

## **Moses Cordovero. Pardes Rimmonim (The Orchard of Pomegranates)**

*Provisional working translation by Stephan Claassen, 2025*

### **Gate 1. Chapter 9.**

After we have, in the previous chapters, been engaged in the necessity of the existence of the Sefirot and their number, it is [now] proper that we will know if someone who denies the subject of the existence of the Sefirot should be called ‘disbeliever’ or not. And we will say that such a person’s mistake in this subject will be in one of two aspects. The first aspect [is] someone who does not know about them at all, not because he, if there would be revealed to him secrets of wisdom, would deny them, God forbid, but because he is not accustomed to them, and the “gates of light” [perhaps referring to this classic work by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish kabbalist Joseph Gikatilla] have not been revealed to him.

For this man, for sure, it is proper that he is not called ‘disbeliever’ or ‘denier’. And the proof to this [is] that, see, even on the subject of removal of the corporeality from the Simple True, blessed be He, the Rambam has said in the Book of Knowledge (of the Mishneh Tora), The Laws of Teshuvah Chapter 3, that the man who believes that the Simple One is corporeal and has a form, is an infidel. And he includes him among the category of infidels. But the Ra’avad [Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquières], of blessed memory, questions him [the Rambam] and this is what it says: “Abraham [= the Ra’avad] said: and why does he call this one a infidel? Many greater and better than this one followed this opinion because of what they saw in the Scriptures and [even] more of what they saw in the words of the Aggadot which are confusing the thoughts” [Hasagot HaRa’avad on Mishneh Torah, Repentance 3:7:1], until here [the citation].

See, that the Ra’avad, of blessed memory, criticizes him [the Rambam] when he says that the one who says that the Godhead is corporeal is a heretic. But it is not proper to think that the opinion of the Ra’avad is that such a one is *not* an infidel, as for sure, he who makes the Godhead bodily is a heretic. Truly their difference of opinion depends on the fact that the Rambam, according to what is seen from his citation, holds that the one who says that the Godhead possesses substance, is a heretic, and even if it is so that this mistake is by reason of his not being accustomed to the godhead, and seeking after the plain meanings of Scriptures and Midrashim, and has not descended to their profundity, to understand their subject according to their form.

And to this the Ra’avad, peace be with him, reached him and spoke against him, and said that a man such as this one, who in all its subjects serves God and walks on the roads of the Torah in honesty, and [yet] because of the shortness of his comprehension believes in the corporeality [of the Godhead] should not be called a heretic, [even] though he for sure is wrong. Because his intention is not towards evil, God forbid.

But the one who knows his Creator, and to whom the gates of the introductions [of knowledge] have been revealed with the removal of the corporeality [of the Godhead], and [even so] does not acknowledge the truth and is insolent, and is [still] saying that the Godhead

is corporeal, such a one verily should be called a heretic, and also according to the opinion of the Ra'avad of blessed memory.

And thus it is said on the subject of the Sefirot, as for sure he who does not know about them, and believes in the simple Godhead without knowledge of the Sefirot, it is not suitable that such a person is called an unbeliever, God forbid, nor a “cutter of the saplings” [indication for those who err in the Kabbalah], God forbid. As if it would have been thus, it would have been fitting that when man was knowing [how to] understand with the education of the commandments, they would [also] educate him on the subject of belief in the Sefirot and on knowledge about them, what we do not find thus.

But on the contrary, they have said that it is fitting to hide them [= the Sefirot] and “they are not giving these matters except to the modest etc.” [Kohelet Rabbah 3:11]. What is not so concerning the subject of the reality of God and His unity, and the subject of the Tora from the heavens, and the prophecy of Moses, and many [more] roots of [our] faith. As when the child is called “knowing”, father and mother teach it about them and reveal it the simple meaning of the matters. As our sages of blessed memory speak in tractate Sukkah [Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah] (42a) “[if he] *is knowing how to speak, his father is teaching him Torah and the Kiryat Shema*”. And they asked in the Gemara: “What is the Torah?” and they said: “Moses commanded us the Torah etc.” [Deuteronomy 33:4] and “Kiryat Shema” is “Hear, Israel” [Deuteronomy 6:4].

And see that they chose these two verses to be that in them are included most aspects of the roots of the Torah. In the verse “*Hear, Israel*” is comprised the existence of God which is “*HaShem*”. Further that He is supervising and even [with] individual supervision [of ourselves, and of every detail], and this is the explanation of “*our God*”. As although his existence is necessary from the viewpoint of the whole world completely, and He was, is and will be, and he brings into being all beings, which is the explanation of the name of four letters [= the Tetragram] in its written form. And although he is the master of all worlds, upper and lower, and this is the explanation of pronouncing it [= the written Tetragram] as Lord/Adonai, and from this follows necessarily His supervision comprising the whole world. Yet nevertheless [He is also] “*our God*”, explanation: he is supervising us in particularity. “*HaShem is one*” makes the unity necessary. And already they explained in the Gemara (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 13) that man needs to focus on the word “one”, that He is king above and below and in the four directions. And with this it is necessary that He has no body, as corporeality is not found in different places at the same time. Further they explained “*one*”, explanation: not as the counted one etc. [as there are one, two, three etc.], as we will explain in the Gate of the Essence and the Vessels in Gate IV in chapter 5 with help of HaShem.

And in the verse “*Moses commanded us the Torah*” is contained the root of the Torah from heaven, and prophecy, and the prophecy of Moses, and this is “*Moses commanded us the Torah*”, as is well-known.

Reward and punishment [is contained] in its saying “*possession of the congregation of Jacob*” [Deuteronomy 33:4], as HaShem desired Israel [/Jacob] for the sake of his/its righteousness and left them as inheritance His Torah. And this is his intention in telling them [in order to

teach the children] these two verses, because when the boy grows up, he will start to roam about in his mind on these words and he will ask his father and his grandfather their reasons and subjects [of these two verses]. And they [= father and grandfather] will reveal him and introduce him to the subjects of the corners of the Torah, bit by bit according to his understanding as it will be able to hold [these new subjects]. This is what is found in the essence of the roots [of Faith]. What is not the case with the upper Sefirot, to the contrary, they have concealed their mystery from every eye, and they do not reveal them except to particular selected ones in a generation. And see, from here [there is] evidence that someone who does not perceive the subject of the Sefirot should not, because of this, be called an unbeliever or a “cutter of the saplings”, God forbid. Verily it will be right for us to say about one who has not [yet] inherited to see the lights in his days, and has not tasted the sweetness of the Torah nor the nectar of her pleasant words. And see, he dies without wisdom and has not seen the good.

The second viewpoint, these are those to whom the subject of the Sefirot and their existence has been revealed, but they deny them because the wickedness of their disposition [which they think], as they became familiar with exterior wisdoms and were supplied with gentile children. And these persons, when they are not called unbelievers or heretics because [of the fact that] they confirm all subjects of the Godhead, yet they are called unbelievers because they deny the explanations of the Oral Torah. And the first from three [types of] unbelievers is someone who denies an explanation from the explanations of the Oral Torah, as the Rambam has written in the mentioned chapter [Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuva, Chapter 3 Law 8], and such a one also contradicts the words of our Sages of blessed memory.

And apart from that he has these [errors], he further adds a [more grave] transgression to his sin, as from the denial of the Sefirot he will proceed [further] to unbelief, as we are [actually] compelled to [believe in] the principles and corners of the Torahs [both the written and oral Torah], that from [the principle that] the One is Simple [as we established in the previous chapter of this Gate], he [= the one transgressing] does not attribute to it change, [but then] how does He look upon subjects that involve change? And similarly, as He is One, how does He look after the classes of species as that will necessitate plurality, as is known? And to [be able to explain] this, he is forced to believe in the Sefirot, and if [he does] not, he will be an unbeliever, God forbid. Just as many have erred in the departure from individual guidance and in these subjects, of which it is not necessary to bring them up [here] in writing.

And see, without him willing we will force him into confirmation of the Sefirot, or he will be called an unbeliever. And on this the way shall be forced that someone who says that he has no occupation in Kabbalah and does not want to make directions in his prayer, except [he thinks, this is only reserved for] a possessor of the Lights, as many have thought, for sure such a one will be called erring, as when man comes to speak on the Simple One in relation to its aspect of its existence, [but] without its existence and its aspect in relation to the Sefirot, he will be found perverting His actions completely.

As the En Sof in relation to the aspect of its essence is simple and does not have changes so that He changes Himself from Din/Judgement to Rachamim/Compassion, and that He acts

according to [His] will, and that He may change from [one] will to [another] will by means of the prayer [of human beings], if not in relation to His aspect to His Sefirot, which are all His Providences, and by means of them [= the Sefirot] there will be change of Din/Judgement and Rachamim/Compassion.

And the investigator should not press to enter in these our matters opposite the camp to understand the subject of the changes and the Providence, as it will bring him damage and not profit, truly we will explain the subject in length in the Gate of the Essence and the Vessels [Gate IV] with help of HaShem.

The end of the matter [is]: man is obliged to believe in the Sefirot in order to be correct on the roots of faith and its corners, as it is not possible to uphold the corners of the Torah except with them, which means: by means of them, as by means of them the Emanator does the changes, and it does not bring Him no change at all from this, God forbid!, as is being explained in length in the mentioned Gate [is הנחמד here a printing error, and should read הנזכר?]. And we ask forgiveness from God [for all our mistakes in the study of the Kabbalah].