

# JEWISH STUDIES

犹太研究

第22辑

## The Three *Sefer* in Jewish Mystical Text *Sefer Yetzirah*

SHI Xinwen

**Abstract:** *Sefer Yetzirah* is the oldest known Hebrew text on Jewish mysticism, describing God's process of creating the universe through the twenty-two Hebrew letters and the ten "Sefirot", explaining the origin of many elements in the Book of Genesis. *Sefer Yetzirah* has many editions. Its language style is concise, while maintaining the ambiguity of sacred text. A representative example is the three homonymous words *sefer* at the beginning of the text, without any vowel marks to indicate their meanings and without any further explanations in the following text. Moreover, the diversity of editions makes the word's meaning more complicated and confusing. The word's key position in the whole text determines its importance, the interpretation towards it should be based on the overall context, while the openness to various interpretations displayed in *Sefer Yetzirah* allows each translator to understand the text from different perspectives and interpret the three *sefer* in different ways. Every translator's interpretation is unique, which would in turn affect more readers.

**Key Words:** Religious Text, Translation, Jewish Mysticism, *Sefer Yetzirah*