

ספר יצירה א:ו

SEFER YETZIRAH 1:6

עשר ספירות בלי מה צפייתן כמראה הבזק ותכליתן
 אין להן קץ ודברו בהן ברצוא ושוב ולמאמרו כסופה
 ירדופו ולפני כסאו הם משתחויים:

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness, their vision is like the appearance of lightning, their limit has no end, and His Word in them is running and returning; they obey His saying, rushing along as a whirlwind, before His throne they prostrate themselves.

THEIR VISION

☞ The word for vision is צְפִיָּה (Tz'fiyah) which is normally used to denote a prophetic or mystical vision. The Sefer Yetzirah is not describing how the Sefirot appear in a mystical vision. In previous sections, it spoke of the exercises used to visualize the Sefirot, now it is describing their appearance. In the previous verse, the Sefer Yetzirah spoke of looking into a depth. In the Hekhalot, the mystical experience is often depicted as a descent.

LIKE THE APPEARANCE OF LIGHTNING

☞ This is taken from the verse in Ezekiel 1:14, "וְהַחַיֹּת רָצוּא וְשׁוּב כְּמֵרָאֵה הַבְּזָק:" "And the Chayot, running and returning like the appearance of lightning." This is the only occurrence of the word בְּזָק (Bazak) in the entire Tanach. It is often translated as "lightning" or "spark". בְּזָק (Bazak) denotes a flashing meteor or bursting bubble according to other interpretations. What the Sefer Yetzirah is stating is that the Sefirot can only be visualized for a moment before they vanish, just like lightning.

THEIR LIMIT HAS NO END

☞ This is derived from the verse from Tehilim 119:96, "לְכֹל תְּכֹלֶה רְאִיתִי קֵץ רַחֲבָה" "מִצְוֹתֶיךָ מְאֹד:" "For every limit I have seen an end, Your commandment is very broad." The word תְּכֹלֶה (Tachlit) means limit, which can also mean "complete" or "finished." The word Tachlit also denotes purpose, so when something fulfills its purpose, it is said to

be completed. The verse “their limit has no end קץ (ketz)” can be compared to a previous verse that says “their measure has no end סוף (sof).” The word סוף (sof) comes from the root ספה (safah), which means “cease to exist,” and קץ (ketz) comes from קצץ (katzatz), meaning “to cut off.” Our Sages say that Sof is the end in relation to that which follows it, and Ketz is the end with regard to what precedes it. What this means is that even though the Sefirot are seen in a flash, there is no limit to the insight that they can give to the individual.

HIS WORD IN THEM IS RUNNING AND RETURNING

☞ This also alludes to the verse in Ezekiel 1:14, “וְהָיָה כִּי יֵצֵא וְיָשׁוּב כְּמַרְאֵה הַבְּזָק:” “And the Chayot, running and returning like the appearance of lightning.”

THEY OBEY HIS SAYING RUSHING ALONG AS A WHIRLWIND

☞ One normally sees the Sefirot “running and returning,” like flashes of lightning. But when a particular edict issues forth from Ein Sof, they no longer oscillate, but pursue it “rushing along as a whirlwind.”

BEFORE HIS THRONE THEY PROSTRATE THEMSELVES

☞ The Sefer Yetzirah speaks in 1:4 about when Ein Sof is “sitting,” it means that He is lowering His essence so as to be concerned with His creation. His Throne is the object upon which He sits and denotes the vehicle of such lowering and concern. Even though “sitting” is a lowering that one does of their own initiative, prostrating oneself and bowing is the lowering that one does before a higher power. The universe of the Sefirot is called Atzilut, the next world below, Beriyah, is the world of the Throne. As described in Ezekiel 1:26, “וּמִמַּעַל לָרְקִיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל-רֹאשָׁם כְּמַרְאֵה אֶבֶן-סַפִּיר דְמוּת כֶּסֶא וְעַל דְמוּת:” “Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a Throne...and upon the likeness of the Throne, was a likeness in the appearance of a Man.” The Throne is in the world of Beriyah, while the “Man” on the Throne represents the anthropomorphic array of the Sefirot in Atzilut. The highest world that can be visualized is that of Yetzirah, the world of the angels. In this world one can visualize the reflection of a Throne. When the Sefer Yetzirah states that the Sefirot “prostrate themselves,” it is indicating that they are reflected in the lower worlds.

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