

## EXERCISES

### Based on Avraham Abulafia's commentary on Sefer Yetzilah

#### **On waking up in the morning:**

Before morning prayers, sit on a chair or on the floor with a straight back.

Your mind is blank, eyes staring out in front at your closed lids.

You will see white and black clouds or patterns or flashes like the chaos of creation.

Cleanse your mind as you cleanse your body.

Breathe in deeply from the depths of your stomach counting five,

and out slowly counting five --altogether, ten Divine breaths enter your body.

Repeat the series of ten breaths, making each breath account for one Sefira.

Say the name of each Sefira out loud,

starting with Keter at the top of your skull and work down to Malchut at the feet.

You will, one by one, apply each Sefira to yourself.

Examine yourself.

"Turn it over and over for everything about you is in it."

#### **(Repeat these in the afternoon, before the Mincha prayer.)**

You will consider how you are acting on the issues of the day so far.

Which Sefira or Sefirot need to be emphasized or minimized.

#### **(Repeat this exercise in the evening, before the Maariv prayer.)**

You will consider which Sefirot you have used well this past day and which you have not.

*(You may also try to look at the other person or persons you will be encountering in whatever context and try to analyze their Sefirot to see which ones are being used more effectively than others.)*

*This process need take no more than five minutes. But you may choose to spend longer. Some mystics advised an hour at the start of each day. (Things were more leisurely then.) –JR)*

### **The Three Mothers. Sefer Yetzilah (2.1 and 3.1)**

Aleph is air, it travels up and down the centre of your body.

Mem is Good and Shin is Evil.

Mem is the right hand and Shin is the left.

Hold the palms out.

Mem is the right and Shin is the left.

Breathe in and out.

Balance the power of Evil against the power of Good.

Five Sefirot on the Right.

Five Sefirot on the Left.

Breathe in and out.

Cleanse the body, clear the Mind.

And fly to Heaven.

**Extension and Space**  
**Sefer Yetzilah (1.13)**

**Stand with naked feet on the floor, facing Jerusalem**

**Rom--Upward direction.**

Raise your arms up above your head  
with the palms facing each other a span apart.  
Between your palms you are feeling the warmth of the air.  
This is the Universe.  
You are reaching beyond the Universe to Ein Sof.  
Reach as you repeat the ten names of the Sefirot.  
Bring your arms down to the side of your body.

**Tachat--Downward direction.**

Bend over at the waist and lower your hands,  
a span apart, down to touch the earth.  
Feel the earth.  
You are reaching down into the world of The Shechina.  
Reach as you repeat the ten names of the Sefirot.

**Mizrach. Eastward.**

Turn the torso towards the east and reach forward  
with your arms outstretched a span a part.  
Return to the front facing position and repeat ten times.

**Maarav--Westward.**

Turn the torso towards the west and reach forward  
with your arms outstretched a span a part.  
Return to the front facing position and repeat ten times.

**Darom--Southward.**

Turn the torso towards the south and reach forward  
with your arms outstretched a span a part.  
Return to the front facing position and repeat ten times.

**Tsafon--Northward.**

Turn the torso towards the north and reach forward  
with your arms outstretched a span a part.  
Return to the front facing position and repeat ten times.

*(An alternative is to simply bend the torso in each direction keeping your hands on you hips. –JR)*

**Breathing and envisioning the Alphabet  
(Sefer Yetzirah 2.1, 3.1)**

**Stand or sit facing Jerusalem.**

Eyes shut.

Back upright, upper arms pressed to body,  
lower arms extended and palms upwards.

Imagine you are weighing the positive force  
in the right palm and the negative in the left.

Ten slow deep breaths from the stomach upwards and out

Repeat focusing on each letter of the Hebrew Alphabet during each breath.

Picture its image.

Hold the breath.

Let it move towards you.

Hold it in place and then let it recede.

**Breathing and balance--**

**Stand facing Jerusalem.**

Stand, back upright, upper arms pressed to body,  
lower arms extended and palms upwards.

Raise right foot to place on left calf and hold it there for ten breaths.

Lower and pause for ten breaths.

Raise left foot to place on left calf for ten breaths.

Lower and rest for ten breaths.

**Head and Eye movements  
Sefer Yetzirah (1.11)**

**Standing or sitting, face Jerusalem.**

Revolve your head clockwise from your left shoulder to your right five times.

Revolve your head clockwise from your left shoulder to your right five times.

Raise your head.

Move your head round from your left shoulder to your right, five times.

Move your head round from your right shoulder to your left, five times.

Look ahead.

Revolve your eyes clockwise from left to right five times.

Revolve your eyes anti-clockwise from right to left five times.

You are following the courses of the Holy Spirit as it moves through the Universe.

During each circle you must think of each of the 22 basic Hebrew letters.

And also in the Shema prayer at night and in the morning.

You must revolve your head in a circle whenever you say "God".

You must revolve your eyes in a circle whenever you say "One".

Thus both the head and eye movements encompass the universe.

**The Five Movements of transformation.  
Sefer Yetzirah (2.2)**

**(Chakak--Engraved)**

Standing upright with arms at your side raise both arms above your head with palms facing and thumbs out, and lower them, repeat ten times.

**(Chatzav--Cut)**

Raise arms above your head and with fingers together imitate a chop downwards and repeat ten times.

**(Tsaraf--Welded)**

Arms stretched out in front you, pull them back as far as you can go and bring them together, ten times.

**(Shakal--Weighed)**

Arms lowered with the palms open and facing forward. Raise arms up to chest level and lower ten times.

**(Hemir--Exchanged)**

With arms outstretched to your sides and fists clenched, cross them over to the opposite shoulder. Repeat ten times.

**231 Gates.  
Sefer Yetzirah (2.4 &5)**

**Sit or stand facing Jerusalem.**

Envision a circle of gates and within each circle is a letter of the Hebrew alphabet starting with Aleph.

Envision another circle within it.

Within it each gate contains a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, starting with Bet.

Revolve the Aleph gate round to align with the Bet, then with the GimmeI, until the circle has been completed.

Then repeat with the Bet.

Continue until you have repeated the whole sequence.

*(Some mystics, perhaps under the influence of Sufism, revolve their bodies with each combination. –JR)*

**NB**

Somewhere in the sequences, several combinations will strike you as more powerful than others or will remain in your memory. Write these down and then reduce your revolutions to those. You may find in the end you are left with only one combination. This will be your personal letter combination for mystical meditation.

**Prostration in Worship (Keidah)**

This is the way the High Priest lay before the Holy of Holies.

He lay flat on his face from west to east.

His arms were stretched forward above his head facing north and south.

His body makes the letter Aleph, One, before God.