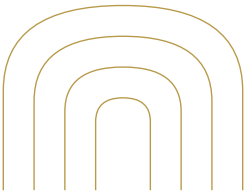
HEKHAL · READER'S EDITION



פירוש ספר יצירה

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah

The commentary printed under the name of Nahmanides, chapters 1 to 3: Hebrew and English

Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)

PROVISIONAL EDITION · MACHINE-ASSISTED · NOT YET REVIEWED BY A CREDENTIALED EDITOR

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About this edition

This volume gathers every part of *Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah* published on Hekhal as of 2026-11-14, in order. Each part keeps its own apparatus and notes.

Hebrew of the commentary on Sefer Yetzirah printed under the name of Nahmanides (Ramban) in the Warsaw 1884 edition, taken from Sefaria (version 'Ramban on Sefer Yetzirah, Warsaw 1884', public domain; source record at the National Library of Israel, NNL_ALEPH001310968), fetched 2026-11-10. Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona ('printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides', Encyclopaedia Judaica, 'Azriel of Gerona'), and it is published here under Azriel's name on that authority. Sefaria files it under Ramban as 'attributed to Ramban' and refers to Chavel's introduction in Kitvei Ramban 2:451, which we have not read. Sefaria carries chapters 1 to 3 only (105 comments, 2,862 Hebrew words by our count); whether the Warsaw print continues beyond chapter 3 has not been checked against a scan. Most comments open with the words of Sefer Yetzirah they explain (99 of the 105); the Warsaw editor's bracketed notes are kept as printed. A collation against a scan of the print is still an open editor item.

TRADITION	jewish-mysticism
LANGUAGE	Hebrew
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ATTRIBUTION	Azriel of Gerona (attributed); printed under the name of Nahmanides (Ramban)
TRANSLATION	Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)
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> What this is: a machine-assisted, provisional translation. Every rendering choice and every unresolved reading is recorded in the apparatus beside the text. If you read the original and something looks wrong, write to community@hekhal.org; corrections are credited.

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Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 1:1-3; the thirty-two paths, the three books, and the ten sefirot without what

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"With thirty-two," etc.: explanation: in the bet he alluded to Ein Sof (the Infinite); for in the power of Ein Sof is the existence of the Height Above (rum ma'alah), from which is the emanation of Chokhmah (Wisdom), and from Chokhmah the thirty-two hidden paths. And because they are drawn forth in Chokhmah from the Height Above, from Ein Sof, they are called peli'ot ("wondrous"), from the expression ki yippale ("if [a matter] be too wondrous"), which we render in the Targum arei yitkasei ("if it be concealed"). And because there is a distinction between path and path, they are likewise called pela'ot, which is from the expression ki yafli lindor ("when he shall set apart to vow"), which is an expression of separation. And each and every path draws from Chokhmah until it comes to show each and every path in Binah (Understanding), as it is said: "And the drawing of wisdom is above pearls." "He engraved," etc.: the power of the Cause of Causes, Ein Sof, from which is Keter Elyon (the supreme Crown), the Height Above, and Chokhmah: it engraved and brought into existence the power of a cause that is called Yod He, which is in the power of existents (havayot); and from the power of Binah it brought into existence the

בשלשים ושתים וכו'. פירוש בב' רמז אין סוף כי בכח א"ס מציאות רום מעלה שממנה אצילות החכמה ומן החכמה ל"ב נתיבות נעלמות. ולפי שהן נמשכות בחכמה מרום מעלה מא"ס נקראים פליאות מלשון כי יפלא דמתרגמינן ארי יתכסי. ולפי שיש הפרש בין נתיב לנתיב נקראים כמו כן פלאות שהוא מלשון כי יפליא לנדור שהוא מלשון הפרשה. וכל נתיב ונתיב ימשוך מן החכמה עד שהוא מגיע להראות כל נתיב ונתיב בבינה כד"א ומשך חכמה מפנינים: חקק וכו'. כח עלת העלות אין סוף שממנו הכתר העליון רום מעלה והחכמה חקק והמציא כח סבה שנקראת יו"ד ה"א שהוא בכח הויות, ומכח בינה המציא כל הבנין שהוא נקרא דעת: בשלשה ספרים. בשלשה שמות הנקראים מהותו של שם שהם כלולים בו: בספר וספר וספור. ג' אותיות של שם יו"ד ה"א וא"ו שהכל כלול בו עד אין סוף מתיחד מאמצעות המהוה שהוא א"ס. ורמז לשלשתם כי ביה י"י צור עולמים, בי"ה שלשים ושתים כשתהפך שתי אותיות של י"ה *[ר"ל י"פ ה' ה"פ י' וב' אותיות י"ה. (ש"ל)]:

עשר ספירות. פירוש שלשים ושתים נתיבות שהם ט"ז לעליונים וט"ז לתחתונים נכללות בעשר. ונקראו ספירות שהם כח לכל הנגדר בגדר עשר: בלי מה. לפי שהם פתח אין סוף שאין לאל חקר אין לו מהות והוא בלימה נקראות בלימה: ועשרים ושתים וכו'. פירוש יש בכלל העשר כ"ב הנחלקים לג' חלקים שהם שלש אמות, שבע כפולות, וי"ב פשוטות, ועל דרך ל"ב נתיבות כ"ב אותיות והכל נכלל בעשר:

ראשונה הזכיר שהכל בחכמה, שנית הזכיר שהכל בבינה, שלישית הזכיר שהכל בדעת בדבר הנראה לעין, וז"ש מספר יו"ד אצבעות כדאמר אתה הראת לדעת וכתיב מבשרי אחזה אלו"ה: וברית יחיד. הלשון דוגמת עשר והוא המכריע בין עשר אצבעות הידים. ובו כלולים כ"ב אותיות ויש בו כח עשר אצבעות וזהו שאמר שהברית מכוון בלשון, וזהו שאמר כמלת לשון וכמלת המעור שיש בו אות ברית קודש, ומכריע בין י' אצבעות הרגלים ומוליד תולדה שהיא מצטיירת בעשרים [ושתים]

whole Building, which is called Da'at (Knowing). "With three sefarim": with three names that are called the essence of the Name, which are included in it. "With sefer and sefar and sippur": the three letters of the Name, Yod He Vav, in which all is included up to Ein Sof, unified through the mediation of the One-who-brings-into-being (ha-mehaveh), which is Ein Sof. And the allusion to the three of them: "For in Yah YHVH is the Rock of worlds"; be-Yah is thirty-two when you invert the two letters of Yah. [Editor's gloss, abbreviations unresolved: י"פ ה' ה"פ י' and the two letters Yod-He. (Sh"L)]

"Ten sefirot": explanation: the thirty-two paths, which are sixteen for the upper ones and sixteen for the lower ones, are included in ten. And they were called sefirot because they are the power for all that is bounded within the boundary of ten. "Beli mah" (without what): because they are the opening of Ein Sof (the Infinite) (for there is no searching-out of El; He has no essence (mahut), and He is belimah), they are called belimah. "And twenty-two," etc.: explanation: within the totality of the ten there are twenty-two, which are divided into three parts, namely three mothers, seven

אותיות ע"כ יש לך להתבונן מן הגלוי על הנסתר:

doubles, and twelve simples; and after the manner of the thirty-two paths, the twenty-two letters; and all is included in ten.

First he mentioned that all is in Chokhmah (Wisdom); second he mentioned that all is in Binah (Understanding); third he mentioned that all is in Da'at (Knowing), in a thing visible to the eye. And this is what he said, "the number of ten fingers," as it says, "You have been shown, to know," and it is written, "From my flesh I shall behold Eloah." "And a covenant of the Unique One": the tongue is a counterpart of the ten, and it is what decides between the ten fingers of the hands. And in it the twenty-two letters are included, and in it is the power of ten fingers; and this is what he said, that the covenant is aligned in the tongue; and this is what he said, "as the circumcision of the tongue and as the circumcision of the member (ma'or)," in which is the sign of the holy covenant; and it decides between the ten toes of the feet and begets an offspring that is formed in twenty-[two] letters. Therefore you must contemplate from the revealed concerning the hidden.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)





An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim Hebrew beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

Controlled terms noted in this passage: **ein-sof** (rendered as *the-infinite*), **chokhmah** (rendered as *wisdom*), **binah** (rendered as *understanding*), **keter** (rendered as *the-supernal-crown*), **sefirot** (rendered as *emanations*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

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Pardes layered reading

PaRDeS (layered reading and gematria). The commentator lays a sod reading over the peshat of Sefer Yetzirah 1:1-3. The 'thirty-two paths of wisdom' become emanated channels drawn from Ein Sof through Keter (rum ma'alah) into Chokhmah, shown in Binah, and built out as Da'at. The proof-verses are kept at their plain wording in the body; the sefirotic identifications live only here. Job 28:18 meshekh chokhmah ('the drawing / price of

wisdom') is read as the drawing-forth (meshekh) of the paths from Chokhmah. Isa 26:4 be-Yah YHVH is read as a code for the three letters of the Name and, by gematria, for the 32 paths. Deut 4:35 and Job 19:26 ground the third mode, Da'at 'in a thing visible to the eye'. The Job 28:18 move is derash: in the verse meshekh plainly means the price or value of wisdom, but the commentator hears it from the same root as nimshakhot ('they are drawn forth') and yimshokh ('it draws') in his own sentence, so the verse is made to say that the paths are drawn out of Chokhmah.

Peshat derash lexical derivation

Peshat/derash (lexical derivation). The commentator gets two senses from the root p-l-'. First, peli'ot = concealed, via Deut 17:8 ki yippale and its Targum Onkelos rendering arei yitkasei ('if it be concealed'); 'de-metargeminan' cites the Aramaic Targum as authority. Second, pela'ot = separated/distinguished, via Num 6:2 ki yafli lindor, read as hafrashah (separation). This is lexical midrash (derash through mi-leshon derivation), not allegory. Together the two senses give the paths a double character: hidden in their source, distinct from one another.

Targum Onkelos

Gematria be yah 32

Gematria. be-Yah (ביה) = 17 = 2+10+5. Inverting the two letters of Yah gives 15 = 5+10 = הי, and 17 + 15 = 32, the thirty-two paths. The bracketed gloss marked (ש"ל) is a later editorial note in the printed text and not the commentator's own words. It appears to read 'yod times heh, heh times yod, and the two letters Yod-He'. Read as multiplication, the arithmetic does not reach 32 (10×5 = 50 and 5×10 = 50). A tally that does reach 32 is possible if the gloss is counting the two orders of the letters, Yod-He and He-Yod (15 + 15 = 30), plus the letter bet (2) as the 'ב" before 'letters Yod-He'. That reading of the abbreviations י"פ ה"פ / and ב' is a suggestion only and needs collation. The gloss is therefore treated as a crux of the printed text: its abbreviations are left unresolved in the body, and its signature (Sh"L) is kept as printed and not expanded.

Beli mah belimah

Beli mah. SY 1:2 'ten sefirot beli mah' is read through mahut ('essence', literally 'what-ness'): the sefirot are the 'opening' (petach) of Ein Sof, which has no mahut and is beyond searching out ('ein la-El cheker', which echoes Isa 40:28 'ein cheker li-tevunato' and Job 11:7 but is not an exact citation). Because of this they are called belimah, 'without-what'. The feminine plural niqra'ot (the sefirot) is kept. See the Hekhal editorial summary on the beli-mah / ayin / Ein Sof lineage. Note that here 'ein' is a negation and not the apophatic grade-name

Ayin. The wordplay beli mah / belimah / mahut is kept as ‘without what’ on purpose. It is not rendered ‘nothingness’, because the commentator denies Ein Sof a ‘what’ (an essence that can be defined); he does not call it nothing. *Hekhal Editorial 2026*

Idra frame anachronism and anatomy

Idra theosophy and the body. This Gerona commentary predates the Zoharic Idrot and names no partzuf (no Atika, Arikh Anpin, or Ze’ir Anpin). One way of reading is still present in an early form: the mapping of the sefirot onto the human body. The ten fingers, the tongue as ‘decider’ between the hands, and the ‘covenant’ (the circumcised member, ma’or) between the toes map the ten sefirot and their deciding center onto the human body. The body of the translation keeps the concrete images (fingers, tongue, member, begets offspring). The body named is the human microcosm read as an image of the sefirot, and no divine body is asserted. The commentator’s own rule, ‘contemplate from the revealed concerning the hidden’, makes this explicit. *Wolfson, Elliot R. 1994*

Milah pun and from my flesh

Milah and ‘from my flesh’. In Sefer Yetzirah’s milat lashon / milat ma’or, the Hebrew milah means both ‘word’ and

'circumcision'. The commentator relies on both senses: the tongue is the covenant of the word (the 22 letters are 'included in it'), and the genital member is the covenant of circumcision (the 'sign of the holy covenant'), which 'begets offspring formed in letters'. The body renders 'circumcision' so that the covenant sense, and the concreteness of berit and ma'or, are not softened. The word sense is recorded here. Job 19:26 'from my flesh I shall behold Eloah' gives the method of the whole unit: one reasons from the visible body (the revealed) to the sefirotic structure (the hidden), as the closing line says. Deut 4:35 'You have been shown, to know' and Job 19:26 are used figuratively here: what is seen in the body is a sign of the hidden structure, and no bodily form is claimed for the divine.

Lurianic frame anachronism

Lurianic cosmogony. This passage has no tzimtzum, chalal, reshimu, kav, or igulim/yosher. Its cosmogony is emanative and sequential: Ein Sof, then the Height Above / Keter, then Chokhmah, then the 32 paths, then Binah, then the whole Building (Da'at). The Lurianic stratum is three centuries later and must not be read back into the translation. *Idel, Moshe 1988*

attribution

Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona ("printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides", Encyclopaedia Judaica, "Azriel of Gerona"). Sefaria files it under Ramban as "attributed to Ramban". *Scholem, Gershom 1987*

Divine names

Divine names are kept as the source gives them. Yod He (י"ה) is called a 'cause' (sibbah). Yod He Vav are the three letters of the Name, matched to sefer / sefar / sippur. The Tetragrammaton is written י"י in the source and rendered YHVH. Eloah (אלו"ה, Job 19:26) is kept as Eloah and not flattened to 'God'. El (לאל, 'there is no searching-out of El') is likewise kept as El.

Editorial decisions

- **sefirot / grade-names.** Chokhmah, Binah, Keter, and Da'at are transliterated with their English gloss on first use. Plain 'wisdom' is kept in the Job 28:18 proof-text, where it is the verse's own word.
- Makhria is rendered 'decides between' (the arbitrating middle term, as in a balance). 'Mediates' is avoided so as not to collapse it into ha-mehaveh's 'mediation' (me-emtza'ut).

- **ma'or.** Ma'or is rendered 'the member (ma'or)', which keeps the concreteness of Sefer Yetzirah's term for the genital member without euphemism or a crude gloss.

Manuscript variants

- **printed edition (bracketed supplement)**: בעשרים [ושתים] אותיות: The printed text supplies 'two' in brackets so that the count reads 22 letters. The underlying witness evidently read 'twenty'.
- **printed edition, gloss (ש"ל)**: *[ר"ל י"פ ה' ה"פ י' וב' אותיות] (ש"ל .י"ה]: This is a later editorial gloss explaining the 32 gematria. It is not part of the commentator's text, and its reading of the abbreviations is uncertain.
- **Num 6:2 (Masoretic)**: Source: לנדור (plene); MT: לנדר: Orthographic only; the source's spelling is kept.
- **Job 19:26 (Masoretic)**: Source: מבשרי אחזה אלו"ה; MT: ומבשרי אחזה אלוה: The source omits the conjunctive vav. Its wording is kept.
- **Sefer Yetzirah 1:3**: Commentary: כמלת לשון וכמלת המעור. Warsaw Sefer Yetzirah: כמלת הלשון וכמילת מעור. Gra version (Sefaria): במילת הלשון ובמילת המעור: The commentator's kemilat agrees with the Warsaw text of Sefer Yetzirah; the bemilat form is the Gra version. His wording is kept.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 1:4-5; ten and not nine, and the ten depths without end

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"Ten and not nine": after he had explained of them the number of the ten fingers, he went back and explained that although there is among created beings a man who has fewer than ten or more than ten, as it is said, "the fingers of his hands and the fingers of his feet, six and six"; nevertheless their essential number is only ten, not fewer and not more. "Ten and not nine": because nine is the power of the body (ha-etzem), which has length, breadth and thickness, and these are nine. He said "and not nine" because you must reckon the boundary of the place (gedar ha-makom) that is unified with them, and therefore they are ten. For one must not separate Chokhmah (Wisdom) from Keter Elyon (the supreme Crown) when you count from below upward; and when you count from above downward one must not separate Tzedek (Righteousness) from the Building (ha-binyan). For whether from below upward or from above downward, they are ten. "And not eleven": that you should not count Ein Sof (the Infinite) among the sefirot (be-sefirah), for it is not included in the number. Although the Height Above (rum ma'alah) is not comprehended, we count [it] among all the sefirot; for although it is not comprehended, the power of existence is in it, and on this

עשר ולא תשע. אחר שפירש מהם מספר עשר אצבעות חזר ופירש שאע"פ שיש בנבראים אדם שהוא בפחות מעשר ויתר על עשר כד"א אצבעות ידיו ואצבעות רגליו שש ושש ואעפ"כ אין עיקרם אלא עשר לא פחות ולא יותר. עשר ולא תשע לפי שהתשע כח העצם שיש בו אורך ורוחב ועובי שהם ט' אמר ולא תשע כי צריך אתה לחשוב גדר המקום המתייחד עמהם ועל כן הם עשר, כי אין להפריד החכמה מן הכתר עליון כשתמנה מלמטה למעלה וכשתמנה מלמעלה למטה אין להפריד צדק מן הבנין. כי בין מלמטה למעלה ומלמעלה למטה הם עשר: ולא אחד עשר. שלא תמנה אין סוף בספירה שאינו נכלל בספור אע"פ שרום מעלה אינו מושג אנו מונים בכל הספירות שהוא אע"פ שאינו מושג כח המציאות יש בו ולזה הוא שוה להם: הבן בחכמה. פי' במשניות ראשונות הזכיר חכמה ובינה ודעת, וכאן הזכיר שאין לפחות ולא להוסיף על עשר לא בחכמה ולא בבינה ולא בדעת ולכך אמר הבן בחכמה פירוש כח עשר של בינה שהוא בחכמה המשך אותו המשך מרום מעלה בחכמה כדי שימשך ממנה אל

account it is equal to them. "Understand with Wisdom": explanation: in the earlier mishnayot he mentioned Chokhmah, Binah (Understanding) and Da'at (Knowing); and here he mentions that one must neither diminish nor add to ten, not in Chokhmah, not in Binah, and not in Da'at. Therefore he said "understand with Wisdom," meaning: the power of the ten of Binah which is in Chokhmah: draw that drawing-forth from the Height Above into Chokhmah, so that it may be drawn from her to Binah. "And be wise with Understanding": that drawing-forth which is drawn into Chokhmah, when it is drawn into Binah, give it the power of Chokhmah, so as to unify this in this and this in this. And therefore he did not say in his wording "understand with Understanding and be wise with Wisdom," so as not to separate between them. "Examine with them": explanation: with Chokhmah and with Binah and with the drawing-forth that is drawn from them. "And probe from them": explanation: from Gedulah (Greatness) and Gevurah (Might), and from the Building, which is called Da'at, which is built from them. "And set the matter (davar) upon its clarity (boryo)":

הבינה: וחכם בבינה. אותו המשך הנמשך בחכמה כשימשך בבינה תן לו כח חכמה כדי ליחד זה בזה וזה בזה. ולכך לא אמר בלשונו הבן בבינה וחכם בחכמה כדי שלא להפריד ביניהם: בחון בהם. פי' בחכמה ובבינה ובמשך הנמשך מהם: וחקור מהם. פירוש מן הגדולה והגבורה ומן הבנין שהוא נקרא דעת שהוא בנוי מהם: והעמד דבר על בוריו. פירוש דבר צדק ולפי שהוא סוף העמד הסוף ותקשרנו בתחילתו שהוא נקרא בוריו. ולכך נאמר בוריו. וכל שאר הדברים נקרא בוריו לפי שמהם כחו. ולשון בוריו משענתו רמז לצדיק יסוד עולם: והשב יוצר על מכונו. פירוש תן לרחמים כח תשובה על מכונו זהו נצח והוד, וכל כח המכינו על כנו קרוי כן:

ע"ס וכו'. במשנה זו הזכיר שהכל מאין סוף ואע"פ שהדברים יש להם שיעור ומדה והם עשר, אותה מדה שיש להם אין לה סוף כי המוטבע מן המורגש והמורגש מן המושכל והמושכל מרום הנעלם והנעלם אין לו סוף א"כ אפילו המורגש והמושכל והמוטבע אין לו סוף ולכך נעשו המדות ההם כדי להתבונן בהם באין סוף: עומק וכו'. עשרה

עומקים מזכיר כאן כדכתיב עמוק עמוק מי ימצאנו וכל העמקים שוים בהשואה אחת אע"פ שהם מתפרשים כל אתד ואחד לדרכו כולן שוים בסופן [זה] לעומק ראשית שהוא חכמה וזה לעומק אחרית שהוא בינה. וזה לעומק טוב שהוא חסד. וזה לעומק רע שהוא פחד. וכנגד ארבעתן ד' יסודות שהם נבראים מיושרים מהם. ואח"כ מזכיר עומק שש קצוות שאין לפחות מהם לכל דבר שיש לו קומה. עומק רום כל עומק ועומק מכח רום מעלה ואחר שהזכיר כחו בנסתר שזהו העומק הוצרך להזכיר הכח שיש לו בנראה שהרי כל מדה ומדה הזכיר שיש לה כח בנראה [רום] הוא צד העליון שכתוב בו ראש דברך אמת שהוא עליון בששה קצוות והכח אשר הוא למטה הוא הנקרא תחת כד"א התחת אלהים אנכי. מזרח תפארת. מערב יסוד. צפון ודרום זהו נצח והוד: ואדון יחיד, אחר שהזכיר עשר גבולין בששה קצוות הזכיר כנגדן ו' שמות אלו, הם אדון המתואר באין סוף מושל בכולן בכח יחודו ממעון קדשו נקרא גדולה גבורה תפארת כד"א מעונה אלהי קדם ועד עדי עד מתחלת הבנין ועד

explanation: the "matter" is Tzedek (Righteousness); and because it is the end, set the end and bind it to its beginning, which is called "its boryo." Therefore it says "its boryo." And all the other things are called "its boryo," because its [Tzedek's] power is from them. And the expression "its boryo" [means] its support, an allusion to "the righteous one is the foundation of the world." "And restore the Former (yotzer) to His base (mekhono)": explanation: give to Compassion (rachamim) the power of return upon its base; this is Netzach (Endurance) and Hod (Splendor). And every power that establishes it upon its stand (kanno) is so called.

"Ten sefirot," etc.: in this mishnah he mentioned that all is from Ein Sof (the Infinite); and although the things have size and measure (shi'ur u-middah) and they are ten, that measure which they have has no end. For the natural (ha-mutba) is from the sensible, and the sensible from the intelligible, and the intelligible from the height of the hidden (rum ha-ne'lam), and the hidden has no end; if so, even the sensible and the intelligible and the natural have no end. And therefore those measures (middot) were made: so as to contemplate Ein Sof through them. "Depth,"

סופו שהוא צדק ונקרא עד כד"א שוכן עד:

etc.: he mentions ten depths here, as it is written, "deep, deep, who can find it?" And all the depths are equal in a single equalization (hashva'ah); although they are differentiated, each one to its own way, all of them are equal in their end: [this] to the depth of beginning, which is Chokhmah (Wisdom); and this to the depth of end, which is Binah (Understanding); and this to the depth of good, which is Chesed (Lovingkindness); and this to the depth of evil, which is Pachad (Fear). And corresponding to the four of them are the four elements, which are created, rightly aligned (meyusharim) from them. And afterward he mentions the depth of the six extremities, fewer than which nothing that has stature (komah) can have. "Depth of height": each and every depth is from the power of the Height Above (rum ma'alah); and after he had mentioned its power in the hidden, which is "the depth," he needed to mention the power it has in the visible, for of each and every measure he mentioned that it has power in the visible. [Height] is the upper side, of which it is written, "The head of Your word is truth," which is uppermost among the six extremities; and the power that is below is that which is called "beneath" (tachat), as it is said,

"Am I in the place of (ha-tachat) Elohim?" East: Tiferet (Beauty). West: Yesod (Foundation). North and South: these are Netzach (Endurance) and Hod (Splendor). "And the singular Lord (Adon yachid)": after he had mentioned ten boundaries in six extremities, he mentioned corresponding to them these six names. They are: "Lord" (Adon), who is described by Ein Sof, ruling over all of them by the power of His unity; "from His holy dwelling" (mi-me'on kodsho): this is called Gedulah (Greatness), Gevurah (Might), Tiferet, as it is said, "the dwelling (me'onah) of Elohei Kedem"; "and unto eternity of eternity" (ve-ad adei ad): from the beginning of the Building to its end, which is Tzedek (Righteousness), and it is called "ad" (eternity), as it is said, "who dwells in eternity (shokhen ad)."

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

▽

An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim Hebrew beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

Controlled terms noted in this passage: **chokhmah** (rendered as *wisdom*), **binah** (rendered as *understanding*), **keter** (rendered as *crown*), **ein-sof** (rendered as *the-infinite*), **sefirot** (rendered as *emanations*), **tzedek** (rendered as *tzedek-the-shekhinah*), **tzaddik** (rendered as *righteous-one*), **chesed** (rendered as *loving-kindness*),

gevurah (rendered as *might*), **tiferet** (rendered as *beauty-glory*), **meyusharim (מיושרים)** (rendered as *rightly aligned*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

⁂

Pardes layered lemma commentary

Levels of reading. Azriel works through the lemmas of Sefer Yetzirah 1:4-5 and turns each instruction to the adept into a teaching about the sefirot. “Understand with Wisdom, and be wise with Understanding” becomes the mutual implication of Chokhmah and Binah. “Examine with them” points to Chokhmah, Binah and their outflow. “Probe from them” points to Gedulah, Gevurah and the Building, called Da’at. “Set the matter upon its clarity” binds Tzedek (the end) to the beginning. “Restore the Former to His base” gives Compassion

its return through Netzach and Hod. The plain sense of the mishnah (an instruction about knowing and conduct) stays in the body as the base layer. Azriel only calls Prov 10:25 a “remez” (hint), and that restraint is kept: the Yesod identification is given here in the notes, not in the body.

Be with in

The preposition be-. In the lemmas “understand with Wisdom”, “be wise with Understanding” and “examine with them” the Hebrew prefix be- is rendered ‘with’ every time, so that the crossing Azriel comments on (understanding with Wisdom, wisdom with Understanding, and the rejected “understand with Understanding and be wise with Wisdom”) stays visible in English. Inside Azriel’s own comment the same prefix describes the flow (drawn into Chokhmah, drawn into Binah) or the scope (not in Chokhmah, not in Binah, not in Da’at), and there it is rendered ‘into’ or ‘in’.

Six and six

”The fingers of his hands and the fingers of his feet, six and six” (2 Sam 21:20; cf. 1 Chr 20:6) is quoted in shortened form; the verse continues “twenty-four in number”. This is a truncation, not a variant. The verse is used homiletically: a man with six fingers on each hand and foot shows that a created body may

have more than ten, so that the ten of Sefer Yetzirah is a count of what is essential, not of what happens to be found in nature.

Boryo and mekhono derash

Two derashot in the first unit, both homiletic moves and not the plain sense of the lemma. First, “boryo” is glossed by Azriel as “its support” (mish’anto, from mish’enet, a staff or prop). He calls this a hint (remez) at “the righteous one is the foundation of the world” (tzaddik yesod olam, Prov 10:25): Tzedek, the end, rests on the Righteous One, Yesod, as on its support. Second, in “restore the Former to His base” (yotzer al mekhono), he reads “mekhono” as Netzach and Hod, the powers that set the formative power (Compassion, rachamim) back upon its stand (kanno). The body translates the lemma at its plain sense and Azriel’s gloss word for word; these identifications are his derash and are not taken into the wording of the lemma.

Sefirah sippur pun

”That you should not count Ein Sof be-sefirah, for it is not included ba-sippur (in the number).” The argument depends on the root s-p-r: sefirah (grade, and also ‘counting’), sippur/mispar (number). Ein Sof is excluded from the ten not because it is less real but because it is not a countable term. This is why ‘sefirot’ stays transliterated in the body. On the beli mah / Ein Sof

apophatic line, see the Hekhal editorial summary. Azriel comments directly on “ten sefirot beli mah, their measure ten that have no end” (SY 1:5). *Hekhal Editorial 2026*

Measures without end

The second paragraph argues that each measure (middah) is endless: the natural derives from the sensible, the sensible from the intelligible, and the intelligible from the height of the hidden, which has no end. The measures were “made so as to contemplate Ein Sof through them”. The ladder (natural, sensible, intelligible, hidden) uses Neoplatonic vocabulary. Scholem’s Encyclopaedia Judaica article on Azriel says his work “most clearly reflects the process whereby Neoplatonic thought penetrated into the original kabbalistic tradition”. *Gershom Scholem*

Peshat derash asmakhta

Proof-texts in the second unit. The verses work as supports and word-links, not as readings in context. “Deep, deep, who can find it?” (Eccl 7:24) supports the “ten depths”. “The head of Your word is truth” (Ps 119:160) supports “height”: rosh, which in the verse means the sum or beginning of the word, is taken as the top, the upper extremity. “Am I in the place of (ha-tachat) Elohim?” (Gen 30:2; also Gen 50:19) is cited only for the word

tachat, which in the verse means ‘in place of’ and is taken here as ‘beneath’, the lower extremity. “The dwelling (me’onah) of Elohei Kedem” (Deut 33:27) is matched to Sefer Yetzirah’s “me’on kodsho” by the shared word ma’on, close to a gezerah shavah, and so “His holy dwelling” is read as Gedulah, Gevurah and Tiferet. “Who dwells in eternity (shokhen ad)” (Isa 57:15) supplies “ad” as a name of Tzedek, the end of the Building. All verses are rendered as the source gives them; the divine name Elohim in the proof-texts is kept transliterated.

Idra frame inapplicable

Configurations. This passage names no configuration of the divine countenance (no Atika Kadisha, Arikh Anpin or Ze’ir Anpin, no skull or beard). The only point of contact is the “stature” (komah), which needs six extremities, and the “body” (etzem) with its three dimensions. These are structures of the ten measures, not a divine body, and the passage should not be read forward into the language of configured countenances (partzufim).

Lurianic frame anachronism

Terms not to read back. “Ha-makom” here is the unifying boundary of the ten, not a vacated space, and “meyusharim” is not the later technical term yosher. None of the terms in this

passage is tzimtzum, kav or chalal, and the passage should be read on its own terms. *Moshe Idel 1988*

Six names

"These six names" are the six words of Sefer Yetzirah 1:5: adon, yachid, el, melekh, ne'eman, moshel. Azriel maps them onto the ten boundaries in six extremities. In the text as printed he names only three items: "Adon" (described by Ein Sof), "me'on kodsho" (Gedulah, Gevurah, Tiferet) and "ad adei ad" (the Building from its beginning to Tzedek). Six names are announced but only three lemmas follow, which may point to a gap in the text or to an abbreviated lemma; the print should be checked. The six directions are given as: height (top), beneath, East = Tiferet, West = Yesod, North and South = Netzach and Hod. The "six" is written with the letter-numeral ו׳.

attribution

Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona ("printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides", Encyclopaedia Judaica, "Azriel of Gerona"). Sefaria files it under Ramban as "attributed to Ramban". *Gershom Scholem*

Editorial decisions

- **sefirot.** Kept ‘sefirot’ / ‘be-sefirah’ transliterated instead of ‘emanations’ so the counting pun stays visible; forbidden counting-renderings avoided.
- **boryo.** The lemma is rendered ‘its clarity (boryo)’; inside Azriel’s comment ‘boryo’ is left transliterated. The polysemy is set out in the ambiguity notes.
- **meyusharim.** Rendered ‘rightly aligned (meyusharim)’ to avoid importing the later technical term yosher and the forbidden ‘straightness’.
- **Pachad / Gedulah.** Alternate grade-names (Pachad for Gevurah, Gedulah for Chesed) kept as the source chose them, not normalized.

Manuscript variants

- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: [זה] before הוא צד העליון before לעומק ראשית; [רום]: Bracketed editorial restorations in the print as digitised, not Azriel’s running text. Kept in brackets in the translation.
- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: אתד for אחד in ‘כל אתד ואחד לדרכו’: An error in the print or in its digitisation (ת for ח); the idiom ‘each and every one’ is

certain from context. Translated as ‘each one’; to be checked against a printed edition.

- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: הזכיר כנגדן ו’ שמות אלו, followed by only three glossed items (אדון; ממעון קדשו; ועד עדי עד): Six names are announced but only three lemmas are explained: a possible gap in the text or an abbreviated lemma. To be checked against a scan of the print.
- **Sefer Yetzirah lemma, printed editions**: והשב יוצר על מכונו: Azriel’s gloss depends on ‘mekhono’/‘kanno’ (base, stand). Collation against the printed Sefer Yetzirah editions is owed; no specific variant reading is asserted here.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 1:6-9; the flash of lightning, the end fixed in the beginning, and the breath of the living God

This edition presents the verbatim Hebrew text of the passage beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

The apparatus carries a running commentary, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, any doctrinally-live ambiguity preserved with both readings, and cross-references to the lexicon. The original-language text is reproduced verbatim from the digital source credited in the provenance line of this page; any modern English translation still under copyright is cited as a comparand only.

"Ten sefirot belimah: their gazing (tzefiyyatan)": the gazing with which a person gazes upon them. "Like the appearance of the flash (ha-bazak)": it does not say "appearance" but "like the appearance"; and likewise "And I saw the like of (ke-ein)": this is nothing but a likeness (dimyon), to bring the matter near to the knowing of the one who inquires. The flash (bazak): like this, when one scatters (bozek) olive-pulp in a stove. "And their end (takhlitan)": what is contained in them is the flash, in this, that there is no end (ketz) to their end. End (ketz): every allotted thing that has measure (middah), of it "end" is said; and every thing that has no measure, of it Ein Sof (the Infinite, "without end") is said. "And His word (devaro) in them is running and returning (ratzo va-shov)": explanation: the natural (ha-mutba) rises through their gazing to contemplate in the sensible, and the sensible in the intelligible, and the intelligible in the hidden. And in each and every one of them the middle line is called "His word," for it is the middle among them, and it rises to receive the drawing-forth of the Chesed (Lovingkindness) of the will, with exceeding speed, running and returning. Explanation: those who receive from Tzedek

יס"ב צפייתן. הצפייה שאדם צופה בהן: כמראה הבזק. מראה לא נאמר אלא כמראה וכן וארא כעין שאינו אלא דמיון להקרב הדבר לדעת החוקר. הבזק כזה שהוא בוזק גפת בכירה: ותכליתן. מה שנכלל בהן הבזק בזה שהוא אין קץ לתכליתן קץ כל דבר קצוב שיש לו מדה נאמר בו קץ וכל דבר שאין לו מדה נאמר בו א"ס: ודברו בהם ברצוא ושוב. פי' המוטבע מתעלה בצפייתן להסתכל במורגש והמורגש במושכל והמושכל בנעלם ובכל אחד ואחד מהם הקו האמצעי קרוי דברו שהוא אמצעי בהם והוא מתעלה לקבל משך החסד הרצון במהירות יתירה ברצוא ושוב: פירוש המקבלים מצדק העטרה כמו כן כסופה ירדופו: ולפני כסאו הם משתחוים. החיצון אל הפנים. פ"א צפייתן הצפיה הוא הכח הנמשך מלמעלה למטה ואותו כח נקרא צפייה שזו צופה בזו כדי לקבל דברו. ואותו כח הנמשך מן הדבר אל המאמר הוא נמשל לסופה, כלומר שהדברים ממשיכים הכח אל המאמר במהירות יתירה והדבר והמאמר לפני כסאו פירוש לאין סוף הם משתחוים:

(Righteousness), the Atarah; so too "like a whirlwind (sufah) they pursue." "And before His throne they bow down": the outer toward the inner. Another explanation: "their gazing": the gazing is the power drawn from above to below, and that power is called gazing, for this one gazes upon that one in order to receive His word. And that power which is drawn from the word (ha-davar) to the utterance (ha-ma'amar) is likened to a whirlwind. That is to say, the words draw the power toward the utterance with exceeding speed; and the word and the utterance "before His throne" (meaning, before Ein Sof) "bow down."

"Embedded (na'utz)": explanation: although the things (ha-devarim) are divided into Chokhmah (Wisdom), Tevunah (Discernment), and Da'at (Knowing), there is no difference among them, for the end is bound to its beginning and the beginning to the end, and the middle is made up of them. And the sign for the matter is flame, coal, and spark, as it is said: "its flashes are flashes of fire, a flame of Yah (shalhevet Yah)." That is to say, all is unified like the blaze of fire that is unified in its hues, and all of them are equal in one root. "For the Lord (Adon) is singular," etc.: she-Adon

נעוץ. פי' אע"פ שהדברים נחלקים בחכמה ובתבונה ובדעת אין הפרש ביניהם שהסוף קשור בתחלתו וההתחלה בסוף והאמצע כלול מהן וסימן לדבר שלהבת וגחלת וזיק כד"א רשפיה רשפי אש שלהבת יה. כלומר שהכל מתיחד כלהב אש המתיחד בגוונין וכולן שוים בעיקר אחד: שאדון יחיד וכו'. שאדון בענין שככה לו שהוא רמז לאין סוף. אדון שם המיוחד ולפי שהוא שוה לכל והכל מתאחד בהשוואתו נקרא אדון יחיד, ואין לו שני אע"פ שממנו כח שניות אין לו שני שהכל שוה בו: ולפני אחד מה אתה סופר. יש הפרש בין אחד ויחיד ומיוחד. שם המתפרש כשהוא מתיחד לפעול בכח אחד נקרא מיוחד. וכשהוא מתחלק לפעול פעולתו כל חלק שממנו נקרא יחיד. וכשהוא בהשוואה אחת נקרא אחד. מה אתה סופר לפי שהאחד וכח שלפניו השוואה גמורה אין מספר לפני אחד שאין מספר אלא מאחד שיש בו אלהות:

בלום. פי' כמו עדיו לבלום וכמ"ש אין דורשין וכו' ואף במה שהורשית להתבונן אל תתן את פיך לחטיא את בשרך משום שנאמר כבוד אלהים הסתר דבר. וכמו שאמרו כל שלא חס על כבוד

is in the sense of she-kakhah lo ("that it is so for it"), which is a hint (remez) to Ein Sof (the Infinite). Adon: the unified Name. And because He is equal toward all, and all becomes one in His equalization (hashva'ah), He is called "singular Lord (Adon yachid)." "And He has no second": although the power of duality comes from Him, He has no second, for all is equal in Him. "And before One, what do you count?" There is a difference between one (echad), singular (yachid), and unified (meyuchad). The differentiated Name (ha-shem ha-mitparesh), when it unifies itself to act with one power, is called meyuchad (unified). When it divides itself to perform its action, each part of it is called yachid (singular). And when it is in one equalization it is called echad (one). "What do you count": because the One and the power that is before it are a complete equalization, there is no number before One. For there is no number except from a One in which there is divinity.

"Restrain (belom)": explanation: as in "[with bit and bridle] his gear, to restrain (edyo livlom)," and as it is said, "One does not expound," etc. And even in what you have been permitted to contemplate,

קונו כו': ולבך מלהרהר. שלא לדמות הנסתר לגלוי: ואם רץ לבך. כדי לדמות: שוב למקום. לדבר המושג שאתה רשאי להרהר בו: ועל דבר זה נכרת ברית. ולכך נגלה הדבר כדי שיהא כח להסתכל לדבר בו ולהרהר ולא במופלא ממנו, כי מכח הדבר שהוא נקרא ברית שהוא מייחד התמורות בכח אחד יכול להכיר שאין הנסתר אלא האחדות גמורה:

עד עתה דברנו במספרן במדתן בצפייתן ביחודן ובהעלמתן עתה נפרש מה הן: אחת רוח. לא הזכיר רום מעלה עד חמש להודיע שאין התחלת ישות אלא מחכמה שהוא נקרא אחת וכח רום נמשך בה מדבר לדבר עד שהוא מגיע להיות מספר חמש: רוח. היא חכמה כדכתיב רוח אלהים והיא נקראת חיים כדכתיב והחכמה תחיה בעליה. ולפי שהכל מכח חכמה כדכתיב כולם בחכמה עשית הזכיר כאן ואמר ברוך ומבורך שמו של חי העולמים. ברוך מכח רוס. ומבורך מכח צדק. שמו. לפי ששם תשומות הברכה והחיים יקרא חי העולמים שהוא חי ויש בו להחיות העולמים והדברים העליונים שהם מכח העולם נקרא עולמים: קול רוח ודבור. אחר

שהזכיר שהספירה הראשונה נקרא רוח אמר שאותו רוח יש בו שלשה קולות הרוח שהוא נקרא קול ואמצעיתו שהוא מרחיב והולך נקרא רוח, וחתוך חלקיו שהוא מתחלק באותיות נקרא דבור. ואפילו הקול ואפילו הדבור נקרא רוח כמו שהוא מפרש, וזהו רוח הקדש שהקדש הוא הכח של רום המזדמן לקבל מא"ס וממנו הרוח שהוא נקרא רוה"ק שממנו אותיות הקדש ולשון הקודש:

"do not let your mouth bring your flesh into sin," because it is said, "It is the glory of Elohim to conceal a matter." And as they said, "Whoever has no regard for the glory of his Maker," etc. "And your heart from pondering": so as not to liken the hidden to the revealed. "And if your heart runs": in order to liken. "Return to the place": to the comprehended matter that you are permitted to ponder. "And concerning this matter (davar) a covenant was cut": and therefore the davar was revealed, so that there might be power to contemplate, to speak of it and to ponder it, and not of what is more wondrous than it. For by the power of the davar, which is called covenant (berit), which unifies the substitutions (temurot) in one power, one can recognize that the hidden is nothing but complete oneness.

Until now we have spoken of their number, their measure, their gazing, their unification, and their concealment. Now we will explain what they are. "One: breath (ruach)": he did not mention "the Height Above" (rum ma'alah) until five, to make known that the beginning of being (yeshut) is only from Chokhmah (Wisdom), which is called "one". The power of the Height (rum) is drawn within it

from thing to thing until it reaches the number five. “Breath”: she is Chokhmah, as it is written, “the breath of Elohim (ruach Elohim)”; and she is called life, as it is written, “and wisdom gives life to those who possess it.” And because all is from the power of Chokhmah, as it is written, “You made them all in wisdom,” he mentioned it here and said: “Blessed (barukh) and made-blessed (mevorakh) is the name of the Life of the worlds (chei ha-olamim).” Barukh: from the power of ros [text uncertain; conjecturally rum, height]. And mevorakh: from the power of Tzedek (Righteousness). “His name (shemo)”: because there (sham) are the deposits (tesumot) of blessing and of life, He is called “Life of the worlds,” for He is living and has in Him [the power] to give life to the worlds. And the supernal things that are from the power of the world (ha-olam) are called “worlds.” “Voice, breath, and speech”: after he mentioned that the first sefirah is called breath, he said that this breath has three voices within it. The breath that is called voice (kol); its middle, which goes on widening, is called breath (ruach); and the cutting of its parts, in which it is divided into letters, is called speech (dibbur). And even the voice and even the speech are called breath, as he

explains: “and this is the holy breath (ruach ha-kodesh).” For the holy (ha-kodesh) is the power of the Height (rum) that stands ready to receive from Ein Sof (the Infinite). From it comes the breath that is called the holy breath, and from it come the holy letters and the holy tongue.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)





An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim Hebrew beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

Controlled terms noted in this passage: **ein-sof** (rendered as *the-infinite*), **sefirot** (rendered as *emanations*), **chokhmah** (rendered as *wisdom*), **chesed** (rendered as *the-sefirah-chesed*), **tzedek** (rendered as *tzedek-the-shekhinah*), **ha-kav ha-emtza'i (the middle line)** (rendered as *the-line*), **olamot** (rendered as *worlds*), **yichud** (rendered as *unification*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

Frame applicability

Frame applicability. This is an early 13th-century commentary on Sefer Yetzirah. It names none of the Idra configurations (Atika Kadisha, Arikh Anpin, Ze'ir Anpin) and none of the Lurianic terms tzimtzum, chalal or reshimu. The Idra and Lurianic readings are therefore used here only for comparison, to flag continuities; they are not read back into the translation.

Kemareh derash

Plain sense and exposition. 'It does not say mar'eh but ke-mar'eh' uses the classic formula 'lo ne'emar X ela Y'. The comparative prefix kaf is read as marking a likeness (dimyon), not a direct sighting, with Ezek 1:27 ('va-ere ke-ein chashmal') as a parallel. In the visionary text Azriel is commenting on, this is a safeguard against reading the vision bodily: what is seen is a likeness 'to bring the matter near to the knowing of the inquirer'.

Bazak gefet

The gloss "like one who scatters (bozek) olive-pulp in a stove" takes up, word for word, the explanation of "ke-mar'eh ha-

bazak" (Ezek 1:14) in Genesis Rabbah 50:1, given there by R. Yehudah in the name of R. Simon in the name of R. Levi bar Parta. Azriel cites it without a name. (b. Hagigah 13b explains the flash differently, as light coming out between potsherds.) The image is a flash of sparks thrown off when olive-refuse is scattered on a fire. *Midrash*

Ketz middah

Azriel defines the terms: whatever has middah (measure) has ketz (end); what has no middah is called Ein Sof. *Moshe Idel 1988*

Middle line

The 'middle line' (ha-kav ha-emtza'i) is the central line within each triad of ascent: sensible, intelligible, hidden. The body keeps the concrete 'line'.

Ratzo vashov

Two levels. 'Running and returning' (Ezek 1:14, cited in SY 1:6 and 1:8) is read on two levels. The contemplative's mind ascends through the sensible, the intelligible, and the hidden; and the middle line ascends to receive the overflow of Chesed and the will. 'Those who receive from Tzedek, the Atarah' places the lowest grade (Tzedek / Atarah, the Shekhinah figure) as the

receiver ‘pursuing like a whirlwind’. The sefirotic identifications are surfaced here; the body keeps the source’s own grade-names.

atarah

Atarah (a wreath or coronet) is set in apposition to Tzedek. It is distinct from Keter (the crown, the highest grade). It is transliterated in the body to avoid confusion with Keter.

Shalhevet yah

Scriptural citation. Azriel quotes Song 8:6 as ‘reshafeha rishpei esh shalhevet Yah’, reading the last word as two: ‘flame of Yah’. The Masoretic text on Sefaria writes שלהבתיה as one word; the source writes two. The body keeps the divine name Yah as the source gives it. Azriel’s triad flame / coal / spark glosses SY 1:7 ‘like a flame bound to a coal’.

hashvaah

hashva’ah (equalization, equality) is Azriel’s signature term. The One, and the power before it, stand in ‘complete equalization’, in which all opposites are equal. The triad echad / yachid / meyuchad sets out three states of the Name: unified to act with one power (meyuchad), divided into acting parts (yachid), and in single equalization (echad). *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Remez ein sof

The hidden level. Azriel says outright that she-Adon is ‘a remez to Ein Sof’ and leaves it unpacked. The body does not expand the hint into open sod; see the ambiguity note on ‘שאדון בענין שככה לו’ for the parse options.

Belom esotericism

The gloss on belom (‘restrain’) builds a chain of restraint from several sources. (1) Ps 32:9, of which Azriel quotes two words, edyo livlom: belom read as reining in. (2) m. Hagigah 2:1 ‘ein dorshin’ and its closing line ‘whoever has no regard for the glory of his Maker’. (3) The Ben Sira saying quoted in b. Hagigah 13a: ‘in what you have been permitted, contemplate; … not in what is too wondrous for you’. (4) Eccl 5:5 and Prov 25:2. The body keeps the citations in Azriel’s abbreviated ‘etc.’ forms. *Mishnah*; *Babylonian Talmud*

Davar berit

’And concerning this matter a covenant was cut’ (SY 1:8). Azriel makes the revealed davar the field in which contemplation is permitted, and calls that davar ‘covenant’ (berit), the power that unifies the temurot into one. Through it one recognizes that ‘the hidden is nothing but complete oneness’. The covenant thus becomes the permitted threshold of the hidden.

Sefirotically, berit is usually the central or Yesod grade, but Azriel does not name a sefirah here, and neither does the body.

Rum five

'He did not mention the Height Above (rum ma'alah) until five' refers to Sefer Yetzirah's list of the ten depths (SY 1:5, omek rum … omek tachat), where 'height' comes fifth. Azriel turns the order into doctrine: being (yeshut) begins in Chokhmah ('one'), and the power of the Height is drawn through it step by step until it reaches the count of five. It is a derash on the order of a list.

Ruach chokhmah gender

Gender of ruach. The body renders ruach as 'breath' throughout. In 1:9 'ruach: hi Chokhmah … ve-hi nikret chayyim' uses the feminine pronoun, rendered 'she is Chokhmah … she is called life'. In the 'voice, breath, speech' gloss the source switches to the masculine 'oto ruach yesh bo' (ruach is grammatically of either gender). The body renders that clause neutrally ('this breath has three voices within it') and records the shift here. It may be grammatical rather than doctrinal.

Sham shem

Wordplay: shemo ('His name') is explained through sham ('there'), 'because there are the deposits (tesumot, cf. Lev 5:21 tesumet yad) of blessing and life'. Barukh (from rum, height) and mevorakh (from Tzedek) mark the upper source and the lower receiver of blessing. This is a two-pole reading of the berakhah formula.

Kol ruach dibbur

Phonetic emanation. A single breath (ruach; Chokhmah, the first sefirah) unfolds as voice (kol), then as the widening middle (breath, ruach), then as speech cut into letters (dibbur). The holy breath (ruach ha-kodesh) is defined through kodesh = the power of the Height ready to receive from Ein Sof, and from it come 'the holy letters and the holy tongue'. This is the Sefer Yetzirah linguistic cosmogony read theosophically.

attribution

Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona ("printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides", Encyclopaedia Judaica, "Azriel of Gerona"). Sefaria files it under Ramban as "attributed to Ramban". *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Ros crux

Textual crux. In 1:9 the transmitted text reads ‘barukh from the power of ros’ (רוס), which gives no sense as it stands. The reading ‘rum’ (height) is a conjectural emendation only, suggested by ‘the power of rum’ later in the same section; it is not a settled reading, and other corruptions are possible. The body keeps ros with the conjecture in brackets marked as uncertain.

Editorial decisions

- **ros/rum.** The transmitted ‘ros’ is kept in the body with a bracketed conjecture. No restoration of the text is recorded until a printed edition confirms the reading.
- **Atarah.** Atarah is transliterated rather than glossed ‘crown’ in the body, to avoid collision with Keter.
- **Adon / pronouns.** Masculine pronouns for Adon / the Name are rendered ‘He’, following the source. Inanimate masculine nouns (koach, davar) are rendered ‘it’.

Manuscript variants

- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: ברוך מכח רוס (ros); conjecturally ברוך מכח רום (rum, height), matching ‘כח של רום’ later in the same section and the ‘rum’ of the

preceding gloss: A textual crux. The resh-vav-samekh / resh-vav-mem confusion is a common scribal slip, but rum remains a conjecture, not a settled reading, and other corruptions are possible. The body keeps ‘ros’ with a bracketed conjecture marked as uncertain. A printed edition or manuscript must be collated before any restoration is recorded.

- **Song 8:6 (Masoretic text)**: שלהבתיה (one word) vs. source שלהבת יה (two words): Azriel’s two-word division brings out the divine name Yah and supports the ‘all is unified in one root’ reading of the flame. The source’s form is kept in the body.
- **printed editions of Sefer Yetzirah with commentaries (attributed to Ramban)**: text transmitted under Nachmanides’ name: An attribution variant; see the attribution footnote.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 1:10-14; breath from breath, water, fire, and the sealing of the six directions

This edition presents the verbatim Hebrew text of the passage beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

The apparatus carries a running commentary, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, any doctrinally-live ambiguity preserved with both readings, and cross-references to the lexicon. The original-language text is reproduced verbatim from the digital source credited in the provenance line of this page; any modern English translation still under copyright is cited as a comparand only.



רוח מרוח. פי׳ כאשר נאצל ריח מריח ונר מנר כן נאצל רוח מרוח ויש רוח שאינו נתפש ויש רוח נתפש והנתפש בשאינו נתפש והגס בא מן הדק ממנו: חקק וחצב בה. רוח ראשון שהוא דק ואין בו כי אם רשימה דקה והנתפש יש לומר בו חקיקה ולפי גסותו יש לומר בו חציבה שהוא חוצב ומחלק חלקי הרוח ובמה באותיותיו: כ״ב אותיות. כנגד י׳ אצבעות ידים ורגלים ושני מכריעים: יסוד. יסוד הבנין הבנוי מהם אע״פ שהבנין בגלגול אותיות שהוא עולה לרל״א שערים אין עיקרן אלא אלו: שלש אמות. הם בינה חסד ופחד והכל מתאחד ולפי שהאחד יש ממנו כח שלא נחלקו האמות לשלש שהשלישי מכריע להודיע שאין השנים אלא כח אחד ובהכפל השלש הם שש והאחד מכריע והם שבע: שבע כפולות. הג׳ בכלל הז׳ שיש באויר כח מים ואש ויש במים כח אויר ואש ויש באש כח מים ואויר ולפי שיש בהם כח כפול נכללו בשבע כפולות: ושתים עשרה פשוטות. כלומר כח כולם בכח בינה ולא תאמר שהם דבר חלוק מן הבינה אלא הם הבינה: ורוח אחת מהן. כשי״ן של תפילין שהאות בולטת מן [העור]

"Breath from breath" (ruach me-ruach): Explanation. Just as scent is emanated from scent, and lamp from lamp, so breath is emanated from breath. And there is a breath that is not grasped, and there is a breath that is grasped; and the grasped is within the not-grasped, and the coarse comes from that which is finer than it. "He engraved and hewed in it": The first breath, which is fine and has in it nothing but a fine impression (reshimah); and of the grasped one may speak of engraving in it, and according to its coarseness one may speak of hewing in it, for He hews and divides the parts of the breath. And with what? With its letters. "Twenty-two letters": Corresponding to the ten fingers of the hands and [the ten toes of] the feet, and the two that decide (makhri'im). "Foundation": The foundation of the Building that is built from them: although the Building, in the rolling of the letters (gilgul otiyot), amounts to two hundred thirty-one gates, their root is none other than these. "Three mothers": They are Binah (Understanding), Chesed (Lovingkindness), and Pachad (Fear), and all is made one. And because there is a power from the One, the mothers were not divided into three [separate things]: the third decides, to make known that

the two are nothing but one power. And when the three are doubled they are six, and the one decides, and they are seven. “Seven doubles”: The three are included in the seven: for in air there is the power of water and fire, and in water there is the power of air and fire, and in fire there is the power of water and air; and because there is a doubled power in them, they were included in the seven doubles. “And twelve simples”: That is to say: the power of all of them is in the power of Binah; and do not say that they are a thing separate from Binah; rather, they are Binah. “And one breath is from them”: Like the shin of the tefillin, where the letter protrudes from the [leather] and is nothing but [leather].

”Water from breath”: Explanation. Each and every power that is fit to extend from thing to thing is in the power of the Height Above (rum ma’alah), and from there it extends to a second power; and what is called in the first power ‘paths’ (netivot) is called in the second power ‘sefirot’, and in the third power ‘letters’. And in those letters He hewed tohu, this being the power of the existents (havayot) that have no impression, and bohu, the power of the existents that have an impression. “Mire and clay” (refesh ve-tit): The turbidity of the

ואינה אלא [עור]:

מים מרוח. פי’ כל כח וכח הראוי להתפשט מדבר לדבר הוא בכח רום מעלה ומשם מתפשט לכח שני ומה שנק’ בכח ראשון נתיבות נקרא בכח שני ספירות ובכח שלישי אותיות ובאותן האותיות חצב בהן תהו שזהו כח ההויות שאין בהן רשימה ובהו כח ההויות שיש בהם רשימה: רפש וטיט. עכירות המים קרוי רפש ועביו קרוי טיט, וכל זה נמשך במים מכח הרוח. חקקן כמין ערוגה. חקק התהו והבהו כמין ערוגה, כלומר חקק בהן נתיבות כמין ערוגה שהמים מתפשטין בה: הציבן. לרפש וטיט ולאותיות כמין חומה. ערוגה וחומה ומעזיבה. האחת מקבלת וזה מגין וזה סוכך וכן האותיות יש מהן מקבלות ויש מהן מתקבלות ויש מהן זקופות כמין חומה:

ארבע אש ממים. פי’ כח הגבורה הנמשך מן החסד נמשל לאש שהוא ממים ומכח האש חצב הכסא הכבוד ושאר הבנין: ומשלשתם. מרוח ומים ואש: יסד מעונו. פירוש הבנין וכל הרקיעים:

רום. ביו”ד חתם בכח אותיות של

water is called mire, and its thickness is called clay; and all this is drawn into the water from the power of the breath. "He engraved them like a kind of garden-bed": He engraved the tohu and the bohu like a kind of garden-bed; that is to say, He engraved in them paths like a kind of garden-bed in which the waters spread. "He set them up" (hetziban): the mire and clay and the letters, "like a kind of wall". Garden-bed, and wall, and ceiling (ma'azivah): the one receives, and this one protects, and this one covers over. And so the letters: some of them receive, and some of them are received, and some of them stand upright like a kind of wall.

"Four: fire from water": Explanation. The power of Gevurah (Might), which is drawn from Chesed (Lovingkindness), is likened to fire that is from water; and from the power of the fire He hewed the Throne of Glory and the rest of the Building. "And from the three of them": from breath, and water, and fire. "He founded His dwelling" (me'ono): Explanation. The Building and all the firmaments.

"Height": With yod He sealed, by the power of the letters alef-mem-shin (AMSh); and after He sealed

אמ"ש ואחר שחתם ביו"ד כח שלש חזר וקבע כל אות ואות מהם באות מן השם שהוא נקרא שמו הגדול: ופנה למעלה. פירוש לרום מעלה שהוא צד העליון משש קצוות וחתמו ביו"ד ה"א וא"ו כלומר בחכמ"ה ובתבונ"ה ובדע"ת. ואותיות הללו כנגדן כח אמ"ש והן נקראין טבעות: שש חתם תחת ופנה למטה וחתמו ביו"ה. פירוש תחת צדק שהוא חתם בחכמה בדעת ובינה וכנגדם כח אש"מ: שביעית חתם מזרח ופנה לפניו וחתם בהי"ו. מזרח זהו תפארת שהוא חתום בבינה בחכמה ובדעת וכנגדן מא"ש: שמינית חתם מערב ופנה לאחריו וחתמו בהו"י. מערב זהו יסוד שהוא חתם בבינה ובדעת ובחכמה וכנגדו מש"א: תשיעית חתם דרום ופנה לימינו וחתמו בוי"ה. דרום זהו נצח שהוא חתם בדעת וחכמה ובינה וכנגדם שא"מ: עשירית חתם צפון ופנה לשמאל וחתמו בוה"י. צפון זהו הוד שהוא בדעת בבינה ובחכמה וכנגדן שמ"א:

לא חזר לפרש משנה זו אלא כדי להודיע ששש קצוות הם עיקר הבנין שהוא בנוי מכח ארבע אותיות שהזכיר תחלה שהם באותיות. והאותיות שהזכיר אינם

with yod the power of the three, He went back and fixed each and every letter of them in a letter of the Name, which is called His great Name. "And turned upward": Explanation. To the Height Above (rum ma'alah), which is the uppermost side of the six extremities, and He sealed it with yod, heh, and vav, that is to say, with Chokhmah (Wisdom), and with Tevunah (Discernment), and with Da'at (Knowing). And these letters: corresponding to them is the power of AMSh, and they are called rings (taba'ot). "Six: He sealed below and turned downward and sealed it with YVH": Explanation. Below is Tzedek (Righteousness), which is sealed with Chokhmah, with Da'at, and Binah (Understanding), and corresponding to them the power of AShM. "Seventh: He sealed east and turned before Him and sealed with HYV": East: this is Tiferet (Beauty), which is sealed with Binah, with Chokhmah, and with Da'at, and corresponding to them MASh. "Eighth: He sealed west and turned behind Him and sealed it with HVY": West: this is Yesod (Foundation), which is sealed with Binah, and with Da'at, and with Chokhmah, and corresponding to it MShA. "Ninth: He sealed south and turned to His right and sealed it

אלא חותמות שהקצוות חתומים בהם ובם כ"ב אותיות מתפשטות בכל דבר ודבר מג' לד' ומד' לה' וכן עד עשר. וכן כל דבר שהוא בכח ראשון אינו צריך לפרש שממנו הוא מתפשט עד עשר:

with VYH": South: this is Netzach (Endurance), which is sealed with Da'at and Chokhmah and Binah, and corresponding to them ShAM. "Tenth: He sealed north and turned to the left and sealed it with VHY": North: this is Hod (Splendor), which is with Da'at, with Binah, and with Chokhmah, and corresponding to them ShMA.

He did not go back to explain this mishnah except to make known that the six extremities are the root of the Building, which is built from the power of the four letters that he mentioned first, which are in the letters. And the letters that he mentioned are nothing but seals with which the extremities are sealed; and in them the twenty-two letters extend into each and every thing, from three to four and from four to five, and so on up to ten. And likewise, anything that is in the first power need not be explained, for from it it extends up to ten.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

▽

An orientation

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Controlled terms noted in this passage: **binah** (rendered as *understanding*), **chesed** (rendered as *loving-kindness*), **gevurah** (rendered as *might*), **chokhmah** (rendered as *wisdom*), **tiferet** (rendered as *beauty-glory*), **tzedek** (rendered as *righteousness*), **sefirot** (rendered as

emanations), **reshimah** (rendered as *the-impression*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

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Peshat derash lemma commentary

Plain sense and interpretation. This passage is a lemma-by-lemma commentary on Sefer Yetzirah 1:10-13 (the second through tenth of the ten sefirot beli mah): ruach me-ruach, mayim me-ruach, esh mi-mayim, and the sealing of the six extremities with permutations of YHV. Each lemma (in quotation marks in the body) is followed by “perush” (explanation). Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona (“printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides”, Encyclopaedia

Judaica, “Azriel of Gerona”). Sefaria files it under Ramban as “attributed to Ramban”. The plain sense of the mishnah (elemental cosmogony) is preserved as substrate; the commentary maps it onto the sefirot. *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Pardes sod sefirotic mapping

Plain sense and hidden sense. Azriel ascends from the plain elemental sense to the hidden (sod) sense: the three “mothers” are Binah, Chesed, Pachad; “fire from water” is Gevurah drawn from Chesed; the directions are sefirot: below = Tzedek (the Shekhinah/Malkhut), east = Tiferet, west = Yesod, south = Netzach, north = Hod; YHV = Chokhmah, Tevunah/Binah, Da’at. The body keeps the source’s own grade-names; the identifications are the source’s, not the translator’s. Notably, Azriel’s assignment of south/north to Netzach/Hod reflects that Chesed and Gevurah are already allotted to the mothers.

Direction mapping azriel own

The matching of directions to grades in the sealing passage (below is Tzedek, east is Tiferet, west is Yesod, south is Netzach, north is Hod) is Azriel’s own scheme, as is his alternation between Tevunah (in the first sealing) and Binah (in the later ones) for the grade matched with heh. The body follows the source’s own identifications without harmonizing them.

Ner mi ner

The “lamp from lamp” analogy for emanation (ne’etzal) echoes the rabbinic image of Moses’ spirit imparted to the elders without diminution (Num 11:17, ve-atzalti; Sifrei Bamidbar 93: “a lamp set on a lampstand, from which many lamps were lit and its light lacked nothing”). The source cites no verse here; the allusion is surfaced, not inserted.

Reshimah not lurianic reshimu

Reception caution. Azriel (d. c. 1238) long predates Isaac Luria, and the Lurianic account of creation is brought in here only as a later horizon. His “reshimah dakah” (fine impression) in the first breath, and the distinction between tohu (existents with no impression) and bohu (existents with an impression), anticipate the vocabulary of the later reshimu (the residue left in the vacated space after the tzimtzum), and his scheme of power extending “from three to four … up to ten” anticipates the measured descent along the kav. No tzimtzum, vacated space, or line is present in this text. Rendered ‘impression’, not ‘residue’, to avoid retrojection. *Moshe Idel 1988*

Fingers configurative

Reception caution. This text predates the Zoharic Idrot (late 13th c.). The one bodily image, the twenty-two letters

corresponding to the fingers and toes and "the two that decide" (the covenant of the tongue and the covenant of circumcision of Sefer Yetzirah 1:3), is a correspondence of letter-structure to the human body made in the image, not a description of a divine body. It is rendered concretely; no partzufim (Arikh Anpin, Ze'ir Anpin, Abba, Imma) appear, and none should be read into the "three mothers".

Three mothers pachad

The "three mothers" (alef-mem-shin, air-water-fire) are identified with Binah, Chesed and Pachad. Pachad (Fear, from Gen 31:42 "Pachad Yitzchak") is an alternative name for Gevurah, used here alongside "koach ha-gevurah" in the fire-from-water lemma; both names are kept as the source gives them. The "third that decides" (makhria) corresponds to the alef of Sefer Yetzirah, "a tongue of statute deciding between them", between mem and shin; Azriel reads it as proof that the two opposed powers are one.

Shin of tefillin

The simile: the shin embossed on the head-tefillin is raised from the leather of the box yet is nothing but that same leather, i.e. the "one breath" and the letters are not separate from their source (here, Binah). The bracketed words [העור] / [עור] are

bracketed in the Sefaria text of the Warsaw print (editorial supplements) and are kept bracketed in the translation.

Leather editorial restoration

Both occurrences of ‘leather’ in the tefillin-shin simile are editorial restorations, not secure readings: they stand in square brackets in the Sefaria text of the Warsaw print, and the brackets in the English mark the same restoration. The sense of the simile depends on them, so they are kept, but they await checking against a manuscript.

231 gates

The 231 gates (rl”a she’arim) of SY 2:4: the number of unordered pairs of the 22 letters, 22×21/2 = 231. Azriel’s point: however the letters are permuted, their root (ikkar) is the three mothers / seven doubles / twelve simples.

Ikkar root

Ikkar is rendered ‘root’ in both places it occurs in this passage: ‘their root is none other than these’ in the first comment, and ‘the six extremities are the root of the Building’ in the closing paragraph. ‘Principal’ or ‘essence’ is the alternative rendering; the same English is kept in both places.

Yhv sealings

SY 1:13 seals the six extremities with the six permutations of YHV. Azriel correlates each permutation with an ordering of Chokhmah (yod), Binah/Tevunah (heh), Da'at (vav), and with a matching permutation of the mothers AMSh (AMSh, AShM, MASh, MShA, ShAM, ShMA). The permuted mother-letters 'are called rings' (taba'ot). Sequence of letters given in the body exactly as in the source.

daat

Da'at, the grade matched with vav in every sealing, is glossed 'Knowing' at its first occurrence and then left transliterated; it is commonly understood as the conjoining grade between Chokhmah and Binah.

Editorial decisions

- **lemmata.** Sefer Yetzirah lemmata stand in double quotation marks, each followed by a colon, to distinguish base text from commentary.
- **reshimah.** Rendered 'impression' rather than the Lurianic 'residue' to avoid retrojection.

Manuscript variants

- **Sefer Yetzirah 1:11**: Lemma: הציבן. Warsaw Sefer Yetzirah: הציבן כמין חומה. Gra version (Sefaria): חצבן כמין חומה: The lemma agrees with the Warsaw text; the reading He hewed them is the Gra version.
- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: [העור] … [עור] bracketed in the shin-of-tefillin simile.: Editorial supplements in the Sefaria text of the Warsaw print; collation against manuscripts owed.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 2:1-3; the twenty-two letters, the scale, and the five places of the mouth

This edition presents the verbatim Hebrew text of the passage beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

The apparatus carries a running commentary, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, any doctrinally-live ambiguity preserved with both readings, and cross-references to the lexicon. The original-language text is reproduced verbatim from the digital source credited in the provenance line of this page; any modern English translation still under copyright is cited as a comparand only.



He did not mention “fathers” until the last chapter, where he mentions three fathers and their offspring, and the seven doubles, in speech and in substitution, and the twelve simples, which have no doubling in substitution. AMSh: avir (air), mayim (water), esh (fire). “Their foundation”: because there is nothing prior except a hidden thing, he did not mention “foundation” except with respect to the power that issues from them, upon which they are founded. By it a person recognizes that there is in them a power for foundation. “A pan of merit, a pan of guilt”: merit is Chesed (Lovingkindness); guilt is Gevurah (Might). The word kaf is meant in its plain sense, as our rabbis of blessed memory said: “Happy is the one who tips himself toward the pan of merit.” It is like what is written: “Behold, upon palms I have engraved you”; “Upon palms he covers light.” “And a tongue of statute deciding between them”: between the pan of merit and the pan of guilt.

”He engraved them”: each and every letter in it he engraved. “And hewed them”: for he hews in order to separate one from the other. “Weighed them”: as it is written, “to make a weight for the breath (ruach)”: he weighed the portions

לא הזכיר אבות עד פרק אחרון שהוא מזכיר שלשה אבות ותולדותיהן וז׳ כפולות בדבור ובתמורה וי״ב פשוטות שאין בהם כפל בתמורה. אמ״ש אוי״ר מי״ם א״ש. יסודן לפי שאין קודם אלא דבר נעלם לא הזכיר יסוד אלא לכח היוצא מהן שהן מיוסדות בו שהאדם מכיר בו שיש בהן כח ליסוד: כף זכות כף חובה. זכות חסד חובה גבורה ולשון כף כמשמעו כדרז״ל אשרי מי שמכריע עצמו לכף זכות, כענין שכתוב הן על כפים חקותיך, על כפים כסה אור: ולשון חק מכריע בינתים. בין כף זכות לכף חובה:

חקקן. כל אות ואות שבה חקק: וחצבן. שהוא חוצב להפריד זו מזו: שקלן. כדכתיב לעשות לרוח משקל שקל חלקי הרוח: והמירן. זו בזו כמו שאמר זכר באמ״ש ונקבה באש״ם: צרפן. זיווגם אות עם אות: וצר בהן ציור נפש כל היצור. רוחות ונשמות שהן בעולם: העתיד לצור. העתידות להצטייר ולהתחדש:

בקול. דקות הרוח האמצעי והאות חצב בו. והפה הוא הנקרא דבור והאותיות קבועות בו בחמשה בגרון ובשפה ובחך ובלשון

ובשינים. והקול והרוח והדבור
שהאותיות חקוקות וחצובות
וקבועות בו נקרא רוח הקדש:

of the breath. “And exchanged them”: one with another, as he said, “male in AMSh and female in AShM.” “Combined them”: their pairing, letter with letter. “And formed with them the form of the soul of all that is formed”: the spirits and souls that are in the world. “That is destined to be formed”: those that are destined to take form and be renewed.

”In the voice”: the fineness of the middle breath (ruach), and the letter he hewed in it. The mouth is what is called speech, and the letters are set in it in five places: in the throat, in the lip, in the palate, in the tongue, and in the teeth. And the voice and the breath and the speech, in which the letters are engraved and hewn and set, is called the holy breath (ruach ha-kodesh).

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

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An orientation

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Controlled terms noted in this passage: **chesed** (rendered as *the-sefirah-chesed*), **gevurah** (rendered as *the-sefirah-gevurah*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

⁂

Peshat derash tana amoraim citation

Peshat and derash. ‘As our rabbis of blessed memory said’ (kedarza”l) cites a rabbinic dictum in paraphrase. Its closest locus is b. Kiddushin 40b (R. Elazar b. Shimon): a person should regard himself and the world as half guilty and half meritorious; ‘happy is he who tips himself toward the pan of merit.’ The lemma-by-lemma format (chakakan, chatzavan, shekalan…) is classic peshat commentary on Sefer Yetzirah 2:2-3. Each gloss supplies a plain sense on which the sefirotic mapping (merit = Chesed, guilt = Gevurah) is then built. *Babylonian Talmud*

Pardes scriptural citations

PaRDeS. Mode: layered remez. Three verses are cited: Isa 49:16 ‘hen al kapayim chakotikh’ and Job 36:32 ‘al kapayim kissah or’, both for kaf = palm; Job 28:25 ‘la’asot la-ruach mishkal’ for shekalan, ‘weighed them’. Consonantally, all three agree with the received text, so nothing is bent. The remez is in the chaining: chakotikh (‘I have engraved you’) prepares chakakan

('he engraved them') and lashon chok ('statute / engraving'). The palms that 'cover light' hint at a concealed light borne by the letters. Following the source's discretion, the sefirotic reading stays at the level of hint and is not unpacked into open sod.

Kaf derash

Azriel's derash on kaf. The Sefer Yetzirah lemma speaks of kaf as the pan of a scale: the pan of merit, which he maps onto Chesed, and the pan of guilt, which he maps onto Gevurah. He calls this 'the plain sense' of kaf and supports it with the rabbinic dictum about tipping oneself toward the pan of merit (b. Kiddushin 40b). He then cites two verses in which kaf means the palm of the hand: Isa 49:16 ('upon palms I have engraved you') and Job 36:32 ('upon palms he covers light'). The same word thus joins the scale of judgment to the engraving palm, preparing the engraving of the letters in the next lemma. The translation keeps 'pan' and 'palms' as the source has them; the link is noted here only. *Hebrew Bible*; *Hebrew Bible*; *Babylonian Talmud*

Idra theosophy applicability

Idra-theosophy. This passage predates the Zoharic Idra stratum. No partzuf (Atika, Arikh Anpin, Ze'ir Anpin) is named, and no anatomy of the divine configurations appears. The frame applies

only as a reception lens. Two points of contact: the scale (kaf zekhut / kaf chovah, with the lashon chok deciding between them) anticipates the balance (metkala) of the Sifra di-Tzeniuta. And the gendered letter-language ('male in AMSh, female in AShM'; zivvugam, 'their pairing, letter with letter') anticipates the gendered zivvug vocabulary. The male and female marking is kept. Nothing from the Idra is read back into the body. *Elliot R. Wolfson 1994*

Lurianic cosmogony applicability

Lurianic-cosmogony. The frame is anachronistic for a Gerona text, and the passage contains no tzimtzum, kav, chalal or reshimu. Later readers could connect Azriel's 'nothing prior except a hidden thing' (davar ne'elam) and the language of engraving and hewing (chakikah / chatzivah: carving letters out so as to 'separate one from the other') with Lurianic measure and limit and the 'engraving' language of later cosmogonies. Shekalan, 'he weighed the portions of the breath', touches the theme of measure and limit by analogy only. These are lenses, not readings of the body. *Moshe Idel 1988*

Avot mothers

'Fathers' (avot). Sefer Yetzirah's last chapter (6:1) speaks of three 'fathers' issuing from the three 'mothers' (immot) AMSh, 'and

their offspring' (toledoteihen). Azriel notes that the term 'fathers' appears only there. In the Warsaw text avot also stands at 3:2 and 5:3, and the commentary itself explains "three fathers" at 3:2. The doubles are the seven letters BGD KPRT, doubled 'in speech' (hard and soft pronunciation) and 'in substitution' (temurah: paired opposites such as life/death). The twelve simples have no such pairing.

Ruach ha kodesh

Voice, breath and speech as the holy breath (ruach ha-kodesh) follows SY 1:9 (kol, ruach, dibbur: 'and this is ruach ha-kodesh'). The five places of articulation (throat, lip, palate, tongue, teeth) follow SY 2:3, in Azriel's own order. The source uses a singular verb (nikra, 'is called') with a threefold subject, presenting the triad as one. The singular is preserved in the translation.

attribution

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Editorial decisions

- **ruach.** Rendered breath, with the transliteration at first occurrence, as in the Sefer Yetzirah edition.
- **lashon chok.** Rendered ‘tongue of statute (lashon chok)’ rather than ‘the deciding pointer’, keeping the source’s wordplay with lashon.

Manuscript variants

- **unspecified (editorial conjecture)**: In ‘lo hizkir avot’, אבות (avot, fathers) could be a scribal exchange with אמות (immot, mothers). The context (the mothers AMSh follow at once) makes both readings possible.: If the reading is ‘mothers’, the remark concerns where SY first names the mothers. The body keeps the transmitted ‘fathers’, pending collation.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 2:4-6; the wheel of 231 gates and the forming of what is from what is not

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בגלגל. בנין האותיות שהוא מתגלגל קרוי גלגל: ברל"א שערים. מספר האלפ"א בית"א תס"ב לפי שאין שער פחות מב' והם רל"א שערים כי בהצטרף אל"ף עם כל אחת ואחת הם כ"ג וכ"ג פעמים כ"ג יהיו שבע מאות וששים ובשוב הסוף לתחלתו הם ארבע מאות וששים ושנים פנים ואחור פנים זה רחמים אחור זה הדין. וסימן לדבר סימן זה לכל הנבראים מעילוי לגריעות ומגריעות לעילוי, כדי להשוות מדותיהן בדרך האחדות שהן עיקר השוואתן. ענג ונגע, הן הן האותיות, ואותיות אלו סימן לשאר האותיות שהן מתגלגלות ע"ד זה:

כיצד שקלן, זו כנגד זו, ראשונה עשרים ושתים אותיות, שניה אחד עשר וכן כולם, וכשהוא מדלג אות מצד ימין מדלג כנגדה משמאל. כיצד המירן אותיות שהן כסדרן לבנות שלא כסדרן לסתור: כל היצור. כל מי שיש לו צורה אע"פ שאין לו דבור. וכל הדבור למי שיש לו דבור וכל מה שהאדם יכול להוציא בדבור נצטייר באותיות: יוצא בשם אחד. הם רל"א שערים שהשם מתגלגל בהם והן בשם ונקראו שם אחד:

"In a wheel": the building of the letters, which revolves, is called a wheel (galgal). "In 231 gates": the number of the alphabet is 462, since there is no gate of fewer than two [letters]; and they are 231 gates. For when alef is joined with each and every one they are 23, and 23 times 23 makes seven hundred and sixty [sic]; and when the end returns to its beginning they are four hundred and sixty-two: face and back (panim ve-achor). Face: this is mercy; back: this is judgment. And a sign for the matter: this is a sign for all created things, [moving] from elevation to diminution and from diminution to elevation, in order to equalize their measures (middot) by way of the unity, which is the root of their equalization (hashva'ah). Oneg (delight) and nega (affliction): they are the very same letters; and these letters are a sign for the rest of the letters, which revolve in this manner.

"How did He weigh them?": this one against that one. The first [row], twenty-two letters; the second, eleven; and so all of them; and when He skips a letter on the right side, He skips its counterpart on the left. How did He exchange them? Letters that are in their order, to build; not in their order, to demolish. "All that is formed":

יצר מתהו. עומק התשובה צייר ממנו צורות של ממש: ועשה אינו ישנו. ואחר שצייר הביאם למעשה ניכר ונראה שמה שהיה אינו שלא היה בו ממש עשה ממנו ישנו: וחצב עמודים. דברים עליונים שהכל עומד ונסמך בהם. וקראם עמודים גדולים שהם מכח הגדולה מאויר שהיא פנימיות קול ורוח ודבור: שאינו נתפש. יש באדם אויר שאינו נתפש כמו חבית סתומה ואדם בתוכה שאינו יכול להכניס בו רוח ורוחו יוצא משם: צופה. מראשית עד אחרית מי ראוי להיות ראש ומי ראוי להיות סוף: וממיר. זה שהיה ראש להיות סוף וזה שהיה סוף להיות ראש כדי להשוות רם ושפל ובינוני: עושה את כל היצור. ובדרך זה גומר המעשים הטבעיים והצוריים והמורגשים וכל הדברים השפלים: שם אחד. שאין כח המוטבע אלא מן המורגש ואין כח המורגש אלא מן המושכל והכל עיקר אחד. שם אחד. בשם אחד אינו אומר אלא שם אחד. בעת שהזכיר התחלת ברייתן הזכיר שהיה בשם אחד, וכשמזכיר תמורתם הזכיר שם אחד, ופירוש שם כד"א הנה שם ה' בא ממרחק: וסימן לדבר עשרים וכו'. סימן לדבר שהאחד

whoever has form, even though it has no speech. And all speech belongs to whoever has speech; and everything that a person can bring forth in speech was pictured in the letters. “Goes forth by one Name”: these are the 231 gates in which the Name revolves; and they are in the Name, and they were called one Name.

”He formed from tohu”: the depth of return (omek ha-teshuvah): from it He pictured forms of substance. And He made what is not (eino) into what is (yeshno): after He pictured, He brought them into action, recognizable and visible, so that what had been “is-not”, in which there was no substance, He made from it “is”. “And hewed pillars”: supernal things, upon which all stands and is supported. And He called them great pillars because they are from the power of Gedulah (Greatness), from air (avir), which is the inwardness of voice and breath (ruach) and speech. “That cannot be grasped”: there is in a person air that cannot be grasped, like a sealed barrel with a person inside it, into which one cannot introduce breath, and [yet] his breath goes out from there. “He foresees”: from beginning to end, who is fit to be head and who is fit to be end. “And exchanges”: that

יסוד רבים ואין הדברים חוץ מן האחד. עשרים ושתים. פירוש עשרים אצבעות ידים ורגלים והלשון והמעור המכריעים שהם גוף אחד. ואמר לשון חפצים כדי לכלול המוטבע והמורגש במלת חפץ שהוא שוה להם ולפיכך כשהאחד לוקה כולן לוקין:

which was head, to be end, and that which was end, to be head, in order to equalize the high and the low and the intermediate. "He makes all that is formed": and in this way He completes the natural works and the formal and the sensible, and all the lower things. "One Name": for the power of the natural (ha-mutba) is only from the sensible, and the power of the sensible is only from the intelligible, and all is one root. "One Name": it does not say "by one Name" but "one Name". When it mentioned the beginning of their creation, it mentioned that it was "by one Name"; and when it mentions their exchange, it mentioned "one Name". And the meaning of "Name" is as it is said: "Behold, the Name of YHVH comes from afar." "And a sign for the matter: twenty," etc.: a sign for the matter that the One is the foundation of many, and things are not outside the One. Twenty-two, meaning the twenty digits of hands and feet, and the tongue and the member (ma'or), the two that decide, which are one body. And it used the term "objects" (chafatzim) in order to include the natural and the sensible in the word chefetz, which applies equally to them; and therefore, when one is stricken, all are stricken.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)





An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim Hebrew beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is

a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

Controlled terms noted in this passage: **galgal** (rendered as *wheel (galgal)*), **gedulah** (rendered as *Gedulah (Greatness)*), **eino / yeshno** (rendered as *what is not / what is*), **omek ha-teshuvah** (rendered as *the depth of return*), **middot** (rendered as *measures*), **panim ve-achor** (rendered as *face and back*), **avir she-eino nitpas** (rendered as *air that cannot be grasped*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

⁂

Attribution azriel

Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona ("printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides", Encyclopaedia Judaica, "Azriel of Gerona"). Sefaria files it under Ramban as "attributed to Ramban". *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Arithmetic corruption

The arithmetic in the first paragraph is corrupt as transmitted. The source says that 23 times 23 makes 760, but 23 times 23 is 529, and 760 fits neither the 231 nor the 462 stated in the same paragraph. The expected derivation is that each of the 22 letters pairs with the other 21: 22 × 21 = 462 ordered pairs, which halved gives the 231 gates. The body keeps the transmitted figures, marked [sic], and does not correct them silently.

Pardes tziruf sod

PaRDeS. The peshat here is combinatorics: 22 letters taken two at a time give 231 unordered gates, or 462 when each pair is also read in reverse ("when the end returns to its beginning"). Azriel lifts this into sod. Forward pairs are "face" (mercy) and reversed pairs are "back" (judgment), and the swapping of head and end is the way the divine measures (middot) are balanced "by way of the unity". Oneg (delight) and nega (affliction) are one set of

letters (ayin-nun-gimel) in different orders, so they show that the extremes of good and evil are a single root permuted. This is not gematria proper, although both words also have the same value, 123. The phrase “the depth of return” (omek ha-teshuvah) glosses tohu; Teshuvah is named again at 3:2, where it ascends to Keter Elyon.

Peshat derash diyyuk

Peshat and derash. Azriel reads the lemma tohu as “the depth of return” (omek ha-teshuvah), a derash on the word. He then uses a classic rabbinic close-reading (diyyuk): “it does not say ‘by one Name’ but ‘one Name’”. He shows that Sefer Yetzirah varies its wording on purpose between creation and permutation, and grounds “Name” in Isa 30:27 (“Behold, the Name of YHVH comes from afar”), which he quotes in agreement with the received text. The proof-text gives the Name its own independent agency. The sign of the twenty-two objects is read through Sefer Yetzirah 1:3: ten digits of the hands and ten of the toes, with the tongue and the member (ma’or, the covenant of circumcision) as the two that decide (makhri’im), set in the middle between them. This anchors the cosmic letter-body in the human body. The explanation of chefetz (“object”) as covering both the natural and the sensible is a lexical derash.

Idra theosophy scope

Configured countenances. This passage names no partzuf. Atika Kadisha, Arikh Anpin and Ze'ir Anpin are absent, and nothing here should be read in their terms. The only point of contact is the pair face and back (panim ve-achor) tied to mercy and judgment, and the balancing of "head" and "end". The pairing in this text is about letter order, not about configured countenances.

Lurianic cosmogony scope

Contraction and the void. There is no tzimtzum, no vacated space (chalal) and no line (kav) in this text. The galgal here is a rotation of letter-pairs, not the static concentric circle (igul), and the two must not be merged. What the passage does contain is an account of making "what is not into what is" from the "depth" of a hidden grade, and the claim that "things are not outside the One". *Moshe Idel 1988*

Neoplatonic triad

Philosophical vocabulary. The chain in which the natural (ha-mutba) comes from the sensible (murgash), and the sensible from the intelligible (muskal), "and all is one root", together with "the One is the foundation of many", uses philosophical vocabulary. The divine Name becomes the single root of the

descending levels of being. This is a cross-tradition parallel and is surfaced in apparatus only. *Daniel C. Matt 1995*

Pillars air

The great pillars hewn from ungraspable air (Sefer Yetzirah 2:6). Azriel reads “great” (gedolim) as a sign of the sefirah Gedulah, which is Chesed. The sealed-barrel analogy, in which breath cannot be put in yet does come out, presents the ungraspable air as an inner source that cannot be reached from outside, though it can flow out. The analogy is concrete in the source and is kept concrete in the body.

Editorial decisions

- **galgal.** Rendered ‘wheel (galgal)’. The house rule against ‘wheel’ applies to the word igul, which does not appear here. Here ‘wheel’ is needed for Azriel’s explanation from the root mitgalgel (‘revolves’).
- **YHVH.** ה’ in Isa 30:27 is rendered ‘YHVH’ so that the specific Name (the Tetragrammaton) is kept rather than flattened to ‘the Lord’.
- **ma’or.** Rendered the member (ma’or), as in the Sefer Yetzirah edition at 1:3.

Manuscript variants

- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: כ"ג וכ"ג פעמים כ"ג יהיו שבע מאות וששים: Arithmetically incoherent (23 x 23 = 529, not 760; and 760 is not 2 x 231). Probably a corruption of a derivation from 22 x 21 = 462. Collation owed.
- **Sefer Yetzirah 2:6**: Commentary and Warsaw Sefer Yetzirah: ועשה אינו ישנו. Gra version (Sefaria): ועשה את אינו ישנו: The commentary agrees with the Warsaw text; the form with את is the Gra version.

Azriel of Gerona on Sefer Yetzirah 3:1-8; the three mothers: alef, mem, shin

This edition presents the verbatim Hebrew text of the passage beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

The apparatus carries a running commentary, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, any doctrinally-live ambiguity preserved with both readings, and cross-references to the lexicon. The original-language text is reproduced verbatim from the digital source credited in the provenance line of this page; any modern English translation still under copyright is cited as a comparand only.



אל"ף חק. פירוש כ"ע כשהתפארת הנקרא חוק מתעלה עד כתר עליון הנקרא אל"ף הוא הנקרא אל"ף חוק וכשאינו מתעלה התפארת למעלה נקרא לשון חוק והוא אמצעי ומכריע ימין ושמאל ובינתים: ושלש אמות. נקראו אמות מפני שהם יסוד לכל זכות ולכל חובה ולכל הכרע:

"Alef chok": explanation: K"E [Keter Elyon, the supreme Crown]. When Tiferet (Beauty), who is called chok (statute), ascends up to Keter Elyon, which is called Alef, he is called "Alef chok"; and when Tiferet does not ascend above, he is called lashon chok (the tongue of statute: the pointer of the scale), and he is the middle, and decides between right and left, "and between them." "And three mothers": they are called mothers because they are the foundation of all merit, of all guilt, and of all decision.

סוד גדול. מכח הגדולה: מופלא. שהוא מכח התשובה ומתעלה עד כתר עליון: ומכוסה. בכח גבורה: וחתום בשש טבעות. ששה קצוות שהן ששה חותמות בשלש אותיות של שם שבהם אותיות אמ"ש כמו שפירשנו בענין חתם רום ביו"ה ושלש אמות וקבען בשעו הגדול. ושלש אלו של אמ"ש ושלש של שם נקראים שש טבעות שהכל חתום בהם כאדם החותם בחותם של טבעת: וממנו. מן היסוד הנזכר: ומתחלקים. פירוש מתחלקים לחלקים שמפרש והולך: זכר באמ"ש. ונקבה באש"ס. ויש לומר סוד גדול זה יסוד: שלש אמות אמ"ש מ"ם דוממת שי"ן שורקת בקול להב אש ואל"ף חוק (אויר) שהוא ת"ת שהוא כלול מהם: שלש אמות אמ"ש ומהן נבראו שלשה אבות

"A great secret": from the power of Gedulah (Greatness). "Wondrous": for it is from the power of Teshuvah (Return), and ascends up to Keter Elyon (the supreme Crown). "And covered": by the power of Gevurah (Might). "And sealed with six rings": six extremities, which are six seals, with three letters of the Name, among which are the letters AMSh, as we explained in the matter of "He sealed the height with YVH" [so the print here; at 1:13 the height is sealed with YHV] and "three mothers," "and He fixed them in His great [Name]" [the Sefaria text reads בשעו; read בשמו]. These three of AMSh and three of the Name are called six rings, for everything is sealed in

them, like a man who seals with the seal of a signet ring. "And from it": from the foundation mentioned. "And they divide": explanation: they divide into parts, which he goes on to explain: "male in AMSh and female in AShM" [the Sefaria text reads AShS]. And one may say: "a great secret": this is Yesod (Foundation). "Three mothers AMSh: Mem silent, Shin hissing with the sound of a flame of fire, and Alef chok (air)": which is Tiferet (Beauty) [T"T], who is comprised of them. "Three mothers AMSh, and from them were created three fathers, from which all was created": explanation: the emanated powers are fathers to the separate power, which are in the lower world. Therefore [he said] "were created" [thus was the version before him], the language of creation (beriah) and not of emanation (atzilut). "Three mothers AMSh."

שמהם נבראו הכל. פירוש שכחות הנאצלות אבות לכח הנפרד שהם בעולם השפל לכך [אמר] נבראו [כן היתה הנוסחא לפניו] לשון בריאה ולא אצילות: שלש אמות אמ"ש

"Three mothers etc. ... and earth from water": explanation: from the turbidity of the water, snow was made, and the snow turned to become earth, as it is said: "For to the snow He says: Be earth." And the wind (ruach) decides between the fire and the water, and from it was created the air that is in the world, [and] the mazalot, which are the seven wandering stars and

שלש אמות כו' וארץ ממים. פי' מעכירות המים נעשה שלג והשלג חזר להיות ארץ כד"א כי לשלג יאמר הוא ארץ. והרוח מכריע בין האש והמים וממנו נברא האויר שהוא בעולם, המזלות שהם שבעה כוכבי לכת ושנים עשר מזלות:

בשנה יש בה קור וחום ורויה שהן שלש ושבעת ימ"ב שהן שבע וי"ב חדשים שבשנה כנגד אמות וכפולות ופשוטות, ופירש לך שהכח נמשך מן האותיות לעולם ומן העולם לשנה ומן השנה אל הנפש. ועד"ז אמרו חכמי המחקר אור השכל נאצל על הגלגלים ומן הגלגלים אל הכוכבים ומן הכוכבים אל בני האדם: בנפש. זה הגוף כי בהתחדש אור חדש במזלות ובהתחדש צמחי האדמה בשנה כן יתחדשו תולדות הנפש כי בעלי חיים הנולדים בשנה זו אינם דומים לבעלי חיים של השנה אחרת על כן אמרו אין מעשרין משנה זו על של חברתה.

the twelve constellations.

"In the year" there are cold, heat, and moistness (revayah), which are three; the seven days of the work of Creation (yemei ma'aseh bereshit, abbreviated in the print), which are seven; and the twelve months in the year, corresponding to the mothers, the doubles, and the simples. And he has explained to you that the power is drawn from the letters to the world, from the world to the year, and from the year to the soul. In this manner the sages of inquiry said: the light of the intellect is emanated upon the spheres, from the spheres to the stars, and from the stars to human beings. "In the soul": this is the body. For as new light is renewed in the constellations, and as the plants of the earth are renewed in the year, so are the generations of the soul renewed: the animals born in this year are not like the animals of another year. Therefore they said: "One does not tithe from this year for its fellow." And because the fire is last, and water and wind (ruach) are above, she is first below. Further, if the wind were below first, the soul would not stand, for the wind lifts her. There are in the soul fire, water, and wind, and seven apertures of the head, and twelve governors, corresponding to the mothers, the doubles, and the

ולפי שהאש אחרון ומים ורוח למעלה, היא תחלה למטה, ועוד שאם היה הרוח למטה תחלה לא היה הנפש עומדת כי הרוח מנשאה, ויש בנפש אש ומים ורוח וז' נקבי הראש וי"ב מנהיגים כנגד אמות וכפולות ופשוטות: וגויה מרוח. ראש הגויה והיא מרוח לדחות הטפה המצטיירת בכח הרוח:

חקקן כו'. חוזר לפרש בהן חקיקה וחציבה וזווגם ולהודיענו כי כולם בעולם וכולם בשנה וכולם בנפש זה בלא זה וזה עם זה:

יש בנקבה מקום שבו צורת אמ"ש וצורת אש"ם וכשהטיפה מתחממת באמ"ש הולד זכר, וכשהיא מתחממת באש"ם הולד נקבה, וכשנופלת בשניהם הוא אנדרוגינוס. ולפעמים נעשה טומטום מתוך שבא עליה פעם שנית, וכשהן תואמים אם שניהם זכרים הטפה נחלקת לשנים באמ"ש וכשהן נקבות באש"ם, ואם הם זכר ונקבה נחלקת באמ"ש ובאש"ם, ואע"פ שאמרו אשה מזרעת תחלה הולד זכר זה מפני שכח האחרון הבא ממנו מבטל הראשון:

ארץ בעולם. שיש בו עפר זכר

ואדמה נקבה: וקור בשנה. שיש בה פירות זכרים ונקבות הבאים ע"י הקור: ופרי בטן בנפש. התולדות שהיא בגוף האדם המוליד זכר ונקבה:

שמים בעולם. העליון שנברא מאש: וחום בשנה. כדכתיב ממגד תבואות שמש שהפירות מתקיימים ע"י החום: וראש זכר ונקבה. נברא מאש:

simples. "And the trunk from wind": the head of the trunk; it is from wind, to propel the drop that is formed by the power of the wind.

"He engraved them etc.": he returns to explain concerning them engraving and hewing and their pairing, and to inform us that all of them are in the world, all of them in the year, and all of them in the soul: this without that, and this with that.

There is in the female a place in which is the form of AMSh and the form of AShM. When the drop is warmed in AMSh, the offspring is male; when it is warmed in AShM, the offspring is female; and when it falls in both, it is an androginos. Sometimes a tumtum is made, because he came upon her a second time. When there are twins: if both are males, the drop divides in two in AMSh; when females, in AShM; and if male and female, it divides in AMSh and in AShM. And although they said, "a woman who emits seed first, the offspring is male," this is because the power of the last, which comes from him, annuls the first.

"Earth in the world": for there is in it dust (afar), male, and soil (adamah), female. "And cold in the

year": for there are in it male and female fruits, which come by means of the cold. "And fruit of the womb in the soul": the generation that is in the body of the human being, who begets male and female.

"Heaven in the world": the upper [world], which was created from fire. "And heat in the year": as it is written, "from the precious yield of the sun," for the fruits are sustained by means of the heat. "And the head of male and female": created from fire.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

▽

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Controlled terms noted in this passage: **tiferet** (rendered as *the-sixth-sefirah*), **keter** (rendered as *the-supernal-crown*), **gevurah** (rendered as *the-sefirah-gevurah*), **sod** (rendered as *secret*). For each, the apparatus carries the sense set and the reason for the rendering chosen.

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Pardes layered lemma to sefirah

Levels of reading. The commentary works lemma by lemma through Sefer Yetzirah's section on the three mothers. It keeps the plain sense of each phrase (a cosmology of letters, elements, year, and body) while mapping the lemmas onto sefirotic grades: "great" is read as Gedulah, "wondrous" (mufla) as Teshuvah (= Binah) ascending to Keter Elyon, "covered" as Gevurah, Alef/air/chok as Tiferet, and "great secret" (alternatively) as Yesod. These identifications are made in the commentary, not substituted for the lemmas. The body keeps the lemma words and the commentator's glosses side by side, so the layering stays visible. *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Lashon hoq scale

The tongue of the scale. Sefer Yetzirah describes the mothers as "a pan of merit (kaf zekhut), a pan of guilt (kaf chovah), and a tongue of statute (lashon chok) deciding between them". The image is the beam-balance, whose pointer (lashon) settles the two pans. The commentator makes this pointer Tiferet, the

middle that "decides between right and left". When Tiferet ascends to Keter (called Alef), the name becomes "Alef chok". This is why the body keeps "lashon chok" with a gloss rather than flattening it to "mediator".

Conjectural emendations

Both bracketed emendations in the second paragraph are conjectural. 'His great [Name]' replaces the Sefaria reading בשעו on the strength of the Sefer Yetzirah passage the commentator cites. 'AShM' replaces the Sefaria reading AShS on the strength of the embryological paragraph later in this passage, which reads AShM four times, and of the Sefer Yetzirah lemma. Neither has yet been checked against a printed edition.

Idra anachronism

No partzuf, countenance, or Idra configuration-name appears in this passage; Atika Kadisha, Arikh Anpin and Ze'ir Anpin are absent and none is supplied. The anatomical items here (the seven apertures of the head, the trunk, the head created from fire) belong to the human microcosm of Sefer Yetzirah's "soul" (nefesh) and are not divine anatomy, so there is no divine-body imagery to read figuratively in this passage. The embryology is offered as natural philosophy keyed to letter-permutation.

Pinchas Giller 2001

Beriah ve lo atzilut

Creation and emanation. The commentator notes that Sefer Yetzirah says “were created” (nivre’u), “the language of creation (beriah) and not emanation (atzilut)”. The upper “emanated powers” are “fathers” to the “separate power” in the lower world, so the creation-verb marks a change of level. The doctrine of four worlds, the tzimtzum, the line and the circles are absent here and are not read into the body. The square-bracketed “[thus was the version before him]” is a later editorial gloss on the commentator’s text-witness; it is marked as such. *Moshe Idel 1988*

Peshat derash halakhic citations

Halakhic dicta used for an aggadic point. Two rabbinic dicta are cited with an anonymous “they said”. (1) “One does not tithe from this year for its fellow”: a halakhic principle derived from Deut 14:22 “shanah shanah” (b. Rosh Hashanah 12b: “one does not set aside teruma or tithe from the new for the old or from the old for the new”; b. Bekhorot 53b derives the tie to the year from “shanah shanah”, Deut 14:22). Here the commentator applies the tithing rule to the generation of living beings, as evidence that each year’s generation is new: a cosmological rather than juridical use. (2) “A woman who emits seed first bears a male” (b. Niddah 31a; b. Berakhot 60a), which the

commentator harmonises with his AMSh/AShM embryology. Androginos and tumtum are halakhic categories of indeterminate sex. They are kept transliterated in the body. *Babylonian Talmud*

Job 37 6

Job 37:6 ‘ki la-sheleg yomar hevei aretz’. Plainly, ‘He says to the snow: Fall to the earth’. The commentator construes it as ‘Be earth’, which yields the derivation of earth from snow, and of snow from turbid water (cf. Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 3, which reads the verse the same way: the earth was created from the snow beneath the Throne of Glory). The source’s consonants agree with the Masoretic text; the bending is in construal. The body follows the source’s construal.

Ymb abbreviation

ב”ימ is read as yemei ma’aseh bereshit, the days of the work of Creation; compare Sefer Yetzirah 4:12, “the seven days of Creation”.

Deut 33 14

Deut 33:14 ‘u-mi-meged tevu’ot shamesh’ (‘and with the precious yield of the sun’). This is cited exactly, as proof that

fruits are sustained by heat. It is peshat-level support for ‘heat in the year’.

Hakhmei ha mehkar

The ‘sages of inquiry’ (the philosophers). The cascade ‘the light of the intellect is emanated upon the spheres, from the spheres to the stars, from the stars to human beings’ reproduces the Arabic-Aristotelian / Neoplatonic emanation scheme of intellects and spheres. The commentator aligns it with Sefer Yetzirah’s sequence of letters, then world, then year, then soul. This is an explicit cross-tradition borrowing by the Gerona kabbalist; it is cross-referenced, not imported into the body’s vocabulary.

Tikkun gender amsh ashm

Male and female in the letter-permutations. Sefer Yetzirah assigns ‘male in AMSh, female in AShM’: the same three mothers, ordered differently. The commentator turns this into embryology: a ‘place in the female’ bears both letter-forms, and which permutation warms the drop determines the sex of the child (both permutations give an androginos; a split drop gives twins). The sexual and generative vocabulary (‘he came upon her’, ‘the drop’, ‘emits seed’) is rendered plainly. The Hebrew

nekevah here is the natural female and is not the Zoharic partzuf Nukva, so it is not rendered ‘Nukva’.

Upper world supply

In ‘the upper [world], which was created from fire’, the bracketed noun is an editorial supply; the Hebrew has only ‘the upper’. ‘The upper [heaven]’ is the alternative.

attribution

Attribution. The printed editions give this commentary to Nahmanides (Ramban). Gershom Scholem lists it among the works of Azriel of Gerona (“printed in the editions of this book but ascribed to Nahmanides”, Encyclopaedia Judaica, “Azriel of Gerona”). Sefaria files it under Ramban as “attributed to Ramban”. *Gershom Scholem 1987*

Editorial decisions

- **Sefer Yetzirah lemmas.** Lemmas from Sefer Yetzirah are set in double quotation marks in the English and followed by a colon, then the commentator’s gloss. This keeps the lemmatic structure that carries the exegesis.
- **feminine pronouns.** Feminine pronouns are preserved: ‘she’ for היא, whose referent (fire, the soul, or the order of

the elements) is left open, and for the soul (מנשאה ‘lifts her’). Tiferet is masculine in the source (‘he’).

- **nekevah.** Hebrew nekevah is rendered ‘female’ and not ‘Nukva’. The Zoharic partzuf term is not present and would be anachronistic.

Manuscript variants

- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: בשעו (for בשמו, ‘His Name’): Restored in brackets in the English; the Hebrew keeps the Sefaria reading.
- **Sefaria digital text of the Warsaw 1884 print**: אש”ס (for אש”ם): Restored in brackets; the same commentary reads אש”ם four times in para. 6.
- **editorial bracket in the transcribed text**: [כן היתה הנוסחא לפניו] ‘thus was the version before him’: A later editorial note that the commentator’s Sefer Yetzirah witness read נבראו. Marked as an insertion, not the commentator’s voice.
- **transcribed lemma**: אל”ף חק (lemma) against חוק (commentary): The lemma spells חק and the comment חוק; it is one word, chok.

Colophon

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