

ספר
דרך
אמונה

מאת המקובל האלקי
רבי מאיר אבן גבאי
ז"ל

DERECH EMUNAH

The Way of Faith

by Rabbi Meir ibn Gabbai

With interlinear English
translation and elucidation



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PUBLISHING

Derech Emunah — The Way of Faith

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First edition

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The Nature of this Work

This volume presents an English elucidation and commentary generated through the utilization of frontier Artificial Intelligence (AI) models. While the technology employed has been rigorously configured to adhere strictly to Orthodox Jewish *hashkafa* and meticulously prompted to maintain fidelity to the original Hebrew text, this work **does not represent, nor is it comparable to**, the output of a traditional team of rabbinical scholars and professional editors.

Usage and Limitations

This translation is intended solely as a tool to assist advanced learners in accessing the depth of the original work. It is **not** intended as a replacement of the original Hebrew source, nor does it carry the authority of a standard rabbinic translation reviewed by leading Torah authorities.

Despite the safeguards implemented to prevent errors and “hallucinations” common to AI models, the nuance of Torah study often transcends algorithmic interpretation. Therefore:

1. **Verification:** Any novel insight, ruling, or conclusion drawn from this translation should be checked against the original Hebrew.
2. **Consultation:** All practical questions or derived lessons should be discussed with and verified by a qualified rabbinic authority before being relied upon.

The goal of this edition is to make these works accessible to a wider audience, but the responsibility for accurate understanding and practical application remains with the reader.

BS"D

*With heartfelt gratitude to Hashem,
lovingly dedicated in honour of
our grandchildren*

Sophie Sultana שתחי
and Shai Yonel Yehudah שיחי Babins

*May they b'ezrat Hashem grow to lives of
Torah, Chuppah and Maasim Tovim,*

The Glowinsky Family

Toronto, Canada

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A Victory for the Holy Books

In the winter of 5745 (1984–85), the staff of the Central Lubavitch Library in Brooklyn noticed that volumes were quietly vanishing from the shelves. By the following Shavuot the cause was known: the books were being removed, late at night, by a grandson of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn — some five hundred and fifty rare volumes in all, roughly a hundred of them already sold.

What might have been treated as a private family dispute the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, framed in altogether different terms. On Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5745 he summoned the board of Agudas Chassidei Chabad and, in a record of that audience preserved as *Zichron Devorim*, declared that there could be no question of inheritance at all: *hu ba'chaim* — he is alive. The library — together with the manuscripts, the writings, and 770 itself — belonged to the Rebbe Rayatz; “his offspring lives, and he too lives,” and so it would remain “forever and ever, without any division.” It was, the Rebbe said, the sacred will of the Rebbe Rayatz that these treasures belong not to any individual, but to the movement he had built.

The matter moved to the United States Federal Court for the Eastern District of New York, before Judge Charles Sifton. On the fifth of Teves, 5747 (January 6, 1987) — nearly a year after the trial had concluded — the court ruled that the library was the property of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, of the Chassidic community, and not of any private heir. Among Chassidim that day has been known ever since by two words: נצחנו, *Didan Notzach* — “ours is the victory.” The opposing side appealed; the appeal was rejected on the twenty-fifth of Cheshvan 5748, and the books themselves were returned soon after, on the second of Kislev 5748. Characteristically, the Rebbe directed that no great *shturem* be made over their return: the point had never been the books as possessions, but the seforim as a living trust.

“Fill Your Homes with Seforim”

Out of that victory the Rebbe drew not triumph but a charge. The redemption of the seforim became the occasion for a sweeping call to *increase* in seforim — to acquire them, to print and republish them, and above all to learn them; to fill every Jewish home with holy books, so that the victory of the seforim would be written not only in a courtroom, but upon the shelves and in the minds of the people.

It is within this current that the present sefer belongs. By the Rebbe’s explicit directive, the Kehot Publication Society brought out an edition of *Derech Emunah* — its foreword dated the third of Kislev, 5748, the very day after the library was restored to its place.¹ That a work of classical Kabbalah from the generation of the Spanish exile should be drawn back into print in that very

¹ *Derech Emunah* (Kehot, 5748), *Pesach Davar*: “By the directive of the Rebbe we hereby print the sefer *Derech Emunah* by the divine Kabbalist Rabbeinu Meir ibn Gabai” — signed by the editors, *Merkos / Kehot*, on the third of Kislev 5748, Brooklyn. The books themselves had been returned the day before, on the second of Kislev 5748.

hour — and at the Rebbe's word — is itself a fitting introduction to it: a book of *emunah* restored to circulation in the same days that the holy seforim themselves were restored to their place.

The Rebbe did more than direct its printing. On the Shabbos that followed — *Parshas Vayetzei*, the seventh of Kislev 5748 — he devoted a *sicha* to the freshly reprinted *Derech Emunah*, learning its opening *teshuvos* before the assembled chassidim: ibn Gabbai's proof of a Governor for the world from the soul that governs the body, and his account of the ten sefirot. Upon these the Rebbe raised a searching question — and unfolded its resolution — drawing the sefer into the living stream of Chassidus.² A complete English translation of that *sicha*, with all its notes, is presented at the back of this volume.

Rabbi Meir ibn Gabbai and His *Derech Emunah*

Rabbi Meir ben Yechezkel ibn Gabbai was born in 5240 (1480) — by the reckoning of his own colophons, between the months of Teves and Nissan of that year — and was carried into exile as a child in the expulsion from Spain in 1492, living out his life in the lands of the Ottoman empire. He became one of the foremost Kabbalists of the generations between the spreading of the *Zohar* and the teachings of the Arizal — a classical, pre-Lurianic master whose thought is rooted throughout in the *Zohar*.

Three works secured his place, each sealed with the date of its completion. The first was *Tola'as Yaakov*, on the inner, Kabbalistic meaning of prayer “by way of *PaRDeS*,” finished on the twelfth of Nissan 5267 (1507), when its author was twenty-seven. The second was his magnum opus *Avodas HaKodesh* (also called *Maros Elokim*), composed between his forty-second and fiftieth years and completed on the second of Teves 5291 (1531). The third is the present *Derech Emunah*, completed on the twenty-third of Adar I, 5299 (1539). *Tola'as Yaakov* and *Derech Emunah* were first printed in Constantinople in 5320 (1560) by the author's son-in-law, R' Shneur ben Yehuda Falcon; the text of *Derech Emunah* as it has come down to us follows the Padua edition of 5323 (1563).

Derech Emunah — “The Way of Faith” — is cast as a reply to a letter, copied at the head of the book, from a student who signs himself “Yosef HaLevi”; he is otherwise unknown, though some have identified him with R' Yosef ben Yitzchak HaLevi, who came to the Land of Israel from Europe around 5250.³ His questions concern the foundations of Kabbalah: the absolute unity of G-d; the reality and necessity of the ten sefirot; that the sefirot are *emanated*, *not created*; and the relationship of the *the Infinite* to them. With patience and rigor ibn Gabbai sets out the Kabbalistic understanding of these matters and defends it, drawing his proofs from Scripture, from the words of the Sages, and from the *Zohar*, *Sefer Yetzirah*, the *Tikkunim*, and the *Bahir* — and, repeatedly, from the responsa on the ten sefirot of R' Azriel of Gerona, the teacher of the Ramban.

About This Edition

This edition presents *Derech Emunah* with a fully vocalized Hebrew text alongside a clear, faithful English translation and a running elucidation. The sources the author cites — the verses, the teachings of Chazal, and the foundational works of Kabbalah — have been identified and, where helpful, set before the reader; and where the Chassidic masters take up the themes of the sefer — as

² *Sefer HaSichos 5748, Parshas Vayetzei; Hisvaaduyos 5748*, vol. 1, p. 558.

³ So conjectured in *Otzar HaGedolim* (vol. 4, p. 184), though without supporting evidence.

the Tzemach Tzedek does, citing *Derech Emunah* by name in his *Sefer HaChakirah*⁴ — we point the way. In particular, because the Rebbe's *sicha* of *Parshas Vayetzei* 5748 bears so directly on the opening of the work, his insights from it are set within the first chapters as marked boxes — headed *The Rebbe's Sichas* — so that ibn Gabbai's words and the Rebbe's reading of them may be studied side by side; and the *sicha* itself, newly rendered into English in full — from its opening word to its closing blessing, with every one of its notes — is given as an appendix at the back of the volume, so that the reader who has finished the *sefer* may then hear it learned in the Rebbe's own voice. Our aim throughout has been to let ibn Gabbai speak in his own voice and within his own framework — to open the gate, not to crowd it.

May the learning of this sefer be a part of the very increase in Torah and in seforim that its republication was meant to serve.

⁴ *Derech Mitzvosecha*, *Sefer HaChakirah*, 8a and 26a; ibn Gabbai's earlier works are likewise cited throughout the Tzemach Tzedek's writings. His *Avodas HaKodesh* is drawn upon across the Chabad corpus more broadly — among others in the *Igros Kodesh* and *Likkutei Sichos* of the Rebbe and the *Toras Shmuel* of the Rebbe Maharash.

THE QUESTIONER'S LETTER

SUMMARY

This opening unit is not yet ibn Gabbai's own teaching but the letter to which the entire *Derech Emunah* is a reply. It is written by a self-described young student, Yosef HaLevi, who addresses his teacher in the elaborate, deferential style of sixteenth-century scholarly correspondence: a cascade of biblical phrases praising the recipient's wisdom and pleading for an answer.

After the florid salutation, the writer stages a small inner drama: he knows he is unfit to ask, yet his "heart" rebukes him for "waver[ing] between two opinions" like the people in Eliyahu's challenge on Mount Carmel, and presses him to write. He then frames his request through the verse of Iyov, "when G-d rises up to judgment," joined to the Talmudic teaching that the first question put to a person in the next world is whether he dealt *faithfully* (*be'emunah*), a fitting overture to a book named *Derech Emunah* ("The Way of Faith").

The body of the letter is a numbered list of questions on the foundations of Kabbalah: how the world has a Governor; whether one must posit sefirot at all rather than the Infinite alone; why they are ten and constitute "one power"; why they are *emanated* and not *created*; how G-d can be One while ten unify within Him; why they were given limit, measure, and "corporeality"; when they came to be, and whether positing their emergence implies that the Perfect One acquired new knowledge; their essence, their names, and the meaning of those names; how each of the ten contains ten, given that Keter is unmixed mercy; and how Malchut, which only receives what is poured into it, can itself be reckoned a "hundred." These are precisely the questions ibn Gabbai sets out to answer in the *teshuvot* that follow.

The Petitioner's Plea

שְׂאֵלָה אֶל רוֹם הַמַּעֲלֹת. רַב פְּעֻלֹת. מַעֲזֵן הַתְּבוּנוֹת. וְשִׁמְעוּ הוֹלָה בְּכָל הַמְּדִינֹת. A question to one exalted in rank, abundant in accomplishments, a fountain of understanding, whose renown travels throughout all the provinces. This ornate salutation praises the recipient's stature, achievements, depth of mind, and far-reaching reputation. **אֶקְרָא לְשָׁלוֹם מִשְׁפָּל מַצְבִּי. אֵל.** I call out a greeting of peace from my lowly station, toward the exalted majesty and abundant radiance of the wisdom and understanding of your honored Torah. The writer contrasts his own humble position with the recipient's exalted wisdom and understanding. **אֶקוֹד וְאֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל מוֹל זֶהר טָהָר וְאֶלְחוּף עֶפֶר רַגְלֵי כ"ת וְאֶכְרַע.** I bow and prostrate myself before the radiance of your purity, and I lick the dust of the feet of your honored Torah. I kneel upon my knees, with my palms spread toward heaven. These gestures express complete humility before his teacher, while the outspread palms evoke the posture of prayer (*Shemos* 9:29). **יִגְדִּיל יִשְׁגֶּיָה יִגְבֶּיָה כֶּסֶף כ"ת.** May He magnify, exalt, and raise the throne of your honored Torah forever. Amen. This is a blessing that the teacher's honored position should continue to rise. **שׁוֹרוֹת הַבְּזוּיוֹת בָּאוֹת. לְהַפִּיל תַּחֲנוּנִי לְפָנֶיךָ פָּנִים מְאִירִים וּמְזִהִירִים כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ** These despised lines come to lay my supplication before you, before a countenance that shines and gleams like the radiance of the firmament. The image associates the recipient with the wise who shine with the firmament's radiance in *Daniel* 12:3, a verse applied by the *Zohar* to masters of esoteric wisdom. **לְהַרְמִינִי וּלְהַקִּימֵנִי. מַעֲנֵנִי וּמַדְלֹתִי לְהַסִּיר אֶבֶן מִכְשׁוֹל מִלְּפָנַי לְהַשִּׁיבֵנִי אֵלֶי הַשְּׂאֵלוֹת** to raise me and lift me from my poverty and destitution, meaning his lack of understanding, to remove a stumbling stone from before me and answer these questions for me. The stumbling stone is the perplexity that prevents him from proceeding with clarity. **אֵע"פ שְׂאֵינִי רְאוּי וְהִגּוֹן וְיוֹדֵעַ אִפִּי' פְּסוּק אֶחָד, וְהִזְיָה לִי.**

יחשב Although I am neither worthy nor fitting, and do not know even a single verse, I ought to remain silent, since Scripture says, “A fool who keeps silent is considered wise.” By invoking *Mishlei* 17:28 against himself, he admits that silence would have been the safer course.¹ **כַּל שֶׁכֶּן וְכַל שֶׁכֶּן לַפְּצוֹת פֶּה וּלְדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי טָהַר הַדֶּרֶת מַעֲלַת כ"ת** How much more so, and how much more so, should I refrain from opening my mouth and speaking before the pure splendor and exalted stature of your honored Torah. Speaking before so great a teacher only increases his fear of exposing his ignorance. **אֲבָל מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּי יָקוּם אֵל לְדִין נִשְׁאָתָה** But what shall I do? For when G-d rises for judgment, I will be asked, “Did you conduct your dealings faithfully?” He combines the language of *Iyov* 31:14 with the Talmudic question asked at a person's final judgment. The reference to faithfulness also anticipates the subject of faith addressed by this work.²³ **וְלִבִּי חֲרָנִי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי מָה לָּהּ נִדְהָם נִרְדָּם** My heart was incensed with me and said to me, “Why are you bewildered? Why are you asleep?” His conscience is portrayed as awakening him with words that echo the rebuke addressed to Yonah aboard the ship (*Yonah* 1:6).⁴ **עַתָּה מָתִי אַתָּה פוּשׁ"ע עַל שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים אִם תִּדְבֹּר אִם תִּחָּשֶׂה הַדְּבָר קוּשָׁה** How long will you keep hopping between the two branches, whether to speak or to remain silent? The matter is difficult. The image echoes Elijah's rebuke at Mount Carmel (*1 Melachim* 18:21). The writer remains caught between asking his questions and keeping silent, with neither choice appearing easy.⁵

אֶזְזֹר כַּגְּבֵר חֲלָצִיָּה וְקַח קֶסֶת הַסּוֹפֵר אֲשֶׁר בְּמִתְנִיָּה Gird your loins like a man, and take the scribe's inkhorn that is at your waist. His heart now urges him to act, invoking biblical images of readiness and writing.⁶⁷ **וְיִכְתְּבוּן מַלְיָה אֶל מְאוּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִשְׁכַּן הַשְּׂכִינָה נְהַרִּי נְחָלִי הַחֲכָמָה** And let your words be written to the luminary of the Children of Israel, the dwelling place of the Divine Presence, from whom rivers and streams of wisdom flow. The teacher is praised as one in whom the Divine Presence rests and from whom wisdom flows forth like abundant water.⁸⁹ **וַיִּתֵּן עָלֶיָּה מִשְׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת קְדוּשָׁתוֹ עַד תִּרְגִּיעַ וְתִנּוּחַ נִפְשָׁה** And may he place upon you some of the oil of his holy anointing, until your soul is calmed and rests. The

¹ *Mishlei* 17:28 — “גַּם אִילָּל מִחֲרִישׁ חָכָם יִחָשֵׁב אִטֵּם שְׁפָתָיו נָבוֹן — “Even a fool who holds his peace is counted wise; one who seals his lips, a man of understanding.”

² *Shabbos* 31a — “אָמַר רַבָּא, בְּשַׁעֲשָׁה שְׁמִכְנִיסִין אָדָם לְדִין אוֹמְרִים לוֹ, נִשְׁאָתָה וְנִתְּנָה בְּאֵמוּנָה — “Rava said: When a person is brought in for judgment, they say to him: Did you deal faithfully?”

³ The writer fuses two sources: “when G-d rises up” from *Iyov* 31:14, and the Talmudic teaching that the opening question at a person's final judgment is *nasata venatata be'emunah*: “did you conduct your affairs faithfully.” The pun on *emunah* (“faith”/“faithfulness”) quietly anticipates the title of the work he is requesting.

⁴ Two Yonah motifs woven together: **וְלִבִּי חֲרָנִי** echoes the prophet's inner turmoil in *Yonah*, ch. 4, while **נִדְהָם נִרְדָּם** draws on the captain's rebuke aboard the ship — **מָה לָּהּ נִדְהָם קוּם קְרָא אֵל אֱלֹהֶיךָ** — “What ails you, slumberer? Arise, call out to your G-d!” (*Yonah* 1:6).

⁵ *Melachim I* 18:21 — **עַד מָתִי אַתָּם פֹּסְחִים עַל שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים אִם ה' הָאֱלֹהִים לָכֹו אַחֲרָיו וְאִם הַבַּעַל לָכֹו אַחֲרָיו** — “How long will you waver between the two opinions? If Hashem is G-d, follow Him; and if the Baal, follow him.”

⁶ *Iyov* 38:3 (repeated at 40:7) — **אֶזְזֹר נָא כַּגְּבֵר חֲלָצִיָּה וְאֶשְׂאֶלְךָ וְהוֹדִיעַנִי** — “Gird your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you shall inform Me.” The Divine summons to *Iyov* becomes the heart's summons to write.

⁷ The scribe of Yechezkel's vision — **וַיִּקְרָא אֵל הָאִישׁ הַלְבָּשׁ הַבְּדִים אֲשֶׁר קֶסֶת הַסּוֹפֵר בְּמִתְנִיָּו** — “And He called to the man clothed in linen, who had the scribe's inkhorn at his waist” (*Yechezkel* 9:3). The imagery casts the recipient as the one commissioned to record the answer.

⁸ *Iyov* 19:23 — **מִי יִתֵּן אִפּוֹ וְיִכְתְּבוּן מִלִּי מִי יִתֵּן בְּסִפְרִי וְיִחָקְנוּ** — “If only my words were written down; if only they were inscribed in a book!” *Iyov*'s longing that his words be inscribed becomes the writer's plea that the teacher's words be set down for him.

⁹ *Mishlei* 18:4 — **מִמֵּים עֲמֻקִּים דְּבָרֵי פִי אִישׁ נַחַל נִבְעַע מְקוֹר חֲכָמָה** — “The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; a flowing stream, a fount of wisdom.”

answer he hopes to receive is compared to anointing oil that will settle his troubled soul.¹⁰¹¹ וַיִּפְתָּח וְיִשְׁמַח לְךָ שְׁעֵי אֹרָה וְהָיִיתָ מוֹצֵק וְלֹא תִירָא And the gates of light will open for you, and you will be firm and unafraid. These gates signify entry into the wisdom of the sefirot, whose understanding will give him confidence. שְׂכָר הוּא לְמַעַלְתָּ הַדֶּרֶת טָהוֹר כ"ת It will be a reward for the exalted splendor and purity of the honor of your Torah. By answering these questions, the teacher will enhance the honor already due to him. וְלִכְּוֹן רִישׁ מַלְיָן אֹמֵר וְלֹא אֶאְרִיךְ תוֹרָה הִיא וְלִלְמוֹד אֲנִי צָרִיךְ Therefore, I shall state the chief points and not elaborate: "It is Torah, and I must learn it." His justification for daring to ask is the obligation to understand the Torah he is learning.¹²¹³

The Ten Questions

א 1. Concerning the world: How can it be established that it has a Governor? This first question asks how we know that a guiding Divine Power governs the world, laying the foundation for all that follows.¹⁴ ב בְּאִיזָה הֶכְרַח יוֹכֵרַח שְׁיֵשׁ סְפִירוֹת כִּי י"ל שָׂאִין שָׁם 2. By what necessity must it be established that there are sefirot? For one may say that there is nothing there except the Infinite alone. The objection asks why any differentiated emanations must be posited rather than only the simple, undifferentiated Infinite. ג 3. If it must be established that there are sefirot, by what necessity is it established that they are ten, and that it is one power? The question demands both a reason for the precise number ten and an explanation of how the ten together remain a single power.¹⁵

ד 4. From where do we know that the sefirot were emanated and were not created like the other created beings? Emanation means that they issue as radiances from G-d and remain inseparable from their Divine source, rather than

¹⁰ The anointing oil described in *Parashas Ki Sisa*, *Shemos*, ch. 30 — שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ, "sacred anointing oil."

¹¹ The idiom is drawn from the Gemara in *Makkos* 24a, where the prophetic verses are distilled and the soul finds rest in the essential principles of faith, fitting for a letter seeking the foundations upon which his soul may 'find calm.'

¹² *Daniel* 7:1 — בְּאִדְוִין הִלְכָּא כְּתַב רִישׁ מַלְיָן אֹמֵר — "Then he wrote down the dream; he stated the sum of the matters." Daniel's 'stating the sum of the matter at the outset' models the writer's resolve to be brief: רִישׁ מַלְיָן אֹמֵר וְלֹא אֶאְרִיךְ — "I state the sum of the matters and will not go on at length."

¹³ The closing apology echoes the sages who justified even indelicate inquiry with וְלִלְמוֹד אֲנִי צָרִיךְ — "It is Torah, and learn it I must" (*Megillah* 28a; *Berachos* 62a): the duty to understand overrides the fear of appearing presumptuous.

¹⁴ The first question is deliberately foundational. Even one who acknowledges a Creator must still establish why there must be a *Governor* superintending all creation at every moment. Since the writer proceeds directly to the sefirot, the order is telling: first the necessity of a guiding Power (*manhig*), and only then the structure of the sefirot through which that governance is exercised, precisely the architecture ibn Gabai builds up in his answers.

¹⁵ The insistence that the ten be 'one power' is a guard against the error that the multiplicity of sefirot, G-d forbid, resembles the vanities of the faith of Edom (the Christian trinity). The unity of the ten within the Emanator is the very heart of what the writer wishes to safeguard 'in the faith of the heart.'

coming into existence as separate creations.¹⁶¹⁷ הַיֵּאֱדָה נִוּכַל לִזְמַר כִּי הוּא אֶחָד וְהַמְסַפֵּר עֲשָׂהָ 5. How can we say that He is one, and yet that the ten, meaning the ten sefirot, are united in Him, so that through this we preserve the faith of our heart and not merely the declaration of our mouth? The question seeks more than a verbal affirmation of unity. It asks how the heart can genuinely understand that the ten sefirot do not compromise G-d's absolute oneness.¹⁸¹⁹ וְאַחֲרֵי שִׁיבּוּר בְּלִי סֶפֶק כִּי יֵשׁ עֲשָׂר סִפִּירוֹת וְגַם שָׁהֵם 6. After it has been established beyond doubt that there are ten sefirot, that they were emanated and not created, and that their number forms a single power, I will ask why G-d gave them limit, measure, and corporeality. These descriptions seem to assign finite dimensions and bodily qualities to the sefirot. The question is how such language can apply to realities that are entirely spiritual.²⁰²¹ ז' 7. When did these sefirot exist? This question concerns the time of their emanation and introduces a dilemma as to whether they appeared near the creation of the world or existed beforehand. אִם יִשִּׁיבֵנִי כ"ת עֲתָה מְקֻרֹב לְבְרִיאַת עוֹלָם אִם כֹּן יֵשׁ לְהִקְשׁוֹת מְדוּעַ 7. When did these sefirot exist? This question concerns the time of their emanation and introduces a dilemma as to whether they appeared near the creation of the world or existed beforehand. אִם יִשִּׁיבֵנִי כ"ת עֲתָה מְקֻרֹב לְבְרִיאַת עוֹלָם אִם כֹּן יֵשׁ לְהִקְשׁוֹת מְדוּעַ. If Your Honor answers me that they came into existence recently, near the creation of the world, then one must ask: Why was their emanation now and not before? Can there be a new thought in the Perfect One? If the sefirot were emanated only when the world was created, this would seem to imply a change or newly arising intention in G-d, whereas the Perfect One undergoes no change in knowledge or will.

וְאִם יִשִּׁיבֵנִי כ"ת שָׁהֵם קְדוּמוֹת בְּהִקְדָּמָתוֹ אִם כֹּן הָיוּ בְּהִשּׁוּאָתוֹ And if your honor answers me

¹⁶ The cardinal distinction of *the Emanation versus beriah** (creation). See at length **Pardes Rimonim** Sha'ar 16, where Ramak reads *אֶצְל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ* from *אֶצְל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ*, "beside the altar": nearness, denoting the deep-rooted cleaving of the emanated to their Cause; *יִבְרָא ה'* from *יִבְרָא ה'*, "if Hashem creates a new creation": a distancing from the bounds of Divinity; *אֶלֶּהִים אֶת הָאָדָם* from *אֶלֶּהִים אֶת הָאָדָם*, "and Hashem G-d formed the man"; and *עֲשִׂיהָ* as the most disclosed, per *עֲשִׂיתִיו אֶף עֲשִׂיתִיו* — "all that is called by My Name and that I created for My glory, I formed it, I even made it." Thus *the Emanation* is Divinity itself and *BY"TA* are separate worlds. *Shefa Tal* (Sha'ar 3, ch. 7) describes *the Emanation* as a mediating stage 'between the *ayin* and the *yesh*,' distinguishing *נֶאֱצַל*, *נֶאֱצַל*, and *נֶאֱצַל* — the emanated world being 'נֶאֱצַל,' nearer to the Emanator than to the emanated. See further the *Shaarei Ramchal* (*Ma'amar HaVikuach* §44–58, 62): *the Emanation* is the totality of the delimited powers of His Will (the sefirot in all their orderings), mere powers of His *ratzon*, and therefore called 'Divinity in all its parts'; *BY"TA* are the standing of the Creator over the messengers He fashioned, i.e. the powers of the Will together with their recipients. These are the questioner's own framings; the notes on 'emanated' vs. 'created' merely map his intent.

¹⁷ This is the cardinal distinction of ibn Gabbai's Kabbalah: the sefirot are not creatures formed from nothing (*beriah*) but radiances *emanated* (*the Emanation*) from the Divine and never separate from it. *Sefer HaBahir* hints at this in reading "Let there be light, and there was light" to mean a light that *already was*: present before it was set in place, not brought into being afresh.

¹⁸ His difficulty, in the classic formulation: *אֶחָד, וְאִם אֶחָד כִּי עֲשָׂר כִּי עֲשָׂר* — If ten, how are they one, and if one, how are they ten?

¹⁹ The writer wants more than a verbal formula of unity. He seeks an understanding by which the heart genuinely holds that the ten sefirot do not compromise G-d's absolute oneness. In ibn Gabbai's system the ten are unified in the Emanator as a flame in its coal: "there is no separation among His letters," as the *Zohar* says of the One above all.

²⁰ The problem of 'limit, measure, and corporeality' ascribed to the sefirot is bound up with the emanation-versus-creation question of Question 4; see the note there.

²¹ Having granted the previous points, he asks why the sefirot are described in terms borrowed from finite, physical reality: limits, dimensions, even bodily imagery. *Sefer Yetzirah* speaks of their "measure" and of their "depths" in every direction, language the answer will have to explain without compromising their wholly spiritual nature.

that they are eternal with His eternity, then they would be equal to Him. Here, “they” refers to the sefirot. If they share the Emanator’s eternity, they would seem to stand on the same plane as He does. **וְאִם הָיוּ בְהִשּׁוּאָה אַחַת מֵהַפֶּרֶשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם** And if they were equal, what difference would there be between them? This would erase the fundamental distinction between the Emanator and the sefirot that He emanates. **וְעוֹד אִם כֵּן שֶׁהֵם קְדוּמוֹת אֵיךְ שִׁיבָה בָּהֶם דִּין וְרַחֲמִים הָרִי לֹא** ועוד אם כן שהם קדומות איך שיבה בהם דין ורחמים הרי לא Furthermore, if they are eternal, how can judgment and mercy apply to them? Judgment was surely not yet necessary, since the created beings had not yet come into existence. These attributes appear to presuppose creatures who can be judged or shown mercy, which raises the question of how they could exist before creation.²² **ח מִהוּ מֵהוּוֹתָם** 8. What is their essence? The question seeks a definition of what the sefirot fundamentally are. **ט ט מֵהוּ שְׁמָם וּמְקוֹמָם רֹצֵה לֵוֹמַר כְּוִנַּת שְׁמָם** 9. What are their names and their place? That is to say, what is intended by their names? The writer seeks both the names of the sefirot and the significance expressed by each name. **י בְּרוּר וְגִלּוֹי שְׁמָאָה בְּרָכוֹת הֵם כְּנֻגַּד מֵאֵה הָאֲדָנִים שֶׁהֵם כְּנֻגַּד עֶשֶׂר** י ברור וגילוי שמאה ברכות הם כנגד מאה האדנים שהם כנגד עשר 10. It is clear and evident that the hundred blessings correspond to the hundred sockets, the silver foundation pieces of the Mishkan, which correspond to the ten sefirot, each of which comprises ten. These three groups thus form a single corresponding structure of one hundred spiritual elements.²³ **הוֹדִיעֵנִי אֵיךְ כָּל אַחַת כְּלוּלָה מִי' בְּהִיּוֹת שְׁכֶתֶר עֲלִיוֹן** הודיעני איך כל אחת כלולה מי' בהיות שכתר עליון Explain to me how each one comprises ten, given that the supernal Keter is absolute and simple mercy, with no admixture of judgment in it. If Keter contains every sefirah, it must seemingly include Gevurah, the attribute of judgment, which appears incompatible with its wholly merciful nature.

וְעוֹד עַל זֶה הָרִי מַלְכוּת"ת שְׁנִקְרָאת יְבֶשֶׁה וְיָמָה וְכָל הַנְּחָלִים הוֹלְכִים אֶל הַיָּם וְאֵין לָהּ אֵלָּא מֵה ועוד על זה הרי מלכות"ת שנקראת יבשה וימה וכל הנחלים הולכים אל הים ואין לה אלא מה And furthermore, Malchut, the lowest sefirah and the receiver, is called dry land and sea. In this image, all the streams flow into the sea, and it has only what is poured into it. If so, how are they one hundred? Since Malchut possesses no light of its own, the question is how it can itself contain ten sefirot and thereby contribute to the total of one hundred.²⁴

A Closing Appeal

לְמַעַן יִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂדֵי מַלְכָּה עוֹלָם דִּי אֲשֶׁרִי שְׂכִינְתִּיהָ בְּכ"ת שְׂאֵל תְּבִטִּי לְפִשְׁעֵי For the sake of Hashem, the G-d of Israel, Shaddai, King of the world, the One who caused His Divine Presence to rest in Your Honor, do not look upon my transgressions. The writer invokes these Divine titles while pleading that his teacher overlook his faults and receive his questions favorably.

²² Attributes such as *Din* (judgment) and *Rachamim* (mercy) seem to presuppose creatures to be judged or shown mercy. If the sefirot predate all creation, in what sense could they bear these attributes? The *Zohar*’s teaching that “in all the supernal crowns of the holy King, mercy and judgment are intertwined” (and that it is the wicked who turn mercy into judgment) bears directly on this question.

²³ The hundred daily blessings, the hundred silver sockets of the Mishkan, and the ten sefirot (each containing ten, yielding a hundred) form a single corresponded set. The *Zohar* reads the verse “what (*mah*) does Hashem ask of you” as “do not read *mah* but *me’ah*, a hundred,” linking the hundred blessings to the full realization of the supernal grades.

²⁴ The same problem from the opposite end of the array. Malchut (the Divine Presence) is the receiver: “the sea” into which all the streams flow (*Koheles* 1:7), possessing of itself only what the higher sefirot pour into it. If Malchut has no light of its own, how can it too contain ten and count toward the hundred? The opening questions concern the topmost sefirah; this one concerns the lowest, framing the puzzle of interinclusion across the whole structure.

ובזכות זה יגדל שמה וכסא כ"ת מעל כל החכמים והשרים And through this merit, may your name and the throne of Your Honor be exalted above all the sages and princes. He blesses his teacher with distinction and authority surpassing those of all other learned and prominent figures. ויציר כפיה ורחמי באותיות הקדש אותיותיה מעשה גלילי אצבעות כ"ח For you will light my lamp. These opening words echo *Tehillim* and ask the teacher to illuminate his understanding. See the creation of your hands, and have mercy upon me through the holy letters, your letters, the work of the twenty-eight finger-joints. The holy letters are those of the written reply he hopes to receive, produced by the teacher's hands, whose twenty-eight finger-joints allude to twenty-eight holy Names.²⁵²⁶ וזכור לי זכות אבות והם יעלו לזכרון לפני אדוני And remember for me the merit of the fathers, and may they ascend in remembrance before my master and my eminent teacher, whom I call the light of my sun and the crown of my head. He appeals to the merit of the patriarchs and concludes with affectionate titles expressing his reverence for his teacher.

תלמיד מתלמידיה תלמיד הצעיר קטון ובזוי עם חרפת איש מתפקד בשלומה יוסף הלוי A student of your students, the young student, small and despised, bearing a man's reproach, inquires after your welfare: Yosef HaLevi. In this humble signature, the writer presents himself as not even a direct disciple, and his language of reproach echoes *Tehillim* 22:7.

²⁵ The writer calls himself the teacher's כפיה — 'the work of your hands,' because he is his disciple, as he states immediately after. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 99b, where Reish Lakish teaches תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב בן חברו תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב בן חברו, and *Sanhedrin* 19b, one who teaches another's son Torah is credited as though he had made him, or borne him.

²⁶ "You will light my lamp" is from *Tehillim* 18:29. The "holy letters" are the letters of the hoped-for written reply. "Twenty-eight" (כ"ח = 28) alludes to the fourteen joints of the right hand and fourteen of the left, on which the *Tikkunei Zohar* arrays twenty-eight holy Names: the writing hand that will produce the answer.

CHAPTER I

She'eilah Rishonah: How the World Has a Governor — the Soul as Microcosmic Proof, and the Six Marks of the True Governor

SUMMARY

Narrative. This unit is the answer (*teshuvah*) to the first question of *Sefer Derech Emunah*: how do we know that the world has a Governor (*manhig*) who sustains it? Ibn Gabbai answers from the microcosm. Man, the “small world” (*olam katan*), is built as a scale model of the whole created order, and the soul within him is what keeps him alive. Since the small world cannot survive without its governor (the soul), neither can the great world survive without a Governor. And that Governor is “the soul of the world and its form that sustains it.”

Torah Basis. The argument is anchored in two Rabbinic texts that draw the very same soul–G-d analogy: the five comparisons of *Barchi nafshi* in *Berachos* 10a (G-d fills the world / the soul fills the body, etc.), and the six comparisons in *Midrash Tehillim* 103. Ibn Gabbai supports each point with verses from *Yirmiyahu*, *Yeshayahu*, *Vayikra*, *Bamidbar*, *Devarim*, *Chavakkuk*, and *Kobekes*.

Aggadic and Kabbalistic Elaboration. Ibn Gabbai reads the Sages’ analogy on two tracks. First, the comparison “proves” the existence and divine origin of the soul (an *the Emanation* emanated from the supernal Emanation), which bears G-d’s “seal” and is comprised of His *midos*. Second, he turns the six points into a systematic list of the qualities a perfect Governor must possess (omnipresence, infinite wisdom and capacity, immutability, self-sufficiency, untouchability by His subjects’ deeds, and invisibility to the senses) and shows that no created being possesses them, so that only the Holy One is the true Governor.

Thematic Significance. The closing paragraphs develop ibn Gabbai’s classical Kabbalah: G-d governs and creates through “His Name” (the system of the sefirot, “His world,” the hidden *olam hane’elam*), of which the Infinite is the cause. He warns that one who believes in the Infinite while denying the Name and its *midos* “denies the fundamental principle” and the heavenly retinue. The unit culminates in faith: The Infinite, beyond all sensory and imaginative grasp, is the root of both belief and its denial, and “the righteous shall live by his faith.”

THE QUESTION

על העולם איך יש לו מנהיג: Concerning the world: How can we know that it has a Governor?
This asks for proof that creation is not self-governing, but is directed and sustained by G-d.

Answer to the First: Man as Microcosmic Proof

(א) (1): תשובה לראשונה. דע כי האדם הנבנה בדמיון בגן כל העולמות
Know that man is constructed in a form corresponding to the structure of all the
worlds. Man is therefore a microcosm, fashioned on a smaller scale to reflect the entire created
order. והנפש שבו המקיימת אותו הזמן הגזור עליה, כלולה ומשוכללת מן ההיות העליונות. The
soul within him, which sustains him for the period decreed for him, is comprised and fully
formed from the higher spiritual realities. These realities are the Emanation and its sefirot. The

soul thus gives life to the body while bearing within itself the imprint of the higher worlds.¹² **וּבְעוֹד הַנֶּפֶשׁ בּוֹ הִנֵּה הוּא דּוֹגְמַת הָעוֹלָם הַגָּדוֹל, וְזֶה נִקְרָא הָאָדָם עוֹלָם קָטָן.** And while the soul is within him, he is a model of the great world, and for this reason man is called a small world. This means that the living human being is a microcosm, a small-scale parallel of the larger cosmos.³ **וּמִמֶּנּוּ תִּלְקַח הָרָאיָה עַל הָעוֹלָם הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר נִבְנָה בְּדַמּוּתוֹ בְּצַלְמוֹ.** And from him shall be taken the proof concerning the great world, which was constructed in his likeness and in his image. Because man reflects the structure of the cosmos, what is established concerning the human being provides evidence for understanding the world as a whole.⁴ **וּכְמוֹ שֶׁאֵי אִיפְשָׁר לְעוֹלָם הַקָּטָן הִזֶּה שִׁיחִיָּה וְיִתְקַיֵּים מִבְּלִית מְנַהִיג שֶׁהוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ כִּי אֵי אִיפְשָׁר לְעוֹלָם הַגָּדוֹל שִׁיִּתְקַיֵּים מִבְּלִית מְנַהִיג.** Just as it is impossible for this small world, the human being, to live and continue existing without a governor, namely the soul, so too it is impossible for the great world as a whole to continue existing without a Governor. That Governor is the soul of the world and its form, which sustains it. By analogy, the Governor is the inner, life-giving power through which the cosmos is animated and maintained, just as the soul gives life to the body. Here, “form” means the spiritual principle that gives the world its ordered and sustained existence.⁵

וְאֵלּוּ ח"ו יִשׁוּעַר הָעֵדֶר זֶה הַמְּנַהִיג יַעֲדֵר הָעוֹלָם בְּכֻלּוֹ. And if, G-d forbid, one were to conceive of the absence of this Governor, the world as a whole would cease to exist. Its dependence upon the Governor is absolute, just as a body dies when its soul departs.⁶ **וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ שֶׁתִּצְטָרֶה לְבֹא כְּלוּלָה מִהַעֲלִיּוֹנִים לְקַיֵּים וּלְהַנְהִיג הַגּוֹר, וְלֹא זֶה לֹא תוּכַל לְקַיֵּימוֹ וּלְהַנְהִיגוֹ.** The soul must come endowed with what derives from the higher realms in order to sustain and govern the body. Its higher origin gives it the power and capacity to rule over the body and preserve its life.

¹ The soul keeps a man alive only for his allotted span, as it is written *Tehillim* 90:10 — יָמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ כֶּהֱם שְׁבָעִים שָׁנָה. The *nefesh* sustains the body “for the time decreed upon him”: the number of his years in this world.

² The author elaborates this in his own major work, *Avodas HaKodesh* (ח"ג פרק כ"ה): the verse בְּצַלְמֵנוּ נִבְרָא אָדָם (המוח במבפנים והקליפה מבחוץ) teaches that man is fashioned after the pattern of the supernal Emanations, “one within another, one a garment to the other, the brain within and the shell without” (המוח במבפנים והקליפה מבחוץ). He is careful to add that these are not literally “shells,” חלילה, but *lights of infinite purity* — מאורות שאין קץ ותכלית לזכותם ולדקותם, the inner being as “brain and soul” relative to the outer, which serves it as “body and shell,” מראש המחשבה ועד סופה, זה לעומת זה.

³ “Small world” (*olam katan*) is the classic designation for man as microcosm. See *Zohar Vayikra* 33b on וירדו בדגת ודא גופא דבר נש דאתקרי עולם קטן) and 130b. (הים; and *Tikkunei Zohar* 100b ובכל הארץ — דא גופא, עולם קטן). The author develops it at length in his own *Avodas HaKodesh* (יצירת האדם התחתון הנקרא) and in the introduction to his *Tolaas Yaakov*, where he likens man’s creation to a builder who erects a great city of many hidden and revealed edifices and finally builds a palace mirroring the whole city: “therefore man is called a small world.” Cf. *Moreh Nevuchim* I:72; *Recanati* (7b); *Shefa Tal* (שער 72); and *Nefesh HaChaim* (שער א' פ"ד): האדם נקרא עולם קטן, כי הוא חותם של כל העולמות... שיצאו ונתפשטו מעיקר אחד ממקור הנעלם (שער א' פ"א). Scriptural root: *Iyov* 19:26 — וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחְיֶה אֱלֹהִים. See too Maharsha, *Berachos* 10a and *Sanhedrin* 42a.

⁴ That the great world “was built in his likeness, in his image” is drawn from the parable of *Tolaas Yaakov* cited in the previous note: the palace fashioned to mirror the entire city.

⁵ Here is the core inference. The soul is to the body as the Governor is to the cosmos: the animating, sustaining principle. Calling the Governor “the soul of the world and its form” (*tzurah*, the formal, life-giving principle) presses the analogy to its conclusion: the world, like the body, is inert without the inner power that maintains it.

⁶ That the removal of the Governor would annihilate the whole world is the theme of *Nefesh HaChaim* (שער א' פ"ב): just as He created all the worlds תכליתי תכליתי, so every instant “כל כח מציאותם וסדרם וקיומם” depends on His willed renewed influx — כרגע היו כולם לאפס ותהו. שער ג' פ"ב): ואילו היה מסלק רצונו יתברך מלהוות אותם כל רגע היו לאין ואפס (ממש). So too

Without this, it could not sustain or govern it. וּמִמֶּנָּה תִּלְקַח הָרְאִיָּה הַנִּכּוֹנָה הָאֱמִיתִית עַל שְׂיִישׁ. And from it, meaning from the soul and its governance of the body, the correct and true proof will be derived that the world as a whole has a Governor. The soul thus provides a visible model for understanding that the entire cosmos likewise depends upon a sustaining Governor.⁷ וְלִהְיֶיר עַל מֶה שֶׁפִּתְּבִיתִי תִּמְצָא לְרוֹ"ל פְּעָמִים יִבְיֵאוּ רְאִיָּה עַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ מִהֶקֶב"ה. To illustrate what I have written, you will find that our Sages sometimes derive proof about the soul from the Holy One using Divine governance as the model, and sometimes they derive proof about Him from the soul. The analogy therefore works in both directions. The author will now cite one Rabbinic teaching that explains the soul through G-d, followed by another that demonstrates G-d's governance through the soul.⁸⁹

The Five Comparisons of *Berachos* 10a

וְאֵמָנָם הָרְאִיָּה מִמֶּנּוּ עַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲמָרָם בִּפ"ק דְּבִרְכוֹת (י' א) הֵיךְ חֲמִשָּׁה בִּרְכֵי נִפְשֵׁי כְּנֻגַּד מִי אֲמָרָן דָּוִד. Indeed, the proof from Him concerning the soul is their statement in the first chapter of *Berachos* (10a): "These five occurrences of 'Bless, O my soul,' with reference to whom did David say them? He said them only with reference to the Holy One and the soul." This introduces the Talmud's five comparisons between the soul and G-d. The author now quotes them in full to show how Divine governance serves as a model for understanding the soul and its governance of the body.

מִהֶקֶב"ה מְלֵא כָּל הָעוֹלָם אֵף הַנֶּשְׁמָה מְלֵאָה כָּל הַגּוּף. מִהֶקֶדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רוֹאֶה וְאֵינוֹ נִרְאֶה אֵף נִשְׁמָה רוֹאֶה וְאֵינָה נִרְאִית. מִהֶקֶב"ה זֶן אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם אֵף נִשְׁמָה זָנָה אֶת כָּל הַגּוּף. מִהֶקֶדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא טָהוֹר אֵף נִשְׁמָה טְהוֹרָה. מִהֶקֶדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ יוֹשֵׁב בְּחֻדְרֵי חֻדְרִים אֵף נִשְׁמָה יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּחֻדְרֵי חֻדְרִים, יָבֵא מִי שְׂיִישׁ בּוֹ חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הִלְלוּ וַיִּשְׁבַּח לְמִי שְׂיִישׁ בּוֹ חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הִלְלוּ ע"כ: Just as the Holy One fills the entire world, so too the soul fills the entire body. His presence and sustaining power extend throughout creation, while the soul gives life to every part of the body. Just as the Holy One sees but is not seen, so too the soul sees but is not seen. The soul perceives through the body's faculties, yet it remains hidden from physical sight, reflecting in a created way G-d's own invisibility. Just as the Holy One nourishes the entire world, so too the soul nourishes the entire body. This nourishment refers to the continual sustaining of life. Just as the Holy One is pure, so too the soul is pure. The soul's purity is a created reflection of the perfect purity attributed to G-d. Just as the Holy One dwells in the innermost chambers, so too the soul dwells in the innermost chambers. Both are concealed from sight, though their effects are evident. Let the one who possesses these five qualities come and praise the One who possesses these five qualities. Thus ends the quotation. The soul, bearing these five qualities in a limited

⁷ The argument by parallel: just as the body lives only through a soul that is itself comprised of the supernal worlds and governed from above, so the great world must be sustained and conducted by what is above it.

⁸ "To call attention" (*ulha'ir*) here means to establish and confirm the point: to arouse the matter so that it stand fast.

⁹ That is, a proof concerning the Holy One drawn from the soul.

and created manner, is therefore uniquely fitted to praise G-d.¹⁰¹ **והפיונה להם ע"ה בכלל לקיים** Their general intention, peace be upon them, is to establish for us the existence of the soul, which is an emanation drawn from the Emanation, the supernal realm bearing that name, the mystery of Divinity. Their first purpose is therefore to affirm that the soul truly exists and that its spiritual source lies in the Divine reality revealed through the realm of Emanation. **וּכְמוֹ שֶׁכָּתַבְתִּי בְּחִיבוּרֵי הַגְּדוּל (עבודת הקודש ח"א** And as I wrote in my larger work (*Avodas HaKodesh*, Part I, chapter 17), in the section on Unity. There he discusses at length the soul's origin as an emanation drawn from the supernal realm of Emanation.¹²

וּלְהוֹרֹת עַל מְקוֹמָהּ בָּאָה חֲתוּמָה בְּחֻתָּמָהּ וּרְשׁוּמָה וּכְלוּלָהּ בְּמִדּוֹתָיו, וְהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הֵלְלוּ And to indicate its place, meaning the higher source from which the soul comes, it came sealed with His seal, marked, and comprised of His attributes. These are the following five qualities, through which it can govern and sustain the body. The soul's resemblance to G-d thus testifies to its Divine source, and these same qualities enable it to rule over the body and preserve its life. **וְתַכְלִית זְוִיגָם וְהִתְאַחֲדָם שֶׁהוּא בְּרִיאָתָם לֹא הָיָה כִּי אִם לְשִׁבְחָהּ** And the ultimate purpose of their union and becoming one, meaning the joining of soul and body, which constitutes their creation, was solely to praise their Maker, in whom are these five qualities. Therefore, He bestowed them within them and comprised them from them. Because these qualities belong to G-d, He imparted them to the soul and made them the powers through which the united soul and body can praise their Creator. **וְאַחֵר שְׁלֹקָהּ הָרְאָיָה עַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ מֵהַקֵּב"ה וְקוּיֵם לָנוּ מִצִּיאוֹתָהּ** וּשְׁנִשְׁתַּלְחָה אֶל הַגּוּף לְהַנְהִיגוֹ וּלְקַיְיֵמוֹ וְכֵן הוּא נִקְרָא עוֹלָם קָטָן, הֵנָּה יֵשׁ לָנוּ עוֹד רְאָיָה מְמַנָּה עַל And after the proof concerning the soul was derived from the Holy One and its existence was established for us, together with the fact that it was sent to the body to govern and sustain it, and through it man is called a small world, we now have a further proof from it concerning the Holy One: that He exists and governs the world. The argument now reverses direction. G-d's governance first served to establish the soul's nature and role, while the soul's invisible yet evident governance of the body now serves as evidence for G-d's existence and governance of the world.¹³

The Six Comparisons of *Midrash Tehillim*

וְהוּא אָמְרָם בְּמִדְרַשׁ תְּהִלִּים (קג) בְּרַכִּי נִפְשִׁי אֵת יי'. And this is what they said in *Midrash Tehillim* (103): "Bless Hashem, O my soul." This teaching develops the analogy from the soul to G-d

¹⁰¹ The soul "fills the whole body": see Rabbeinu Bachya, *Kad HaKemach* (ערך אבל), on the five names of the *nefesh* and the five *Barchi nafshi*: just as the Holy One fills the whole world (even though His power is more manifest in certain places, אל, ככהר סיני וזה המוריה ובית אל, as it is written (*Yirmiyahu* 23) מלא אני מלא, so the soul fills the whole body, even though it shows itself more in certain limbs (the brain, heart, and tongue), אין לך אבר גדול וקטן שאין שם כח הנשמה. For the graded self-revelation of the soul through the body's apertures, see *Pischei Shearim* (Leshem, "נתיב אורות אח"פ דא"ק פתח, "הנהיגה העולם ועד סופו). The radiance emerging through the openings of eyes, ears, nose and mouth stems from the *nefesh*; sight is subtler than hearing, hearing than smell, smell than speech — הנשמה שהיא זכה רוחניות לגמרי... רואה מסוף העולם ועד סופו.

¹¹ See the author's own words in the introduction to his *Tolaas Yaakov* on these five qualities.

¹² "My major work, in the section on Unity": *Avodas HaKodesh* (ח"א פרק י"ז).

¹³ That is, proof not merely that He exists, but that He governs.

לְמַחַ מְקַלֵּס דָּוִד לְהַקֵּב"ה בְּנֶפֶשׁ, אָמַר מָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ מְמַלְאָה אֶת הַגּוּף כִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְמַלֵּא אֶת הָעוֹלָם. וּמָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ סוֹבֶלֶת אֶת הַגּוּף כִּי הַקֵּב"ה סוֹבֵל אֶת הָעוֹלָם. וּמָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ יְחִידָה בַּגּוּף כִּי הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֵינָה אוֹכֶלֶת וְאֵינָה שׁוֹתָה כִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינוֹ אוֹכֵל וְאֵינוֹ שׁוֹתָה. וּמָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ טְהוֹרָה כִּי הַקֵּב"ה טְהוֹר שְׁהוּא לְמַעַלָּה מֵעוֹלָמוֹ. וּמָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ רוּאָה וְאֵינָה נִרְאָה כִּי הַקֵּב"ה רוּאָה וְאֵינוֹ נִרְאָה. Just as the soul neither eats nor drinks, so the Holy One neither eats nor drinks. Just as the soul is pure, so the Holy One is pure, for He is above His world. And just as the soul sees but is not seen, so the Holy One sees but is not seen. These three comparisons describe His complete self-sufficiency, His purity and transcendence beyond the world, and His invisibility even though nothing is hidden from His sight. אָמַר דָּוִד תְּבֵא הַנֶּפֶשׁ שְׂיֵשׁ בָּהּ כָּל הַמִּדּוֹת הַלְלוּ וּתְהַלֵּל. David said: Let the soul, which possesses all these attributes, come and praise the Holy One who possesses all these attributes. Because the soul reflects these qualities in a limited way, it is fitting that it should praise the One who possesses them in their perfect and original form.

ע"כ: הנה יש לנו ראיה נצחת מהעולם הקטן שאי אפשר לו להתקיים בלא מנהיג אל העולם. הגדול שאי אפשר לו להתקיים בלא מנהיג. Thus ends the quotation. Behold, we have conclusive proof from the small world, the human being viewed as a microcosm, which cannot continue existing without a governor, to the great world, the cosmos as a whole, which cannot continue existing without a Governor. The two Rabbinic teachings cited above firmly establish this inference from the soul's governance of the human body to G-d's governance of the entire world. ורז"ל הורונו בזה המדות אשר יצטרכו למנהיג השלם להיות ממולא בהם ואין שום. And our Sages taught us through this the attributes with which the perfect Governor must be endowed. This comparison identifies the qualities required for perfect governance. No being in the world can glory in them. Therefore, it is not worthy to be a true governor. Since no created being possesses all these qualities, every created candidate is disqualified from being the world's true Governor. ואמנם הקדוש ברוך הוא לו נאה להנהיג ולא לזולתו כי לו ובו כל מיני השלמות וא"כ הוא המנהיג. However, it is fitting for the Holy One to govern, and for no other, because every kind of perfection is His, belonging to Him alone, and is within Him. Therefore, He is the true and perfect Governor. No other being possesses every perfection required of the true Governor. The authority to govern the world therefore belongs to G-d alone, and no creature can share that claim.

¹⁴ *Midrash Tehillim*: i.e. *Midrash Shocher Tov* on Psalm 103.

THE SOUL AND THE HOLY ONE — THE SAGES' PARALLELS

<i>Just as the soul, in the body...</i>	<i>...so the Holy One, in the world</i>	
fills the whole body	fills the whole world	B · M
sees, yet is not seen	sees, yet is not seen	B · M
is pure	is pure — and above His world	B · M
sustains it entirely	sustains it entirely	B
dwells in the innermost chambers	dwells in the innermost chambers	B
bears and carries it	bears and carries it	M
is unique within it	is unique in His world	M
neither eats nor drinks	neither eats nor drinks	M

B = Berachos 10a (five comparisons) M = Midrash Tehillim 103 (six)

THE REBBE'S SICHA — ON THE OPENING OF THE SEFER

When the newly reprinted edition of *Derech Emunah* reached the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he devoted a *sicha* to this very opening passage (*Shabbos* Parshas Vayetzei, 7 Kislev 5748), raising a question he called “fundamental, yet utterly simple.”

Ibn Gabbai proves a Governor of the great world from the soul that governs the small world: as the body cannot endure without a soul, so the cosmos cannot endure without a Governor. **But how can the way the lower world is conducted compel the way the Upper World is conducted?** The Holy One is omnipotent: “who can say to Him, *what are You doing?*” Surely He could have created a great world bearing no resemblance whatever to the small one: one that endures with no governor at all. (The same question presses on the chapters that follow: that there *must* be sefirot, and that they *must* be ten.)

The foundation of every such proof, the Rebbe answers, is *ratzon*, the Divine will. Because He is omnipotent, creation could have taken endlessly different forms; rather, “it arose in His will,” in the language of our Sages, that the world “be as it now is,” and further, that “whatever can proceed by intellect and ordered gradation should proceed by intellect.” He revealed in His Torah that He chose to contract Himself, as it were, into the configuration of *Adam*, fashioning lower man “in Our image, after Our likeness”: in *that* image. **Only once we know from the Torah that He willed the lower man to mirror the Upper** may we reason from the one to the other: “from my flesh I envision G-d.”

This, the Rebbe shows, is why ibn Gabbai’s opening question is worded with such care: “*how* does the world have a Governor,” not “*why*.” To “*why*” there is no answer of intellect, for in truth He could have made a world that needs no governor at all; there is only His will that it be governed. But “*how*” (granting that He willed His governance to proceed by intellect) invites exactly the demonstration ibn Gabbai gives: “a conclusive proof from the small world, which cannot endure without a governor, to the great world, which cannot endure without a governor.”

(*Sefer HaSichos* 5748, Parshas Vayetzei.)

The Six Marks of the True Governor

However, **ואמנם המדות הצריכות למנהיג שאינן כי אם במנהיג השלם יתפרה ולא בזולתו הם ששה:** the attributes required of a Governor, which are found only in the perfect Governor, may He be blessed, and in no other, are six: These six attributes provide the structure for the remainder of this answer, corresponding to the six comparisons presented in *Midrash Tehillim*.

הא' אמרם מה הנפש ממלאה כו' כה הקדוש פרוה הוא ממלא כו'. והפונה כי כל מנהיג שאין First: Their statement, “Just as

the soul fills the body, so the Holy One fills the world. The meaning is that any governor whose governance does not encompass and extend to all those under his rule is not worthy of being called a governor. The first mark of true governance is that it reaches every subject without exception. **וְאִמָּנָם אֵין נִמְצָא בְּעוֹלָם שֶׁמִּמְלֵא הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹמַר שֶׁהִנְהִיגָתוֹ מִתְפַּשֵּׁט וּמִמְלֵאָה כָּל הָעוֹלָם כִּי אִם** הוא יתְפַּרֵּד וּבְעֵנִין אֶת הַשְּׂמִים וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מֵלֵא (ירמיה כג, כד) וְכַתִּיב (ישעיה ו, ג) מֵלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ. Indeed, no being exists in the world who fills the world, which means whose governance extends throughout and fills the entire world, except He, blessed be He. This accords with: “I fill the heavens and the earth” (*Yirmiyahu* 23:24). It is also written (*Yeshayahu* 6:3): “The whole earth is filled with His glory.” If so, He is the true Governor, and governance over all the worlds is fitting for Him and for no other. These verses attest that G-d’s presence and governance extend everywhere, fulfilling the first requirement of a true Governor.¹⁵¹⁶ **הב' כָּל מִנְהִיג שָׂאִין לוֹ יְכוּלֹת וְחֻכְמָה** בְּלִתי בַּעַל תְּכֵלֶת לְהִנְהִיג מוֹנֵהֲגִיו כְּפִי חִלּוּפֵיהֶם ו(ב)כִּי נִסְתָּרֵיהֶם אֵינוֹ מִנְהִיג אֲמִיתִי, כִּי אֵין בּוֹ חֻכְמָה וִיכוּלֹת לְסִבּוֹל וְלִשְׂאֵת מוֹנֵהֲגִיו לְרֹב חִלּוּפֵי הִנְהִיגוּתֵיהֶם וּמִצְבֵּי עֲנִינֵיהֶם וּמִקּוּמוֹתֵיהֶם וְשִׁנוּיֵי טְבַעֵיהֶם. Second: Any governor who does not possess unlimited power and wisdom to govern those under his rule according to their differences and their hidden circumstances is not a true governor. For he lacks the wisdom and ability to tolerate and bear those under his rule amid the great diversity of their conduct, the conditions of their affairs, their locations, and their changing natures. He will therefore grow weary of those under his rule, and they of him. The second mark of true governance is infinite capacity and wisdom. A finite ruler is eventually overwhelmed by the endless variety and changing circumstances of his subjects, causing weariness on both sides.

אִמָּנָם הֵיכּוֹל וְהַחֲכָם הָאֲמִיתִי בַּעַל תְּכֵלֶת יֵשׁ בּוֹ דִּי לְסִבּוֹל וְלִשְׂאֵת מוֹנֵהֲגִיו וְלִהְנִיגָם הִנְהִיגָה הַיְשָׁרָה הַקְּיִימָת עִם כָּל חִלּוּפֵי הִנְהִיגוּתֵיהֶם וְתִמּוּרֹת מִצְבֵּם וְעֲנִינֵיהֶם וְשִׁנוּיֵי טְבַעֵיהֶם וְרַבּוּי. However, the truly powerful and wise One, who is without limit, has sufficient capacity to bear and carry His subjects and to govern them with upright and enduring governance, throughout all the variations in their conduct, the transformations of their circumstances and affairs, the changes in their natures, and the multitude of their human conditions and hidden matters. What overwhelms a finite ruler presents no difficulty to G-d, whose unlimited wisdom and power encompass every subject and every changing circumstance without strain.¹⁶¹⁷ **וְהָאֲדוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֵלָה לוֹ לֹא נֶאֱוָה הִנְהִיגָה וְלֹא רָאִי לְהִתְפָּאֵר שָׂאִין מִנְהִיג אֲמִיתִי** The Lord who possesses these qualities is fittingly vested with governance, and He may rightly glory that there is no true Governor except Him alone, may He be blessed. This is what our Sages meant when they said: “Just as the soul bears the body, and so forth, so the Holy One bears the world, and so forth.” The soul’s capacity to carry the body serves as an analogy for this second

¹⁵ 'אם יִסְתַּר אִישׁ בְּמִסְתָּרִים וְאֵין לֹא אֶרְאֶנּוּ נֶאֱמַר ה' הִלּוֹא אֶת הַשְּׂמִים וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מֵלֵא נֶאֱמַר ה' — *Yirmiyahu* 23:24

¹⁶ וְקָרָא זֶה אֵל זֶה וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ ה' צְבָאוֹת מֵלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ — *Yeshayahu* 6:3

¹⁷ On the endless variety and hidden states of His subjects, cf. *Vayikra Rabbah* 4:8 and *Devarim Rabbah* 2:36. See especially *Midrash Tanchuma* (Bereshis 5): Hadrian asked Akilas on what the world stands; he answered, “on the wind (רוח).” He brought a camel, loaded it, and choked it by pulling the rope both ways; when the camel would not rise Hadrian conceded that he had removed its רוח. Said Akilas: if a camel cannot bear its load without the spirit within it, how much more does the Holy One’s spirit bear the entire world; — כל שכן שהקב"ה נושא את העולם כולו, ושתק אדריאנוס — Hadrian remained silent (accepting his response).