

# The Gate of Unity and Faith

*To understand, to a small degree, the statement of the Zohar that Shma Yisrael is a higher level unity and Baruch Shem Kvod Malchuto L'olam Vo-ed is a lower level unity.*

## Chapter One

“Know today and take it to heart that Havaye is Elokim; in the heavens above and on the earth below there is none else.

There is something we need to understand here: Would you really imagine that there is another god in the waters below the earth? Why must the verse warn so strongly, “take it to heart”?

Now, there’s a verse that says, “Forever, G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens.” The Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, explained it this way: Your word that You said, “Let there be a sky in the midst of the waters”—those very words and letters stand firmly within the sky of the heavens and are forever invested within all the heavens to vivify them. Like it says, “The word of our G-d shall stand firm forever.” So, also, “His words live and stand firm forever.”

For if the letters were to depart for just an instant, G-d forbid, and return to their source, all the heavens would become void and absolute nothingness. It would be as though they had never existed at all, exactly like before the utterance of “Let there be a sky.”

The same applies to all created things in all the upper and lower worlds. Even in this physical earth, which is called the kingdom of the silent: If the letters of the ten utterances by which the earth was created during the six days of creation were to depart from it for just an instant, G-d forbid, it would revert to void and absolute nothingness, exactly like before the six days of creation.

This corresponds with the teaching of the Ari (Rabbi Isaac Luria), of blessed memory, who taught that even within those creations that are actually “silent”—such as rocks, soil and water—there is a soul and spiritual vitality. This is the invested letters of speech from the ten utterances. These letters vivify and is-ify the silent to be a something out of the nothingness and void that preceded the six days of creation.

Now יבש, the name of the stone, is not mentioned in the ten utterances as they are written in the Torah<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, vitality extends to the stone from these ten utterances by transposing and substituting letters through a cyclical process of 231 gates, forward and backward, as described in the Book of Formation. This process eventually produces the combination of letters יבש, which is the name and vitality of the stone.

The same applies to all the creations in the world: The name each is called in the Holy Language, those are the very letters of speech that are derived from the ten utterances to vitalize it. Only that they are derived through a hierarchy of processes, through substitutions and transpositions of letters in the 231 gates—until they reach that particular creation and invest themselves within it to vitalize it.

This is because the particular creations are not able to receive their vitality directly from the ten utterances as they are in the Torah. The vitality that extends from the ten utterances directly is far too great for any specific creation. They do not have the capacity to receive this vitality unless this vitality descends and steps down repeatedly from one level to another through these substitutions and transpositions of letters--as well as gematrias, which are the quantified value of the letters. Through this process, eventually the vitality is able to compact itself in order to invest itself with a particular creation and is-ify it.

So this is the name that a thing is called in the Holy Language: The packaging for the vitality compacted within the letters of this name that has been devolved from the ten utterances of the Torah. These ten utterances have the power and vitality to create something out of nothing and vitalize it forever, since “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are completely one.”

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<sup>1</sup> See the preface of Ramban to the Torah, near the end, where he explains that the letters of each parsha of the Torah are the forces that give existence to whatever that parsha is discussing.

## 1. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon

### Laws of the Foundation of the Torah, Chapter One

1. The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdoms is to know that there is a Primal Existence and He brings all entities into existence. And all entities from the heavens to the earth and everything in between only exist from the reality of His existence.
2. And if you could imagine that He is not an existence, then no other entity would be able to exist.
3. And if you should imagine that all other entities aside from Him do not exist, He alone would exist—and He would not be annulled through their annulment. For all entities are in need of Him and He, blessed be He, does not need any one of them. Therefore, His realness is not like the realness of any of them.

Commentary of the Pirush to halacha 3;

...and the Holy One, blessed be He, brings each entity into existence and He sustains each one with the current that flows upon it continuously. It is because of this that they need Him. But He does not need them. Therefore, His realness is not like the realness of any one of them.

## 2. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the Tanya

as transcribed in Maamarei Admor Hazakein, Parshiot, Va-Etchanan, page 736

“And you should know today...there is none else.”

This means a clear knowledge. For a person must understand with the eyes of the mind and not with plain faith alone.

Now, this seems puzzling: What is the meaning of, “there is none else”? Could there be, heaven forbid, another god under the earth?

Rather, “none else” means that there is nothing supplementary (Tofel) to Him. For the heavens and the earth and all that is in it is only the Creator, may He be blessed.

For example, the sun in the heavens...

It is just the same with the creation of the worlds: There is a Divine statement, “Let there be a sky...” and from these *otiot* extends and evolves the sky. So that the sky we see is only a glimmer of these *otiot*, “Let there be a sky”. And the sky’s existence is void in relation to theirs.

Now, to our eyes, it seems to be a sky, since we do not grasp the *otiot*. But if we *would* grasp the *otiot* themselves, we would not perceive a sky—just as in the analogy of the sun mentioned earlier.

### 3. Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz, Shnei Luchot HaBrit

Section: Toldot Adam; Beit HaBechira 4

...for the true, absolute faith is that, “in the heavens above and on the earth below there is none else” (Deut. 4:39). And when the verse says, “none else,” it doesn’t mean there is no other god besides Him, blessed be He—because this we already know, that “G-d is our L-rd and G-d is one.” Rather, it means that there is *nothing else* in the world—no idea of a thing, except for G-dliness. What I mean to say is that there is not a thing in the world, whatever it may be, any vitality or potential of movement, even inert matter, that does not extend through a chain of processes from Him, blessed be He.

This is the idea behind the statement, “And You vivify all of them.” He, blessed be He, is-ified all of them and He, blessed be He, vivifies all of them. For if He would not, heaven forbid, they would not exist. And before He existified them He knew them—for He existifies them and His knowing is His decree. He decreed and He spoke and He commanded and it is so.

Anyone who does not believe this is so and asserts a dualism, attributing to anything any independent power, heaven forbid, that person is accepting a dualism of “two authorities”...

[R. Horowitz continues to explain that this is the difficulty Maimonides faces in answering the question of free choice.]

### 4. Midrash Tehillim 119:36

“Forever, G-d, Your word stands in the heaven.” What is the word that stands in the heaven? Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, says, “What do the heavens stand upon? Upon that word that I said, “Let the sky be amidst the waters.” With that word that He created them, with that word they endure forever.

### 5. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov

cited in Ketter Shem Tov, siman 194

...immediately when the Holy One, blessed be He, said “Let the sky be,” the sky came into being, as it is written, “With the word of G-d the heavens were made.” And this statement entered as an inner vitality to vivify the sky that it should endure all the days of the universe as it says, “Forever, G-d, your words stand in the heavens.”

Similarly, when He said, “The earth will produce living beings!” or “The earth will produce herbage and fruit trees!” that statement brought them into being and that statement is an inner life-force for them.

So when a person takes a fruit and says a blessing, “Blessed are You, G-d...”—when he mentions G-d’s name, that vitality through which this fruit is created wakes up...and this vitality is the nourishment of the soul...

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## 7. Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, *Pardes Rimonim*,

Portal 6, chapter 8

“...and Ketter is also an extension of the Ein Sof. But don’t stop there, for the Ein Sof extends into all of the sefirot, to the point that you cannot say, “This is Malchut and not Ein Sof,” heaven forbid! Rather, Malchut also has the power of the Ein Sof.

And don’t stop there either, because in this way the Ein Sof is the vivifying force of the Sefirot and the vivifying force of the supernal chariots and the vivifying force of the angels and vivifying force of the entire work of creation from the very first point to the last.

This is why we say, “And You vivify all of them” (Nechemia 9:6; c.f. the prayer liturgy). Our teachers of blessed memory interpreted this as, “And you is-ify all of them.” But they also stood by the simple meaning of “You vivify all of them.”—because it is all one idea: Since He is-ified them and brought them into existence out of nothing, the current must continue flowing and all of them continue drawing their vitality from Him. And since He is continually vivifying them, it turns out that He is is-ifying them at all times and at every moment and in every event. So you see that vivifying and is-ifying is really one thing.

Along the same lines, we can understand, “And in His goodness He renews each day, continuously, the first act of Creation.” This is talking about the current that flows to vivify them, to sustain them and to set all their properties. So that if, heaven forbid, you could imagine the withdrawal of His current from them—they would terminate

immediately. This is all they are: projections of the mystery of His light. It is the current of a stream that is never interrupted but renews itself constantly, like the waters of a river that renewed every moment.

Now we will return to our discussion: that the Infinite, the King of kings of kings, controls all things. For His very essence penetrates and descends

by way of the sefirot and between the sefirot,

within the merkavot and between the merkavot,

within the angles and between the angels,

within the enclosing spheres and between the enclosing spheres,

within the elements and between the lowly elements,

within the earth and between the earth and her offspring,

and until the final point within the depths,

“His glory fills the entire earth.”

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had this in mind when he wrote in the Tikunim (preface to Zohar, 3b), “And the Primal Cause shines with the ten sefirot of Atzilut and within the ten of Briah and shines in the ten classes of angels and in the ten enclosing spheres of the heavens and yet does not change in any place.”

He took care to note that the Primal Cause “does not change,” in order to rule out the notion that since He extends to such a degree we should find that He changes as the garments change—heaven forbid! That is why he writes that He does not change at any place.

## **8. R. Chayim Vital in the name of his teacher, R. Yitzchak Luria, the Ari HaKadosh**

Eitz Chayim, Shaar Kitzur ABYA, Chapter 10

Let us start with the Domem—these being metals and precious stones. Their matter and form is a composite of all the four elements, only that the element of Earth dominates in them. Therefore, the nefesh in them is only to integrate all the four elements—but it does not change them or introduce into them any transformation beyond that which is already there in the Elements—other than this integration.

Therefore, this nefesh is called the nefesh that integrates, presents and sustains them according to what they are without at all changing what is there. If so, this nefesh is a singular force. That is why most of the sages do not call it a nefesh at all, since it does not introduce anything, but only integrates what is already there.

## **9. R. Moshe Cordovero, Pardes Rimonim**

Portal 30 Chapter 6

## 10. R. Yeshaya Horowitz, Shnei Luchot HaBrit

(Toldot Adam, Bayit Ne'eman 5)

In truth, the word, "Ozen" (ear) does not refer to the ear of the physical body. Rather, it refers to the function of the ear that is brought about through the power of the current that flows to it.

This is what is meant by the verse, "He Who plants the ear in place, does He not hear? He forms the eye, does He not see?" Understand it this way: The creation of any limb of a person is through the wheel of the holy letters of the alef-bet; which in turn conduct a current from the higher, root forces; which in turn are intimately connected to the base-root forces. If so, there must be in that set of letters the power of that function that is performed by that particular created limb. And similarly, that function must exist in some form in the higher, root force that flows to that set of letters. And so it continues higher and higher, working backwards from effect to cause: from the functions here below, we know the potentials that exist above. Since there is vision and hearing below, there must be vision and hearing in the root force above.

Of course, the vision and hearing above are not bodily functions—they are spiritual phenomena that are somehow analogous to these functions. Take hearing for example: When people hear a voice with their ears, they *discern* the idea that is communicated to them. So, too, there is a divine function above that receives information about what is happening below and discerns whether it is acceptable or not. Therefore, this divine function is called *Ozen* (ear). As the verse says, "For an ear will discern matters."

## 11. Midrash Rabba, Deuteronomy

Chapter 2, 28

Jethro gave some credence to polytheism when he said, "Now I know that Havaye is greater than all the gods."

*(He implied that they are great, but G-d is greater.—Matnat Kehuna)*

Naaman acknowledged a little more than Jethro, for he said, "Now I know that there is no G-d in all the earth except among the Jews.

*(He agreed about the earth, but didn't mention the heavens.—ibid)*

Rachav appointed Him in the heavens and the earth when she said, "For Havaye, your G-d, is G-d in the heavens beyond and on the earth beneath."

*(Not only on the earth but also in the heavens, "that your eyes do not see". But she still left over "the empty hollow of the world."—Yalkut Shimoni)*

Moses appointed Him even in the empty hollow of the world, as he said, "Know today and take it to heart, that Havaye is the Elokim; in the heavens beyond and on the earth beneath there is none else." What did he mean by "none else"? He meant even in the empty hollow of the world.

אב	גד	הי	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת
אג	הז	טכ	מס	פק	שא	גה	זט	כמ	ספ	קש
אד	זי	מע	קת	גי	טל	שב	זח	זח	כנ	פר
אה	טמ	פש	גז	כס	קא	הט	מפ	שג	זכ	סק
או	כע	שד	טנ	קב	זל	פת	הי	סר	גח	מצ
אז	מק	נט	סש	הג	פא	זמ	קג	טס	שה	כפ
אח	סת	זג	שו	מר	הל	קר	כצ	גי	פכ	טע
טא	פג	בק	המ	שי	סא	טפ	גכ	קה	מש	זס
אי	קו	סב	כר	זע	גל	שח	פד	מת	טצ	הג
אכ	שט	קו	פה	סג	מא	כש	טק	זפ	הס	גמ
					אל					
אמ	גס	הפ	זק	טש	כא	מג	סה	פז	קט	שכ
אנ	הצ	טת	מר	פת	של	גע	זר	כב	סו	קו
אס	זש	מה	קב	גפ	טא	סז	שמ	הק	כג	פט
אע	טב	פי	גצ	כד	קל	הר	מו	שג	זת	סח
אפ	כה	שס	טג	קמ	זא	פכ	הש	סט	גק	מו
אצ	מה	גר	סי	הת	פל	זב	קג	טד	שע	כו
אק	סכ	זג	שפ	מט	הא	קס	כו	גש	פמי	טה
אר	פנ	כח	הב	שצ	סל	טי	גת	קע	מי	זד
אש	קפ	סמ	כט	זד	גא	שק	פס	מכ	טז	הג
את	שר	קצ	פע	סנ	מל	כי	טח	זו	הד	גב

Figure 28. The 221 Gates according to Rabbi Eliezar Rokeach of Wormes (1160-1237).

אב	גד	הו	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת
אג	דה	וו	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב
אד	הז	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג
אה	זו	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד
או	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה
אז	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז
אח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו
אט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח
אי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט
אכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי
אל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ
אמ	נס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי	כל
אנ	סע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ	למ
אס	עפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי	כל	מנ
אע	פצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ	למ	נס
אפ	צק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע
אצ	קר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ
אק	רש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ
אר	שת	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק
אש	תב	גד	הז	זח	טי	כל	מנ	סע	פצ	קר
את	בג	דה	זו	חט	יכ	למ	נס	עפ	צק	רש

Figure 27. The 231 Gates according to the later Kabbalists. This is the Alef array corresponding to Keter. (Note how the letters of the Tetragrammaton spelled out, are lined up with the lines.)





## Chapter Two

Now from this we have an answer for the *minim* who deny that G-d could supervise the details of His world or perform the signs and miracles described in the Torah. We have exposed the root of their error, for they err through a mistaken comparison. They compare the works of G-d in making heavens and earth to the works of man and his clever tricks. For once a silversmith has produced a utensil, that utensil is no longer in need of the hands of the silversmith. Even though his hands are removed from it and it goes its way in the market, it's structure and form endure exactly as when it left the hands of the silversmith.

So these fools imagine the work of heaven and earth. But their eyes are blinded from seeing the great distinction between the work of man and his clever tricks—whereby he makes something from something, simply changing the form and appearance from the appearance of an ingot of silver to the appearance of a utensil—and the work of heaven and earth, which is something from nothing.

And this is a greater wonder than the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, by way of analogy.

### 12. Torah Ohr

#### Parshat Va'era

The philosophers fail to grasp the concept that G-d supervises details. For example, the statement of the Talmud, “No person so much as stubs a finger here below unless it is so decreed from above.” They have a problem with this: Since He, blessed be He, is a perfect unity, the true oneness, how could we say that He occupies Himself with knowing details and supervising each specific one, putting His mind to many different matters? This is no longer oneness but plurality.

### 13. Likutei Torah

#### Shir HaShirim

Bilaam's thought was in accordance with their error that the worlds come into being from Him, blessed be He, in a chain of cause and effect. If so, it follows that He must be “exalted over all the nations” (Psalms 113:4) without lowering Himself to see with specific supervision in this world. For whenever there is a chain of cause and effect, if the cause will invest itself within the effect there would be a reciprocal effect in the cause.

Therefore, Bilaam thought, it's improper that He should invest Himself, blessed be He, to such a degree in the lowly effects of this world, since He is “of eyes too pure to look at evil” (Habakuk 1:13). It's more proper for Him to be exalted and transcendent without lowering Himself to such a degree.