

Moses Cordovero. Pardes Rimmonim (The Orchard of Pomegranates)

Provisional working translation by Stephan Claassen, 2024

Gate 1. Chapter 3.

Tiferet further harmonizes between Gedolah[/Chesed] and Hod, and between Gevurah and Netsach, and the reason is that Gedolah and Netsach are the right side [which is] Chesed/Mercy, and Gevurah and Hod they are Din/Judgement, the left, and they need harmonizing. And there is some proof to this in the words of Rashbi of blessed memory in the book of the Faithful Shephard [Raya Mehemna, Zohar Parasha Pinchas, III.244a], this is what it says: ‘And in the first redaction: “I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam...”[Song of Songs 5:1], right arm with left thigh. “my honeycomb with my honey”[ibidem], Jacob and Rachel. “my wine with my milk” [ibidem], left arm with right thigh. Chesed with Hod, these are the right arm with the left thigh. Jacob and Rachel, the Pillar of the Center with Malkut. Gevurah with Netsach, these are left arm with right thigh. And why are there two of his attributes here? Because it is a secret which he will thus express. David said here: “Your priests will be clothed in righteousness and your devout ones will rejoice [Psalms 132:9]. It is written there, [but] ‘and your Levites will rejoice’ it should have said. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: ‘it is not customary to change my attributes, but after you have invited me, I must do after your wish.’ From this we are taught that the master of the house, when he invites even the king, the king must do after his [= the master of the house’s] wish. And because of this we have been taught: “all what the master of the house will say, do” [Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 86b]. And this being so, it is a fitting secret, etc.’ End of citation.

And what there is to arouse in this saying is [first] the lengthiness of its expression, and the repetition of the subject in not [very] different words. In his saying ‘right arm with left thigh, Chesed with Hod’ etc., [even] if we, until now, had not heard that the two arms are: Gedolah the right arm, Gevurah the left arm, and [about] the two thighs that they are: Netsach the right thigh, Hod the left thigh, why is there need for this lengthiness in the explanation of the plain matters? Second [note]: Essentially he could have used a short and clear expression in his saying [, such as]: “my myrrh with my balsam”, Chesed with Hod. “my honeycomb with my honey”, the pillar of the center with Malkut. “my wine with my milk”, Gevurah with Netsach. And he could have kept quiet about thighs and arms, so that there would have been no need to explain them afterwards. Third [note]: that essentially this saying [is] in parasha Pinchas (Zohar III.241a/b), as thus he said: ‘and in the first recension’, explanation: in the Zohar, because that is the book that precedes this [book/saying]. And there in parasha Pinchas he does not lengthen, nor in whole nor in part, but [gives] only the first part of the saying. And it says thus: “I have mixed my myrrh with my balsam”, right arm with left thigh. “my honeycomb with my honey”, Jacob with Rachel. “my wine with my milk”, left arm with right thigh’ – until here the citation. And although he adds there [that is: in Raya Mehemna, Zohar III.244a] to the subject of harmonizing [that] the special name “my myrrh” is Chesed, and

“my balsam” [is] Netsach as we will explain, nevertheless he does not further add to the subject of clarification of the words. And one needs to find out why he does not use this relation here [Zohar III.241a/b].

Fourth [note] on his saying ‘Jacob with Rachel’. And he does not say ‘body [= Tifer’et = Jacob] with the female [= Malkut = Rachel]’, the limbs in the same way and with the same treatment as the limbs which he assigned to the other Sefirot.

Fifth [note]: After he goes down to the explanations of his works in what he says: ‘And they are, etc, it would have been fitting to say: ‘right arm with left thigh, Chesed with Hod’, as this is the normal order, and not to let the explanation precede the [original] text [that needs to be explained] by his saying ‘Chesed with Hod, right arm with left thigh etc.’, and similar for them all.

Sixth [note]: And what difficulty does he find in: ‘And why are there two of his attributes here’. And what is difficult [is] that sometimes Netsach is suckling from Gevurah and similarly Hod from Chesed, but most of the time Netsach is suckling from Chesed and Hod from Gevurah. But sometimes it occurs, because of the assimilation and influencing that Netsach is suckling from Gevurah, and Hod from Chesed. And therefore each one is composed of them all, so that they all consent to a single action and a single emanation. And therefore is it possible that the two opposites become equalized, even Gevurah with Chesed.

And we will explain that Rashbi, of blessed memory, found difficulty in the scriptural verse, because it was proper for it to say: ‘I mixed my myrrh and my balsam, I ate my honeycomb and my honey, I drank my wine and my milk.’ Why [does the verse use the words] “with” [instead of ‘and’], because it [appears to be] superfluous? And to this he answered that there above the verse that is before us (what is printed in parasha Wayikra, page 4b and further) he said: “My myrrh with my balsam”, Chesed with Netsach. “my honeycomb with my honey”, Gevurah with Hod. “my wine with my milk”, body and covenant.’ [I did not find the exact citation but a slightly longer paraphrase in Zohar III.4a]. And see, with this parts of our questions are reconciled, because he says ‘with’ ‘with’ to unite these attributes in the mentioned manner, but because this answer is not satisfying, when the intention of the biblical verse is only [to teach us] that Chesed is united with Netsach, Gevurah with Hod, and Tiferet with Yesod, if this is all so [it would be more fitting to] be silent of ‘with’ and ‘with’. And from the matter it is taught that it says that when they are being united their customary ways are in this, as three are uniting themselves with three. To this he says: ‘And in the earlier recension’, its explanation: in the Zohar, in parasha Pinchas, a different and more than extended explanation was given, and this is it: ‘right arm with left thigh’, of which the intention is: Chesed *with* its being [of] the line of Chesed/Mercy [the right axis], being united with Hod *with* its being [of] the line of Din/Judgement [the left axis]. And thus Gevurah *with* its being [of] the line of Din being united with Netsach *with* its being [of] the line of Chesed. And now there will be no difficulty in why he said ‘with’ ‘with’, which is necessary because it is not their customary way in this. But because it is contrary to their habit and nature, therefore it is necessary to say ‘with’ ‘with’, to teach us that this order is contrary.

And the reason that he speaks in the Zohar with special names of the limbs (arms, thighs), and [does] not [mention] the attributes by their names. [This is] because it is difficult for him, since after he clarified that the Sefirot are turned over into what [is] not the [normal] order, that [that is: mention the Sefirot by their regular names] would be impossible. Because the [normal] route of suction of Netsach is from the right, and thus it is below Chesed [in] the line of Chesed/Mercy. And the route of suction of Hod is from the left, and thus it is below Gevurah [in] the line of Din/Judgement. How is it [then] possible that they change their function? That would be impossible. And to clarify this subject for us in bold rhetorical language he uses in his expression arms and thighs, to tell you that just as the arms and thighs are adhering together and are connected with the body, and by means of the body it unites the right arm with the left thigh, and similarly the left arm with the right thigh, and the body is the medium that unites them and couples them together. Similarly the subject [functions] above by means of Tif'eret, which is the one that branches out in six extremities, and these extremities are its limbs. Just as the limbs are branches for the body, so are the extremities limbs and branches for Tif'eret. And therefore, by means of this it is possible for these Sefirot to be mixed in this mixture, and this is possible, and not impossible. But [even] if this is so, we have not yet escaped the question 'why are there two of his attributes here', as we will explain.

And see, explained is the reason that he is forced to say 'arms' and 'thighs' and not the attributes themselves with their names. But Rashbi of blessed memory, in the book of the Faithful Shepherd (Raya Mehemna) [the later recension] intends to bring the citation of the first recension, transferring it to his expression itself, which is "I have mixed my myrrh with my balsam", right arm with left thigh. "my honeycomb with my honey", Jacob with Rachel. "my wine with my milk", left arm with right thigh', until here the citation of the recension. And he adds in the clarification the rest of the saying. The intention is to clarify to us exactly [with] his fine expression when he says 'right arm with left thigh' etc., that the subject on the side of Scripture is [some recensions have אלא ("except/but") here instead of לא ("not"), which I have followed] on purpose, that Chesed unites itself with Hod, and not that Hod unifies itself with Chesed. He intends to say that the dwelling-place of Chesed will be in Hod and the root is Chesed. And similarly with Gevurah, that its dwelling-place is in Netsach, and the root is (Netsach) [other reading: Gevurah; there is some confusion here and below on what exactly is the 'root'], and not the inverse. And similarly Tif'eret in Malkut below. For if we would say that the root above are lower ones in the upper ones, the reason of 'why are there two attributes here?' would not be established. Because if this would be so, you would find that the bride and her bridesmaids would go up to the house of the bridegroom and his groomsmen. And if this would be the case, it would not be proper for the bride to change any custom of the bridegroom at all, because she is lodging in his house. But here it is what is correct: Chesed in Hod, Gevurah in Netsach, Tif'eret in Malkut. And they are three upper ones in three lower ones. We will find the bridegroom lodging with his groomsmen in the house of the bride with her bridesmaids. And since he is in the house of the bride, it is proper that he will accustom himself to the will of the bride. And it is in her hand to change the custom according to her will as to what is better in her eyes. And with this subject there is an answer to the question 'why are there two attributes here?', as we will explain with help of

HaShem. And this is what Rashbi of blessed memory intended, to explain to us the fine point of its expression in having the clarification of the word precede the word itself, in his saying: ‘Chesed with Hod, right arm with left thigh’ [in his explanation in Raya Mehemna, Zohar Parasha Pinchas, III.244a], and not the inverse. To awake us to the fine point of its expression, because with intending intention he uses the expression of ‘arms’ and ‘thighs’, and not the expression of the attributes ‘Chesed’ and ‘Hod’ etc. To teach that this mixing is by means of the body. And this he intends when he has the expression of ‘Chesed’ and ‘Hod’ precede that of ‘arm’ and ‘leg’ as if he says: examine carefully! Because it had already been possible to shorten the expression saying ‘Chesed’ and ‘Hod’, the expression of the attributes and not [using] the expression of the limbs. But [he uses the expression of the limbs] “to give you understanding” (Daniel 9:23). Because the mystery of this mixing, which seems to be turned, is [actually] aligned by means of the body which is Tif’eret, the middle one, as we have explained. But on the contrary: ‘arm’ and ‘thigh’ [are] clarification of Chesed and Hod, and [it is not so that] Chesed and Hod are clarification of ‘arm’ and ‘thigh’. And to this we will answer that with Jacob and Rachel there was no need to change their names into the name of limbs, because there is no modification in their subject and their unity, but [it is] as customary: Tif’eret on [in the same line of] Malkut, and therefore he does not alter them.

And further we understand that in the expression of the first recension [Zohar III.241a/b] he says: ‘right arm in/with (ב) left thigh’ and similarly ‘left arm in/with (ב) right thigh’, and he does not say ‘with’ (עם), ‘with’ (עם), but [he speaks] in brief. And in this saying [here, Zohar III.244a] in his explanation he clarifies ‘Chesed with (עם) Hod’ etc., and he [now] says ‘with’ ‘with’. ‘And why are two of his attributes here?’ Explanation: it is right if it is this what they are clarifying, as there is only a modification of the attributes concerning the influx and the sucking only, which we would have thought in the explanation ‘right arm in/with (ב) left leg’, that its intention is on the influx only which Chesed influences in Hod, and similarly which Gevurah influences in Netsach, there is no difficulty for us at all that thus [is] the way of the attributes that the ones suck from the others. But according to what he explains in this saying ‘right arm in/with (ב) left thigh’, explanation: ‘with’ (עם) really [they are really together], which is that Chesed unifies itself downwards into Hod, and Gevurah downwards into Netsach. If this is so, it is [still] difficult ‘why the two attributes [are] here’. As according to the way of the real unification, this is not the way of unification of the Sefirot, as Netsach connects itself with Chesed, and Hod with Gevurah, as we will explain in the Gate of the Thigh of Jacob [Gate XVII], with assistance and help of HaShem, in the chapters 3 and 4.

And the meaning according to the influx, even if it is that Chesed can influence in/with Hod, yet Hod will perform its [natural] action which is an action of Din/Judgement, even if it will not perform [it] with the strength as it would be when it would suck from Gevurah, and there is in this no [need for] fear, since there is [here] no modification of the attributes [the way the attributes act remains the same, although the intensity may differ].

Truly [however] in real union there is doubt because the activity of Judgement/Din is abolished from everything. Since when Gevurah wishes to act with Judgement/Din, Netsach will conquer that Judgement/Din and will not allow it to act, in the mystery of the unity. And therefore it is difficult ‘why the two attributes [are] thus’, as it is a modification of the

attributes and a restraint of Judgement/Din, and this is not convenient. And this is not the natural order, that which was told to David: “On account of David, your servant etc.” [Psalm 132:10] he changed and extended the power of Compassion/Rachamim. As even if the joy [רינה, referring to the previous verse (Psalm 132:9) mentioned in the beginning of the current chapter] is from the side of Judgement/Din as is known, he [= David] wanted that it would be from the side of Chesed/Mercy, and this will be explained further in the Gate of the Whatness and the Conduct [Gate VIII], with help of HaShem, in chapter 6.

And similarly concerning Tif’eret, since it came to the house of Malkut as it says: “I have come to my garden, my sister, my bride” [Song of Songs 5:1]. When this is so, it is that it behaves itself according to her [= Malkut’s] will, even with modification of the attributes, to extend the power of Compassion/Rachamim further. And this is what is called ‘Chesed in/with Hod, Gevurah in/with Netsach and Jacob in/with Rachel, because they [are] three upper ones in/with three lower ones by means of Jacob the bridegroom who has come to the house of his bride Rachel as we have explained. But if it would have been so that the bride would go up to the house of the bridegroom, it would not have been convenient to change, as it is not the natural order to change [in those circumstances].

And see, we will end the clarification of the saying, and may good taste and knowledge go out for us, as Tif’eret also harmonizes between Gedolah[/Chesed] and Hod, and between Gevurah and Netsach.