders: Adam and Eve / Two Drives: Two Hearts (בְּחִירָה, free choice) / Two Worlds: This World and the World to Come / Reishis is Torah, Israel, Challah / Understanding / Differentiation / Bayis (house): a focal point / Holy Temple / Bayis denotes Wife / Hospitality / Oneness and Multiplicity	55
	Kindness and Culmination	
	Three Pillars: Torah, Worship and Kind Deeds / God's overflowing Chessed / Torah Begins and Ends with Chessed / Abraham Emulates God's Chessed / Brotherly Kindness / Blending of Contrasts / The Three Partners / Set of Three / Three Divine Gifts	71
	Dimensions and Concern	
	Four Dimensions and Spiritual Stages / Defining לָךְ / Lesson of the Letters / Discretion and Tact / Charity vs. Chessed / Chessed with Hand and Heart / Rich and Poor Benefit Equally / Wealth and Contentment of the Benefactor	78



Divinity, Gentility and Specificity

This World is Imbued with the Divine / Large and Small ה / Abram becomes Abraham / Repentance and Mercy / Hashem Manifested in Silence / The Missing ה / Five Apertures (Priestly Blessing) / Femininity / The Weaker Arm (tefillin) / Two New Songs / The Definite Article / Name of God

85



Completion, Redemption and Transformation

Guarantor of Redemption / Conjunction and Continuity / Conversive Vav / From Anguish to Gladness and Vice Versa / The Many Meanings of Vav / Complete or Defective Spellings / Purim / Broken Vav

94



Spirit, Sustenance and Struggle

Seven is the Focal Point / Sustenance and Struggle / Armament: Measures of Self Defense / The Seventh Day / Provider of Sustenance / Sabbath and Israel / Sabbath and the World to Come / Enjoyment on the Sabbath

104



Transcendence, Divine Grace and Life

Grace / Life / Sin / Structure and Symbolism / Interchangeable Letters

112



Goodness

The Objective Good / Repentance / Man's Goodness and Humility / Diminished and Enlarged ו / Divorce

118



Creation and the Metaphysical

Humility / Inheritance of Torah / Fundamental Unit (the decimal system) / Allusions to God and Israel / Prayer / Deleted and Added י / י For Emphasis / As Spokesman

125



Crowning Accomplishment

Three Crowns / Name of Objects / For Like (comparison) / End ך; Suffix of Possession / Small כ

133



Teaching and Purpose

Man's Learning and Teaching / Purpose and Transition / God the Master Teacher / Learning with Heart / Great ל and Small ל

138



Revealed and Concealed; Moses and Messiah

Omnipresent / Where God Resides / Teaching the Revealed / Moses and the Messiah / מ of History / Significance of 40

143



Faithfulness, Soul and Emergence

God is Faithful / Serving God in Two Ways / נשמה, soul, and נר, Candle / Perpetuation / Fruitfulness / Downfall and Simultaneous Salvation / Inverted נ

151



Support, Protection and Memory

Support and Enclosure / Creation of the Woman / ס Stands for סימנים / Mathematical Devices / Gematriaos / א"ת ב"ש Alphabetic System / Acronyms (initials) / Allusions

159



Sight and Insight

Reflection of the Universe / Man's Personality / Tempted Eye / Primeval Light / Eyes of God / Seventy Denotes Spirituality / Wine Reveals One's Innermost Self / Allegorical Reflections on the Shape of ך / Esau / Rich Man, Poor Man / Support of Fellow Man

171



Speech and Silence

Man's Essence / A Time for Silence and a Time for Speech / Consistency of Mouth and Heart / Moses / Crucial Words / Seeing before Speaking / Kabbalah / Healing

180



Righteousness and Humility

Righteousness: Divine and Human / Roads to Righteousness / Humility / The Tzaddik in both Worlds

189



Holiness and Growth Cycles

God's Holiness / Man's Holiness / Abstinence and Control / Hakafah Cycles / Sacrifices / Monkey

194



Choosing Between Greatness and Degradation

Wicked / Anyone can Return / Heroic Penitent / Another Path to Repentance / God's Receptiveness / The Head / Erroneously Applied to Idols / The Passageway between Heaven and Earth

199



Divine Power and Script; but also Corruption

Mastery and Peace / Prayerful ן / Symbolism of its three heads / the Rainbow / Two Kinds of ן; Two Kinds of Script / Falsehood / ן, Shin — ן, Sin / Enlarged ן

207



Truth and Perfection

Distant Neighbors / Truth is Life / God's Seal / Truth from the Start / Creations Depends on Truth / The Mark of Man's Final Destination / Perfection / Esther, the Last of the Twenty-two Saintly Women.

214

Epilogue

A Return to Origin: From Tav to Aleph

Universal Cycle of Return / Spiritual Cycle in the Universe / Faith in Providence / Continuous Cycle of Generations / Cycles in Religious Customs / תשר"ק: Celestial Order of the Holy Letters

221

Appendix

The Ksav Ashuris Script used in Torah Scrolls

Three Tannaitic Opinions / The Solution According to Mar Zutra / A Novel Solution

232

Index

Scriptural Verses/Subject

237