

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

*Provisional working translation by Stephan Claassen, 2025*

### Gate 1. Chapter 6.

They have given us another explanation of this mishna [from Sefer Yetzirah] in the book of the Faithful Shepherd [Raya Mehemna] [Parasha Ki Tisa, Zohar II.187b], and this is what it says: ‘The commandment to give “*a half-shekel with the holy shekel*” [Exodus 30:13]. The Faithful Shepherd said: ‘What is a half-shekel [a biblical weight-measure]? It is similar to a half-hin [a biblical liquid measure]. And this is Wav exactly placed between two He’s [reading the Hebrew consonants “hin” as “He’s”]. The stone to weigh with, it is a Yud [with the numerical value of 10], twenty gerah [another biblical weight-measure] [is] a shekel, it is Yud Wav Daleth (יוד) [this is the name of the letter ך (Yud) spelled out in Hebrew characters, which has the numerical value of 20]. “*And the wealthy one shall not increase*” [Exodus 30:15], this is Central Pillar [= Tif’eret], it will not increase on ten (י). As thus it is said in Sefer Yetzirah ‘Ten Sefirot without what-ness, ten and not eleven.’ “*and the poor one shall not decrease*” [Exodus 30:15], this is the Righteous One [= Yesod], he will not decrease from ten, as it is said: ‘ten and not nine’, and a half-shekel, it is ten’. End of citation.

And it is necessary to examine this citation minutely.

Firstly his saying ‘What is a half-shekel? It is similar to a half-[hin] etc.’. Explanation ‘a half-hin’ is Tif’eret [the Wav] which is ‘exactly placed between two He’s.’ Truly with ‘a half-shekel’ it does not fit to explain thus ‘exactly placed between’, as we do not know between what [the half-shekel is placed].

Secondly his saying ‘the stone to weigh with, it is a Yud etc.’. See, according to the meaning [it follows] that Yud Wav Daleth (יוד) is twenty. And how does he say that one should not subtract from nor add to the ten, is it not that יוד [with value twenty], with its half being ten, and see: ten has been added to ten and that makes twenty! And according to his explanation one should not add to the ten [Sefirot] any Sefirah, not even Tif’eret nor Tsaddik [= Yesod], but he mentioned these which are ‘the wealthy’ and ‘the poor’, and the more so [concerning] all the others.

Thirdly his saying ‘the stone to weigh with, it is a Yud’, and how do they weigh with this stone, whereas it is *twenty* gerah and the weight needs to be ten, which is only a half-shekel. And if we say that his intention is to say as if it were to weigh with this stone and it is a complete stone, if this is so it is a lengthy expression, and he could have said ‘the stone to weigh with, it is a Yud Wav Daleth, and it is twenty gerah’. Why does he say ‘the stone to weigh with, it is a Yud, twenty gerah [is] a shekel, it is Yud Wav Daleth’, which is repetition and lengthening.

Fourthly his saying ‘and a half-shekel, it is ten’, as there appears to be no link with it [= what is said previously in the citation]. And further that it is contrary to what we have explained, as above he spoke the explanation: ‘a half-shekel’ which is ‘exactly placed between’ [= the

Wav] and now he says ‘a half-shekel it is Yud’, which is that the meaning of ‘half-’[the Aramaic word] has half of a shekel as its meaning.

And see, to comprehend this saying we need to introduce the subject that the Sefirot are ten from above towards below, and ten from below towards above, is as the resemblance of a spark of the sun coming and reaching a polished mirror, and the light turns and returns towards its source, similar the subject with the Sefirot, as they come from above downwards until Malkut, and there is the station of the light, and it returns to its source by way of journeys [= in stages], as just as they are ten from above downward, similarly then are ten from below upward, and we will this discourse in more length in its own Gate [Gate 15], with help of HaShem.

And see, this mystery is explained within the form of the [letter] א (Aleph), which is ך (Yud) above, [and] ך (Yud) below, to reveal the source of the light from above downward, and from below upward, and they [= the two Yud] are the upper waters and the lower waters, as we will explain in the Gate on the entries of the special names [Gate XXIII] in the entry ‘water’.

And see, the ם (Wav) that is between the two ך (Yud), is Tif’eret, the one who unites the upper waters and the lower waters, and this is ‘a half-shekel’ which is situated exactly between the shekel which is the complete measure, the measure of Atsilut/Emanation: ten from above downwards and ten from below upwards, and it [the Wav/Tif’eret] is situated exactly between and the medium between the two Yud which are ‘twenty gerah’, the ‘shekel’. And now the meaning of a half-hin [the two “He’s”] and the meaning of a half-shekel are all one [and the same] matter. And [thus] the first contradiction is solved [the Wav is placed between two Yud]. ‘The stone to weigh with, it is a Yud’. Explanation: this stone has always the shape of ך (Yud), which is called ‘stone’, and all ‘stone’ refers to the essence of Yud as we will explain in the Gate on the entries of the special names [Gate XXIII] in the entry ‘stone’, with help of HaShem.

And see, this stone to weigh ‘a half-shekel’ with, as ‘a half-shekel’ is ten, as we have explained, therefore the stone with which one weighs it [= the half-shekel] is the form of a ך (Yud) which is ten. ‘twenty gerah, the shekel it is Yud Wav Dalet’. Explanation: when he says: ‘twenty gerah, the shekel it is Yud Wav Dalet’ in its fullness [the name Yud spelled out in Hebrew characters], he points to twenty [its numerical value is twenty] which are the two Yuds: Yud [10 Sefirot] from above downwards, and Yud [10 Sefirot] from below upwards.

And see, its half [of twenty], which is Yud/ten, in its plain meaning it is the stone to weigh [with]. And when it is [spelled out in] full it is the complete shekel which is twenty gerah, ten from above downwards and ten from below upwards, as we have explained. “*And the wealthy one shall not increase*”, this is the Central Pillar, it will not increase on ten etc.’. Explanation: needless to say [that this holds for] the rest of the Sefirot but even the “wealthy one” [Tif’eret], which is more wealthy in emanation and in totality than the rest of the Sefirot, nevertheless it must not increase [this] totality above ten Sefirot because they are ten and not eleven. And therefore it must not increase totality above ten because of its wealth, but its wealth will be in the increase of emanation/influx and light, or that it being totalized out of ten [by] many totalizations, but it never increases on the sum of the ten. “*And the poor one shall*

*not decrease*”, this is the Righteous One, he will not decrease from ten, etc.’ Explanation: Yesod, even if it so that it is being called ‘needy one’ because of its poverty (in the time of exile indicating that it is not its nature)) as its saying (Isaiah 57:1) “*The righteous one perishes* etc.”. And it is needy and poor. And he says that even if it is poor, its poverty cannot decrease from ten Sefirot, the general rule [being] that one is not to decrease from them, according to the subject ‘ten and not nine’, but its poverty is in the diminution of its emanation/influx, or [in] the diminution of its totalization out of the ten, yet not that it decreases from them [= the ten Sefirot], but that it does not add many totalizations out of ten [out of ten. Truly one is not to decrease from the aforementioned ten, in order that it will not be less than ten. As it is impossible to say that there is a place being removed [from the ten] because of one of them [lacking], but they [the Sefirot] are always ten. ‘And a half-shekel, it is ten’. Explanation: now, according to when we have explained that the wealthy one, which is the Central Pillar which is actually a half-shekel in the middle between the two Yuds, which are ‘a shekel [it is] twenty gerah’, if this is so, ‘a half-shekel’ is ten, and ten is ‘a half-shekel’. And if this is so, since Scripture has come to teach us that ‘the wealthy one’, which is Tif’eret, is not worthy to increase on ten, if this is so, how does he say ‘the wealthy one shall not increase ... from a half-shekel’, and it [= the wealthy one] is itself a half-shekel, and how has he given proportion to the wealthy one who is Tif’eret with the half-shekel which is Tif’eret in reality, to this [=to clarify this] he says: ‘and a half-shekel, it is ten’. Explanation: Despite of what we have explained above, that Tif’eret is the one that is called ‘a half-shekel’ because of it being medium/in the middle, nevertheless “Scripture does not depart from its literal meaning” [Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 63a], that it [= Tif’eret] is called thus in its aspect [of being] between the shekel, and cutting it in two, and a half-shekel is ten. And now he says; ‘the wealthy one shall not increase’ never in its essence which is ‘a half-shekel’ which is that it is cutting the shekel in two and making each one out of ten. Thus far the explanation of the saying. And learning from it we have found the explanation of the mishna ‘ten and not nine, ten and not eleven, which has come to teach us on the subject of the general rules of what is totalized, that one is not to ‘increase... from the ten’, as we have explained.

And now we will return to clarify the rest of the expression of the mishna, which says: “understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding” etc. And the commentators have explained that the intention is to unify Chochmah with Binah and Binah with Chochmah. Further they explained that the intention is that the root of Chochmah is in Binah, and the root of Binah is in Chochmah. Further they explained that when one extends the emanation to Chochmah, it will be for the sake that it [Chochmah] will go to Binah, and when one extends [the emanation] to Binah, “give it [the emanation] the power of Chochmah” [Ramban on Sefer Yetzirah 1:4:5]. And although the commentators have explained these matters and what follows from them, yet [the words of] their explanation are not appealing. Since why does it warn us now on these subjects with Binah and with Chochmah, but not with the other Sefirot, because sure, as we are bound to unite the three first ones, the unity of the seven [Sefirot] that are below them is similarly an obligation to us.

And further why is Keter [the uppermost Sefira] not brought into this union in some of the explanations? Further its saying “analyze with them” etc., and the commentators have explained when you analyze properly, you will know that the mentioned Chochmah and Binah are the root of Gedolah/Chesed and Gevurah, “and examine carefully from them”, explanation: when you examine carefully you will find that Gedolah/Chesed and Gevurah are the root of Netsach and Hod, as these are extending from them. And [afterwards] it says: “establish the matter on its strength”, “matter” is Malkut, “its strength [בוריו]” as “his staff”, and thus Targum Onkelos (on Exodus 21:19) [translates “his staff” in Aramaic], and this is Yesod. “And return the formator on its base”, and “return [השב]” corresponding to repentance [תשובה], to give its strength in Tif’eret which is its base with the name “formator”, and the base of Tif’eret are Netsach and Hod.

Until here the words of the commentators, although we have chosen the selected and precious that is their commentaries.

And it is that this subject is not satisfactory for us because this is not the nature of the author [of Sefer Yetzirah]’s way of expression.

And further, what peculiarity [is there] in its making us now hear these subjects and novelties, because this is the way of those who pray, not of those who write, and we have nothing to learn and new from it.

Therefore it appears to me [that I must explain it in a different way and] to explain that Chochmah is a reception [something that one receives, thus not an activity] and the instruction that man has learned from his master. Aptly “they transmit him the chapter headings” [Babylonian Talmud, Chagigah 13a]. And Binah is the reflection and the supplement which man is reflecting and supplementing out of himself from the general principles and the chapter headings that have been transmitted to him. And now this is its intention in its saying: “understand with wisdom”, it means to say: consider well with what you have learned from your master the wisdom of the attributes [= the Sefirot], which they did not transmit [itself but] only the chapter headings. And it is necessary for man to understand with it one matter from another, that is as what our sages of blessed memory said [Babylonian Talmud, Chagigah 13a]: they say this matter only to a wise one and he understands from his knowledge [this verse combines the three principles Chochmah (“wise one”), Binah (“understands”) and Da’at (“knowledge”)].

See that man needs to compare a matter with [another] matter and to produce a matter from [another] matter, in order that he will have a fertile intellect, and not an impotent intellect.

And it says “Be wise with/in understanding/Binah”, explanation: when you are begetting and comparing with your intellect and you understand, it is necessary that you make it [= your intellect] wise and interpret it with what the sages have received and with the shortness of their words, [so] that the subject will be included to you in addition, sometimes much, sometimes a little, “*and do not rely on your understanding/Binah*” [Proverbs 3:5].

“and examine [בחנו] in them”, this wants to say: into the substance of the Sefirot, which corresponds to “in them”, into their what-ness will be the examination/aspect [בחינה] by way of solely “going and returning” [Ezekiel 1:14], and by way of humility and being attentive to the glory of your Creator, Who makes wise the simple ones, and this is: “in them”.

Truly in deeds that are extended out of them [the Sefirot] the subject will be with strong investigation and with good knowledge, with carrying and giving and with great speculation.

And as this examination is in the deeds that are extended towards us out of the essence of the Sefirot, it says: “investigate *from* them”, wanting to say: in that which is extended “from them” and not into their substance which corresponds to “in them” as it said above.

And “establish the matter on its strength”. Explanation: establish the subject on its authority and descend to the profundity of the explication, so that it will be proven to you without any doubt.

“And return the formator on his base”. Explanation: your whole intention in any case will be that the King of Kings, the En Soph, blessed be He, will be gazing at “his base”, which are his thrones which are the ten Sefirot, and the whole intention will be on the subject of the unification of the emanated entities that are set apart, in the emanator, and [the unification] of the emanator in the emanated things.

Or it wants [to say] “Establish the matter on its strength”, just as the commentators have explained, that it corresponds to the unification of Malkut in Yesod, and that one is not allowed to separate them by believing [they are] nine, God forbid!, but [they are] ten with Malkut.

“And return the formator on his base”, that the Sefirot are the base and a throne for him, and He is the Lord distributing/emanating as a king on the throne (הכסא), and he is not in the number of the throne [the numerical value of הכסא is 86, which is the same number as that of God/Elohim אלהים]. Until here the explanation of the mishna.

And see, it has been explained in these chapters that the Sefirot are ten, not less and not more, and that there is in this matter no doubt, God forbid!, but this is the truth in the heart of all kabbalists.