



ENGLISH

לקוטי תורה

שיר השירים

Likkutei Torah • Shir HaShirim

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi



The English translation

Edition 1 • 5787 • 2026

8 maamarim

DEDICATED IN HONOR OF

מוקדש לכבוד הגאון המקובל רבי לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן זצ"ל

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchok



Likkutei Torah

THE CHASSIDISHE PARSHA

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About this edition

Edition 1 · October 4, 2026 · 24 Tishrei 5787

נדפס כ"ד תשרי ה'תשפ"ז

This edition contains the English translation.

8 of the 41 maamarim of this volume: those translated so far. The rest follow in later editions.

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The Rebbe asked that the maamarim of the week's parsha, the "Chassidishe Parsha," be learned during that week, spread over its seven days (Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5725 · Toras Menachem vol. 42, pp. 306-309). Why learn it, and the Rebbe's brachos: likuteitorah.com/about/the-chassidishe-parsha/

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שיר השירים אשר לשלמה

ישקנו מנשיקות פיהו כי...

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's



“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine.” Now, it is known that the Holy One, blessed be He, is called a groom (chassan). 1

And the Congregation of Israel (Knesses Yisrael) is called by the name “bride” (kallah). This is on account of the drawing down and bestowal of the Torah to Israel, as our Sages said: “‘On the day of his wedding’: this is the Giving of the Torah.”

Therefore “one who gladdens the groom merits the Torah, which was given with five voices” (in the first chapter of Berachos), for chassan [means] chas darga, “descending a level.”

That is, the descent and drawing down of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, to be clothed in the Torah. And the Congregation of Israel is the source of the souls of Israel; and likewise each and every individual spark of Israel is in the aspect of a bride.

Now, kallah has two meanings. The first is from the term kilayon, “consumption,” for she consumes and wears away everything, from the word kalah, “consumed.” (As in “my flesh is consumed [kalah]”) (in Psalms 73), which Targum Yonasan renders “my body is spent,”

that is, a term of consumption; and so too (in Isaiah 16:4). And likewise with kallah pointed with a patach, one may say that the meaning is also along these lines. And so it is in the Zohar, Parshas Acharei (folio 72), on the verse “for she is his daughter-in-law (kallaso)”: “the consummation (shetzisa)...,” etc.

For the word kalah is a noun denoting the action, like rakah, zakah, dakah [“soft,” “pure,” “fine”], and she is called kallah because she consumes, etc.

And so it is found in the Midrash Rabbah: “that they were consumed (nitkallu).” The second [meaning] is from the term “my soul yearns (kalsah),” etc. (Psalms 84), meaning the yearning of the soul to cleave to and be absorbed in His light, may He be blessed.

(As the Targum Yonasan renders there, “my soul longs [te’ivas],” which is a term of yearning, as in “and your desire (teshukasech) shall be to your husband,” which the Targum renders “te’uvtich.”) The explanation is this: in the reading of the Shema there are two levels of self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh).

The first is to give over one's soul at [the word] "One." The second is "You shall love... with all your soul," even if He takes your soul, etc. We need to understand what they are and the difference between them.

We must further understand how "You shall love... with all your heart" is relevant after the level of self-sacrifice at "One." For of love it is written at the end of Parshas Nitzavim, "to love, etc., for He is your life."

But self-sacrifice means casting away one's life, which is a nullification of one's very existence before the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself. (See in Parshas Shemos, in the discourse beginning "To understand the saying of our Sages on 'For your love is better than wine,'" and in the discourse beginning "A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim.")

If so, how, after the virtue and level of the self-nullification of self-sacrifice at "One," can there be room for the level of "You shall love," where there is someone who loves? The explanation is that

the first level, to give over one's soul at "One," comes from "Hear, O Israel," etc. For "hear" (shema) denotes understanding, which is contemplation of the greatness of the Infinite One (Ein Sof), blessed be He: how He is One

just as before the world was created, without any change whatsoever, as it is written, "I, Havayah, have not changed," etc.; "You were [the same] before [the world] was created," etc.; "I am the first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no Elokim."

Elokim means that which conceals and hides, etc. For before Him, may He be blessed, there is no concealment that conceals and hides at all, since all before Him is considered as nothing, etc.

Accordingly, "and you shall not profane (sechalelu) My holy Name," etc.: not to make an empty 2 space (makom chalal), etc., so that something would be separate from Him, may He be blessed, G-d forbid. And consequently all the desires, the sense of self and [living] for oneself, etc., are nullified.

This is the term kilayon, "consumption": consuming the self-for-oneself, etc., so that all his wishes are nullified and no will at all remains except toward Him, may He be blessed.

(This is the meaning of "my flesh and my heart are consumed," as Targum Yonasan renders, "my body is spent," and as stated in the Zohar, Parshas Acharei, cited above, that "the consummation (shetzisa) of the world" is the consumption of all wishes.

It is along the lines of what is explained elsewhere on the verse "When you go out": that the point of the heart's inwardness rises and is absorbed in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, and not only from this world, etc., but even from the lower and the upper Gan Eden, as it is written, "Whom do I have in heaven," etc.; "my flesh is consumed," etc.)

The second level is from the term “my soul yearns (kalsah),” which is a term of yearning and love. This is the level of the nullification of the self (bittul hayesh), meaning that he is an existing entity (and not a complete consumption of the self, as in the first level), but that he nullifies himself, wanting to be absorbed and nullified, etc.

Therefore we interrupt between the two levels of self-sacrifice mentioned above with “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever,” the level of the lower unity (yichuda tata’ah). For from the level of His Malchus (sovereignty) all created beings came into being from nothing to something, since there is no king without a people; this is the source of the existence and life-force of all created beings.

And it is written, “and besides Me there is no Elokim”: “besides Me” specifically, meaning outside of Him, may He be blessed, G-d forbid. But Havayah Himself is Elokim: “I am Havayah your Elokim”; I Myself, etc., 3

who contracts and conceals the Infinite Light, blessed be He, which is without limit, so that there may be a revelation of the level of created beings as existing entities (yesh). And like the snail,

whose garment is of itself and within itself. And from this level of “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever” comes about “You shall love” at the level of an existing self, someone who loves, etc.; whereas the higher unity (yichuda ila’ah) is the level of actual self-nullification in self-sacrifice.

(This resolves how “You shall love” is relevant after the self-sacrifice at “One”: namely, through our interrupting with “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.” See what is written on this subject in Parshas Vayeishev, in the discourse beginning “On the twenty-fifth of Kislev,” in a somewhat different manner; and one who understands will understand that it all rises on one stalk.)

These two levels are called, in the language of the Kabbalah, the Higher Shechinah (Shechinta Ila’ah) and the Lower Shechinah (Shechinta Tata’ah), etc. And they are the two levels of bride spoken of in the Song of Songs, for the whole Song of Songs speaks of the two levels of bride mentioned above, as is known,

for twice the affection between groom and bride is said and repeated in the Song of Songs, and it alludes to the two levels of bride mentioned above.

(See Pardes, Gate 8, chapter 13, on the Higher Shechinah and the Lower Shechinah; and Zohar HaRakia at the beginning of Parshas Bereishis, on what is stated there in the Zohar: “As the rose..., etc., so too the Congregation of Israel...,” etc.

And see what is written on the meaning of the Congregation of Israel below, in the discourse beginning “There are sixty queens,” in the name of Mishnas Chassidim; and see what is written in Parshas Tetzaveh, in the discourse beginning “Remember what Amalek did to you,” etc.; and see Sefer H.M., section 156. The intent of all is one,

namely the two levels of the higher unity and the lower unity. And see further what is written on the two levels of bride in the discourse beginning “And I will betroth you to Me,” in the haftarah of Parshas Bamidbar; and perhaps it is a somewhat different matter, namely as written at the end of the discourse beginning “For You are my lamp,” on the subject of the early generations and the later generations.)

2. Now, from the two levels of bride mentioned above there come about two levels of grooms, 4 [each] the level of “descending a level” (chas darga). This is [the meaning of] “the voice of the grooms’ jubilation from their wedding canopies”: “grooms” implies two. The matter will be understood through the phrase “King, praised and glorified forever is His great Name.”

At first glance it is not understood what a great name and a small one are. Likewise we must un- 5 derstand the saying of our Sages, “Before the world was created there was He and His Name alone”: how can the level of a name apply before the world was created, when there was not yet anyone to call Him by His name?

It will be understood through what is known: that G-d, may He be blessed, is called in the Gemara and the Midrashim by the name “the Holy One, blessed be He.” They chose this name, and not other names and appellations such as “Compassionate and Gracious,” because it indicates that He is holy and set apart, etc.

(See what is written in Parshas Miketz, in the explanation of the verse “For with You is the source of life,” and below, in the first discourse on “Go forth and see.”) And the drawings-forth and enclothings of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) at the beginning of the chain of descending worlds (hishtalshelus) bear no comparison [to Him], except as a drop to the ocean.

This is the saying of our Sages, “The Holy One, blessed be He, sits and occupies Himself with the Torah,” etc. That is: His essence, may He be blessed, is holy and set apart, but He “sits” and lowers Himself to be clothed in the Torah, like a person who sits and lowers his stature. And this illumination is called the level of “name,” which is only

a radiance and an illumination. (And the meaning of “Before the world was created there was He and His Name alone” is the source, the root and the capacity that exists in the Infinite One, blessed be He, for there to be a revelation of radiance and illumination, from which worlds would come into being when it would arise in His desire and will.

It is like the radiance of the sun contained within the luminary, which is the sun itself. But in the thing compared it is in an infinitely higher manner: for the sun gives off its radiance without choosing to, whereas above, the drawing forth and revelation of the radiance, by way of analogy, is when it arises in His will, etc. If so, the radiance contained in Him

is what lies within His capacity, may He be blessed, to shine forth radiance and illumination, etc. And this capacity and power is called His Name. This is what is written, “the power of Adonai... with Your great power.” This is because His being and essence is not within the category of bestowal and drawing forth at all; see what is written in the discourse beginning “You are standing.”

Therefore the power and source of the drawing forth is called His Name, as explained elsewhere on “For with You is the source of life”: that even the level of “the source of life” is called “with You,” meaning something secondary and considered as nothing, etc.)

This is the meaning of His great Name, which is above the chain of descending worlds; and this great Name of His is “praised and glorified forever,” at the level of the Infinite.

This is [so] because He alone, may He be blessed, is unique and one, and the essence of “the Life of the worlds” is only the level of King, etc.

For the descent of the worlds is not by way of cause and effect, as written in the books; for if so there would be, as it were, a change, since in cause and effect there is a change in the cause through its bestowal.

As, by way of analogy, when a teacher imparts to his student, he necessarily puts his attention into what he imparts, and his mind is not free to study matters and ideas as it was free before the imparting.

But with Him, may He be blessed: “You are the same before the world was created and since the world was created,” without any change, G-d forbid.

This is because the source of the life-force of the worlds is only from the level of His Name alone, the level of Malchus (sovereignty). (See further on the subject of His great Name in Parshas Shelach, on the verse “I [am Havayah your G-d] who brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

And in Parshas Pinchas, in the discourse beginning “Command the children of Israel,” etc., on how shemo, “His Name,” has the numerical value of ratzon, “will.” And on “These are the names,” etc.)

And in truth, “His Name alone is exalted.” And the drawing forth from the level of His Name is not by way of cause and effect, for if so everything would be the level of the Infinite.

Rather, the drawing forth is by way of tzimtzum (contraction) and a leap, until only the level of a line and a thread (kav) is drawn from the Malchus of the Infinite, and [after it] further contractions and concealments without number

(see the Book of Beinonim, Part II, chapter 9, in the gloss), until there can be the level of a chain of descent by cause and effect; and as is known concerning the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin) and the light that fills all worlds (memalei kol almin), etc.

Now, this enclothing and drawing forth from His great Name, to be clothed in the Torah, “sitting and occupying Himself with the Torah,” is the level of the song of the Torah (rinah de’o-raysa). For “the Torah comes forth from Chochmah (wisdom).”

“Comes forth,” precisely: that is, the revealed aspect of the Torah is from Chochmah. But the supernal illumination by which the Infinite Light, blessed be He, is clothed in supernal Chochmah, “wise,

but not with a knowable wisdom,” is the level of the cantillation notes (ta’amim) of the Torah and the song of the Torah: zarka, makaf, shofar, etc. (For the notes, too, are like letters, which are a drawing forth, as is known concerning notes, vowel points, crowns and letters.

But they are letters and drawings-forth from the level of supernal delight, the level of “For with You is the source of life,” which is above even the level of supernal Chochmah, and needless to say above the letters of speech, which are drawn from Chochmah. The explanation: just as there are letters of speech and letters of thought,

so there are letters contained within intellect, and also in what is above intellect. This is the meaning of the ta’amim; ta’am also means “good taste” and sweetness. That is, they are letters and drawings-forth of supernal delight, from the level of the King’s delight in His own essence, as it is written, “And I was beside Him... a delight.”

From there it is drawn to be clothed in supernal Chochmah. This is “I delight in Your Torah,” as explained elsewhere on “And I was beside Him as a nursling,” etc. And see further on the song and the notes of the Torah on “And it came to pass at the end of two years.”

And in Parshas Emor, on “And the kohen shall wave them”; and in Parshas Vezos HaBerachah, on the verse “Moshe commanded us the Torah,” etc. And elsewhere it is explained that this is what is written, “And He was King in Yeshurun,” for Yeshurun may also be said to denote shir, “song.”

Also, just as a song is circular, so in a melody its end is embedded in its beginning, for when one finishes the melody, its beginning is drawn out again, etc. So too above: the melodies and notes are the drawing forth of the actual light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin), and this drawing forth is at the level of King, as the blessing says, “Blessed are You, Havayah our G-d, King of the world, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us.”)

3. This is [the meaning of] “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” For song (shir) is a matter 6 of being absorbed through “running and returning” (ratzo vashov); and above, it is the level of “reaching and not reaching,” etc.

(See in Etz Chaim that the level of “reaching and not reaching” is drawn from the mouth of Adam Kadmon, which is the level of the lights of the ta’amim of Adam Kadmon, etc.; and this is “song...,” etc., “with the kisses of his mouth.” And see what is written further on the drawing forth that is at the level of “reaching and not reaching” in the explanation of “their goings out by their journeys,” etc.; see there.)

This is “Song of Songs”: that is, the song from which the songs below receive; for there are several levels of song [rising] from below to above.

For the source of the created beings, which gives them life and brings them into being from nothing to something (this is the level of Malchus of Atzilus), rises and is absorbed in self-nullification (bittul) in its Emanator, blessed be He, at the level of song, in “running and returning.” And even after [its] enclothing in [the worlds of] Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah,

the ascents of the worlds, which rise and are absorbed, etc., are called the level of song, like the melody of a musician as he plays, which has notes rising and falling, in ascents and descents; and there are many kinds of ascents without end or measure, and all are at the level of song.

This is [the saying], “All that have song go out with song and are drawn with song,” etc. (See what is written on “A psalm, a song of the dedication of the House,” and on “And his brother’s name was Yuval.”)

Now, all these songs from below to above are called shirah, with a heh, in the feminine form, as it is written, “this song (hashirah hazos)”: the level of bride. And from the level of bride there is drawn the level of the groom’s joy, from concealment to revelation: “who gladdens the groom with the bride.”

That is, through the bride: through the level of shirah with a heh, the level of bride, the supernal song (shir) is drawn, the masculine level. (See the Zohar, Parshas Vayeilech, folio 284b and 285a.)

This is the drawing forth of the Infinite Light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin) from the level of His great Name: the notes of the Torah and the song of the Torah, the level of supernal delight, to be clothed in the Torah.

(See on the subject of the Song of Songs in the Midrash Rabbah, at the end [of the comment] on the verse “The Song of Songs”; Zohar II, 48b, 132a, 143a-b, 144a-b, 145b; Zohar III, 74b, 284b.)

(One may perhaps explain [the word] Yisrael in “Hear, O Israel” as shir El, “song of G-d,” for in the souls of Israel there is [something] of the level of song and of the level of songs; see below, in the explanation of “Go forth and see,” and in Zohar I, Vayechi (folio 245).) And see what is written above on the subject of Yeshurun, and what is written in Parshas Balak on “He has not seen iniquity in Israel,” etc.

“Which is Solomon’s” (asher liShlomo): as in “He makes peace in His heights”: Michael, the 7 prince of water, and Gavriel, the prince of fire, two opposites, etc.

So too there is to be a joining and mutual absorption of two opposites, from below to above and from above to below. For He, may He be blessed, is holy and set apart, and there is no comparison, etc., [but only] as a drop to the ocean, etc.

And the worlds are at the level of separate existence (yesh). For the Infinite Light to be clothed 8 in this drop, which bears no comparison at all, etc., there must necessarily be a drawing forth of supernal delight, that He take delight in drawing forth the drop, etc.

This delight is the matter of song, from which comes about peace (shalom), the bonding of the giver with the receiver, etc. And so there will be “which is Solomon’s (liShlomo).”

For in the word liShlomo the masculine and the feminine are included together: Shlomo with a cholam [signifies] “the King to whom peace belongs,” which is the drawing down of the masculine drop.

And Shlomo [ending] with a heh also indicates the feminine form: the level of the ascent from below to above. Through the joining of the two, a supernal union is made and song is drawn to the songs. See on the subject of Shlomo in the Ramaz (folio 176b).

What causes all this is what is written, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.” For the drawing forth of His great Name at the level of song and notes is called the level of kisses: the revelation of inner love, like the love of a father

for his only son. From the great abundance of the love, whose inside is inlaid with love like a burning fire, it cannot pass from potential to actual in revelation except by way of a great contraction, contracting itself into the breath of the mouth and the spirit of his mouth.

And although this is a physical act, nevertheless precisely in this the inwardness of the love is revealed, which does not clothe itself in any other vessel, not [even] in the letters of speech, etc. (See what is written on this in the discourse beginning “If only you were as a brother to me... I would kiss you,” etc.)

So [too] this yearning and this supernal delight, that there be a revelation and enclothing of the Infinite Light in the level of the drop, and the bestowal in the Torah, is by way of a skip and a leap, not by way of the chain of descending worlds (hishtalshelus),

but by way of a great contraction: “sitting and occupying Himself with the Torah,” etc.: “praised and glorified forever is His great Name.”

This is [the meaning of] “By day G-d commands His kindness, and at night His song is with me.” “By day”: through Israel who occupy themselves with the Torah, supernal kindness is drawn down every day, the level of bestowal from above to below; as our Sages said in the chapter Lifnei Eideihen (folio 3b):

“The first three hours the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and occupies Himself with the Torah; the second, He sits and judges; the third, He sits and sustains,” etc.; this is the enclothing of the Infinite Light in bestowal.

(That is: “sits and occupies Himself with the Torah” is the drawing down of the intellect (mochin), Chochmah, Binah and Daas; “in the second He sits and judges” is the level of Chesed, Gevurah and Tiferes; and “in the third three hours He sits and sustains” is the level of Netzach, Hod and Yesod, as is known that Netzach and Hod are called “[Come,] eat of My bread.” And see the Zohar, Parshas Pinchas

(folio 217b), on “and bread that sustains the heart of man”: “that bread that the heavens (shechakim) grind,” etc., which are Netzach and Hod. And see what is written in Iggeres HaKodesh, in the discourse beginning

“To understand the parable and the metaphor.”) But “at night His song is with me” is the song of the angels from below to above, which comes after Israel’s drawing-down by day: “By day G-d commands His kindness,” etc.

And shirah is written, [while] shiro is read: this is the union of Z’eir Anpin and Nukva, as above. Therefore pihu, “his mouth,” is written, and not piv, with an added heh: the level of masculine and feminine.

4. Now, all this is the level of the first groom, “descending a level”: the drawing down of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) to be clothed in the Torah, supernal Chochmah, “wise, but not with a knowable wisdom,” etc. 9

And the level of the second groom is when the Infinite Light, blessed be He, having already been drawn down and clothed in the Torah, is drawn down also below, into [the worlds of] Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah: “He established a testimony in Yaakov and set a Torah in Israel”

(and see Likkutei Torah on Psalms, section 78, on this verse), so that there be a revelation of the Infinite Light below as above, and the supernal delight be drawn down also below, into the Torah and mitzvos of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah.

This is what our Sages said: “The Torah preceded the creation of the world by two thousand years.” That is, “two thousand” (alpayim) is “I will teach you (a’alefcha) wisdom, I will teach you understanding”; for at first, the first drawing forth of the Torah is from His great Name into Chochmah and Binah.

This is the level of the first groom, the first “descending”; and afterward the level of the second groom is the Torah being drawn from the two “thousands” mentioned above into the world, which is the level of the emotive attributes (middos) of Z’eir Anpin

(see what is written in the discourse beginning “The heavens are My throne,” and in the explanation of “And I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel” in Parshas Emor, and in the discourse beginning “And the light of the moon shall be,” etc., in Parshas Tzav, and in the explanation of “I will greatly rejoice,” concerning “as a groom adorns himself with splendor”): that is, the Torah being drawn down below into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah.

This is “who has sanctified us with His commandments”: that the supernal delight is drawn into His commandments and into the Torah, for the Torah is nothing but the interpretation and explanation of the commandments.

Now, of the mitzvos it is said, “which a person shall do, and live by them.” That is: the person makes them into mitzvos, as it is written, “and you shall do them (osam)”: “you (atem)” is written. And afterward “and live by them”: he receives life-force from them, for they are above the level of man.

For all the mitzvos are with physical things: esrog, sukkah, tzitzis, and offerings from animals, from cattle and sheep; and the root

of the animal is from the level of Tohu, “before a king reigned over the children of Israel,” etc., above the level of Adam, as our Sages said, “Even the gnat preceded you”; but it fell down below in the shattering [the printed text reads “in song”].

Whatever could be refined and absorbed into holiness became angels, Michael and Gavriel, etc.; and whatever could not be refined fell lower and lower, until in the World of Asiyah (Action) it became physical cattle and beasts, and everything that is made under the sun. 10

And through man (the Name Mah, the level of Tikkun, the level of Chochmah), who raises up and offers his offering upon the altar,

“this is the law of the animal”: it rises to its source and root in the World of Tohu, above the level of Adam, so that man receives life-force from them and “lives by them,” etc.

So it is with all the mitzvos: tzitzis is of physical wool, and tefillin of parchment, etc. It is likewise so: below, man is the one who makes them into a mitzvah, so that the drawing forth of the Infinite Light is drawn into them.

But above, the virtue of the mitzvos is lofty and very exalted, for the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and the seven of the Rabbis are 620 pillars, like a pillar that joins above and below. And this is what is written, “Behind and before You formed me,” etc.

Now, the drawing forth of the two grooms mentioned above, to “descend a level,” is through the two levels of bride: “who gladdens the groom with the bride.”

For from the level of the first bride, the level of self-sacrifice and consumption, an arousal from above is brought about: the drawing forth of the Infinite Light, His great Name, to be clothed in the Torah, supernal Chochmah, “and wisdom comes from nothing,” etc.

And from the level of the second bride, “my soul yearns,” etc., the level of “someone who loves,” etc., as above, there comes the drawing forth of supernal Chochmah to be clothed also in the Torah and mitzvos of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. (See what is written in the discourse beginning “You have captured my heart, my sister, [my] bride.”)

Therefore, after “You shall love... with all your soul,” it is written, “And these words which I [Anochi command you] shall be,” etc.: the One who is Anochi commands you, etc.; “and you shall speak of them.”

It is like “I am the Mishnah that speaks in your mouth,” etc., and as it is written, “And I have put My words in your mouth”: My very words. And this is “A maskil of Eisan,” etc.

That is: Eisan [alludes to] esanim, “the strong ones,” who are the Tannaim, who through the study of the Torah draw down the level of maskil, which is supernal Chochmah, so that it is drawn down below into the world through the level of Chesed (kindness).

And this is “I will sing of G-d’s kindnesses forever (olam)”: that there is drawn into the world (olam) the level of song and delight, the song of the Torah. And this is a dwelling place among the lower realms.

Now, for there to be a revelation of the level of groom, there must first be the level of chuppah 11 (canopy) and encompassing (makif), the drawing forth of the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin); and afterward the revelation is drawn forth at the level of the inner dimension of the groom.

This is “And in the shadow of My hand I have covered you”: the level of chuppah. And “the grooms’ jubilation” is “from their canopies,” from the level of the encompassing, etc. (See what is written on the subject of chuppah in the discourse beginning “For over all the glory, a canopy,” and in the discourse beginning “Moshe commanded us the Torah,” etc., and on “To my mare among Pharaoh’s chariots,” and in the discourse beginning “The eyes of all look to You.”)

“For your love is better than wine.” Now, our Sages said: “‘No eye has seen’: this is the wine pre- 12 served in its grapes since the six days of Creation.”

And it is written, “My wine that gladdens Elokim,” etc.: “From here [we learn] that song is said only over wine,” etc. The explanation is that the wine in the grapes is swallowed up [within them], and it comes out from concealment to revelation.

Therefore, “when wine enters, the secret comes out,” etc., and “wine gladdens,” etc.: to bring 13 out from concealment to revelation. And whatever was more concealed and hidden,

the revelation afterward is with greater intensity; and there is nothing in revelation that was not first in concealment, like the child that was hidden in the mother’s womb, etc.

So too with sowing: the seed must be hidden and covered and rot in the earth; and the more it is hidden and rots in the ground, the more the grain grows afterward, with increase and abundance of blessing.

So too all the exiles are the level of concealment: “We have not seen our signs,” etc. And because there was to be a revelation “face to face” at the Giving of the Torah, to receive the revealed Torah, it was enough

with a concealment and exile of 210 years beforehand. And now, the length of the exile is because in the Time to Come the inner dimension and the ta’amim of the Torah will be revealed. (See what is written in Parshas Va’eira, at the end of the discourse beginning “And Elokim spoke to Moshe.”)

And as it is written, “He sows charity (tzedakos), He causes salvations (yeshuos) to sprout”: through charity, reviving the spirit of the lowly with physical silver and gold, He causes yeshuos to sprout, a term [related to] “and G-d turned (vayisha),” etc.:

the revelation of the 370 (sha’a) lights. And this is the meaning of “wine that gladdens Elokim,” for Elokim is the level of hiddenness and concealment, as it is written,

“For a sun and a shield is Havayah Elokim”: the level of the Name Elokim is the level of a shield and a sheath, to conceal and to hide, so that [the world] appears as an existing thing. And when it comes out from concealment to revelation, then the joy is great for Elokim specifically.

And this is “when wine enters, the secret (sod) comes out,” etc.: “the secret of Havayah is for 14 those who fear Him,” etc. And the wine preserved in its grapes is the level of a great concealment and hiddenness from the six days of Creation, for the revelation that will be in the Time to Come will be at the level of the Infinite: “no eye has seen,” etc.

And see on the subject of the wine preserved in its grapes since the six days of Creation in the 15 discourse beginning “The matter of the blessing of the zimun,” at its end. But all this is at the level of the chain of descending worlds (hishtalshelus), of concealment and revelation, the level of wine, etc.

But “your love” (dodecha) is above the chain of descending worlds, above even the level of concealment, above the level of the light that encompasses [all worlds] (sovey) and [the light that] fills [all worlds] (memalei); for there is no comparison, etc., holy and set apart, and “before Him darkness is as light.”

That is: when the concealment is brought to revelation, this is considered below like coming out of darkness into light; for at first, when the light was at the level of concealment, “darkness covers,”

and through the revelation “they have seen a great light,” and there is great joy for Elokim. But before Him, His essence, may He be blessed,

this light and revelation is equal to the darkness that was at first; for “all lights are darkened before Him,” and the supernal Keser (Crown), “although it is a clear light, a polished light, is black,” etc.

This is “for your love is better”: the revelation of the level of His being and essence, which is drawn forth through Torah and mitzvos, the level of the “Song of Songs,” etc., the revelation of His great Name, etc.: 16

it is “better than wine,” etc. [See what is written in the discourse beginning “This matzah,” etc., and in the discourse beginning “You shall draw water with joy,” on “The words of the Scribes are more beloved to Me than the wine of Torah”; and see what is written in the discourse beginning “I will sing to G-d,

for He is exalted above the exalted,” on the explanation of “Master of wonders,” and on the explanation of “for He is exalted above the exalted,” etc.; and what is written in the discourse beginning “Until one does not know between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai,’” on the explanation and meaning of “the parable of the ancient one (hakadmoni)”:

“the Ancient One of the world,” etc. And see further on the subject of “for your love is better” in the Midrash Rabbah on the Song of Songs, and in Parshas Naso, chapter 14, on “On the seventh day, the prince”

(Zohar II, 12b, 94b, 95a, 150a). And on the subject of “Let him kiss me,” in the Midrash Rabbah on the Song of Songs and in Parshas Ki Sisa, chapter 41; Zohar I, 44b, 70a, 137a; II, 124b, 120b, 147b, 256b; III, 287a.]

שיר השירים אשר לשלמה

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's



“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.” [We need] to understand the matter of receiving the face of the Shechinah (Divine Presence). Now, our Sages, of blessed memory, said (at the beginning of the second chapter of Berachos), “Let your ears hear what you bring forth from your mouth.” Meaning: the Community of Israel (Knesses Yisrael) is called “you” (atah), as is written in Zohar II (104a) 1

and at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash and at the beginning of Parshas Ve'atah Tetzaveh. And they said that a person has no obligation in prayer other than to hear and contemplate what “you” (that is, the Community of Israel) brings forth from his mouth, meaning

his life-force and his soul, [as it is written,] “Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” And all Israel are intermingled one with another: what one lacks is found in his fellow, and when they all join together as one they form a complete stature, as is known.

Therefore, when one separates himself from his fellow through any kind of separation, in which his heart and will are cut off from him [the other] in one of his words, affairs or traits, or in his intellect and his service in matters of Heaven, in Torah and in prayer, and when this is so in his heart, then by the designs of his heart he makes one limb lacking.

It follows that His Name is not complete. Therefore one who trembles at the word of G-d should be very, very careful about this. And therefore, when a person prays, he should resolve in his heart that it is not the body, meaning the animal soul that is brought into being, that prays, 2

but only the soul that is a part of G-d above is the one that prays; it speaks within him the words of the prayer and all the matters said in it, and he is to do nothing

except let his ear hear the song and the prayer which it sings and praises. And when he resolves this in his heart and does so, this service is called “receiving the face of the Shechinah.”

Meaning: the service of the Community of Israel, which pleads and casts itself down before G-d, is called “the face of the Shechinah,” and a person's hearing its song and prayer is called “receiving the face of the Shechinah,” like a vessel that receives what is within it; meaning, it is

nothing but a garment for it. And there is a bad vessel that cannot receive the good within it and spits them out; that is, he cannot bend his ears and his heart

to understand the words of the prayer and the service. This is called “not meriting to receive the face of the Shechinah,” which is the work of the evil inclination and its schemes, to push him away and turn him aside from following G-d, “lest he hear with his ears and understand with his heart, and return and be healed.”

And this is [the meaning of] “the Song of Songs”: “songs” is the individual [aspect] of Israel, **3** each one separate from his fellow, and “the Song of Songs” is the Community of Israel; and the one who understands will understand.

And this is [the meaning of] “Glory (hishallelu) in His holy Name.” For at first glance the expression hishallelu is not understood, since it is a passive form, like nishba (sworn) and ne’echal (eaten), which implies that the quality of praise is drawn into them. But on the contrary, they are the ones praising G-d, and it should have said “Praise (hallelu) His holy Name.” So what is [the meaning of] the expression hishallelu?

But the matter is according to what is written, “Ado-nai, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise.” The explanation of this verse will be understood by way of an analogy.

When a person prays, most of the time he needs great toil in contemplation until he is stirred in his heart. And sometimes he needs no toil at all: as soon as the oneness of G-d and His greatness rise in his thought, the heart is drawn of itself into being stirred,

without his knowing who draws it with cords of great love. And it seems a wonder in his eyes: from where did the devotion, with the heart’s desire, come to him, of itself and spontaneously, etc.? But the matter is that it is written, “So that [my] glory may sing to You and not be silent.”

And it is written, “G-d, do not be silent,” and the Zohar explains that it refers to the level of **4** Malchus (sovereignty), which sings constantly: “the lower light calls constantly to the upper light and is not still,” etc. And this is [the meaning of] “And I am prayer”: “I” (ani) is the level of Malchus, which is the level of prayer, etc.

And the level of Malchus comprises ten Sefiros: Chochmah, Binah and Daas, the emotive attributes (middos), and speech. And from the level of speech were drawn the Ten Utterances, which are clothed in the worlds, and especially in souls and angels, etc., who receive not through so great a concealment, etc.

Now, when there is a revelation of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) in this praise of the attribute of **5** Malchus, that is, the revelation is in Chochmah, Binah and Daas and the emotive attributes, reaching even the level of speech within Malchus, as it is written, “So that glory may sing to You,” etc., “Do not be silent,” etc.

Now, by way of analogy, in man below: when he prays with the heart's desire and a revelation of the heart's yearning, then the words come out from the depth of the heart, [like] flashes of fire, and a word that comes out from the heart enters the heart of the listener, until he too is stirred by it. This is not so if the speech is cold, etc.

So too it will be understood by analogy above, regarding “And I am prayer,” of the level of 6 Malchus, which is the level of Chochmah, Binah and Daas and the emotive attributes within Malchus, reaching even the level of speech,

which is the level of the letters, the power of the Maker within the things made: [they] shine in souls and angels as a revelation of G-dliness, [like] words that come out from the heart, etc.,

until this level shines also in the souls below, which are drawn of themselves to be stirred and for one's heart to be set aflame for G-d without toil. And this is the level of love and awe that are drawn from above, [as it is written,] “a service of gift I will give,” etc.

This is not so at times, when the level of the supernal speech is not drawn down below in a revealed way, as it is written, “I was mute with silence,” [and] “like a ewe before her shearers is mute,”

and also because of a person's physicality and coarseness, so that he has no vessel to receive this revelation. That is: to receive the awe and love (dechilu u'rechimu) that come from above is through his first arousing love and awe in his soul.

And this is the matter of “Ado-nai, open my lips.” The level of the Name Ado-nai, which is the 7 level of Malchus, is what opens the lips of the person who prays.

“And my mouth shall declare (yagid) Your praise”: the expression yagid denotes drawing forth, as in the analogy of one who draws water from high to low, where the water flows of itself and the person only brought it about by tilting the vessel of the upper waters. So too, the praise and acclaim with which the soul praises is not by virtue of the soul's own comprehension,

as though it drew forth something; rather, the praise is “Your praise,” the essential [praise], from the attribute of Malchus, and “my mouth” is only the one that declares and draws it forth, as a mere cause.

That is, the mouth of a person is a vessel for the resting of the supernal speech, etc. And this is 8 the matter of “hishallelu in His holy Name,” in the passive form, and it does not say hallelu:

that is, when there is a revelation from above, then it says to the souls and the supernal angels, whose praise and acclaim are in their comprehension of the living G-d, that their praise is not their own, such that it would say hallelu; rather, this quality of praise is drawn to them from above, and their mouth declares His praise, may He be blessed, which is drawn into them from above.

(And therefore this verse, hishallelu, was said when they brought the Ark to Jerusalem, for then, through the revelation of G-dliness in the Ark, which is the level of “awesome in praises” (nora has the letters of aron, “ark”), as written in סה”מ, section 77, through this a revelation of the quality of praise was drawn into them, so that it would be hishallelu, etc.)

(And see Zohar I, 153a, at the end of the first column, on “And the cows went straight,” [and] Zohar II, 138a.) From all this the matter of “the Song of Songs” will be understood, as above.

לריח שמניך טובים שמן תורק שמך על כן עלמות אהבוך

For Fragrance, Your Oils Are Good



“For fragrance, your oils are good; your name is oil poured forth; therefore the maidens love 1
You.”

(See the Midrash Rabbah on the Song of Songs on this verse, and on the verse “Return, return, O Shulamite”; and at the beginning of Lech Lecha; Vayikra [Rabbah], end of chapter 3; Naso, chapter 13, on the offering of Nachshon, regarding “mixed with oil”; and at the beginning of Tavo.) Now, sometimes the Torah is called wine and sometimes oil: “for Your love is better than wine.”

The matter [is this]. It is written (Zechariah 9:17), “and new wine makes the maidens flourish”; and in the Gemara, first chapter of Bava Basra (12b): “one whose heart is sealed” etc., “wine opens him”; “wine enters, the secret comes out”: the joy that was hidden is revealed, etc.

And in the service of G-d, “for Your love is better than wine” means: “Your love” is love and awe with fervor that comes from contemplation, which is the level of wine, Binah (understanding): to contemplate how “Your kingship,” the revealed world, is the level of revelation, [bringing] something from nothing, giving life to the dimensions of space and time, “and Your dominion is in every generation,” etc.

And this is the level of the secret that is hidden within the worlds, to the point that the world seems to be a thing existing in its own right. And the awe and love born of this contemplation are “the secret comes out” mentioned above, as though the level of G-dliness were seen, how “all before Him is considered as truly nothing,” as is known, etc.

(And this is the meaning of “Who revealed this secret to My children?”: “Who” (Mi) is Binah; and it is the revelation of the concealed kindnesses (chasadim) in the Yesod of Imma, that is, the revelation of love and awe, etc.)

And it is known that the Congregation of Israel is called “bride,” and this is when the secret comes out into revelation, so that the light of G-dliness shines in the souls of Israel. And this is called “when she has received the male”

(in the Zohar, Bo, 38b; and see the Zohar HaRakia there, and the work abbreviated Seh”m, folio 9a, section 21), for the Holy One, blessed be He, is called “bridegroom.”

And a bride has nothing of her own, only what is given her from above: “for your Husband is your Maker,” etc., and “the glory of G-d has shone upon you,”

“though I sit in darkness, G-d is a light for me.” And she is called the level of na’arah (maiden) with a hei: the five Gevuros of the male, which he gives her at the first union; these are “Your love” mentioned above, whose essence is from the hidden world,

except that they come out by way of Nukva, etc. (And see Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of the Shema at Bedtime, chapter 11, the section beginning “Likkutim,” and chapter 6; and Mikdash Melech at the beginning of Tzav.)

And before she has received, when the light of G-dliness has not yet shone within her, she is called na’ar, without the hei, [that is,] without the five Gevuros mentioned above. And this is one whose heart is sealed, like a virgin, who has not been stirred to awe and love by the contemplation of the revealed world mentioned above; and [these] are called “maidens” (alamos).

(And see what is written on “The eyes of all,” that then she is called kol (all), lacking the hei of kalah (bride), [which is] the five Gevuros of the male, etc.; and see what is written about this in the maamar beginning “He will revive us after two days,” etc.; and see what is written on “I will betroth you to Me,” etc., and on “And if a woman vows,” etc., and on “When you go out,” etc., “and afterward you shall come to her,” etc., and on “It is good to take refuge.”)

And the counsel so that there be also the level of “the maidens love You” is the level of oil: “for 2 fragrance, your oils are good.” And the Torah is called “oil poured forth” (shemen turak), [oil] that is poured from vessel to vessel, so that what was below comes above,

for it is turned over, etc.; then the fragrance rises from the bottom of the first vessel, whereas while it was full of oil the fragrance was below, as mentioned above, etc.

And the point of the analogy is that the Torah came down, step by step, into physical matters, narratives of events and physical letters: “G-d founded the earth with wisdom”; “Abba founded the daughter”; so that what is below is turned upward and what is above downward, etc.

And this is “your name is oil poured forth”: the whole Torah is the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He; then [comes] “for fragrance, your oils,” etc. And the letters are called “horses,” for they come through many stages of descent from the masculine world, the level of oil, etc.

(And it is called “oil poured forth,” which is turned over, etc., because the letters, although they are below intellect and the emotive attributes (middos), and are called “stones” in Sefer Yetzirah, being the level of the inanimate,

yet the root of the letters and of the inanimate has its source above intellect, only it is like an inverted seal, etc. And see what is written on “A psalm, a song for the dedication of the House,” concerning letters and stones, etc., and on “And Yehudah approached him,” etc.

And this is “for fragrance, your oils,” which are drawn from the fragrant oil, which is the level and rank of the anointing oil. And see what is written concerning “pure balsam” in the explanation on “O that you were [as my brother],” etc.; and see what is written concerning the anointing oil)

(later on), in Parshas Naso, on “This was the dedication of the altar on the day it was anointed,” etc.; and in the Ramaz on Parshas Emor (89), regarding “that supernal oil,” etc.

And see Iggeres HaKodesh, the section beginning “And David made,” concerning the root of the letters, whose source is the hidden intellect and the beginning of intellect, etc.

And see what is written at the end of Parshas Miketz, in the maamar beginning “The Chanukah lamp is a mitzvah,” etc., that the letters of the Torah are rooted far, far above the level of the Torah [itself], etc.

And see there, that of the Torah it is said “and the Torah is light,” while the letters are rooted in the level of air (avir), which is the source of light (or), etc.; and air is ruach (breath).

And this is the meaning of “for fragrance, your oils,” for fragrance (rei’ach) and spirit (ruach) **3** are one matter, as is explained elsewhere, and as our Sages said on “My pleasing fragrance” (rei’ach nichochi): “a gratification of spirit (nachas ruach) before Me,” etc.

Therefore the letters are called “horses,” for they lift very high upward, and all ascents from below to above are by means of the letters, for “thought accomplishes nothing,” etc.

And see Mevo She’arim, Gate 3, Part 3, chapter 3, on “from His mouth [come] knowledge,” etc. And [as with] one who rides a horse: the horse will carry him to a distant place that he could not have reached on foot, etc.

So too, by way of analogy, when he puts all his thought into the letters, they lift him and raise him to a high place (as written on this later, at the end of the maamar beginning “To My mare,” etc.). But it is written: “He does not desire the strength of the horse, nor take pleasure in the legs of a man.”

Meaning: when he does not immerse his Chochmah, Binah and Daas in the letters, but only his thought, this is like mere horse-riding, where only his legs cling to the horse, and the horse runs while he does nothing, etc.

Rather, “G-d takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope for His kindness”: meaning, that he immerse his Chochmah, Binah and Daas in contemplating the greatness of G-d, together with the cleaving of his thought to the letters

(and see what is written in Parshas Beshalach, in the maamar beginning “To My mare,” and on “Then [Moshe] sang”). And he should take to heart the well-counseled counsel when he sees that he is very far from being stirred in his heart and from fervor [born] of contemplation, etc.:

he should humble himself utterly, saying: “What am I, that I should have fervor, for my heart is sealed, since

I am utterly, utterly distant from the One G-d?” Only this is in his power: to plead for his soul, to desire to cleave to G-d. And this is “those who hope for His kindness”: they wait and long with great longing for the revelation of G-dliness, etc.

“And I do not want to be separated,” etc. This is the meaning of “His kindness” (chasdo): chas 4
dalet, [pity on the dalet,] the revelation of G-dliness. And this is “a diadem of beauty” (tzeфирas
tif’arah): for those who await (metzapim) His beauty and the splendor of His majesty. And from
this he can draw G-d’s kindness upon himself, so that his heart will be stirred, etc.

And so too regarding the study of the Oral Torah, the revelation of His blessed will in this physi-
cal world: pure and impure, permitted and forbidden, etc.

And one who does not have even the level of “those who hope for His kindness” mentioned
above: of him it is written, “He remembered His kindness and His faithfulness to the house of
Israel,” the level of Nukva, etc.; “upon Israel, His faithfulness.” And to the house of Israel He
draws down faith as well, etc.

To explain further the meaning of “oil poured forth”: it is according to what is written elsewhere 5
explaining the Zohar (Bereishis, 27b) on “the Mishnah is the wife of that youth,” etc.,

that in the laws of the revealed Torah before us, the very essence of supernal Chochmah is
clothed and drawn down, a revelation that does not exist even in the higher worlds,

for even in the Garden of Eden only the radiance of the Shechinah shines, and a mere glimmer
of supernal Chochmah, etc. And the reason for this is explained elsewhere (regarding Purim, in
the maamar beginning “For Avraham did not know us”) from the analogy of the lion, etc.:

“the face of a lion on the right,” etc.; and likewise the glimmer of supernal Chochmah must
necessarily be clothed in the lowest place, namely in the laws of impure and fit, etc.

See there. And it is also like the analogy mentioned in Iggeres HaKodesh near its end: “More-
over, speech,” etc., is only a glimmer, etc., whereas in the drop [of seed] there is drawn also
from the very being and essence of the soul; see there.

And see further there, the section beginning “In the Raaya Mehemna, Parshas Naso.” And this 6
is the meaning of “oil poured forth”: the very essence of the oil itself is poured out and drawn
down below.

And this is [how] what is above comes specifically below, as mentioned above. And as for “your
name is oil poured forth,” the meaning was explained above, namely as our Sages said, “the
whole Torah is the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He,” etc.

And see what is written on this on “And these are the names of the children of Israel,” and in Parshas Yisro, in the maamar beginning “Moshe spoke,” how all the performance of the mitzvos is “to perfect the mystery of His Name,” etc.; see there.

And in the Zohar, Parshas Tzav (34a), “your name” is explained as Malchus, into which the oil of supernal Chochmah is poured and drawn; see there.

(And see the Zohar, Parshas Yisro, 87b, on “A good name is better than good oil,” and the Zohar, volume 1, end of 96a.) And this is as written in the Zohar, Parshas Terumah (145b): “The inheritance of the father, the daughter inherits,” etc.

And this is as is known concerning “with wisdom He founded the earth,” specifically, unlike “He established the heavens with understanding”; and as written on this in Parshas Bereishis, in the maamar beginning

“To understand the reason,” etc., and on “And [G-d] formed the man [of] dust,” etc. Now the level of Malchus [is] “the mouth: the Oral Torah we call her,” etc.

And see what is written later, in the maamar beginning “I am black,” on “The words of the Scribes are dearer to Me,” etc., that they are above the level of “book,” which is the level of the Written Torah, etc.;

see there. And see Iggeres HaKodesh, the section beginning “He and His life-force,” on what is written there: “only it is like an inverted seal, and their beginning is wedged in their end,” etc.

And this is “your name is oil poured forth”: into the laws of the Oral Torah there is drawn from the level of the essence of the oil, which is exceedingly high and exalted; that is, as it is written, “Like the good oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, the beard of Aharon,” etc.

And as written (later) in the maamar beginning “When you kindle the lamps,” that the level of the beard of the High Priest is the level of hairs, which are the laws, etc., and upon this there is the level of oil from above, etc.;

see there. And as for its saying “the beard” twice, “the beard, the beard [of Aharon],” one may say [it is] according to what is written later, in the maamar beginning “I am black,” that the laws in the positive commandments, which are from the level of Chesed, are drawn from the level of the supernal beard,

which is the level of whiteness, “white as snow” and “like pure wool”; and the laws in the negative commandments are drawn from the level of “his locks are curled, black,” etc.; see the Idra of Naso (beginning of 132a).

And this is the meaning of “for fragrance, your oils are good”: for the level of “like the good oil,” etc., “running down upon the beard,” etc., has its root exceedingly high and exalted.

Therefore it is called “fragrant oil,” and this is the meaning of “thirteen rivers of pure balsam oil” (in the Gemara, Taanis 25a), which is a higher level than plain oil; and as written elsewhere, in Parshas Terumah, at the end of the maamar beginning

“Now it is written, ‘And your people are all righteous,’” etc. And see the Zohar, beginning of Emor (88b), and see the Zohar, beginning of Terumah (127b).

And see concerning “for fragrance, your oils” in the Zohar, Parshas Acharei (end of 58b), and in Parshas Beha’aloscha (150a), and in Parshas Tzav (end of 35a), and at the beginning of Parshas Vayera (96a), and in the Ramaz there.

One may further say, in explaining “for fragrance, your oils,” etc., and “oil poured forth,” etc., 7 following the plain sense of the explanation of the Midrash on the Song of Songs, which explains that “oil poured forth” is a higher level than “for fragrance, your oils,” which is

only a kind of mere fragrance from the oil; but “oil poured forth” is like a person who pours from a vessel into his friend’s vessel, who gives him the oil itself.

And this is according to what is written elsewhere (in the maamar beginning “Moshe commanded us the Torah,” etc., in Parshas VeZos HaBerachah), that in the flow from the Written Torah, which is the level of the bridegroom, to the Oral Torah, which is the level of the bride, there are two levels and ranks.

The first is in the manner of “the fallen fruit of the supernal wisdom is Torah,” and it is called erusin (betrothal), which is an external flow; and this is “for fragrance, your oils.”

And as written in Likkutei Torah on Tehillim, on “He established a testimony in Yaakov,” etc. And this is why it is only a kind of mere fragrance: a glimmer of the Yesod of Abba, and not its very being and essence.

However, the second level is that there be drawn from the level of the bridegroom to the bride, from the level of the inner dimension of the Written Torah; and this is nisu’in (marriage) and the union of bridegroom and bride; see there. And this is “your name is oil poured forth”: the essence of the oil of supernal Chochmah is drawn into the level of Malchus, the Oral Torah, etc.

Now from all this follows “therefore the maidens (alamos) love You”: that is, the level of Beriah, 8 Yetzirah and Asiyah, which receive from the level of Malchus, which is the source of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah; as written in the Zohar, volume 3

(end of 58b), volume 2, 144b (and see further volume 1, 98a; volume 3, 59a, 71b).

And likewise from the level of Malchus of Atzilus there is drawn a revelation below in each and every one of Israel, through their accepting upon themselves the yoke of the kingship of Heaven.

And then, in the study of Torah, there is drawn into him as well from the level of “for fragrance, your oils,” etc., and “oil poured forth,” etc.; and this too is in the manner of the two levels mentioned above, betrothal and marriage;

that is, that the light of G-d be absorbed and grasped in the mind and in the heart, [for] “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are entirely one,” etc., and that the contemplation enter “within a man, and a deep heart,” etc.

And as our Sages said, “the light within it brings him back to the good”; and as written at the end of the maamar beginning “When you kindle,” on “like the good oil,” etc., that runs down “according to his attributes,” etc., and “the oil of his right hand calls out,” etc.; see there.

And this is why it first says “for Your love is better than wine”: wine is contemplation of the re- 9
vealed world, and from this contemplation comes about the level of the bride, etc., as mentioned above.

But so that there be also the level of “the maidens love You,” that is, even one whose heart is sealed and who has not been stirred by the contemplation mentioned above,

this is through occupation with Torah, which is the level of oil, as mentioned above, which is the level of “that I (Anochi) command you,” etc.,

which no thought can grasp at all; and because it is from a very lofty level, therefore it can make an engraving and a vessel even in one whose heart is sealed, etc.

And [this is] like what is explained in Parshas Bechukosai (the maamar beginning “It is explained in Etz Chaim”), that through this an engraving is made from within in the animal soul, etc.; and this is the meaning of “a well that princes dug,” etc.;

see there. And [it is] like what is explained further elsewhere (in the maamar beginning “I will betroth you to Me”) concerning “my heart and my flesh sing to the living G-d,” for

the heart and the flesh, because they are physical vessels, etc., do not yearn for “the courts of G-d,” which are the source and life of the soul, like the level of contemplation of the revealed world, which is called wine, as mentioned above,

but only when they sing to the living G-d Himself, in His glory, etc.; for the higher a level is, the more it can descend and spread further below, and through this it comes and reaches the heart and flesh, etc.; see there at length.

And so it is here: because the level of “the fragrance of your oils” and “oil poured forth” is a flow from a level far higher than the rank of wine, and oil floats on top of wine, etc.

And in the Gemara, first chapter of Shabbos (5b), where the Sages and Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri disagree whether they count as joined to one another,

and this is because oil is very high, at the level of “the supernal Chochmah of all,” as written in the Zohar, Parshas Tzav (34a), and therefore it is far, far above the level of wine, etc.

And therefore it can take effect even in one whose heart is sealed, that his heart be engraved through words of Torah, so that there be also “the maidens love You,” etc.; and like “I will pass through the land of Egypt: I and not an angel,” etc.

(2) One may further say, in explaining “for fragrance, your oils,” etc., and “oil poured forth,” 10 etc., following the Midrash mentioned above, that this is the matter of “A person should always divide his study into three: a third in Scripture, a third in Mishnah and a third in Talmud.”

Now in studying the mitzvos, Mishnah and Talmud, one comprehends and grasps the very being of His blessed wisdom, since it has been clothed in physical matters, which are truly His blessed will and wisdom.

And this is “oil poured forth,” etc. This is not so with the narratives of Tanach, where His blessed wisdom, clothed in the words and combinations of letters, is not comprehended at all.

And as written in the Zohar, Beha’aloscha (152a), that the plain sense understood from the narratives of the Torah is called “the garment of the Torah”; and the Ramaz explained there

that, for example, [in] the section “And these [are the kings]...in the land of Edom,” etc., certainly the event happened as it happened, and [the verse] does not depart from its plain meaning, but G-d’s intent in it is not [the event] itself;

rather, in it are hidden the secrets of the World of Tohu, etc.; see there; and in the Zohar there (149b), which elaborates on this. And in the Pardes, Gate 27, chapter 1, he elaborates in explaining the above Zohar statement, and writes as follows:

“But when a person comes to study the Torah, his intent must be that he is studying that matter as being divine words, whose immense inwardness is hidden from him, etc.; and even though he understands nothing of it

but the plain sense of the narrative, and needless to say this one, but even one who does not understand at all, etc., he too has a good reward.” End of quote.

Therefore the letters of the Torah and the plain sense of the narrative are called “the fragrance of your oils”: for even though the inwardness of His blessed wisdom, hidden and clothed in that narrative and those letters, is not understood or comprehended at all

(unlike grasping the plain sense of the laws and mitzvos as they come in the explanation of the Mishnah and Gemara, where even the plain, understood sense is called “the bodies of the Torah” and not merely a garment; see there in the Zohar and in the Pardes),

nevertheless the letters and the plain sense of the narrative are themselves “the fragrance of your oils,” for in them and through them the one who reads Scripture draws down a fragrance and glimmer from the level of “the oil of holy anointing,”

just as, by way of analogy, one smells a good fragrance even though he does not taste it in his mouth at all, and even though he is far from it, etc.

On the contrary, this fragrance is drawn from an exceedingly high place, which is the level of the fragrant oil, which is above the level of plain oil, supernal Chochmah, etc.

And because it is higher in rank, it cannot come into revelation in a manner of closeness, in the manner of taste, like “oil poured forth,” etc.,

but only in the manner of fragrance, etc. (as written in the explanation on “These are the journeys of the children of Israel,” concerning “the Jordan at Jericho”). And this is what is said in the Zohar, Beha’aloscha (149b):

“That word of that narrative does not come to show about itself alone, but comes to show about that general principle,” etc.; see there.

Nevertheless there is also an additional, immense advantage in the level of “oil poured forth,” which is the drawing down of the essence of supernal Chochmah, and not merely fragrance and a glimmer, etc.; and both alike are good.

Now the study of the Zohar and of the Arizal is included in “a third in Scripture.” And the reason for this is written elsewhere, in explaining the Zohar on Bereishis (27b) mentioned above.

In brief: the Midrash of the Zohar, and likewise Midrash Rabbah and the other Midrashim, are commentary on Scripture; and Rashi explained in the first chapter of Berachos (11b) that Midrash is close to Scripture, etc.; see there.

And although in Hilchos Talmud Torah it is explained that the Midrash of the Torah, that is, Sifra and Sifrei and the like, is included in “a third in Mishnah,” that is at any rate because they are the explanation of the laws and bodies of the Torah, just like the Mishnah itself.

But in studying the secrets of the Zohar there is no comprehension even for the greatest of sages, only knowledge of the existence of the chain of descending worlds, and no comprehension of the essence at all; and this is like the study of Scripture,

where one reads the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He, even though he does not comprehend at all the essence hidden in them, as mentioned above; and similar to this is the study of the Zohar and Etz Chaim.

Therefore it is included in “a third in Scripture.” (And this resolves what the Ran writes at the end of the first chapter of Avodah Zarah: “since Mishnah is weightier than Scripture,” etc., “why is a third of the day needed for Scripture?”)

Therefore this too is called “for fragrance, your oils,” for knowledge of the existence is like mere fragrance compared to comprehension of the essence of His blessed wisdom that is in Mishnah and Talmud.

And [this is] along the lines of what is explained in Iggeres HaKodesh near its end, that in studying the order of the chain of descent, even if one has comprehended the existence, it is not in itself superior to the study of the mitzvos, in which one comprehends and grasps the essence, etc.,

but rather in that knowledge of the existence is also a great and exalted mitzvah, and indeed surpasses them all, as it is written, “Know this day,” and “Know the G-d of your father,” etc., and it brings to a whole heart.

Moreover, the fragrance and the knowledge of the existence are also a glimmer from the level of the inner dimension of the Torah, etc. (And see the Zohar, Parshas Acharei, 73a: “three levels,” etc., “and each level upon level, hidden and revealed,” etc.; see there; and see what is written on this on “For the thing is very near to you.”)

Therefore there must be both levels, “for fragrance, your oils,” etc., and “oil poured forth,” etc.; and from this follows “therefore the maidens love You,” as mentioned above.

לריח שמניך טובים שמן תורק שמך על כן עלמות אהבוך

For the fragrance of your goodly oils



“For the fragrance of your goodly oils, your name is oil poured forth; therefore the maidens 1 (alamos) love you.” Now, souls that are not in a body in this world are called alamos, “maidens”: do not read alamos, “maidens,” but olamos, “worlds.”

And it is written, “For your Master is your Maker, etc.”: these are the souls that are in this world. And see on this in Rabbah, [Parshas] Bo, end of section 15, [and] Zohar III, [Parshas] Teitzei (p. 277a).

Now, the descent of the soul into this world is a great descent. Needless to say at a time when the Holy Temple does not stand; but even before the time of exile, it is an exile and a great descent for the souls to be clothed and made physical

in a body in this world. For before coming to this world the soul was enjoying the radiance of the Shechinah. And it is said, “Better that I be judged and come to the World to Come”: for all the sufferings of Gehinnom are worthwhile in order to come afterward to the delight of the Garden of Eden,

even the lower one. And there is a lower Garden of Eden and a higher Garden of Eden, and when the soul must ascend to the higher Garden of Eden there is yet another Gehinnom before it, called the River of Fire (Nehar Dinur), which “flows and goes forth.” If so, what need is there, and why did the soul descend into this world, so great a descent?

But this descent is for the sake of an ascent. And what is the ascent that is greater than [all] the above? It is said: “One hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is finer than all the life of the World to Come.”

For all the life of the World to Come, the lower Garden of Eden, the Days of Mashiach and so on, is only the radiance of the Shechinah, a single glimmer. With the yud the World to Come was created: the yud is a great tzimtzum and a single thought,

like, by way of analogy, a single letter compared to the very essence of one’s being and essence. “And from my flesh I behold G-d”: above, in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, His being and essence, it is

only a single thought: He looks and beholds to the end of all the generations. “With a single utterance [the world] could have been created”; “Bereishis is also an utterance.” It is the yud, a tzimtzum,

a single glimmer. “All the days of the life” of the World to Come is in the plural, for there are several lower Gardens of Eden and higher Gardens of Eden and Days of Mashiach, one higher than the other, through all the fifty thousand jubilees.

For all the six thousand years are only one Shemittah, and in them there are a lower Garden of Eden, a higher Garden of Eden and the Days of Mashiach, etc.

If so, all the life of the World to Come is only a radiance and a single glimmer from the Infinite Light, blessed be He, His being and essence; and “no thought can grasp Him” at all in His being and essence.

This is [the meaning of] “a descent for the sake of an ascent”: through teshuvah, to rise to this elevation, to be included in His being and essence. And “one hour ... is finer, etc.,” 2

specifically in exile and in descent into a physical body, through teshuvah from the depth of the heart, as an arousal from below, from contemplating his descent from a very high and exalted place: “Know from where

you came”: from above Chochmah, “and Chochmah comes from nothingness,” which is the beginning of revelation; “and to where you are going”: to be clothed in this world. Even though he did not sin, nevertheless he has become physical and separated from His being and essence, in utter distance.

And one must be among “the masters of reckoning,” so “that a person know in his soul, etc.,” and arouse compassion over his descent, etc., with a broken heart over the life of the soul. And as a matter of course, compassion is drawn down through the chain of descending worlds upon children, life and sustenance: “Remember us for life, etc.”

This is [the meaning of] “With great compassion I will gather you”: through teshuvah from the depth of the heart, as he contemplates that “for a small moment I forsook you,” that the forsaking is 3

only a small moment, a single thought: all the six thousand years, and the lower Garden of Eden and the higher Garden of Eden, and the Days of Mashiach, and the Resurrection of the Dead, and all the fifty thousand jubilees. (And see on this in the discourse beginning “To understand the meaning of the verse ‘Who is a G-d like You.’”)

Therefore, since his descent into this world is a great descent, through this he arouses teshuvah from the depth of the heart, [and] abundant compassion from His being and essence, to draw down the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which cannot be drawn down in a single vessel

but only in thirteen attributes: “Havayah, Havayah, G-d, compassionate, etc.” Havayah is the drawing down from His being and essence, that Havayah become thirteen attributes, etc.

And this is [the meaning of] “For your Master (bo’alayich) is your Maker, etc.” But how can this 4 expression apply to Him, may He be exalted, who has no bodily form, with regard to spiritual souls? And it is written, “As a young man espouses (yiv’al) a maiden, etc.”

But it is said about this (Sanhedrin, p. 22b): “A woman makes a covenant only, etc.”

For through its descent into this world, in exile, [the soul] became physical, and his heart was dulled and became stone. Even if he is not a soul that sins through what is forbidden, G-d forbid, [this comes about] also through what is permitted, when he does not sanctify himself, etc.

And through the arousal of abundant compassion, an arousal from above, in the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, his heart is opened; for this attribute has the power to open one whose heart is sealed like a maiden’s, as we see in a cruel person whose heart is sealed, yet when some compassion is aroused in him, his heart opens.

And this is [the meaning of] “For your Master is your Maker”: through teshuvah from the depth 5 of the heart, in contemplating that “G-d of Hosts,” which is all the life of the World to Come, etc.,

is only “His Name”: “His glory is over earth and heaven,” the radiance of the Shechinah; and the source of his soul is very high and exalted, etc., and its descent is a great descent, etc.

Through this he arouses the Thirteen Attributes, etc., with abundant compassion, to open his heart, so that it be a vessel, and “the foundation for Your dwelling that You have made, G-d, etc.”

“May G-d make His face shine upon you”: so that through this, “as water [reflects] face to face, etc.,” he too will turn his face back in teshuvah. And this is also [the meaning of] the Ten Days of Teshuvah: a return to [being] face to face.

For all the year, even though one serves G-d, etc., it is on the level of the back of the neck: “For they have turned to Me the back of the neck and not the face.”

For the whole essence of a person’s life-force and all the senses, sight and hearing, speech [and] smell, are in the face, while in the back of the neck there is only bone, etc.

So too, one must turn back the whole essence of the point of his heart, and his will, and thought, speech and action, to G-d alone; as it says, “Whom have I in heaven, etc.”: the lower Garden of Eden and the higher Garden of Eden, etc.,

which are only a radiance and a single glimmer, as [explained] above. And before the Ten Days of Teshuvah, all the month of Elul, one arouses the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, so that through this the Ten Days of Teshuvah will be face to face, one with One, “with all your soul, etc.,” to be included and nullified in His being and essence: abundant compassion and “abundant in kindness.”

Now, all this concerns the souls that are in this world, in exile and a great descent, etc. But it is 6 through teshuvah, as [explained] above, and “in the place where a baal teshuvah stands, etc.”

But the souls in the Garden of Eden, who are on the level of perfect tzaddikim, who apprehend of the radiance of the Shechinah, as [explained] above: if so, through what is their ascent, to be included, etc., since a broken heart from the depth of the heart does not apply to them, etc.?

This is [the meaning of] “For the fragrance of your goodly oils, etc., therefore the maidens love you.” The explanation is that [it is] through the Torah that they engaged in while they were in this world, clothed in bodies; for the Torah too was clothed in physical things.

And this is [the meaning of] “your name is oil poured forth”: the whole Torah is the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, poured from vessel to vessel through the chain of descending worlds, to be clothed in this world in physical things. And the further down it is poured, etc.,

the more its fragrance spreads; as we see with physical oil, that what was above, when poured from vessel to vessel, below its fragrance becomes greater.

So too the Torah: “their end is wedged in their beginning,” “last in deed, first in thought.” Through this they have an ascent, to be included, as [explained] above.

And this is [the meaning of] “therefore the maidens”: these are the souls that are not in a body in this world; “love you”: this is the great love, “abundant in kindness.” For “your dew is a dew of lights”: whoever makes use of the light of Torah, the light of Torah revives him (Kesubos 111b).

And this is [the meaning of] “goodly,” a term for light: “the light, that it was good.” Now, through teshuvah from the depth of the heart, while the soul is still in this world, it can rise and attain the great love as well, as [explained] above.

And this is [the meaning of] “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, etc.” Now, it is said, “The words of the Scribes are dearer to me than the wine of Torah”: these are the hundred blessings that are said

every day, “Blessed are You, G-d,” which are from the words of the Scribes, so that there be a revelation and drawing down “from world to world”; “our G-d,” that He be our G-d, not above, on the level of, etc., only through intellect and contemplation.

But there must be a revelation of the point of his heart, that there be one will, for Him alone, may He be exalted. And in every one of Israel there is a love

that is hidden, each according to his own measure, [coming] into revelation in prayer. There is one who prays in the manner of “their heart cried out,” even though he sees in himself that he is coarse and clothed in physical desires and traits.

But even so, the truth is not so; for that is only falsehood, from the world of falsehood, while the love mentioned above is the truth.

Therefore the Congregation of Israel is called by the name “nut”: “I went down to the garden of nuts.” Just as a nut has a kernel and a shell covering it, so too with souls, etc., while they are in a body in this world. And this is the secret of the hidden love mentioned above.

But through what can it come into great revelation? It is through the arousal of the higher secret, “He made darkness His hiding place, etc.,”

to come into revelation; through this the lower secret, the love mentioned above, is revealed, as is explained in the discourse beginning “If a man has two wives, etc.”; see there.

And this is [the meaning of] “When wine enters, the secret comes out”: through teshuvah the higher secret and the lower secret come out, as [explained] above. And this is [the meaning of] “Who revealed this secret to My children, etc.”

שחורה אני ונאווה בנות ירושלים וגו'

“I am black and comely, O daughters of Jerusalem”



“I am black and comely, O daughters of Jerusalem” etc. “Do not look upon me that I am black- 1
ish, for the sun has gazed upon me” etc.

This will be understood in light of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, that the Torah was given as black fire upon white fire, as explained in Shir HaShirim Rabbah at the end of the passage “His head is as the most fine gold,” and in the Zohar, Part III, Nasso, 132a (and see further in the Ra’aya Mehemna, Shoftim, 275a).

Now, just as the whole Torah was given in this way, so too what our Sages said, “With the yud the World to Come was created” etc., is likewise in the manner of black fire upon white fire.

The explanation of the matter is as follows. We must first understand that the World to Come, the Higher Garden of Eden, is the delight of the souls from their grasp of G-dliness: a wondrous delight without end and without limit, beyond all measure and bound.

This is why they said of Elisha Acher: “Better that he be judged and come to the World to Come,” for all the sufferings of Gehinnom are worthwhile

for twelve months in order afterwards to receive the gratification and delight of the World to Come, because this delight has no end or bound, and all the sufferings of Gehinnom cannot be measured or compared against it.

For were there any measure and bound to this delight, there would be room for some weighing and balancing, to reckon how much suffering [is worth] against the delight.

But in truth it is beyond all measure and bound; therefore nothing at all compares to it, and “Better that he be judged” etc.

If so, we must understand what the level of the yud is, from which this world of great delight was 2
created. To understand this, [we apply the verse] “From my flesh I behold G-d.”

By way of analogy, we see plainly in a physical person that the revelation of the letters of speech is in thought and speech, but in the intellect itself there is as yet no level of letters at all.

Only when he thinks and ponders it are the letters born (see what is written on this in the discourse beginning “Who has counted” in Parshas Balak),

and they are revealed, in a concealed way, in his thought, and they come to greater revelation when he speaks to another. They are garments for the intellect, which clothes itself in the letters of thought and speech,

but they are not its essence and being, for in the essence of the intellect no pronunciation of letters is yet recognized or felt (see what is written in the explanation of the verse “And you shall make a tzitz,” on “and you shall engrave upon it the engravings of a signet”).

Even so, the revelation of these letters, although they are felt as sounds only in speech, through the five articulations of the mouth, does not have its beginning and its coming into being from nothing to something there (as is written at length on the verse “And David made there a name”).

Likewise, the letters of thought do not come into being from the level of the grasped intellect that shines in thought. Rather, the source from which there comes to be a power of letters in thought and speech is fixed in the very being of the soul itself, for the soul

is full of letters. These are powers for flows of energy which, in their descent lower and lower down to the level of thought, take the form of actual pronounced letters; for in thought too the letters take form after the manner of their pronunciation,

as one utters them with the mouth (and in this vein [the Sages] said in the Gemara, “Two spirits were conversing with one another”: that their speech and conversation are fine and spiritual letters, like the letters of thought in us, and their thought is finer still, as is written elsewhere), except that it is concealed.

Speech, by contrast, actually reveals [them] to another. Their source is higher than the level of intellect, that is, from the level of the soul itself (see what is written on this in the explanation of the verse “If you walk in My statutes”). This is not to say that the letters are the actual being and essence of the soul,

for the being of the soul is intellect and emotive attributes etc. (meaning that it is the source of the intellect and the emotive attributes, as is written in the explanation of the verse “And you shall not withhold salt,” in the discourse beginning “Behold, they are one people,” and in the discourse beginning “Elijah opened”),

but that the soul itself also includes the powers of the letters, so that from it there is drawn down into the level of thought by way of a mere extension of radiance. And see what is written in the discourse beginning “Thus shall you bless” regarding the soul being full of letters.

Summary: The matter of the Torah being given as black fire upon white fire, and likewise the yud with which the World to Come was created. We must first introduce the matter of the letters of thought and speech, which are merely garments for the soul and the intellect, and nevertheless the root of the letters is in the soul itself. 3

2. Now, exactly like this analogy is [the matter] above, in the Infinite Light, blessed be He. For 4
the revelation of the souls' grasp of G-dliness and their delight in G-d, though it is a wondrous delight, is nonetheless only from the level of letters

(see the discourse beginning "And now, let the power be great" on "as You have spoken, saying," that Malchus of Atzilus, which is the letters of the speech of Atzilus, becomes Attik of Beriah, which is the source and root of the Higher Garden of Eden etc.; and see what is written in the discourse beginning "You shall keep My Sabbaths" on "Creator of holy beings, may Your Name be praised" etc.).

The Higher Garden of Eden is the letters of thought, and the Lower Garden of Eden is the level of speech. This is [the meaning of] "I created it, I formed it, I also made it": "I created it" is the level of thought, the Higher Garden of Eden; "I formed it" is the level of speech and the Lower Garden of Eden.

"I also made it" is the world of action, this physical world. (See what is written in the discourse beginning "Who has counted" that "also" (af) is a term of inclusion, and it includes a fourth level which is above the levels of thought, speech and action, which are only garments for the Infinite Light, blessed be He;

that is, the level of the Supernal Will, which is the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self and Glory, and which is drawn down through the fulfillment of the mitzvos in this world etc.;

see there. In the same way one may say regarding what is written, that in the Higher Garden of Eden the revelation is from the level of the letters of thought and in the Lower Garden of Eden from the level of speech, that nonetheless through fulfilling the Torah and mitzvos in this world an additional light is drawn into the Garden of Eden. This is the clothing of the Supernal Will and the Supreme Chochmah in thought and speech, in the manner of "Your thoughts are very deep."

As is written in the discourse beginning "For as the new heavens" on "and He placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it," and in the discourse beginning "Then Israel sang" etc., "Spring up, O well" etc.; and see what is written in the discourse beginning "I" in the portion of tzitzis, on the twofold "I" etc., "to be your G-d."

Now, with the yud the World to Come was created, but this world was created with the hei, and there is a level in the hei which in its root is higher than the yud, as is written on "Go forth" regarding the hei of Avraham. Therefore through teshuvah and good deeds in this world additional light is drawn into the Garden of Eden. Let us return to our subject, the matter of the letters of thought and speech.)

These are merely garments for the Infinite Light, blessed be He, as is written in the Tikkunei Zohar: "You prepared garments for them, from which souls fly forth" etc.

But in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self and Glory, no revelation of comprehension applies, for “no thought can grasp Him” at all, and “You are wise, but not with a knowable wisdom” etc.

“He is the Knower and He is the Knowledge” etc. (see what is written in the discourse beginning “Behold, they are one people,” cited above, on the meaning of “You are wise, but not with a knowable wisdom”).

Of this it is said, “He made darkness His hiding place.” Darkness is something in which no grasp or comprehension at all is seen.

(See what is written in the discourse beginning “The heads of the tribes” on “and of it is said, ‘He made darkness His hiding place’” etc., and in the discourse beginning “And He called to Moshe.”)

Now, all this is from below upward: what is above the comprehension of created beings is called “darkness,” meaning that which is not grasped,

as in the saying “Who forms light and creates darkness”: the darkness is in Beriah, above the light of revelation which is in Yetzirah. (For Beriah is thought and Yetzirah is speech. Now, for the student, the teacher’s speech is called light and revelation, but the teacher’s thought is still darkness for the student.

But for the teacher himself, his speech counts as nothing compared with his thought, and what he thinks in thought in one moment requires many words to speak. Therefore for him thought is called light, and speech is called darkness compared with thought. Further:

In Beriah there shine Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atzilus, which are called “the hidden world” relative to the emotive attributes of Atzilus, called “the revealed world,” which shine in Yetzirah. For of Chochmah and Binah of Atzilus it is said, “The hidden things belong to Havayah our G-d.” And see what is written in the discourse beginning “I have come into My garden.”

Therefore the Seraphim too, who are in Beriah, are called “standing above him,” meaning above the vav, the six extremities, which nest in Yetzirah. Their service is not with a great noise, like the Chayos and the Ofanim who raise themselves with a great noise, since those are from the revealed world.

It is also stated that when one says “Who forms light” one touches the tefillin of the hand, and at “and creates darkness” one touches the tefillin of the head. It is explained elsewhere that the tefillin of the hand are called a sunken seal, the clothing of the lights in the vessels, while the tefillin of the head are called a raised seal, lights that are above the vessels. This is alluded to specifically in “creates darkness,” because at present this level does not come into revelation until the Time to Come.

From all this it is understood that for us what is revealed is called light, and what is above revelation is called darkness etc. In the same way, anything that is higher in rank is called, for us, greater darkness.)

But from above downward it is the reverse: what comes more into the revelation of comprehension is more within the category of darkness

relative to the Infinite Light in His very Self and Glory, as is written in the Zohar that the Supreme Keser, although it is a clear light, a brilliant light, is black relative to the Cause of Causes etc., and all of them are darkened before Him etc.

And it is written, “All before Him are considered as nothing.” (Something similar is explained elsewhere on “G-d of knowledge” (Kel de’os): that from below upward what is below is called “something” (yesh) and what is above is called “nothing” (ayin), but from above downward it is the reverse, as is written in the discourse beginning “When they put ‘we will do’ first” and in the discourse beginning “On the eighth day, an assembly,” and in other places.)

Therefore the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self and Glory, which is above the bounds of comprehension, is called light, and it is the level of white fire.

(And what is below Him etc., even Keser, is called darkness, as said above; and see what is written on this in the explanation of “Who has counted.” It is also like the analogy of “a candle at noon: of what use is it?” The candle is called darkness relative to the light of day, though relative to the night it is called a lamp.

In the same way our Sages said, “All the prophets will be nullified in the Time to Come,” and it is explained elsewhere that the light of the prophets’ prophecy will count as nothing compared with the revelation of the Time to Come, like a candle at noon etc.

All the more so relative to the Infinite Light, blessed be He: in order that a radiance be drawn from it to be the source of the ten Sefiros, there had to be a tzimtzum and a vacated space, and afterwards only a kav and a thread was drawn down, as is known.

Now, the matter of its being called fire, except that there is white fire and black fire, is as written elsewhere, in the discourse beginning “You are standing,” in explaining the verse “For Havayah your G-d is a consuming fire” etc.

Further, in general there are four elements, fire, air, water and earth, which correspond to the four worlds Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. Fire is the level of Atzilus: just as it is the nature of fire to withdraw upward, so Atzilus is exalted and lofty above Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah; for Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah are created beings, while Atzilus is G-dliness.

Now, within Atzilus itself there are also Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah: Keser, or also the Supreme Chochmah, is called Atzilus of Atzilus; Binah is called Beriah of Atzilus; and Z'eir Anpin and Nukva are Yetzirah and Asiyah of Atzilus. More generally still, there are the general Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, and the very highest Atzilus is called fire.

Even so, it is called black fire relative to the Emanator, the Infinite One, blessed be He, who is called white fire etc. So too, in general, Z'eir Anpin relative to Attika Kaddisha is called black fire relative to white fire.)

But because the worlds cannot receive [it], and “no thought can grasp Him” etc., therefore “G-d saw the light, that it was good” to be hidden away.

It was hidden away in the manner of “He made darkness His hiding place” etc. This is [the meaning of] “He who dwells in the concealment of the Most High, in the shadow of Shaddai he lodges”: to contract and conceal the light

by many contractions and screens that separate and conceal His light, blessed be He, so that there be a level of revelation below: the level of the Higher Garden of Eden, the delight of the souls etc. and their grasp of the light of G-d etc., “I created it, I formed it” etc.

(See what is written on “And Elokim spoke” etc., “And I appeared to Avraham” etc., “as Kel Shaddai,” who said to His world “Enough” (dai). And see Shaar HaYichudim, chapter eight, the fifth yichud, on the matter of light, water and firmament, which is drawn down through the Name Shaddai.

It will be understood in light of what is written on this matter on “Praise G-d in His sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of His strength”; and see what is written in the discourse beginning “They were disputing in the Heavenly Academy” etc., that it is the Higher Garden of Eden, which is called “firmament,” and that what is drawn down to them from the level of His light, blessed be He, comes through many contractions etc., as said above.)

This is [the meaning of] “And in His goodness He renews each day, continually, the work of creation”: “in His goodness” means that from His seeing that it was good to hide away the light, there came into being the renewal of the work of creation, to be from nothing to something, as the revelation of delight and comprehension

(as is written, “To cause those who love Me to inherit yesh,” which refers to the Garden of Eden, which is called something from nothing (yesh me'ayin). And see on the matter of “good to hide away” at the beginning of Pekudei, 220b, and at the beginning of Emor, 88a, and in Bereshis Rabbah, Parsha 3, at the end of section 18; and see what is written on “And in His goodness He renews” etc.

through the level of the yud, which is the level of tzimtzum etc., in the discourse beginning “And I besought” and in the discourse beginning “I will sing” etc., “for He is highly exalted”).

Summary: In the same way above, the revelation of light in the Garden of Eden is only from the 5 level of letters, “with the yud the World to Come was created,” and these are garments.

But as for His essence, blessed be He, “no thought can grasp Him” at all. Of this it is said, “He made darkness His hiding place.” This is from below upward: what cannot be comprehended is called darkness.

But from above downward it is the reverse. This is [the meaning of] “it was good” to hide away [the light] in the manner of darkness, so that there be revelation in the Garden of Eden; and this is “And in His goodness He renews.”

3. Now, this contraction, the matter of “it was good” to hide away the light in the place of darkness, is like, in the analogy, the level of the letters within the soul itself, in order that there be a revelation of actual letters in thought and speech 6

(meaning: it has already been explained that although the form of the twenty-two letters is fixed in the very being of the soul itself, nevertheless the letters are not the being and essence of the soul; for the essence of the soul is higher even than the being of the intellect and emotive attributes that shine from it in the body,

but it is exalted above them with a great elevation. Only a radiance and power from it, when drawn down and clothed in the brain, becomes the source of the intellect in the brain. While that power is still included in the essence of the soul, it is above the level and being of the source of the intellect in the brain.

In the same way, the letters included in the soul are powers from which, in their descent to be revealed in thought and speech, the form of letters takes shape. Even so, although these powers are still above the level of the actual letters of thought and speech, they are nonetheless a descent and contraction relative to the actual being and essence of the soul.

This contraction is in order that from it there afterwards be the revelation of the letters of thought and speech, which are actually material letters, and that is a further, truly complete contraction.

The beginning of this contraction is the coming into being, within the soul itself, of the form of the letters without matter. All these contractions are an analogy for the matter of “it was good to hide away.”

That is: it is stated at the beginning [of the Zohar], “At the outset of the King’s will, He engraved engravings in the supernal radiance.” This is the contraction for the coming into being of engraved letters, so to speak. The matter is as written on “This is the statute (chukas) of the Torah,” that engraving is higher than written letters, for it is of the thing itself and within it.

This is the meaning of “engraved (charus) upon the tablets” etc. Ink letters, by contrast, are a separate thing, and they also blacken the parchment completely. However,

the engraved letters, although they are of the thing itself and within it, also darken somewhat the bright precious stone: when an engraving is made in it, its brightness from before the engraving is somewhat darkened, since in the place of the engraving it is not so bright.

The application is understood: this is the matter of “He made darkness His hiding place,” the level of the Supreme Keser, which is drawn from the Malchus of the Infinite, the level of letters; although it is still the level of the Infinite,

and like engraved letters it is of the thing itself and within it, and above the level of Chochmah and Binah, which are called actual “action” relative to the Infinite, like ink upon parchment etc., nevertheless Keser too is called darkness and black fire relative to the Infinite One, blessed be He, who is far above Keser and is called white fire.

This contraction is in order that afterwards there come into being the level of Chochmah and Binah and the Garden of Eden, which is like the analogy of letters written in ink etc., the level of actual black. This too is, by way of analogy, the matter of the coming into being of the letters of the soul, which are

like engraved letters, of the thing itself and within it, in order that afterwards there come into being actual letters in thought and speech, truly material, actual black fire. Now, although relative to the Infinite the engraved letters are also called darkness, as said above, nevertheless relative to the written letters,

that is, the level of Chochmah and Binah, the sources of the Garden of Eden, [as in] “and a river goes forth from Eden,” Keser is called actual white fire, since it is only of the thing itself and within it, by way of analogy. Therefore Z’eir Anpin of Atzilus, relative to Keser, is called black fire upon white fire)

(as is written in Parshas Nasso, 132a). In the same way Z’eir Anpin, relative to Malchus of Atzilus, is called “white light,” and she, relative to it, is called “black light”

(as is written in Parshas Bereshis, 51a, in Parshas Lech Lecha, 83b, and in Parshas Shoftim, 275a).

For Malchus, which is the source of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, is called the attribute of night and darkness, since the Infinite Light is hidden and clothed in it in a manner of hiddenness and concealment: “Your kingship (malchuscha) is a kingship over all worlds (olamim),” [olamim] being from the term for concealment (he’elem).

The level of Z’eir Anpin, by contrast, which is Atzilus, the higher unity, is called day and light. As is written in the discourse beginning “Sing and rejoice” on “joyful song at evening and gladness in the morning”; and see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning “And you shall know this day.”

This is [the meaning of] “With the yud the World to Come was created,” like the analogy of the ink upon the parchment: the smooth parchment alludes to the level of white fire, the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self, as it were, which “no thought can grasp” (and see what is written on “Set me as a seal”),

except through the yud, the level of a black point that blackens the parchment, so that there be a level of revelation and comprehension in the shape of the letter yud.

Now, as in the analogy above, when there comes a revelation of the letters of thought, although they are only garments for the intellect, they are nevertheless not a completely separate thing, a thing unto itself; for what he thinks and ponders in these letters is the intellect itself.

So too, by way of analogy, with the yud upon the parchment, where the ink blackens the parchment to reveal the shape of a yud: the ink itself is not a substantial thing to be considered a thing unto itself; it only blackens the parchment so that the parchment reveals the shape of the yud

(meaning that although the shape of the yud is only from the ink, without the parchment that carries and bears it there would be no shape from it at all. Therefore our Sages said, “Any letter which is not surrounded by parchment on its four sides is invalid.” If so, the ink does nothing

but blacken etc., so that the parchment reveal etc. In the application, this means that the parchment itself, which is the Infinite One, blessed be He, reveals the yud, which is the Supreme Chochmah; for “You are wise” means You Yourself, that the Infinite Light, blessed be He, is drawn down and shines in the Supreme Chochmah.

And see what is written on “And Israel saw the great hand,” in explaining “And He called: Havayah, Havayah,” and what is written on this also at the end of the discourse beginning “Return, O Israel.”) So, in the application, through the many contractions the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self and Glory, is revealed below.

This is “With the yud the World to Come was created”: the delight of the souls in the actual Infinite Light, blessed be He. (And see Parshas Balak, 191a.) And see what is written in the discourse beginning “Sarai your wife.”

As for the yud being the level of a point and the smallest of all the letters, see what is written in the explanation of “Many waters” on “and this is ‘We have a little sister,’” and see the Zohar, Part II, Terumah (165b): “Because there is” etc.,

“although” etc. This is the matter of the smallness of the vessel and the abundance of the light, in the manner of “The righteous say little and do much” (and see the Gemara, chapter 3 of Menachos, 29b, end).

Summary: This contraction is like, in the analogy, the level of the letters in the soul, and from it 7
there follows afterwards the clothing in the letters of thought. It is like engraving and writing.
And just as, nevertheless, what is it that thinks in the letters of thought? Surely the intellect
itself;

and likewise the ink unites with the white parchment that bears it; so in the application, through
the letter yud with which the World to Come was created, the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself
is drawn down and revealed.

This is why the Seraphim say "Holy," because of their grasp of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, 8
which is separate and which "no thought can grasp." [They say] "Holy" three times, corre-
sponding to the three worlds Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. "The whole earth is full of His glory":
the clothing of the level of "Holy" is in everything etc.

(Meaning: just as in the Higher Garden of Eden the Infinite Light shines as the souls' compre-
hension, so the Seraphim, since they too are in the World of Beriah, say "Holy" etc., for they
grasp how the Infinite Light is separate and how all its flow is only through the contraction of
the letter yud.

But the essence of the Infinite Light is holy and separate etc. Since they are in Beriah, which is
the beginning of the coming into being of something from nothing, they therefore grasp that
He, blessed be He, is holy etc. On the matter of "Holy" three times, see what is written in the ex-
planation of "And now, let the power be great" and of "After Havayah your G-d shall you walk.")

Now, the Ofanim, who are below them in rank, say "Blessed is the glory of Havayah": this is the
attribute of His Malchus, blessed be He, for "Your kingship is a kingship over all worlds," and
all worlds are only the level of letters etc. "Blessed" is also drawn from the level of the light that
encompasses all worlds, from the hidden world etc.

The explanation of the matter: there are two kinds of angels. There are those who are givers, 9
who convey all the influences to this world through the constellations etc.; these are the
Ofanim, who say "Blessed is the glory" etc.

"Blessed" (baruch) is a drawing down, that the glory of Havayah be drawn from the level of
"His place," He being the place of the world while the world is not His place. This is the meaning
of "Blessed is the Omnipresent (HaMakom)," and it is the drawing down of the flow from above,
which the Ofanim draw down by saying "Blessed."

And there are angels who are receivers, who "receive from one another" and do not give to 10
those below at all but are only receivers. These are the Seraphim, who say "Holy" etc., and they
are loftier than the angels who give.

This is what is written, “Thousands upon thousands serve Him, and myriads upon myriads stand before Him” (Daniel, chapter 7). “Stand before Him” refers to the Seraphim, the receivers etc.,

who say “Holy.” See what is written elsewhere on the matter of “camps and chariots” mentioned in Parshas Beshalach (48b), and what is written in the discourse beginning “And He came from the holy myriads.” This is as written, “Who forms light and creates darkness.”

That is, Yetzirah is the level of light, from which the flow is drawn below; it is the rank of the Ofanim, who give to those below, to all the animals and beasts. A child under thirteen years also receives from the level of the Ofanim.

Therefore it is called light, which is the level of white fire from our perspective, since it shines 11 and flows downward. “And creates darkness” is the level of the Seraphim in Beriah, who are in the manner of black fire, which is the darkness.

This is because they only withdraw upward, saying “Holy” etc.; therefore they are in the manner of black fire and darkness, on account of the withdrawal etc.

Likewise is the matter of “Holy” and “Blessed.” “Holy” is what is separate and which “no 12 thought can grasp” at all; it is the level of “He made darkness His hiding place,” as explained above in section 2. The level of “Blessed” is the matter of white fire, that there be revelation below.

But this is from below upward. From above downward it is the reverse: the level of “Holy” is called white fire relative to the drawing down of the level of “Blessed is the glory,” which is the level of “Your kingship,” the level of letters etc.

For “Holy” is the level of Keser etc. In [“glory”] there are two levels: the lower glory, which is the attribute of His Malchus, blessed be He, and the higher glory, the Supreme Chochmah; and all [of it]

is called black fire relative to the Supreme Keser, as said above regarding ink upon white parchment etc. And see what is written on the matter of “Holy” and “Blessed” in the discourse beginning “If the bright spot has preceded” etc. and in the discourse beginning “You have captured my heart, my sister.”

It follows that the “Holy” and “Blessed” said by the Seraphim and the Ofanim are the matter of white fire that is upon black fire, as said above.

This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, is so called by these two aspects together, “Holy” and “Blessed” (kadosh baruch hu); for in this manner is the drawing down and revelation of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, who is holy and blessed is He.

Now, because the Ofanim hear the level of “Holy” which the Seraphim say, they raise themselves with a great noise. The noise is the matter of self-nullification in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, to go out of their sheath **13**

and their comprehension according to their temperament and nature, since they hear something new that is above their power of comprehension. The Seraphim, by contrast, though they too are certainly nullified in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, with a greater degree and elevation,

yet it is written, “Seraphim stand above him”: this comprehension is not so much a novelty for them, beyond their comprehension. Therefore “with a great noise” is not said of them

as it is of the Ofanim. (See what is written on this in the discourse beginning “And it shall be, from one new moon”: that this is the matter of the analogy of the city-dweller who saw the king, or the villager etc., and this is the difference between weekdays and Shabbos etc. Now the Seraphim, since their self-nullification is in the manner of the hidden

and inward, therefore also draw down the level of “Holy,” which is in the manner of concealment. The Ofanim, whose self-nullification is in the manner of the revealed, therefore also draw down the level of “Blessed,” the level of letters, which is the revealed etc. And see what is written in the discourse beginning “And you shall know this day” on “and all innards and kidneys shall sing to Your Name.”)

Summary: This is also the matter of the Seraphim saying “Holy” and the Ofanim “Blessed.” For **14** the Seraphim are from Beriah, “creates darkness,” black fire, the level of “stand before Him”; therefore they say “Holy,” separate, “He made darkness His hiding place.”

The Ofanim are from Yetzirah, “forms light”: they give to those below and say “Blessed is the glory” etc. All this is so called from below upward, as said above.)

4. Now, exactly like all these matters is [the case] in the divine service of every person: the level of revealed love and the level of hidden love

(that is, analogous to the two levels mentioned above, of the Ofanim and the Seraphim. The hidden love is called black fire, in the manner explained above regarding the Seraphim, who are called black fire, except that the souls are on a more inward level).

For the revelation of love through contemplating the greatness of the Infinite One, blessed be He, so that from his understanding he gives birth to flashes of fire and a thirst etc.

to be included and nullified in Him, blessed be He, in actual existence and with self-sacrifice, does not come about through the act of contemplation alone, as if the attribute of love came into being from nothing to something by the power of his understanding.

Rather, the contemplation is the cause that there be drawn from the level of the hidden love, which is in a person's nature from the level that is above knowledge, in a manner of darkness and hiding of the Face, to be revealed in the heart through contemplation and knowledge, and to enlarge the pyre of the fire of love etc.

(Meaning that this is a kind of proof of the existence of the hidden love; for the revelation of love etc. is not etc., but rather etc., as said above.)

The coming into being of love from nothing to something is fixed in the soul, and the very being of the soul itself is intellect and emotive attributes, love and awe etc.;

for it is "a part of G-d above," and like a son drawn from the brain of the father etc., who by nature does not want to be separated from His unity and oneness, blessed be He, and can give his life for the sanctification of G-d's Name etc.,

as is written in the Book of the Intermediates. (And see what is written in the discourse beginning "On the eighth day he sent the people away" that the root of this love is taken from the level of "before" (kedem), from the level of "For My thoughts are not your thoughts" etc., "He made darkness His hiding place" etc.

And see what is written in the discourse beginning "If in My statutes" that this level is from the aspect of "Your fathers dwelt beyond the river," "they arose in thought," that is, from the hidden brain (mocha setima'ah), the engraved letters etc., "He engraved engravings in the supernal radiance," "The soul which You have given within me is pure"; and this is the matter of the letters that are of the thing itself and within it.

This is the matter of "the sun has gazed upon me," white fire, as follows below; for the engraving is in the white fire, of the thing itself and within it, except that the engraving is the source and root of the blackness of the black fire, from above downward, as said above.)

In order that it be revealed in the heart, to go out from concealment into revelation, it is through contemplating the actual Infinite Light, blessed be He, which "no thought can grasp" at all.

In this manner the order of prayer was established: the Verses of Song, and the blessing "Who forms light," how "in His goodness" that is hidden He renews etc., and the angels say "Holy" etc.

This is the level of noise, the renewal of comprehension; for at night, in sleep, [there is] one sixtieth etc., and in the morning one becomes a new creature, "You breathed it into me" etc.

"And after the noise, fire": this is the level of the Shema and "You shall love"; for "The lamp of Havayah is the soul of man," like a lamp and a flame that rises of itself (and see what is written in the discourse beginning "And you shall offer a burnt-offering, a fire-offering"),

that is, as is written, “To You, Havayah, I lift up my soul,” to be included, thought in thought and speech in speech, “and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house” etc. This is the true revelation of the light of love within a man and a deep heart.

Except that the level of noise from the level of darkness must come first, like the creation of the world: first darkness and then light. And it is written, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day”: evening is the level of darkness, and afterwards morning, light, to be revealed as day, and the revelation of the level of “one.”

(And see what is written in the discourse beginning “Because you did not serve,” and what is written in the discourse on the matter of Chanukah on “morning by morning, when he tends the lamps” etc.; and see the Zohar, Balak, 204a end and 204b; and see what is written on “And Lavan rose early in the morning,” and at the end of the discourse beginning “To understand the matter of the blessings”; and see the Zohar, Vayikra, 22b; and see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning “And you shall know this day.”)

“And after the fire, a still, small voice”: this is the prayer of the Eighteen Blessings, “Blessed are You, Havayah our G-d, King of the world,” that the level of Havayah, the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in His very Self and Glory, be blessed and drawn down; “and there the King comes” etc.

The revelation of Havayah below, in His kingship, “a kingship over all worlds,” comes through “for Havayah is our G-d,” that we are nullified before Him, blessed be He; and we also draw down that He be “King of the world” etc., as is written elsewhere.

With this will be understood what is written, “Do not look upon me that I am blackish (shechar-chores).” It means a doubled blackness; for the love in itself is hidden, not seen or revealed in the heart,

and it is also covered with a garment of sackcloth, being clothed in the animal soul. (If so, the meaning and matter of the doubled blackness is in the manner of from below upward and from above downward, both together; for from below upward what is not grasped at all is called blackness,

and from above downward what is lower in rank is called blackness. If so, both levels are in the soul: the matter of the hidden love, since it is very concealed and above the intellect, is called black fire relative to the person, as in “creates darkness,” and this is the matter of darkness from below upward.

And its being covered and clothed in the animal soul is the darkness from above downward, being the lowest level in rank: “darkness shall cover the earth” (Isaiah, chapter 60), “and the fool walks in darkness” (Ecclesiastes, chapter 2).) Nevertheless, “Do not look upon me,”

for its being hidden in itself is because “the sun has gazed upon me”: the level of the sun is the level of white fire, which the worlds cannot receive; and therefore it was good to hide it away in the place of darkness.

Therefore the love is in a manner of darkness and concealment, not revealed in the body. (And this is “With me from Lebanon, O bride”: the root of the soul is from the level of Lebanon. And this is “and flowing streams (nozlim) from Lebanon”: nozlim means the level of their mazal, the source and root of the soul, which is from the level of Lebanon, except

that it was good to hide it away in the manner of black fire. It is in the level of yechidah, in which a divine spark is clothed etc., as is written in Etz Chaim, Shaar 41, chapter 3, on the verse “I said, you are G-dly beings” etc.; and see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning “When I break for you” etc., “and His anger” etc.

Now, in the Midrash Rabbah on Shir HaShirim, on “I am black,” it is stated: “I am black all the days of the week, and comely on Shabbos.” The matter is that the level of hidden love, called black fire, is in concealment all the days of the week, and therefore it is in the manner of “I am black,” concealment.

But on Shabbos it goes out and is drawn from concealment into revelation, as is written elsewhere, in the discourse beginning “To understand the saying of our Sages” on “For your love is better [than wine].”

So too on Shabbos there shines in revelation, from the level of the World of Beriah, what is called “creates darkness,” as is known regarding the inner court that faces east (kadim), the level of “stand before (kadmohi) Him”: on Shabbos the light shines and is drawn from there.

And this is “and comely on the Shabbos day.”) As for its entering a garment of sackcloth, this is in truth “My mother’s sons were incensed (nicharu) against me”; nicharu is in the passive form.

“My mother’s sons” means the evil inclination and the chambers of kelipas nogah, which receive the flow from the level of His Malchus, blessed be He, for “His kingship rules over all” (and see Parshas Mishpatim, 125a end, on “in its mother’s milk”).

They are the root of all the evil traits; they themselves are “incensed” and burn with their lust. These are “against me” (bi), meaning that they are clothed in me, and from them these evils come forth.

But they do not affect the G-dly soul itself, in the point of its love, which remains in its existence and strength, as is written, “And My glory I will not give to another”

(see the Ra’aya Mehemna at the beginning of Teitzei, 276a, and the commentary of the Ramaz there). And it can rule and have dominion over them and turn them from one extreme to the other, and be in actual self-sacrifice.

Therefore our Sages said of the sinners of Israel, “Gehinnom comes to an end but they do not come to an end,” because the root of their soul is from the level of the actual Infinite, which has no end or termination. Therefore “My mother’s sons were incensed against me” means that they work evil and come to an end.

The soul, by contrast, is a part of G-d, "You breathed it into me," which has no end or termination. The proof is that even in the sinners of Israel the love is still whole,

for "they made me keeper of the vineyards": all the desire of the evil inclination is to cause Israel to sin in order to suckle and receive life-force from holiness. If so, there must necessarily still be holiness in him,

for "although he sinned, he is Israel," and that power of holiness which he has is without end or termination. Therefore he can rule and have dominion over his spirit and turn his heart from one opposite to the other

(that is, through "and Havayah illumines my darkness," as is written at the end of the discourse beginning "For You are my lamp." Now, the meaning of nicharu will be understood from what is written elsewhere, in the discourse beginning "And I return in peace," on "and he went to Charan": charan is from the term "my throat is parched (nichar)" etc.; and through teshuvah, from the level of charan it becomes rinah (song).

So too it will be understood regarding the level of "incensed against me": through teshuvah, so that his heart is transformed etc., the soul will be elevated to be "comely as the tents of Kedar" etc. And see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning "As an eagle stirs up" on "He kept him as the pupil of His eye": the black of the eye, where sight is revealed, so that "eye to eye they shall see" etc.)

Summary: Likewise in a person there is the level of revealed love and hidden love, like the matter of the two ranks of the Ofanim and the Seraphim: noise and fire. 15

This is "shecharchores," two blacknesses: the essence of the love is not revealed but black and hidden, and furthermore it is covered with the sackcloth garment of the animal soul. Nevertheless, "Do not look upon me,"

for regarding the first blackness the answer is "the sun has gazed upon me": the root of the love is from white fire, and it was good to hide it away in the manner of black fire.

Regarding the second blackness, it is the matter of "My mother's sons were incensed against me," so that from the level of charan there be the level of rinah.) 5. This is "I am black and comely": black from the level of blackishness etc.,

and comely, for the blackness is from the level of the darkness, "He made darkness His hiding place," like the analogy of the ink upon the parchment, which blackens the parchment: the parchment, which is the level of white fire, becomes beautiful through this

(in the manner of "When is He great etc.? When He is in the city of our G-d," and in the manner explained on this in the discourse beginning "And Elokim spoke" etc., "I am Havayah, and I appeared" etc. And as explained above, through the letters the revelation of the intellect is drawn forth, by way of analogy.

It follows that this contraction is the cause of the revelation; and see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning “And Korach took.” This is how the level of white fire becomes beautiful through this, as is written elsewhere in explaining “my beautiful one” (yafasi), that she makes beautiful garments for the Holy One, blessed be He: “You have clothed Yourself with glory and majesty,”

that is, that in them and through them there be a dwelling place among the lower realms. Elsewhere a further meaning of “and comely” was explained: the level of the white fire of the Torah is the matter of “and the hair of His head like pure wool”; nevertheless it is only the level of hairs and does not compare to the essence.

But through the descent into black fire, to refine and transform the darkness of the animal soul, there will be drawn the advantage of light from the source of the whiteness. It may be said that this is what is drawn through the refinement of the second blackness, as said above regarding “He kept him as the pupil” etc.

And see what is written further on the matter of the Torah being given as black fire upon white fire in the discourse beginning “And they shall make for themselves tzitzis.” And see further on the matter of “I am black and comely” in the Midrash Rabbah, Beshalach, Parsha 23, and Vayakhel, Parsha 49.)

“As the tents of Kedar”: they are black on the outside, but inside they are “as the curtains of Shlomo.” The curtains of Shlomo are the inner curtains 16

(and this is “And He formed (vayitzer) man,” with two yuds, the level of white fire and black fire etc.; and see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning “When I break for you” etc.).

The matter of a curtain is what is written, “He stretches out the heavens like a curtain”: that is, like the curtain, of which the roof and the walls are made of one piece, as it was in the Mishkan: “the half curtain that remains shall hang over the back of the Mishkan.”

So “He stretches out the heavens”: the heavens curve round below, beneath the earth, just as above, equally, and all is one level.

So too the spheres that revolve in the heavens above are those that revolve beneath the earth. 17
This is “as the curtains of Shlomo,” the King to whom peace (shalom) belongs; for with Him, blessed be He, “darkness is as light,” and all is equal before Him, and above and below are the same before Him.

This is from the level of the light that encompasses all worlds. In the level of the light that fills all worlds, by contrast, it is according to the order of the chain of descending worlds: “I created it, I formed it” etc., the Higher and Lower Garden of Eden etc.

But in the level of the light that encompasses all worlds, “all before Him are” actually “as nothing,” and at this level He can transform even from one extreme to the other.

This is “May Havayah lift up His countenance to you”: that is, when there is the inner uplifting **18**
in the level of the light that encompasses all worlds, then it can

extend until it reaches even “to you,” even “if your dispersed be at the end of the heavens” etc.
“And give you peace”: the level of bonding, so that his soul longs to cleave to Him, blessed be
He.

This is the level of “peace in the household below,” from below upward: “To You, Havayah, I lift **19**
up my soul.” That is, through the level of Aharon, the groomsman of the Queen; “Aharon” has
the letters of nir’eh (“will be seen”),

that is, that he see it as though the Holy One dwells within his innards, so that there be the level
of noise, “and after the noise, fire” etc. The service of Aharon is “When you raise up the lamps,”
like a flame that rises of itself, from below upward. And the dwelling

and drawing down of “Holy” within his innards is through the level of Moshe, the groomsman of
the King, the level of Daas, which is “Blessed,” that the level of Havayah be drawn down to be
“King of the world” through the level of “our G-d” etc., as said above.

This is “Havayah is near to all who call upon Him etc., in truth”: two truths, from above down- **20**
ward and from below upward; that he draw down below the level of “the truth of Havayah” and
the revelation of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, into his soul, in order to raise and bind his
soul to G-d, the Life of all life, blessed be He.

(With all the above will be understood what is written, “who reigned from Hodu to Kush,” which
is like the matter of what is written, “darkness is as light”; for hodu is from the term “His glory
(hodo) covered the heavens,” “His glory is over earth and heaven,” and as is written, “Glory and
majesty are before Him.”

Hodu is also a term of acknowledgment (hoda’ah), for acknowledgment is toward the level of
the light that encompasses all worlds, which “no thought can grasp” at all, as is written else-
where on “Yehudah, you [your brothers shall acknowledge].”

“To Kush” is the level of blackness, which is the end of the chain of descending worlds: “dark-
ness shall cover the earth,” “I clothe the heavens with blackness.” See what is written on this at
the end of the discourse beginning “My dove, in the clefts of the rock,” and in Likkutei Torah
on Parshas Behaaloscha and Parshas Shoftim, that Kush is the level of the 325 judgments, from
which the chain of the external forces descends etc.

But “Your kingship is a kingship over all worlds,” and “His kingship rules over all,” and even
the external forces cannot transgress the word of Havayah; as is written on this at the end of the
discourse beginning “And all the people saw.” This is “who reigned from Hodu to Kush.”

This is “a hundred and twenty-seven provinces” [see the beginning of Chayei Sarah, 123a], which is the general drawing down from the Malchus of the Infinite. This is “from Hodu,” down to Malchus of Asiyah, which is clothed in the level of blackness; and this is “to Kush.”

But we also find that Kush is said in praise, as is said of Shaul, who is called “Kush, the son of Yemini”; and likewise “Are you not like the children of the Kushites to Me,” which Targum Yonasan renders, “Are you not considered before Me like beloved children?” So too Rashi explains in Parshas Behaaloscha regarding “the Kushite woman.” And in the Zohar, Parshas Terumah

(130a, beginning): that is, “And sometimes they call the white ‘black,’ as it is written, ‘for he had taken a Kushite woman,’ ‘Are you not like the children of the Kushites to Me’” etc.

The matter is that it was explained above regarding the Supreme Keser that it is the level of the supernal darkness of “He made darkness His hiding place,” which is above comprehension.

This is what is said in the Zohar, “And sometimes they call the white ‘black’”: because of the greatness of its light it is not grasped at all. From there is the root of the hidden love, which is the level of black fire, and this is the matter of “Are you not like the children of the Kushites to Me.” 21

For this love of black fire, which is from the level of “He made darkness His hiding place,” is like the love of a son for his father, like a son drawn from the brain of the father, who by nature does not want to be separated from His unity and oneness, blessed be He, and can give his life for the sanctification of G-d’s Name etc.

This is what is said, “like beloved children,” that is, in the manner of what is written in the Book of the Intermediates, chapter 44, in the name of the Ra’aya Mehemna: “like a son who strives for his father and mother, whom he loves more than his own body, soul and spirit” etc.

The meaning of “from Hodu to Kush” is as explained above regarding “the light, that it was good”: it is the level of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, which is hidden and clothed in the level of Keser, called “He made darkness His hiding place.” 22

In a person too, it is the divine spark clothed in the level of yechidah in the soul. On this account all the souls of Israel are called Yehudim, for through it self-nullification unto self-sacrifice is drawn forth etc.

With all this will also be understood the saying of our Sages in the first chapter of Megillah (11a): Rav and Shmuel; one said, Hodu is at the end of the world and Kush is at the end of the world,

that is, according to the first explanation, that Kush is the darkness of Asiyah, the level of blackness. And one said, Hodu and Kush

stand next to one another; just as he reigned from Hodu to Kush, so he reigned from one end of the world to the other. "Next to one another" is the matter of the supernal darkness in which the light was hidden,

that is, the level of the Supreme Keser, white within and black without. Alternatively, Hodu means "You have clothed Yourself with glory (hod) and majesty," the level of "Havayah reigns, He has clothed Himself in grandeur," as is written in the discourse beginning "My dove" on the matter of "my beautiful one"; and Kush is the level of "creates darkness," the world of the Seraphim.

This is "they sit next to one another," for Malchus of Atzilus becomes the source of Beriah etc. and is clothed in Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Beriah; and of this it is said, "I am black" etc.,

because it is clothed in the level of "and creates darkness" etc., as is written elsewhere. This is the matter of the Torah being given as black fire upon white fire.

And also the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, as said above. "And just as he reigned from 23 Hodu to Kush," for there is the ultimate of unity and self-nullification etc.,

"so he reigned" etc.; for "Your kingship is a kingship over all worlds," and "there is none else besides Him," and all is by individual providence: "a person does not knock [his finger below unless it is decreed above]" etc. And see what is written in the discourse beginning "And Mordechai went out" on

"and therefore He nullified etc. those who arouse" etc.; for in truth "I, Havayah, have not changed." From there it is understood that this level applies to the Megillah of Esther; and also the first level, regarding Hodu and Kush being next to one another,

that is, in the manner of the Torah being given as black fire upon white fire, applies to it as well; for they "accepted it anew in the days of Achashverosh," as is written, "And the Jews accepted" etc.

שחורה אני ונאווה בנות ירושלים כאהלי קדר כיריעות שלמה

“I Am Black, yet Comely, O Daughters of Jerusalem”



“I am black, yet comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Shlomo.” Now, “the daughters of Jerusalem” is the name given to the souls that have not yet descended into this world to be enclothed in a body ¹

and an animal soul, and are still included in their Emanator, blessed be He, at the level of utter nothingness (ayin). And [the soul] is called “pure is she,” for “pure” means that it is still at the level of ayin; and afterwards, “You created it,” something from nothing, etc.

For all souls, before their descent into this world, stand there in self-nullification (bittul) and in actual inclusion within the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He.

As it is written of Eliyahu, “As G-d lives, before whom I have stood.” And not Eliyahu alone, but all souls, before their descent and their enclothing in a body and an animal soul;

and then they are called “the daughters of Jerusalem.” (In the Pardes, in the Erchei HaKinuyim, under the entry “the daughters of Jerusalem,” he cites two interpretations of this in the name of the Zohar, Parshas Vayechi, and the first interpretation is as it has been explained here; see there, and in Parshas Vayechi, page 242a.)

For they take upon themselves the level of a complete awe (yirah shalem), that is, the completeness of awe. For awe stems from the level of His sovereignty, may He be blessed, “a kingship over all worlds,” upward without end and downward without limit,

which is the level of the Infinite. And in the chain of descending levels (hishtalshelus) among created beings, they have no power to receive this awe in its completeness. As it is written, “To make known to the sons of man His mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of His kingdom”: the glorious splendor of

His kingdom is that the angels take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, the camp of Michael with love and the camp of Gavriel, etc., “a thousand thousands and ten thousand myriads,” etc., and “His troops are beyond number.”

For all this is the glory and splendor of the greatness of His kingship, may He be blessed; and “to make known to the sons of man” is only through the level of “His mighty deeds,” which are the many and varied contractions (tzimtzumim) in the chain of descending levels. But the soul, before it comes

into this world to be enclothed in a body, [the souls] being at the level of utter nothingness, take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven in completeness, as it is at the level of the Infinite itself. And they are called “the daughters of Jerusalem,” at the level of “virgins, her companions following her, are brought to you.”

(See Zohar II, 197b, page 235a and 238a, and the Mikdash Melech there. And it must be said that this follows the second interpretation in the Pardes; and consequently it is understood that according to the first interpretation this too can be explained as written here. See further in Parshas Mishpatim, page 105, end of side b, and in Parshas Acharei, page 67b.)

They are also called alamos (maidens), as it is written, “therefore the maidens love You.” And the souls that have descended and been enclothed in a body and an animal soul in this world, [collectively] called Knesses Yisrael, which is the source of the souls of Israel, are called by the name “bride” (kallah),

because the Holy One, blessed be He, is called, in relation to them, by the name “groom” (chasan), from the expression chaus darga (descending a level), which is the drawing down of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, into the souls.

And this is [what took place] at the Giving of the Torah, of which it is written, “on the day of his wedding,” for that is the time of the marriage. For just as in marriage, by way of analogy, the union and joining is the drawing down of the drop that is drawn from the brain of the giver into the recipient, etc.,

so the Torah is His wisdom and will, may He be blessed, at the level of the Infinite One (Ein Sof) itself, blessed be He: “He is wise, but not with a knowable wisdom,” etc.

And this drawing down, at the level of the Infinite itself, is grasped and absorbed in the souls of Israel: the six hundred thousand letters of the Torah are six hundred thousand channels of flow to the six hundred thousand souls of Israel.

Therefore our Sages, of blessed memory, said that the infant in its mother’s womb is taught the entire Torah, etc., so that light and life-force (chayus) from the letters of the Torah be grasped and absorbed in its soul; for they are a radiance of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, “wise, but not with a knowable wisdom,” etc.

And then the souls of Israel are called by the name “bride,” for she receives the drop, etc. See the Idra Zuta (page 290b).

2. Now, this level of “bride,” which is the source of the souls that have descended and been en- 3
clothed in a body, says to the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, the souls that have not descended and are still at the level of “pure is she,” being included in their Emanator at the level of utter nothingness:

Though “I am black” because of my descent into this world and my enclothing in the physical body, I am nevertheless more comely than the daughters of Jerusalem. For

the meaning of “I am black” at the level of the bride is as it is written, “His locks are curled (tal-
talim), black as a raven”: taltalim [means] tilei tilim (heaps upon heaps) of halachos, which are
“his locks,” the level of

hairs and strands drawn from the brain in great subdivision. And so too, the heaps upon heaps of halachos are channels drawn from the Supernal Wisdom (Chochmah Ila’ah), “wise, but not with a knowable wisdom,” etc. They are at the level of “black.”

The matter will be understood by first explaining that it is written, “And the hair of His head was 4
like pure wool,” [meaning] that the hairs are in a state of whiteness; and it is written, “His locks are curled, black,” etc.

But the explanation is that the level of the hairs is channels of flow that stem from the level of Chesed and “abundant in kindness,” which is drawn and spreads down below, like the analogy of the hairs that extend to a great

length. And they are the heaps upon heaps of halachos and the fine points of the Scribes that are in every mitzvah, as it is written (Proverbs 4), “Extol her (salseleha), and she will exalt you.” The meaning of salseleha is as our Sages, of blessed memory, said (Rosh HaShanah 26b), “she was turning over her hair,” etc.

But there are hairs that are drawn down and enclothed in the level of whiteness, which is the level of Chesed: these are the many halachos in the positive commandments, concerning sacrifices, terumos, tithes, tzitzis, tefillin, Shabbos, etc.: how the mitzvah is to be done with a sacrifice so that it ascend favorably before G-d and as a pleasing fragrance, etc.

And so too with all the other mitzvos, which are channels of the Supernal Wisdom through the 5
level of Chesed, to elevate physical things through their being performed according to their commandment, and to bind them to the light of G-d and His holiness. These are the hairs drawn from the level of “the hair of His head was like pure wool,” which is the supernal whiteness and the supernal Chesed that is called “abundant in kindness,” etc.

But the black hairs are the halachos that were drawn and spread into the prohibitive commandments, to separate the evil from the good and to push it away from holiness, since it does not ascend and become included in the light of G-d and His holiness.

And of this it is said, “black as a raven.” The meaning of “as a raven” is: just as the raven is cruel, so in the level of these hairs there is an element of cruelty. For even in a thing that is forbidden or unfit, etc., 6

there is drawn a divine spark and life-force that gives it life and brings it into being, for without the divine spark and life-force it would not exist at all; and nevertheless the divine spark within it does not ascend favorably before G-d, to be included in His light and holiness, may He be blessed, but is simply pushed outside.

And this is like cruelty toward the divine spark within it. A person, too, must conduct himself toward his own soul with the attribute of cruelty, turning away from evil in the manner of iskafya (subjugation), etc., through many fences and safeguards, the fine points of the Scribes: “Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you,” etc.

Therefore it is at the level of “black as a raven.” (See Zohar III, 132a, 140a, 79b, 127b; Zohar II, 116a.)

And of this it is said, “I am black”: for she receives the drop, which is the Supernal Wisdom (Chochmah Ila’ah), in the manner of “black,” that is, in the form of the halachos and the fine points of the Scribes, which are “his locks are curled, black as a raven,” as explained above.

And also, “I am black” in the fulfillment of the practical mitzvos, which are done with things enclothed in actual physicality; and the sum of them all is tzedakah (charity),

which is in actual physicality, and whose obligation comes through a person’s involvement in this world: he engages in business and profits from it, and through this becomes obligated in tzedakah. And while he is engaged in business, he is thus enclothed in the matters of this world itself.

Even so, “yet comely”: for of tzedakah it is written, “Tzedakah exalts a nation”; for by giving tzedakah to a poor person from his toil and labor, the very life of his soul, he elevates and exalts his entire animal soul and its life-force.

And this is [the meaning of] “you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh (Paroh)”: through the tzedakah, in which he gives a fifth of his labor, there comes about the level of paroh, which is the level of revelation, from the expression “for Aharon had exposed them (pera’o)”: a revelation of the Infinite Light itself, blessed be He, is drawn down upon his soul. 7

Therefore, before every mitzvah we say, “Blessed are You, Havayah, our G-d”: that the Infinite Light, blessed be He, be “blessed,” [that is,] drawn down, “from world to world,” at the level of “You,”

that is, at the level of revelation, as if He were face to face, so that Havayah be truly “our G-d”: that His G-dliness, may He be blessed, be grasped and absorbed in the soul itself.

And of this our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “Fortunate is he who comes here with his learning in his hand”; that is, that his learning, which is the Supernal Wisdom, be grasped and absorbed in him,

like a woman who absorbs the drop, by way of analogy. For if the light of the Torah is not grasped and absorbed in his soul, this is

like a woman who discharges [it], etc. (See what is written on the subject of absorption regarding Shemini Atzeres, in the discourse beginning “G-d is for me among my helpers” and in the discourse beginning “It is better to take refuge,” and also in the other discourses there.)

And this is “you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh”: that the level of paroh, revelation, comes about in his soul itself. (See what is written on this verse in Etz Chaim) (Sha’ar 31, chapter 7), and in Likkutei Torah [of the Arizal], Parshas Vayigash. And from this there follows “and the four hands (yados) shall be yours,” for

the four hands are the great hand, the strong hand, the high hand and the outstretched arm. The great hand is as it is written, “And Israel saw the great hand that G-d had wrought in Egypt.”

Meaning: even in the level of Egypt there is a drawing down and spreading of the level of the great hand, which was drawn and spread very far down, even into the level of Egypt;

that is, the supernal Chesed is drawn down so greatly that thoughts of teshuvah fall even into a lowly soul, from the lowest levels of Asiyah and en clothed in actual physicality.

And this is the matter of the great hand. But it is known that “one nation shall be stronger than 8 the other nation,” and “G-d has made one opposite the other,” and “were it not that the Holy One, blessed be He, helps him,” etc.

And this help and this assistance is called the strong hand, to prevail and to conquer, etc. And the high hand is to exalt and bind his soul in the fulfillment of “And you shall love... with all your heart,” etc.

And the outstretched arm is also the level of a hand, for the hand has three sections, and the uppermost is called the arm. It is “outstretched,” extended far, far downward, in the manner of “and His right hand embraces me,” like a person who embraces, etc., so that there not be a state of separation, G-d forbid, etc.

And all this is drawn down through tzedakah, for through it “the four hands shall be yours, as seed for the field”; for in the time of exile everything is only in the manner of sowing, “Light is sown for the righteous,” etc., as stated in the Midrash.

3. And as for the aspect of the Torah that is at the level of “black,” [namely] the halachos and the 9 fine points of the Scribes in the prohibitive commandments, which are at the level of “black as a raven” mentioned above:

Our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “The words of the Scribes are dearer to Me than the wine of the Torah.” The explanation is that the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world with three things: sefer, sofer and sippur (book, scribe and telling).

Sefer (book) is the Written Torah; and sofer (scribe), which is above the level of sefer, is the level of the Oral Torah. For this is why the words of the Sages are called “the words of the Scribes (soferim)”: they are above the level of sefer.

(See what is written on this in the discourse beginning “This is My Name,” and in the discourse beginning “Your heart will meditate in awe: Where is the scribe?”, and elsewhere on the verse “And you shall draw water with joy.”) [Sefer] is the level of the Written Torah, which is from the Supernal Wisdom (Chochmah Ila’ah), the level of “a mitzvah is a lamp, and the Torah is light.”

Now, the illuminating light of the lamp comes from the hue that is close to the wick; but the white hue that surrounds it does not itself illuminate;

rather, it is the source of the light, from which the illuminating light is drawn and spreads. And so it is with the words of the Sages, called “the words of the Scribes,”

from which the level of the sefer, the level of “the Torah is light,” comes to be drawn; and they themselves are the level of the source of the light, the level of the makif (the surrounding), which is the level of “He made darkness His hiding place.”

Therefore most of the fine points of the Scribes are in the prohibitive commandments, where there are many more fences and safeguards for the Torah than in the positive commandments; for the prohibitive commandments have an advantage and a superiority over the positive commandments.

As our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “‘My remembrance’ with Vav-Hei [equals] 248; ‘My Name’ with Yud-Hei [equals] 365.” The prohibitions are at the level of Yud-Hei, which is higher than Vav-Hei; for the positive commandments are at the level of the Name Vav-Hei, the revealed world (alma de’isgalya).

For “the 248 commandments are the 248 limbs of the King”: they are vessels and a dwelling for the life-force that is drawn and spreads into them from the essence of the soul, the life-force being truly enclothed in them, so that the limbs obey its will, etc.

But the prohibitions are at the level of Yud-Hei, the level of the hidden world (alma de’iskasya), for the life-force and the Infinite Light from this level are not enclothed in the soul in a revealed way,

but in concealment, in the manner of “and You guard it within me”; because the soul has no vessel or dwelling for the Infinite Light, blessed be He, to rest [in it] at this level so as to be revealed in actual enclothing,

but only in the manner of negation, the level of “not,” as it is written, “in a land not sown”: it is “sown” in the manner of “not,” etc. And as explained elsewhere, this is the soul’s cleaving to G-dliness above, in its root, at the level of sovev, “He made darkness His hiding place,” etc.,

the level of darkness and not of revealed light, etc.; for it is impossible to reach this level through the deed of the mitzvos that a person performs, but only through the prohibitions, which are the level of negation and “not,” etc.

And through this “a spirit from on high will be poured upon him”: the indwelling in his soul of 10 the Infinite Light, blessed be He, that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin). And through this his animal soul, too, will be elevated. For

the animal soul has its root in the level of “the face of a lion” and “the face of an ox” in the Chariot, etc., from the guardians of the ofanim, which are below the seraphim, etc.

But it is written, “and the ofanim rise up opposite them,” and “the ofanim, with a great noise,” etc. For the seraphim say, “Holy,” [meaning] separate, etc.,

“Havayah Tzevakos”: “He is a sign (os) among His host.” “A thousand thousands and ten thousand myriads” is the number of a single troop, and “His troops are beyond number”; all of them receive life-force only from the level of a single letter (os). “The whole earth is full of His glory”:

“His glory” is the thirty-two paths of Chochmah, for “there is no glory but Torah”; and it is [the Torah] that is enclothed so that “the whole earth,” this lowest [earth], is “full” of it at the level of “His glory,”

that is, at the level of a mere ray and radiance. And the ofanim, which receive from them, “rise up opposite them” and quake “with a great noise,” because of the immense holiness of the Infinite Light, which, like its Name, has no end, etc.

Now, “G-d is not in the noise,” and “after the noise, fire”: in the manner of thirst and longing, 11 an actual expiring of the soul, in a state of self-nullification and inclusion in the Infinite Light, blessed be He, beyond what their soul can bear. And this thirst and longing is not for the level of “His glory,” which is only a ray and radiance,

but for the level of “the heavens and the earth I fill,” the level of “I” itself, that is, the indwelling of the Infinite One, blessed be He, that encompasses all worlds, itself.

And this is “the ofanim rise up”: they are lifted up opposite the seraphim, above them. And 12 from this thirst and this longing comes what is written, “My soul thirsts for You,” etc., “so in holiness I have beheld You”: “holiness” is a word in its own right, the level of holy and separate, [and] “I have beheld You,” so that there be a revelation of G-dliness,

and as it will be in the future, “and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll,” and it is written, “the new heavens and the new earth”: there will not be physical heavens and earth that obscure and conceal the glory of G-d, so as to be a thing and an entity in its own right.

For in every thing the Infinite Light, blessed be He, is drawn, as it is written, “And Mount Sinai was all in smoke (ashan)”: olam, shanah, nefesh (world, year, soul). Olam is the dimension of space, into which the level of the Infinite is drawn, as it is written, “Behold, there is a place with Me.”

And so too in the dimension of shanah (year), the dimension of time: “He is King, He was King **13** and He will be King,” past, future and present; all is at the level of the Infinite, etc.

And so too in nefesh (the soul) there is a radiance of the Infinite Light: “and all the living shall thank You, Selah,” and the higher and the lower Gan Eden; and there is a Gan Eden above Gan Eden, without end or limit, in ascent after ascent, etc.

And in the future, when the world, and its materiality and coarseness, will be refined, then “eye **14** to eye they shall see,” etc. And this is “I am black, yet comely”: for through

the level of “black,” which is the soul’s cleaving [to G-d] through fulfilling and observing the prohibitive commandments, which are at the level of “black as a raven,” through this there will be, in the future, a revelation of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin),

which is above the bounds of the worlds, beyond what the soul can bear, except in the manner of negation, “a land not sown.” And at this level she is more comely than the daughters of Jerusalem, etc.

(See what is written on the subject of “I am black, yet comely” in the discourse beginning “The voice of my beloved,” that it refers to the Oral Torah, etc.; and this is along the lines of what was explained above on the words of the Scribes, etc. And see [the Zohar,] Parshas Bereishis, page 49, end of side a; and the S.H.M., section 137, and the end of Part I, section 5; and Parshas Shemos, 14a; and Parshas Acharei, page 59b; [and Parshas] Balak, 191a.)

ביאור ענין שחורה אני ונאווה

An Explanation of “I Am Black, yet Comely”



An explanation of the matter of “I am black, yet comely.” This is the statement of the **1** Community of Israel (Knesses Yisrael) to “the daughters of Jerusalem,” who are the souls divested of the body.

The matter is this: the Shechinah is Malchus of Atzilus, which enclothes itself in [the worlds of] Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, [as it is written,] “that I may dwell in their midst,” [and] “Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity.” She is the one who says, “I am black, and nevertheless comely.”

And the explanation of “the daughters of Jerusalem” is this: at first the souls were included [in their source] in the state of gestation (ibbur) in Atzilus, and afterwards they are drawn down in the state of birth (leidah) into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah (and see what is written on this in the discourse beginning “The sea saw and fled”).

And then they became limited beings, for the level of the Infinite (Ein Sof) exists only in Atzilus, where the illumination of the kav and the thread of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) comes to an end, etc. (and see what is written on this in the explanation of the verse “Who has counted the dust of Yaakov”).

This is not so in Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. Needless to say the angels—Michael with love and Gavriel with awe and fear, and likewise [those who say] “Holy” in the twelve hours, etc.—all of them are in a state of limitation, etc.; and the angels who accused and said, “What is man?”—He stretched out His finger, etc.,

for they cannot receive more than the level of limit and measure that is in them. And this is what is written, “to make known to the sons of man His mighty deeds, and the glory of the splendor of His kingship”: that not the whole measure of His kingship, blessed be He, is enclothed in them,

but only glory and radiance; and even so, this radiance, a tiny fraction of [His] splendor, is theirs, etc. And not only [angels], but even souls,

such as the souls of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov: there is a level of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov in Atzilus, where “He and His life-forces are one”; but the Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov that are in Beriah are in the state of limited beings, etc.

And this state of limitation comes with the birth of the souls into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. 2
Not so in the state of gestation in Atzilus: there “He and His life-forces and His vessels are one.”

For there the Infinite Light shines. And these souls that are in the state of gestation are called “the daughters of Jerusalem”: because they are in the state of gestation within Malchus they are called “daughters,” and they are called by the name of Jerusalem (Yerushalayim) because they receive complete awe (yirah shalem), the perfection of awe, in a state of true self-nullification (bittul), [that of] “He and His life-forces are one,” which is at the level of Atzilus.

Now the Shechinah’s saying to them, “I am black, and nevertheless comely”: “I am black” in 3
[her] descent among limited beings, for blackness came about through bitterness over how very far she is from the higher unity (yichuda ila’ah).

And over this great compassion is aroused, as in the saying, “G-d of the world, in Your abundant mercy,” etc. And then Malchus is called “swarthy” (shecharchores): two aspects of blackness.

The first is from the bitterness mentioned above. And “from my flesh I behold” the bitterness a person [feels] in his soul, so as to arouse great compassion upon his soul, the seat of this bitterness being in the heart, in the left chamber, which is full of blood, etc.

And of this level of bitterness in Malchus it is written, “for the sun has gazed upon me.” That is: the higher unity, which is called “a sun and a shield”—“has gazed upon me”: when I remember the level of the higher unity, a state of blackness and bitterness comes about, as mentioned above. And as he explains in Parshas Tazria (page 45b): “for the sun has gazed upon me”—that the sun has withdrawn from me, from shining for me, etc.

See there. (And this is the meaning of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, that the mitzvah of the Chanukah lamp is “from when the sun sets.” That is: the main descent of Malchus into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah is at the time when the Holy Temple is not standing, and then it is the state of “the sun has withdrawn from me,” etc.; and this is the meaning of “from when the sun sets.”

And to give her light is through the Chanukah lamp, as is written on this in the explanation of the verse “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion,” etc.: light, oil and wick, etc., are all drawn down below as well, etc.; see there.

Now the mitzvah of the Chanukah lamp is of the words of the Scribes (divrei soferim), which is the level of the source of the light, etc., and through it the level of “and comely” is drawn into the level of “I am black,” as mentioned above.) And the second blackness is the descent itself, to be en clothed in the practical mitzvos; and [this is] not only because “the sun has gazed upon me,”

but because of the physicality of the descent itself, being enclothed in physical things, with which the mitzvos are performed: offerings from animals, tzitzis from wool, tefillin from parchment, etc.

(And see what is written in Parshas Bamidbar, at the end of the discourse beginning “And [G-d] spoke, etc., in the wilderness of Sinai,” on the level and degree of the compassion of the twelve tribes, to arouse compassion upon the spark of G-dliness that descended from its place of glory, etc.,

and the compassion of the level of the seventy souls who came forth from Yaakov’s loins, to arouse exceedingly great compassion upon one’s soul: not only on account of the descent, that it descended from its place of glory, but also that it became enclothed in the material body; see there.

And this is the matter of the two aspects of blackness mentioned above: the first, that she descended from her place of glory; the second, that she also became enclothed in the material body, etc.)

Now this is her consolation: although “I am black,” nevertheless “and comely,” for from this very blackness the level of “and comely” comes about. For

through the blackness that lies in the bitterness of distance—of this it is said, “and much produce comes through the strength of the ox,” for “when the sitra achra is subdued, [the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He,] rises,” etc.

And through the blackness of being enclothed in the practical mitzvos: the mitzvos are the 613 paths, and together with the seven rabbinic [mitzvos, they are] 620, the level of Keser,

that is, the supernal will. For there is a lower will, which extends from Chochmah and Binah to the emotive attributes (middos); but the supernal will is the intermediary between the Emanator and the emanated, as is known.

And this is “and comely”—more than “the daughters of Jerusalem,” who are the souls in Atzilus. 4 For although their abode and dwelling is in Atzilus itself and they have no descent into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah,

their life-force (chayus) and existence are from the level of letters, for the 600,000 souls are the 600,000 letters of the Torah, and the letters are the level of vessels; only the souls are from the inner dimension of the vessels, but vessels they are nonetheless. Not so through the descent of Malchus:

she rises to the level of the lights (and see what is written on this on the verse “And I will make [your windows] of kadkod”), and not only that, but she rises ever higher, to the loftiest heights, to the very essence of the simple Infinite One (Ein Sof), etc.

“As the tents of Kedar.” Avraham, from whom there came forth, etc.: the level of Kedar, dross 5 and refuse. Yet nevertheless there is in it some small life-force of holiness, for otherwise it would cease to be and perish;

only that life-force is in the manner of an encompassing [light] (makif). And this is the matter of the frankincense among the eleven spices of the incense: for ten spices are encloded in the kelipos, and the eleventh is in the manner of an encompassing [light], for it is white in its essence, etc.

And this is “as the tents of Kedar”: they have a tent and an encompassing [light]. So too I have a level of a tent and an encompassing [light], from the level of the higher unity (yichuda ila’ah) —“for the sun has gazed upon me,” etc., “a sun and a shield,” etc.

(That is to say: if there is a level of encompassing [light] that gives life to them, who derive from the shattering of the vessels, etc., how much more so, many times over, are higher encompassing [lights] drawn down through fulfilling the practical mitzvos, which are the rectification and refinement of kelipas nogah, so as to bring about “and you shall eradicate the evil,” etc.

And see what is written below, at the end of the discourse beginning “To a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots I have likened you,” and see the discourse beginning “And it came to pass when Pharaoh sent,” on the matter of “for those who do His will, how much more so.”)

“As the curtains of Shlomo”: more exalted encompassing [lights]. For there are [two] levels in 6 the encompassing [lights]: the first, those that are revealed now; and the second, those that come to revelation only in the days of Mashiach (and see what is written on this in Parshas Shemos, in the explanation of the verse “[In days] to come Yaakov will take root,” etc.).

And these are called “the curtains of Shlomo” after the verse, “Or let him take hold of My strength, let him make peace (shalom) with Me.” Explanation: the matter of peace is the joining of two opposites,

that is, that supernal lights, whose nature is to rise and withdraw upward, should shine below. And “peace” twice: [peace] in the household above and [in the household] below. The household below: the joining of

Malchus of Atzilus, to become Atik to Beriah; and the household above: that there be a drawing down and joining from the level of the Infinite (Ein Sof), [as it is written,] “You made them all with wisdom,” for Chochmah is called action, physicality, before Him, blessed be He, [so as] to become Atik to Atzilus

(and see what is written on this in the discourse beginning “Go forth and behold... King Shlomo”). And whoever engages in Torah for its own sake, by reading the letters of the Torah, draws this down.

And this is “[all] who call upon Him in truth.” “In truth”—this is the Torah, for Chochmah is called truth, [and] “the Torah comes forth from Chochmah,” etc.

“And they call upon Him in truth” means: within truth they call Him and draw Him down, etc. And it is called “the curtains of Shlomo” with a hei: the higher hei and the lower hei.

Now the matter of shalom and Shlomo themselves is at the level of His enclothing in the worlds, 7 making peace between them. But “as the curtains of Shlomo” refers to higher encompassing [lights], and there is nothing corresponding to them in the kelipos at all.

For “the tents of Kedar,” the level of frankincense, stand opposite the level of the encompassing [light] of holiness; but opposite “the curtains of Shlomo” there is no counterpart at all, and this will be revealed specifically in the time to come, etc.

And this is “I am black” with the two kinds of blackness mentioned above, and nevertheless 8 “and comely,” as mentioned above. Now all this is also alluded to in the verse, “Before the hoary head (seivah) you shall rise,” etc.

Explanation: “seivah” is what is written, “and the hair of His head like clean wool,” for the hairs are at the level of whiteness, and they are the many laws in the positive commandments. And “honor the face of the elder (zaken)” is what is written, “His locks are wavy, black as a raven,” as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, that “zaken” means one who has acquired wisdom.

And they are the laws that were drawn down and extended into the prohibitive commandments, etc. And “you shall fear your G-d”: this is the words of the Scribes and the seven rabbinic mitzvos, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “The words of the Scribes are more stringent than the words of Torah”; “I am Havayah,” for all is one.

ביאור הדברים ע"פ שחורה אני ונאווה

An Explanation of the Matters on "I Am Black, Yet Comely"



An explanation of the matters [set out] on the verse "I am black, yet comely."

1

Now, between the Emanator and the emanated [levels] there must be an intermediary level, as is written in Etz Chaim, Sha'ar 41, chapter 3. This is because "none of these attributes is in Him at all."

2

Even in the Ten Sefiros, what is called the Sefirah of Chochmah (wisdom) means the vessel that limits the light of the Ten Sefiros: [that vessel] is what is called by the name Chochmah,

and so too with Binah (understanding) and Chesed (kindness), etc. But the light itself cannot properly be called by the name Chochmah; [it is] only "the light that brings the Sefirah of Chochmah into being."

And the light is only a radiance and illumination from the essence of the Emanator, and it effects no change whatsoever in His being and essence. This is [the meaning of] "I, G-d, have not changed": [He is] just as [He was] before all the worlds were created.

3

This resolves the question of the philosophers: how is it that none of the descriptions [ascribed to G-d] effects any change in [His] essence? [The answer is] that they do not pertain to the essence at all.

(That is, what is written in the Torah, "and under His feet, etc.," "written with the finger of G-d, etc.," "the eyes of G-d," "the ears of G-d," and the like. The Pardes has already discussed this at length in Sha'ar 22, chapter 1, and so has the Shelah in [his] introduction)

(pages 11, 13, 14). See there, for they explained the matter correctly. Nevertheless, [all] this pertains only to the Ten Sefiros.

So too the attributes (middos), such as "compassionate" or "avenging," etc.: although in truth the supernal attributes are not at all of the same kind and category as the attributes in created beings, as explained in Iggeres HaKodesh, in the epistle beginning "To understand a parable and a figure,"

nevertheless they pertain only to the level of the vessels of the Ten Sefiros alone, as in the saying of the Tikkunei Zohar, "All [this is] to show how the world is conducted, but not, etc., any of these attributes at all." See Sefer Shel Beinonim (Part I, chapter 2, in the gloss, and Part II, chapter 9, in the gloss).

And even so, all this is truly ascribed to Him, blessed be He: that He Himself, blessed be He, is truly the Merciful One and the Kind One, or the Avenger, etc.,

through the enclothing of the light that He, blessed be He, shines forth from Himself into the vessels to give them life; and the light unites with them, for “He and His causations are one” in the fullest sense. Even so, this effects no change whatsoever in His essence, blessed be He, nor is He affected [by it],

for the light that is enclothed in the Ten Sefiros, too, is only like a radiance and illumination, while His essence, blessed be He, is holy and separate, etc. It is not like the soul, which is itself enclothed in the body, etc.

Even more than this is written in the Pardes, Sha’ar Atzmus VeKeilim (the Gate of Essence and Vessels), chapter 4: that even in the light and radiance enclothed in the vessels of the Ten Sefiros, there is in that essence no change or hue at all, neither judgment

nor mercy, neither right nor left, etc., even though all these actions that come from mercy and judgment flow and are drawn specifically from the light, by means of the vessels.

Now, the vessels of Atzilus are also truly G-dliness, and “He and His causations are one” (see on this Iggeres HaKodesh, in the epistle beginning “He and His life-forces, etc.”; and see what is written on the verse “I will go down now and see, etc.”).

And even the light that brings all the Sefiros into being is only like the radiance of the sun, which effects no change in the luminary itself. Therefore it is called by the name “the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof),” “light” being a term for a mere radiance and illumination.

Yet even so, for the Infinite Light to be able to come into revelation, so that all the Sefiros come into being from it, there must first be an intermediary level between the Emanator and the emanated; then the Infinite Light can bring the Sefiros into being and give them life. The intermediary is Keser (the Crown),

for it contains [something] of the last level of the Emanator, and it contains a level called “the root of the emanated.” Therefore Keser is sometimes called the Infinite Light

(that is, from the side of the last level of the Emanator that is in it, for this level is not counted among the Ten Sefiros at all; while from the side of the level of the root of the emanated, it is counted among the Ten Sefiros. Therefore it is an intermediary level).

For the essence and being of the Emanator, the very essence of the Infinite One (Ein Sof), is not within the bounds of “all worlds,” such that the light and influence from Him could come into revelation even in the World of Atzilus, except through the intermediary level mentioned above.

(As for what needs to be understood, how one can speak of a “last level” in the Infinite One: for “last” or “first” applies only where one can speak of beginning and end, that is, in the Ten Sefiros, where Chochmah is called the beginning of the chain of descending worlds (hishtalshelus), etc., and Malchus is called “the end of all levels.”

This is not so with the Infinite One, blessed be He, Who has no end and no beginning and is simple in the utmost simplicity: what does “last level” mean [there]?

It would seem [possible] to say [this] according to what has been explained in several places on the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, “Before the world was created, there were He and His Name alone.” For the question is well known: how, before the creation of the worlds, could there be a name for the Holy One, blessed be He? Who called Him by His name?

But the matter is this: the spreading forth of the life-force drawn from Him, blessed be He, to give life to all the worlds and the Ten Sefiros—this spreading forth and drawing down is only the level of a name, which is only a mere radiance and illumination and is called the Infinite Light. But His being and essence, blessed be He, is high and exalted,

for it is written, “I, G-d, have not changed,” etc. Now, even before the world was created, the fact that He can be revealed, and that illumination and radiance be drawn from Him by His simple will—this is what is called the level of His Name, which existed before the world was created.

For this power and capability is called the level of His Name, included in His essence. This is the meaning of “the last level of the Emanator”: like a person’s name, by way of analogy, which is truly naught and nothing compared to his essence, etc.

It is from this level alone that [light] is drawn to become Atik and the Keser of Atzilus, etc. It is very fitting to call this “the last level,” according to the wording explained elsewhere: for the core of G-dliness is not that the worlds come into being from Him and receive their life-force and existence from His G-dliness, blessed be He,

for “You are He before the world was created, and after it was created,” exactly alike. And even had He not created the worlds, all would be equal before Him, blessed be He, just as now that He has created [them], etc.

Rather, His giving life to the worlds and bringing them into being is only through a mere illumination from Him, blessed be He; it is the Life of all life of the entire chain of descending worlds. But His being and essence, blessed be He, is infinitely above this illumination, which is the Life of all life of all the worlds,

and they are considered as truly nothing before Him, blessed be He. Therefore this illumination is called “the very last level possible” in the Infinite One, the Emanator, blessed be He. For even with the radiance and light that spreads forth from the sun,

it is obvious that this light and radiance exists also in the body of the sun's orb itself, etc., and this radiance is considered truly naught and nothing compared to the body of the sun's orb, which is the source of this light and radiance, etc., as is written at length in Sefer Shel Beinonim)

(Sha'ar HaYichud VehaEmunah, chapter 3): that while it is included in the sun, the name "existence" does not apply to it at all, only the name "naught and nothing,"

for in truth, there it is as utter naught and nothing, etc. See there. Now, the sun's radiance shines from the sun without will or choice on the sun's part.

How much more so, by an a fortiori argument with thousands upon thousands of distinctions without end, [is this so] Above, where the light comes to be revealed when it arose in His will and desire.

If so, this power included in His essence is truly naught and nothing compared to His being and essence, exactly like a person's name compared to his essence.

This is the meaning of "Before the world was created, there were He and His Name alone," and this is what the Arizal said: "the very last level possible, etc."

Now, these words of the Arizal are a compelling proof and conclusive evidence for what is written in several places: that "the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof)" means the light and the revelation, whereas His being and essence is, by way of analogy, the level of the luminary, which is the source of the light, etc. 4

For otherwise, what is the meaning of "the lowest and humblest of all the levels of the Infinite One," which the Arizal says? Rather, he certainly means, by way of analogy, the light and the radiance, etc.

The Ramaz, too, wrote thus in a gloss at the beginning of Otzros Chaim; these are his words: "Specifically an illumination from the Infinite One, but not from His essence, blessed be He. And this is [the meaning of] 'He drew forth': that is, from His light alone He shone below." End of quote. 5

Rabbi Menachem Azariah [of Fano], too, in the introduction to his book Yonas Elem, wrote that "Infinite" can be said of His Name, blessed be He, but not of His being and essence, etc.

However, although it is true and correct that only of the light can one say what is written in Etz Chaim, "the very last level, etc.,"

nevertheless, in truth, the meaning of "the very last level in the Infinite One" of which Etz Chaim speaks does not refer to the light and radiance as a whole.

Rather, it means something further: that from the very last level within the light and radiance, [light] is drawn to become Atik of Atzilus. As is known, at first there was a tzimtzum (contraction) in the light, and afterwards only a kav (line) and thread alone was drawn from the Infinite Light, etc.

And the kav is called “the last level” relative to the light, etc. See what is written on this subject 6 in the explanation on “I have seen, and behold, a menorah of gold,”

and in the explanation on “Let them bring royal apparel, etc.” It is from the kav that [light] is drawn to become the level of Atik of Atzilus; and the level of Atik is drawn into and enclothed in Arich Anpin, which is the root and source of the emanated.

This is the meaning of Keser being called the intermediary between the Emanator and the emanated, etc. That is, for the illumination of the Infinite Light to be drawn into and enclothed in the vessels of the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus, this comes about by the lowest level of the light and radiance first being drawn into and enclothed in the root of the Ten Sefiros, 7

that is, in the level within Keser that is called “the root of the emanated,” whose stature is infinitely higher than the level of the individual Ten Sefiros, and which also includes them all together.

Through this, afterwards, illumination is drawn from this level to be enclothed in all the individual vessels of the Ten Sefiros, in each vessel according to its measure, etc. See Sefer Shel Beinonim, chapter 51.

The analogy and its application mentioned there will be understood here in an infinitely more wondrous way. (See Etz Chaim, Sha’ar 8, chapter 5, [on] “and above his skull, etc.,” [concerning] Atik of Atzilus, and what is written on this in the explanation on “their goings forth according to their journeys.”)

2. Now, it is written, “Yours, G-d, are the greatness and the might”: that is, the attributes (mid-dos) of Atzilus are nullified in the essence of the Infinite Light, for “none of these attributes is in Him at all.” Likewise, the level of Malchus of Atzilus is nullified and united with the Infinite One, blessed be He, as it is written, “Yours, G-d, is the kingdom.” 8

As is known, in Atzilus “He and His causations are one,” even at the level of the vessels. This is 9 not so with the World of Beriah, which is at the level of something from nothing: the created being is a “something” and a separate entity, and even the vessels of the Ten Sefiros of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah are created beings, and “He and His causations are one” does not apply to them.

Therefore, for there to be a drawing down from the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus into the Ten Sefiros of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, this too is through an intermediary level: the level of Malchus of Atzilus becomes Atik for Beriah. Etz Chaim, Sha'ar 41, chapter 4, explains that it is en clothed in the Keser of Beriah, that is, in Arich Anpin of Beriah. 10

Therefore this is the intermediary level between Atzilus and Beriah, as [explained] above regarding the Keser of Atzilus, etc. It follows that in the level of Malchus of Atzilus there are two levels.

The first is while it is in Atzilus, before it descends to become Atik for Beriah; in Atzilus it is the level of union with the Infinite Light: "Yours, G-d, is the kingdom."

The second is when it is drawn from Atzilus and en clothed in Beriah, to become Atik for Beriah. This is the level of "[He] is King, [He] was King, and [He] will reign," for then it becomes the source for the coming into being of time—past, present and future. This is not so in Atzilus, where this level does not apply, for [there] "He was, is and will be" in a single moment.

Now, when Malchus descends into Beriah, it is called, in the language of the Gemara and of Targum Onkelos, by the name Shechinah, [meaning] that which dwells in the chamber of the Holy of Holies, where the level of G-dliness used to rest, as explained in Sefer Shel Beinonim, chapter 53. There [in the chamber of the Holy of Holies of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, 11

and likewise in the chamber of the Holy of Holies in the Holy Temple] the term Shechinah applies. This is not so when it is in Atzilus: there the term Shechinah does not apply, since there it is united with the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) in the utmost unity and is not yet en clothed and dwelling in the source of the created beings.

Only when it becomes the level of Atik for Beriah and is en clothed in Arich Anpin of Beriah—which is the root of the Ten Sefiros of Beriah, and Beriah is created beings—

and a revelation of G-dliness dwells there, does the term Shechinah apply: for the level of His Malchus, blessed be He, in Atzilus, in which the kav from the Infinite Light, blessed be He, is en clothed, dwells within Beriah.

(As is written in the Pardes, in Erchei HaKinuyim, under the entry "Shechinah," that it causes the entire supernal Atzilus to dwell in the lower world, etc.; see there. Of this it is said, "that I may dwell in their midst, etc.," [and] "to His dwelling shall you seek, etc.")

On this basis one can explain what the Maggid said to the Beis Yosef about the meaning of "Shechinta," which the Shelah brought at the end of [his] introduction, in the passage beginning "To complete this matter I will copy the view of the words of the Maggid, etc.," up to: "And the Ramban alluded to it in what he wrote,

‘that she is with them in oneness but not in emanation’; and many were perplexed in explaining his words. However, according to the Maggid’s explanation it is well explained, that the Shechinta, the Matronita, is with the ten supernal Sefiros in a single oneness, etc., but is not with them in emanation, etc.” End of the Shelah’s words.

This seems, on the face of it, to contradict what is explained in the writings of the Arizal, that the Shechinta is Malchus of Atzilus. But according to what has been written [here], it is well [resolved]: his intention, too, is as written above in the name of the Arizal, that Malchus of Atzilus has two levels: the first, as it is united with the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus; and the second, as it becomes Atik for Beriah.

And Shechinta is the name specifically of the second level in Malchus. However, [in the discourse] on “The Song of Songs,” the level of the supernal Shechinah was explained above, namely the level of Binah, and the Pardes there explains the reason: because it causes the first three [Sefiros] to dwell upon the seven Sefiros of the structure.

Likewise one may say that the level of Malchus as it is in Atzilus is also called so. See the Zohar HaRakia at the beginning of Parshas Bereishis, and the book Eshel Avraham there, on “As a rose, etc., so is My beloved, etc.”

Now, in Likkutei HaShas of the Arizal, in the passage beginning “Know that from what our Sages, of blessed memory, said, ‘Go and diminish yourself,’” it is also implied as the Maggid said to the Beis Yosef. See there, where it says, “And of this level it was said, ‘Go and diminish yourself, etc.,’ for Malchus of Atzilus does not descend below, etc.” See there.

And in Etz Chaim, Sha’ar 47, beginning of chapter 5, it is written: “Now, the secret of Atik Yomin of Beriah is the secret of the point of Malchus of Atzilus, to which the Holy One, blessed be He, said, ‘Go and diminish yourself, and be a head to foxes,’ for this is the head of all of Beriah, and it is the secret of Atik Yomin of Beriah.” End of quote. See there also, Sha’ar 41, end of chapter 2,

and Sha’ar 47, chapter 1. Now, every holy thing leaves an impression in its place even though it has departed from there, and this point always remained at the head of Beriah, etc. See there.)

(And see the Pardes, Sha’ar HaMetzius, chapter 1; and see the commentary of the Ramaz on the Zohar, at the beginning of Parshas Yisro, folio 67b, on “There is a King below, etc.”).

Likewise, in souls there are two levels. For the root of the souls is from the level of the inner di- 12
mension of the vessels of Atzilus. And although the soul is a limited being,

[this is] because, regarding the lights and vessels of Atzilus, the lights are infinite but the vessels are in a state of limit and finitude (as explained in Iggeres HaKodesh, in the epistle beginning “He and His life-forces”).

Of this it is said, "The measure of the stature of the Creator of the beginning is two hundred thirty-six thousand myriads of parsangs, etc." Therefore, regarding the revelation of the illumination from the Ten Sefiros, there are several different modes: sometimes the light prevails over the vessel,

and then the revelation is at the level of the Ten Sefiros; and sometimes the vessel prevails, etc. And the souls were drawn from the inner dimension of the vessels; therefore they are in a state of limitation,

for the vessels limit the light. Therefore the name "neshamah" (soul) can apply [to them]; and also, the soul is much smaller than the vessels themselves, like a drop of water, etc.

Now, while the souls are above, they are called "brothers and friends" of Z'eir Anpin. Afterwards 13 they are drawn, through the union of Z'eir Anpin and Nukva, to be in a state of gestation (ibbur) in Malchus of Atzilus.

This is the saying of Eliyahu, "As G-d lives, before Whom I have stood." Then they are called "daughters of Jerusalem," because when the soul stands there, it is in the utmost unity and self-nullification (bittul) in the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) that is before the partition (parsa), akin to the nullification of the vessels of the Ten Sefiros themselves, for "He and His causations are one."

(See what is written in Parshas Yisro in the explanation of "Remember the Shabbos day, etc.," and on "I will make [your windows] of kadkod.") This is the explanation of "daughters of Jerusalem": that they are able to receive the level of awe (yirah) that is in Malchus in completeness. And this is the level of "The soul that You have placed within me is pure,"

that is, while it is in Atzilus, as above; and afterwards, "You created it," that is, when the soul descends to Beriah. It is known that between Atzilus and Beriah there is a partition, called in the language of the Gemara a "curtain" (pargod), so that there can be the level of a created being.

It follows that just as in the level of Malchus there are two levels—the first, its being in Atzilus; the second, its dwelling in the chamber of the Holy of Holies of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah and becoming Atik of Beriah, as above—so too in the souls, which are drawn from the inner dimension of the vessels of Malchus, there are likewise two levels in this manner.

This is the meaning of "It is pure; You created it, etc." Now, with the soul's descent into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah (and likewise with the level of Malchus), it is then called kallah (bride), a term related to "my soul pines (kalsah)."

As is written in the Idra Zuta (folio 290b), "Then she is called kallah, etc." That is: because it descended into Beriah, which is limited

(which is not so in Atzilus, where the lights are at the level of the Infinite), therefore her soul pines: "When shall I come and see" the revelation of the Infinite Light?

For in Beriah the revelation is in a mode of limitation and contraction, and through the partition. This is why the angels say “Holy” three times: every four hours [the angel] says “Holy” anew,

because the comprehension and influx drawn to him is limited, and the stirring it produces in him lasts four hours, until afterwards he says “Holy” again, etc.

For were a greater revelation of comprehension drawn to him from the level of Malchus, he would be nullified out of existence, as in the saying, “The Holy One, blessed be He, stretched out His little finger among them and burned them.”

Therefore the soul that is there in a state of limitation—its pining to come from the state of limitation to a revelation without limitation is then a longing in revelation and an intense pining of the soul: “When shall I come and see,” for it has not yet come. And this is “Remember G-d from afar.” 14

Therefore it is called kallah. But the souls that stand at the level of Atzilus are called “my sister,” 15 for [their] love is not with fiery flashes in the manner of the level of kallah, but a hidden love, in a state of self-nullification. And there it is said, “Maidens, her companions, following after her, etc.,

in the King’s chambers,” for they stand there in the chambers of Atzilus and receive the level of awe that is there in completeness. Therefore they are called “daughters of Jerusalem.” And although

they too are there in a limited state, as explained above, that the souls are drawn from the inner dimension of the vessels, nevertheless there “He and His life-forces and His causations are one,” and the light is at the level of the Infinite.

Therefore, at any rate, they are nullified in the utmost self-nullification to the Infinite Light before the curtain. This is not so in Beriah; therefore [there] it is called kallah. 16

It follows, then, that this descent and distance cause an additional ascent, for through it they come to be at the level of kallah, and then specifically the Holy One, blessed be He, is called, in relation to them, by the name chasan (bridegroom), as it is written, “on the day of his wedding”—this is the Giving of the Torah.

For “the Torah is the fallen fruit of the supernal wisdom,” like the analogy of the physical drop that descends and is drawn from the brain itself, and through its descent in stages by way of the spinal cord it became physical and turned into a physical drop; and nevertheless there is in it

of the power of the intellect (mochin) and their very essence, to beget [one] like itself. So too, the Torah was drawn from the level of “wise, but not with a known wisdom,” and descended in stages below until it could be en clothed in physicality; therefore it is called “fallen fruit.”

(See what is written in the discourse beginning “The land shall rest” on the sowing of the seed, etc., and what is written elsewhere on the statement in the Zohar, Parshas Bereishis, folio 27, “I will make him a helpmate”—this is the Mishnah.”) And like the drop that became physical, etc., and is taken in by the level of kallah—that is, by the souls of Israel who study the Torah in this world.

Therefore, before the souls are created, while they are still in a state of gestation in Malchus of Atzilus, they teach [the soul] the entire Torah, and afterwards an angel comes and strikes him, etc.,

so that through his toil he will return to his learning, which is, by way of analogy, the taking in of the drop, that is, the Torah as it is below. Therefore, “on the day of his wedding”—this is the Giving of the Torah,

for the level of the revelation of the Torah and its descent below is the level of chasan, [as in] chos darga, “descending a level,” to come into the revelation of the Torah from the supernal wisdom until it is taken in by the level of kallah.

Therefore in the Song of Songs everything is spoken of in terms of chasan and kallah, and also 17 in terms of “my beloved.” For just as with every individual soul, it is specifically in its descent into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah that it is called kallah, so it is with the level of Malchus: specifically in its descent to become Atik for Beriah is it then called by the name kallah.

And the meaning of kallah is kol hei: kol (“all”) means the level of the inclusion of all the attrib- 18 utes (middos), for the Ten Sefiros of Malchus are drawn from the ten [aspects of] Malchus of the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus—from the Malchus of Keser comes the Keser of Malchus, etc.—and the hei is the level of revelation. And see what is written on the verse “The eyes of all look to You, etc.”

This is the meaning of “I am black, yet comely”: the source of the souls of Israel that is in 19 Beriah, which is the level of Malchus when it is called Shechinah, as above, says to the “daughters of Jerusalem,” that is, to the souls that are in Atzilus, “I am black,” because of the descent into a state of limitation.

Even so, “[I am] comely,” for through this there is a greater revelation than there was in the state of “daughters of Jerusalem,” when the soul was then in the chambers of Atzilus.

This is [the meaning of] “He goes along weeping, carrying the bag of seed; he will surely come back with joyful song, carrying his sheaves,” as the explanation of this is written in the discourse beginning “Return, O Israel”; see there.

(The reason is as above: that specifically then it comes to be at the level of kallah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, is called, in relation to her, the level of chasan—that is, the drawing down of the Torah from the very essence of the supernal Chochmah, which is higher in its root than the comprehensions they had in the chambers of Atzilus—as is written in Parshas Lech Lecha, in the discourse beginning “The matter of ‘Go forth,’” on “The Torah is the fallen fruit of supernal wisdom, etc.” See there.

This will explain what the Maggid said to the Beis Yosef, cited in the Shelah there: that everything said about the union of Tiferes and Malchus is all in terms of their illumination within their sheath, that is, in the level of Malchus that is called Shechinta. This is as written here, that specifically then it is called kallah, etc., as above.

The reason for this—for at first glance it is not understood: Malchus as it is in Atzilus is a far higher level, as above. Why then should the union of Z’eir Anpin and Nukva, which is called the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah—which is the drawing down of the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin) into the light that fills all worlds (memalei kol almin), the highest level and drawing down—

all be drawn specifically in the level of kallah, which is Malchus that descended into Beriah, etc., except that she ascends into Atzilus and unites there with Z’eir Anpin face to face? See Etz Chaim, Sha’ar 47, chapter 1, and Pri Etz Chaim, on the intentions of the Shema and the Shemoneh Esreh. And see the Zohar, Bereishis (folio 49, end of side a).

However, the matter will be understood by first introducing what is written elsewhere: that one needs to understand, regarding the supernal unions, why they are described in the Zohar and Etz Chaim in the language of physical coupling, and called the coupling of Z’eir Anpin and Nukva, and the like.

After all, the essential meaning of coupling and union is nothing but the flow and revelation of light from the giver to the receiver.

If so, at first glance it would seem more fitting to compare this bestowal, by way of analogy, to the influence of a teacher on a student, or to a rich man’s giving charity to a poor man, etc. Why did they need to clothe it in a very physical analogy?

But the matter is that there is a great difference between the influence of a teacher on a student and the union of male and female. For in the influence of a teacher on a student there is nothing but bestowal from the teacher alone, and the student is entirely secondary, being

only at the level of a recipient alone. This is not so with the union of male and female: the woman too emits seed, the red, from which comes flesh, etc., as it is written, “When a woman emits seed,” and our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “If the woman emits seed first, she gives birth to a male, etc.”

On the contrary, the main formation of the child is from the female's seed; it is only that the female is nevertheless called the recipient, because the female's seed has no power to congeal so that the child be formed from it, except through the male's seed,

like milk that congeals into cheese when rennet is put into it, and the like. This is what is written, "You poured me out like milk and curdled me like cheese, etc."

Now, above, in the supernal union, there are also the levels of "feminine waters" (mayin nukvin) and "masculine waters" (mayin duchrin). Although the level of the masculine waters is the drawing down of the supernal Chochmah, within which the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, is enlothed,

this comes about through the raising of the feminine waters, which are the refinements of the 288 sparks, through a person praying with love and awe by the strength of [his] eating and drinking, which is the refinement of kelipas nogah,

and likewise the wool of tzitzis and the parchment of tefillin, etc. This is the meaning of the feminine waters of Nukva: that Malchus of Atzilus is enlothed in Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah to refine the 288 sparks, etc.

Now, the root of the feminine waters is very high, for it is from the World of Tohu, "before any 20 king reigned, etc." Yet nevertheless, the masculine waters are what refine the feminine waters, etc.;

but after the refinement, it ascends into [the Name] Sag, which is above the masculine waters of [the Name] Mah, as is known regarding "A woman of valor is the crown of her husband." Therefore they were compelled to compare the supernal union specifically to the coupling of male and female, even though it is a very physical analogy.

(See what is written at the end of the discourse beginning "The voice of my beloved" on "leaping over the hills, etc.," and in the explanation on "Then Israel sang, etc., 'Spring up, O well, etc.>") On this basis one will understand the reason that the supernal union is specifically in the level of Shechinta, which is Malchus that descends into Beriah, etc.:

for the main refinement of the 288 sparks is in Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, whereas of Atzilus it is written, "Evil shall not dwell with You." And in her descent to Beriah she refines the feminine waters, and specifically through this the supernal union takes place;

that is, she ascends into Atzilus, face to face with Z'eir Anpin, etc. Nevertheless, the matter is along the lines of what the Ramaz wrote in Parshas Ki Sisa (folio 189b): "Know

that the upper rose is Malchus of Atzilus, which is called 'My beloved' (rayasi), and our Sages, of blessed memory, said, '[read] she who sustains Me (mefarnesasi),' because all the refinements that are elevated from below by the lower Malchus ascend up to Malchus of Atzilus,

and she raises feminine waters to her Husband, and through this the bounty descends to the worlds." End of quote. And see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning "A psalm, a song of the dedication of the House," on "The stone the builders rejected, etc."; and see what the Ramaz wrote in Parshas Ki Seitzei (folio 276), in the passage beginning "And He makes her grow, and from this we learn, etc." See there.

And in Parshas Pinchas (folio 215b): Leah and Rachel become one. He also wrote so at the beginning of Parshas Terumah (folio 126b), on "Who is this, etc."

And see what is written in Parshas Yisro, in the discourse beginning "Remember the Shabbos day," on the ascent of the souls through their descent into the body: that at first they were from the level of the unity of "He and His causations are one,"

and through their enclothing in the animal soul they ascend to be at the level of the unity of "He and His life-forces are one." This is also understood according to what is written here: that while in Atzilus they were drawn from the inner dimension of the vessels, which is the matter of "He and His causations, etc.,"

and through their descent into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah they will ascend higher, as will be explained in the meaning of "I am black, yet comely." (And see what is written in the discourse beginning "If you walk in My statutes: Now, it is explained in Etz Chaim.")

3. Now, to understand the explanation of "I am black": that she receives the level of the drop, **21** which is the level of the supernal Chochmah, in the aspect of "black," that is, in the aspect of the halachos and the fine points of the Scribes, which are [the meaning of] "His locks are curled, black as a raven."

The matter is that it is stated in the Idra of Naso (folio 132), and these are its words: "For it was taught: it is written, 'His locks are curled, black as a raven,' and it is written, 'and the hair of His head like pure wool.' There is no difficulty: this is in the upper beard, and this is in the lower beard.

And on this account, when the Torah was given to Israel, it was given in black fire upon white fire." End of quote. And on folio 136a it says: "The locks of black hair, etc.,

to which pure and impure are attached; and from here the reasons of the Torah are attached, in purity [and] in impurity." End of quote. The meaning of "pure and impure" is what is kosher and unfit, impure or pure.

It follows that the root of the halachos of the prohibitive commandments is drawn from the hairs of Z'eir Anpin, while the halachos of the positive commandments are drawn from the level of "pure wool," the hairs of Arich Anpin.

The explanation is this: it has already been explained above that when there needs to be a new **22** drawing down and revelation from the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, it must all be through Keser, which is the intermediary between the Emanator and the emanated.

This is [the meaning of] “Who renews in His goodness.” That is: He draws new light from the source, the level of the Infinite One, blessed be He, through His goodness, which is the level of “abundant in kindness,” the attribute of Keser; and through this, afterwards, “Shine a new light upon Zion.”

This drawing down from Keser into the Ten Sefiros is only through the level of hairs, as is writ- **23** ten in Etz Chaim and in the Zohar, that Abba and Imma draw nourishment from the mazalos.

The explanation is this: of His essence, blessed be He, it is said, “I, G-d, have not changed,” and “none of these attributes is in Him at all.” Therefore, for there to be a drawing down and revelation from the Infinite One in the level of Chochmah—that from “You” there be drawn the level of “wise”—

this is a great descent, and it comes about through “abundant in kindness,” as it is written, “The world is built by kindness”: that He lowers Himself to be called by the name “wise” and “understanding.”

And it is impossible for [light] to be drawn from the level of “abundant in kindness” into **24** Chochmah except through the level of hairs alone. And the vessel for this, that this revelation from the Infinite Light should come about, is through

the mitzvos, the 613 paths of the Skull (Gulgulta), the root of the mitzvos, the supernal will; and it is drawn through the hairs, the thirteen tikkunim of the beard of Arich Anpin, the attributes of mercy and “abundant in kindness.” And Abba draws nourishment from the eighth mazal, the revelation of the reasons of the mitzvos.

However, the whole chain of descent mentioned above is only from the level of the final yud of the Name Sag that is in the Supernal Brightness (Tehiru Ila’ah), as is written in the book Emek HaMelech, Sha’ar 3 (and cited from it in Mikdash Melech, Parshas Bereishis, on folio 15),

and in the Zohar, Parshas Shemos (another reading: Parshas Bereishis), it is stated that the coming into being of all the worlds is through a single thought, and therefore everything is considered like a drop in the ocean.

Therefore, of His essence, blessed be He, one cannot say even “encompassing all worlds” (sovev kol almin), for He is not within the bounds of worlds at all; and also what he said, “You are wise,”

that is, that from the level of “You” [light] is drawn to be enclothed in the level of “wise,” as above—of His essence and being even this does not apply; rather, “You” refers to the level of “encompassing all worlds.”

For the essence of the Infinite One is simple in the utmost simplicity, and “a clear and lucid light is darkness before Him,” and [all] are considered as truly nothing: “I, G-d, have not changed,” just as before the world was created. And the entire source of the drawing down and revelation is only from the level of Malchus of the Infinite One.

But of the essence of the Infinite One even this does not apply, that there be a source from which any illumination would be revealed; and it does not pertain to the worlds at all, such that one would say, “You are wise.”

Only from the level of Malchus of the Infinite One: although it is the Infinite Light, nevertheless it is a level of which one can say [this], and from which the worlds of Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah and [the light that] encompasses all worlds can descend, through a leap and through the illumination of the kav and thread. And of this he said, “You are wise.”

Now, the revelation of the light from this level, from the level of “You” to the level of “wise”— 25 that is, that there be drawn a revelation from [the light that] encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin), an illumination for the worlds, for Chochmah is the beginning of the World of Atzilus, and it is written, “You made them all with wisdom”—

comes about through the positive commandments. Of this revelation it is said, “and the hair of His head like pure wool”: the level of the supernal whiteness, the revelation of His very will and kindness.

(See on this the explanation on “For on this day He shall atone,” in Parshas Acharei.) This is the meaning of “the upper beard,” which means the beard of Arich Anpin,

that is, through the fulfillment of the 248 positive commandments, “the 248 limbs of the King”: by performing the mitzvah and fulfilling His will, blessed be He, one draws His very will into the worlds.

The Patriarchs fulfilled the Torah in a spiritual manner; the revelation through their deeds was above, in Atzilus. But for there to be

a revelation literally below, from the level of “the hair of His head like pure wool,” it is through the performance of the mitzvos with actual physical things. Through this a revelation of the level of “encompassing all worlds” is drawn below, so that below too there is the revelation

as above in the supernal Chochmah, where the level of “You” is drawn into the level of “wise,” as above. (See what was written above in Parshas Lech Lecha; see what is written on the hairs on the verse “You shall make holy garments for Aharon, etc.”; and what is written on the verse “It shall be tzitzis for you,” on the meaning of “and you shall be holy.”)

But that there be a revelation of His essence, as it were, which is above the level of “encompassing all worlds,” cannot be except in the Time to Come. (See the Ramaz on Parshas Bereishis) (on folio 4b), who wrote,

and these are his words: “It seems to my humble mind that the main rectification is for the time of the rectification of the worlds after the time of Mashiach, for then we will have the power to draw the drop from the inner dimension of Atik, which is not so now.” End of quote.

Then the revelation will be literally below as well (see what is written on the verse “Set me as a seal”), and [it will come about] through the fulfillment of the prohibitive commandments, as will be explained.

Now, the prohibitive commandments are at the level of the lower beard, that is, the beard of Z’eir Anpin: “His locks are curled (taltalim), black as a raven”—taltalim, tilei tilim, “mounds upon mounds” of halachos, the words of the Scribes (soferim), the level of the scribe (sofer), which is above the level of the book (sefer);

and also the rabbinic fences and safeguards, most of which concern prohibitions. And they are “black as a raven,” in a mode of cruelty; that is, this also requires the attribute of severities (gevuros), to rule that the thing is unfit and cannot be elevated: although of necessity there is a spark of holiness in it, nevertheless it is rejected.

This is what is said in the Idra: “the black hairs, etc., to which pure and impure are attached”: to 26 rule that this is pure and kosher and can be elevated, while another thing is impure and unfit and cannot be elevated, although it has a spark in it.

And in forbidden things, too, there are two levels: just as in holiness there is the inner and the encompassing, so in kelipah too there are the two levels mentioned above.

For example, “You shall not eat forbidden fat” and the like: this is the level of the inner, for the food enters within. And there is the level of the encompassing: even though nothing enters within, his body becomes impure when he touches it. This is the level of the encompassing of kelipah, which is the whole subject of the Order of Taharos.

Therefore our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “‘And knowledge’—this is the Order of Taharos.” 27 For there must be no separating screen, neither from the inner nor from the encompassing [aspect] of kelipah; and through this, in the Time to Come, there will be a revelation of an illumination from His essence and being.

This is “I am black,” and specifically through this, “comely.” That is: although the soul, when it descends into Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, into a state of limitation, is in the state of “I am black,”

yet through fulfilling the mitzvos also in the manner of “his locks are curled, black as a raven”—in the fine points of the Scribes, the fences and safeguards, which are from the level of holy severities (gevuros)—the sitra achra is thereby repelled. Therefore, although below I am black as well, like a raven, not in a mode of drawing down,

yet through this, “comely”: for the prohibitive commandments are vessels through whose fulfillment there will be, in the Time to Come, a revelation of His essence and being, of which it is said, “I, G-d, have not changed,” and which is not within the bounds of any illumination drawn from Him, blessed be He.

(As for the halachos of the prohibitions depending on the beard of Z’eir Anpin, which is far below the level of the beard of Arich Anpin, on which the halachos of the positive commandments depend—and elsewhere it is stated that the prohibitions are drawn from yud-hei and the positive commandments from vav-hei—this will be explained below, G-d willing.)

4. To explain the reason, one must first introduce the subject of Tohu and Tikkun. The shattering 28 of the vessels of Tohu came about because the light was abundant and the vessels too small to contain [it],

and the vessel could not limit the light. Therefore the vessels shattered and fell below, and the lights withdrew into the essence of the Emanator.

Afterwards they were refined and rectified. The rectification (tikkun) is that they became configurations (partzufim), each attribute being composed of ten, and through the multiplicity of vessels the lights were rectified. As R. Chaim Vital wrote in his commentary on the Idra Zuta, the secret of the rectification is the diminishing of the light; on the contrary, this is what enables the vessels being refined to receive it.

Now, first there was refined from the vessels of Tohu what was included in the World of Atzilus, 29 in the vessels of the Ten Sefiros of Tikkun; and what could not be included in Atzilus descended to Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah and was refined there, so that souls and angels came forth.

Therefore the angels have the power to be [as in] “and the Chayos carry the Throne,” and “upon the Throne, as the appearance of a man”—the level of the lights and vessels of Atzilus.

This is because their root is from the World of Tohu, and the lights of Tohu are higher than the lights of Tikkun, for Tikkun is the diminishing of the light (through apertures, channels and hairs);

only that because of the shattering of the vessels the lights withdrew into their Emanator and the vessels fell below. But after the vessels have been refined and raised from their fall, their root, the lights of Tohu, returns to be revealed in them, which is the level of “before any king reigned over the Children of Israel.”

This is [the meaning of the fact] that through the self-nullification (bittul) of the Chayos of the Chariot, [who] “tremble from the might of the Throne”—which is the refinement and rectification of what is in them from the shattering of the vessels, which was refined and rectified until it was included in the state of self-nullification—

then an illumination from the lights of Tohu, which withdrew into the essence of the Emanator, is revealed in them; and through this they carry the Throne and the Man upon the Throne, [up] to the level of the very essence of the Infinite One (Ein Sof), blessed be He, the level of “for He is not a man.”

Now, the angels are what has already been refined; this is [the meaning of] “and those who serve Him all stand,” for they stand in a state of self-nullification. And so too the souls, as written in Etz Chaim, that the soul itself needs no rectification and descended only to refine the animal soul, etc.

Now, just as there are three partners in a person—father, mother, and the Holy One, blessed be 30 He, Who places a soul in him—so too in the physical animal there is a soul from the level of the Chayos in the Chariot, from the aspect of the dregs and waste that have not yet been refined. They are refined through

the person who eats them: by the strength of having eaten the animal he can say “One” and “You shall love [G-d] ... with all your heart”—with both your inclinations—and pray with self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh). Through this the animals, too, are refined, and all the things permitted to eat; and through this an illumination from the lights of Tohu is revealed, as above regarding “and the Chayos carry, etc.”

And likewise when positive commandments are performed with them, such as shofar, sukkah and lulav, tzitzis and tefillin, one draws down the revelation of the lights of Tohu that withdrew, so that they are revealed in the vessels of Tikkun

(and this revelation will be drawn into the G-dly soul, just as above “the Chayos carry” the level of its “Man”). All this is with things “permitted to your mouth.” This is not so with forbidden things, which cannot be elevated at all.

Now, one must understand: in the holy Chariot, “the face of a lion on the right” precedes in rank and is higher than “the face of an ox”; and therefore also in the offerings there was “a lion that devours the offerings.”

Why, then, below, is the ox permitted to be eaten, and can be elevated by the person who eats it 31 or offers it upon the altar, so that through this

the ox itself is elevated and included in holiness; whereas the lion is among the impure beasts, which are forbidden to be eaten, and is unfit for anything holy, for “only what is permitted to your mouth was approved for the work of Heaven”?

The explanation is this: it is known that “the husk precedes the fruit.” Not that the husk literally precedes the fruit, G-d forbid; rather, the light and life-force that is en clothed within it in a state of exile, having fallen there from the shattering of the vessels,

is from higher levels than the fruit itself (as is written in the discourse beginning “And it was when Pharaoh sent”), as above regarding Tohu and Tikkun. Nevertheless, the husk itself is dross and husk (kelipah).

Therefore the lion below is an impure beast and below the ox, which relative to the lion is like fruit relative to husk. However, the root of the light, life-force and spark encloded in it is from a level above the ox, for above, “the face of a lion is on the right, etc.”

Now, like the coming into being of the lion below from the face of the lion, so in the same way is 32 the matter of Avraham, from whom Yishmael came forth. This means that he came forth from him as dross separated from the silver; and then Avraham became a chariot for the Chesed (kindness) of Atzilus, like silver after it has been purified of its dross.

And at the time before the refinement of the vessels of Tohu, Yishmael too was included in the 33 level of Avraham, and the shattering of the vessels took place; and Yishmael preceded Yitzchak, as the husk precedes the fruit.

Therefore he was the firstborn. This is like the level of the lion below relative to the ox, by way of analogy: for the level of Yitzchak is

like the level of the face of the ox in the holy Chariot, and Yishmael is like the level of the lion below, for his root is higher, that is, from the level of the face of the lion;

but he himself came forth as dross and husk (and from this will be understood the meaning of “I am black, yet comely, like the tents of Kedar,” as below), like the afterbirth that surrounds the child.

This is because in its root, when it was included in the drop, it is more exalted, and afterwards, through the refinement, it is separated and thrown away. The explanation is that what is higher in its root, when it falls through the shattering of the vessels, falls lower.

Therefore, in the shattering of the vessels of Tohu too, there are several levels: what fell lower did so because its root was higher, for the lights were higher;

therefore the vessels could not contain them and fell with force further below. Some of the vessels that shattered and fell descended into domestic animals and beasts permitted to be eaten, and what was higher in its root fell lower, into things forbidden to be eaten.

Now, the fulfillment of the prohibitive commandments is entirely with forbidden things, whose 34 root is higher than that of the permitted things, like the lion as against the ox.

And through fulfilling His will, blessed be He, in the manner of the prohibitions, that is, in the manner of rejection, in which the inner and encompassing [forces] of kelipah are rejected—

that is, through refraining from eating, “You shall not eat,” or being careful not to become impure through them, and all the fences and safeguards concerning them—through this “He will remove the spirit of impurity from the land,”

and there will be no concealment or kelipah; and through this there is revealed the very essence of the supernal lights, which are higher than the lights revealed through the positive commandments performed with permitted things, etc.,

just as above the revelation of the level of the face of the lion is higher than the level of the face of the ox, etc. And see what is written in Parshas Eikev on the verse “And He fed you the manna, etc.”

5. And this is [the meaning of] “I am black, etc.; do not look upon me that I am swarthy, for the sun has tanned me.” That is: although below I am in a state of blackness and of limitation, and in the fulfillment of physical things, 35

yet specifically through all this I come to a great elevation, for through this there will be revealed something new: a revelation of His essence and being—that is, in general, through the fulfillment of all the mitzvos, the positive commandments and the prohibitive commandments,

which are with physical things whose root is from the World of Tohu, and the lights of Tohu withdrew into the essence of the Emanator. Therefore, specifically through fulfilling His will, the supernal will, with these things, the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) will be revealed, a revelation more exalted than what was revealed in the lights of Tikkun.

And although below I am in concealment and contraction, yet “the sun has tanned me.” For “a sun and a shield is Havayah Elokim,” and “sun” is the level of the higher unity (yichuda ila’ah) —“Yours, Havayah, is the greatness, etc.”—which are nullified in the Infinite Light. 36

Therefore, when the sun shines below—the revelation of an illumination from the level of the higher unity in the soul—[it is] through contemplation during the Shema, in the manner of the higher unity,

of how “all before Him is considered as nothing,” and through the fulfillment of the mitzvos. For every revelation of new light from the Infinite Light, which is not within the bounds of the chain of descent (hishtalshelus), must come through the level of an intermediary, that is, the level of Keser, and through the 613 paths that were drawn from the Gulgalta and descended below in the fulfillment of His very will.

Through this the light from [the level that] encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin) is revealed, through fulfilling His will with physical things whose root is from the World of Tohu, whose lights withdrew on high, as mentioned above. 37

But the superiority of the revelation through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments over the revelation through fulfilling the positive commandments is this: in the level of “encompassing all worlds” there are also two levels. The first is what is called “encompassing all worlds”; if so, it pertains to worlds, for although

it encompasses and is not revealed, nevertheless it can be called by the name “encompassing the worlds.” And that [the light that] encompasses all worlds be in actual revelation comes through fulfilling the positive commandments, which are with permitted things.

But His essence and being cannot truly be called by the name “encompassing all worlds,” as mentioned above; it is the level of “I, G-d, have not changed,” exactly as before the world was created.

And it is this that is revealed specifically through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments, 38 through severities (gevuros) and the rejection of kelipah. For the severities in their root are higher than the kindnesses (chasadim), like the superiority of gold over silver, or as salt sweetens meat:

“Can what is tasteless be eaten without salt?” For through the salt the taste is revealed. Thus taste, which is a high level (“and the palate tastes food”; therefore the letters gimmel, yud, kaf, kuf, too, which are from the palate, are higher than the other letters, as is written on the verse “And you shall count for yourselves from the morrow, etc.”; see the Idra Zuta, folio 295b),

is revealed specifically through the salt, which in itself is below the food, for it is not fit to be eaten, and it is in the aspect of severities. It is also like [the saying], “A word is worth a sela, silence is worth two,”

that is, through fulfilling the prohibitions in the manner of negation, which concern forbidden things, whose fallen sparks have their root in a higher place. Therefore, through fulfilling His will, blessed be He, with them—to reject the kelipah—through this there is a revelation of His very essence and being.

And this is the meaning of “I am black, yet comely, like the tents of Kedar.” For it was explained 39 above regarding Avraham, from whom Yishmael came forth,

that he came forth as dross, like the coming into being of the lion below from the level of the face of the lion in the Chariot. Nevertheless, he receives his life-force from Avraham,

only that the life-force is mainly in the manner of the encompassing, for the sitra achra cannot receive holiness in the manner of inner revelation, only in the manner of the encompassing;

as with the eleven spices of the incense: the ten are those encloded in the kelipos in a state of exile, and the eleventh is in the manner of the encompassing—this is the frankincense (levonah), which is essentially white (lavan)—and their main life-force is from the encompassing, etc. (See what was written on this above in Parshas Toldos, on the verse “See, the fragrance of my son, etc.”)

Now, there are two [kinds of] encompassing: one like a garment, which encompasses from close by; the second, a higher encompassing,

like a tent and a dwelling, which also encompasses, but encompasses from afar; and the tent and dwelling are also more precious than the garment, etc.

Now, the way holiness gives life to the sitra achra is only from afar. This is the meaning of “the 40 tents of Kedar”: specifically a tent. And the Community of Israel says that so too there is with me a revelation of the level of a higher encompassing [light], which encompasses from afar, as it is written, “Remember G-d from afar.”

That is: the level of “encompassing all worlds” (sovev kol almin) is called “encompassing the worlds.” And this is the matter of the garments made from the performance of the mitzvos, which is through fulfilling the positive commandments.

But through “I am black,” in fulfilling the prohibitive commandments, which is the level of “black as a raven”—through this, “comely, like the tents of Kedar”: there is drawn a revelation of His essence and being, which cannot be called even “encompassing the worlds,” as above.

(That is: just as the encompassing [light] that gives life to the sitra achra is far removed from them in rank, as written in Etz Chaim, Sha’ar 10, chapter 11, “for the holy does not mix with the profane, etc.”)

so too, relative to the essence of the Infinite One, blessed be He, even the highest worlds are considered as truly nothing, and they are infinitely more distant in rank from the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, than the distance, in the analogy, of the opposing side from its encompassing [light], the “tents of Kedar.”

Therefore this higher encompassing [light], drawn from the Infinite Light itself, blessed be He, is compared specifically to the analogy of “the tents of Kedar, etc.”

And see what is written on the verse “A psalm, a song of the dedication of the House” on these two encompassing [lights], garment and house, etc. One can further explain why it is compared specifically to the tents of Kedar: in holiness there are ten Sefiros, “ten and not eleven,” as is written in Sefer Yetzirah and cited in the Raaya Mehemna at the beginning of Parshas Ki Sisa.

This means that in Keser there are two levels, Atik and Arich, and the level of Atik is not counted among the Ten Sefiros; this is “and not eleven, etc.” See Etz Chaim, Sha’ar 22, chapter 1, section 4, “and we do not count, etc.”; and so too in the whole of Atzilus, Atik Yomin, etc.

Now, the drawing down of the level of the higher encompassing [light] mentioned above, at the level of tent and house, which is above the level of garment, etc., is the level of Atik, which is the lowest level in the Emanator, the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself.

Therefore it is compared specifically to the tents of Kedar, because there the encompassing is certainly not commensurate with the inner, as above. So too, even the highest worlds are very far in rank from the Infinite One, blessed be He, infinitely more than the distance in the analogy of the tents of Kedar, [having] nothing whatsoever [in common with Him].

Even so, this higher encompassing [light] too is revealed through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments, for the reason mentioned above. And according to the language of the Kabbalah one may give the reason it is compared specifically to the tents of Kedar: in holiness there are ten and not eleven, that is, the Ten Sefiros, and they begin from the level of Arich Anpin; and the meaning of “and not eleven” is

that the level of Atik is not counted among the Ten Sefiros. Now, Arich Anpin is called “encompassing all worlds,” but the level of Atik is not called even “encompassing all worlds.” Therefore it is compared to the tents of Kedar, for there, there are eleven crowns, and the eleventh level, which is the level of frankincense, is called the level of “the tents of Kedar,” as above.

If so, Atik Yomin of holiness, which is not counted among the Ten Sefiros, is compared specifically to this level. And this is why in the Tabernacle there were eleven curtains of goats’ hair: so that the level of the higher encompassing [light], too, would be drawn, etc.

And see what is written in the discourse beginning “And He called to Moshe,” on the meaning of “And Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it”; see there. Now, although through the positive commandments [light] is also drawn from the level of Atik, through the positive commandments it is drawn from the seven lower [Sefiros] of Atik Yomin, which are en clothed in Arich Anpin;

but the level of the first three [Sefiros] of Atik Yomin, which are not en clothed in Arich Anpin at all, is drawn specifically through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments, as [will be explained] below. According to this, the reason will also be understood why the prohibitive commandments depend specifically on the hairs of Z’eir Anpin, and the positive commandments on the tikkunim of the beard of Arich Anpin. And this is the meaning of the Torah having been given in black fire upon white fire, as was written above in the name of the Idra Rabba)

(folio 132). This means that “black fire” is the level of the prohibitive commandments, and “white fire” is the level of the positive commandments; and so it is in Sefer Hadrass Melech, section 139, in the name of the Ramaz.

The explanation: it is written, “and Torah is light.” Now, the main light of a burning lamp is from the hue next to the wick, but the white hue that surrounds it does not itself give light, etc.;

so it is [stated] above. But seemingly, on the contrary, the main light is from the white hue, whereas the hue next to the wick is black, or a blue hue, and does not give so much light.

However, it seems that the intent is along the lines of what is written in the Zohar, Bereishis (folio 51a): “And upon the white light, above, rests a hidden light that surrounds it”; and so too in Parshas Lech Lecha (folio 83b);

and the Ramaz explained (cited in Sefer Hadrass Melech, section 139) that the hidden light refers to the secret of the concealed Keser, which surrounds everything, etc.

Accordingly, one can also understand the matter of the Torah having been given in black fire upon white fire, which are the level of the first two hues; and this is “and Torah is light.”

And there is yet the level of the hidden light (nehora setima’ah), which is the source of the light. 41 And this is the matter of the words of the Scribes, from which is drawn the level of the book, which is the level of “and Torah is light, etc.”

Now, the positive commandments are the level of the white light (nehora chivara): it is a light that can come into revelation—the light and kindness from Him, blessed be He—the fulfillment of His will by active doing. It is the level of the hairs of Arich Anpin,

which are the level of “like pure wool,” the white light; for in order for the light to be in a state of revelation, it is impossible except through the level of hairs, as was written above regarding the rectification, which is the diminishing of the light, etc.

But the prohibitions depend on the hairs of Z’eir Anpin, which are called “black,” the black light (nehora uchma), which is below the tikkunim of the beard of Arich Anpin, called “white fire.” That is, the light does not come as a revelation of His will by active doing, but only by way of “not.”

Therefore it is also called the blue light (nehora techela), which consumes (mechaleh) something else; for the main subjugation of the sitra achra is through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments.

However, although it is below the hairs of Arich Anpin, which are white fire, “like pure wool,” in truth the root of the light in the prohibitions is higher than the white fire of the positive commandments,

that is, it is from the level of the hidden light that surrounds the white light, whose nature and essence, because of the greatness of its level, cannot be grasped, as written in Pri Etz Chaim, Sha’ar HaShabbos, end of chapter 4. And see what is written in the explanation on “And the Jews accepted” on the element of fire itself, etc.;

see there. Its revelation is through the black hairs of Z’eir Anpin, which are the level of the black light itself; for as they are below, they are far below the hairs of Arich Anpin,

which are “like pure wool,” the level of “abundant in kindness,” to elevate the permitted things so that they become actual vessels for the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof); whereas the level of the hairs of Z’eir Anpin, black

as a raven, is in the aspect of severities (gevuros), to reject the forbidden things—although there is a spark in them, etc., nevertheless one rejects it with both hands—and the quality of “abundant in kindness” is higher than the level of the severities.

Nevertheless, it is specifically in the severities of the black light that the level of the hidden light mentioned above is en clothed and drawn, and not in the white light.

For through the white light, “abundant in kindness,” from which comes “the right [hand] draws near,” to elevate the permitted things so that they become a vessel for the revelation of the Infinite Light—

it is impossible [for them] to be a vessel for the Infinite Light that is not within the bounds of drawing down, nor within the bounds of encompassing; they are a vessel only for the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin),

and not for His essence and being, which is not within the bounds of any drawing down. However, in the three cavities of the Skull (Gulgalta) of Z’eir Anpin, where the source of the division of the attributes into kindnesses and severities is,

there, therefore, there could be a revelation of the superiority of the severities, which is the level of the prohibitions and of rejection, to reject forbidden things. This rejection is the fulfillment of the supernal will in a thing higher than the fulfillment of the will in permitted things, as above regarding “the husk precedes the fruit, etc.”

And this could not be in the beard of Arich Anpin, where all is the level of great mercy and “abundant in kindness,” the white light, “like pure wool.” And the superiority of severity in this rejection is rooted higher than the “abundant in kindness” mentioned above, as in “A word is worth a sela, silence is worth two,”

that is, through this there will be a revelation of the essence of the Infinite Light, the hidden light, “the most hidden of all hidden.” Therefore, although below, the hairs of Z’eir Anpin are certainly lower in level than the hairs of Arich Anpin, nevertheless in them

and through them, through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments that depend on them, the essence of the Infinite Light is drawn down and revealed, which is above the revelation through the positive commandments that is drawn through the hairs of Arich Anpin, which are “like pure wool.”

This is what is said in the Idra Rabba (folio 140a): “And because these hairs are black and dark, it is written, ‘He reveals deep things out of darkness.’” And see there in the Arizal’s explanation of the Idra.

The intent is as above: through the prohibitions there is drawn a revelation of deep things, such depths as are not revealed through the white light of the positive commandments, etc.

And as in “Out of the depths I have called You, etc.” And this is what is written, “Your thoughts 42 are very deep, etc.; when [the wicked] spring up, etc., it is to destroy them forever”: that specifically through the rejection of the kelipos a revelation is drawn from the level of the depth of the supernal thought, etc.

In the same way we find with the mitzvah of tzitzis, that the blue (techeles) is higher than the white, etc.; see Pri Etz Chaim. And this is exactly the same thing: for of the mitzvah of tzitzis it is written, “and you shall not stray, etc.,”

which is the fulfillment of the prohibitive commandments, and it is through the blue hue, which consumes the evil and rejects it; while of the white hue it is written, “so that you remember and do all My commandments,” the fulfillment of the positive commandments, as written elsewhere. And it will be further explained below why the prohibitions are drawn specifically from the hairs of Z’eir Anpin.

6. Now, the meaning and matter of “comely” is this: [there are] attributes that are above 43 Chochmah, that is, they are the source of the attributes (middos),

as in the Musaf of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, and in Ne’ilah, we say, “Who is like You, Father of mercies,” which is a revelation of a higher level than the level of “Merciful Father.”

For the meaning of “Merciful Father” is the enclothing of the light in the attribute of mercy, which is among the attributes of Atzilus; but “Father of mercies” means that He brings into being and draws down the attribute of mercy, to have mercy on the worlds and give them life

(and this is “the Good One, for Your mercies have not ended”). This is the level of the attributes that are above Chochmah; and therefore it is said in Musaf and Ne’ilah, when the Kedushah of “Keser” is said.

Now, for the revelation from there to come into the attributes of Atzilus, it is through the level of hairs. For the hairs are only, by way of analogy, the level of the vegetative,

for the speaking [being] too comprises mineral, vegetative, animal and speaking, and the level of hairs is only the vegetative within him, which is the level of the attributes, called “vegetative.” This is not so with Chochmah, which is called “living,” above the vegetative level, as it is written, “and wisdom gives life.”

And just as the Chochmah of Atzilus is above the attributes of Atzilus and is called “living,” 44 while the attributes (middos) are the level of “vegetative,” so too in the level of Atik Yomin and Arich Anpin the attributes are called “vegetative.”

And this is the level of “and the hair of His head like pure wool”; from there is the root of the revelation through the positive commandments. But through the prohibitions there is drawn a revelation of Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin.

For the positive commandments and the prohibitions are drawn from the Name Havayah: the prohibitions from yud-hei and the positive commandments from vav-hei. This does not mean that they are from the Name Havayah enclothed in the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus, for it was explained above at length that the mitzvos are a revelation of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof) through the level of Keser, which is the intermediary, etc.

Rather, it means that they are drawn from the Name Havayah of Atik Yomin. If so, the positive commandments, which are drawn from vav-hei, are the revelation of the level of the seven lower [Sefiros] of Atik Yomin, which are the attributes; and this revelation is through the level of the hairs, “and the hair of His head like pure wool,” the vegetative level.

But the prohibitions, which are drawn from yud-hei, are Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin; it is impossible for this level to be revealed through hairs and the vegetative level, etc.

Nevertheless, this revelation is drawn through the black hairs of Z’eir Anpin, which are below 45 the hairs of Arich Anpin; and this is “He reveals deep things out of darkness, etc.”

The explanation: on the contrary, because the level of Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin is the highest level, therefore its enclothing will be in a lower level, as in the matter mentioned above of the lion and the ox: the lion’s root is much higher than the ox’s root,

and yet below, the lion is lower in level—but that very thing is the cause, etc. And by way of this analogy—making the necessary distinction—it will be understood even higher above: that the light from the level of Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin cannot be enclothed in the hairs of Arich Anpin,

but only below them, in the hairs of Z’eir Anpin, where the light shines through rejection, by way of “not,” etc.

With this the meaning of “I am black, yet comely” will be understood: that the revelation of the 46 level of “comely” comes specifically through “I am black,” “black as a raven.”

The explanation is that “comely” means as it is written, “A man’s wisdom lights up his face,” and it is the level of “May G-d make His face shine upon you,”

which is the seventh of the thirteen tikkunim of Arich Anpin, the tikkun of “and truth,” which is the illumination of the face; for the face is free of hair, because it is above the level of hairs and contractions, which are only the vegetative level.

But “A man’s wisdom lights up his face” means the essence of Chochmah within Keser, which is above the vegetative level, as above. (See what is written on this subject in the explanation on “And Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys”; and see the Ramaz on Parshas Vayikra, at the beginning of the parsha, who wrote that in the tikkun of “and truth” the Daas of Atik shines, etc.; see there.)

And this is “I am black, yet comely”: through fulfilling the prohibitive commandments, which are drawn from the level of the black hairs—through this, “comely,” which is the revelation of the illumination of the face, far above the level of the hairs of Arich Anpin, as above.

And there is a still higher level: this is the matter of “like the curtains of Shlomo”—[the King] to Whom peace (shalom) belongs—on the basis of the verse, “Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; peace he shall make with Me.”

“Peace” twice: that is, in the heavenly household and in the earthly household. The meaning of “in the earthly household” is that for there to be a union and revelation of Atzilus in Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, there must be a peace that joins and binds them.

And peace in the heavenly household means the binding and revelation of the Emanator’s light 47 in the emanated [levels]; it is through the level of Yesod, which unites them and makes peace between distant things that bear no comparison to each other.

For He, blessed be He, is “exalted from the days of the world” of Atzilus, and nevertheless “in His goodness He renews each day, continually, the work of creation, etc.”

(According to what is written in the Shelah, Parshas Va’eschanan, that “good” in its full sense is the inner goodness, the choicest of the good, etc., end of quote—and see the Zohar, Terumah, [folio] 165—one may say that “His goodness” is the highest level in Keser, through which He renews and draws down the light into the “abundant in kindness” of Arich Anpin, etc. And see the Zohar at the beginning of Parshas Emor, and the Ramaz there; and see what is written in the discourse beginning “Va’eschanan” on “and in His goodness He renews, etc.”)

Also within Atzilus alone there is peace in two ways: the union of Chochmah and Binah through Daas, which joins them, and the inclusion of Chesed and Gevurah in each other through Tiferes; also that each attribute be composed of ten—all this is the matter of “He makes peace in His heights.”

All this is the matter of His enclothing in the worlds and making peace between them; see 48 Iggeres HaKodesh on the verse “And the work of righteousness shall be peace.”

But “the curtains of Shlomo” means [the One] to Whom peace belongs, where it does not apply at all to say that there are two things between which peace must be made; rather, all are considered as truly nothing.

Even “a clear light is darkness before Him,” and they are nullified in their source like the sun’s radiance in its source, which cannot be called by the name “light,” because it is nullified in the luminary

(and this is like the union and nullification of the Ten Sefiros of Akudim in their Emanator: they are “bound” in one vessel, for out of the intensity of their nullification in the Infinite One (Ein Sof), blessed be He, they are in one vessel, etc.; and it does not apply to say that there are two things between which peace must be made, as with the Ten Sefiros of Atzilus, where each is in a vessel of its own).

And in the Time to Come this level too, of “the curtains of Shlomo,” will be revealed: that is, when there will be a revelation of His essence and being, “I, G-d, have not changed”—this is called “the curtains of Shlomo,” which encompasses all the levels of peace and is higher than them.

Now, the curtains of Shlomo are white. For it is written, “And Lavan rose early in the morning”: that is, an illumination from the level of the supernal whiteness, the revelation of the supernal kindness in all the partzufim; “and he kissed his sons

and his daughters”: these are the level of cause and effect, giver and receiver; and afterwards, “and Lavan returned to his place.” But all this is the level of the illumination of the kindness of the Infinite One, blessed be He, revealed in Atzilus.

Moshe our teacher, peace be upon him, however, asked, “Let me cross over, please, and see the good mountain and the Levanon.” The meaning of Levanon is a doubled form of “whiteness” (libun), that is, the source of whiteness, which cannot be en clothed at all in the Ten Sefiros and shines only in an encompassing manner

(and this is what is written, “and see, etc.”: for the essential revelation will be only in the Time to Come, “and I will walk among you”; or, nevertheless, through fulfilling the mitzvos dependent on the Land, he could come to the level of seeing the level of Levanon, as sight alone). And it is called “the curtains of Shlomo”: “He stretches out the heavens like a curtain.”

The explanation: it was explained above that through fulfilling the prohibitions there is drawn a revelation of Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin; and this is what is said, that the prohibitions are drawn from yud-hei.

And of this revelation it said, “comely, like the tents of Kedar”; the reason this revelation was compared to the tents of Kedar was written above. And afterwards it further said that a still higher level will be revealed,

namely the encompassing [lights] of Chochmah, Binah and Daas of Atik Yomin; and this is the level of “like the curtains of Shlomo.” (And see Mevo She’arim) (Sha’ar 2, Part 3, chapter 5): “The superior and very great part is what remains encompassing, etc.”; see there.

This needs to be reconciled with what is written (in Sha'ar 3, Part 1, chapter 5), that the inner light is great, etc.; and so too wrote Etz Chaim (in the first edition, Sha'ar 10, end of chapter 2).

And so too it is written in Mishnas Chassidim, Maseches Atik, end of chapter 1. And see what is written there in Mevo She'arim (Sha'ar 3, Part 1, beginning of chapter 5): "And perhaps the student, etc.";

see there. And see the Ramaz at the beginning of Parshas Shemini on the inner light and encompassing light of Atik: that the encompassing light spreads, etc., beyond all searching. End of quote.

And this is as written here. And all is through the level of "I am black": that the soul descended below in order to carry out the subjugation (iskafya) and transformation (is'hapcha) of darkness into light, etc.,

through "turn from evil and do good," for through this all the dross from what fell in the shattering of the vessels will be refined, and there will be no separating screen. "And the glory of G-d will be revealed"; "eye to eye they shall see"; "on that day G-d will be One and His Name One."

(The level of "the curtains of Shlomo" will be further understood from what is written elsewhere, at the end of the discourse beginning "Until he does not know [the difference] between 'Cursed is Haman' and 'Blessed is Mordechai'": "Cursed is Haman" is the kelipah that covers and conceals the Name yud-hei, the level of the prohibitions, and "Blessed is Mordechai" is the drawing down of the positive commandments, the level of vav-hei.

And the level of higher teshuvah (teshuvah ila'ah) rises above the level of yud-hei and the level of vav-hei, as it is written regarding Yom Kippur, "before Havayah you shall be purified": above the level of the Name Havayah, on which the positive commandments and the prohibitive commandments depend, etc.

And so on Purim they merited this revelation through the self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh) in [the face of] Haman's decree, when their faces were blackened; and this is the level of "I am black, yet comely, like the curtains of Shlomo."

Therefore the rejoicing is "until he does not know [the difference] between, etc.," for it is much higher than the two levels of positive and prohibitive, etc. And therefore on Yom Kippur the strip of crimson wool would turn white, and this is through the drawing down from the source of whiteness, as in "and the Lebanon, etc.")

7. After all this, the meaning of the verse "Rise before the hoary head, etc." will also be understood. For it is explained in the Likkutei Torah of the Arizal, in Taamei HaMitzvos, at the end of Parshas Kedoshim, that "Rise before the hoary head" refers to the beard of Arich Anpin, and "and honor the face of the elder" refers to the beard of Z'eir Anpin.

But how can one say of a person below that he should rise before Arich [Anpin] and Z'eir Anpin, 50 etc.? Is it not [said], "No thought can grasp, etc.," and is it not written, "For no man can see Me and live, etc."?

Rather, the matter is that it refers to the fulfillment of the Torah and mitzvos, which are drawn from the beard of Arich Anpin and from the beard of Z'eir Anpin: the positive commandments are drawn from the beard of Arich Anpin, and the prohibitions are in the beard of Z'eir Anpin.

And when one fulfills the mitzvah with beautification of the mitzvah, as is proper, he thereby 51 fulfills "Rise before the hoary head, etc." And all the more so according to what is written elsewhere, that the mitzvos are called "G-d's agents," and "a person's agent is like himself"; if so, this is literally "Rise before the hoary head, etc."

And included in this is honoring a Torah scholar and rising before a Torah scroll, as explained in the Zohar at the end of Parshas Kedoshim: Rav Hamnuna Sava, when he would see a Torah scroll, would rise before it and say, "Rise before the hoary head, etc."

And this is what we hold (in Kiddushin, folio 32b), that "Rise before the hoary head" refers to one who is old and wise, while "and honor the face of the elder" refers to one who has acquired wisdom, even a youth who is wise.

This is like the explanation of the Likkutei Torah [of the Arizal], that "Rise before the hoary head" refers to the beard of Arich Anpin, which is the level of "the Elder" (Sava), as it is written, "and the Ancient of Days sat, etc.,

and the hair of His head like pure wool." But "and honor the face of the elder" refers to the beard of Z'eir Anpin, which is the level of "his locks are curled, black, etc.,"

only that "he acquired wisdom": acquisition (kinyan) is a drawing from concealment into revelation, so that the hidden brain (mocha setima'ah) is drawn into it, as is explained in the Idra (folio 140a):

"And because these hairs are black and dark, it is written, 'He reveals deep things out of darkness,' etc."—that through fulfilling the prohibitions there is drawn the level of the depth of the supernal Chochmah, "Your thoughts are very deep, etc.,"

as explained above at length. Now, the meaning of "and you shall fear your G-d": the Likkutei Torah [of the Arizal] explains there that it is the level of Nukva, Malchus of Atzilus.

The explanation is that this refers to the Oral Torah, for "Malchus is the mouth; we call it the 52 Oral Torah"; and the seven rabbinic commandments and the other safeguards and fences that are from the words of the Scribes.

And so it is implied in the Zohar there: Rabbi Shimon said, "From here is an allusion to the Written Torah and an allusion to the Oral Torah"; and as written in Mikdash Melech there, that the Oral Torah is the level of Nukva, and of it is said, "and you shall fear your G-d."

The explanation: Malchus is below Z'eir Anpin, and all the more so below Arich [Anpin]; and of this it is said, "Your hair is like a flock of goats, etc." Therefore it was necessary to say of this, "and you shall fear,"

for in truth the words of the Scribes are more stringent than the words of the Torah, etc., as is known regarding "The words of the Scribes are dearer to me than the wine of the Torah," for their root is from the level of the scribe (sofer), which is above the Written Torah, the level of the book (sefer).

As is written further elsewhere on the meaning of "Greater understanding (binah yeseirah) was 53 given to woman than to man," that it refers to the Oral Torah. For the matter of the seven rabbinic commandments,

such as washing the hands, eruvin and the Chanukah lamp, is also to repel the nurture of the external forces, as with the prohibitive commandments: through washing the hands the external forces do not draw nurture from the attributes, from the fingernails, etc.

And this is accomplished in the rabbinic commandments through active doing, whereas in the Written Torah this level can come about only through "not," which is the matter of the prohibitions; and in the Oral Torah this level comes and is drawn into the seven rabbinic commandments, which are rabbinic positive commandments.

And this is "Greater understanding was given to woman." And see what is written in the explanation on "Thus shall you bless," on "How can I not show favor to Israel? For I wrote, 'And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless,' and they are scrupulous with themselves down to an olive's bulk, etc.,"

that is, they drew down from higher than the level of the drawing down that comes through the Written Torah, etc.; see there. And see what is written further on this in Parshas Matos, in the discourse beginning "And her father hears her vow." Therefore it is said of this, "and you shall fear your G-d": the level of Malchus, "we call it the Oral Torah."

And see what is written at the end of the discourse beginning "The voice of my beloved" on 54 "mountains and hills, the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs, etc."; in the same way it will also be understood regarding the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. And the end of the verse, "I am Havayah," [means] that all is one, as written at the end of the discourse beginning "Keep My Shabbosos, etc."