

ספר הבהיר

Sepher Ha-Bahir

or

“The Book of Illumination”

Attributed to Rabbi Nehunia ben haKana

Translated by Aryeh Kaplan

The Bahir

The First Verses of Creation 3

The Aleph-Beth 7

The Seven Voices and the Sephiroth 12

The Ten Sephiroth 32

Mysteries of the Soul 53

Index 57

The Bahir

Section I

The First Verses of Creation

1. Rabbi Nehuniah ben HaKana said:

One verse (*Job 37:21*) states, "And now they do not see light, it is brilliant (*Bahir*) in the skies...[round about God in terrible majesty]."

Another verse, however, (*Psalms 18:12*), states, "He made darkness His hiding place." It is also written (*Psalms 97:2*), "Cloud and gloom surround Him." This is an apparent contradiction.

A third verse comes and reconciles the two. It is written (*Psalms 139:12*), "Even darkness is not dark to You. Night shines like day -- light and darkness are the same."

2. Rabbi Berachiah said:

It is written (*Genesis 1:2*), "The earth was Chaos (*Tohu*) and Desolation (*Bohu*).

What is the meaning of the word "was" in this verse? This indicates that the Chaos existed previously [and already *was*].

What is Chaos (*Tohu*)? Something that confounds (*Taha*) people.

What is Desolation (*Bohu*)? It is something that has substance. This is the reason that it is called *Bohu*, that is, *Bo Hu* -- "it is in it."

3. Why does the Torah begin with the letter *Bet*? In order that it begin with a blessing (*Berachah*).

How do we know that the Torah is called a blessing? Because it is written (*Deuteronomy 33:23*), "The filling is God's blessing possessing the Sea and the South."

The Sea is nothing other than the Torah, as it is written (*Job 11:9*), "It is wider than the sea."

What is the meaning of the verse, "The filling is God's blessing?" This means that wherever we find the letter *Bet* it indicates a blessing.

It is thus written (*Genesis 1:1*), "In the beginning (*BeReshit*) [God created the heaven and the earth." *BeReshit* is *Bet Reshit*.]

The word "beginning" (*Reshit*) is nothing other than Wisdom. It is thus written (*Psalms 111:10*), "The beginning is wisdom, the fear of God."

Wisdom is a blessing. It is thus written, "And God blessed Solomon." It is furthermore written (*I Kings 5:26*), "And God gave Wisdom to Solomon."

This resembles a king who marries his daughter to his son. He gives her to him at the wedding and says to him, "Do with her as you desire."

4. How do we know that the word *Berachah* [usually translated as blessing] comes from the word *Baruch* [meaning blessed]? Perhaps it comes from the word *Berech* [meaning knee]. It is written (*Isaiah 44:23*), "For to Me shall every knee bend." [*Berachah* can therefore mean] the Place to which every knee bends.

What example does this resemble? People want to see the king, but do not know where to find his house (*Bayit*). First they ask "Where is the king's house?" Only then can they ask "Where is the king?"

The Bahir

It is thus written, "For to Me shall every knee bend" -- even the highest -- "every tongue shall swear."

5. Rabbi Rahumai sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Deuteronomy 33:23*), "The filling is God's blessing, possessing the Sea and the South"?

This means that wherever we find the letter *Bet* it is blessed.

This is the Filling referred to in the verse, "The filling is God's blessing."

From there it nourishes those who need it. It was from this Filling that God sought advice.

What example does this resemble? A king wanted to build his palace among great cliffs. He mined into the bedrock and uncovered a great spring of living water. The king then said, "Since I have flowing water, I will plant a garden. Then I will delight in it, and so will all the world."

It is therefore written (*Proverbs 8:30*), "I was with Him as a craftsman, I was His delight for a day, a day, frolicking before him at every time."

The Torah is saying, "For two thousand years I was in the bosom of the Blessed Holy One as His delight."

The verse therefore says, "a day, a day." Each day of the Blessed Holy One is a thousand years, as it is written (*Psalms 90:4*), "A thousand years in Your eyes is as but yesterday when it is passed."

From then on, it is at times, as the verse states, "[frolicking before Him] at every time."

The rest is for the world. It is thus written (*Isaiah 48:9*), "I will [breathe out] My praise through My nose for you."

What is the meaning of "My praise"? As it is written (*Psalms 145:2*), "A praise of David, I will raise You high [my God, O King, and I will bless Your name for the world and forever]."

Why is this a praise? Because I will "raise You high."

And what is this elevation? Because "I will bless Your name for the world and forever."

8. What is a blessing?

It can be explained with an example. A king planted trees in his garden. It may rain and water them, and the ground may be wet and provide them with moisture, but still, he must water them from the spring.

It is thus written (*Psalms 111:10*), "The beginning is Wisdom, the fear of God, good intelligence to all who do them [His praise endures forever]."

You may think that it lacks something. It is therefore written, "His praise endures forever."

7. Rabbi Amoraï sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Deuteronomy 33:23*), "The filling is God's blessing, possessing the Sea and the South"?

Moses was saying, "If you follow my decrees, you will inherit both this world and the next."

The World to Come is likened to the sea, as it is written (*Job 11:9*), "It is wider than the sea."

The present world is referred to as the South. It is thus written (*Joshua 15:19*), "[Give me a blessing] for you have set me in the land of the south, [therefore give me springs of water]."

The Targum translates this, "behold the earth is the south."

8. Why did God add the letter *Heh* to Abraham's name, rather than any other letter?

This was so that all parts of man's body should be worthy of life in the World to Come,

The Bahir

which is likened to the sea.

To the extent that we can express it, the Structure was completed in Abraham. [Regarding this Structure] it is written (*Genesis 9:6*), "For in the form of God, He made the man." The numerical value of Abraham is 248, the number of parts in man's body.

9. What is the meaning of (*Deuteronomy 33:23*), "[The filling is God's blessing, the Sea and the South] he shall inherit it (*YiRaShaH*)?" It would have been sufficient if the verse said, "inherit (*RaSh*) [the Sea and the South]."

But this comes to teach us that God must also be included. The word *YiRaShaH* thus contains the letters *RaSh YH* [meaning, "inherit God"].

What does this resemble? A king had two treasuries, and he hid one away. After many days he said to his son, "Take what is in these two treasuries." The son replied, "Perhaps you are not giving me all that you have hidden away." The king said, "Take everything."

It is thus written, "the Sea and the South, he shall inherit it." Inherit God (*YH RaSh*) -- everything will be given to you if you only keep My ways.

10. Rabbi Bun said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Proverbs 8:23*), "I was set up from eternity (*Me-Olam*), from a head, before the earth?"

What is the meaning of "from eternity (*Me-Olam*)?" This means that it must be concealed (*He-elam*) from the world.

It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*), "He has also placed the world (*Ha-Olam*) in their hearts [that they should not find out the work that God has done from the beginning to the end]." Do not read *Ha-Olam* (the world), but *He-elam* (concealment).

The Torah said, "I was first, so that I might be the head of the world." It is thus written, "I was set up from eternity, from a head."

You may think that the earth was before it. It is therefore written, "before the earth."

It is thus written (*Genesis 1:1*), "In the beginning created God the heaven and the earth."

What is the meaning of "created"? He created everything that was needed for all things. And then God. Only after that is it written "the heaven and the earth."

11. What is the meaning of the verse (*Ecclesiastes 7:14*), "Also one opposite the other was made by God."

He created Desolation (*Bohu*) and placed it in Peace, and He created Chaos (*Tohu*) and placed it in Evil.

Desolation is in Peace, as it is written (*Job 25:2*), "He makes peace in His high places."

This teaches us that Michael, the prince to God's right, is water and hail, while Gabriel, the prince to God's left, is fire. The two are reconciled by the Prince of Peace. This is the meaning of the verse, "He makes peace in His high places."

12. How do we know that Chaos is in Evil? It is written (*Isaiah 45:7*), "He makes peace and creates evil."

How does this come out? Evil is from Chaos, while Peace is from Desolation.

He thus created Chaos and placed it in Evil, [as it is written "He makes peace and creates evil." He created Desolation and placed it in Peace, as it is written, "He makes peace in His high places."]

13. Rabbi Bun also sat and expounded:

The Bahir

What is the meaning of the verse (*Isaiah 45:7*), "He forms light and creates darkness?" Light has substance. Therefore, the term "formation" is used with regard to it. Darkness has no substance, and therefore, with regard to it, the term "creation" is used. It is similarly written (*Amos 4:12*), He forms mountains and creates the wind."

Another explanation is this:

Light was actually brought into existence, as it is written (*Genesis 1:3*), "And God said, let there be light." Something cannot be brought into existence unless it is made. The term "formation" is therefore used.

In the case of darkness, however, there was no making, only separation and setting aside. It is for this reason that the term "created" (*Bara*) is used. It has the same sense as in the expression, "That person became well (*hi-Bria*)."

14. Why is the letter *Bet* closed on all sides and open in the front? This teaches us that it is the House (*Bayit*) of the world. God is the place of the world, and the world is not His place. Do not read *Bet*, but *Bayit* (house).

It is thus written (*Proverbs 24:3*), "With wisdom the *house* is built, with understanding it is established, [and with knowledge are its chambers filled]."

15. What does the *Bet* resemble? It is like a man, formed by God with wisdom. He is closed on all sides, but open in front. The *Aleph*, however, is open from behind.

This teaches us that the tail of the *Bet* is open from behind. If not for this, man could not exist.

Likewise, if not for the *Bet* on the tail of the *Aleph*, the world could not exist.

16. Rabbi Rahumai said:

Illumination preceded the world, since it is written (*Psalms 97:2*), "Cloud and gloom surround Him." It is thus written (*Genesis 1:3*), "And God said, 'let there be light,' and there was light."

They said to Him, "Before the creation of Israel your son, will you then make him a crown?" He replied yes.

What does this resemble? A king yearned for a son. One day he found a beautiful, precious crown, and he said, "This is fitting for my son's head."

They said to him, "Are you then certain that your son will be worthy of this crown?"

He replied, "Be still. This is what arises in thought."

It is thus written (*2 Samuel 14:14*), He thinks thoughts [that none should be cast away].

The Bahir
Section II
The Aleph-Beth

17. Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded:

Why is the letter *Aleph* at the beginning? Because it was before everything, even the Torah.

18. Why does Bet follow it? Because it was first.

Why does it have a tail? To point to the place from which it came.

Some say, from there the world is sustained.

19. Why is Gimel third?

It has three parts, teaching us that it bestows (gomel) kindness.

But did Rabbi Akiba not say that Gimel has three parts because it bestows, grows, and sustains. It is thus written (Genesis 21:8), "The lad grew and was bestowed."

He said: He says the same as I do. He grew and bestowed kindness to his neighbours and to those entrusted to him.

20. And why is there a tail at the bottom of the Gimel?

He said: The Gimel has a head on top, and is like a pipe. Just like a pipe, the Gimel draws from above through its head, and disperses through its tail. This is the Gimel.

21. Rabbi Yochanan said:

The angels were created on the second day. It is therefore written (Psalm 104:3), "He rafters His upper chambers with water [He makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind]." It is then written (Psalm 104:4), "He makes the winds His angels, His ministers from flaming fire."

[Rabbi Haninah said: The angels were created on the fifth day, as it is written (Genesis 1:20), "And flying things shall fly upon the firmament of heaven." Regarding the angels it is written (Isaiah 6:2), "With two wings did they fly."]

Rabbi Levatas ben Taurus said: All agree, even Rabbi Yochanan, that the water already existed [on the first day]. But it was on the second day that "He raftered His upper chambers with water." [At that time He also created] the one who "makes the clouds his chariot," and the one who "walks on the wings of the wind." But His messengers were not created until the fifth day.

22. All agree that none were created on the first day. It should therefore not be said that Michael drew out the heaven at the south, and Gabriel drew it out at the north, while God arranged things in the middle.

It is thus written (Isaiah 44:24), "I am God, I make all, I stretch out the heavens alone, the earth is spread out before Me." [Even though we read the verse "from Me" (May-iti), it can also be read] Mi iti -- "Who was with Me?"

I am the One who planted this tree in order that all the world should delight in it. And in it, I spread All.

I called it All because all depend upon it, all emanate from it, and all need it. To it they look, for it they wait, and from it, souls fly in joy.

The Bahir

Alone was I when I made it. Let no angel rise above it and say, "I was before you." I was also alone when I spread out My earth, in which I planted and rooted this tree. I made them rejoice together, and I rejoiced in them.

"Who was with Me?" To whom have I revealed this mystery?

23. Rabbi Rahumai said: From your words we could conclude that the needs of this world were created before the heavens.

He answered yes.

What does this resemble? A king wanted to plant a tree in his garden. He searched the entire garden to find a spring flowing with water that would nourish the tree, but could not find any. He then said, "I will dig for water, and will bring forth a spring to nourish the tree." He dug and opened a well, flowing with living water. He then planted the tree, and it stood, giving forth fruit. It was successfully rooted, since it was always watered from the well.

24. Rabbi Yanai said: The earth was created first, as it is written (Genesis 2:4), "[On the day that God made} earth and heaven."

They said to him: Is it not written (Genesis 1:1), "[In the beginning God created] the heaven and the earth"?

He replied: What is this like? A king bought a beautiful object, but since it was not complete, he did not give it a name. He said, "I will complete it, I will prepare its pedestal and attachment, and then I will give it a name."

It is thus written (Psalm 102:26), "From eternity You founded the earth" -- and then, "the heavens are the work of Your hands."

It is furthermore written (Psalm 104:2), "He covered Himself with light like a garment, He spread out the heaven like a curtain, He rafters His upper chambers with water." It is then written (Psalm 104:4), "He makes the winds His angels, His ministers of flaming fire."

Finally, it is written (Psalm 104:5), "He founded the earth on its pedestals, that it not be removed for the world and forever."

When He made its pedestal, He strengthened it. It is therefore written, "that it not be moved."

What is its name? "And Forever (VoEd) is its name. And [the name of] its pedestal is "World" (Olam). It is therefore written, "for the World And Forever."

25. Rabbi Berachiah said:

What is the meaning of the verse (Genesis 1:3), And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light"? Why does the verse not say, "And it was so"?

What is this like? A king had a beautiful object. He puts it away until he had a place for it, and then he put it there.

It is therefore written, "Let there be light, and there was light." This indicates that it already existed.

26. Rabbi Amorai said: What is the meaning of the verse (Exodus 15:3), "God is a man (Ish) of war"?

Mar Rahumai said to him: Great master, do not ask about something that is so simple. Listen to me and I will advise you.

He said to him: What is this like? A king had a number of beautiful dwellings, and he gave each one a name. One was better than the other. He said, "I will give my son this dwelling whose name is Aleph. This one whose name is Yod is also good, as is this one whose name is Shin." What did he do then? He gathered all three together, and out of them he made a single

The Bahir

name and a single house.

He said: How long will you continue to conceal your meaning?

The other replied: My son, Aleph is the head. Yod is second to it. Shin includes all the world. Why does Shin include all the world? Because with it one writes an answer (T'shuvah).

27. The students asked him: What is the letter Daleth?

He replied: What is this like? Ten kings were in a certain place. All of them were wealthy, but one was not quite as wealthy as the others. Even though he is still very wealthy, he is poor (Dal) in relation to the others.

28. They said to him: What is the letter Heh?

He grew angry and said: Did I not teach you not to ask about a later thing and then about an earlier thing?

They said: But Heh comes after [Daleth].

He replied: The order should be Gimel Heh. Why is it Gimel Daleth? Because it must be Daleth Heh.

And why is the order Gimel Daleth?

He said to them: Gimel is in the place of Daleth, on its head it is in the place of Heh. Daleth with its tail is in place of the Heh.

29. What is the letter Vav?

He said: There is an upper Heh and a lower Heh.

30. They said to him: But what is Vav?

He said: The world was sealed with six directions.

They said: Is not Vav a single letter?

He replied: It is written (Psalm 104:2), "He wraps Himself in light as a garment, [he spreads out the heavens like a curtain]."

31. Rabbi Amorai asked: Where is the Garden of Eden?

He replied: It is on earth.

32. Rabbi Ishmael expounded to Rabbi Akiba:

What is the meaning of the verse (Genesis 1:1), "[In the beginning God created] (et) the heaven and (et) the earth"? [Why is the word et added in both places?]

If the word et (an untranslated preposition that connects a transitive verb to its predicate noun) were absent, we would think that "heaven" and "earth" were gods. [For we could have read the verse, "In the beginning, God, the heaven and the earth created..." taking all three nouns as subjects of the sentence.]

He replied: By the Divine Service! You may have reached out for the true meaning, but you have not sorted out, and therefore you speak in this manner. But [in the case of "heaven"] the word et comes to include the sun, moon, stars and constellations, while [in the case of "earth"] it comes to add trees, plants, and the Garden of Eden.

33. They said to him: It is written (*Lamentations 2:1*), "He threw the beauty of Israel from heaven to earth." From here we see that it fell.

He replied: If you have read, you did not review, and if you reviewed, you did not go over it a third time. What does it resemble? A king had a beautiful crown on his head and a beautiful cloak on his shoulders. When he heard evil tidings, he cast the crown from his head and the

The Bahir

cloak from his shoulders.

34. They asked him: Why is the letter Cheth open? And why is its vowel point a small Patach?

He said: Because all directions (Ruach-ot) are closed, except for the North, which is opened for good and for evil.

They said: How can you say that it is for good? It is not written (*Ezekiel 1:4*), "And behold, a stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud and burning fire." Fire is nothing other than fierce anger, as it is written (*Leviticus 10:2*), "And fire went out from before God, and it consumed them and killed them."

He said: There is no difficulty. One case is speaking of when Israel does the will of God, while the other is speaking of when they do not do His will. When Israel does not do His will, then the fire comes close [to destroy and punish]. But when they do God's will, then the Attribute of Mercy encompasses and surrounds it, as it is written (*Micah 7:18*), "He lifts up sin and passes over rebellion."

35. What is this like? A king wanted to punish and whip his slaves. One of his governors stood up and asked the reason for this punishment. When the king described the offence, the governor said, "Your slaves never did such a thing. I will be their bondsman until you investigate it more thoroughly." In the meantime, the king's anger was calmed.

36. His students asked: Why is the letter Daleth thick on the side?

He replied: Because of the Segol which is in the small Patach.

It is thus written (*Psalms 24:7*), "The openings (*pitcher*) of the World." There He placed a Patach above and a Segol below. It is for this reason that it is thick.

37. What is the Patach? It is an opening (Petach).

What is meant by an opening? This is the direction of north, which is open to all the world. It is the gate from which good and evil emerge.

And what is good?

He mocked them and said: Did I not tell you that it is a small Patach (opening)?

They said: We have forgotten, teach us again.

He reviewed it and said: What is this like? A king had a throne. Sometimes he carried it on his arm, and sometimes on his head.

They asked why, and he replied: Because it is beautiful and it is a pity to sit on it.

They asked: Where did he place it on his head?

He replied: In the open Mem. It is thus written (*Psalms 85:12*), "Truth sprouts up from the earth, and the righteousness looks down from heaven."

38. Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Psalms 87:2*), "God loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

"The gates of Zion" are the "openings of the World."

A gate is nothing other than an opening. We thus say, "Open for us the gates of mercy."

God said: I love the "gates of Zion" when they are open. Why? Because they are on the side of evil. But when Israel does good before God and are worthy that good be opened for them, then God loves them -- "more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

["The dwellings of Jacob"] are all peace, as it is written (*Genesis 25:27*), "Jacob was a simple

The Bahir

man, dwelling in tents.

39. This is like two men, one who is inclined to do evil and does good, and the other who is inclined to do good and does evil.

Who is more praiseworthy? The one who is inclined to do evil and does good, for he may do good again.

It is therefore written (Psalm 87:2), "God loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." These [dwellings] are all peace, as it is written (Genesis 25:27), "Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents."

40. His students asked: What is Cholem?

He replied: It is the soul -- and its name is Cholem.

If you listen to it, your body will be vigorous (Chalam) in the Ultimate Future. But if you rebel against it, there will be sickness (Choleh) on your head, and diseases (Cholim) on its head.

41. They also said: Every dream (Chalom) is in the Cholem.

Every white precious stone is in the Cholem. It is thus written [with regard to the High Priest's breastplate] (Exodus 28:19), "[And in the third row...] a white stone (aChLaMah)."

42. He said to them: Come and hear the fine points regarding the vowel points found in the Torah of Moses.

He sat and expounded: Chirek hates evildoers and punishes them. Its side includes jealousy, hatred and competition.

It is thus written (Psalm 37:12), "He gnashes (Chorek) his teeth at them." Do not read chorek (gnashes), but rochek (repels).

Repel (rachek) these traits from yourself, and repel yourself from evil. Good will then certainly attach itself to you.

43. Chirek. Do not read ChiRiK but KeRaCh (Ice). Whatever the Chirek touches becomes ice. It is thus written (*Exodus 34:7*), "and cleanses."

44. What is the indication that Chirek has the connotation of burning?

This is because it is fire that burns all fire. It is thus written (*1 Kings 18:38*), "And God's fire fell, and it consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and evaporated the water that was in the trench."

The Bahir

Section III

The Seven Voices and the Sephiroth

45. He (Rabbi Amorai) said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 20:15*), “And all the people saw the voices.” These are the voice regarding which King David spoke.

It is thus written (*Psalms 29:3*), “The voice of God is upon the waters, the God of glory thunders.” [This is the first voice.]

[The second voice is] (*Psalms 29:4*), “The voice of God comes in strength.” Regarding this it is written (*Isaiah 10:13*), “By the *strength* of my hand have I done it.” It is likewise written (*Isaiah 48:13*), “Also *My Hand* has founded the earth.”

[The third voice is] (*Psalms 29:4*), “The voice of God is with majesty.” It is also written (*Psalms 111:3*), “Splendour and majesty are His works, his righteousness stands forever.”

[The fourth voice is] (*Psalms 29:5*), “God’s voice breaks the cedars.” This is the bow that breaks the cypress and cedar trees.

[The fifth voice is] (*Psalms 29:7*), “God’s voice draws out flames of fire.” This is what makes peace between water and fire. It draws out the power of the fire and prevents it from evaporating the water. It also prevents [the water] from extinguishing it.

[The sixth voice is] (*Psalms 29:8*), “God’s voice shakes the desert.” It is thus written (*Psalms 18:51*) “He does kindness to his Messiah, to David and his descendants until eternity” – more than [when Israel was] in the desert.

[The seventh voice is] (*Psalms 29:9*), “God’s voice makes hinds to calf, strips the forests bare, and in His Temple, all say Glory.” It is thus written (*Song of Songs 2:7*) “I bind you with an oath, O daughters of Jerusalem, with the hosts, or with the *hinds* of the field.”

This teaches us that the Torah was given with seven voices. In each of them the Master of the universe revealed Himself to them, and they saw Him. It is thus written, “And all the people saw the voices.”

46. One verse states (*2 Samuel 22:10*), “He bent the heavens and came down, with gloom under His feet.” Another verse says (*Exodus 19:20*) “And God came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain.”

Still another verse, however, (*Exodus 20:22*) states “From heaven I spoke to you.”

How is this reconciled? His “great fire” was on earth, and this was one voice. The other voices were in heaven.

It is thus written (*Deuteronomy 4:36*), “From the heavens He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you. And on the earth He showed you His great fire, and His words you heard from the fire.”

Which [fire] was that? It was the “great [fire]” that was on the earth.]

From where did the speech emanate? From this fire, as it is written, “and His words you heard from the fire.”

47. What is the meaning of the verse (*Deuteronomy 4:12*), “You saw no form, only a voice”?

The Bahir

This was explained when Moses said to Israel (*Deuteronomy 4:15*), “You did not see an entire image.” You saw an image, but not an “entire image.”

What is this like? A king stands before his servants wrapped in a white robe. Even though he is far away, they can still hear his voice. This is true even though they cannot see his throat when he speaks. In a similar manner, they saw an image, but not an “entire image”.

It is therefore written, “You saw no form, only a voice.” It is also written (*Deuteronomy 4:12*) “A voice of words you heard.”

48. One verse (*Exodus 20:15*), states, “and all the people saw the voices.” Another verse, however, (*Deuteronomy 4:12*) states, “The voice of words you heard.” How can [the two be reconciled]?

At first they saw the voices. What did they see? The seven voices mentioned by David. But in the end they heard the word that emanated from them all.

But we have learned that there were ten.

Our sages taught that they were all said with a single word.

But we have said that there were seven.

There were seven voices. Regarding three of them it is written (*Deuteronomy 4:12*), “The voice of words you heard, but you saw no form, only a voice.” This teaches us that they were all said with a single word.

This is so that Israel should not make a mistake and say, “Others helped him. It might have been one of the angels. But His voice alone could not be so powerful.” It was for this reason that he came back and included them [in a single word].

49. Another explanation:

It was so that the world should not say that since there were ten sayings for ten kings, it might be that He could not speak for them all through one. He therefore said (*Exodus 20:2*), “I am [the Lord your God],” which included all ten.

What are the ten kings? They are the seven voices and three sayings (*Amarim*).

What are the sayings? [They are the ones alluded to in the verse] (*Deuteronomy 26:18*) “God has said for you today.”

“What are the three? [Two are mentioned in the verse] (*Proverbs 4:7*), “The beginning is Wisdom: acquire Wisdom, with all your acquisition, acquire Understanding.”

It is thus written (*Job 32:8*), “The soul of Shaddai gives them Understanding.” The soul of Shaddai is what gives them Understanding.

What is the third one?

As the old man said to the child, “What is hidden from you, do not seek, and what is concealed from you, do not probe. Where you have authority, seek to understand, but you have nothing to do with mysteries.”

50. We have learned (*Proverbs 25:2*), “The glory of God is to hide a word.”

What is “a word”? That of which it is written (*Psalms 119:160*), “The Beginning of Your word is truth.”

[It is also written] (*Proverbs 25:2*), “The glory of kings is to probe a word.”

What is this “word”? That of which it is written (*Proverbs 25:11*), “A word spoken in its proper place (*Aphen-av*)”, do not read “its proper place” (*Aphen-av*), but “its wheel” (*Ophen'av*).

The Bahir

51. The students asked Rabbi Berachiah, "Let us discuss these words with you," but he would not give them permission. Once, however, he did give them permission, but he did so to test them, to see if they would now pay good attention.

One day he tested them and said, "Let me hear your wisdom."

They began and said:

"In the beginning" is one.

[Two is] (*Isaiah 57:16*), "The spirit that unwraps itself is from Me, and I have made souls."

[Three is] (*Psalms 65:10*), "The divisions of God are filled with water."

What are these "divisions?" You taught us, our master, that God took the waters of creation and separated them, placing half in the skies and half in the ocean. This is the meaning of "the divisions of God are filled with water."

Through them, man studies the Torah.

Rabbi Chama thus taught: Because of the merit of deeds of kindness, a person can study the Torah. It is thus written (*Isaiah 55:1*), "Ho, let all who are thirsty come for water, let him without silver come, stock up and eat." Go to Him, and He will do kindness with you, and you will "stock up and eat."

52. "Let him without silver come" can also be explained in another way. Let him come to God, for He has silver. It is thus written (*Haggai 2:8*), "Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold."

What is the meaning of the verse, "Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold"?

What is this like? A king had two treasuries, one of silver, and one of gold. He placed that of silver to his right, and that of gold to his left. He said [of the silver], "This should be ready, and easy to take out."

He keeps his words calm. He is attached to the poor and directs them calmly. It is thus written (*Exodus 15:6*), "Your right hand, O God, is mighty in power."

If he rejoices in his portion, then all is well. If not, then (*Exodus 15:6*), "Your right hand, O God, crumbles the enemy."

He said to them: This is referring to the gold. It is thus written, "Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold."

53. Why is [gold] called *Zahav*? Because it includes three attributes, [alluded to in its three letters, *Zayin, Heh, Beth*].

[The first attribute is] Male, (*Zachar*). This is the *Zayin*.

[The second is] the Soul. This is the *Heh*. [The numerical value of *Heh* is five, alluding to the five names of the soul: *Nephesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chiah, Yechidah*.]

What is the purpose the *Heh*? It is a throne for the *Zayin*. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 5:7*), "For one above the other watches."

The *Beth* is its sustenance. It is thus written (*Genesis 1:1*), "In (*Beth*) the beginning [God] created..."

54. What is its function here?

What is this like? A king once had a daughter who was good, pleasant, beautiful and perfect. He married her to a royal prince, and clothed, crowned and bejewelled her, giving her much money.

Is it possible for the king to ever leave his daughter? You will agree that it is not. Is it ever possible for him to be with her constantly? You will also agree that it is not. What can he

The Bahir

then do? He can place a window between the two, and whenever the father needs the daughter, or the daughter needs the father, they can come together through the window. It is thus written (*Psalms 45:14*), “All glorious is the king’s daughter inside, her garment is interwoven with *gold*.”

55. What is the *Beth* at the end? [As it is written] (*Proverbs 24:3*), “With wisdom will the house (*Bayit*) be built.”

The verse does not say “was built”, but “will be built”. In the future God will build and decorate it, thousands of times more than it was.

It is as we have said: Why does the Torah begin with a *Beth*? As it is written (*Proverbs 8:30*), “I was with Him as a craftsman, I was His delight for a day, a day, [frolicking before Him at every time].” These are the two thousand years, which are the “beginning”.

Two? But the scripture says seven, as it is written (*Isaiah 30:26*), “The light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold [like the light of the seven days.” And we said, “Just like the sun was for seven, so the moon was for seven.” [He replied,] “I said thousands.”

56. They said to him: Up until now there are five. What comes next?

He replied: First I will explain gold. What is gold? We learn that it is where justice emanates. If you bend your words to the right or left, you will be punished.

57. What is the meaning of the verse (*Isaiah 30:26*), “The light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, like the light of the seven days.”

The verse does not say “seven days,” but “*the* seven days.” These are the days regarding which it is written (*Exodus 31:17*), “For six days God made [the heaven and the earth].” As you said, God made six beautiful vessels. What are they? “The heaven and the earth.” Are they not seven? Yes, as it is written (*ibid.*) “And on the seventh day, He rested and souled.”

What is the meaning of “souled?” This teaches us that the Sabbath sustains all souls. It is therefore written that it souled.

58. Another explanation:

This teaches us that it is from there that souls fly forth. It is thus written, “and He souled.” This continues for a thousand generations. It is thus written (*Psalms 105:8*), “The word that He commanded until a thousand generations.”

Immediately after this it says, “[the covenant] that He cut with Abraham.”

What is the meaning of “cut”? He cut a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands and the ten toes of his feet.

Abraham was ashamed. God then said to him (*Genesis 17:4*), “And I, behold My covenant is with you,” and with it, “you will be the father of many nations.”

59. Why is heaven called *Shamayim*?

This teaches that God kneaded fire and water, and combined them together. From this He made the “beginning of His word.” It is thus written (*Psalms 119:160*), “The beginning of your word is truth.”

It is therefore called *Shamayim* – *Sham Mayim* (there is water) – *Esh Mayim* (fire water). He said to them: This is the meaning of the verse (*Job 25:2*), “He makes peace in His

The Bahir

heights.” He placed peace and love between them. May He also place peace and love among us.

60. We also say (*Psalms 119:164*), “seven times each day I praised You for Your righteous judgement.”

They asked him, “What are they?”

He replied, “You do not look at it carefully. Be precise and you will find them.”

61. They asked him, “What is the letter *Tzaddi*?”

He said: *Tzaddi* is a *Nun* and a *Yod*. Its mate is also a *Nun* and a *Yod*.

It is thus written (*Proverbs 10:25*), “The righteous (*Tzadik*) is the foundation of the world.”

62. They asked him: What is the meaning of the verse [with regard to Balak and Balaam] (*Numbers 23:14*), “And he took him to the field of the seers.”?

What is the “field of the seers”? As it is written (*Song of Songs 7:12*), “Come my beloved, let us go out to the field.”

Do not read *Sadeh* (the field), but *Sidah* (carriage).

What is this carriage? He said, “The Heart of the Blessed Holy One.”

His heart said to the Blessed Holy One, “Come my beloved, let us go out to the carriage to stroll. It will not constantly sit in one place.”

63. What is his heart?

He said: If so, Ben Zoma is outside, and you are with him.

The heart (*Lev*) [in numerical value] is thirty-two. These are concealed, and with them the world was created.

What these 32?

He said: These are the 32 Paths.

This is like a king who was in the innermost of many chambers. The number of such chambers was 32, and to each one there was a path. Should the king bring everyone to his chamber through these paths? You will agree that he should not. Should he reveal his jewels, his tapestries, his hidden and concealed secrets? You will again agree that he should not. What then does he do? He touches the Daughter, and includes all the paths in her and in her garments.

One who wants to go inside should gaze there.

He married her to a king, and also gave her to him as a gift. Because of his love for her, he sometimes calls her “my sister,” since they are both from one place. Sometimes he calls her his daughter, since she is actually his daughter. And sometimes he calls her “my mother.”

64. Furthermore, if there is no wisdom, then there is no justice.

It is thus written (*1 Kings 5:26*), “And God gave wisdom to Solomon.” He then judged the case [of the two mothers and the infant] correctly, and it is then written (*1 Kings 3:28*), “And all Israel of the judgement that the King had judged, and they feared the king, for they say that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgement.”

65. And what wisdom did God give to Solomon?

Solomon had God’s name. We have thus said that whenever Solomon is mentioned in the *Song of Songs*, it is a holy name, except in one case.

God said to him, “Since your name is like the name of My Glory, I will let you marry my

The Bahir

daughter.”

But she is married!

Let us say that He gave her to him as a gift. It is thus written (*1 Kings 5:26*), “And God gave wisdom to Solomon.”

Here, however, it is not explained. Where then is it explained? When the scripture states (*1 Kings 3:28*), “For they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgement.” We then see that the wisdom that God gave him was such that he could “do judgement.”

What is the meaning of “to do judgement?” As long as a person does judgement, God’s wisdom is inside him. This is what helps him and draws him near. If not, it repels him, and not only that, but it also punishes him. It is thus written (*Leviticus 26:28*), “I will chastise you, also I.”

66. And Rabbi Rahumai said: What is the meaning of the verse (*Leviticus 26:28*), “[I will chastise you,] also I”?

God said, “I will chastise you.”

The Congregation of Israel said, “Do not think that I will seek mercy for you, but I will chastise you. Not only will I render judgement, but I will also chastise you.”

67. What is the meaning of (*Leviticus 26:28*), “[I will chastise you, also I], seven for your sins”?

The Congregation of Israel said: “I will chastise you, also I” – and also those regarding which it is written (*Psalms 119:164*), “Seven each day I praised You.”

They joined her and replied: Also us seven. Even though among us is the one who reverses itself, the one who oversees good and merit, we too will reverse ourselves and chastise.

Why? Because of your sins.

But if you return to Me, then I will return to you. It is thus written (*Malachi 3:7*), “Return to Me, and I will return to you.”

The scripture does not say, “I will bring you back to Me.” Instead it says, “I will return to you” – with you. We will all seek mercy from the King.

What does the King say? [He says] (*Jeremiah 3:22*), “Return you backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings.” [He also says] (*Ezekiel 18:30*), “Return and bring back.”

What is the meaning of the verse, “Return and bring back”? Come back and ask those Seven to return with you. The scripture therefore says, “and bring back” – those regarding which it is written, “seven for your sin.”

68. The disciples asked Rabbi Rahumai: What is the meaning of the verse (*Habakkuk 3:1*), “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, for errors.” A prayer? It should be called a praise [since it speaks of God’s greatness].

But whoever turns his heart from worldly affairs and delves in the Works of the Chariot* is accepted before God as if he prayed all day. It is therefore called “a prayer.”

What is the meaning of “for errors”? As it is written [regarding wisdom] (*Proverbs 5:19*), “With its love you shall always err.”

Regarding what is this speaking? The Works of the Chariot, as it is written (*Habbakuk 3:2*)

* i.e. “Maaseh Merkavah” or Merkavah Mysticism which Kaplan says was synonymous with the Qabalah at the time the Bahir was first composed.

The Bahir

“O God, I heard a report of You and I feared.”

69. What is the meaning of, “I heard a report of You and I feared, [O God, bring to life Your works in the midst of the years]”?

Why does the verse say “I feared” after “I heard a report of You,” and not after “in the midst of the years”?

But it was “from the report of You” that “I feared.”

What is the “report of You”? It is the place where they listen to reports.

Why does the verse say “I heard” and not “I understood”? [The word “heard” has the connotation of understanding] as we find (*Deuteronomy 38:49*), “A nation whose language you do not hear.”

70. Why did he say “I feared”? Because the ear looks like the letter *Aleph*.

The *Aleph* is the first of all letters. Besides this, the *Aleph* causes all the letters to endure.

The *Aleph* looks like the brain.

When you mention the *Aleph* you open your mouth. The same is true of thought, when you extend your thoughts to the Infinite and Boundless.

From *Aleph* emanate all letters. Do we not see that it is first?

It is thus written (*Micah 2:13*), “God (*YHVH*) is at their head.” We have a rule that every Name that is written *Yod He Vav He* is specific to the Blessed Holy One and is sanctified with holiness.

What is the meaning of “with holiness”? This is the Holy Palace.

Where is the Holy Palace? We would say that it is in thought and in the *Aleph*.

This is the meaning of the verse, “I heard a report of You and I feared.”

71. Habakkuk therefore said: I know that my prayer is accepted with delight. I also delighted when I came to that place where I understood “a report of You and I feared.” Therefore, “Bring to life your works in the midst of the years” – through Your unity.

What is this like? A king who was talented, hidden and concealed went into his house and commanded that no one seek him. One who does seek is therefore afraid, lest the king find out that he has violated the king’s order. [Habakkuk] therefore said, “I feared, O God, bring to life Your works in the midst of the years.”

This is what Habakkuk said: Because Your name is in You, and You is Your name, “bring to life Your works in the midst of the years.” Thus will it be forever.

72. Another explanation of “Bring to life Your works in the midst of years”:

What is this like? A king had a beautiful pearl, and it was the treasure of his kingdom. When he is happy, he embraces it, kisses it, places it on his head, and loves it.

Habakkuk said: Even though Kings are with You, the beloved pearl is in Your world.

Therefore, “Bring to life Your works in the midst of years.”

What is the meaning of “years”? It is written (*Genesis 1:3*), “And God said, ‘Let there be light.’” Light is nothing other than day, as it is written (*Genesis 1:16*), “The great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night.”

Years are made from days.

It is thus written, “Bring to life Your works in the midst of years” – in the midst of that pearl that gives rise to years.

The Bahir

73. But it is written (*Isaiah 43:5*), “[Fear not, for I am with you,] I will bring your seed from the east.” The sun rises in the east, and you say that the pearl is day.

[He replied:] I am only speaking with regard to the verse (*Genesis 1:5*) “And it was evening and it was morning, day.” Regarding this it is written (*Genesis 2:4*), “In the day that God made earth and heaven.”

74. And it is written (*Psalms 18:12*), “He made darkness His hiding place round about, His *Succah* the darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies (*Shechakim*).”

He said: Regarding this it is written (*Isaiah 45:8*), “The skies (*Shechakim*) pour down righteousness.”

This righteousness (*Tzadik*) is the Attribute of Judgement for the world. It is thus written (*Deuteronomy 16:20*), “Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue.”

Immediately after this, it is written, “that you may live and occupy the land.” If you judge yourself, then you will live. If not, then it will judge you, and it will be fulfilled, even against your will.

75. Why does the Torah say “righteousness, righteousness” twice?

He said: Because the scripture continues (*Psalms 18:13*), “At the glow opposite Him.”

The first “righteousness” is literal righteousness (*Tzedek*). This is the Divine Presence [*i.e. Shekinah*]. It is thus written (*Isaiah 1:21*), “Righteousness dwells in it.”

What is the second “righteousness”? This is the righteousness that frightens the righteous. Is this righteousness charity (*Tzadakah*) or not?

He said that it is not.

Why? Because it is written (*Isaiah 59:17*), “He put on righteousness like a coat of mail, and [a helmet of salvation on His head].”

His head is nothing other than Truth. It is thus written (*Psalms 119:160*), “The head of Your word is truth.”

Truth is nothing other than peace. It is thus written [that King Hezekiah said] (*Isaiah 39:8*), “There shall be peace and truth in my days.”

Is it possible for a man to say this? But this is what Hezekiah said: The attribute that You gave to David my ancestor is half of my days, and peace and truth are half of my days. It is for this reason that he mentioned “my days.”

He mentioned both “peace and truth” and “in my days,” since it is all one. It is thus written (*Genesis 1:5*), “And it was evening, and it was morning, one day.”

[The day reconciles morning and evening, and is therefore peace.] Just as the day is peace, so he chose peace. It is therefore written (*2 Kings 20:19*), “Peace and truth shall be in my days.”

This shall be through the attribute that You gave to David. Regarding this, it is written (*Psalms 89:37*), “His throne shall be like the sun before Me.”

76. What is the meaning of the verse (*Habakkuk 3:2*), “In the midst of years make it known”?

He said: I know that You are the holy God, as it is written (*Exodus 15:11*), “Who is like You, mighty in holiness?” Holiness is in You and You are in holiness. Nevertheless, “in the midst of years make it known.”

What is the meaning of “make it known”? [This means] that You should have mercy. It is thus written (*Exodus 2:25*), “And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew.”

The Bahir

What is the meaning of, “and God knew”?

What is this like? A king had a beautiful wife, and had children from her. He loved them and raised them, but they went out to bad ways. He then hated both them and their mother.

The mother went to them and said, “My children! Why do you do this: Why do you make your father hate both you and me?” [She spoke to them in this manner] until they had remorse and did the will of their father.

When the king saw this, he loved them as much as he did in the beginning. He then also remembered their mother. This is the meaning of the verse, “And God saw... and God knew.”

This is also the meaning of the verse, “In the midst of years make it known.”

77. What is the meaning of the verse (*Habakkuk 3:2*) “In anger, you shall remember love (*rachem*)”?

He said: When Your children sin before You and You are angry at them, “remember love.”

What is the meaning of “remember love”? That regarding which it is written (*Psalms 18:2*), “I love (*rachem*) You O God, my strength.”

And You have him this attribute, which is the Divine Presence of Israel. He recalled his son whom he inherited, and whom You gave to him. It is thus written (*I Kings 5:26*), “And God gave wisdom to Solomon.”

And You should remember their father Abraham, as it is written (*Isaiah 41:8*), “The seed of Abraham My friend” – “In the midst of years make it known.”

78. Where do we see that Abraham had a daughter? It is written (*Genesis 24:1*), “And God blessed Abraham with all (*Bakol*).”

It is also written (*Isaiah 43:7*), “All that is called by My name, for My glory I created it, I formed it, also I made it.”

Was this blessing his daughter, or was it not?

Yes, it was his daughter.

What is this like? A king had a slave who was complete and perfect before him. The king tested the slave in many ways, but the slave withstood all temptation.

The King said, “What will I give that slave? What should I do for him? I can do nothing but command my older brother to advise him, watch over him and honour him.” The slave thus went to the older brother and learned his attributes. The brother loved him very much, and called him his friend. It is thus written (*Isaiah 41:8*), “The seed of Abraham My friend.”

He said, “What will I give him? What can I do for him? Behold I have made a beautiful vessel, and in it are beautiful jewels. There is nothing like it in the treasuries of kings. I will give it to him, and he will be worthy in his place.”

This is the meaning of the verse, “And God blessed Abraham with all.”

79. Another explanation:

[It is written] (*Habakkuk 3:2*), “I heard a report of You and I feared.” [This means] “I understood what was reported about You and I feared.”

What did he understand? He understood God’s thought. Even [human] thought has no end, for man can think, and descend to the end of the world.

The ear also has no end and is not satiated. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 1:8*), “The ear is not satiated from hearing.”

Why is this so? Because the ear is in the shape of an *Aleph*. *Aleph* is the root of the Ten

The Bahir

Commandments. Therefore “the ear is not satiated from hearing.”

80 What is the meaning of the letter *Zayin* in the word *Ozen* (ear)?

We have said that everything that the Blessed Holy One brought into His world has a name emanating from its concept. It is thus written (*Genesis 2:19*), “All that the man called each living soul, that was its name.” This teaches us that each thing’s body was thus.

And how do we know that each thing’s name is its body?

It is written (*Proverbs 10:7*), “The memory of the righteous shall be a blessing, and the name of the wicked shall rot.” What actually rots, their name or their body? [One must agree that it is their body.] Here too, [each thing’s name refers to] its body.

81 What is an example of this?

Take the word for root – *Shoresh* (*Shin – Resh – Shin*).

The letter *Shin* looks like the roots of a tree.

[*Resh* is bent, since] the root of every tree is bent.

And what is the function of the final *Shin*? This teaches us that if you take a branch and plant it, it will root again.

What is its function of the *Zayin* [in *Ozen* – ear]?

[Its numerical value is seven] corresponding to the seven days of the week. This teaches us that each day has its own power.

And what is its function [in the word *Ozen*]?

This teaches us that just like there is infinite wisdom in the ear, so is there power in all parts of the body.

82 What are the seven parts of man’s body?

It is written (*Genesis 9:6*), “In the form of God, He made man.” It is also written (*Genesis 1:27*), “In the form of God He made him” – counting all his limbs and parts.

But we have said: What does the letter *Vav* resemble? It is alluded to in the verse (*Psalms 104:5*), “He spreads out light like a garment.” For *Vav* is nothing other than the six directions.

He replied: The covenant of circumcision and man’s mate are considered as one.

His two hands then make three, his head and body, five, and his two legs make seven.

Paralleling all these are their powers in heaven. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 7:14*), “Also one opposite the other had God made.”

These are the days [of the week, as it is written] (*Exodus 31:17*), “Because six days God made the heaven and the earth.” The scripture does not say “in six days,” but rather, “six days.” This teaches us that each day [of the week] has its own specific power.

83 What is the significance of the *Nun* [in the word *Ozen*]?

This teaches us that the brain is the main part of the spinal cord. It constantly draws from there, and if not for the spinal cord, the brain could not endure. And without the brain, the body could not endure.

The entire body exists only in order to provide for the needs of the brain. And if the body did not endure, then the brain would also not endure.

The spinal cord is the channel from the brain to the entire body. It is represented by the bent *Nun*.

But [in the word *Ozen*] the *Nun* is a straight one.

The Bahir

The straight *Nun* is the one that is always at the end of a word. This teaches us that the straight *Nun* includes both the bent one and the straight one.

But the bent *Nun* is the Foundation. This teaches us that the straight *Nun* includes both male and female.

84. The open *Mem*. What is the open *Mem*?

It includes both male and female.

What is the closed *Mem*?

It is made like a belly from above.

But Rabbi Rahumai said that the belly is like the letter *Teth*.

He said it is like a *Teth* on the inside, while I say that it is like a *Mem* on the outside.

85 What is a *Mem*?

Do not read *Mem*, but *Mayim* (water). Just like water is wet, so is the belly always wet.

Why does the open *Mem* include both male and female, while the closed *Mem* is male?

This teaches us that the *Mem* is primarily male. The opening was then added to it for the sake of the female.

Just like the male cannot give birth, so the closed *Mem* cannot give birth. And just like the female has an opening with which to give birth, so can the open *Mem* give birth. The *Mem* is therefore open and closed.

86. Why should the *Mem* have two forms, open and closed?

Because we said: Do not read *Mem*, but *Mayim* (Water).

The woman is cold, and therefore, must be warmed by the male.

Why should the *Nun* have two forms, bent and straight?

Because it is written (*Psalms 72:17*), "Before the sun shall his name reign (*ya-Nun*)."
[This is] from two *Nuns*, the bent *Nun* and the straight *Nun*, and it must be through male and female.

87. It is written (*Ecclesiastes 1:8*), "The ear is not satiated from hearing." It is also written (*Ecclesiastes 1:8*), "The eye is not satiate from seeing." This teaches us that both draw from thought.

What is thought?

It is a king that is needed by all things that were created in the world, both above and below.

88. What is the meaning of the expression, "It rose in thought"? Why do we not say that "it descended [in thought]"?

Indeed, we have said, "One who gazes into the vision of the Chariot first descends and then ascends."

We use the expression [of descent] there because we say, "One who gazes into the vision (*Tzafayat*) of the Chariot." The Aramaic translation of "vision" (*Tzafiyat*) is *Sechuta* [meaning a covering, and alluding to the fact that one is looking down from above]. It is also written (*Isaiah 21:8*), "And he called as a lion: 'Upon the watchtower (*Mitzpeh*), O God.'" Here, however, we are speaking of thought, [and therefore only speak of ascent]. For thought does not include any vision, and has no ending whatsoever. And anything that has no end or limit does not have any descent.

People therefore say, "Someone descended to the limit of his friend's knowledge." One can

The Bahir

arrive at the limit of a person's knowledge, but not at the limit of his thought.

89. Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the *Segol*? Its name is *Segulah* (treasure). It comes after the *Zarka*. What is the meaning of *Zarka*?

It is like its name – something that is thrown (*ni Zrak*). It is like something that is thrown, and after it comes (*Ecclesiastes 2:8*), “the treasures of kings and lands.”

90. What is the reason that it is called *Zarka*?

It is written (*Ezekiel 3:12*), “Blessed is the glory of God from His place.” This indicates that no being knows His place. We recite [God's] name of the Crown, and it goes to the head of the Owner. It is thus written [regarding God] (*Genesis 14:19*), “Owner of heaven and earth.” When it goes, it is like it is thrown (*Zarka*). Following it is treasure (*Segulah*). It is at the head of all letters.

91. Why is [this accent] at the end of a word, and not at the beginning?

This teaches us that this Crown rises higher and higher.

It is included and crowned, as it is written (*Psalms 118:22*), “The stone that the builders rejected has become the head cornerstone.” It ascend to the place from which it was graven, as it is written (*Genesis 49:24*), “From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.”

92. He also said:

What is the reason that we place blue wool in the *Tzitzit*? And why are there 32 [threads]? What is this like? A king had a beautiful garden, and in it were 32 paths. He placed a watchman over them to show that all these paths belong to him alone. [The king] said to him, “Watch them, and walk upon them every day. As long as you walk these paths, you will have peace.”

What did the watchman do? He appointed other watchmen [as his assistants to watch] over them. He said, “If I remain alone on these paths, it is impossible for me, a single watchman, to maintain them all. Besides that, people may say that I am the king.” The watchman therefore placed his assistants over all the paths. These are the 32 paths.

93. What is the reason for the blue?

The watchman said, “Perhaps those assistant watchmen will say that the garden belongs to us.” He therefore gave them a sign, and told them, “See this. It is the sign of the king, indicating that the garden belongs to him. He is the one who made these paths, and they are not mine. This is his deal.”

What is this like? A king and his daughter had slaves, and they wanted to travel abroad. But [the slaves] were afraid, being in terror of the king. He therefore gave them his sign. They were also afraid of the daughter, and she [also] gave them a sign. They said, “From now on, with these two signs, ‘God will watch you from all evil, He will safeguard your soul.’”

94. Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse (*1 Kings 8:27*), “Behold the heaven and the heaven of heaven cannot contain You”?

This teaches us that the Blessed Holy One has 72 names.

All of them were placed in the Tribes [of Israel]. It is thus written (*Exodus 28:10*), “Six of

The Bahir

their names on one stone, and the names of the other six on the other stone, according to their generations.”

It is also written (*Joshua 4:9*), “He raised up twelve stones.” Just like the first are (*Exodus 28:12*), “stones of memorial,” so these are (*Joshua 4:7*), “stones of memorial.”

[There are therefore] 12 stones [each containing six names] making a total of 72. These parallel the 72 names of the Blessed Holy One.

Why do they begin with twelve? This teaches us that God has twelve Directors. Each of these has six Powers [making a total of 72].

What are they? They are the 72 languages.

95. The Blessed Holy One has a single Tree, and it has twelve diagonal boundaries:

The northeast boundary, the southeast boundary;

The upper east boundary, the lower east boundary;

The southwest boundary, the northwest boundary;

The upper west boundary, the lower west boundary;

The upper south boundary, the lower south boundary;

The upper north boundary, the lower north boundary;

They continually spread forever and ever;

They are the arms of the world.

On the inside of them is the Tree. Paralleling these diagonals there are twelve Functionaries.

Inside the Sphere there are also twelve Functionaries.

Including the diagonals themselves, this makes a total of 36 Functionaries.

Each of these has another. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 5:7*), “For one above another watches.” [This makes a total of 72.]

It therefore comes out that the east has nine, the west has nine, the north has nine, and the south has nine.

These are twelve, twelve, twelve, and they are the Functionaries in the Axis, the Sphere, and the Heart.

Their total is 36. The power of each of these 36 is in every other one.

Even though there are twelve in each of the three, they are all attached to each other.

Therefore, all 36 Powers are in the first one, which is the Axis. And if you seek them in the Sphere, you will find the very same ones. And if you seek them in the Heart, you will again find the very same ones.

Each one therefore has 36. All of them do not have more than 36 forms.

All of them complete the Heart [which has a numerical value of 32]. Four are then left over.

Add 32 to 32 and the sum is 64. These are the 64 Forms.

How do we know that 32 must be added to 32? Because it is written (*Ecclesiastes 5:7*), “For one above another watches, [and there are higher ones above them].”

We thus have 64, eight less than the 72 names of the Blessed Holy One. These are alluded to in the verse, “there are higher ones above them,” and they are the seven days of the week.

But one is still missing. This is referred to in the next verse (*Ecclesiastes 5:8*), “The advantage of the land in everything is the King.”

What is this “advantage”? This is the place from which the earth was graven. It is an advantage over what existed previously.

And what is this advantage? Everything in the world that people see is taken from its radiance. Then it is an advantage.

The Bahir

96. What is the earth from which the heavens were graven?

It is the Throne of the Blessed Holy One. It is the Precious Stone and the Sea of Wisdom. This parallels the blue in the Tzitzit.

Rabbi Meir thus said: Why is blue chosen above all other colours [for the Tzitzit]? Because the blue resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky,¹ and the sky resembles the Throne of Glory. It is thus written (*Exodus 24:10*), “They saw the God of Israel, and under His feet was like a pavement of sapphire, like the essence of heaven in clarity.” It is furthermore written (*Ezekiel 1:26*), “As the likeness of a sapphire stone was the appearance of a Throne.”

97. Rabbi Berachiah sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 25:2*), “And they shall take for Me a lifted offering (*Terumah*)”? It means, “Lift Me up with your prayers.”

And whom? Those whose “hearts make them willing.” These are the ones who are willing to draw themselves away from this world.

Honour him, for it is in him that I rejoice, since he knows My name. From him it is fitting to take My lifted offering, as it is written (*Exodus 25:2*), “from each man whose heart makes him willing, you shall take My lifted offering.” From he who makes himself willing.

Rabbi Rahumai said: [This refers to] the righteous and pious in Israel who raise Me over all the world through their merit. From them the Heart is sustained, and the Heart sustains them.

98. And all the Holy Forms oversee all the nations. But Israel is holy, taking the Tree itself and its Heart.

The Heart is the beauty (*hadar*) of the fruit of the body. Similarly, Israel takes (*Leviticus 23:40*), “the fruit of a beautiful (*hadar*) tree.”

The date palm is surrounded by its branches all around it and has its sprout (*Lulav*) in the centre. Similarly, Israel takes the body of this Tree which is its Heart.

And paralleling the body is the spinal cord, which is the main part of the body.

What is the *Lulav*? [It can be written] *Lo Lev* – “it has a heart.” The heart is also given over to it.

And what is this Heart? It is the 32 Hidden paths of Wisdom that are hidden in it.

In each of their paths there is also a Form watching over it. It is thus written (*Genesis 3:24*), “To watch the way of the Tree of Life.”

99. What are these Forms? They are that regarding which it is written (*Genesis 3:24*), “And He placed the Cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden, and the flame of a sword revolving, to guard the way of the Tree of Life.”

What is the meaning of, “He placed to the east (*kedem*) of the Garden of Eden”? He placed it in those paths that preceded (*kadmu*) the place that was called the Garden of Eden. It was also before the Cherubim, as it is written, “the Cherubim.” It was furthermore before the flame, as it is written, “the flame of a sword revolving.”

Is it then before [the flame]? Heaven is called *Shamayim*, indicating that fire and water existed before it. It is written (*Genesis 1:6*), “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it be a division between water and water.” It is then written (*Genesis 1:8*), “And God called the firmament heaven (*Shamayim*).”

How do we know that the heaven is fire? It is written (*Deuteronomy 4:24*), “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

The Bahir

100. And how do we know that “” refers to the Blessed Holy One?

It is written (*I Kings 8:36*), “And you, O Heaven, shall hear.” Was Solomon then praying to heaven that it should hear their prayers? But [we must say the he was praying] to the One whose name is Heaven.

It is thus written (*I Kings 8:27*), “Behold the heaven and the heaven of heaven cannot contain You.” This is the name of the Blessed Holy One.

You therefore have fire. How can you then say that it was before?

But we must say that their Power existed before the Forms of that place. Only then did these Holy Forms come into existence.

What is their Power? It is that regarding which it is written (*I Samuel 2:2*), “There is none holy like God, there is none other than You, and there is no Former like our God.”

101. Rabbi Berachiah sat and expounded:

What is the *Lulav* that we discuss? It is the 36 (*Lu*) given over to 32 (*Lav*).

And how?

He replied: There are three Princes, the Axis, the Sphere and the Heart. Each one is twelve, and the three therefore constitute a sum of 36, through which the world is sustained. It is thus written (*Proverbs 10:25*), “And Righteous is the foundation of the world.”

102. We learned: There is a single pillar extending from heaven to earth, and its name is Righteous (*Tzadik*).

[This pillar] is named after the righteous. When there are righteous people in the world, then it becomes strong, and when there are not, it becomes weak.

It supports the entire world, as it is written, “And Righteous is the foundation of the world.” If it becomes weak, then the world cannot endure.

Therefore, even if there is only one righteous person in the world, it is he who supports the world. It is therefore written, “And a righteous one is the foundation of the world.”

You should therefore take My lifted offering from him first. Then (*Exodus 25:3*), “And this is the lifted offering that you should take from them” – from the rest. What is it? “Gold, silver and copper.”

103. Another explanation:

It is written (*Exodus 25:2*), “and the shall take for Me (*Li*) a lifted offering.” [*Li* (for Me) can also be read, “for the *Yod*.”] They shall take the *Yod*, which is the tenth, as a lifted offering to make it holy.

How do we know that the tenth is holy? Because it is written (*Leviticus 27:32*) “The tenth shall be holy to God.”

What is holy? That regarding which it is written (*Ezekiel 44:30*), “The *beginning* of all the first fruits ... and every lifted offering of every thing.”

It is furthermore written (*Psalms 111:10*), “The *beginning* of wisdom is the fear of God.” Do not read “is the fear” but “and the fear.” [The verse will then read, “The beginning is wisdom and the fear of God.]

104. The disciples asked Rabbi Eliezer: Our master, what is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 13:2*), “Sanctify to Me every first-born”? Does the Blessed Holy One then have a first-born?

He replied: “Sanctify to Me (*Li*) every first-born” refers to nothing other than the second

The Bahir

level of holiness.

It is the name that is given to Israel, as it is written (*Exodus 7:22*), “My son, My first-born, Israel.”

To the extent that we can express it, He was with them [in Egypt] in the time of their oppression. It is therefore written (*Exodus 4:27*), “Send forth My son and he will serve Me.” [Here, only “My son” is mentioned,] and not “My first-born.”

Rabbi Rahumai said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Deuteronomy 22:7*), “You shall surely send away the mother, and the children you shall take for yourself.” Why does it not say, “You shall surely send away the father”?

But the scripture says, “you shall surely send away the mother” in honour of the one who is called the Mother of the World. It is thus written (*Proverbs 2:3*), “For you shall call Understanding a Mother.”

105. What is the meaning of, “and the children you shall take for yourself”?

Rabbi Rahumai said: These are the children that she raised. And who are they? They are the seven days of creation, and the seven days of *Succot*.

Are the seven [days of *Succot*] then not the same as the seven days of the week?

The difference is that [the days of *Succot*] are more holy. Regarding them it is written (*Leviticus 23:37*), “holy convocations.”

But then, why not [also include the seven weeks before] Shavuot, since this is also called (*Leviticus 23:21*), “a holy convocation”?

He replied: Yes, but this is the one and the other is two. It is thus written (*Exodus 12:16*), “The first day shall be a holy convocation, and the seventh day shall be a holy convocation.”

He said:

Why is *Shavuot* one [day]?

Because the Torah was given to Israel on that day. And when the Torah was created in the beginning, the Blessed Holy One ruled His world alone with it. It is thus written (*Psalms 111:10*), “The beginning is wisdom, the fear of God.” [God] said [to it], “This being so, your holiness shall be yours by yourself.”

And what is *Succot*?

He replied: the letter *Beth* [which has the connotation of a house (*Bayit*)]. It is thus written (*Proverbs 24:3*), “With wisdom a house is built.”

And how do we know that *Succot* has the connotation of a house? As it is written (*Genesis 33:17*), “And Jacob travelled to Succot. He built himself a house, and for his livestock he built *Succot* (huts). Therefore he named the place Succot.”

106. Rabbi Berachiah sat and expounded:

What is the Axis (*Teli*)?

This is the likeness that is before the Blessed Holy One. It is thus written (*Song of Songs 5:11*), “His locks are curled (*Taltalim*).”

What is the Sphere? This is the Womb.

What is the Heart? It is that regarding which it is written (*Deuteronomy 4:11*), “unto the heart of heaven.” In it are included the 32 mystical paths of Wisdom.

107. What is the meaning of the verse (*Numbers 6:24-26*), “May God (*YHVH*) bless you and watch you. May God (*YHVH*) make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. May God

The Bahir

(*YHVH*) lift His face to you and give you peace.”

This is the explicit Name of the Blessed Holy One. It is the Name containing twelve letters, as it is written, *YHVH YHVH YHVH*.

This teaches us that God's names consists of three troops. Each troop resembles the other, and each one's name is like [the other's] named. All of them are sealed with *Yod He Vav He*.

And how?

The [four letters] *Yod He Vav He* can be permuted 24 different ways, forming one troop.

This is, “May God (*YHVH*) bless you...”

In a similar manner, the second one, “May God (*YHVH*) make His face shine...” These are 24 names of the Blessed Holy One.

In a similar manner, the third one, “May God (*YHVH*) lift His face...” These are 24 names of the Blessed Holy One.

This teaches us that each army, with its leaders and officers, has 24. Multiply 24 by three and you have the 72 names of the Blessed Holy One.

These are the 72 names derived from the verses (*Exodus 14:19-21*), “And travelled... And came ... And stretched ...”

108. And who are the Officers? We learned that there are three.

Strength (*Geburah*) is the Officer of all the Holy Forms to the left of the Blessed Holy One. He is Gabriel.

The Officer of all the Holy Forms to His right is Michael.

In the middle is Truth. This is Uriel, the Officer of all the Holy Forms [in the centre].

Each Officer is over 24 Forms. But there is no reckoning of his troops, as it is written (*Job 25:3*), “Is there a number to His troops?”

But if so, then there are 72 plus 72 [making a total of 144].

He said: This is not the case. For when Israel brings a sacrifice before their Father in heaven, they are united together. This is the unification of our God.

109. Why is this sacrifice called a *Karban* [which means “bringing close”]?

Because it brings the Forms of the Holy Powers close. It is thus written (*Ezekiel 37:17*), “And you shall join one of them to the other, making one stick, and they shall become one in your hands.”

And why is [the sacrifice] called a “pleasant fragrance”?

Fragrance is only in the nose. The sense of smell is through breath, and this is nowhere but in the nose.

“Pleasant” (*nicho'ach*) means nothing other than “descending.” It is thus written (*Leviticus 9:22*), “And he descended,” and the Targum translates this as *Ve-Nachit* [having the same root as *nicho'ach*].

The fragrance-spirit descends and unifies itself with those Holy Forms, bringing itself close through the sacrifice. It is for this reason that [a sacrifice] is called a *Karban*.

110. There is a name that is derived from the three verses (*Exodus 14:19-21*), “And travelled ... And came ... And stretched...”

The letters of the first verse, “And travelled...” are arranged in this name in the order that they are in the verse.

The letters of the second verse, “And came ...” are arranged in the name in reverse order.

The Bahir

The letters of the third passage, “And stretched...” are arranged in the name in the same order as they occur in the verse, just like the case of the first verse.

Each of these verses has 72 letters.

Therefore, each of the names that is derived from these three sentences, “And travelled... And came... And stretched...” contains three letters.

These are the 72 names. They emanate and divide themselves into three sections, 24 to each section.

Over each of these sections is a higher Officer.

Each section has four directions to watch, east, west, north and south. The four directions then have a total of 24 forms. [This is true of the first section] as well as the second and the third.

All of them are sealed with *YHVH*, God of Israel, the living God, Shaddai, high and exalted, who dwells in eternity on high, whose Name is holy, *YHVH*. Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.

111. Rabbi Ahilai sat and expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse, “God (*YHVH*) is King, God (*YHVH*) was king, God (*YHVH*) will be King forever and ever.”?

This is the Explicit Name (*Shem Ha Mephoresh*), for which permission was given that it be permuted and spoken. It is thus written [regarding the above-mentioned Priestly Blessing] (*Numbers 6:27*), “And they shall place My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

This refers to the Name containing twelve letters. It is the name used in the Priestly Blessing, “May God bless you...” It contains three names [each having four letters] making a total of twelve.

Its vowel points are *Yapha'al Y'pha'oel Yiph'ol*.

If one safeguards it and mentions it in holiness, then all his prayers are heard. And not only that, but he is loved on high and below, and immediately answered and helped.

This is the Explicit Name that was written on Aaron's forehead.

The Explicit Name containing 72 letters and the Explicit Name containing twelve letters were given over by the Blessed Holy One to [the angel] Mesamariah, who stands before the Curtain. He gave it to Elijah on Mount Carmel, and with them he ascended and did not taste death.

112. These are the Explicit Holy Exalted Names. There are twelve Names, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel:

Ah-Tzitzah-ron

Aklithah-ron

Shemaqtharon

Demushah-ron

Ve-Tzaphtzaphithron

Hurmyron

Brach Yah-ron

Eresh Gadra-aon

Basavah Monahon

Chazhavayah

Havahayryhah

The Bahir

Ve-Harayth-hon

All of them are included in the Heart of heaven.

They include male and female. They are given over to the Axis, the Sphere and the Heart, and they are the wellsprings of Wisdom.

113. Rabbi Rahumai sat and expounded:

What are the twelve tribes of Israel?

But this teaches us that the Blessed Holy One has twelve rods [on high. The word *Shevet* is the same for both “tribe” and “rod.”]

What are they?

What is this like? A king had a beautiful fountain. All his brothers has no water other than this fountain, and could not endure thirst. What did he do? He made twelve pipes for the fountain, and named them after his brothers' children.

He then said to them, “If the sons are as good as their fathers, they will be worthy, and I will let water flow through the pipes. The fathers will then drink all they wish, and so will the sons. But if the sons are not worthy and do not do what is right in my eyes, then regarding this, these pipes will stand. I will give them water only on the condition that they give none to their children, since they do not obey my will.”

114. What is the meaning of the word *Shevet* [which has the connotation of both a tribe and a rod]?

It is something simple and not square.

What is the reason?

Because it is impossible to have one square inside another square. A circle inside a square can move. A square inside a square cannot move.

115. What are the things that are circular?

They are the vowel points in the Torah of Moses, for these are all round. They are to the letters like the soul, which lives in the body of man.

It is impossible for [man] to come [into this world] unless [the soul] endures within him. It is impossible for him to speak anything, great or small, without it.

In a similar manner, it is impossible to speak a word, great or small, without the vowel points.

116. Every vowel point is round, and every letter is square.

The vowel points are the life of the letters, and through them, the letters endure.

These vowel points come through the pipes to the letters through the fragrance of a sacrifice, which immediately descends. It is therefore called “A descending (pleasant) fragrance to God” – indicating that it descends to God.

This is the meaning of the verse (*Deuteronomy 6:4*), “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.”

117. Rabbi Yochanan said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 15:3*), “God is a man (*Ish*) of war, God (*YHVH*) is His name”?

Man (*Ish*) indicates a sign. The Targum thus renders, “God is a man of war,” as “God is the Master of victory in war.”

The Bahir

What is this Master?

Aleph is the first, the Holy Palace.

Do we then say that the Palace is holy? Instead we say, “the Palace of the Holy One.”

118. *Yod* is the Ten Sayings with which the world was created.

What are they? They are the Torah of Truth, which includes all worlds.

What is the *Shin*?

He said: It is the root of the tree. The letter *Shin* is like the root of a tree.

119. What is this tree that you mentioned?

He said: It represents the Powers of the Blessed Holy One, one above the other.

Just like a tree brings forth fruit through water, so the Blessed Holy One increases the Powers of the Tree through water.

What is the water of the Blessed Holy One?

It is wisdom. It is the souls of the righteous. They fly from the fountain to the great pip, ascend and attach themselves to the Tree.

Through what do they fly?

Through Israel. Why they are good and righteous, the Divine Presence dwells among them.

Their deeds then rest in the bosom of the Blessed Holy One, and He makes them fruitful and multiplies them.

120. How do we know that the Divine Presence is called *Tzedek* (Righteous)? It is written (*Deuteronomy 33:26*), “He who rides in the heavens is your help, and His majesty is in the skies (*Shechakim*).” It is also written (*Isaiah 45:8*), “The skies (*Shechakim*) run with Righteousness (*Tzedek*).”

Tzedek is the Divine Presence, as it is written (*Isaiah 1:21*), “Righteousness (*Tzedek*) dwells in it.”

Righteousness was given to David, as it is written, (*Psalms 146:10*), “May God reign forever, your God O Zion, for generation to generation.” It is also written (*1 Chronicles 11:1*), “Zion is the city of David.”

121. What is the meaning of “generation to generation”?

Rabbi Papias said: “A generation goes and a generation comes (*Ecclesiastes 1:4*).”

Rabbi Akiba said: “The generation came” – it already came.

122. What is this like? A king had slaves, and he dressed them with garments of silk and satin according to his ability. The relationship broke down, and he cast them out, repelled them, and took his garments away from them. They then went on their own way.

The king took the garments, and washed them well until there was not a single spot on them. He placed them with his storekeepers, bought other slaves, and dressed them with the same garments. He did not know whether or not the slaves were good, but they were [at least] worthy of garments that he already had and which had been previously worn.

[The verse continues] (*Ecclesiastes 1:4*), “But the earth stands forever.” This is the same as (*Ecclesiastes 12:6*), “The dust returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

The Bahir

Section IV

The Ten Sephiroth

123. Rabbi Amorai said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Leviticus 9:22*), “And Aaron raised up his hands to bless the people, and he blessed them and he descended [from making the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings].”?

Did he not already descent? But he descended “from making the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings,” and then “Aaron raised up his hands to bless the people.” What is the meaning of this raising [of hands]?

It was because he had offered a sacrifice and brought them before their Father in heaven, as we have said. Those who offer sacrifice must elevate them, [and those who] unify them [must] unify them among these.

And; what are they? The people, as it is written “to the people.” [This means] “for the sake of the people.”

124. Why are the hands lifted when they are blessed in this manner?

It is because the hands have ten fingers, alluding to the Ten *Sephiroth* with which heaven and earth were sealed.

These parallel the Ten Commandments.

In these Ten are included the 613 Commandments. If you count the letters in the Ten Commandments, you will find that there are 613 letters.

They contain all 22 letters except *Teth*, which is missing in them.

What is the reason for this? This teaches us that *Teth* is the belly – and is not included among the *Sephiroth*.

125. Why are they called *Sephiroth*?

Because it is written (*Psalms 19:2*), “The heavens declare (*me-Saprim*) the glory of God.”

126. And what are they?

They are three. Among them are three troops and three dominions.

The first dominion is light. Light is the life of water.

The second dominion includes the *Chaioth Ha-Qadesh*, the *Ophanim*, the wheels of the Chariot, and all the troops of the Blessed Holy One. The bless, exalt, glorify, praise and sanctify the might King with the *Kedushah*. Arranged in the mystery of the great *Kedushah* is the fearsome and terrible King. And they crown Him with three “holies.”

127. Why are there three “holies” and not four?

Because the holiness on high is three by three. It is thus written, “God is King, God was King, God will be King forever and ever.”

It is also written (*Numbers 6:24-26*), “May God bless you... May God shine upon you... May God lift...”

The Bahir

It is furthermore written (*Exodus 34:6*), “God (*YHVH*), God (*YHVH*).” The third one includes the rest of God’s Attributes.

What are they? [As the verse continues], “God, merciful and gracious” – the thirteen Attributes [of Mercy].

128. [The *Kedushah* is the verse (*Isaiah 6:3*), “Holy holy holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with His Glory.”]

What is the meaning of “holy holy holy”? [And why is it] foollowed by, “the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory”?

The [first] “holy” is the highest Crown.

The [second] “holy” is the root of the Tree.

The [third] “holy” is attached and unified in them all.

[This is followed by], “the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory.”

129. What is the “holy” that is attached and unified?

What is this like? A king had sons, who in turn also had sons. When the [grand]sons do his will, he mingles with them, supports them, and satisfies them all. He gives [his sons] everything good, so that they should be able to satisfy their children. But when the [grand]children do not do his will, then he only gives the fathers as much as they need.

130. What is the meaning of, “the whole earth is filled with His glory”?

This is the earth that was created on the first day. It is on high, filled with God’s glory and paralleling the Land of Israel.

And what is [this glory]? It is Wisdom, as it is written (*Proverbs 3:35*), “The wise shall inherit glory.”

131. What is “God’s glory”?

What is this like? A king had a matron in his chamber, and all his troops delighted in her. She had sons, and each day they came to see the king and to bless him.

They asked him, “Where is our mother?” He replied, “You cannot see her now.” They said, “Let her be blessed wherever she is.”

132. What is the meaning of “from His place”? This indicates that none know his place.

This is like a royal princess who came from a far place. People did not know her origin, but they saw that she was a woman of valour, beautiful and refined in all her ways. They said, “She certainly originates from the side of light, for she illuminates the world through her deeds.”

They asked her, “From where are you?” She replied, “From my place.” They said, “If so, the people of your place are great. May you be blessed, and may you place be blessed.”

133. Is this “glory of God” then not one of His hosts? Is it not inferior? Why then do they bless it?

But what is this like? A man had a beautiful garden. Outside the garden but close to it, he had a nice section of field. On this section, he planted a beautiful flower garden.

The first thing that he would water would be his garden. The water would spread over the entire garden. It would not reach the section of field however, since it was not attached, even though it was all one. He therefore opened a place for it and watered it separately.

The Bahir

134. Rabbi Rahumai said:

Glory (*Kavod*) and Heart (*Lev*) both have the same [numerical value, namely 32].

They are both one, but Glory refers to its function on high, and Heart refers to its function below.

“God’s glory” and the heart of heaven” are therefore both identical.

135. Rabbi Yochanan said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 17:11*), “And it was when Moses would raise his hands, Israel would prevail, and when he would lower his hands, Amalek would prevail.”? This teaches us that the whole world endures because of the Lifting of Hands.

Why?

Because the name of the power given to Jacob is Israel.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were each given a particular Power. The counterpart of the attribute in which each one walked was given to him.

Abraham did deeds of kindness. He prepared food for everyone in his area and for all wayfarers. He acted kindly and went out to greet them, as it is written (*Genesis 18:2*), “and he ran to greet them.” Not only that, but (*Genesis 18:2*), “He bowed to the earth.” This was a complete act of kindness.

God therefore granted him the same measure and gave him the attribute of Kindness (*Chesed*). It is thus written (*Micah 7:20*), “You give truth to Jacob, Kindness to Abraham, as You swore to our fathers from days of yore.”

What is the meaning of “from days of yore”? This teaches us that if Abraham did not do deeds of kindness, then he would not have been worthy of the attribute of Truth. Jacob would then not have been worthy of the attribute of Truth.

In the merit through which Abraham was worthy of the attribute of Kindness, Isaac became worthy of the attribute of Terror. It is thus written (*Genesis 31:53*), “And Jacob swore by the Terror of his father Isaac.”

Does anyone then swear in this manner, mentioning his belief in the Terror of his father?

But up until that time, Jacob had not been given any power. He therefore swore by the power that was given to his father. It is for this reason that it is written, “And Jacob swore by the Terror of his father Isaac.”

What is it?

It is Chaos. It emanates from evil and astounds people.

And what is that? It is that regarding which it is written (*I Kings 18:38*), “And fire came down and it consumed the burnt offering, and the stones, and the earth, and it evaporated the water that was in the trench.” It is also written (*Deuteronomy 4:24*), “The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

136. What is Kindness?

It is the Torah, as it is written (*Isaiah 55:1*), “Ho, let all who are thirsty come for water, let he without silver come, [stock up and eat – come, stock up wine and milk, without silver and without payment].”

[Kindness is therefore] silver. It is thus written, “come, stock up and eat – come, stock up wine and milk, without silver and without payment.” He fed you Torah and taught you, for you have already earned it through the merit of Abraham, who did deeds of kindness.

Without silver, he would feed others, and without payment, he would give them wine and milk.

The Bahir

137. Why wine and milk? What does one have to do with the other?

But this teaches us that wine is Terror and milk is Kindness.

Why is wine mentioned first? Because it is closer to us.

Do you then think that this refers to actual wine and milk? We must say that it is the Form of wine and milk.

Through the merit of Abraham, who was worthy of the attribute of Kindness, Isaac was worthy of the attribute of Terror. And because Isaac was worthy of the attribute of Terror, Jacob was worthy of the attribute of Truth, which is the attribute of Peace.

God bestowed him according to his measure. It is thus written (*Genesis 25:27*) “Jacob was a complete man, dwelling in tents.” The word “complete” means nothing other than peace. It is thus written (*Deuteronomy 18:13*), “You shall be complete with the Lord your God,” and the Targum renders this, “You shall be at peace (*sh’lim*).”

The word “complete” refers to nothing other than the Torah. It is thus written (*Malachi 2:6*), “A Torah of truth was in his mouth.” What is written in the very next phrase? It sates, “With peace and uprightness, he walked before Me.” “Uprightness” is nothing other than peace, as it is written (*Psalms 25:21*), “Complete and upright.”

It is therefore written (*Exodus 17:11*), “And it was when Moses would raise his hands, Israel would prevail. This teaches us that the Attribute that is called Israel has in it a “Torah of Truth.”

138. What is the meaning of “a Torah of Truth?”

It is that which teaches (*Moreh*) the Truth of [all] worlds, as well as His deeds in thought.

He erected Ten Sayings, and with them the world stands. It is one of them.

In man He created ten fingers, paralleling these Ten Sayings.

Moses raised his hands and concentrated to some degree on the Attribute that is called Israel, which contains the Torah of Truth. With his ten fingers, he alluded that he was upholding the Ten. For if [God] would not help Israel, then the Ten Sayings would not endure every day. It was for this reason that “Israel prevailed.”

[The verse continues], “And when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed.” Would Moses then do anything that would cause Amalek to prevail? But [this teaches us] that it is forbidden for a person to stand for [more than] three hours with his hands spread out to heaven.

139. His disciples asked: To whom are the hands raised?

He replied: To the heights of heaven. How do we know this? It is written (*Habbakkuk 3:10*), “The deep gives forth its voice, it lifts up its hands on high.” This teaches us that the Lifting of Hands is only to the heights of the heaven.

When among Israel there are people who are wise and know the mystery of the Glorious Name, and they lift up their hands, they are immediately answered.

It is thus written (*Isaiah 58:9*), “Then (*Az*) you will call and God will answer.” If you call God “then” (*Az*), He will answer you immediately.

140. What is the meaning of “then” [- *Az* – spelled *Aleph Zayin*]?

This teaches us that it is not permissible to call *Aleph* alone. [It can] only [be called] through the two letters that are attached to it, which sit first in the kingdom.

Together with the *Aleph*, they are then three. Seven of the Ten Sayings then remain, and this

The Bahir

is the *Zayin* [which has the numerical value of seven].

It is also written (*Exodus 15:1*), “Then (*Az*) sang Moses and the children of Israel.”

141. What are the Ten Sayings?

The first is the Highest Crown. Blessed and praised be it name and its people.

Who are its people?

They are Israel. It is thus written (*Psalms 100:3*), “Know that the Lord is God, He made us, and not (*Lo*) we, His people.” [Lo is spelled *Lamed Aleph* and can be read, “to *Aleph*”.] The verse then reads, “to *Aleph* are we.”

[It is our duty] to recognise and know the Unity of Unities, who is unified in all His names.

142. The second one is Wisdom .

It is thus written (*Proverbs 8:22*), “God procured me, the beginning of His way, before his works, from then (*Az*).” A “beginning” is nothing other than Wisdom, as it is written (*Psalms 111:10*), “The beginning is wisdom, the fear of God.”

143. The third one is the quarry of the Torah, the treasury of Wisdom, the quarry of the “spirit of God”.

This teaches us that God carved out all the letters of the Torah, engraved it with spirit, and with it made all Forms. This is the meaning of the verse (*1 Samuel 2:2*), “There is no Rock (*Tzur*) like our God” – there is no Former (*Tzayir*) like our God.

144. These are three. What is the fourth?

The fourth is (*Deuteronomy 33:21*), “the charity of God,” His merit and his Kindness (*Chesed*) to all the world.

This is the Right Hand of the Blessed Holy One.

145. What is the fifth?

The fifth is the great fire of the Blessed Holy One > Regarding this it is written (*Deuteronomy 18:16*), “Let me see the great fire no more, lest I die.”

This is the Left Hand of the Blessed Holy One.

What are they? They are the *Chaioth ha-Qadesh* and the holy *Seraphim*, to their right and their left. They are the “pleasant ones” which ascend higher and higher, as it is written (*Ecclesiastes 5:7*), “And ones higher than they.”

It is also written (*Ezekiel 1:18*), “And as for their height, they had height, and they had fear, and their height was filled with eyes, around the four.” And around Him are angels. Those around them also bow down before them, kneeling and declaring, “The Lord He is God, the Lord He is God.”

146. The sixth one is the Throne of Glory, crowned, included, praised and hailed.

It is the house of the World to Come, and its place is in Wisdom . It is thus written (*Genesis 1:3*), “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

147. And Rabbi Yochanan said:

There were two [types of] light, as it is written, “[let there be light,] and there was light.” Regarding both of them it is written (*Genesis 1:4*), “[And God saw the light] that it was good.”

The Bahir

The Blessed Holy One took one [of these types of light] and stored it away for the righteous in the World to Come. Regarding this it is written (*Psalm 31:20*), “How great is the *good* that You have hidden away for those who fear You, that You have accomplished for those who find shelter in You...”

We learn that no creature could look at the first light. It is thus written (*Genesis 1:4*), “And God saw the light that it was good.”

It is furthermore written (*Genesis 1:21*) “And God saw all that He made, and behold, it was very good.” God saw all that He had made and saw shining, brilliant good.

He took of that good, and included in it the 32 paths of Wisdom, giving to this world. This is the meaning of the verse (*Proverbs 4:2*), “I have given you a doctrine of *good*, My Torah, do not abandon it.” We say that this is the treasury of the Oral Torah.

The Blessed Holy One said, “This Attribute is considered to be included in this world, and it is the Oral Torah. If you keep this Attribute in this world, then you will be worthy of the World to Come, which is the good stored away for the righteous.”

What is it?

It is the force of the Blessed Holy One. It is thus written (*Habakkuk 3:4*), “And the glow will be like light, [He has rays from His hand, and His hidden force is there].” The glow that was taken from the first Light will be like [our visible] light if His children keep the “Torah and Commandment that I wrote to teach them.” It is thus written (*Proverbs 1:8*), “Hear my son, the admonition of your father, and do not abandon the Torah of your mother.”

148. And it is written (*Habakkuk 3:4*), “He has rays from His hand, and His hidden force is there.”

What is “His hidden force”?

This is the light that was stored away and hidden, as it is written (*Psalm 31:20*), “[How great is the good] that You have hidden away for those who fear You, [that You have accomplished for those who find shelter in You].”

What remains for us in that which “You have accomplished for those who find shelter in You.” These are the ones who find shelter in Your shadow in this world, who keep Your Torah, observe Your Commandments, and sanctify Your name, unifying it secretly and publicly. The verse thus concludes, “in the sight of the sons of man.”

149. Rabbi Rahumai said:

This teaches us that Israel had light. Torah is light, as it is written (*Proverbs 6:23*), “For a commandment is a lamp, Torah is light, [and the way of life is the rebuke of admonition].”

And we say that a lamp is a commandment, illumination (*Orah*) Oral Torah, and light (*Or*) is the written Torah. [How can we then say that the Oral Torah is light (*Or*)?]

Because this light has already been kept, it is called light.

What is this like? A room was hidden at the end of a house. Even though it is day, and there is bright light in the world, one cannot see in this room unless he brings along a lamp.

The same is true of the Oral Torah. Even though it is a light, it needs the written Torah to answer its questions and explain its mysteries.

150. Rabbi Rahumai said:

What is the meaning of the verse (*Proverbs 6:23*), “And the way of life is the rebuke of admonition”?

This teaches us that when a person accustoms himself to study the Mystery of Creation and

The Bahir

the Mystery of the Chariot, it is impossible that he not stumble. It is therefore written (*Isaiah 3:6*), "Let this stumbling be under your hand." This refers to things that a person cannot understand unless they cause him to stumble.

The Torah calls it "the rebuke of admonition," but actually it makes one worthy of "the way of life." One who wishes to be worthy of "the way of life" must therefore endure "the rebuke of admonition."

151. Another explanation:

"Life" is the Torah, as it is written (*Deuteronomy 30:19*), "And you shall choose life." It is furthermore written (*Deuteronomy 30:20*), "For it is your life and your length of days."

If one wants to be worthy of it, he should reject physical pleasure and accept the yoke of the commandments. If he is afflicted with suffering, he should accept it with love. He should not ask, "Since I am fulfilling the will of my Maker and am studying the Torah each day, why am I afflicted with suffering?" Rather, he should accept it with love.

Then he will be completely worthy of the "way of life."

For who knows the ways of the Blessed Holy One? Regarding all things, one must therefore say, "Righteous are You, O God, and Your judgement is fair. All that is done from heaven is for the good."

152. You said [that the sixth one was] His Throne. Have we then not said that it is the Crown of the Blessed Holy One? We have said, "Israel was crowned with three crowns, the crown of priesthood, the crown of royalty, and the crown of Torah above them all."

What is this like? A king has a pleasing, beautiful vessel and he was very fond of it.

Sometimes he placed it on his head – this is the *Tefillin* worn on the head. At other times he carried it on his arm – in the knot of the *Tefillin* worn on the arm. Sometimes he lend it to his son so that it should remain with him.

Sometimes it is called His Throne. This is because He carries it as an amulet on His arm, just like a throne.

153. What is the seventh? It is the heaven [called] *Aravot*.

And why is it called heaven (*Shamayim*)? Because it is round like a head.

We learn that it is in the centre, with water at its right and fire at its left. It supports water (*Sa Mayim*) from fire and water, and brings peace between them.

Fire comes and finds the attribute of fire on its side. Water comes and finds the attribute of water on its side. It is therefore written (*Job 25:2*), "He makes peace in His high places."

154. Is it then the seventh? Is it nothing more than the sixth.

But this teaches us that the Holy Palace is here, and it supports them all. It is thus counted as two. It is therefore the seventh.

And what is it?

It is Thought that does not have any end or boundary. This place likewise does not have any end or boundary.

155. The seventh one is the east of the world. It is from where the Seed of Israel comes.

The spinal cord originates in man's brain and extends to the [sexual] organ, where the seed is. It is therefore written (*Isaiah 43:5*), "From the east I will bring your seed, [and from the west I will gather you]."

The Bahir

When Israel is good, then this is the place from which I will bring your seed, and new seed will be granted to you. But when Israel is wicked, [then I will bring] seed that has already been in the world. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 1:4*), “A generation goes and a generation comes,” teaching us that it has already come.

156. What is the meaning of the verse (*Isaiah 43:5*), “And from the west I will gather you”? [This means that “I will gather you”] from the attribute that always points to the west. Why is [west] called *MaAReV*? Because it is there that all seed is mixed together (*MitAReV*). What is this like? A king’s son had a beautiful bride and he hid her in his chamber. He took riches from his father’s house and constantly brought it to her. She in turn took everything, constantly put it away, and mixed it all together. Ultimately he seeks to see what he had gathered and accumulated.

It is therefore written, “And from the west I will gather you.”

And what is his father’s house?

It is that regarding which it is written, “From the east I will bring your seed.” This teaches us that it is brought from the east and sowed on the west. He then gathers what he has sowed.

157. What is the eighth one?

The Blessed Holy One has a single Righteous One (*Tzadik*) in His world, and it is dear to Him because it supports all the world. It is the Foundation (*Yesod*).

This is what sustains it, and makes it grow, increasing and watching it. It is beloved and dear on high, and beloved and dear below; fearsome and mighty on high, and fearsome and mighty below; rectified and accepted on high, and rectified and accepted below.

It is the Foundation of all souls.

Did you then say that it is the eighth? And do you say that it is the Foundation of all souls?

Is it then not written (*Exodus 31:17*), “And on the seventh day He rested and souled”? Yes, it is the seventh. This is because it decides between them. There are six, and three are below and three above, and it decides between them.

158. Why is it called the seventh? Is it then the seventh?

It is not. But it is because the Blessed Holy One rested on the Sabbath with the attribute regarding which it is written (*Exodus 31:17*), “For six days God made the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and souled.” This teaches us that each day has a Saying that is its Master.

This is not because it was created on that day, but because that is when it does the task to which it was assigned. Each one does its task and maintains its activities.

The seventh day therefore comes and does its task, making them all rejoice. Not only that, but it also causes their souls to grow, as it is written, “on the seventh day He rested and souled.”

159. What is this “rest”? It is the absence of work. It is a cessation which is called *Shabbat* (meaning rest).

What is this like? A king had seven gardens, and the middle one contained a fountain, welling up from a living source. Three [of his gardens] are at its right, and three are at its left. When it performed its function and overflowed, they all rejoiced, saying, “It overflowed for our sake.” It waters them and makes them grow, while they wait and rest.

Do we then say that it waters the seven? But it is written (*Isaiah 43:5*), “From the east I will

The Bahir

bring your seed.” This indicates that one of [the seven] waters it.
We must therefore say that it waters the Heart, and the Heart then waters them all.

160. Rabbi Berachiah sat and expounded:

Each day we speak of the World to Come. Do we then understand what we are saying?
In Aramaic, the “World to Come” is translated “the world that came.”
And what is the meaning of “the world that came”?

We learned that before the world was created, it arose in thought to create an intense light to illuminate it. He created an intense light over which no created thing could have authority. The Blessed Holy One saw, however, that the world could not endure [this light]. He therefore took a seventh of it and left it in its place for them. Thee rest He put away for the righteous in the Ultimate Future.

He said, “If they are worthy of this seventh and keep it, I will give them [the rest] in the Final World.”

It is therefore called “the world that came,” since it already came [into existence] from the six days of creation. Regarding this it is written (*Psalm 31:20*), “How great is Your good that You have hidden away for those who fear You.”

161. What is the meaning of the verse (*Exodus 15:27*), “And they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy date palms, and they encamped there by the water”? What is so special about seventy date palms? In one small place there can be a thousand. But [this teaches us that] they were worthy of their counterpart. They are likened to date palms.

It is written (*Exodus 15:23*), “And they came to Marah, and they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter (*marah*).” This teaches us that the north wind confused them. It is thus written (*Exodus 15:25*), “And he cried out to God, and He showed him a tree. He cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.”

God immediately placed His hand against the Satan and diminished him. It is thus written (*Exodus 15:25*), “There He gave them a decree and a law, and there He proved them.”

This teaches us that at this time, the Satan attached himself to them in order to blot them out from the world. It is thus written (*Exodus 15:24*), “And the people complained to Moses saying, ‘What shall we drink?’” [The Satan] continued to denounce Moses until he cried out to God and was answered.

What is the meaning of the verse, “And He showed him a tree”? This teaches us that the Tree of Life was near the water. The Satan came and removed it in order to denounce Israel and cause them to sin against their Father in heaven.

[The Satan] said to them, “Are you now then going into the desert? Even now [you have nothing] other than bitter water, but this has some benefit, since you can make some use of it. But when you enter the desert, you will not even find [water] with which to wash your hands and face. You will die from hunger and thirst, naked and having nothing.”

The people came to Moses and repeated these words, but he put them off. When [the Satan] saw that he could not overcome them, he strengthened himself [to overcome] Israel and Moses.

The people came, and “they complained to Moses.” They said, “Even here we lack water. What will we drink in the desert?”

The Satan had falsified the situation in order to cause the people to sin. As soon as Moses saw the Satan, “He cried out to God, and He showed him a tree.” This is the Tree of Life

The Bahir

that Satan had removed. He then “cast it into the water, and the water became sweet.” The Blessed Holy One then gave the Satan a “decree and a law,” and it was there that He “proved” Israel. The Blessed Holy One warned Israel saying (*Exodus 15:26*), “If you listen to the voice of the Lord your God, [and do what is upright in His eyes, give ear to His commandments, and keep all His decrees, then all the sickness that I brought upon the Egyptians, I will not bring upon you, for I am God who heals you].”

162. What is this like? A king had a beautiful daughter, and others desired her. The king knew about it, but could not fight those who wanted to bring his daughter to evil ways. He came to his house and warned her, saying, “My daughter, do not pay attention to the words of these enemies and they will not be able to overcome you. Do not leave the house, but do all your work at home. Do not sit idle, even for a single moment. Then they will not be able to see you and harm you.”

They have one Attribute which causes them to leave aside every good way and choose every evil way. When they see a person directing himself along a good way, they hate him.

What is [this Attribute]? It is the Satan.

This teaches us that the Blessed Holy One has an Attribute whose name is Evil. It is to the north of the Blessed Holy One, as it is written (*Jeremiah 1:14*), “From the north will Evil come forth, upon all the inhabitants of the earth.” Any evil that comes to all the inhabitants of the earth comes from the north.

163. What is this One Attribute?

It is the Form of a Hand.

It has many messengers, and the name of them all is Evil Evil. Some of them are great, and some are small, but they all bring guilt to the world.

This is because Chaos is toward the north. Chaos (*Tohu*) is nothing other than Evil. It confounds (*Taha*) the world and causes people to sin.

Every Evil Urge (*Yetzer HaRa*) that exists in man comes from there.

And why is it placed to the left? This is because it does not have any authority any place in the world except in the north.

It is not accustomed to be anywhere except in the north. It does not want to be any place but in the north. If it remained the south until it learned the routes of the south, how could it lead others astray? It would have to stay there for [several] days until it learned, and then it could not cause people to sin. It therefore is always in the north, to the left.

This is the meaning of the verse (*Genesis 8:21*), “For the Urge of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” It is evil from his youth, and it does not incline [in any direction] other than the left, for it is already accustomed to be there.

It is regarding this that the Blessed Holy One said to Israel (*Exodus 15:26*), “If you listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is upright in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments” – and not to the commandments of the Evil Urge – “and keep all His decrees” – and not the decrees of the Evil Urge – “[then all the sickness that I brought upon the Egyptians, I will not bring upon you,] for I am God who heals you.”

164. What does the Evil Urge gain?

What is this like? A king appointed clerks over the lands of his kingdom, over his work and over his merchandise. Each and every thing had its clerk. There was one clerk in charge of the storehouse containing good food. Another was in charge of the storehouse containing

The Bahir

stones. Everyone came to the storehouse containing good food. The clerk in charge of the storehouse of stones came and saw that people were only buying from the other [clerk]. What did he do? He sent his messengers to tear down the weak house [so that people would need stones to rebuild them]. They could not do so, however, to the strong ones. He said, "In the time that it takes to tear down one strong [house], you can tear down ten weak ones. People will then all come and buy stones from me, and I will not be inferior to the other." It is thus written (*Jeremiah 1:14*), "From the north will evil come forth, upon all the inhabitants of the earth." The verse then continues (*Jeremiah 1:15*) "For I call all the families of the kingdom of the north – says God – and they will come, and each one will place his throne at the opening of the gates of Jerusalem..." Evil will be their business, and the Evil Urge will also constantly strive.

The word *Satan* means "turning aside," since he turns all the world aside to the balance of guilt.

How is this indicated? It is written (*Genesis 38:16*), "And he turned aside to her," and the Targum renders this *VeSata*, [*Satah* being the root of Satan]. It is likewise written (*Proverbs 4:15*), "Turn aside (*S'the*) from it and pass on."

165. What is the significance of the seventy date palms?

They had accepted upon themselves the commandments, as it is written (*Exodus 15:26*), "If you listen to the voice of the Lord your God." Immediately after this we find (*Exodus 15:27*) "And they came to Elim (*Elimah*) [where there were twelve wells of water and seventy date palms]."

What is the meaning of *Elimah*? It is *Eli Mah* – "to me is what."

"Where there were twelve wells of water." At first God gave it to them as wells, and in the end, he gave it back to them as stones. It is thus written [regarding the stones set up near the Jordan] (*Joshua 4:9*), "twelve stones."

What is the reason? It is because the Torah was originally likened to water in the world. Only later was it put in a permanent place. Water, however, is here one day and elsewhere the next.

166. What are the seventy date palms?

This teaches us that the Blessed Holy One has seventy Structures.

These draw from the twelve Simple Ones. Just like water is simple, so are these simple.

How do we know that the date palm is a Structure? Because it is written (*Song of Songs 7:8*), "Your structure is like a date palm."

Besides that, there are seventy kinds of date palms. It is therefore written that there were seventy date palms. One was not like the other, their functions were all different, and the taste of one was not like the taste of the other.

167. You said that the seventy date palms represent the seventy Structures. But have you not said that there are 72?

There are 71. Israel makes 72, but it is not included.

But did you not say that there were seventy?

One is the Officer of the Satan.

What is this like? A king had sons and bought slaves for them. The king then told his sons, "I am giving you all equally."

One of them replied, "I do not want to be with you, for I have the power to steal everything

The Bahir

from you.”

The king then said, “Because of this, you will not have a portion among them at all.” [The rebellious son] did what he could. He went out and lay in wait for [the slaves], showing them much gold, jewels and troops. He said, “Come over to me.”

What did the king do? He amassed his armies together with the armies of all his sons. He showed them to the slaves and said, “Do not let him trick you into thinking that his armies are stronger than mine. Behold the troops of that son. He is deceitful and wants to rob you. Therefore, do not listen to him, for at first he will speak smoothly in order to entice you into his trap, but in the end he will laugh at you. You are my slaves, and I will do for you everything good if you turn away from him and do not listen to him.”

He is the Prince of Chaos. It is thus written (*1 Samuel 12:21*), “Do not turn aside, for you will follow Chaos. It will not help or save, for it is Chaos.” [It cannot help or save,] but it can do harm.

The advice that I give you is that you should (*Exodus 15:26*), “Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, do what is right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His decrees.”

When you keep all His decrees, then, “All the sickness that I brought upon the Egyptians, I will not bring upon you.”

Why did He say all this? In order to close all doors, so that he should not find you soft at times and hard at times.

When you keep all His decrees, then “all the sickness that I brought upon the Egyptians” – through My hand – “I will not bring upon you.”

What is the meaning of “for I am God who heals you”? This means that even when he comes and strikes, I am God who will heal you.

168. Why do you call it the eight?

Because with it the eight are begun, and with it the eight numbers are completed. In function, however, it is the seventh one.

And what are [the eight] that were begun? This is the fact that a child enters the Covenant of Circumcision when eight days old.

Are they then eight? They are nothing more than seven. Why then did the Blessed Holy One say eight? Because there are eight directions in man.

What are they? They are as follows:

The right and left hands;

The right and left legs;

The head, the body, and the Covenant as an arbitrator;

And his wife, who is his mate.

It is thus written (*Genesis 2:24*), “And he shall cling to his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”

They are the eight, and they parallel the eight days of circumcision. Are they then eight?

They are nothing more than seven, since the body and covenant are one. It is therefore eight.

169. What is the ninth?

He said to them: the ninth and tenth are together, one opposite the other.

One is higher than the other by 500 years.

They are like two Wheels (*Ophanim*). One inclines toward the north, while the other inclines toward the west. They reach down to the lowest earth.

The Bahir

What is the lowest earth? It is the last of the seven earths down below.

The end of the Divine Presence of the Blessed Holy One is under His feet. It is thus written (*Isaiah 66:1*), “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is the hassock for My feet.”

The Victory (*Nitzachon*) of the world is there. It is thus written (*Isaiah 24:10*), “for Victory of Victories (*Netzach Netzachim*).”

170. What is the meaning of “Victory of Victories”?

There is a single Victory (*Netzach*). Which is it? It is the one that inclines toward the west.

And what is secondary to it? This is the one that inclines toward the north.

And the third one? This is the one that is below.

The third one? But you have said that the Chariot has two wheels. We must therefore say that the end of the Divine Presence is also called Victory.

This is the meaning of “Victory of Victories.” “Victory” is one, and “Victories” is two, giving [a total of] three.

171. His disciples said to him: From above to below we know. But from below to above we do not know.

He replied: Is it not all one – below to above and above to below?

They said: Our master, ascending is not the same as descending. One can run while descending, but cannot do so while ascending.

He replied: Go out and see.

He sat and expounded to them:

There is a Divine Presence below, just like there is a Divine Presence above.

What is this Divine Presence? We have said that it is the light that was derived from the first Light, which is Wisdom. It also surrounds all things, as it is written (*Isaiah 6:3*), “The whole earth is filled with His glory.”

What is its function?

What is this like? A king had seven sons, and he assigned each one a place. He said to them, “Sit here, one above the other.”

The lowest one said, “I will not sit at the bottom. I do not want to be far from you.”

[The king] replied, “I will surround you and see you all day long.”

This is the meaning of the verse, “The whole earth is filled with His glory.”

Why is He among them? This is so that He should support them and sustain them.

172. And what are the sons?

I have already told you that the Blessed Holy One has seven Holy Forms.

All of them have a counterpart in man, as it is written (*Genesis 9:6*), “for in the form of God He made man.” It is likewise written (*Genesis 1:27*), “In the form of God He made him, male and female He made them.”

This is what they are:

The right and left legs;

The right and left hands;

The body, covenant and head.

But these are only six. You have said that there are seven.

The seventh is with his wife. It is thus written (*Genesis 2:24*), “And they shall be one flesh.”

But she was taken from his ribs, as it is written (*Genesis 2:21*), “And He took one of his

The Bahir

ribs.”

He said: Yes from his ribs.

Does he then have a rib?

Yes. It is written (*Exodus 26:20*), “the ribs of the tabernacle.” The Targum renders this, “the side of the tabernacle.”

And what is His side?

What is this like? A king had an idea to plant ten male trees in a garden. All of them were date palms. He said, “Since they are all the same kind, it is impossible for them to endure.”

What did he do? He planted and *Etrog* among them. This was one of those which he had intended to be male.

And why is the *Etrog* female? Because it is written (*Leviticus 23:40*), “The fruit of a beautiful tree, fronds of a date palm, [branches of a tree of leaves, and willows of the brook].”

What is the fruit of a beautiful (*hadar*) tree?

The Targum renders this verse, “The fruit of the *Etrog* tree, and the *Lulav*.”

173. What is the meaning of “beautiful”? It is the beauty of all things. This is also the beauty of the *Songs of Songs*. Regarding it, it is written (*Songs of Songs 6:10*), “Who is she who looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible like an army with banners?”

This relates to the Female.

Because of her, the female was taken from Adam. This is because it is impossible for the lower world to endure without the female.

And why is the female called *Nekevah*? Because her orifices (*Nekev*) are wide. Also because she has more orifices than the male. What are they? They are the orifices of the breasts, the womb, and the receptacle.

174. And what is the reason that you said that the *Song of Songs* is beautiful?

Yes, it is the most beautiful of all the Holy Scriptures.

Rabbi Yochanan thus said: All Scripture is holy, and all the Torah is holy, but the *Song of Songs* is the Holy of Holies.

What is the meaning of the Holy of Holies? It means that it is holy for the Holy Ones.

What are the Holy Ones? They are the counterparts of the six directions that are in man.

That which is holy for them is holy for everything.

175. What is this that is Holy? It is the *Etrog*, which is the beauty (*hadar*) of them all.

Why is it called beautiful (*hadar*)? Do not read *hadar*, but *HaDar* – “Which dwells.”

This refers to the *Etrog* which is not bound together with the *Lulav*. Without it the commandment of the *Lulav* cannot be fulfilled.

It is also bound with them all. It is with each one of them, and is unified with them all.

176. What does the *Lulav* parallel? It is the counterpart of the spinal cord. It is thus written (*Leviticus 23:40*), “[fronds of a date palm,] a branch of a tree of leaves, and willows of the brook.”

The [leafy] branches [of the myrtle] must cover the majority [of the bunch]. If its branches do not cover its majority, it is invalid.

Why?

The Bahir

What is this like? A man has arms, and with them he protects his head. He has two arms, and his head makes three.

[It is therefore called] “a branch of a tree of leaves.” A “branch” is to the left, and the “leaves” are to the right. It then comes out that the “tree” is in the centre.

And why is it called a “tree”? Because it is the Root of the Tree.

177. What are “willows of the brook”? There are two [willow branches in the *Lulav*,] and these parallel the two legs in man.

Why are the [“willows of the brook”] called *Arvey Nachal*? Because the greater of the two is inclined toward the west (*ma-Arev*) and draws its strength from there.

The one to the north is smaller than it by a journey of 500 years. It is on the northwest side, through which it functions.

It is named after it, since they are both mixed (*Arav*).

178. Another explanation:

[Willows of the Brook] are called *Arvey Nachal* because the function of one is sometimes mixed (*ma-arav*) with that of the other.

Why are they called Willows of the *Brook*? This is because of the place in which they are fixed, which is called Brook. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 1:7*), “All the Brooks go to the sea, but the sea is not filled.”

What is this sea? We say that it is the *Etrog*.

How do we know that each of the seven Attributes is called a Brook (*Nachal*)? Because it is written (*Numbers 21:19*), “From Gift to Nachaliel [, from Nachaliel to Bamot, and from Bamot to the valley that is in the Field of Moab, the head of the cliff, and it looks down on the face of the Yeshimon].” Do not read Nachaliel, but *Nachley El* – Brooks of God.

And all six then go on one path to the sea.

What is this path? It is the one that arbitrates between them. It is thus written (*Habbakuk 3:5*), “Before Him goes the pestilence, and fiery bolt at His feet.”

All of them go to that pipe, and from that pipe to the sea.

This is the meaning of the verse, “From Gift to Brooks of God.” [Gift] is the place that is given, namely the brain. From there they go to the Brooks of God.

“And from Brooks of God to Bamot.” What is Bamot? As the Targum renders it, *Ramta* – “heights.” This is the *Segol* that follows the *Zarka*.

[The verse continues,] “And from Bamot to the valley that is in the Field of Moab, the head of the cliff, and it looks down on the face of the Yeshimon.”

“And from the heights (*Bamot*) to the valley that is in the Field of Moab.” This is that which is prepared. And what is that which was in the Field of Moab? Do not read Moab, but *May-av* – “from a father.” This is the father regarding which it is written (*Genesis 26:5*) “Because Abraham hearkened to my voice, kept My trust, My commandments and My decrees...”

What is this field? It is the one that is at “the head of the cliff,” and which also “looks down on the face of the Yeshimon.” [Yeshimon] is interpreted to mean Heaven.

Regarding that pipe, it is written (*Song of Songs 4:15*), “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, flowing from Lebanon.”

What is Lebanon? We say that this is Wisdom.

What are the Willows of the Brook (*Nachal*)? We say that this is that which gives inheritance (*Nachalah*) to Israel. It refers to the two Wheels of the Chariot.

The Bahir

179. We learned that there are Ten Spheres and Ten Sayings. Each Sphere has its Saying. It is not surrounded by it, but rather, it surrounds it.

This [physical] world is like a mustard seed inside a ring.

Why? Because of the Spirit that blows upon it, through which it is sustained. If this spirit were to be interrupted for even a moment, the world would be annihilated.

180. There are three Spheres in this world.

How? This world inclines to the north and the south.

How? North west south. North west is the first sphere that revolves around us.

Do we then say that it is to the north-west? But we say that its strength is to the north. This is the left foot.

Above it is the second Sphere, which is entirely to the west.

Do we then say that it is to the west? But we say that its power is to the west. These are the Victories of the world.

Above it is the third Sphere, and its power is to the south-west.

What is the original power that you said was second? We say that this is the right foot.

And what is the power that is to the south-west? This is the Foundation of the world.

Regarding this it is written (*Proverbs 10:25*), "The Righteous is the Foundation of the world."

The second power stands behind the Chariot, while the first power stands in front of it.

The "Righteous, Foundation of the world" is in the centre. It emanates from the south of the world, and is officer over the other two.

In its hand are also the souls of all living things. It is the Life of Worlds.

Whenever the word "creation" (*Beriah*) is used, it is done with it. Regarding it, it is written (*Exodus 31:17*), "He rested and souled."

This is the attribute of the Sabbath day. Regarding this it is written (*Exodus 20:8*), "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

But it is also written (*Deuteronomy 5:12*), "Keep [the Sabbath]." This is speaking of the seventh attribute. Regarding this seventh attribute it is written (*Leviticus 19:30*), "My sabbaths you shall *keep*, and My sanctuary you shall fear."

What is the seventh attribute? This is the Blessed Holy One's attribute of Goodness.

181. Why is it written, "My sabbaths you shall keep," [in the plural] rather than "My sabbath" [in the singular]?

What is this like? A king had a beautiful bride, and every week she would set aside a day to be with him. The king also had beautiful beloved sons. He said to them, "Since this is the situation, you should also rejoice on the day of my joy. For it is for your sake that I strive, and you also respect me."

182. What is the reason that [the Torah says] "remember" [in one place,] and "keep" [regarding the Sabbath in another]?

"Remember" (*zachor*) refers to the male (*Zachar*). "Keep" (*shamor*) refers to the bride.

Why is it connected to, "and My sanctuary you shall fear"? This is because My sanctuary is holy. Why? "Because I am God who makes you holy" – from every side.

183. Why do we say [in the blessing after food], "On all that He created...[Blessed]is the Life of Worlds." Why do we not say, "On all that You created"?

The Bahir

But we bless the Holy One, who grants His wisdom to this “Life of Worlds.” It then provides for all.

184. What is the reason that we say [in blessings, “Blessed are you...] who made us holy with *His* commandments and commanded us” [in the third person]? Why do we not say, “that You made us holy with Your commandments, and You commanded us, “ [in the second person]?

This teaches us that all commandments are included in the Life of Worlds.

Because of His love for us, He gave us [the commandments] in order that they should make us holy and allow us to be worthy. Why? Because when we are in this world, we can become worthy of the World to Come, which is great.

In its hand is the treasury of souls. When Israel is good, these souls are worthy of emerging and coming to this world. But if they are not good, the [these souls] do not emerge.

We therefore say, “The Son of David will not come until all the souls in the Body are completed.”

What is the meaning of “all the souls in the Body”? We say that this refers to all the souls in man’s body. [When these are completed] new ones will be worthy of emerging.

The Son of David (the Messiah) will then come. He will be able to be born, since his soul will emerge among the other new souls.

What is this like? A king had an army, and he sent them much bread to eat. They were so lazy that they did not take care of [the bread] which they did not eat [immediately]. The bread therefore became mouldy and went to waste.

The king investigated to find out if they had what to eat, and to see if they had eaten what he had sent them. He found that the bread had become mouldy and they were ashamed to ask for new bread. How could they tell the king, “We did not take care of [what you sent us,] but now we are asking for more”?

The king also became angry. He took the mouldy bread and ordered that it be dried and rectified as much as possible. He swore to the men, “I will not give you any more bread until you eat all this mouldy bread.” He then returned the bread to them.

What did they do? They agreed to divide it up, and each one took his portion. The diligent one took his portion and placed it in the air, taking care of it and keeping it in good condition to eat. The other one took it and ate it lustfully. He ate what he could and laid the rest aside, not taking care of it since he had given up on it. It spoiled even more and became so mouldy that he could not eat it at all. He therefore starved to death.

He was then blamed for the sin of his body: Why did you kill yourself? Is it not enough that you ruined the bread the first time? But I returned it to you and you ruined it [again]. You ruined your portion because you were too lazy to take care of it. And not only that, but you also killed yourself.”

[The soldier] replied, “My lord, what could I have done?”

He answered, “You should have taken care of it. And if you claim that you were not able to, you should have watched your friends and neighbours with whom you shared the bread. You should have seen what they did and how they took care of it, and you should have kept it like they did.”

They also interrogated him: Why did you kill yourself? Is it not enough that you ruined the bread? But you also went ahead and killed the matter of your body. You shortened the days of your life, or [at least] caused it. It may have been possible that you would have had a good son. He could have saved you, and [rectified] the damage that you and others did. Your

The Bahir

suffering will therefore be increased on all sides.

He became confused and replied, "What could I have done when I did not have any bread? With what could I have sustained myself?"

They answered: If you would have strived and worked in Torah, you would not reply foolishly and brazenly like this. Because of your reply, it is obvious that you have not worked or strived in Torah. It is thus written (*Deuteronomy 8:3*), "For not by bread alone does man live, but from all that emanates from God's mouth does man live." You should have searched and probed and asked, "what is it through which man lives?"

What is this which "emanates from God's mouth"

From here they said, "An ignoramus cannot be pious."

If a person does not act with kindness (*Chesed*) toward himself, he cannot be called pious (*Chasid*).

185. How can one do kindness to his Master?

By studying the Torah. All study of Torah is a deed of kindness toward one's Master. It is thus written (*Deuteronomy 33:26*), "He rides the heavens with your help, [His pride is in the skies]." God says, "When you study Torah for its own sake, then you help Me and I can ride the heavens."

Then, "His pride is in the skies (*Shechakim*)."

What is *Shechakim*? We say that it is in the innermost chamber. The Targum thus renders it, "His word is in the Heaven of Heaven."

Therefore, "not by bread alone does man live, but from all that emanates from God's mouth does man live."

However, "the fool answers brazenly."

"Abandon this brazenness, and do not reply in this manner!"

He is therefore punished. What is his punishment? We have already discussed it.

186. What is the meaning of the verse (*Job 15:2*), "Should a wise man answer knowledge of spirit?" What is "knowledge of spirit"?

This is the Knowledge that is close to the spirit. Regarding this it is written (*Isaiah 11:2*), "And there will rest upon him a spirit of God, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, [a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of God]."

[First comes] Wisdom, and then comes Understanding. And in Understanding is "counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear of God."

But you told us that "counsel" is deeds of Kindness, and that Understanding is the Attribute of Justice.

[One is above the other.]

Knowledge is Truth. Knowledge is therefore that with which one recognises the truth.

"The fear of God" is the Treasury of the Torah .

This is like I say, but one is above the other.

Rabbi Akiba thus said: With whatever God created, He created its counterpart. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 7:14*), "Also one opposite the other has God made."

What is the Treasury of the Torah? It is that regarding which it is written (*Isaiah 33:6*), "The fear of God is His treasury." A person must first be god-fearing, and then he can study Torah.

This is like a person who comes to buy date honey but does not bring a vessel in which to carry it. He says, "I will carry it in my bosom." He tries to carry it in his bosom but it was

The Bahir

very heavy, and he is also afraid that it will tear and soil his clothing. He therefore throws it away on the road.

This person is then punished twice. First because he ruined good food, and second because he wasted his money.

187. The fear of God is the one that is higher.

It is in the palm of God's hand. It is also His Force.

This palm (*kaf*) is called the pan of merit (*Kaf Zechut*). This is because it inclines the world to the pan of merit.

It is thus written (*Isaiah 11:3*), "I will grant him a spirit of the fear of God, and he will not judge by the sight of his eyes, he will not admonish according to what his ear hears." He will incline all the world to the pan of merit. From there counsel emanates, and from there health emanates to the world.

[It is also written,] (*Genesis 49:24*) "From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." This is the place that is called "There." Regarding this, it is written (*Habakkuk 3:4*), "[He has rays from His hand,] and His hidden Force is *there*."

188. Once this thing comes, sharpen it. What is its sharpening? Tell us the meaning of the verse, "He has rays from His hand."

Why does it first say "rays" and then "His hand"? It should have said "His hands" [in the plural].

There is no contradiction. This is very much like the verse (*Exodus 32:19*), "And Moses' anger flared, and he threw the tablets from his hands." The way this is written, however, it would be read "His hand" [in the singular].

It is likewise written (*Exodus 17:12*), "And his hands were faithful until the sun set." The verse says *Emunah* ("was faithful" – in the singular) and not *Emunot* ("were faithful" – in the plural).

They replied: Our master, we are pointing out a contradiction in order to receive an answer, and you are covering our eyes. Did you not teach us, master, that you must answer first things first and last things last?

[He said:] And what have you then asked? [The meaning of,] "He has rays from His hand." By the Divine service, I have just explained it to you with my words.

They were ashamed.

When he saw that they were ashamed is it not true that [at first] there was water, and that fire emanated from it? Water therefore included fire.

And Master, what is the meaning of "rays"?

He replied: There are five rays. These are the five fingers on man's right hand.

189. And master, you are the one who told us in Rabbi Yochanan's name that there are only two arms of the world."

He replied: Yes. But here "rays" allude to the two rays that are below them.

And what are they?

He said: With the anger of your head.

And what is above?

He said: The fear of God.

190. And what is the fear of God?

The Bahir

It is the first light.

Rabbi [Meir] thus said: Why is it written (*Genesis 1:3*), “And God said, ‘let there be light,’ and there was light”? Why does it not say, “and it was so”?

But this teaches us that the light was very intense, so that no created thing could gaze upon it. God therefore stored it away for the righteous in the Ultimate Future.

This is the measure of all merchandise (*Secorah*) in the world. It is also the power of the precious stones that are called *Socheret* and *Dar*.

And upon what is the attribute of *Dar*?

This teaches us that God took a thousandth of its radiance, and from it He constructed a beautiful precious stone. In it He included all the commandments.

Abraham came, and He sought a power to give him. He gave him this precious stone, but he did not want it. He was worthy and took Kindness as his attribute, as it is written (*Micah 7:20*), “Kindness to Abraham.”

Isaac came, and He sought a power, but He gave it to him and he did not want it. He was worthy and took the attribute of Strength, which is [called] Terror. It is thus written (*Genesis 31:53*), “And Jacob swore by the Terror of Isaac his father.”

Jacob came and wanted it, but it was not given to him. They said, “Since Abraham is above and Isaac is below him, you will be in the centre and take all three.”

What is the centre?

It is peace, as it is written (*Micah 7:20*), “You give Truth to Jacob.” Truth is identical with Peace, as it is written (*Esther 9:30*), “Words of Peace and Truth.” It is likewise written (*2 Kings 20:19*), “For peace and truth will be in my days.”

This is the meaning of the verse (*Isaiah 58:14*), “I will feed you with the inheritance of Jacob your father.” This is a complete inheritance (*Nachalah*), comprising Kindness, Terror, Truth and Peace.

It is therefore written (*Psalms 118:22*), “The stone despised by the builders has become the chief cornerstone.” This is the Stone that was despised by Abraham and Isaac, the builders of the world, and that then became the chief cornerstone.

191. And why did they despise it? Is it not written (*Genesis 26:5*), “Because Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My watch, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs.”

What is the meaning of “My watch”?

It refers to what the Attribute of Kindness said: As long as Abraham was in the world, I did not have to do my job. Abraham stood there in my place and “kept my watch.” It is my task to bring merit to the world, and even when people are guilty, I bring them merit. I also bring them back, directing their hearts to do the will of their Father in heaven.

All this Abraham did, as it is written (*Genesis 21:33*), “And he planted a tamarisk in Beersheba, and he called there in the name of the Lord, God of the world.” He would share his bread and water with all the people in the world, bringing them merit. Seeking to convince them, he would say, “Whom then are you serving? Serve the Lord, God of heaven and earth.” He would preach to them until they would repent.

How do we know that he would also bring merit to those who were guilty?

It is written (*Genesis 18:17*), “Shall I then cover from Abraham what I am doing? Abraham is becoming a great, mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.”

[God said,] “I will give him merit. I know that he will seek mercy for them and be worthy.”

The Bahir

Is it then possible to say that the Blessed Holy One did not know that they could be saved? But He told this [to Abraham] to bring him merit. From here they said, “If one comes to purify himself, they help him. If one comes to defile himself, they open for him.” What is the meaning of, “they open for him”? It refers to those that are always open.

192. [It is written that Abraham kept] (*Genesis 26:5*), “My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs.” He said, “Since I do not want [the precious stone], I will keep all the commandments that are included in it.”

What is the meaning of “My Torahs”? This teaches us that he knew and kept even the decisions (*Horah*) and discussions that are taught on high.

193. And what is the meaning of the verse (*Genesis 49:24*), “From there is the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.”

From “There” is nourished the Rock of Israel.

What is the meaning of “from There”? We say that this is the Supernal Righteous One (*Tzadik*).

What is it?

It is [the precious stone called] *Socheret*. And the stone that is below it is called *Dar*.

And what are the rays mentioned in the verse (*Habakkuk 3:4*), “He has rays from His hand”? These are the five fingers of the right hand.

The Bahir

Section V

Mysteries of the Soul

194. Rabbi Rahumai said:

This I received [from the tradition]. When Moses wanted to know about the glorious fearsome Name, may it be blessed, he said (*Exodus 33:18*), “Show my please Your glory.” He wanted to know why there are righteous who have good, righteous who have evil, wicked who have good, and wicked who have evil. But they would not tell him. Do you then think that they did not tell him? Can one then imagine that Moses did not know this mystery? But this is what Moses said: “I know the ways of the Powers, but I do not know how Thought spreads through them. I know that Truth is in Thought, but I do not know its parts.” He wanted to know, but they would not tell him.

195. Why is there a righteous person who has good, and [another] righteous person who has evil?

This is because the [second] righteous person was wicked previously, and is now being punished.

Is one then punished for his childhood deeds? Did not Rabbi Simon say that in the Tribunal on high, no punishment is meted out until one is twenty years or older.

He said: I am not speaking of his present lifetime. I am speaking about what he has already been, previously.

His colleagues said to him: How long will you conceal your words?

He replied: Go out and see. What is this like? A person planted a vineyard and hoped to grow grapes, but instead, sour grapes grew. He saw that his planting and harvest were not successful so he tore it out. He cleaned out the sour grape vines and planted again. When he saw that his planting was not successful, he tore it up and planted it again.

How many times?

He said to them: For a thousand generations. It is thus written (*Psalms 105:8*), “The word that He commanded for a thousand generations.”

It is in relation to this that they said, “Lacking were 974 generations. The Blessed Holy One stood up and planted them in each generation.”

196. Rabbah said: If the righteous wanted, they could create a world. What interferes? Your sins, as it is written (*Isaiah 59:2*), “Only your sins separate between you and your God.”

Therefore, if not for your sins, there would not be any differentiation between you and Him. We thus see that Rabba created a man and sent it to Rav Zeira. He spoke to it, but it would not reply. But if not for your sins, it would also have been able to reply.

And from what would it have replied? From its soul.

Does a man then have a soul to place in it?

Yes, as it is written (*Genesis 2:7*), “And He blew in his nostrils a soul of life.” If not for your sins, man would therefore have a “soul of life.” [Because of your sins, however] the soul is not pure.

This is the difference between you and Him. It is thus written (*Psalms 8:6*), “And You have

The Bahir

made him a little less than God.”

What is the meaning of “a little”? This is because [man] sins, while the Blessed Holy One does not. Blessed be He and blessed be His Name for ever and ever, He has no sins.

But the [Evil] Urge comes from Him.

Can we then imagine that it comes from Him? But it originated from Him until David came and killed it. It is thus written (*Psalm 109:22*), “My heart is hollow within me.”

David said: Because I was able to overcome it (*Psalm 5:5*), “Evil will not sojourn with You.”

How was David able to overcome it? Through his study, since he never stopped [studying] day or night. He therefore attached the Torah on high. For whenever a person studies Torah for its own sake, the Torah attaches itself to the Blessed Holy One.

They therefore say, “A person should always study Torah, even not for its sake, since if [he studies it] not for its sake, he will eventually come to [study it] for its sake.”

What is this Torah that you are discussing?

It is the Bride who is adorned and crowned, and who is included in the commandments. It is the Treasury of the Torah. It is the betrothed of the Blessed Holy One, as it is written (*Deuteronomy 33:4*), “Moses commanded us the Torah, the heritage (*Morasha*) of the congregation of Jacob.” Do not read “heritage” (*Morasha*) but “betrothed” (*Me’urasa*).

How is his so. When Israel engages in the Torah for its own sake, then it is the betrothed of the Blessed Holy One, then it is the heritage of Israel.

197. Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded:

Why was Tamar worthy of being the mother of Peretz and Zerach?

It was because her name was Tamar. Tamar was [also] the sister of Amnon. She was therefore made for this.

Why were they called Peretz and Zerach?

Peretz was named after the moon. The moon breaks out (*paratz*) at times, and will be built up in the future. Zerach was named after the sun, which always shines (*zarach*) in the same manner.

But Peretz was the first-born. Is then the sun not greater than the moon?

This is no difficulty, as it is written (*Genesis 38:28*), “One put out a hand,” [indicating that Zerach’s hand emerged before Peretz was born]. It is then written (*Genesis 38:30*), “This his brother, upon whose hand was the scarlet thread, emerged, and he was named Zerach.”

[Zerach] was supposed to have been the first-born. But God saw that Solomon would descend [from Peretz], and He had such great joy that He made [Zerach] return.

198. Why was she called Tamar and not any other name?

Because she was female.

Can we then say that [it was something special that] she was female?

But it is because she included both male and female. For [Tamar means a date palm, and] every date palm includes both male and female.

How is this? The frond (*Lulav*) is male. The fruit is male on the outside and female on the inside.

And how? The seed of the date has a split like a woman. Paralleling it is the power of the moon above.

The Blessed Holy One created Adam male and female, as it is written (*Genesis 1:27*), “Male and female He created them.” Is it then possible to say this? Is it then not written (*Genesis*

The Bahir

1:27), “And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him”? It is only then later written (*Genesis 2:18*), “I will make him a helper opposite him,” and (*Genesis 2:21*), “And He took one of his ribs, and closed the flesh under it.” [We therefore see that the male was created first, and only later the female.]

But we must say that the Torah uses [three different words]: “formed” (*yatzar*), “made” (*asah*), and “created” (*bara*).

When the soul was made, the word “made” is used. [The word “created” is then used:] “Male and female He *created* them.” The word “formed” was used when the soul was combined with the body and the spirit was brought together.

How do we know that “forming” means bringing together? For it is written (*Genesis 2:19*), “And the Lord God formed (gathered) all the beasts of the field and all the flying things of the heaven, and He brought them to the Man to see what he would call each thing.”

This explains the verse (*Genesis 5:2*), “Male and female He created them.” It is also written (*Genesis 1:28*), “And God blessed them.”

199. The soul of the female comes from the Female, and the soul of the male comes from the Male. This is the reason why the Serpent followed Eve. He said, “Her soul comes from the north, and I will therefore quickly seduce her.”

And how did he seduce her? He had intercourse with her.

200. His disciples asked: Tell us how this took place.

He replied: The wicked Samael made a bond with all the host on high against his Master. This was because the Blessed Holy One said [regarding man] (*Genesis 1:26*), “And let him rule over the fish of the sea and the flying things of heaven.”

[Samael] said, “How can we cause him to sin and be exiled from before God?” He descended with all his host, and sought a suitable companion on earth. He finally found the serpent, which looked like a camel, and he rode on it.

He then went to the woman and said to her (*Genesis 3:1*), “Did God also say, from all the trees of the garden [you shall not eat]?” [He said, “I know that He did not forbid all the trees,] but I will seek more – I will add in order that she should subtract.”

She replied, “He did not stop us from anything besides” (*Genesis 3:2*) “the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Do not eat from it and do not touch it, lest you die.’”

She added two things. She said, “from the *fruit* of the tree that is in the middle of the garden,” while [God] had only said (*Genesis 2:17*), “from the Tree of Knowledge.” She also said, “do not touch it lest you die,” [while God had only spoken of eating it].

What did Samael do? He went and touched the tree. The tree cried out and said, “Wicked one, do not touch me!” It is thus written (*Psalms 36:12*), “Let not a foot of pride overtake me, and let not the hand of the wicked move me. There have the workers of iniquity fallen – they are thrust down, they cannot rise.”

He then said to the woman, “See, I touched the tree and I did not die. You can also touch it and not die.”

The woman went and touched the tree. She saw the Angel of Death approaching her and said, “Woe is to me. Now I will die and the Blessed Holy One will make another woman and give her to Adam. I will therefore cause him to eat with me. If we die, we will both die, and if we live, we will both live.”

She took the fruit of the tree and ate it, and she also gave some to her husband. Their eyes

The Bahir

opened and their teeth were set on edge. He said, “What is this that you have given me to eat? Just as my teeth were set on edge, so will the teeth of all [future] generations be set on edge.”

[God then] sat down in true judgement, as it is written (*Psalm 9:5*), “[You have upheld my cause, You have sat on the throne as a] righteous Judge.” He called to Adam and said “Why do you flee from Me?”

[Adam] replied (*Genesis 3:10*), “ ‘I heard Your voice in the garden’ – and my bones trembled. ‘I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid.’ I was naked of works, I was naked of commandments, and I was naked of deeds.” It is therefore written “because I was naked, and I hid.”

What was Adam’s garment? It was a skin of fingernail. As soon as he ate from the fruit of the tree, this skin of fingernail was removed from him, and he saw himself naked. It is thus written (*Genesis 3:11*), “Who told you that you were naked? [Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from it?]”

Adam said to the Blessed Holy One, “Master of all worlds: When I was alone, did I ever sin before You? But the woman that You placed with me enticed me from your word.” It is thus written (*Genesis 3:12*), “The woman that you placed with me [gave it to me, and I ate].”

The Blessed Holy One said to her, “Is it not enough that you sinned? But you also caused Adam to sin.”

She replied to Him, “Master of all worlds: The serpent enticed me to sin before You.”

[God] took the three of them, and decreed upon them a sentence of nine curses and death. He then cast the wicked Samael and his group from their holy place in heaven. He cut off the feet of the serpent and cursed it more than all the other animals and beasts of the field. He also decreed that it must shed its skin every seven years.

Samael was punished and made the guardian angel over the wicked Esau.

In the Future, when God uproots the Kingdom of Edom, he will lower him first. It is thus written (*Isaiah 24:21*), “God will punish the host of heights of high.” This statement, death and punishment all came because she added to the commandment of the Blessed Holy One. Regarding this it is said, “Whoever increase diminishes.”

*May God enlighten our eyes with the light of His Torah,
May He place in our hearts His fear,
May we be worthy to greet Him.*

*He will enlighten the hear
Waken the heart with understanding
Make the heart shine with brilliance.*

The Bahir

Index

1 Kings, 11, 17, 24
1 Samuel, 38
2 Kings, 20, 54
2 Samuel, 6, 12
32. See Heart
613 Commandments, the, 34
64 Forms, the, 25
72, 45
72 names, the, 24, 25, 29, 30

A

Aaron, 30, 34
Abraham, 4, 15, 20, 36
Aleph, 5, 7, 9, 18, 38
Amalek, 36
Amos, 5
angels, 7, 8, 13, 39
Attribute
 "that is called Israel", 37
 Evil, 44
 of Judgement, 19
 of Mercy, 10
 Oral Torah, 39, 40
 Satan, the, 43, 44, 45
Axis, 25
Az, 38

B

Bayit, 3, 5, 15, 28
beauty, 10, 26, 48
Berachah, 2
Bet, 2, 3, 5, 7
Beth, 7, 14, 28
Blessed Holy One, the, 3, 16, 18, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,
 30, 31, 32, 34, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 55, 57,
 58, 59
Bohu. See Desolation

C

Chai'oth ha-Qadesh (Holy Living Creatures), 34,39
Chaos, 2, 5, 36
Chariot, the, 18, 23, 34, 40, 47, 49, 50
Cherubim, 26
Cheth, 10
Chiah, 14
Chirek, 11
Cholem, 11
copper, 27
Creation, 2, 40
Crown, the (Kether), 23, 35, 38, 40

D

Daleth, 9, 10

Darkness, 5
David, 3, 12, 20, 51, 57
Desolation, 2, 5
Deuteronomy, 2, 3, 4, 12, 18, 36, 57
Divine Presence, the (Shekinah), 19, 20, 32, 46, 47

E

Ecclesiastes, 4, 14, 21, 39
Eden, Garden of, 9, 10, 26
Elijah, 30
Etrog, 48
Evil, 5, 44, 57
Evil Urge, the, 44
Exodus, 8, 11, 12, 20, 35, 56
Explicit Name (Shem Ha Mephoresh), 30
Ezekiel, 10, 17, 39

F

foundation, 16, 27

G

Gabriel, 5, 7, 29
Genesis, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 36, 56
Gimel, 7, 9
gold, 14, 27, 45

H

Habakkuk, 18, 39
hadar. See beauty.
Haggai, 14
Heart, 16, 25, 36
heaven, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 19, 26, 27, 34, 49, 52, 58
Heh, 4, 9, 14
Holy Palace, the, 18, 32, 41

I

Isaiah, 3, 5, 7, 12, 19, 35, 56
Israel, 6, 10, 11, 12, 17, 35, 57

J

Jacob, 11, 28, 36, 57
Jeremiah, 17, 44
Job, 2, 4, 5, 13, 16, 29, 41
Joshua, 4, 24, 45

K

kaf, 53
Karban, 29
Kedushah, 34

The Bahir

Kindness (Chesed), 36, 37, 38, 52, 54
Knowledge (Daath), 52, 58

L

Lamed, 38
Lamentations, 10
Lev. See Heart. See Heart. See Heart
Leviticus, 10, 17, 34
Light, 5, 19, 34
Lulav, 26, 48, 58

M

Malachi, 17, 37
Mem, 10, 22
Messiah, 12, 51
Micah, 10, 18, 36
Michael, 5, 7, 29
Moses, 4, 11, 13, 31, 36, 56

N

Nephesh, 14
Neshamah, 14
Numbers, 16, 29, 35
Nun, 16, 22

O

Ophanim (Wheels), 34, 46

P

Peace, 5, 20, 37
Peretz, 57
Proverbs, 3, 4, 5, 13, 16, 18, 35
Psalms, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 34, 56

R

Rabbi
Akiba, 7, 9, 32, 53
Amorai, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 23, 24, 34, 57
Berachiah, 2, 8, 14
Bun, 4, 5
Chama, 14
Eliezer, 27
Haninah, 7
Levatas ben Taurus, 7
Nehuniah ben HaKana, 2
Rahumai, 3, 5, 8, 17, 18, 22, 26, 28, 31, 36, 40, 56
Yanai, 8
Yochanan, 7, 32, 36, 39, 48, 53
Resh, 21
righteous, 16, 19, 27, 32, 39, 40, 41, 50, 55, 56
righteousness, 10, 12, 19
Ruach, 10, 14

S

Sabbath, the, 15, 42, 50
sabbaths. See Sabbaths, the.
Samael, 58
Segol, 10, 23, 49
Sephiroth, 12, 34
Seraphim, 39
Seven Voices, The, 12
Shabbat, 42
Shaddai, 13, 30
Shamayim. See heaven.
Shavuot, 28
Shechakim (skies), 19, 32, 52
Shevet, 31
Shin, 9, 21
silver, 14, 27, 37
Solomon, 2, 17, 20, 57
Song of Songs, 12, 16, 17, 28, 45
spinal cord, the, 22, 26, 48
Strength (Geburah), 29
Succot, 28

T

tabernacle, 47
Tamar, 57
Targum, the, 4, 29, 32, 37, 45, 48, 52
Teli. See Axis
Ten Commandments, the, 21, 34
Terror (Pachad) a term for Geburah, 36, 37, 54
Teth, 22, 34
Tohu. See Chaos
Torah, 2, 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 19, 37, 57, 59
Torah of Truth, 32, 37
Treasury of the Torah, 52, 57
Tree of Life, the, 26, 43
Truth, 10, 14, 16, 20, 36, 37, 52, 54, 56
twelve, 24, 42
twelve tribes of Israel, the, 30
Tzaddi, 16
Tzadik. See righteous.
Tzitzit, 24

U

Understanding (Binah), 13, 28, 52
Uriel, 29

V

Vav, 9, 18
Victory (Netzach), 46, 47
voice, 12, 38, 59
voices, 12

W

Wisdom (Chokmah), 2, 3, 13, 25, 26, 29, 31, 35, 38, 39, 47,
49, 52

The Bahir

Y

Yechidah, 14
YHVH, 18, 30, 35
YiRaShaH, 4
Yod, 9, 16, 18

Z

Zahav. See gold
Zarka, 23, 49
Zayin, 14, 21, 38
Zerach, 57
Zion, 11, 32