

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

*Provisional working translation by Stephan Claassen, 2025*

### **Gate 1. Chapter 7.**

After we have occupied ourselves in the previous chapters with the state of our beliefs that are accepted by all kabbalists, that the Sefirot are ten, not less, not more, in this chapter we want to safeguard the student against from the place of confusion and error, and this is the question asked to rav Hai Gaon [the last of the Geonim of Pumbeditha, lived 939-1038]. And those who asked said: “Will our teacher instruct us, as we have found that our sages of blessed memory [taught] the Thirteen Attributes which Moses, our teacher of blessed memory, received [Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17b, based on Exodus 34:6-7]. And [we found] that Abraham our father of blessed memory in the book that our sages of blessed memory attributed to his name, which is Sefer Yetzira, counts there ten Sefirot. And we need to learn from his [= your] holy mouth whether the ten Sefirot are the thirteen Attributes. If this is so, we find thirteen Attributes, [but] we do not find thirteen Sefirot. Or are the thirteen Attributes [something] on themselves and the ten Sefirot [something else] on themselves? We need your teaching and are waiting for your answer. Until here the citation of the question.

And see, the rav explained to them that the thirteen Attributes are the branches of the descendants that go out from the ten upper ones [which] are called Sefirot, these opposite these with three hidden ones, heads of heads [general principles]. And [even] if they do not have reality for you [in the Torah], there is a tradition for them by those that preceded us, man [receiving] from the mouth of man until [it was received] from the mouth of the prophets of blessed memory. And the descendants, these are the works called attributes, and the roots, which are the parents, are called Sefirot, not because it is [that their name might refer to] number (מספר) etc. And we have not copied his whole answer because we will dwell longer on it and clarify the explanation broader in the Gate of Purity [Gate XI] chapter 1, with help of HaShem.

And now it is appropriate that we say that the intention of the rav, in his saying ‘with these heads of heads etc.’ is not that his answer to them would be that there are thirteen Sefirot. Because if that would have been the intention of the rav, he could have settled the root of their question for them, [by saying] that what is in Sefer Yetzira, where it says ‘ten and not eleven’, [that] this is not traditional law (Halacha).

And since we see that the Gaon did not hasten to settle the expression nor to reject it, [this means] that it is seen that he reckons the three hidden ones not to be Sefirot – [and thus to avoid] that we could have said that they [= the Sefirot] are thirteen, as they [= the three hidden ones] are only hidden powers, [more] fine realities than the reality of the Sefirot, just as we will expand [our] clarification there [in Gate XI, chapter 1] with help of HaShem.

And just as there is for us no distress from what we have found, that there are [the] ten [Sefirot] of [the world of] Atsilut/Emanation, and the ten of [the world of] Beriah/Creation, and [the] ten of [the world of] Yetzira/Formation, and [the] ten of [the world of]

Asiya/Action, similarly it is not difficult for us that there are hidden realities, because surely the Sefirot they are always only ten. And when we encounter hidden realities, they are sources for the revealed ones. And if it is so that the revealed ones are a shadow of the upper [hidden] ones, and they never ascend from ten, and do not decrease from ten, and the three [“heads of heads”] are sources as we will explain there in the clarification of the words of the Gaon, with help of HaShem.

Further there is a place for erring in a Baraita of R. Simon the Righteous, and Rav Hamai Gaon copied it in the Book of the Meditation which he wrote, and this is the citation: ‘And each of these thirteen powers has a known name. And there their degree [is] one above the other. 1. Primordial Air, 2. Primordial Wisdom/Chochmah, 3. Wonderful Light, 4. Hasmal (חשמל)/Amber, 5. Cloud, 6. Throne of Brightness, 7. The big wheel that is called Hashazit (חזזית), the place of origin of the vision (חזיון) of the visionaries, 8. Cherub [name of an angel], 9. Wheels of the Chariot, 10. The Encircling Air, 11. Curtain, this is the Throne of the Honor, 12. The place of the souls that is called Chambers of Gedolah/Greatness, 13. The mystery of the upper arrangement which is called Palace of the Upper Holy One. And these are the thirteen powers that are revealing themselves from hidden upper Keter which is called Artisan’. End of the citation for our [current] subject.

And the truth is that the apparent meaning is that it counts the order of the Sefirot, and thus it is that there are ten Sefirot. And the first one is Primordial Air, and this is Keter, as its thus name is well-known and it will be explained in the Gate of the Special Names (Gate XXIII). The second one is Primordial Wisdom and this is Chochmah/Wisdom itself. Third Wonderful Light which is Bina, Fourth Hasmal which is Chesed, Fifth Cloud [is] Gevurah, Sixth the Throne of Brightness which is Tif’eret, Seventh Hashazit which is Netsach and it is one of the prophets of truth, Eighth Cherub which is Hod, Ninth Wheels of the Chariot which is Yesod, Tenth the Encircling Air which is Malkut.

From here onwards they are not among the Sefirot, but degrees which are beneath the Sefirot. And some explain that they are three sorts of emanation that are in Malkut, but not [of the degree of the] actual emanation. But to us it seems that his intention is that they are three sources hidden in Malkut, as there has come an allusion to it, just as three upper ones were alluded to hidden in Keter, thus they [here] came in it [= Malkut] unveiled. And here is not the place for this subject, but [it is] in the Gate of Purity [Gate IX] and in the Gate of Atsilut, Beriah, Yetzira Asiya [Gate XVI], with help of HaShem.

And on the subject of the three remaining ones, see in the words of Rabbi Simon the Righteous, blessed be he, that they are [called] “11. Curtain, 12. The place of the souls that is called Chambers of Gedolah/Greatness, 13. The mystery of the upper arrangement which is called Palace of the Upper Holy One.” It appears to us in his expression, when the meditation is considered well, that he does not speak on the subject of the Sefirot, but on the powers of the Sefirot, and particularly that he calls the eleventh one “Curtain” of which the explanation is: a place of interruption, and it is a curtain and a screen between Atsilut/Emanation and the other matters that are below Atsilut/Emanation, and he calls it Throne of the Honor, as it is the throne that encompasses many thrones, and among us it is the subject of the base expressed as

[the world of] Beriah/Creation, as will be explained in the Gate of Atsilut, Beriah, Yetzira, Asiya [Gate XVI], with help of HaShem.

And see, it is known that the souls are hewn from below the Throne of the Honor, and although it is that, according to the truth, they are emanated from above the Throne, yet they hewn from below the Throne, as the “hewing” is a special name for the [world of] Yetzira/Formation, as will be explained in the aforementioned Gate [Gate of Atsilut, Beriah, Yetzira Asiya, Gate XVI].

And see, the [world of] Yetzira/Formation is below the [world of] Beriah/Creation, [and] it is found that the place of hewing of the souls is below the Throne of the Honor which is below the [world of] Beriah. And therefore this degree below the Throne of the Honor is called Place of the Souls and similarly [it is called also] the Rooms of Greatness/Gedolah, which are actually the rooms of the Garden of Eden.

And below this [world of] Yetzira/Formation [is the world of] Asiya/Action and this [world] is referred to by the expression “mystery of the upper arrangement”, and this is the arrangement of serving [angels] in the mystery of the [world of] Asiya/Action who are below [the world of] Yetzira/Formation. This is what appears to us on the subject of the Baraita of Rabbi Simon the Righteous.

And see, the subject of the thirteen attributes has been settled, and according to [this] master [Hai Gaon] or according to [the other] master [Hama Gaon], the Sefirot are always ten. And however on the subject of the question which they asked the Gaon, [that is] if the thirteen attributes are Sefirot or not, we have proof that they are not an allusion to the Sefirot according to the argument [it might seem] of [Hai] the Gaon. And the proof [is] that they are called “thirteen attributes of Compassion”, and see, among the Sefirot there are attributes [the axes] of Judgement/Din, such as Gevurah and Hod. Therefore what is clear to us in this is that the thirteen attributes are the twelve boundaries which are the twelve permutations [of the Tetragram YHVH], and they are twelve, and [added to them] the place that surrounds them, which is the name that encompasses them, they are thirteen. And they are in each of the three places which are Dragon/תלי and Sphere/גלגל and Heart/לב, [Sefer Yetzira 6:2] and the sign [=acronym] is TGL/תג"ל. And besides that there are further thirteen hidden ones [permutations of the name YHVH], and they are in Keter.

And what is suitable to extend on the clarification of the subject of this sermon will be explained in the Gate of the Details of the Names [Gate XXIII] with help of HaShem, as that is its place, in the explication of the name of seventy-two letters.

And see, Rabbi Nehunya ben HaQana of blessed memory, is perfecting this speculation, as he counted thirteen attributes in Keter, as I will cite him in the Gate of What-ness and Governance [Gate VIII] in chapter 3, with help of HaShem. And similarly also the Rashbi of blessed memory wrote thirteen Attributes of Compassion in Ze'ir Anpin (“the Small Face”) and thirteen Attributes in Arikh Anpin (“the Long Face”). Certainly it is seen that their opinion is contrary to the opinion of the [Rav Hai] Gaon of blessed memory.

And the place for the explanation of the thirteen attributes is not here, as it will be explained in a book of itself [possibly referring to his book *Tomer Devorah*, *Palm-tree of Deborah*], if HaShem will decree [us] life. And the aim among us in this is to strengthen the belief of the Kabbalists, that one should not believe in adding to the ten Sefirot nor in subtracting from them, as it is “...*a tent that will not wander, will not set out...*” [Isaiah 33:20], ten and not eleven, and he who increases or lessens, is sinning and brings evil upon himself. And we ask from God to rescue us from errors.