

The problem: Divine perfection implies unchangingness, yet creation / process has change.

Know that in the blessed Creator there is no change whatsoever. Wherever there is herein stated anything that indicates a lack in the functioning of the Creator, it all is stated in reference to the Sefirot. ... They did not speak actually about the Creator, but about the Sefirot. If you wish to query: we already know that the Sefirot are emanated, not created, and it is known that anything about which it is said, '[it is] emanated' – the power of the Emanator is in the emanated; and if so, whatever is said about the Sefirot is as if it is said about the Creator. [And this would imply that there is change in the Creator.]

(Rabbi Menahem Recanati, *Meanings of the Commandments*, cited by Rabbi Judah Hayyat)

'The Sefirot: Three Perspectives'

1. They are divine tools
2. They are divine essence
3. They are divine names

Tzemaḥ Tzedeq's Elucidation of the three-perspectives model: first layer of analysis			
	If Tools	If Essence	If Name
Divine Essence	Stands alone	Grouped Together	Distinct
Sefirot – Emanation	Grouped		Distinct
Creation	Together	Stands alone	Distinct
Tzemaḥ Tzedeq cites occurrences of his grandfather Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyadi agreeing with each of the 3 perspectives			

Further elucidation

1. Sefirot as Tools: Rabbi Menahem Recanati:

Sefirot are like a craftsman's tools, by means of which he carries out his work.

They do not differentiate between a thing and its opposite: they are the same towards each thing and its opposite. Therefore, one of the sages compared them to the will of the soul, which is the same towards all desires and all thoughts that spread forth from it: although these are many, their root is not other than one.

Just as the soul is clothed in the body, likewise with the blessed Creator: from His Great Light, these vessels sparked forth; and the Sages called them Sefirot. But the spreading forth of the blessed First Cause in these vessels is called 'Emanation'. ...

1. Were we to say that the 10 Sefirot are actually the blessed Creator Himself, then how could it be that the Creator is One, whereas the number [of the Sefirot] is 10?! And it is not correct to posit parts in the essence of the blessed Creator.

2. Furthermore, [were the 10 Sefirot identical to the Creator,] by positing differentiation between the attributes, we would posit differentiation within the actual essence of the Creator; and this is impossible to say. Indeed, it is known that from the left side flow all impurities and witchcraft, whereas from the right side it is the opposite. If these [sides] are actually the Creator – how could we posit differentiation in the acts of the Creator?!

2. Sefirot as Divine Essence:

2.1: Nominalists: Sefirot are not actual 'things' / 'realities' / 'hypostacies'; they have no objective reality. Rather, 'According to the differentiation of functions (Heb. *bəḥinot*) within Him in conjunction with differentiated actions, He is called by many names, and we say about Him that He is 10 Sefirot.'

Agrees with non-Kabbalistic philosophers (Judah HaLevi, Maimonides), but non-standard for Kabbalists, who generally see the Sefirot as actual, objective things.

2.2.1: Theologically Unacceptable Essentialists: Divine Essence is the 10 Sefirot. (Rare or non-existent)

2.2.2: Acceptable Essentialists: Sefirot are within the Divine Essence, but not identical to It; they are a subordinate function.

Synthesis of 'Tools' and 'Essence': Stage 1:

Synthesis uses nuance: 2 layers within 10 Sefirot (discussed in Rabbi Moses Cordovero's *Pardes*): 1) hidden in their Emanator; 2) manifest

Stage in Hierarchy	Whose View?	Explanatory Analogy from the Human Soul
Divine Essence is Simple, beyond any trait	Agrees with 'Tools – Recanati'; & with 'Nominalist Essentialists' and 'Acceptable Essentialists'	Core self
Sefirot hidden in Emanator are imbedded in Divine Essence, and non-differentiated, 'without substance' (lit. without 'what')	Cf. 'Acceptable Essentialists' (disagrees with Recanati)	Capacity within core self to function / relate externally
Manifest Sefirot are mere Tools	Cf. Recanati	Actual, particularized relating / functioning
Creation – experiences disjunction from divine	All agree	Outer result of particularized relating

How do the Manifest Sefirot emerge from the Hidden Sefirot?

Cf. the emergence of a flame from a burning coal.

It is possible for something incomparably lower to emerge from something incomparably higher – as long as there is some unifying factor.

Are the 'Manifest Sefirot' Divine?

'Tools – Recanati'; 'Cordovero – *Pardes*): No, only the flow of 'light' from the divine essence than emanates into them is divine.

Rabbi Isaac Luria ('Ari za"l'); Rabbi Shneur Zalman; (cf. *Avodat HaQodesh*): Yes: G-d is Infinite, not lacking any capacity – not even the capacity to act in finite manner. The manifest Sefirot are a revelation of the Infinite One's capacity for finitude. They come from an immediate divine source, too: the 'residue' of divinity that remained even after the 'withdrawal of the infinite divine light'. From this point of view, the manifest Sefirot are not actually finite, but the source of finitude (and thus they, too, can be called 'without substance'); or: viewed from the source, they are not finite; although viewed from the result, they seem finite.

Further Categorization / Synthesis:

3. Sefirot as Divine Names: No capacities, etc. exist in the divine Essence; but capacities emerge retroactively, in order to enable manifestations, when aroused

Agrees with Recanati & 'Essentialist Nominalists' that nothing exists in Essence; but agrees with *Pardes* that Sefirot are actual things, and that there are pre-tool stages in Sefirot.

Question for next time: How / Why does anything emerge from simple divine Essence?