

## **A SHORT CHRONOLOGY OF KABBALAH**

**586 BCE** Ezekiel's Chariot Vision (Chapters 1–3)

**1**

**100–** Rabbinic “Merkabah” (“Chariot”) mysticism

**200**

Hekhalot literature

**~800** Sefer Yetzirah “The Book of Formation” (The world was created from the 10 sefirot and the 22 letters)

**~ 1180** Sefer Ha-Bahir

**~ 1250** Nachmanides

Azriel of Gerona, Joseph Gikatilla, Moses de Leon

**~ 1280 THE ZOHAR**

Bahya ben Asher

Isaac of Akko

**~ 1540 THE SAFED KABBALISTIC REVIVAL**

Joseph Caro

Moses Cordovero

Isaac Luria

**1665–66 MESSIANIC MOVEMENT OF SABBETAI ZEVI**

**1750–1830 GOLDEN AGE OF HASIDISM**

**1865–1935 RABBI ABRAHAM ISAAC KOOK**

THE ANCHOR BIBLE

# Ezekiel

1-20

A NEW TRANSLATION  
WITH INTRODUCTION  
AND COMMENTARY

BY

Moshe Greenberg

I. Ezekiel's Call: The Vision  
(1:1-28b<sup>c</sup>)

1 It was in the thirtieth year in the fourth month on the fifth of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, that the heavens opened and I saw a divine vision. 2 (On the fifth of the month—that was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile— 3 it happened that the word of YHWH came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of YHWH came upon him<sup>a</sup> there.)

4 As I looked, a stormy wind came from the north, with a large cloud and a mass of fire, surrounded by a radiance; out of it—out of the fire—appeared something that looked like *hashmal*. 5 Out of it the figures of four creatures emerged and this was their appearance: they had a human shape, 6 but they each had four faces and each four wings. 7 For legs, they had a straight leg, and their feet were like a calf's foot. They gleamed like burnished bronze. 8 Human hands were under their wings on their four sides. As for the faces<sup>b</sup> and the wings<sup>c</sup> of the four of them, 9<sup>b</sup>their wings were joined one to another<sup>b</sup>, they did not change position as they went, but each went straight ahead. 10 The shape of their face was human; but on the right the four of them had a lion's face, and on the left the four of them had a bull's face; and the four of them had an eagle's face. 11<sup>b</sup> And their faces<sup>b</sup> and their wings were separated above; each had two joining each, and two covering their bodies. 12 Each went straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go they went, without changing position as they went. 13<sup>c</sup> And the shape of the creatures, their appearance, was like<sup>c</sup> burning coals of fire; something with the appearance of torches it was, moving around amidst the creatures. The fire had a radiance and from it lightning flashed. 14<sup>d</sup> And the creatures darting to and fro with the appearance of sparks./

<sup>a</sup> G S "me" (as from *ly*).

<sup>b-b</sup> Not in G.

<sup>c-c</sup> G "And amidst (as from *wbywrt*) the creatures (was) an apparition like" (as from *mr<sup>h</sup> k-<sup>2</sup>*); S "And the shape of the creatures (was) like the appearance of" (as from *km<sup>r</sup>h*).

<sup>d</sup> This verse is not in G.

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15 As I looked at the creatures I saw one wheel on the ground alongside the creatures, with its four faces. 16 And the appearance of the wheels<sup>b</sup> and their design<sup>b</sup> were like chrysolite and all four had the same shape; their appearance<sup>b</sup> and their design were as if one wheel were inside the other wheel. 17 When those went these went on their four sides, without changing position as they went. 18 As for their rims, they had height and they had dread<sup>f</sup>; and their brows were inlaid all around with eyes for the four of them. 19 When the creatures went the wheels went beside them; when the creatures rose off the ground the wheels rose too. 20 Wherever the spirit would go they went<sup>e</sup>/wherever the spirit go/<sup>e</sup> and the wheels rose alongside them, for the spirit of the creature was in the wheels: 21 when these went those went and when these halted those halted and when these rose off the ground the wheels rose alongside them, for the spirit of the creature was in the wheels.

22 There was a shape over the heads of the creature, of an expanse that looked like dreadful ice, stretched over their heads above them. 23 Below the expanse their wings were extended one toward the other; each had two giving cover, each had two giving cover<sup>b</sup> to his body. 24 I heard the sound of their wings as they went like the sound of the deep sea like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they halted their wings slackened. 25 There was a sound from above the expanse that was over their heads: when they halted their wings slackened.<sup>b</sup>

26<sup>b</sup> Above the expanse that was over their heads<sup>e</sup> was the figure of a throne with the appearance of sapphire-stone<sup>i</sup>, and above, on the figure of a throne was a figure with the appearance of a human being. 27 From the appearance of his loins upward I saw the like of *hashmal*,<sup>b</sup> having something with the appearance of fire surrounding it<sup>b</sup>; and from the appearance of his loins downward I saw something with the appearance of fire; and he was surrounded by a radiance. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in a cloud on a rainy day such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the figure of the Majesty of YHWH; when I saw it, I fell on my face—

<sup>e-e</sup> G "for the four of them. 16 And" (as from *l'rhim w-*).

<sup>f-f</sup> G "and I saw them" (as from *w'r'h lhm?*); S "and they were seeing."

<sup>g-g</sup> Not in G and S.

<sup>b</sup> Vs. 25 is missing from some medieval Heb. mss.

<sup>i-i</sup> G "like the appearance of sapphire-stone (S "and like") the image of a throne upon it" (= *lyw*; G does not reflect *lyw* at the end of the verse where MT has it).

## COMMENT

1:1-3. Ezekiel's custom of opening accounts of his prophetic experiences with their date and sometimes their circumstances (see the Table of Dates in the Introduction) caused a departure here from the usual beginnings of prophetic books. Whereas books usually open with a superscription giving details of identification and setting (as, e.g., Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1-3; Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1), here these appear in vss. 2-3 as an explanatory interruption of the first-person narrative of vs. 1. The date in vs. 1 is explained in vs. 2 in terms of the era of Jehoiachin's exile, in accord with the rest of the dates in the book; then the "I" of vs. 1 and his location are identified. Since vss. 2-3 are in the third person, they are generally supposed to be, like the superscriptions of other prophetic books, from an editorial hand, not the prophet's. If so, however, and if the equation of "the thirtieth year" with the fifth of Jehoiachin's exile is accepted as correct, then the prophet will have jumped from one era in 1:1 to another throughout the rest of his book, taking no account of the change. One can avoid this embarrassment by supposing the prophet to have been his own editor and the author of the explanation in vss. 2-3—an extraordinary but not impossible procedure.

The era to which "the thirtieth year" belongs is unknown. If it is Jehoiachin's exile, like all the other dates in the book, then the equation of the "thirtieth year" of vs. 1 with the "fifth year" of vs. 2 is wrong, and this first date will be the latest in the book (after year 27 of 29:17); some modern scholars have felt that this is so and regard the verse as a fragment—the start of the latest dated prophecy. For example, S. Spiegel (*HTR* 24 [1931], 282ff.), W. F. Albright (*JBL* 51 [1932], 96f.) and C. Howie (*Date and Composition*, pp. 41, 49f.) take the "thirtieth year" as the date when Ezekiel first published his book; Freedman privately adds that it may have been the occasion of a closing vision essentially the same as that of "the fifth year." This proposal reads a great deal into the text. The vision that follows is later repeatedly referred to as having been "by the Chebar canal" (3:23; 10:15, 22; 43:3); since nowhere in the book but in our vs. 1 and 3 is any vision located there, to separate the referents of these verses from each other and from the following vision seems unreasonable. The editorial explanation (vss. 2-3) takes "the thirtieth year" as another era's equivalent of year 5 of Jehoiachin's exile. What that other era might be has been guessed at several times. T reads: "In the thirtieth year from the time when Hilkiah the high priest found the book of Torah in the Temple" (cf. II Kings 22:8ff.); and, indeed, it one counts back from the fifth year of the exile thirty years according to

says, Not to lay on, Nittai the Ar-belie says, One may lay on; Judah ben Tabbari says, Not to lay on, Simon ben Shetach says, One may lay on; Shemaiah says, One may lay on; Abtalion says, Not to lay on; Hillel and Menachem did not differ, but Menachem went forth<sup>2</sup> and Shammai came in;<sup>3</sup> Shammai says, Not to lay on, Hillel says, One may lay on. The former<sup>4</sup> were *Presidents*, and the latter<sup>5</sup> were *Heads of the Court*.\*

1 *ie.*, on **יום טוב**, a Holy-day-day, the hands may not be laid upon an offering, **לִפְנֵי**, before it is slaughtered. *Leviticus* 1, 4. The **מִקְרָבָהּ**, *laying on of hands*, is forbidden on **שַׁבָּת** as the person doing so leans with his whole weight upon the animal so making it as a beast of burden on the Sabbath and causing it to perform thus as it were an act of work. 2 Into the service of King Herod. According to some authorities this means he became an apostate. § 3 To be **דָּוָר דָּוָר** in his stead. He carried on the controversy. 4 Of each of the **זוּת**, *Pairs*, here mentioned (see **וְרֵעִים**, *Introduction*; 14<sup>b</sup>-15). 5 Literally *the second to them, ie.*, the other of every *Pair*. 6 Or *Vice-Presidents*, literally *Fathers*.  
§ See ADDENDA, Note 6. \* See ADDENDA, Note 7.

Mishnah 3  
מְשַׁבְּחֵי ג  
בְּיַד שְׂמֵרָא יֹאמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם; אֶבְרָהָם לֹא עוֹלָלוֹת. וְנִבְרִית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם.  
בְּיַד שְׂמֵרָא יֹאמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם; אֶבְרָהָם לֹא עוֹלָלוֹת. וְנִבְרִית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם.

1 Compare **בְּיַד שְׂמֵרָא** 21. 2 On **יום טוב**. 3 Not even **עוֹלָלוֹת**. 4 Both Schools agree that **עוֹלָלוֹת**, *burnt-offerings*, and **וְרֵעִים**, *peace-offerings*, of **זוּת**, *pairs*, and **נִבְרִית**, *free-will-offerings*, may not be offered on **יום טוב**. Basis *Deuteronomy* 16, 8. Compare 12<sup>a</sup>, 4.

CHAPTER 2

Mishnah 1

The laws of *incest* may not be expounded<sup>1</sup> to three persons,<sup>2</sup> nor the *Story of Creation* before two persons,<sup>3</sup> nor the subject of the *Chariot*<sup>4</sup> before one person alone unless he<sup>5</sup> be a Sage<sup>6</sup> and comprehends of his own knowledge. Whoever puts his mind to these four matters<sup>8</sup> it were better for him if he had not come into the world<sup>9</sup>—What is above?<sup>10</sup> What is below?<sup>11</sup> What is beyond?<sup>12</sup> What is in the opposite beyond?<sup>13</sup> And whosoever has no regard for the honour of his Creator<sup>14</sup>, it were better for him had he not come into the world.

1 Or *studied, explained. Leviticus* 18, 6-20. 2 To avoid going too deeply into the subject which might lead to undesirable thoughts.\* 3§ Because of insolvable problems (*Genesis* 1, 1 ff.) which would lead to undesirable and useless mystic speculations of the Divinity. 4 *Ezekiel* 1, 1 ff.; compare **מִקְרָבָהּ** 4<sup>b</sup>. 5 The disciple. 6 Literally *were*. 7 Referring to the disciple who to his teacher's knowledge does not need too much detail on this subject. 8 Mentioned here immediately following. 9 For these speculations lead to no result whatever and do not even serve any useful academic or philosophical purpose but only cause a falling away from true moral teaching. 10 To or beyond infinity in one direction. 11 To or beyond infinity in the opposite direction. 12 Beyond the heavens in the east, or at infinite space in the east, or *What was before the Creation?* 13 Beyond the heavens, or at an infinite distance, in the west, or *What will be in the hereafter when the world will have ceased to exist?* 14 Or *Maker, viz.*, who-ever denies the omnipotence and omnipotence and omniscience of his Creator ..... or *whoever transgresses in secret, fearing man more than God*.  
\* See ADDENDA, Note 4. § See ADDENDA, Note 5. † Or *fact*.

Mishnah 2  
בְּיַד שְׂמֵרָא יֹאמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם; אֶבְרָהָם לֹא עוֹלָלוֹת. וְנִבְרִית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם.  
בְּיַד שְׂמֵרָא יֹאמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם; אֶבְרָהָם לֹא עוֹלָלוֹת. וְנִבְרִית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, מְבִינֵי יִשְׁלַחֲנָם וְאֵין סוֹמְכִין עָלֵיהֶם.

## FROM THE TALMUD: SONCINO TRANSLATION

Talmud — Mas. Chagigah 11b

## CHAPTER II

MISHNAH THE [SUBJECT OF] FORBIDDEN RELATIONS<sup>4</sup> MAY NOT BE EXPOUNDED IN THE PRESENCE OF THREE,<sup>5</sup> NOR THE WORK OF CREATION<sup>6</sup> IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO, NOR [THE WORK OF] THE CHARIOT<sup>7</sup> IN THE PRESENCE OF ONE, UNLESS HE IS A SAGE AND UNDERSTANDS OF HIS OWN KNOWLEDGE. WHOSOEVER SPECULATES UPON FOUR THINGS, A PITY<sup>8</sup> FOR HIM! HE IS AS THOUGH HE HAD NOT COME INTO THE WORLD, [TO WIT], WHAT IS ABOVE,<sup>9</sup> WHAT IS BENEATH,<sup>10</sup> WHAT BEFORE, WHAT AFTER.<sup>11</sup> AND WHOSOEVER TAKES NO THOUGHT FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS MAKER,<sup>12</sup> IT WERE A MERCY<sup>13</sup> IF HE HAD NOT COME INTO THE WORLD.

GEMARA. You say at first: NOR [THE WORK OF] THE CHARIOT IN THE PRESENCE OF ONE;<sup>14</sup> and then you say: UNLESS HE IS A SAGE AND UNDERSTANDS OF HIS OWN KNOWLEDGE! — This is the meaning: the forbidden relations may not be expounded to three,<sup>15</sup> nor the work of creation to two, nor [the work of] the chariot to one, unless he is a Sage and understands of his own knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

THE FORBIDDEN RELATIONS MAY NOT BE EXPOUNDED IN THE PRESENCE OF THREE. What is the reason? Shall one say, because it is written: Whosoever to any that is near of kin to him?<sup>17</sup> ‘Whosoever’<sup>18</sup> [implies] two, ‘near of kin to him’ [implies] one; and the Divine Law said: Ye shall not approach to uncover their nakedness.<sup>19</sup> But then since it is written: Whosoever curseth his God,<sup>20</sup> Whosoever giveth of his seed unto Molech,<sup>21</sup> are these [passages] also [to be interpreted] thus! — These, therefore, must be required to make Gentiles subject to the prohibition concerning blasphemy<sup>22</sup> and idolatry like the Israelites; then this [verse]<sup>23</sup> is also required to make Gentiles subject to the prohibition concerning the forbidden relations like the Israelites!<sup>24</sup> It must be inferred, therefore, from the verse: Therefore shall ye keep My charge.<sup>25</sup> ‘Ye shall keep’ [implies] two,<sup>26</sup> ‘My charge’ [implies] one; and the Divine Law said: That ye do not any of these abominable customs.<sup>27</sup> But then since it is written: Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore,<sup>28</sup> And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread,<sup>29</sup> And ye shall keep the charge of the holy things,<sup>30</sup> are these [passages] also [to be interpreted] thus! — Therefore, said R. Ashi, THE FORBIDDEN RELATIONS MAY NOT BE EXPOUNDED IN THE PRESENCE OF THREE must mean: the secrets<sup>31</sup> of the forbidden relations may not be expounded to three.<sup>32</sup> What is the reason? It is a logical conclusion:<sup>33</sup> when two sit before their master, one engages in discussion with his master and the other inclines his ear to the instruction; but [when there are] three, one engages in discussion with his master, and the other two engage in discussion with one another and do not know what their master is saying, and may come to permit that which is prohibited in the matter of the forbidden relations. If so, [the rule should apply to] the whole Torah also!<sup>34</sup> The [subject of] forbidden relations is different, for the master said:<sup>35</sup> Robbery and the forbidden relations, a man's soul covets and lusts for them. If so, [the rule should apply to] robbery also! [In the case of] the forbidden relations, whether [the opportunity] be before him or not before him, a man's inclination is strong; [in the case of] robbery, if [the opportunity] is before him, his inclination is strong, but if it is not before him, his inclination is not strong.

NOR THE WORK OF CREATION IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO. Whence [do we infer] this? — For the Rabbis taught: For ask thou now of the days past;<sup>36</sup> one may inquire,<sup>37</sup> but two may not inquire. One might have thought that one may inquire concerning the pre-creation period, therefore Scripture teaches: Since the day that God created man upon the earth.<sup>38</sup> One might have thought that one may [also] not inquire concerning the six days of creation,<sup>39</sup> therefore Scripture teaches: The days past<sup>40</sup> which were before thee.<sup>41</sup> One might have thought one may [also] inquire concerning what is above and what is below, what before and what after, therefore the text teaches: And from one end of heaven unto the other.<sup>42</sup> [Concerning the things that are] from one end of heaven unto the other thou mayest inquire, but thou mayest not inquire what is above, what is below, what before, what after.

Talmud — Mas. Chagigah 12a

But now that this<sup>1</sup> is inferred from [the expression] ‘From one end of heaven unto the other’,<sup>2</sup> wherefore do I need [the expression], ‘Since the day that God created man upon the earth’? — To intimate that which R. Eleazar taught. For R. Eleazar said: The first man [extended]<sup>3</sup> from the earth to the firmament, as it is said: Since the day that God created man upon the earth;<sup>4</sup> but as soon as he sinned,<sup>5</sup> the Holy One, blessed be He, placed His hand upon him and diminished him,<sup>6</sup> for it is said: Thou hast fashioned me<sup>7</sup> after and before,<sup>8</sup> and laid Thine hand upon me.<sup>9</sup>

Rab Judah said that Rab said: The first man [extended]<sup>10</sup> from one end of the world to the other,<sup>11</sup> for it is said: ‘Since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other’; as soon as he sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, placed His hand upon him and diminished him, for it is said: ‘And laid Thine hand upon me’. If so, the verses<sup>12</sup> contradict one another! — They both [have] the same dimensions.<sup>13</sup>

Rab Judah further said that Rab said: Ten<sup>14</sup> things were created the first day, and they are as follows: heaven and earth, Tohu [chaos], Bohu [desolation],<sup>15</sup> light and darkness, wind and water, the measure of day and the measure of night.<sup>16</sup> Heaven and earth, for it is written: In the beginning God created heaven and earth.<sup>17</sup> Tohu and Bohu, for it is written: And the earth was Tohu and Bohu.<sup>18</sup> Light and darkness: darkness, for it is written: And darkness was upon the face of the deep;<sup>18</sup> light, for it is written: And God said, Let there be light.<sup>19</sup> Wind and water, for it is written: And the wind<sup>20</sup> of God hovered over the face of the waters.<sup>21</sup> The measure of day and the measure of night, for it is written: And there was evening and there was morning, one day.<sup>22</sup> It is taught: Tohu is a green line that encompasses the whole world, out of which darkness proceeds, for it is said: He made darkness His hiding-place round about Him.<sup>23</sup> Bohu, this means the slimy<sup>24</sup> stones that are sunk in the deep, out of which the waters proceed, for it is said: And he shall stretch over it the line of confusion [Tohu] and the plummet of emptiness [Bohu].<sup>25</sup>

But was the light created on the first day? For, behold, it is written: And God set them in the firmament of the heaven,<sup>26</sup> and it is [further] written: And there was evening and there was morning a fourth day<sup>27</sup> — This is [to be explained] according to R. Eleazar. For R. Eleazar said: The light which the Holy One, blessed be He, created on the first day, one could see thereby from one end of the world to the other; but as soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, beheld the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion,<sup>28</sup> and saw that their actions were corrupt, He arose and hid it from them, for it is said: But from the wicked their light is withholden.<sup>29</sup> And for whom did he reserve it? For the righteous in the time to come,<sup>30</sup> for it is said: And God saw the light, that it was good;<sup>31</sup> and ‘good’ means only the righteous, for it is said: Say ye of the righteous that he is good.<sup>32</sup> As soon as He saw the light that He had reserved for the righteous, He rejoiced, for it is said: He rejoiceth at the light of the righteous.<sup>33</sup> Now Tannaim [differ on the point]: The light which the Holy One, blessed be He, created on the first day one could see and look thereby from one end of the world to the other; this is the view of R. Jacob. But the Sages say: It<sup>34</sup> is identical with the luminaries;<sup>35</sup> for they were created on the first day, but they were not hung up [in the firmament] till the fourth day.<sup>36</sup>

R. Zutra b. Tobiah said that Rab said: by ten things<sup>37</sup> was the world created: By wisdom<sup>38</sup> and by understanding,<sup>39</sup> and by reason,<sup>40</sup> and by strength,<sup>41</sup> and by rebuke,<sup>42</sup> and by might,<sup>43</sup> by righteousness and by judgment,<sup>44</sup> by lovingkindness and by compassion.<sup>45</sup> By wisdom and understanding, for it is written: The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; and by understanding established the heavens.<sup>46</sup> By reason, for it is written: By His reason<sup>47</sup> the depths were broken up.<sup>48</sup> By strength and might, for it is written: Who by His strength setteth fast the mountains, Who is girded about with might.<sup>49</sup> By rebuke, for it is written: The pillars of heaven were trembling, but they became astonished at His rebuke.<sup>50</sup> By righteousness and judgment, for it is written: Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of Thy throne.<sup>51</sup> By lovingkindness and compassion, for it is written: Remember, O Lord, Thy compassions and Thy mercies; for they have been from of old.<sup>52</sup> Rab Judah further said: At the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, it went on expanding like two clues<sup>53</sup> of warp, until the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked it and brought it to a standstill, for it is said: ‘The pillars of heaven were trembling, but they became astonished at His rebuke’. And that, too, is what Resh Lakish said: What is the meaning of the verse, I am God Almighty?<sup>54</sup> [It means], I am He that said to the world: Enough!<sup>55</sup> Resh Lakish said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the sea, it went on expanding, until the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked it and caused it to dry up, for it is said: He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers.<sup>56</sup>

Our Rabbis taught: Beth Shammai say: Heaven was created first and afterwards the earth was created, for it is said: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.<sup>57</sup> Beth Hillel say: Earth was created first and afterwards heaven, for it is said: In the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.<sup>58</sup> Beth Hillel said to Beth Shammai: According to your view, a man builds the upper storey [first] and afterwards builds the house! For it is said: It is he that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven,<sup>59</sup> and hath founded His vault upon the earth.<sup>60</sup> Said Beth Shammai to Beth Hillel: According to your view, a man makes the footstool [first], and afterwards he makes the throne!<sup>61</sup> For it is said: Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.<sup>62</sup> But the Sages say: Both were created at the same time.<sup>63</sup> For it is said: Yea, Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spread out the heavens: When I call unto them they stand up together.<sup>64</sup> And the others?<sup>65</sup> What is the meaning of ‘together’? — [It means] that they cannot be loosened from one another.<sup>66</sup> However, the verses contradict one another! — Resh Lakish answered: When they were created, He created heaven [first], and afterwards He created the earth; but when He stretched them forth He stretched forth the earth [first], and afterwards He stretched forth heaven.

What does ‘heaven’ [Shamayim] mean? R. Jose b. Hanina said: It means, ‘There is water’.<sup>67</sup> In a Baraita it is taught: [It means], ‘fire and water<sup>68</sup>’; this teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, brought them and mixed<sup>69</sup> them one with the other and made from them the firmament.

R. Ishmael questioned R. Akiba when they were going on a journey together, saying to him: Thou who hast waited<sup>70</sup> twenty-two years upon Nahum of Gimzo,<sup>71</sup> who used to explain the [particle] Eth<sup>72</sup> throughout the Torah, [tell me] what exposition did he give of [Eth] the heaven and [Eth] the earth?<sup>73</sup> Said [R. Akiba] to him: If it had said, ‘heaven and earth’, I could have said that Heaven and Earth<sup>74</sup> were names of the Holy One, blessed be He.<sup>75</sup> But now

rule over them.<sup>27</sup> ‘Stay’ — this means the masters of the Bible.<sup>28</sup> ‘Staff’ — this means the masters of the Mishnah, like R. Judah b. Tema and his colleagues. R. Papa and our Rabbis dispute therein: one says that there were<sup>29</sup> six hundred orders of the Mishnah, and the other that there were seven hundred orders of the Mishnah.<sup>30</sup> ‘Every stay of bread’ — this means the masters of Talmud,<sup>31</sup> for it is said: Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.<sup>32</sup> ‘And every stay of water’ — this means the masters of Aggadah, who draw the heart of man like water by means of the Aggadah. ‘The ‘mighty man’ — this means the masters of traditions.<sup>33</sup> ‘And the man of war’ — this means one who knows how to dispute<sup>34</sup> in the warfare of the Torah. ‘The judge — this means a judge who passes judgment in strictest accord with truth — ‘The prophet’ — according to the literal meaning of the word. ‘The diviner’ — this means the King, for it is said: A divine sentence is in the lips of the King.<sup>35</sup> ‘The elder’ — this means one who is worthy to sit in session.<sup>36</sup> ‘The captain of fifty’: do not read ‘the captain of fifty’ but ‘the captain of the Pentateuch’;<sup>37</sup> it means one who knows how to argue in the five books of the Torah. Another explanation: ‘the captain of fifty’ — as R. Abbahu [taught]. For R. Abbahu said. From here [we learn] that a Methurgeman<sup>38</sup> may not be appointed over a congregation, who is less than fifty years of age. ‘And a man of rank’ — this means one for whose sake favour is shown to his [entire] generation, like R. Hanina b. Dosa,<sup>39</sup> for instance, on high;<sup>40</sup> [or] below,<sup>41</sup> like R. Abbahu at the court of Caesar.<sup>42</sup> ‘The counsellor’ — [this means] one who knows how to determine the intercalation of years<sup>43</sup> and the fixation of months.<sup>44</sup> ‘And the wise [man]’<sup>45</sup> -this means a disciple who makes his teachers wise. ‘Charmer’ — at the moment that he begins a Torah<sup>46</sup> — discourse, all become dumb. ‘And the skillful [‘man]’<sup>47</sup> — this means one who understands one thing from another.<sup>48</sup> ‘Enchanter’ — this means one who is worthy to have imparted to him the words of the Torah, which was given in a whisper.<sup>49</sup> ‘And I will give children to be their princes’: what is the meaning of [the words], ‘I will give children to be their princes’? R. Eleazar said: It means persons who are empty<sup>50</sup> of good deeds.<sup>51</sup> ‘And babes shall rule over them’. R. Aha<sup>52</sup> b. Jacob said: [It means] foxes sons of foxes.<sup>53</sup> ‘But he was not pacified<sup>54</sup> until he said to them: The child shall behave insolently against the aged’: — those persons who are empty of good deeds shall behave insolently against such as are filled with good deeds<sup>55</sup> as a pomegranate [with seeds]. ‘And the base against the honourable’: those to whom weighty [precepts] appear as light ones<sup>56</sup> will come and behave insolently against those to whom light [precepts] appear as weighty ones.<sup>57</sup>

R. Kattina said: Even at the time of Jerusalem's downfall honest men did not cease from among them, for it is said: For a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father: ‘Thou hast a mantle, be thou our ruler’!<sup>58</sup> Matters on account of which men hide themselves as in a garment<sup>59</sup> thou hast ‘under thy hand’.<sup>60</sup> And this ruin:<sup>61</sup> what is the meaning of [the expression] ‘and this ruin’? — Matters which people do not grasp unless they stumble over them<sup>62</sup> are under thy hand’. In that day shall he take<sup>63</sup> [an oath], saying: I am not<sup>64</sup> a healer, for in my house is neither bread nor a mantle; ye shall not make me ruler of a people.<sup>65</sup> — Shall he take, ‘Take’ expresses an oath, for it is said: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God [in vain].<sup>66</sup> I am not a healer.’ I was<sup>67</sup> not of those who are bound to the Schoolhouse.<sup>68</sup> For in my house is neither bread not a mantle, — for I possess no knowledge of Bible or Mishnah or Gemara, But perhaps that case<sup>69</sup> is different; for had he said to them, I have knowledge, they would have said to him, Tell us then! — He could have answered that he had learnt but had forgotten; why then does it say: ‘I am not a healer’? [It must mean], I am not a healer at all.<sup>70</sup> But is it so? Behold Raba said: Jerusalem was not destroyed until honest men ceased therefrom, for it is said: Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth;<sup>71</sup> and I will pardon him.<sup>72</sup> — There is no contradiction:

Talmud — Mas. Chagigah 14b

the one [verse] refers to religious matters,<sup>1</sup> the other to business. In regard to religious matters, there were [honest men left]; in regard to business, there were no [honest men left].

Our Rabbis taught: Once R. Johanan b. Zakkai was riding on an ass when going on a journey, and R. Eleazar b. ‘Arak was driving the ass from behind. [R. Eleazar] said to him: Master, teach me a chapter of the ‘Work of the Chariot’.<sup>2</sup> He answered: Have I not taught you<sup>3</sup> thus: ‘Nor [the work of] the chariot in the presence of one, unless he is a Sage and understands of his own knowledge’? [R. Eleazar] then said to him: Master, permit me to say before thee something which thou hast taught me.<sup>4</sup> He answered, Say on! Forthwith R. Johanan b. Zakkai dismounted from the ass, and wrapped himself up,<sup>5</sup> and sat upon a stone beneath an olive tree. Said [R. Eleazar] to him: Master, wherefore didst thou dismount from the ass? He answered: Is it proper that whilst thou art expounding the ‘Work of the Chariot’, and the Divine Presence is with us, and the ministering angels accompany us, I should ride on the ass! Forthwith, R. Eleazar b. ‘Arak began his exposition of the ‘work of the Chariot’, and fire<sup>6</sup> came down from heaven and encompassed<sup>7</sup> all the trees in the field; [thereupon] they all began to utter [divine] song. What was the song they uttered? — Praise the Lord from the earth, ye sea-monsters, and all deeps . . . fruitful trees and all cedars . . . Hallelujah.<sup>8</sup> An angel<sup>9</sup> [then] answered<sup>10</sup> from the fire and said: This is the very ‘Work of the Chariot’. [Thereupon] R. Johanan b. Zakkai rose and kissed him on his head and said: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who hath given a son to Abraham our father, who knoweth to speculate upon, and to investigate, and to expound the ‘Work of the Chariot’ — There are some who preach well but do not act well, others act well but do not preach well, but thou dost preach well and act well. Happy art thou, O Abraham our father, that R. Eleazar b. ‘Arak hath come forth from thy loins. Now when these things were told R.

Joshua, he and R. Jose the priest<sup>11</sup> were going on a journey. They said: Let us also<sup>12</sup> expound the 'Work of the Chariot'; so R. Joshua began an exposition. Now that day was the summer solstice;<sup>13</sup> [nevertheless] the heavens became overcast with clouds and a kind of rainbow<sup>14</sup> appeared in the cloud, and the ministering angels assembled and came to listen like people who assemble and come to watch the entertainments<sup>15</sup> of a bridegroom and bride. [Thereupon] R. Jose the priest went and related what happened before R. Johanan b. Zakkai; and [the latter] said: Happy are ye, and happy is she that bore you;<sup>16</sup> happy are my eyes that have seen thus. Moreover, in my dream, I and ye were reclining<sup>17</sup> on Mount Sinai, when a Bath Kol<sup>18</sup> was sent to us,<sup>19</sup> [saying]: Ascend hither, ascend hither! [Here are] great banqueting chambers, and fine dining couches prepared for you; you and your disciples and your disciples' disciples are designated for the third class.<sup>20</sup> But is this so?<sup>21</sup> For behold it is taught: R. Jose b. R. Judah said: There were three discourses:<sup>22</sup> R. Joshua discoursed before R. Johanan b. Zakkai, R. Akiba discoursed before R. Joshua, Hanania b. Hakinai discoursed before R. Akiba; — whereas R. Eleazar b. 'Arak he does not count! — One who discoursed [himself], and others discoursed before him, he counts; one who discoursed [himself], but others did not discourse before him, he does not count. But behold there is Hanania b. Hakinai before whom others did not discourse, yet he counts him! — He at least discoursed before one who discoursed [before others].<sup>23</sup>

Our Rabbis taught: Four men entered the 'Garden',<sup>24</sup> namely, Ben 'Azzai<sup>25</sup> and Ben Zoma,<sup>26</sup> Aher,<sup>27</sup> and R. Akiba. R. Akiba said to them: When ye arrive at the stones of pure marble,<sup>28</sup> say not, water, water!<sup>29</sup> For it is said: He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.<sup>30</sup> Ben 'Azzai cast a look and died. Of him Scripture says: Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.<sup>31</sup> Ben Zoma looked and became demented.<sup>32</sup> Of him Scripture says: Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.<sup>33</sup> Aher mutilated the shoots.<sup>34</sup> R. Akiba departed unhurt.

Ben Zoma was asked: Is it permitted to castrate a dog?<sup>35</sup> He replied: Neither shall ye do this in your land,<sup>36</sup> — [this means], to none that is in your land shall ye do thus.<sup>37</sup> Ben Zoma was [further] asked: May a high priest marry a maiden who has become pregnant?<sup>38</sup> Do we [in such a case] take into consideration Samuel's statement, for Samuel said,

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Talmud — Mas. Chagigah 15a

I can have repeated sexual connections without [causing] bleeding;<sup>1</sup> or is perhaps the case of Samuel rare?<sup>2</sup> He replied: The case of Samuel is rare, but we do consider [the possibility] that she may have conceived in a bath.<sup>3</sup> But behold Samuel said: A spermatic emission that does not shoot forth like an arrow cannot fructify! — In the first instance, it had also shot forth like an arrow.

Our Rabbis taught: Once R. Joshua b. Hanania was standing on a step on the Temple Mount, and Ben Zoma saw him and did not stand up before him.<sup>4</sup> So [R. Joshua] said to him: Whence and whither, Ben Zoma?<sup>5</sup> He replied: I was gazing between the upper and the lower waters,<sup>6</sup> and there is only a bare three fingers' [breadth] between them, for it is said: And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters<sup>7</sup> — like a dove which hovers over her young without touching [them].<sup>8</sup> Thereupon R. Joshua said to his disciples: Ben Zoma is still outside.<sup>9</sup> See now, when was it that 'the spirit of God hovered over the face of the water? On the first day [of Creation]; but the division took place on the second day, for it is written: And let it divide the waters from the waters!' And how big [is the interval]? R. Aha b. Jacob said, As a hair's breadth; and the Rabbis said: As [between] the boards of a landing bridge. Mar Zutra, or according to others R. Assi, said: As [between] two cloaks spread one over the other; and others say, as [between] two cups tilted one over the other.<sup>10</sup>

Aher mutilated the shoots.<sup>11</sup> Of him Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt.<sup>12</sup> What does it refer to? — He saw that permission was granted to Metatron<sup>13</sup> to sit and write down<sup>14</sup> the merits of Israel. Said he: It is taught as a tradition that on high<sup>15</sup> there is no sitting<sup>16</sup> and no emulation, and no back,<sup>17</sup> and no weariness.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps, — God forbend! — there are two divinities! [Thereupon] they led Metatron forth, and punished him with sixty fiery lashes,<sup>19</sup> saying to him: Why didst thou not rise before him when thou didst see him? Permission was [then] given to him to strike out the merits of Aher. A Bath Kol<sup>20</sup> went forth and said: Return, ye backsliding children<sup>21</sup> — except Aher.<sup>22</sup> [Thereupon] he said: Since I<sup>23</sup> have been driven forth from yonder world,<sup>24</sup> let me go forth and enjoy this world. So Aher went forth into evil courses.<sup>25</sup> He went forth, found a harlot and demanded her. She said to him: Art thou not Elisha b. Abuyah? [But] when he tore a radish<sup>26</sup> out of its bed on the Sabbath and gave it to her, she said: It is another [Aher].<sup>27</sup> After his apostasy, Aher asked R. Meir [a question], saying to him: What is the meaning of the verse: God hath made even the one as<sup>28</sup> well as the other?<sup>29</sup> He replied: It means that for everything that God created He created [also] its counterpart. He created mountains, and created hills; He created seas, and created rivers. Said [Aher] to him: R. Akiba, thy master, did not explain it thus, but [as follows]: He created righteous, and created wicked; He created the Garden of Eden,<sup>30</sup> and created Gehinnom.<sup>31</sup> Everyone has two portions, one in the Garden of Eden and one in Gehinnom. The righteous man, being meritorious,<sup>32</sup> takes his own portions and his fellow's portion in the Garden of Eden. The wicked man, being guilty,<sup>33</sup> takes his own portion and his fellow's portion in Gehinnom. R. Mesharsheya said: What is the Biblical proof for this? In the case of the righteous, it is written:

## Selections from Hekhalot Rabbati

Translation: Morton Smith

[93] Said Rabbi Ishmael: Thus ran the teaching as to the vision of the Merkabha: He who beholdeth the Merkabha hath no right to stand up [out of courtesy to a superior], except before three authorities only: before a king and before a high priest and before a sanhedrin (and that, when a patriarch is with the sanhedrin, thus if a patriarch is not with a sanhedrin, then even before a sanhedrin he shall not stand up). And should he stand up he would be guilty of death because he had stood up before it, and he would lessen his days and cut short his years.

[94] Said Rabbi Ishmael: What be the words of the songs which a man doth recite when he descendeth to the Merkabha? Let him begin and recite the principal songs [OR, the first songs]:

The beginning of praise and the commencement of song  
 The beginning of jubilation and the commencement of exultation  
 Do the princes sing who serve each day  
 The Lord God of Israel and the throne of His glory;  
 They bear up the wheel of the throne of His glory, [singing]:  
 "Sing, sing for joy, supernal dwelling!  
 "Shout, shout for joy, precious vessel!  
 "Made marvelously and a marvel.  
 "Surely thou shalt gladden the King who sitteth upon thee,  
 "[With a joy] as the joy of the bridegroom in his bridechamber.  
 [Thus said I] when I came to take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings  
 In the joy of my heart which rejoiced in thee.  
 (For thy converse [my heart] is with the converse of the King  
 And with thy Maker thou dost hold discourse.)  
 (As it is said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.")

...

[104] Who is like unto our King among all the lofty ones of them who lay hold upon kingship?  
 Who is like our Maker? Who is like unto the Lord our God?  
 Who is like unto Him among those who knot the knots of diadems?  
 For with six voices do the supernal servants,  
 The bearers of the throne of His glory,  
 The cherubim and the ophanim and the holy beasts, sing before Him,  
 For each voice is exalted beyond its fellows and differeth from that which was before it.  
 The first voice: Everyone who heareth it at once crieth out and prostrateth himself.  
 The second voice: Everyone who hearkeneth unto it at once falleth into confusion and thereafter returneth not.  
 The third voice: Everyone who heareth it at once is seized by convulsions and at once dieth.  
 The fourth voice: Everyone who hearkeneth unto it at once hath the skull of his head and his body broken and most of the ends of his ribs are torn out.  
 The fifth voice: Everyone who heareth it at once poureth himself out as a vessel and is utterly dissolved into blood.  
 The sixth voice: Everyone who hearkeneth unto it at once is seized at heart by a fierce fire, and his heart is tumultuous  
 and overturneth his inmost bowels, and his bile is dissolved within him as to be as water.  
 (As it is said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.")

....

[140] Said Rabbi Ishmael: Metatron, the great Prince of the Presence, spoke to me [saying]: "My friend, come and I shall reveal the Messianic end which even they of old time were not worthy that it should be revealed to them, but thy glory is weighed equal to [that of] Aaron the Priest. As for that generation in which the son of David shall come, in it are all the peoples like unto a woman in travail, eating and drinking but with no thought. And there shall be wailing among the holy,

and cries of terror among the images of the mighty ones, and trembling shall arise in the cities and quaking in the provinces. And the vine shall yield its fruits, yet shall wine cost dear, and the olives shall be smitten and oil shall be dear. And none that laboreth, he and his household, all the day long suffereth to support himself and to support his household, because of the great cost of living. And when the nations of the world do see that this be so, they give authority for assistance in all things, as it is said [Psalms 97.7] ‘Ashamed be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols.’ And when thou seest all these signs, know that this is the Messianic end.

...

[167] For from the throne of His glory and upwards His height is one hundred and eighty thousands of myriads of parasangs, and from the throne of His glory and downwards there be one hundred and eighty thousands of myriads of parasangs. His stature is two hundred and thirty and six thousands of myriads of parasangs. From the ball of the right eye to the ball of the left eye there be thirty myriads of parasangs. The width of His right eye is three myriads of parasangs and three thousand of parasangs, and so for His left eye. And from His right arm to His left arm His width is seventy and seven myriads of parasangs, and His arms are folded upon His shoulders. His right arm – The Mover is its name, and the name of His left arm is The Follower (?) The palms of His hands are four thousands of myriads of parasangs, each one. The right palm – its name is Just, and of the left the name is Holy. Therefore He was called “God the great, the strong, and the fearful.” Said Metatron, “Thus far have I beheld the height of Jedidiah, the Master of the world. Peace.” [These revelations enable us to understand the verses in the Song of Songs 5.9 ff.] “What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?” etc. “My love is white and ruddy,” etc., all the section down to “daughters of Jerusalem.”

...

[170] When the Angel of the Presence goeth in to arrange and to set in order the throne of His glory and to prepare a seat for the Mighty One of Jacob, a thousand diadems doth he bind upon the head of each one of the ophanim of majesty, and a thousand times doth he kneel and fall down and prostrate himself before each one of them. Two thousand diadems doth he bind upon the head of each one of the cherubim of glory, and two thousand times doth he kneel and fall down and prostrate himself before each one of them. Three thousand diadems doth he bind upon the head of each one of the Holy Beasts, and three thousand times doth he kneel and fall down and prostrate himself before each one of them. Six thousand diadems doth he bind to [him who is called] Shining Light, to him and to eight thousand thousands of thousands of myriad myriads of myriads of diadems, and six thousand times doth he kneel and fall down and prostrate himself before each one of them. Twelve thousand diadems doth he bind upon [the angel of] lightning, upon him and upon sixteen thousand thousands and myriad myriads of myriads of diadems, twelve thousand times doth he kneel and fall down and prostrate himself before each one of them.

...

[173] Each day, when the dawn beginneth to appear, The King majestic sitteth and blesseth the beasts” “To ye, Beasts, do I speak, “Ye, Creatures, do I cause to hear.  
 “O Beasts, who bear the throne of My glory “With whole heart and with longing soul, “May that hour be blest in which I created ye, “May that planet be exalted under which I formed ye, “May the light of that day  
 “In which ye occurred to the thoughts of My heart, shine. “For ye are a precious vessel which I have prepared and have completed. “Be silent before Me, all creatures which I have made, “That I may listen and give ear to the voice of the prayer of My children.”

...

[204] And whenever a man wished to descend to the Merkabha he would call to Surya the Prince of the Presence and conjure him one hundred and twelve times by Totrosi’ ai the Lord (who is called Totrosi’ ai Zurtak Totrakhiel Tophgar ’Ashrawwili’ ai Zebhodi el Zoharari el Tandi el, and Shekhadhozi’ ai Dehibhiron, and ’Andiriron the Lord God of Israel. And let him beware that he do not exceed an hundred and twelve times and do not diminish from them. And if he exceed or diminish his blood is upon his own head. Bit his mouth must utter [the words of conjuration] and the fingers of his hands must count one hundred and twelve and forthwith he may go down and rule in the [world of the] Merkabha.)

...

[206] Said Rabbi Ishmael: Thus did Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakkanah say to me: Totrosi’ ai the Lord God of Israel of Hosts sitteth within seven palaces, one within another. And at the entrance to each palace are eight door-keepers, four to the right of the lintel and four to the left of the lintel. These be the names of the door-keepers of the first palace: Lahabhiel, and Kashrael, Gahoriel, Zekhuthiel, Tophhiel, and Lahariel, Mathkiel, and Shuwael. And there be those who say, And Shubhael. These be the names of the door-keepers of the second palace: Tagri el, and Mathpiel, Sarhiel, and ‘Azpi el, Shaharari el, and Starel, Rig’iel, and Sahabiel. And these be the names of the door-keepers of the third palace: Shebhuri el, and Rezuziel, and

Shalmiel, Sabhlael, and Zahazrael, Hadarel, and Puriel, and Paltriel. These be the names of the door-keepers of the fourth palace: Pahdiel, Gebhurthiel, Pozaziel, and Shekhinael, Shathkael, and 'Arbhiel, and Kapiel, and 'Anaphiel. These be the names of the door-keepers of the fifth palace: Tehilael, and 'Azziel, Gatoel, Gathoel, and Sa'aphriel, Naraphiel, and Gariel, Hadiel. And these be the names of the door-keepers of the sixth palace: Domiel, and Kazpiel, Gahaghiel, and 'Arasbarasbiel, 'Anromiel, and Parziel, and Magogael, and Tophrael.

And at the door of the seventh palace stand angry all the heroes, warlike, strong, harsh, fearful, terrific, taller than mountains and sharper than peaks, Their bows are strung and stand before them; their swords are sharpened and in their hands. And lightnings flow and issue forth from the balls of their eyes, and spider-webs of fire from their nostrils and torches of fiery coals from their mouths. And they are equipped with helmets and with coats of mail, and javelins and spears are hung upon their thews.

...

[216] And all those who descend to the Merkabha ascend and are not harmed, but they behold all this trouble and descend safely and come to stand and bear witness and tell the fearful and terrific vision. (Whereas, in the palaces of kings who are flesh and blood, matters are otherwise. [Neither are such visions seen, nor do visitors get safely out.]) And they bless and praise and applaud and glorify and exalt and magnify and attribute honor and beauty and greatness to Totrosi'ai the Lord God of Israel who rejoiced in those who descend to the Merkabha and who sat and looked for each one of Israel, to know when he would descend and behold

The wonderful loftiness and strange lordship,  
Loftiness of exaltation and lordship of splendor,  
Which come to pass before the throne of His glory  
Three times each day, on high,  
From the time when the world was created  
And until now, for praise.

[217] King just, King faithful, King beloved, King lovely, King supporting King lowly, King humble, King righteous, King pious, King holy, King pure, King blessed, King lofty, King mighty, King gracious, King merciful, King of Kings of Kings and Lord of the Crowns.

[218] Totrosi'ai the Lord God of Israel desireth and awaiteth –  
In such measure as He awaiteth for the redemption and for the season of salvation  
Which is laid up for Israel for a day of vengeance  
After the destruction of the last temple –  
When shall he descendeth to the Merkabha descend?  
When shall he see the loftiness of the height?  
When shall he see the end which bringeth salvation?  
When shall he hear the end which is wrought by wonders?  
When shall he see that which eye hath not seen?  
When shall he ascend and tell to the seed of Abraham who loved Him?

# The Sefer Yetzirah

G. Scholem Translation

## Chapter 1

1. With 32 wonderful paths of Wisdom engrave Yah, the Lord of Hosts, [God of Israel, the Living God, King of the Universe, Almighty God, merciful and gracious, High and Exalted, dwelling in eternity, whose name is Holy, and create His universe] with three books, with text (Sepher), with number (Sephar), and with communication (Sippur).
2. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness plus twenty two [foundations] letters: Three Mothers, Seven Doubles, and Twelve Elementals.
3. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: The number of the ten fingers, five opposite five, with a single covenant precisely in the middle, like the circumcision of the tongue and the circumcision of the membrum.
4. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Ten and not nine; ten and not eleven. Understand with Wisdom, and be wise with Understanding. Examine with them and probe them, make a thing stand on its essence, and make the Creator sit on his base.
5. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Their measure is ten which have no end. A depth of beginning, a depth of end; a depth of good, a depth of evil; a depth of above, a depth below; a depth east, a depth west; a depth north, a depth south. The singular Master, God faithful King, dominates them all from His holy dwelling until eternity of eternities.
6. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Their vision is like the "appearance of lightening", their limit has no end. His Word in them is "running and returning". They rush to his saying like a whirlwind, and before His throne they prostrate themselves.
7. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Their end is embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, like a flame in a burning coal. For the Master is singular, He has no second. And before One, what do you count?

8. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Bridle your mouth from speaking and your heart from thinking. And if your heart runs, return to the place, as it is written, "The Chayot running and returning" (Ezekizl 1:14). Regarding this covenant was made.
9. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: One is the Breath of the Living God, blessed and benedicted be the Name of the Life of worlds. Voice, Breath and Speech. This is the Holy Breath (Ruach HaKodesh).
10. Two: Breath from Breath. With it engrave and carve twenty-two foundation letters - three, Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Elementals - and one Breath is from them.
11. Three: Water and Breath. With it engrave and carve chaos and void, mire and clay. Engrave them like a garden plot, carve them like a wall, cover them like a ceiling.
12. Four: Fire from water. With it engrave and carve the Throne of Glory, Seraphim, Ophanim, holy Chayot, and Ministering Angels. From the three establish His dwelling, as it is written, "He makes His angels of breaths, His ministers from flaming fire" (P salms 104:4).
13. Five: With three of the simple letters seal "above". Choose three and place them in His great Name: YHV. With them seal the six extremities. Face upward and seal it with YHV.
  - Six: Seal "below". Face downward and seal it with YHV.
  - Seven: Seal "east". Face straight ahead and seal it with HYV.
  - Eight: Seal "west". Face backward and seal it with HVY
  - Nine: Seal "south". Face to the right and seal it withn VYH.
  - Ten: Seal "north". Face to the left and seal it with VHY.
14. These are the Ten Sefirot of Nothingness. One is the Breath of the Living God. Breath [from Breath], Fire [from water, and the extremities], up, down, east, west, north and south.

## Chapter 2

1. Twenty-two foundation letters: three Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Elementals. The three Mothers, AMSh, their foundation is the pan of merit, the pan of liability, and the tongue of decree deciding between them.
2. Twenty-two letters: Engrave them, carve them, weigh them, permute them, and transform them, and with them depict the soul of all that was formed and all that will be formed in the future.
3. Twenty-two foundation letters: They are engraved with voice, carved with breath, and placed in the mouth in five places: AChHO, BVMP, GYKO, DTLNTh, ZSShRTz.
4. Twenty-two foundation letters: They are set in a circle as 231 Gates. And this is the sign: There is no good higher than delight (ONG), and there is no evil lower than plague (NGO).
5. How? Weigh them and transpose them, Aleph with each one, and each one with Aleph; Bet with each one, and each one with Bet. They repeat in a cycle. Therefore, everything formed and everything spoken emanates in one name.
6. From substance out of chaos and make nonexistence into existence. Carve great pillars out of air that cannot be grasped. This is the sign: One forsees, transposes, and makes all creation and all words with one Name. And a sign of this: Twenty-two objects in a single body.

### **Chapter 3**

1. Three Mothers, AMSh: Their foundation is the pan of liability, the pan of merit, and the tongue of decree deciding between them.
2. Three Mothers, AMSh: A great, mystical, concealed secret, sealed with six rings,. And from it emanate fire and water, separating themselves as male and female. Three Mothers, AMSh, are their foundation, and from them are born the Fathers, from which ev erything was created.
3. Three Mothers, AMSh, in the Universe are air, water, and fire. Heaven was created from fire, earth was created from water, and the air decides decides

between the fire and the water.

4. Three Mothers AMSh, in the year are fire, water, and breath. The hot is created from fire, the cold is created from water, and the temperate from breath decides between them.
5. Three Mothers, AMSh, in the Soul are fire, water, and breath. The head is created from fire, the belly is created from water, and the chest, created from breath, decides between them.
6. Three Mothers, AMSh: Engrave them, carve them, permute them, and with them seal three Mothers in the Universe, three Mothers in the Year, and three Mothers in the Soul, male and female.
7. Make aleph king over breath, bind a crown to it, and combine one with another. And with them seal air in the Universe, the temperate in the year, and the chest in the Soul, the male with AMSh, and the female with ASHM.
8. Make Mem king over water, bind a crown to it, and combine one with another. And with them seal earth in the Universe, the cold in the Year, and the belly in the Soul, the male with MASH, and the female with ShMA.

## Chapter 4

1. Seven Doubles, BGD KPRT: Their foundation is life, peace, wisdom, wealth, grace, seed, dominance. Each has two sounds: B-Bh, G-Gh, D-Dh, K-Kh, P-Ph, R-Rh, T-Th. A structure of soft and hard, a structure of strong and weak, double because they are transposes. The transpose of life is death, the transpose of peace is evil, the transpose of wisdom is folly, the transpose of wealth is poverty, the transpose of grace is ugliness, the transpose of seed is desolation, the transpose of dominance is subjugation.
2. Seven Doubles, BGD KPRT: Seven and not six, seven and not eight. Examine with them and probe from them, make each thing stand on its own essence, and make the Creator sit on His base.
3. Seven Doubles, BGD KPRT, parallel the seven extremities. These are the six extremities: up, down, east, west, north, south. And the Holy Palace precisely in the middle upholds them all.

4. Seven Doubles, BGD KPRT: Engrave them, carve them, combine them, as planets in the Universe, days in the Year, and gates in the Soul. From them engrave seven firmaments, seven earths, seven weeks. Seven is therefore beloved under all heavens.
5. How? Make Bet king over life, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Saturn in the universe, Sunday in the Year, and the right eye in the Soul.
6. Make Gimel king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Jupiter in the Universe, Monday in the Year, and the left eye in the Soul.
7. Make Dalet king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Mars in the Universe, Tuesday in the Year, and the right ear in the Soul.
8. Make Kaf king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict the Sun in the Universe, Wednesday in the Year, and the left ear in the Soul.
9. Make Peh king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Venus in the Universe, Thursday in the Year, and the right nostril in the Soul.
10. Make Resh king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Mercury in the Universe, Friday in the Year, and the left nostril in the Soul.
11. Make Tav king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict the Moon in the Universe, the Sabbath in the Year, and the mouth in the Soul.
12. The Seven Doubles, how does one permute them? Two stones build two houses, three build six houses, four build 24 houses, five build 120 houses, six build 720 houses, and seven build 5040 houses. From there on go out and calculate that which the mouth cannot speak and the ear cannot hear

These are the seven planets in the Universe: The Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars. These are the seven days in the Year: The seven days of creation. And the seven gates in the Soul are the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, and the mouth. And with them were engraved the seven firmaments, the seven earths, the seven hours. Seven is therefore beloved for every desire under heaven.

## Chapter 5

1. Twelve Elementals: HV ZCh TY LN SO TzQ. Their foundation is sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, coition, action, motion, anger, laughter, thought, and sleep. Their measure is the twelve diagonal boundaries: the north-east boundary, the south-east boundary, the upper-east boundary, the lower-east boundary, the upper-north boundary, the lower-north boundary, the south-west boundary, the north-west boundary, the upper-west boundary, the lower-west boundary, the upper-south boundary, the lower-south boundary. They continually spread for ever and ever. They are the Arms of the Universe.
  
2. Twelve Elementals: HV ZCh TY LN SO TzQ. Engrave them, carve them weigh them, permute them, transpose them, and with them depict the twelve constellations in the Universe: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces; the twelve months in the Year: Nissan, Iyar, Sivan, Tamuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Mar-cheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar; and the twelve directors of the Soul: two hands, two feet, two kidneys, the spleen, the liver, the gall bladder, the hemsess, the kiva, and the korkeban.
  - How does one permute them? Make Heh king, bind a crown in it, and with it depict Aries in the Universe, Nissan in the Year, and the right hand in the Soul.
  - Make Vav king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Taurus, Iyar in the Year, and the left hand in the Soul.
  - Make Zayin king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Taurus in the Universe, Sivan in the Year, and the right foot in the Soul.
  - Make Chet king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Cancer in the Universe, Tamuz in the Year, and the left foot in the Soul.
  - Make Tet king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Leo in the Universe, Av in the Year, and the right kidney in the Soul.
  - Make Yud king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Virgo in the Universe, Elul in the Year, and the left kidney in the Soul.
  - Make Lamed king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Libra in the Universe, Tishrei in the Year, and the liver in the Soul.
  - Make Nun king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Scorpio in the Universe, Mar-cheshvan in the Year, and the spleen in the Soul.
  - Make Samekh king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Sagittarius in the Universe, Kislev in the Year, and the gall bladder in the Soul.
  - Make Eyn king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Capricorn in the Universe, Tevet in the Year, and the hemsess in the Soul.
  - Make Tzadi king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Aquarius in the Universe, Shevat in the Year, and the kiva in the Soul.
  - Make Kuf king, bind a crown to it, and with it depict Pisces in the

Universe, Adar in the Year, and the korkeban in the Soul.

3. Three Mothers which are three Fathers, from which emanate fire, breath and water. Three Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Elementals.
4. These are the twenty-two letters which are founded by the Blessed Holy One [Yah, YHVH of Hosts, God of Israel, the Living God, high and exalted] dwelling in eternity, whose name is Holy, exalted and Holy is He.

## Chapter 6

1. Three are the fathers and their offspring, seven are the planets and their hosts, and twelve are the diagonal boundaries. And the proof of this, true witnesses, are the Univers, the Year, and the Soul. He decreed Twelve, (Ten), Seven and Three and He appointed them in the Teli, the Cycle, and the Heart. The three are fire, water, and breath: fire above, water below, and breath, the decree that decides between them. A sign of this is that fire upholds water.

Mem hums, Shin hisses, and Alef is the decree that decides between them.

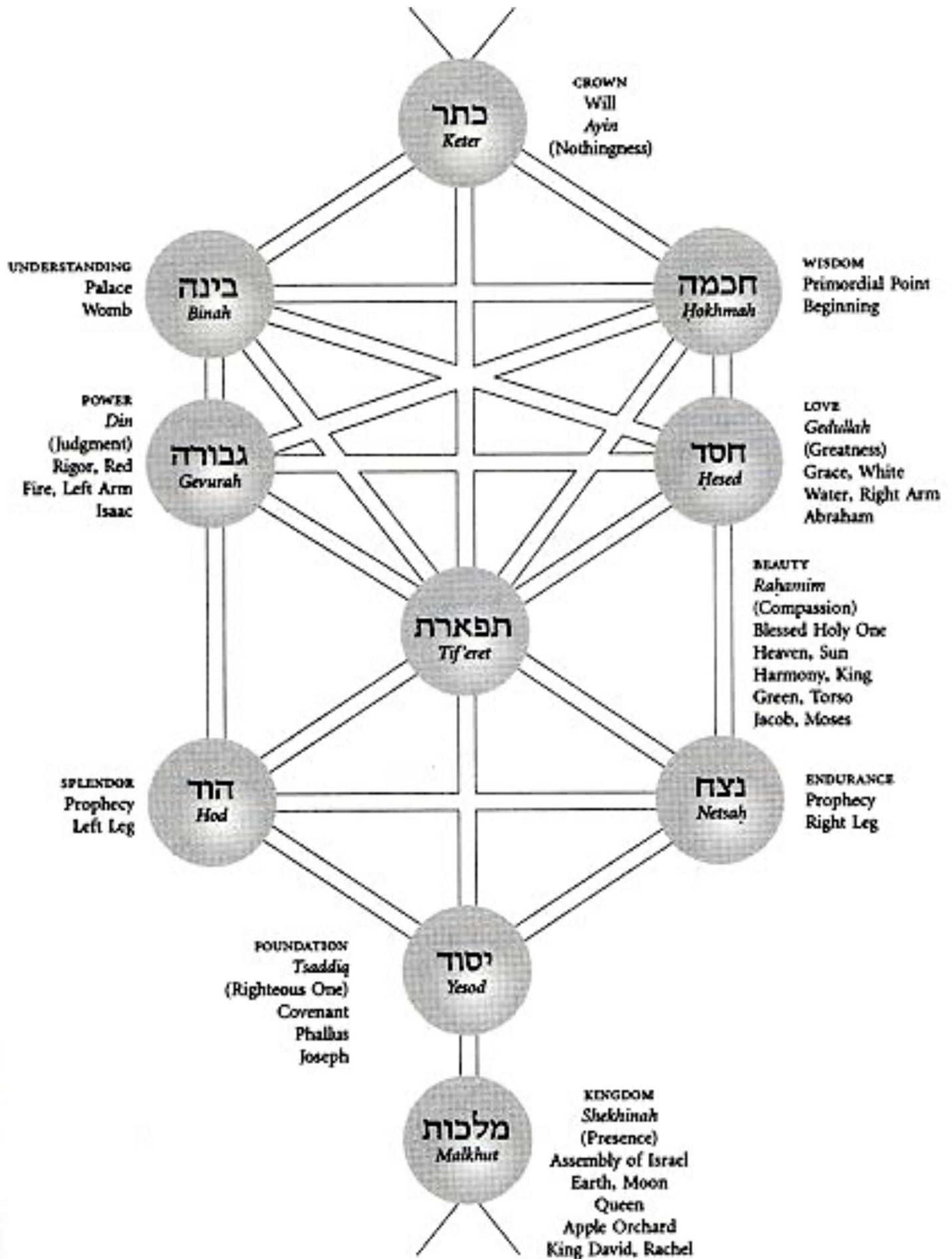
2. The Teli in the Universe is like a king on his throne, the cycle in the Year is like a king in the province, the Heart in the Soul is like a king in battle.

"Also every desire, one opposite the other was made by God" (ecclesiastes 7:14). Good opposite evil, good from good, evil from evil. Good makes evil recognizable, and evil makes good recognizable. Good is kept for the good, and evil is kept for the wicked .

3. Three: Each one stands alone. Seven are divided, three opposite three, with a decree deciding between them. Twelve stand in war: three who love, three who hate, three who give life, and three who kill. The three that love are the heart, the ears and the mouth; the three that hate are the liver. the gall bladder, and the tongue. And God, the faithful King dominates them all. One over three, three over seven, and seven over twelve, and all of them are bound, one to another.
4. And when Abraham our father gazed, he looked, saw, delved, understood,

engraved, carved, permuted and depicted, and he was successful. And the Master of all, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to him, and took him in His bosom, [kissed him on the head, and called him, "my Beloved"]. He made a covenant with him between the ten toes of his feet-this is the covenant of circumcision-and between the ten fingers of his hand-this is the covenant of the tongue. He bound the twenty-two letters to his tongue and revealed their foundation. He drew them in water, burned them in fire, agitated them with breath. He ignited them with seven planets, and directed them with twelve constellations.

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The Ten Sefirot