PARDES RIMMONIM

ORCHARD OF POMEGRANATES

COMPLETE TEXT



MOSES CORDOVERO

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PARDES RIMMONIM

(Orchard of Pomegranates)

Moses Cordovero

Moses ben Jacob Cordovero

English Translation

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Translator's Introduction.

The *Pardes Rimonim* (The Orchard of the Pomegranates), written by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero in the sixteenth century, is one of the most important works of Kabbalah, an esoteric branch of Judaism that seeks to unravel the hidden secrets of the universe and God. Cordovero was one of the greatest Kabbalists of his generation, and his writings represent a milestone in the organization and systematization of Kabbalistic teachings. Pardes *Rimonim* explores the nature of the **sefirot** (the 10 divine attributes), the creation of the universe, and the mystical relationships between the Divine and the material world.

This book is a masterpiece of spiritual introspection and mysticism, grounded in a profound Jewish wisdom. Its value to the Kabbalistic world is incomparable, as it systematizes and organizes the teachings of generations of Kabbalists who preceded it. Over the years, *Pardes Rimonim* has been widely studied by serious students of Kabbalah, and is an essential text for anyone interested in understanding the depth of the spiritual mysteries that shape the esoteric tradition of Judaism.

Strengths of the Work

Systematization of Kabbalistic Thought: Cordovero organizes the esoteric traditions of Kabbalah into a cohesive system, making mystical concepts more accessible to scholars. His presentation of the sefirot and other fundamental concepts provides a structured framework that facilitates in-depth study.

Rich Metaphorical Language: The work is known for the richness of its metaphors and symbolisms, which create a bridge between the spiritual and the material. The analogies and poetic imagery employed by Cordovero allow the reader to explore Kabbalistic ideas on multiple levels of meaning.

Timeless Relevance: Although written in the sixteenth century, the *Pardes Rimonim* remains a source of inspiration for students and mystics to this day. His approach to the concepts of unity, emanation, and creation continues to influence contemporary spiritual thought.

The Value of the Work in the Kabbalistic World

Pardes *Rimonim* stands as a central text in the tradition of Lurianic Kabbalah and throughout the Kabbalistic movement of Safed. It synthesizes the teachings of figures such as **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai**, the author of the **Zohar**, and other foundational texts of Jewish mysticism. The book offers a detailed exploration of the concepts of **divine emanation**, **cosmic creativity**, and **spiritual connection** between the human and the divine, serving as an indispensable guide for any serious seeker of esoteric knowledge.

This text is more than an intellectual treatise; It is a spiritual journey. Kabbalah is known to be an occult discipline and often difficult to access, but Cordovero opens its doors through methodical and clear reasoning, allowing the reader to explore the secrets of God and Creation in a structured and inspiring way.

Translation: Purpose and Quality

The English translation of *Pardes Rimonim* aims to make this mystical work accessible to a wider audience, especially those who are not fluent in Hebrew but who wish to delve into the deep mysteries of Kabbalah. The translation, by preserving the original structure, ensures that the reader has an experience as close as possible to the Hebrew text.

Positive Points of Translation:

Fidelity to the Original Text: The translation respects the organization of the gates and chapters, maintaining the sequence of thoughts and ideas as they were presented by Cordovero.

Clarity of Concepts: Essential Kabbalistic concepts, such as the **sefirot**, are explained in an understandable manner, making the work accessible to a wider audience without sacrificing its spiritual depth.

Accessibility for Modern Students: The translation makes Pardes *Rimonim* more accessible to contemporary students and mystics, providing a valuable entry point into the study of Kabbalah.

Points to Improve in Translation:

Loss of Mystical Nuances: As with any translation, certain nuances of the original Hebrew, particularly with regard to esoteric terms, may not be completely captured in English. The deep spiritual meaning of some Kabbalistic words is difficult to translate exactly.

Lack of Explanatory Notes: Although the translation is clear, we do not add notes, we will do so in a new work, aimed at this objective, which adequately meets the demand for all the translated material.

Purpose of the Translation

The main goal of translation is to democratize access to one of the most influential texts of Kabbalah. While the study of Hebrew is recommended for deeper understanding, this translation provides a solid foundation for serious students seeking to explore Jewish mysticism without the hindrance of language. It allows the reader to not only understand the basic concepts of Kabbalah, but also to experience the spiritual depth that Cordovero infused into his work.

The *Pardes Rimonim* is a monumental work in the field of Kabbalah and remains essential for those seeking to understand the mysteries of the universe and the soul through a spiritual lens. The English translation offers an accessible path for those who wish to delve deeper into these teachings without prior knowledge of Hebrew.

While some esoteric nuances may get lost in translation, the value of this version is invaluable for those who want a serious and structured introduction to Kabbalah. This translation offers the reader a valuable guide to spiritual study while maintaining the integrity and complexity of the original text.

Elizeu Antonio de Souza
Araçatuba 01/10/2024

Dedication

To my beloved son, Benjamin A.C. Moreira,

May this book be a light that guides your steps through life, bringing wisdom, understanding, and strength. May it lead you on a journey of deep learning and connection with the mysteries that shape our world. Just as Moshe Cordovero teaches us, may you see beyond appearances, exploring the secrets of creation and the hidden wonders of the soul.

I wish that your education will be full of enriching discoveries and that your path will always be illuminated by truth. May your health and well-being always be strengthened by the wisdom that emanates from the words of the Torah and the Kabbalistic secrets.

As it is written in Cordovero's teachings:

"This is God's camp. The generation of those who seek Him will rejoice in His works, like a dance of two companies. Our eyes saw and were amazed [at these teachings] rising from the earth to plant the heavens. As the sun rises at noon, a bright light is upon them. The opening of his words gives light and shines in a divine vision to those who are sanctified in the treasury of the secrets of the Torah, which is organized and guarded from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards [and] covered with sapphires."

May this blessing accompany all your days and may you rejoice in the works of the Creator, finding joy and meaning in the eternal dance of life.

With all my love and hope for your future,

Elizeu A. Souza

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Author's Preface

The young Moshe, son of Rabbi Yaakov Cordovero, reflects: "As I observe the days of my youth slipping away, wasted in the pursuit of fleeting desires, leaving behind no hope. When I reached the age of twenty and the first signs of maturity began to show, my Creator stirred me from my slumber, as one is awakened from sleep, and I said to my soul: 'How long will you, wayward child, continue to evade the truth? How long will you remain intoxicated? Remove the wine from before you. How long will sinful thoughts dwell within you, making you forget the Lord, your Creator, who formed you in the womb? Now, rise and call upon your God. Devote yourself to His service daily, and repair the altar of the Lord that lies in ruins.'"

Hearing this call, my soul responded: "Let me rise and wander through the streets and marketplaces of the city, seeking a place where I might find peace and fulfillment." And then I heard a voice, the voice of a heavenly messenger, my teacher and mentor, the divine Kabbalist, the wise Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz Halevi, may his light shine brightly. He brought me into the chambers of his wisdom, and he said to me: "My son, let my words guide your heart. Incline your ear and listen to the words of the wise." He placed me at the threshold of wisdom and understanding, which is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. Its teachings are subtle and profound, concealed in the mysteries of the Torah. The words in my mouth were like sweet honey, and I diligently attended his school, listening to his teachings. He inspired me to study the ways of the Zohar and provided me with the keys to unlock its gates.

With newfound strength, I immersed myself in these studies, day after day, and marveled at the beauty of the wisdom revealed to me. How pleasant it is to engage in this sacred work! For many days I became a disciple of this wisdom, intoxicated by its love. It nourished me constantly, at every moment, until it became unforgettable to me.

As I came to fulfill my vows, I placed before me the entire collection of sacred writings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, may peace be upon him. I pondered them deeply, feeling as though I were adrift in the middle of the sea, like one lost at the top of a mast, confused by the vastness of the teachings. I then said to myself: "I will take up the pen of a scribe and arrange these teachings, one by one, in their proper order, to give my mind space to comprehend each section separately." When my heart was strengthened by one teaching, I would move on to the next. And when I saw that my method was sound and aligned with divine guidance, I unrolled the scroll before me, intending it to serve as a reminder and a guide for the structure of these teachings.

I called this work *Pardes Rimonim* (The Orchard of Pomegranates) for specific reasons. First, because this wisdom, the wisdom of Kabbalah, is traditionally referred to as "Pardes" (Orchard), as is well known. Second, because this scroll would be a source of delight for my soul in this world and in the world to come, sustaining me throughout my years, as an orchard I have planted to find joy within.

It is like an orchard of pomegranates, for its sections are like the trees planted within it, and its chapters are like the fruit, arranged side by side, not one or two, but filled to the brim like the seeds of a pomegranate. Thus, it is fitting to name it *Pardes Rimonim*. We

have divided the scroll into thirty-two sections, and each section is referred to as a "gate," for they are gates that lead one into the innermost secrets of the Torah.

Furthermore, we divided the gates into chapters, some short and some long, depending on the content and depth of each chapter. We ask the reader not to enter through these gates unless they have been entrusted with the keys and know the ways to unlock them, for otherwise, they may suffer harm instead of benefit. But for those who have been granted the keys, they will open many gates of wisdom, and we trust that our work will lead to the discovery of many new insights.

Let the reader not expect us to explain the same concept twice, as this would lengthen the work unnecessarily. Therefore, do not move on from one chapter until you have fully understood what is necessary for your comprehension, as we will rely on what has already been written in the previous chapters. Similarly, do not shift from one gate to another until you have mastered its content. Then you may proceed confidently without fear. Nevertheless, we will not withhold further explanations where necessary, as we have written in certain places or will write in others. These are the names of the gates, each marked by its lettered banner...

Request:

"Distribute, for he gives to the needy, for they spread their fountains to quench the thirst of those who seek and those who know and are proficient in them properly, serving the Lord with all their heart. Of such a one it is said, ‘There is one who scatters and yet increases more.’ Indeed, there is a gate that has been closed, and we have no desire to open it at all; this is in the context of Sabbatical and Jubilee years. The reason for this is our fear of ascending the mountain, and even of touching its edge, because dealing with this matter touches upon the roots of faith. Not only that, but we have not found in the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, anything to quench our thirst. And if, being the master of Kabbalah and the father of secrets, he wished to conceal his secret, who can come after the king to open the gates of his treasures without his permission?

There is another gate, the gate of reincarnation, concerning which Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, spoke, revealing a little and concealing much more. Yet, in these thirty-two topics, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, dealt extensively with matters from the Zohar, from the Tikkunim, Ra’aya Mehemna, Yanuka and Saba, the commandments, and other precious teachings that have been preserved with us, as well as in the words of the Sefer HaBahir, Sefer Yetzirah, and other commentaries. From the finest plants of these gardens, this orchard was planted. Let not the reader think that I seek to destroy the boundaries of the garden that has been planted, for the primary sources are the words of the saints mentioned above. Especially in most of the gate of the values of appellations, there is no addition as thin as a garlic peel, and in the other gates, nothing has been said that does not derive from the words of the saints.

And if the reader wishes to dispute, before doing so, he must first correct and reconcile the words of the holy ones, and only then may he follow his heart's desire. Our tongue is not as an iron pen to engrave in his mind what he does not wish to accept, God forbid, for we are not worthy to say, 'Accept our opinion.' Rather, it is he, not we, who has the right to bring truth to light. Let him review the words once, twice, and thrice, and seek to justify them. If he does so, he may attribute the issue to the possibility that he forgot some aspect of the matter in which he stumbled and failed to grasp. Only after toiling and not finding the words as they are, will it be good and pleasant if he reveals the hidden wisdom. For we know that there is a double portion of wisdom for each of our generation, for we are young in days, and we have already endured scorn and bitterness from the youths of our generation. For the hand of the Lord is upon us, and the straps of poverty hang like the walls of our house, as is known to all who enter our gates, and the burdens and millstones hanging around our necks deceive us. It is not hidden from us that everyone has a share in wisdom. And if we have breached a boundary by entering his portion, God will forgive, and He will inform us, and crowns will be upon his head to adorn us, and his words will be a guard for us, so that we do not deviate from what he tells us, to the right or the left.

Moreover, it is required of the reader that it is not appropriate to approach the holy at any time until one has purified one's thoughts from the vanities of time and its schemes, and cleansed his head of pride, for it is a shell that prevents its bearer from entering to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in this temple of wisdom. One must humble oneself like dust before every person, hear his disgrace and rejoice in affliction, and not study the wisdom of the Torah to boast, especially the study of this wisdom, for if he does, it will

consume him until destruction, as stated by our sages of blessed memory in the Midrash Bereshit Rabba, Rabbi Huna, in the name of Bar Kappara: 'Let the lips of falsehood be silenced, etc.' They shall be plucked out, silenced, muted, silenced as it says, 'Who makes the mute, or the deaf?' And it says, 'Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field.' They shall be silenced, as it is said, for speaking arrogantly about the righteous, the living God, words that He copied from His creations in arrogance, I wonder! Simply to boast and say, 'I expound on the work of Creation!' Arrogance, I wonder! Disrespect for His honor, as Rabbi Yossi bar Hanina said, 'Whoever gains honor by shaming another has no share in the World to Come, all the more so with regard to the honor of the place, etc.' End of quotation.

Therefore, one must conduct oneself with humility until the time comes when he sees himself fit, and then he may enter the sanctuary of the Lord. And it is fitting for everyone who enters the gates of the garden of wisdom to offer a prayer that his steps be guided rightly, and his path be made straight, so that he does not stumble, nor stray from the truth, neither to the right nor to the left.

And this is a beautiful prayer for anyone who enters the inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies, with God's help:

'O He who dwells in the heights and oversees the lower realms, Lord of all the emanations, singular and unique, one, king, awesome, who emanates all that is emanated, creates all that is created, forms all that is formed, and makes all that is made. Who can attain even one in a thousand thousands and myriad myriads of the greatness of the exalted hidden mysteries of Your deeds, let alone the greatness of Your creations? And who can think to know even one of a thousand thousands and myriad myriads of the hidden secrets concealed within Your creation, let alone and all the more so to attain even a fraction of a fraction of the portion of a portion of a thousand thousands and myriad myriads of Your emanations? You are the singular Master, there is no second, who unites with them in perfect unity. Therefore, O Lord my God, open my eyes that I may behold wonders from Your Torah, forgive and pardon, and pass over all my sins, iniquities, and transgressions, that I have sinned, erred, and transgressed before You from the day I was on the earth until this day. For I am not brazen and stiff-necked to say before the Lord my God and the God of my fathers, ‘I am righteous and have not sinned,’ but rather I have sinned, erred, and transgressed, I and my 248 limbs and 365 sinews, and my soul, spirit, and breath, and all that is revealed with me. We have all strayed like sheep without a shepherd, and we have ruined what we cannot repair, if not for the abundant flow that comes from above, from the exalted order of the channels. You who know my faults, rectify what I have corrupted, and grant me the light of Your Torah. Guard me from errors, and let Your generous spirit support me. Teach me the way of Your truth, and reveal to me the pleasantness of the secrets of Your Torah, so that I may learn and teach, observe and perform. Amen, and amen, Selah and forever. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.' Thus ends the language of the prayer."

Gate 1

Chapter 1

The first gate, called "Ten and Not Nine":

It is well-known and widely accepted that regarding the number of the Sefirot, all who engage in this hidden wisdom agree unanimously that there are ten, and there is no dispute at all regarding this. This is one of the matters in which a covenant has been established within the wisdom of the Sefirot. We have with us the Sefer Yetzirah, which is attributed to our father Abraham, peace be upon him. Some also attribute it to Rabbi Akiva, though this is not universally agreed upon.

The words of this book are deep, elevated, and hidden from the intellectual eyes of its examiners. Even though there are many different interpretations, we still require more understanding for every section. Nevertheless, we will attempt to explain its words to the best of our limited understanding.

The text reads: "Ten Sefirot of nothingness, counted as ten fingers, five corresponding to five, and a single covenant is directed in the middle by the word of the tongue and the word of the foreskin."

While we had initially thought not to explain this Mishnah due to the depth and secrets concealed in it—certainly beyond our understanding, and no one can fully grasp the depth of its language except for Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, and Rabbi Akiva, peace be upon him—we feel compelled by duty to interpret it with all the strength we have.

There are several points to scrutinize: Firstly, the phrase "Ten Sefirot of nothingness, counted" seems superfluous. It would have been enough to say, "Ten Sefirot of nothingness, corresponding to the fingers. Why mention 'counted'?" Secondly, why mention five? Third, according to this text, it seems there are eleven Sefirot, as it says "five corresponding to five, and the covenant in the middle," making it eleven. Fourth, why mention "by the word of the tongue" and "by the word of the foreskin"? What do these two mediators mean? Fifth, what is the intention in telling us that the Sefirot correspond to the fingers? It does not seem to relate to the subject at hand.

In addressing these questions, we say that the author of this book intended to conceal the entire wisdom of the Sefirot in this passage while also affirming its truth. He stated that there are ten Sefirot. Since saying "ten" implies some level of limitation and corporeality due to the division into a number, he added the term "of nothingness" (בלי מה, 'Bli Ma'), meaning "without substance." The meaning of "nothingness" (בלי מה) is "without essence." Though we speak of them as ten, in truth, the faith is that they are without essence, beyond human comprehension. They are neither limited nor graspable, as they are free of both boundaries and corporeality. And whatever is not physical cannot be comprehended except through the heart of those wise among the people of Israel, as in prophecy.

The reasoning behind counting them as ten will be explained in the following chapters, God willing. He mentioned "counted as ten" to emphasize that, despite our limited understanding, they truly exist as a number. The term "Sefirot" comes from the word for number, indicating that they are counted as such, even though they are without substance. The proof of this is their name, "Sefirot," which is derived from the concept of numbering, as we have explained.

To affirm that they are a number, and that their number is ten, he said, "counted as ten fingers." The verse says, "When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers" (Psalms 8:4). From this verse, it is derived that the creation of the heavens and their hosts was done through the fingers, which symbolize the Sefirot of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. Since the fingers are ten, it follows that the Sefirot through which the world was created are also ten.

"Five corresponding to five"—the author encountered a problem, as the verse says, "My hand also laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand spanned the heavens" (Isaiah 48:13). This implies that the heavens were created by the hand of God, which includes five fingers—thus, only five Sefirot were involved, not ten. To resolve this, he said, "Five corresponding to five," indicating that just as the heavens are the work of God's right hand, and the earth is the work of God's left hand, together they form ten. This is what is meant by "Five corresponding to five"—five on the right and five on the left, with the right creating the heavens and the left creating the earth.

"A single covenant directed in the middle"—this phrase addresses the possibility of interpreting the Sefirot as either five or twenty (counting both the fingers of the hands and feet). To clarify, the ten fingers of the feet are a reflection and garment for the ten fingers of the hands. Hence, even though we see them as ten fingers of the feet, they are only a reflection of the ten Sefirot above, just as the Sefirot of creation are a reflection of the ten Sefirot of Atzilut. Thus, we conclude that there are always five Sefirot, with the left side being a reflection of the right.

Chapter 2

We will further explain this Mishnah with an additional interpretation that the commentators have offered regarding "five corresponding to five," which is more fitting and accepted. This explanation aligns with many teachings of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (peace be upon him) in numerous places. The matter refers to five on the right and five on the left. The five on the right represent five Sefirot that tend mostly toward the side of kindness, which is the right side: Keter (Crown), Chokhmah (Wisdom), Gedulah (Greatness), Netzach (Eternity), and Tiferet (Beauty). The five on the left represent five Sefirot that tend toward judgment, which is the left side: Binah (Understanding), Gevurah (Strength), Hod (Glory), Yesod (Foundation), and Malkhut (Kingship).

Even though Tiferet is primarily in the middle column, it fundamentally leans toward kindness, as is known, and it inclines toward the right. Binah, in its essence, is associated with judgment, as it is called the source of judgments because from it, judgments emerge, as we will explain in Gate of Essence and Guidance, chapter six.

Likewise, Hod is associated with judgment, as it is written: "And my beauty was turned upon me into corruption" (Daniel 10:8), and "all day long is grief" (Lamentations 1:13), where "grief" (דוה) shares the letters of "Hod" (הוד). Yesod (Foundation) also leans primarily toward the side of Gevurah (judgment). Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (peace be upon him) explained this in the *Tikkunei Zohar* (Tikkun 13, 29b), stating, "The Righteous takes from the left, and the middle column takes from the right." He further clarified in another part of the *Tikkunei Zohar* (125a), saying, "The Righteous takes from the left, which is Isaac, the 'end of life,' tied to the left," etc. Even though this language requires deeper interpretation and careful study, the overall message is that Yesod inclines primarily to the left, unlike Tiferet.

This may explain the reason for the two mediators (intermediary forces) beyond other reasons, as we will explain in Gate of the Mediators, chapter four, God willing. Additionally, Malkhut is fundamentally judgment, as it is commonly known among all Kabbalists, who refer to it as the Attribute of Soft Judgment. Even though some places may seem to argue against this concept, these teachings are foundational and firmly established, as the truth of the judgment is absolute.

These Sefirot, in their order, form two hands: the right hand consists of Keter, Chokhmah, Gedulah, Netzach, and Tiferet, while the left hand consists of Binah, Gevurah, Hod, Yesod, and Malkhut. Tiferet is the "covenant of the tongue," which mediates between judgment and kindness, as is known, and is included within the number ten itself. Similarly, the covenant of circumcision (associated with the male organ) primarily corresponds to Yesod, but also hints at Tiferet, since the body and the covenant are considered one, as explained by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (peace be upon him) in *Tikkunim* on numerous occasions. Thus, we find that between ten and ten, there is no mediation, as there is between five and five, as explained above in chapter one. This concludes the second interpretation of this Mishnah, based on what the commentators have explained about "five corresponding to five."

We will now offer a third interpretation of this Mishnah, from another perspective on "five corresponding to five," as it appears to us, though each reader can choose the explanation that resonates with them. In this interpretation, "five corresponding to five" does not refer to the fingers mentioned earlier. Instead, it shifts away from discussing the number ten and begins to explain the mediation between judgment and kindness, and the order of mediation and the elements requiring mediation. Therefore, the Mishnah says that "five correspond to five" because Tiferet mediates between Chokhmah and Binah in the secret of Daat (knowledge) as it ascends to Keter, as we will elaborate in Gate of the Mediators, God willing. Thus, one (Chokhmah) stands opposite the other (Binah)—Chokhmah being the root of kindness, and Binah being the root of judgment.

Tiferet further mediates between Gedulah (Kindness) and Gevurah (Judgment), as is known, and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (peace be upon him) explained this in the *Tikkunei Zohar* (Tikkun 30, 75a) on the verse, "And it was evening, and it was morning" (Genesis 1:5), as follows: "And God called the firmament heaven. 'God' refers to the higher Mother (Binah), 'the firmament' refers to Tiferet, which is between the right and left and includes both, as it is written: 'And it was evening (Isaac) and it was morning (Abraham).'"

Although the plain meaning of this passage supports our explanation, since it has come to us, we will offer a brief clarification so it will not pass without understanding. The points to analyze are as follows:

1. Why did Rabbi Shimon say, "And God called the firmament," where "God" refers to Binah, when it is already known that every mention of "God" (Elohim) in the creation narrative refers to Binah?
2. Why did he use the term "Mother" (Ima) instead of the more common name "Binah"?
3. Why, after saying "the middle column," did he clarify that it is between right and left? Isn't it clear that the middle column is between the right (Gedulah) and left (Gevurah)? Why the need for additional explanation?
4. When descending to explain that it is between right and left, why not say "Tiferet" directly instead of repeating "middle column" redundantly?
5. Why the apparent repetition in saying, "it is between right and left and includes both"?
6. How does the verse, "And it was evening, and it was morning," serve as proof of this idea?

We say that Rabbi Shimon, peace be upon him, was troubled by the verse, "And God called the firmament heaven" (Genesis 1:8), since "firmament" refers to Tiferet, and "heaven" also refers to Tiferet. Therefore, what does the verse mean by saying, "And God called the firmament heaven," as if implying that firmament and heaven are not the same thing? To this, he responds, saying that "God" refers to the higher Mother (Binah). That is to say, every mention of "God" in Genesis refers to Binah, which is responsible for influencing and emanating to the lower realms, earning the title of "Mother." Thus, the verse refers to Tiferet as the "firmament" and heaven as something encompassing it.

Tiferet has two aspects. One aspect is from Chokhmah, which is the higher quality, related to the secret of the line of mercy that emanates from Keter and extends into Chokhmah, as explained in the Gate of Emanation, God willing. This aspect corresponds to the existence of Moses as its chariot, as explained in *Tikkunei Zohar* (Tikkun 13, 29a). Therefore, the first aspect of Tiferet, in relation to Chokhmah, represents pure mercy without any mixture of kindness or judgment. This aspect is referred to as "Rakia" (firmament), as it originates from Chokhmah.

Chapter 3

Tiferet also mediates between Chesed (Greatness) and Hod (Glory), as well as between Gevurah (Strength) and Netzach (Eternity). The reason is that Chesed and Netzach are on the right side, representing kindness, while Gevurah and Hod are on the left side, representing judgment, and thus they require mediation. This idea has some support in the words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, peace be upon him, in the Zohar (*Ra'aya Mehemna*, Pinchas 244b), where it states:

"In the first composition, my teacher combined myrrh with spices, the right arm with the left thigh. He combined my honey with my sweetness—Yaakov with Rachel. He combined my wine with my milk—the left arm with the right thigh. Chesed (Kindness)

with Hod (Glory), the right arm with the left thigh, Yaakov with Rachel, the middle column with Malchut (Kingship). Gevurah (Strength) with Netzach (Eternity), the left arm with the right thigh. Why are his attributes arranged in this manner? There is a secret here. David said, 'Your priests will be clothed in righteousness, and your pious ones will rejoice' (Psalms 132:9). And it says there, 'And the Levites will rejoice' should have been stated, but God said, 'It is not proper to change My attributes. Rather, after you invite Me, I must fulfill your will.' From here we learn that if the master of the house invites even the king, the king should fulfill his will, and this is why we establish the principle: 'Whatever the master of the house tells you, do it,' etc."

What we must note in this passage is the length of its language and the repetition of the concept using different words. It says, "the right arm with the left thigh, Chesed with Hod," etc., and up until now, we already knew that the two arms are Chesed (the right arm) and Gevurah (the left arm), and the two thighs are Netzach (the right thigh) and Hod (the left thigh). What was the need for this extended explanation of something so simple?

Additionally, it would have been clearer and shorter to state "my teacher combined myrrh with spices—Chesed with Hod, my honey with my sweetness—the middle column with Malchut, my wine with my milk—Gevurah with Netzach," and remain silent about the arms and thighs, as their meanings would be understood automatically.

Furthermore, the core of this passage is found in the Zohar, in *Pinchas* (241b), where it says: "In the first composition, my teacher combined myrrh with spices, the right arm with the left thigh. He combined my honey with my sweetness—Yaakov with Rachel. He combined my wine with my milk—the left arm with the right thigh." It stops there and does not extend the explanation further.

Even though the Zohar elaborates on the mediation of "myrrh" (Chesed) and "spices" (Netzach), it does not expand much more on the details of the words. We should question why this Zohar passage did not follow that simpler phrasing here.

The phrase "Yaakov with Rachel" is also noteworthy, as it does not follow the same structure used for the other Sefirot, which pairs limbs with their corresponding feminine counterpart (such as Chesed with Hod, or Gevurah with Netzach).

After Rabbi Shimon began explaining his words by saying "Chesed with Hod" and "the right arm with the left thigh," the correct order should have been to state the language as "the right arm with the left thigh," followed by "Chesed with Hod," instead of reversing the explanation as was done here.

Why does Rabbi Shimon ask, "Why are his attributes arranged this way?" What was the problem? After all, it is common for Netzach to draw from Gevurah and for Hod to draw from Chesed, even though their primary nourishment typically flows from Netzach to Chesed and from Hod to Gevurah. Occasionally, due to the mingling of energies and influences, Netzach draws from Gevurah, and Hod draws from Chesed. Therefore, each of the Sefirot includes elements from all the others so that they harmonize and act in unison. This allows even opposites, like Chesed and Gevurah, to blend.

The Zohar was perplexed by the text because it should have said, "I have gathered my myrrh and my spices; I have eaten my honey and my sweetness; I have drunk my wine and my milk." Why use the word "with" repeatedly? It seems unnecessary. The answer provided in the Zohar (Vayikra 4b) says, "Myrrh with spices" refers to Chesed with Netzach, "Honey with sweetness" refers to Gevurah with Hod, and "Wine with milk" refers to the body and the covenant.

This partially answers our question, as the word "with" was used to signify the unification of these attributes in the manner described. However, since the verse is meant to unify Chesed with Netzach, Gevurah with Hod, and Tiferet with Yesod, it would have been sufficient to leave out the repeated use of "with," since it is understood that they are unified in their natural order of three connecting to three.

To clarify further, the Zohar in *Pinchas* (241b) provides a different, more expansive interpretation: "The right arm with the left thigh" means that Chesed, though aligned with the right (kindness), is unified with Hod, though aligned with the left (judgment). Similarly, Gevurah, though aligned with the left (judgment), is unified with Netzach, which aligns with the right (kindness). Now, it is no longer perplexing why the word "with" is used repeatedly—it was necessary because this arrangement is contrary to their natural order.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai employed the language of limbs ("thighs" and "arms") rather than the names of the Sefirot because he was explaining how, in the world of Sefirot, this reversed arrangement might seem impossible. Netzach typically draws from Chesed and aligns under the right column, and Hod typically draws from Gevurah and aligns under the left column. How, then, can their roles be reversed? To illustrate this in a metaphorical way, he used the example of limbs, saying that just as the thighs and arms are connected and attached to the body, which unifies the right arm with the left thigh and the left arm with the right thigh, so too can these Sefirot be blended in such a manner through the central body, which is Tiferet.

Thus, by the power of Tiferet, which extends to the six extremities (the six Sefirot), this mixture becomes possible. This blending is indeed achievable, though it may seem counterintuitive.

Still, we are left with the question of why these attributes are arranged in this manner, as we will explain. Rabbi Shimon's use of "limbs" instead of directly naming the Sefirot points to the involvement of Tiferet, the body, as the unifier.

In conclusion, we see that Tiferet mediates between Chesed and Hod, as well as between Gevurah and Netzach.

Chapter 4

In the previous chapter, we concluded from the aforementioned teaching that Tiferet mediates between Chesed (Greatness) and Hod (Glory), as well as between Gevurah (Strength) and Netzach (Eternity). This concept might seem somewhat unusual to the listener, so we will further establish and clarify this point to demonstrate that it is neither far-fetched nor strange but rather very close to rational understanding.

It is well known that Tiferet receives from Chesed and Gevurah and transmits to Netzach and Hod. There is no doubt that the flow which Tiferet sends to Hod must contain a portion of the influence it received from Chesed, as we have already explained. Similarly, the flow Tiferet sends to Netzach must contain an element of the influence it received from Gevurah. However, the influence that Tiferet transmits to Netzach and Hod does not remain exactly as it received it from Chesed and Gevurah. Rather, the flow is balanced through Tiferet, which blends it into a more moderate mixture, harmonizing Chesed with Hod and Netzach with Gevurah.

Thus, this mediation is somewhat constant. There are times when Tiferet must receive primarily from the attribute of Gevurah to transmit to Netzach in order to implement judgment in the world, such as for the purpose of enacting retribution. At other times, Tiferet receives mostly from Gevurah to mitigate the severity of judgment. Similarly, there are times when Tiferet receives predominantly from Chesed to transmit to Hod and mitigate Hod. This mixing and similar matters are explained in the Gate of Channels, chapter 2, section 5. The principles here are clear to the understanding and logical for those who seek knowledge.

We will further expand on this topic and demonstrate the concept using the established agreement of all the great Kabbalists regarding the colors of the Sefirot. They agreed that Netzach is red, leaning towards white, and Hod is white, leaning towards red. Netzach, they explained, is red leaning towards white, meaning it is red due to its reception of the harsh judgment from Gevurah through the mediation of Tiferet, as explained earlier. Because of this judgment, it is red. However, due to its stronger connection to Chesed (which is its primary source), it tends towards white, diluting the redness and returning it to white. This is why it "leans," meaning its predominant characteristic is white.

Conversely, the opposite applies to Hod, which receives through Chesed via Tiferet and is white. However, because its primary source of reception is from Gevurah (where its inclination and place are), it must lean towards red, shifting mercy towards judgment.

Thus, Tiferet is positioned in between with its color blending white and red between Chesed and Hod, and between Gevurah and Netzach. The topic of these colors is discussed in greater detail in the Gate of Colors, section 5. Praise and thanks be to the One who bestows goodness upon the undeserving, who has bestowed His goodness upon us. May God illuminate our path, helping us prove this idea with three reliable witnesses: the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, peace be upon him, the wisdom of Kabbalah, and the words of the great Kabbalists.

In summary, the areas that require mediation are as follows: five opposite five. Chokhmah (Wisdom) is opposite Binah (Understanding); Chesed is opposite Gevurah. These form two pairs. Chesed is opposite Hod, and Gevurah is opposite Netzach. This creates two more pairs, making four against four. Additionally, Yesod (Foundation) mediates between Netzach and Hod, as explained in the Gate of Mediators, chapter 4. This results in five opposite five. However, there are only two mediators between the five and the five: Yesod and Tiferet. How? Yesod mediates between Netzach and Hod, and Tiferet mediates between Chesed and Gevurah, between Chesed and Hod, between Gevurah and Netzach, and between Chokhmah and Binah in a hidden state within the secret of Daat, as explained in the aforementioned Gate.

With this introduction, we can now understand the Mishnah we are interpreting, which states "five opposite five," meaning they are indeed five opposite five, and the "covenant of unity" is positioned in the middle because the mediators stand in between and unify the extremes. The term "Lashon" (tongue) refers to Tiferet, which is called the "Lashon" because through Binah (which is likened to the tongue), Tiferet ascends upward to mediate between Chokhmah and Binah in the secret of Daat, as explained in the aforementioned Gate. Through Binah, Tiferet also mediates between Chesed and Gevurah, as we explained in chapter 2, with God's help. The term "Or" (foreskin) refers to Yesod, the second mediator.

Thus, the concept becomes more settled, and we resolve the issue we raised about the five opposite five and the mediators being eleven. We are not referring to the number of Sefirot here but rather to the number of mediations, as explained, so there is no need for further elaboration. We have now clarified the Mishnah using the most well-known version found in books and among commentators, despite the fact that Ramban, peace be upon him, appears to have had a different version. However, we rely on the consensus of most texts. When the scholar examines the various versions, they will find that this one is more precise, and it has not yet been fully verified whether Ramban's version aligns with the interpretation attributed to him.

Chapter 5

After we have moved from the lofty and steep heights of the previous Mishnah, in which we confirmed the agreement among the Kabbalists that the Sefirot are ten and no more, we now proceed to the next Mishnah, which is the second one in this section but the fourth in the chapter. The text reads as follows:

"Ten Sefirot of nothingness. Ten, not nine. Ten, not eleven. Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding. Examine them, and investigate from them, know and contemplate from them, and establish the matter in its truth, and restore the Creator to His place."

We have agreed not to raise issues with this Mishnah, as its wording is inherently unclear, and the verse itself demands interpretation, for its surface meaning does not support any explanation until we delve into it. We will now write what God puts in our mouths concerning the matter of "Ten, not nine" and its explanation.

The intention is to warn us against the error of thinking that Keter (Crown) is not part of the Sefirot, considering it instead as Ein Sof (the Infinite), which it is not, for "One higher than the highest watches" (Ecclesiastes 5:7). Many have mistakenly believed that Ein Sof is included in the count of the Sefirot and that it is Keter. We will refute this view in the chapter about whether Ein Sof is Keter, in section five. God save us from this erroneous thought.

In truth, the Sefirot are ten without the Ein Sof, for if it were otherwise, the emanated Sefirot would be reduced to nine. This is unacceptable; the emanated beings must be ten, not nine. Furthermore, the Mishnah warns us not to exclude Malkhut from the count, as some have mistakenly thought in their reasoning. God save us from this mistaken view as well. Malkhut is certainly included among the Sefirot in Atzilut (the

world of emanation), even though it is not fully unified with the others because it has been separated, as we will explain in the chapter on the diminishing of the moon.

This explanation is close to what Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, peace be upon him, interpreted in the Zohar (*Ra'aya Mehemna*, Ki Tetze, 277b), where he said:

"There are others, masters of the written Torah, masters of attributes who inherit souls from the side of the holy Malkhut, which is included in the ten Sefirot. Whoever inherits it and merits it attains the ten Sefirot without separation—ten and not nine, for if one were to inherit only Malkhut, there would be nine separated from it. Since there is no separation there, the author of Sefer Yetzirah said: 'Ten, not nine.' And if you say that it rises above the ten, perhaps you explain it by saying Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh—those are ten. Yod, which unites with it, does not rise above the ten. Therefore, it is ten and not eleven."

The meaning of this passage is that when Rabbi Shimon said, "there are others," he referred to an earlier part of the passage, where he explained that some righteous individuals have a soul from the side of Beriah (the world of creation), which is called "Mother." This will be explained in the Gate of the Soul, section five. He then added that there are others, "masters of the written Torah," who engage in divine Torah and its mysteries.

To avoid misunderstanding that "masters of the written Torah" refers only to those who study the revealed aspects of halachot, interpretations, and midrashim, Rabbi Shimon clarified that even though these individuals earn great reward, they do not attain the level of this specific soul until they engage in the secrets of the Sefirot, which are the mysteries of divinity. These individuals are called "masters of attributes" because the focus of Kabbalists is on the attributes (Sefirot) and their relationships.

Rabbi Shimon explained that these individuals inherit a soul from Malkhut itself, not from Metatron or "Mother" (Binah), as previously mentioned. He said they merit a soul that is included in the ten Sefirot. To address the concern that other souls might also be included in the ten or that this soul might not be included in the ten, he explained that the soul from Malkhut must necessarily be included in the ten because the Sefirot are inseparable and interconnected. When we mention Malkhut, it implies that the other Sefirot are also connected to it. This is not the case with souls from the side of Metatron or "Mother," as they belong to the world of separation, descending from Atzilut, and thus do not have this requirement. Therefore, only a soul from the side of Malkhut is necessarily included in the ten.

When we say that a soul from the side of Metatron or "Mother" is not included in the ten, we do not mean that it does not contain all ten Sefirot at all, for this is impossible. Every action that emanates from above must include all ten Sefirot; otherwise, it would imply separation. This is the reason for physical defects, such as missing limbs, which indicate a flaw in the person’s actions, as they have caused a separation in the holy source. Therefore, their soul does not extend into those limbs, and it is defective. The defect reflects the person's spiritual state, as we will explain regarding limbs in the Gate of the Soul, chapter seven.

Thus, it is impossible for a soul or action in this world not to include all ten Sefirot. Even when we refer to a soul from the side of Metatron or "Mother," we do not mean that it is not from above (heaven forbid), for all souls come from above. The difference, as we will explain in the aforementioned chapter, is that the soul from Malkhut is inherently included in all ten Sefirot, whereas the soul from the side of Metatron or "Mother" is not directly part of the ten Sefirot.

Returning to the Sefirot themselves, there is a significant distinction between saying that Malkhut is "included in the ten" and saying that it is "united with the essence" of the other Sefirot. Being included is not the same as being united with the essence of the Sefirot, in which case all ten Sefirot are visibly present in it. This is the meaning of "included in the ten Sefirot" in the Zohar.

Rabbi Shimon explained that this inclusion is not merely a natural inclusion as occurs with all Sefirot but rather that "whoever inherits it and merits it" attains the ten Sefirot in their fullness, meaning that the ten Sefirot are fully manifested within that soul. When we say "inherits and merits," we refer to two conditions: first, preparation through the actions of one's father during the act of procreation, as the sages taught, "One who sanctifies himself during marital relations..." If the father sanctifies himself properly, he merits drawing down a holy soul from a high place, and the degree of sanctity determines the soul's elevation. This is explained in many places in the Zohar and Talmud. The term "inherits" refers to this process of drawing down a lofty soul.

Secondly, the individual must also be righteous and worthy of this soul through their own deeds, ensuring that the soul does not depart from them. This is explained further in the Gate of the Soul, chapter 3, section 5. The phrase "merits it" refers to a person earning this soul through their own righteous actions. When one merits a soul from Malkhut, it is necessarily included in the ten Sefirot, as it is inseparable from the other Sefirot. This is the meaning of the Zohar's phrase "ten Sefirot without separation."

The author of *Sefer Yetzirah* said, "Ten, not nine," to teach that the soul from Malkhut, being a part of Malkhut, must also include all ten Sefirot. If the soul were separated from the other Sefirot, it would imply that Malkhut is also separated from the other Sefirot, which is impossible. Therefore, the ten Sefirot can never be reduced to nine.

The statement "Ten, not eleven" warns us not to count the Throne (associated with Beriah) among the emanated Sefirot, as we will explain in the Gate of Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah (AbyA), God willing. It also warns us not to count the angel Metatron, the prince of the presence, among the Sefirot, even though his name is like his Master's name, as he belongs to Yetzirah and not Atzilut, as explained in the aforementioned Gate.

These interpretations of the Mishnah are consistent with its language of affirmation and negation: "Ten" affirms the number of Sefirot, and "not nine" negates any reduction. Similarly, "Ten, not eleven" negates any addition to the number of Sefirot.

Chapter 6

Another explanation of this Mishnah is provided in the Zohar (*Ra'aya Mehemna*, Ki Tisa 187b), as follows:

"A commandment to give half a shekel by the holy shekel. Rabbi Meir said: What is half a shekel? It is like half of a *hin* (a unit of measurement), and this corresponds to the *vav* (ו), which is the middle between the two *hehs* (ה). A stone for weighing with is the *yud* (י). The twenty *gerah* weight of the shekel is the *yud* (י). 'The rich shall not give more' refers to the middle column, which shall not exceed ten, as it is stated in *Sefer Yetzirah*: 'Ten Sefirot of nothingness, ten and not eleven.' 'The poor shall not give less,' this refers to the *tzaddik* (righteous one, Yesod), who shall not decrease from ten, as it is said: 'Ten and not nine.' And half a shekel is ten."

This passage requires some clarification:

1. The statement: "What is half a shekel? It is like half of a *hin*, which is Tiferet, the middle between the two *hehs*." However, in the context of half a shekel, this doesn't seem applicable, as we don't know what it is a middle between.
2. The statement: "A stone for weighing with is the *yud*," seems to suggest that the *yud* represents the value of twenty. But how can this be consistent with the idea that nothing should be added or subtracted from ten? The *yud* (which is ten) is only half of twenty, so how can the stone be said to weigh twenty?
3. The phrase "A stone for weighing with is the *yud*, twenty *gerah* is the *yud*," appears to be repetitive and redundant, stating the same thing twice.
4. The statement "And half a shekel is ten" seems disconnected from the rest of the passage and even contradicts the previous explanation, where half a shekel was said to be the middle. Now it claims that half a shekel is ten, implying that half is simply the numeric value of ten, not a middle.

To understand this passage, we must first introduce the concept that the Sefirot are ten from above downward and ten from below upward. This can be compared to the reflection of sunlight hitting a polished mirror: the light comes from above, strikes the mirror, and then returns to its source. In a similar way, the Sefirot flow from above downward until they reach Malkhut, where the light is gathered and then returns upward to its source. This concept will be elaborated upon in another chapter, God willing.

This secret is hinted at by the shape of the letter *aleph* (א), which consists of a *yud* above, a *yud* below, and a *vav* in between, symbolizing the flow of light from above to below and its return from below to above. The two *yuds* represent the upper and lower waters, while the *vav* (the middle column) represents Tiferet, which unites the upper and lower waters. This is the meaning of "half a shekel," which is the middle between the complete measure of the shekel—the ten Sefirot from above to below and the ten from below to above. Tiferet is the intermediary between the two *yuds*, which together make up twenty *gerah* of the shekel.

Now the meaning of "half a *hin*" and "half a shekel" is the same, resolving the first question.

Regarding the statement "a stone for weighing with is the *yud*," the word "stone" (*even*) always symbolizes the form of the letter *yud*, which represents the concept of the number ten. The stone used for weighing half a shekel is thus the *yud*, representing ten. The complete shekel is twenty *gerah*, which corresponds to the two *yuds*—one from above to below, and one from below to above. The "stone" (the *yud*) represents the simple value of ten, which is used to weigh half the shekel. When it is doubled, it

becomes the full shekel, or twenty *gerah*—one *yud* from above and one from below, as explained.

Regarding the phrase "the rich shall not give more," this refers to Tiferet, the middle column. Even though it is "rich" in abundance and completeness compared to the other Sefirot, it cannot exceed ten, for the Sefirot are always ten, not eleven. Its richness is expressed in the increase of light and influence, but it will never go beyond the completeness of ten.

Regarding "the poor shall not give less," this refers to Yesod, also called the *tzaddik* (righteous one), which is considered "poor" in times of exile, as the verse says, "The righteous man perishes" (Isaiah 57:1). Even though Yesod may be "poor" and lacking in times of exile, it cannot be reduced to fewer than ten Sefirot, just as it is stated: "Ten and not nine." Yesod's poverty is expressed in the reduction of light or fullness, but it will always remain connected to the ten Sefirot.

The phrase "half a shekel is ten" now makes sense, according to what we have explained: the rich one, Tiferet, corresponds to the middle column, the half of the shekel that is between the two *yuds*. Since half the shekel is ten, it demonstrates that Tiferet is the middle between the upper and lower waters, dividing the full shekel (twenty *gerah*) into two tens.

Thus, the rich one will never exceed ten, and the poor one will never diminish from ten, because they both correspond to the fullness of the ten Sefirot.

The remaining parts of the Mishnah are explained as follows: "Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding" means that one should unify wisdom (Chokhmah) with understanding (Binah), and Binah with Chokhmah. Some commentators explain this to mean that the root of wisdom is within understanding, and the root of understanding is within wisdom. Others explain it to mean that when you draw influence into Chokhmah, you should ensure that it flows into Binah, and when you draw influence into Binah, you should give it the strength of Chokhmah.

The phrase "Examine them and investigate from them" means that one should carefully examine the Sefirot in their essence through the proper methods of inquiry, while maintaining a humble awareness of the divine. The phrase "Establish the matter in its truth" means to establish the matter on a firm foundation and delve deeply into the subject until it becomes clear. "Return the Creator to His place" means that one's ultimate goal should always be to restore the divine presence to its proper place, unifying the emanated Sefirot with their source, the Emanator.

The explanation concludes with a firm affirmation that the Sefirot are always ten, never less and never more, which is a fundamental belief held by all Kabbalists.

Chapter 7

After having dealt in previous chapters with reinforcing our firm belief, as agreed upon by all Kabbalists, that the Sefirot are ten, no more and no less, in this chapter, we aim to prevent the student from falling into confusion and error. This issue arose in a question posed to Rav Hai Gaon. The question was as follows:

"The questioners ask our master: We find that our sages (of blessed memory) refer to the thirteen attributes that Moses, our teacher, received. And regarding Abraham, our father, of blessed memory, our sages attributed to him the *Sefer Yetzirah*, which lists ten Sefirot. We need to understand from your holy mouth whether the ten Sefirot are the same as the thirteen attributes. If so, then we find thirteen Sefirot, not ten, or are the thirteen attributes separate from the ten Sefirot? We seek your Torah and await your answer."

Rav Hai Gaon explained to them that the thirteen attributes are branches and developments that stem from the ten levels, which are called Sefirot, aligned against one another, along with three hidden aspects—the "Heads of the Heads." And even though these hidden aspects are not directly manifest, they are passed down by tradition from our ancestors, one generation to the next, back to the prophets. These developments are the actions known as attributes (*middot*), while the roots, which are their origins, are called Sefirot. They are not called by a numerical name simply because of their number, etc. We will not copy the entire response here because we intend to elaborate on it in full in *Gate of the Purities*, chapter 1, God willing.

For now, it is important to clarify that when Rav Hai Gaon mentioned "three hidden heads" in his response, he did not mean to suggest that there are thirteen Sefirot. Had that been his intention, he would have directly answered the primary question—that the statement in *Sefer Yetzirah* which says "Ten and not eleven" is not a binding ruling. Since we see that Rav Hai Gaon did not address this point or reject it, it seems clear that the three hidden aspects are not considered Sefirot such that we would count them as thirteen. Rather, they are hidden forces, subtle realities, separate from the Sefirot, as we will explain in detail in the aforementioned section, God willing.

Just as we are not troubled by the fact that we find ten Sefirot in Atzilut, ten in Beriah, ten in Yetzirah, and ten in Asiyah, so too should we not be concerned by the presence of hidden aspects, for the Sefirot always remain ten. If we encounter hidden realities, they are the sources of the revealed ones, and the revealed ones are reflections of the higher ones. The number of Sefirot always remains ten, neither more nor less, and the three hidden aspects are sources, as we will explain when we elaborate on Rav Hai Gaon's words.

Another source of confusion might come from a *Baraita* of Rabbi Shimon the Righteous, which was quoted by Rav Hamai Gaon in his book *Sefer HaIyun*. The text states as follows:

"These thirteen powers each have a specific name, and their levels are arranged one above the other:

1. Primordial Air,
2. Primordial Wisdom,
3. Marvelous Light,
4. Hashmal,
5. Cloud,
6. Throne of Glory,
7. Wheel of Greatness, called 'Chazchazit', the place where visions of the prophets emerge,

8. Cherub,
9. Wheels of the Chariot,
10. Surrounding Air,
11. Curtain, which is the Throne of Glory,
12. The place of souls, called 'Chambers of Greatness',
13. The secret of the upper array, called 'The Holy Upper Chamber'."

These thirteen powers emanate together from the concealed upper Keter, known as "Oman" (the Artisan), etc.

At first glance, it might appear that this *Baraita* is listing the Sefirot, and indeed the Sefirot are ten, beginning with:

1. Primordial Air, which corresponds to Keter, as it is a well-known name for Keter,
2. Primordial Wisdom, which is Chokhmah,
3. Marvelous Light, which is Binah,
4. Hashmal, which is Chesed,
5. Cloud, which is Gevurah,
6. Throne of Glory, which is Tiferet,
7. Chazchazit, which is Netzach, and is also associated with the prophets,
8. Cherub, which is Hod,
9. Wheels of the Chariot, which is Yesod,
10. Surrounding Air, which is Malkhut.

Beyond these ten, the remaining names refer not to Sefirot but to levels below them. Some have explained these as three types of emanations within Malkhut, though not actual emanations of the Sefirot themselves. However, it seems that these refer to three hidden sources within Malkhut, just as there are three hidden aspects within Keter. We will elaborate further on this in the *Gate of Purities* and in the *Gate of Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah* (AbyA), God willing.

As for the three additional levels mentioned by Rabbi Shimon the Righteous—11. Curtain, 12. The place of souls (called 'Chambers of Greatness'), and 13. The secret of the upper array (called 'The Holy Upper Chamber')—it seems from the text that these do not refer to the Sefirot but rather to the powers of the Sefirot. In particular, the mention of the eleventh as "Curtain" indicates a dividing barrier, a screen between Atzilut and the realms beneath it. This is called the Throne of Glory, which encompasses many other thrones, and refers to the realm of Beriah, as will be explained in the *Gate of AbyA*, God willing.

It is well known that the souls are hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory, and though in truth they emanate from above the throne, they are still considered to be "hewn" from beneath the throne, as this hewing refers to the world of Yetzirah, as we will explain in the aforementioned gate. Yetzirah is beneath Beriah, so the place where souls are hewn is beneath the Throne of Glory, which is under Beriah. Therefore, the level below the Throne of Glory is called "The place of souls," and the Chambers of Greatness are the actual chambers of Gan Eden.

Beneath Yetzirah is Asiyah, referred to as "the secret of the upper array," which refers to the order of angels that serve in Asiyah, beneath Yetzirah. This is our understanding of Rabbi Shimon the Righteous's *Baraita*.

Thus, the issue of the thirteen attributes is resolved. Whether according to one explanation or another, the Sefirot always remain ten.

Regarding the question posed to Rav Hai Gaon—whether the thirteen attributes are the Sefirot—the evidence shows that the thirteen attributes are not Sefirot, as Rav Hai Gaon suggested. The proof is that the thirteen attributes are called the "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy," whereas the Sefirot include attributes of judgment, such as Gevurah and Hod. Therefore, it is clear to us that the thirteen attributes refer to the twelve boundaries, which correspond to twelve permutations of the Divine Name, with the source that sustains them being the thirteenth. These exist in three places—Teli, Galgal, and Lev—denoted by the acronym Tagal. Additionally, there are thirteen hidden aspects within Keter, as we will elaborate in the *Gate of Divine Names*, in the explanation of the Name of 72, God willing.

Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKana, of blessed memory, also adhered to this understanding, listing thirteen attributes within Keter, as I will quote in the *Gate of Essence and Governance*, chapter 3, God willing. Likewise, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the *Idra* mentioned the thirteen attributes of mercy in both Zeir Anpin and Arikh Anpin, clearly indicating a view opposite to that of Rav Hai Gaon.

The explanation of the thirteen attributes belongs in a separate work, which we will discuss in detail if God grants us life. Our goal here is to uphold the Kabbalistic belief that one must not believe in adding or subtracting from the ten Sefirot, for they are the unchangeable framework: ten and not eleven. Anyone who adds or subtracts from this number errs and brings harm upon themselves. We pray that God protects us from mistakes.

Chapter 8

After confirming the number of the Sefirot, we should now investigate whether they are necessary according to philosophical inquiry. To this, we say that the Sefirot are indeed necessary for several reasons.

The first reason is that we, who believe in divine providence, even in individual providence, must assert that God administers the world through the Sefirot. This is because the One who is simple, the cause of all causes and the source of all sources, is beyond change and attributes—such as wisdom, justice, hearing, and other qualities that philosophers exclude from Him. Similarly, descriptions of physicality and corporeality—such as "God descended" or "the appearance of God's glory was like a consuming fire" (Exodus 24:17), or "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne" (Isaiah 6:1), or "the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34), and "they saw the God of Israel and under His feet was a sapphire stone" (Exodus 24:10), or the vision of the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel (Daniel 7:9)—refer to boundaries and physicality, which are ascribed to God's attributes.

However, regarding the One who is simple in His essence, these descriptions cannot apply unless we view His relationship to His attributes, as we will explain in *Gate of Essence and Vessels* and *Gate of Divine Names* with God's help. Through the attributes, there are changes such as judgment and mercy, but not in His essence, as will be explained in the aforementioned gate.

Thus, in order not to contradict the fundamental belief in the One's simplicity—where He is beyond attributes that imply physicality and boundaries—we are compelled to believe in the Sefirot. This is because, although we affirm divine providence, which is another fundamental belief, we must also believe in the Sefirot so that the core principles of our faith do not contradict each other, as explained. This is one of the reasons why belief in the Sefirot is necessary, and this is a compelling argument derived from the Torah, understood through inquiry.

Moreover, the commentators have written numerous proofs for the necessity of the Sefirot purely through philosophical investigation, without relying on the Torah. However, since our approach in this work is not based on philosophical inquiry, we will not delve into these proofs.

Additionally, the ten attributes (Sefirot) and their mystery are explained in Scripture. The first three are explained in Job's words to his friends, where he said: "But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?" (Job 28:12). This verse explains the order of the first three Sefirot: they are called *Ein* (nothingness), *Chokhmah* (wisdom), and *Binah* (understanding). The first Sefirah (*Chokhmah*) is emanated from the first Sefirah called *Ein*, as indicated by the phrase "Wisdom is found from nothingness (*Ein*)." The letters *Alef-Yud* refer to *Alef* (Ein) and *Yud* (Chokhmah), and *Zayin-Heh* refers to *Binah*, which is emanated from Chokhmah.

The seven Sefirot that follow are explained in the words of King David: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in heaven and in the earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom" (1 Chronicles 29:11). The phrase "Yours, O Lord" alludes to the first three Sefirot, with *Binah* being referred to as *Lekh* (to You), which equals 50, corresponding to the 50 gates of understanding. The phrase *Lekh* and *Kol* (all) are interchangeable, as the letters are similar.

Yesod (Foundation) is referred to as *Kol* when it receives from Binah, which contains the 50 gates. This is like a seal that turns from *Lekh* to *Kol*, representing the reversal from what was above to what is below. The 50 gates are hinted at in the word *Lekh* (to You) and in the word *Kol* (all), because the gates are 50, corresponding to the mystery of Binah, which extends down to Hod, the five Sefirot, each of which contains ten, making a total of 50. They are arranged in the form of *Segol*, with Chesed, Gevurah, and Tiferet being three points, and Netzach and Hod being two points beneath them. This forms the letters *Lekh* and *Kol*, symbolizing the seal that turns from above to below. The rest of the matters relating to these gates will be explained in the *Gate of the Gates*, God willing.

Gedulah (greatness) refers to Chesed (kindness), *Gevurah* (power) refers to fear, *Tiferet* (beauty) refers to Tiferet, and *Netzach* (eternity) and *Hod* (glory) refer to Netzach and Hod. The phrase "for all that is in heaven and in the earth" refers to Yesod, which is the

bridge that connects heaven (Tiferet) and earth (Malkhut). Yesod unifies Tiferet (called "heaven") and Malkhut (called "earth").

Malkhut (kingdom) is not fully detailed in the verse, as it merely says "Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom," because Malkhut's position is above Netzach, Hod, and Yesod, but due to its diminishment, it descended below. Therefore, the verse only hints at it through its unification, indicating that its place is in heaven. However, it was cast down to earth, as the verse later says, "Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom," indicating that Malkhut has its own splendor and beauty. Nevertheless, it is still united with its root above, as the verse concludes: "Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, Yours is the Binah," as explained earlier. *Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh* refers to Tiferet, while "the kingdom" refers to Malkhut, implying its union with its partner. Two kings are nourished from one crown.

Chapter 9

After dealing in previous chapters with the necessity of the existence and number of the Sefirot, it is appropriate to ask whether someone who denies the existence of the Sefirot should be considered a heretic or not. We say that a person's error regarding this matter can stem from one of two perspectives.

The first perspective involves someone who is entirely ignorant of the Sefirot—not because, if the secrets of wisdom were revealed to them, they would deny them (God forbid), but because they were never exposed to these teachings or to the gates of light. Such a person should certainly not be called a heretic or a denier. Evidence for this is found even regarding the belief in God's incorporeality. The Rambam (Maimonides) states in *Sefer HaMada*, *Hilchot Teshuvah* (Chapter 3), that someone who believes that God is a body or has a physical form is considered a heretic and is categorized as a *min* (sectarian). However, the Raavad (Rabbi Avraham ben David) disagreed with him, writing: "And why did he call this person a heretic? Many great and good people held this belief because of what they saw in the Scriptures and because of misinterpreted aggadot (narratives) that mislead opinions."

The Raavad argues against categorizing someone as a heretic simply for believing that God has a body, as some great people held this belief based on their interpretation of Scripture and aggadic teachings. The Raavad certainly does not mean to suggest that such a belief is correct—indeed, those who attribute corporeality to God are certainly mistaken. But the Raavad contends that if a person sincerely worships God and follows the Torah with purity, yet holds a mistaken belief in God's corporeality due to their limited knowledge, they should not be labeled a heretic, as long as they do not intend to reject the truth (God forbid).

However, someone who has already recognized God and who understands the principles of divine incorporeality but still denies the truth and claims that God has a body—this person, according to both the Rambam and Raavad, would certainly be considered a heretic. Similarly, regarding the Sefirot, someone who is unaware of them but believes in a simple, indivisible God without knowledge of the Sefirot should not be labeled a heretic or as someone who "cuts the saplings" (a term used for heresy). If this were the case, then as soon as a person became capable of understanding the obligations of the commandments, they would also need to be educated about the belief in the Sefirot and their nature—something we do not find. On the contrary, the sages taught

that these matters should be kept hidden and are only revealed to the righteous and humble. This is in contrast to the fundamental beliefs about God's existence, unity, the Torah from heaven, and Moses' prophecy, which are taught to children as soon as they can speak. As the Mishnah in *Sukkah* (42a) teaches, when a child begins to speak, his father should teach him Torah and the *Shema* prayer. The Gemara explains that the Torah refers to the verse "Torah was commanded to us by Moses" (Deuteronomy 33:4), and the *Shema* refers to "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

These two verses were chosen because they encapsulate the majority of the fundamental principles of the Torah. In the verse "Hear, O Israel," we find the concept of God's existence—this is "the Lord." It also implies divine providence, even personal providence, which is the meaning of "our God." Even though God's existence is required by the entire universe, as He was, is, and will be, and He creates all being—this is the meaning of the Tetragrammaton in its written form—and although He is the sovereign of all worlds, both upper and lower, as indicated by the way we pronounce His name as *Adonai* (Lord), His providence is nonetheless specifically directed toward us, as indicated by "our God." The phrase "the Lord is one" reinforces the principle of divine unity.

The Gemara in *Berakhot* (13b) explains that one should focus on the word "one," understanding that it means God rules over the heavens and the earth, as well as the four directions. This teaching also implies that God is incorporeal since a physical being cannot exist in multiple places at once. The word "one" also implies that God's oneness is not like other onenesses, as we will explain in *Gate of Essence and Vessels*, chapter 5. In the verse "Torah was commanded to us by Moses," we find the principle of the Torah from heaven, prophecy, and Moses' unique level of prophecy, as well as reward and punishment, as expressed by the phrase "an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob." This means that God, out of His love for Israel, gave them the Torah.

The sages selected these two verses because when a child grows older, he will begin to reflect on their meaning and ask his parents about their significance, and they will gradually introduce him to the core principles of the Torah as he becomes capable of understanding them. This is the approach taken with the fundamental principles of faith. However, in contrast, the secret of the upper Sefirot is concealed from most people and is only revealed to select righteous individuals. From this, we see that someone who does not understand the concept of the Sefirot should not be considered a heretic or someone who "cuts the saplings." Rather, we can say of such a person that they have not merited seeing the "lights" of wisdom, nor have they tasted the sweetness of Torah's depths and beauty. Such a person, though spiritually poor, is not a heretic.

The second perspective involves those who have been exposed to the teachings about the Sefirot and their existence but deny them because of their negative tendencies, having been influenced by foreign philosophies and non-Jewish wisdom. Even if such people are not heretics in the sense of denying the basic principles of divinity, they are still considered heretics because they deny the explanations of the Oral Torah. As the Rambam writes, one of the three categories of heretics includes someone who denies an interpretation of the Oral Torah. Furthermore, these individuals deny the teachings of the sages and worsen their error by rejecting the Sefirot, which leads them to deny divine providence. They will inevitably be led to deny providence because they will

argue that since the One is simple and without change, He cannot supervise the world of change. Additionally, they will question how a single, unified God can oversee the multiplicity of species, which would imply division, as is known.

Thus, they will be forced to believe in the Sefirot to maintain their belief in providence. Otherwise, they will fall into heresy, just as many have erred by denying individual providence and holding other misguided beliefs, which we need not elaborate on here. Consequently, we must insist that they believe in the Sefirot; otherwise, they must be considered heretics. Furthermore, if someone claims they have no interest in Kabbalah and intends only to pray to the Creator of the lights (i.e., to God without reference to the Sefirot), as many have thought, they are certainly mistaken. If a person seeks to speak of God as a simple, indivisible One in relation to His existence, without understanding His relationship to the Sefirot, they will end up negating His actions altogether.

The Infinite One (Ein Sof), in His essence, is simple and beyond change—He does not move from judgment to mercy or respond to prayer by changing His will unless we consider His relationship to the Sefirot, which are the instruments of His providence. Through the Sefirot, changes between judgment and mercy occur. Let the reader not hastily delve deeper into these matters, as it could lead to harm rather than benefit. We will explain this topic in detail in *Gate of Essence and Vessels*, with God's help.

In conclusion, belief in the Sefirot is necessary in order to properly understand the fundamental principles of faith, as the Torah's teachings can only be maintained through the Sefirot, which are the means by which the Emanator enacts changes without being affected by them, as explained in depth in the aforementioned gate. May God forgive us.

Chapter 10

After discussing the Sefirot, their necessity, and their understanding among the sages, we must now explore their nature and the names agreed upon by the commentators, particularly according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, of blessed memory. These are as follows: the first is *Keter* (Crown), the second is *Chokhmah* (Wisdom), the third is *Binah* (Understanding), the fourth is *Gedulah* or *Chesed* (Greatness or Kindness), the fifth is *Pachad* or *Gevurah* (Fear or Strength), the sixth is *Tiferet* (Beauty), the seventh is *Netzach* (Eternity), the eighth is *Hod* (Glory), the ninth is *Yesod* (Foundation), and the tenth is *Malchut* (Kingship).

These ten Sefirot correspond to ten divine names that are not to be erased, and the names and the Sefirot are considered the same because the spiritual essence of the names is identical to the Sefirot themselves. The *Keter* corresponds to the name *Ehyeh*, which appears in the Torah three times in a single verse: "And God said to Moses, 'Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh' (I will be what I will be), and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: Ehyeh has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14). The reasoning behind why this name does not appear elsewhere in the Torah, along with other uncertainties regarding this topic, will be explained in the *Gate of Names*, God willing.

The name for *Chokhmah* is *Yah* (יה), which appears frequently in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. In the Torah, it is found in verses such as "The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation, Yah" (Exodus 15:2), and "For

the hand is upon the throne of Yah" (Exodus 17:16). In the Prophets, it appears in "Yah, Yah is seen in the land of the living" (Isaiah 38:11), and in the Writings, in "Out of my distress I called on Yah; Yah answered me and set me free" (Psalms 118:5), and many similar instances.

The name for *Binah* is the four-letter name *YHVH* (יהוה) vocalized as *Elokim*. This name also appears frequently in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In the Torah, an example is "Adonai YHVH, by what shall I know that I will inherit it?" (Genesis 15:8), and many others. In the Prophets, "Adonai YHVH is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet" (Habakkuk 3:19), and in the Writings, "I will come in the strength of Adonai YHVH; I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone" (Psalms 71:16), and many others.

The name for *Chesed* is *El* (אל), which appears frequently in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In the Torah: "He called him El, the God of Israel" (Genesis 33:20). In the Prophets: "El Elohim YHVH, He knows" (Joshua 22:22). In the Writings: "The God (El) whose way is perfect" (Psalms 18:31), and many others.

The name for *Gevurah* is *Elokim*. This name is also frequently found in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In the Torah: "And Elokim tested Abraham" (Genesis 22:1). In the Prophets: "And a great fear of Elokim fell upon the people" (1 Samuel 14:15). In the Writings: "Arise, O Elokim, judge the earth" (Psalms 82:8), and many others.

The name for *Tiferet* is *YHVH*, the Tetragrammaton, which has various forms of abbreviation (*YHVH* as *Keh*, *Shav*, *Mah*). In the Torah: "And YHVH said," or "And YHVH spoke" (Genesis 4:9), and many others. In the Prophets: "Thus said YHVH," and similar verses. In the Writings: "YHVH said to me, 'You are my son'" (Psalms 2:7), and many others.

The name for *Netzach* does not appear by itself but is paired with *Hod* under the name *Tzevaot* (Hosts). This name does not appear in the Torah but is found extensively in the Prophets, as in: "Thus says YHVH Tzevaot," and many similar verses.

For *Yesod*, the commentators agree that its unique name is *El Chai* (Living God). However, it is problematic because *El Chai* is not considered one of the names that cannot be erased. In *Tractate Shevuot* (35a), *Chai* (life) is not listed as one of the sacred names, but only *El*. The name *El*, which is sacred, is associated with *Chesed* by way of attribution, as explained in various interpretations. Rabbi Abba in the Zohar (Parashat Vayikra, 11a) said: "The sixth and seventh are called *Tzevaot*, the eighth is *El Chai*, as it is written: 'For there YHVH commanded the blessing, life forevermore' (Psalms 133:3). This refers to the *Tzaddik* (righteous one, *Yesod*) from whom all life flows."

The reason Rabbi Abba counted *Netzach* and *Hod* as the sixth and seventh (even though they are the seventh and eighth) is that he started his count from *Yah*, which corresponds to *Chokhmah*, as explained in the text. He explains that *Yesod* is called *El Chai* because it is the source of life, even though the essence of life is higher up in *Chokhmah* and *Binah*, as it is written: "Wisdom gives life to those who have it" (Ecclesiastes 7:12), as will be explained in the *Gate of Names*, God willing. Therefore, *Yesod* is called *El Chai* because it is the source of life in relation to the world below,

and this is why Rabbi Abba uses the term "from it life flows." Thus, Rabbi Abba explains that the name of *Yesod* is *El Chai*.

Rabbi Elazar, however, disagrees (Zohar 72b) and argues that *Yesod* is called *Shaddai* (Almighty). He says: "The ninth is *Shaddai*, who says to the world 'Enough' (Die), because satisfaction comes only through the *Tzaddik*, who is the foundation of the world." Rabbi Elazar questioned how the name *Shaddai*, which means "enough," could be associated with *Yesod*, given that this refers to limiting the world's expansion—a role seemingly better suited to *Malchut*, the "architect" of creation. He concludes that *Shaddai* refers to the satisfaction and sustenance provided by *Yesod*, as it is the channel of nourishment for the world.

Therefore, while Rabbi Abba associates *Yesod* with *El Chai*, Rabbi Elazar connects it to *Shaddai*. We do not deny *El Chai* being associated with *Yesod*, but it is not a sacred name like the other divine names that are not to be erased. Rather, it is a descriptive name, as is seen in the verse: "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God" (Psalms 84:3). The name *Shaddai* is found in the Torah: "El Shaddai bless you, and make you fruitful and numerous" (Genesis 28:3), as well as: "Like the voice of Shaddai when they walked" (Ezekiel 1:24) and "May Shaddai be with you in times of trouble" (Job 5:17).

The name for *Malchut* is *Adonai*. This appears in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. In the Torah: "And now, let the power of Adonai be great" (Numbers 14:17), and many others. In the Prophets: "Adonai sent a word into Jacob" (Isaiah 9:7). In the Writings: "Adonai, open my lips" (Psalms 51:17). The Masoretic tradition counts 134 occurrences of this name in Scripture. The reason for this number is explained by the commentator *Hizkuni*, who notes that it corresponds to the initials of the four directions—East, West, and South—suggesting that these three directions are closed off by God's name, while the North remains open for punishment of the wicked. In the future, God will close it as well.

These ten names mentioned above are the vessels for the spiritual essence of the Sefirot, and this spiritual essence is clothed in the innermost spirituality symbolized by the four-letter divine name (YHVH) within each Sefirah. This and other matters regarding these names and the essence of the Sefirot will be explained in the coming gates, God willing, each in its appropriate place.

Thus, this section is concluded. Thanks to God, who has helped us thus far—may He continue to assist us, Amen.

Gate 2

Chapter 1

The Reason Why There Are Ten and Not More

After discussing the necessity of the concept of "Emanation" in the previous gate and establishing that it is agreed upon by the Kabbalists that there are ten, no fewer and no

more, and having outlined their nature and names, we now aim in this gate to explain the reason why there are ten, and regarding the entire matter of Emanation as a whole, with the help of Heaven.

While delving into the Eden-like depths of the sages' books on this wisdom, we found that the sage Rabbi Yehuda Hayati in his book *Minchat Yehuda* (Leaf 49b) wrote one reason for the ten, quoting Rabbi Azriel and offering his own response. Here is Rabbi Azriel's explanation:

"Know that every point comes with three dimensions: length, width, and depth. When you multiply these with each other in a squared numerical manner, three times three gives nine, and with the space containing them, they become ten." These are the words of Rabbi Azriel of blessed memory.

Rabbi Yehuda objected to this, stating: "I do not find this explanation satisfactory for two reasons. First, the premise is not true, for the mentioned dimensions apply to things with quantity, and a point has no quantity, as it is the end of a line. Secondly, how could it be pleasing to God that dimensions which define physicality be attributed to the Emanation? Surely, physicality has no place in Divinity." These are his words.

Since Rabbi Yehuda's objections are somewhat unclear, especially his first criticism regarding the statement that a point has no quantity, etc., we will clarify his intention. The matter is as follows: Every physical object has length, width, and depth. There is nothing physical in the world that lacks these three dimensions, as they define physicality. If we imagine two of these dimensions, length and width, without depth, we would have a surface, which refers to something like the color spread over the surface of paper, where length and width are present, but depth is absent—hence, it is called a surface.

If we imagine only one dimension, length, without width or depth, it would be called a line—specifically, a line of length devoid of width and certainly of depth. Finally, if we imagine the negation of all three dimensions of physicality, this would be called a point. This means that a point has neither length, width, nor depth. Not that it could exist in reality, but it is a conceptual point, a representation of the negation of physical dimensions, not something that exists in actuality.

With this understanding, we can grasp Rabbi Yehuda's critique of Rabbi Azriel: Rabbi Azriel's words are contradictory because he claimed that a point comes with three dimensions, which is impossible, as a point lacks length, width, and depth, being only the end of a line, as we have explained. Thus, a point cannot have dimensions. Furthermore, the statement that a point is the end of a line is not universally accepted among geometers. Some say that multiple points can form a line, while others argue that even if all the points in the world were combined, they could never form a line, since a point has no length, and therefore cannot produce length. This issue, however, is not central to our discussion.

Rabbi Yehuda, having presented his two critiques of Rabbi Azriel’s explanation, offered an alternative numerical interpretation in defense of Rabbi Azriel. However, since this interpretation is neither appropriate nor convincing, we will not reproduce it here. Instead, we will provide our own defense of Rabbi Azriel’s position. We acknowledge

that Emanation is neither physical nor material; nevertheless, physicality and materiality emanate from it. As the Kabbalists believed, the four fundamental elements—water, fire, air, and earth—are alluded to in the Sefirot. Kindness corresponds to the element of water, Strength to fire, Beauty to air, and Kingship to earth. Not because these are literally the elements, heaven forbid, but because they are the roots of the elements, from which the elements themselves were created.

Similarly, the same applies to the dimensions of physicality. It is not that there is actual physicality above, nor that the dimensions of physicality apply to the Sefirot. Rather, because physicality was created from them and they are its roots, it is metaphorically appropriate to speak of the dimensions of physicality in reference to their roots. Thus, it is valid to speak of length, width, and depth above, referring to the powers from which these dimensions arise. Each of the three powers produces three different actions, resulting in nine manifestations. The force that brings these into existence is the tenth power. Thus, we are compelled to recognize ten powers above, which are the ten Sefirot—not that Rabbi Azriel's idea implies actual physicality above, heaven forbid.

We also believe that Rabbi Azriel was correct to compare Emanation to the dimensions of physicality, as this comparison has precedent. For example, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation) employs this same method when it speaks of the depth of height, the depth of below, the height, below, east, west, south, and north, which are the dimensions of physicality. Nevertheless, *Sefer Yetzirah* did not refrain from employing this analogy even when discussing Divinity because these are metaphors and analogies used in discourse.

Regarding the second objection, that the point has no quantity, this is not a valid critique, for there is no point without boundaries. And while we have stated earlier that a point has no quantity, this refers only to a conceptual point, which does not exist in reality. A real point, however, does have dimensions. Therefore, the objection is unfounded. Moreover, since Emanation is neither physical nor material, it is referred to as a point to indicate that Emanation is the root of physicality and its dimensions. Additionally, Emanation is called a point to convey that just as a point is indivisible, so too is Emanation indivisible. Even though we may speak of parts within it, these are merely metaphorical.

Chapter 2

Rabbi Yehuda wrote another reason and claimed that it is more satisfactory than the explanation of Rabbi Azriel, which we cited in the previous chapter. He wrote:

"The comprehensive number is ten, and there is none other besides it. This is because anything beyond ten reverts to the ones—whether in terms of the ones, like eleven, twelve, or thirteen, or in terms of the tens, like twenty, thirty, or forty, which are merely multiples of the tens. Since Emanation falls under the category of numbers, it is fitting for it to align with the most comprehensive number among numbers." These are his words.

What he meant by "since Emanation falls under the category of numbers" is that it is necessary for the Sefirot to have numerical qualities so that the created beings would possess numerical boundaries, as we explained earlier.

The question that arises is: What causes the comprehensive number to be ten, and not twenty or one hundred? Why do the levels beyond twenty return to the original numbers? We would respond that the reason the Sefirot are ten is that if they were twenty, the number would likewise be twenty. And this is certainly true. This is a more satisfactory and acceptable explanation—that the Sefirot are the primary cause, and the number is secondary, rather than the reverse, where the number is ten for no reason and thus serves as the cause for Emanation being numbered as ten. Furthermore, the Sefirot are the primordial cause for all created beings, and they are the cause for everything that emanates from them and downward. So how could a subsequent number be the cause of the prior Sefirot? This is certainly a strained argument.

While we refute these responses as explanations for Emanation, we do not deny the truth that numbers and Emanation have a great relationship, as the number ten progresses from one ten to the next indefinitely, never exceeding ten. This is also true for the Sefirot. Moreover, numbers ascend by multiples of ten: from ten to one hundred, and from one hundred to one thousand. The number one thousand is represented by the letter *Aleph*, which symbolizes the return to complete unity, just as the Sefirot return to unity. Ten times ten equals one hundred, and multiplying that again results in one thousand, represented by *Aleph* in the mystical sense, where everything returns to its source in unity. This concept is foundational to many essential Torah principles, as we elaborate in the Gate of Combinations, with the help of Heaven.

We also acknowledge the truth in the idea that Emanation is structured in threes upon threes, with a unifying force. This means that there are three aspects—Kindness, Judgment, and Mercy—with each of them containing three further aspects. In Kindness, there is Wisdom as the head, Kindness as the middle, and Eternity as the end. Similarly, in Judgment, there is Understanding as the head, Strength as the middle, and Glory as the end. In Mercy, there is Beauty as the head, Foundation as the middle, and Kingship as the end. The highest Crown includes everything, as we will explain in greater detail in the Gate of Essence and Conduct in Chapter 25, with the help of Heaven. This is a profound matter, and we will elaborate more on it there. Nevertheless, we maintain that these explanations do not fully account for the reason behind the Emanation, as we have already stated.

Rabbi Menachem Recanati of blessed memory also wrote an explanation regarding the seven Sefirot of construction, one by one, in his book on the reasons for the commandments, in the section on the discussion of Essence and Vessels. Rabbi Yehuda Hayati of blessed memory cited his words, and now we will explain why the world requires these seven aspects, which correspond to Kindness, Strength, Beauty, Eternity, Glory, Foundation, and Kingship.

The first aspect of construction is Kindness, as no building can exist without it. This means that through this attribute, the Holy One, blessed be He, pardons the sins of Israel. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, this attribute is called the one that "whitens the sins of Israel," forgiving those that arise from the aspect of Strength, where the evil inclination derives its power. This Sefirah is emanated from Understanding, which is above it. However, the first three Sefirot—Crown, Wisdom, and Understanding—are intellectual and are not considered attributes, so we are not discussing them at this time. This act of Kindness is a great act by which the Holy One, blessed be He, treats His creations, as He pardons them, one sin after another, and reconciles with them, even though strict

justice does not require it. Therefore, the world cannot exist without this pillar of Kindness.

In the *Sefer HaBahir*, I found the following: "The attribute of Kindness said, 'As long as Abraham was in the world, I did not need to perform my task, for Abraham stood in my place and fulfilled my role. He did my work, as he justified the world even when it was guilty. Furthermore, he inspired them to return to the will of their Father in Heaven. Abraham did all this.'"

The world also requires the second pillar, which is Judgment, the opposite of the first attribute mentioned. Without this pillar, the wicked would never be punished, and everyone would steal and murder their fellow without consequence. Therefore, the world must be governed by this pillar to exact retribution on the wicked. This Sefirah is emanated from Kindness, which we mentioned earlier, and is called "fire from water." Just as fire is the opposite of water, so too are the actions of this attribute the opposite of those of Kindness. These two are called the "arms of the world," as it is written, “And underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

The world also needs a third pillar, which is Beauty, the middle attribute, which balances and mediates between the two. The world requires this attribute because the first two attributes alone are insufficient. If someone were judged solely by Judgment, which operates without mercy, the judgment would be harsh and might even punish the righteous entirely. Conversely, if one were judged solely by Kindness, their few sins would not be considered, even in this world. Therefore, the world requires a middle attribute, like one who unites two things together, to give each person what they deserve, according to their deeds. For example, if the righteous sin, they are punished in this world, and if the wicked perform good deeds, they are rewarded in this world. This attribute is called the East, from where light spreads to the world, and the sun's sphere corresponds to it because daylight flows from it.

The world also requires the fourth and fifth pillars, which are Eternity and Glory. These are emanated from Kindness and Judgment, as it is written, "Pleasures are in Your right hand forever" (Psalms 16:11), meaning Eternity is aligned with the right, beneath Kindness, while Glory is aligned with the left, beneath Judgment. Eternity signifies victory, meaning that through this attribute, Kindness and merit overcome the accusers. Therefore, one must give thanks to God, which is why Glory is related to thanksgiving, acknowledging that without God's help, a person could not stand before Satan.

The world also requires the sixth and seventh pillars, which are Foundation and Kingship, corresponding to male and female. Everything flows into Kingship, which is also called the Shekhinah, the Assembly of Israel, where all the Sefirot dwell. We have already explained this above. Thus, the Sages of blessed memory called Kingship the "bride," and in *Shir HaShirim* (Song of Songs), it is referred to as the bride because it is inclusive of everything. It is aligned with the West, as the Sages said, "The Shekhinah is in the West," because everything converges there.

Although most of what has been said is correct, these explanations are not sufficient to explain Emanation. Since Judgment and punishment, Kindness and reward, are found in the two attributes of Kindness and Strength, and Beauty serves as the mediating attribute, why do we need the other Sefirot? Why couldn't the triumph over the accuser

and the evil inclination be achieved through Strength, as indeed Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai of blessed memory explained, that overcoming one's inclination is through Strength? We will elaborate on this in Chapter 3 of the Gate of Essence and Conduct. Similarly, Glory (Hod) does not function as an active attribute, according to the explanation given, but rather represents the person giving thanks to God. Do we really need to emanate an entire Sefirah just so that humans can give thanks to God? I wonder at this.

Furthermore, why do we need Foundation and Kingship? Since Kindness and Judgment are unified through the middle, what need is there for male and female distinctions or for any further combination? The forces are already unified through the middle. Additionally, this approach does not provide a reason for the existence of the first three Sefirot at all, as Rabbi Menachem himself acknowledged.

Furthermore, it would be sacrilege to suggest that the Almighty's power was insufficient to emanate a single Emanation, meaning one Sefirah, containing the power of punishment, reward, and mediation. The answer does not lie in the phrase from the Mishnah, "With ten utterances, the world was created; could it not have been created with one utterance?" (Avot 5:1). On the contrary, the Mishnah's intention is the opposite of what Rabbi Menachem claimed. Even though the creation of the world involves distinct processes indicating Judgment, Mercy, and mediation, it could have been created with one utterance, meaning through one Sefirah, implying that nothing prevents the Almighty from encapsulating the power of all ten Sefirot within a single Sefirah. This is the intention behind the statement, "Could it not have been created with one utterance?" referring to the current state of creation.

Thus, this explanation does not fulfill our desire or quench our thirst at all.

Chapter 3

After having written in the previous chapters all the reasons provided by the commentators, whether many or few, and having critically analyzed them according to the guidance we have received from Heaven, we now aim to present our own understanding on this matter, based on the insights we have reached.

Before anything, we must say that while we see great explanations, we have not encountered any definitive refutation. This question essentially boils down to one of two approaches: Either the question is directed to us, asking how we know that there are ten Sefirot and not another number (e.g., twenty or five or one), or the question is addressed to the Emanator, the Infinite One, blessed be He, asking why He emanated ten and not some other number.

For each of these approaches, we offer a response. If the question is directed to us, meaning, how do we find support for the Kabbalistic teaching that there are ten Sefirot, as opposed to twenty or five or just one, then this question is not a true difficulty. There are many sources in the Torah of Moses that reveal and illuminate the hidden mysteries related to this matter. Whether it is the creation of the world through the Ten Utterances, or the giving of the Torah through the Ten Commandments, or King David's ten forms of praise in the psalm "Praise God in His sanctuary," with which he concluded his book—all these show the significance of the number ten.

This matter is further explained in the Talmud, in *Rosh Hashanah* (32a), where it says: "Why are there ten [mentions of] kingship in the prayers? Rabbi said: These correspond to the ten praises that David said in the Book of Psalms." The Talmud then asks, "But there are many more praises in Psalms!" Rabbi responded, "It refers to those praises which include the phrase 'Praise Him with the sound of the shofar.'" Rav Yosef said: "They correspond to the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses on Sinai." Rabbi Yochanan said: "They correspond to the Ten Utterances with which the world was created." The Talmud then asks: "But there are only nine utterances!" To which Rabbi Yochanan replies, "The word *Bereishit* (In the beginning) is also a command, as it is written, 'By the word of God, the heavens were made.'"

This explanation, however, seems problematic, especially regarding Rabbi Yochanan's interpretation that *Bereishit* is also a commandment. It is implied that the term *Bereishit* refers to wisdom (as it is often called "the beginning"), and the letter *Bet* in *Bereishit* refers to it as well. Thus, even though *Bereishit* is considered a command, there would still only be nine utterances. If that's the case, why didn't the questioner instead challenge why Wisdom (Chokhmah) isn't counted, resulting in eight utterances instead of nine? And if the question was about whether Crown (Keter) is included in the count, why was the answer satisfactory when *Bereishit* was added? It should have been challenged further, since even with *Bereishit*, there would still only be nine utterances, as *Bereishit* corresponds to Wisdom.

This is a general question about the Ten Utterances, and from this we can also derive support for the opinion of Rabbi Shem Tov ben Shem Tov, author of *Sefer HaEmunot* (Book of Beliefs), which we will cite in the Gate of whether the Infinite One is Keter, in Chapter 3. He held the view that Keter is not counted among the Sefirot, and the ten Sefirot start from Wisdom and downward. Since he was pressed to maintain the number ten, he introduced an additional Sefirah called Da'at (Knowledge), positioned between Chokhmah (Wisdom) and Binah (Understanding), and above Chesed (Kindness) and Gevurah (Severity). We will elaborate on this topic in the appropriate section.

According to his explanation, the Ten Utterances begin from Wisdom. Even then, without counting *Bereishit*, we would only have nine, and with *Bereishit*, we would have ten. However, this conclusion leads to contradictions that arise from the Talmud's statement. Before raising more objections and clarifying this concept, it is necessary to resolve this issue. We state that this matter is impossible because Rabbi Shem Tov himself admitted that Da'at is mentioned in the verse "By His knowledge, the depths were broken up" (Proverbs 3:20), and the Sages said that the world was created through three things: Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge. Thus, it is clear from the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that Da'at represents the hidden aspect of Tiferet, which mediates between Chokhmah and Binah. This is what is referred to as "Son of Yud-Heh" (Ben Yod-Heh), which unites Chokhmah and Binah, as we will discuss in more detail in the relevant section.

Given this understanding, we should ask: Why does Da'at, which represents the hidden aspect of Tiferet, operate as a distinct utterance while other aspects of the Sefirot, like the hidden aspects of Binah in Chokhmah, do not? Why should Da'at generate a separate utterance when the other hidden Sefirot did not, despite their prior existence? For example, why did Binah, hidden within Chokhmah, not generate a separate utterance, just as Da'at and Tiferet did?

It cannot be said that Da'at was singled out to generate an utterance because it represents the union of Tiferet and its counterpart (Malchut), which are referred to as the two great luminaries. Initially, they were united and generated one utterance, but when the moon was diminished and separated, Tiferet and Malchut each generated separate utterances. If that were the case, why didn't Tiferet and Malchut each generate separate utterances from the beginning, even though they were united? After all, they are two distinct Sefirot, and if they were considered one, there would only be nine Sefirot before the moon's diminution, not ten. This contradicts the fundamental principles of Kabbalah, as explained in the previous Gate.

Furthermore, we see from the Ten Commandments and the Ten Utterances that their connection is essential, as demonstrated by the passage we quoted earlier, and this is also made clear in the Zohar (Parashat Yitro 93b): "These Ten Words of the Torah are the foundation of all commandments of the Torah, the foundation of both above and below, and the foundation of the Ten Utterances of Genesis." The Zohar states that the Ten Commandments encompass all the mitzvot of the Torah, and the Ten Utterances encompass all the workings of creation.

Now, since the Ten Commandments and the Ten Utterances are fundamentally connected, how can it be that the Shekhinah was initially united and then diminished? Certainly, once the Shekhinah was united for the purpose of union, it would not have been diminished while still with its partner. And if it were below, then why are there still ten, considering that Da'at had already become hidden and thus should not have generated a separate command?

Moreover, could we say that without the moon's diminishment, there would have only been nine utterances? This seems unlikely, as it would mean the world would be lacking an entire aspect of one utterance. Since Da'at encompasses both Tiferet and Malchut, why didn't it create everything through the unity of both? And why was there a need for separate creation through Malchut and Tiferet afterward, when Da'at, which unifies them, is a more complete power than either?

Additionally, we have several clear proofs that *Bereishit* is indeed the utterance of Keter. First, in the *Sefer HaBahir*, it states that the first utterance is Keter, blessed and exalted. Wisdom is second, as the text continues. Thus, the *Bahir* explicitly counts Keter as the first of the utterances. Moreover, the initial question itself does not present a difficulty, because even though the word *Bereishit* refers to Chokhmah, the utterance itself belongs to Keter. Due to the subtlety of Keter and its closeness to its source, it is not explicitly named in the four-letter divine name, but rather hinted at through the tip of the *Yod*. It is also referred to as *Aleph*, indicating its wondrous and hidden nature.

Even though the letter *Bet* of *Bereishit* refers to Chokhmah, the tip of the *Bet* points to Keter, as explained by Rabbi Akiva: "They say to the *Bet*, 'Who created you?' and it points with its tip to the *Aleph*." The meaning is that Chokhmah, represented by the *Bet*, is not the beginning of Emanation but the second emanation. Its tip points back to *Aleph*, which symbolizes Keter, indicating that Keter precedes it. Thus, it is appropriate to consider *Bereishit* as an utterance of Keter, even though the word *Bereishit* itself hints at Chokhmah, as part of it alludes to Keter.

In conclusion, the utterance of *Bereishit* includes all of Emanation, indicating that the Emanator (Keter), through the power of the Infinite One, created everything. Nevertheless, Keter itself is the actual emanator and the one who expressed the utterance. Therefore, most of the utterances are included within all ten, and the word *Bereishit* hints at Chokhmah, even though the primary utterance belongs to Keter. This is not surprising, just as the blessing of the Patriarchs relates to Chesed (Kindness), but Chesed is not mentioned until the phrase "God of Abraham," and even then, it refers to Chokhmah. Similarly, in the utterance of *Bereishit*, the word *Bereishit* hints at Chokhmah, but the main utterance belongs to Keter.

Thus, the interpretation of *Bereishit* as an utterance of Keter is valid, and the issue raised by Rabbi Shem Tov does not pose a necessary contradiction. However, we are still obligated to clarify a passage in the Zohar, Parashat Vayikra (11b), where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai states that there are ten utterances excluding *Bereishit*. This matter requires further exploration, and we will begin by citing another statement from the *Tikkunei Zohar* to help resolve this confusion, with the help of Heaven.

Chapter 4

In the *Tikkunei Zohar*, it is implied that the actions of the utterances were not performed through any of the first three Sefirot (Crown, Wisdom, and Understanding), as the first utterance, "Let there be light," corresponds to Keter (Crown). The second utterance, "Let there be a firmament," corresponds to Chokhmah (Wisdom), and the third utterance, "Let the waters gather," corresponds to Binah (Understanding). Here is the relevant passage from *Tikkunei Zohar* 42 (79a):

"In *Bereishit* [In the beginning], there is the 'man' about whom it is said, 'And Jacob was a simple man,' and this is the third day, for there were three craftspeople up to this point. The first day, the second day, and the third day—each brought forth its own craft. On the first day, the hidden, wondrous master, the level called 'Ain' (Nothingness), encompassing three Sefirot—Aleph (Keter), Yud (Chokhmah), and Nun (Binah)—commanded each of these three days to produce its own craft. He said to the first day, 'Let there be light,' and immediately it brought forth its craft, and thus it is written, 'And there was light.' It has already been established that there is no creation without an act. One from 'Ain' (Nothingness), who hovered in the air, brought forth light. Yud (Chokhmah) brought forth the firmament. Nun (Binah) from 'Ain' brought forth the dry land, as it is written, 'Let the waters gather.'"

From this passage, it is clear that the ones performing the actions were the craftsmen—the six days of creation. They acted through the utterances of the first three Sefirot, which were still in the state of *Ain* (Nothingness).

It is also important to understand regarding these ten utterances, that although there are ten, we know that no creation or action took place except through the six days of creation, each corresponding to one of the six lower Sefirot: Kindness on the first day, Strength on the second day, Beauty on the third day, Eternity on the fourth day, Glory on the fifth day, and Foundation on the sixth day. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai of blessed memory explained that all of creation was accomplished through these days, with the final completion through Malchut (Kingship), which brings things into full manifestation. He states this in *Parashat Terumah* (127a):