
Sefer ha-Zohar

The Book of Splendour

What is The Sefer ha-Zohar?

The Zohar [radiance] is the greatest classic of Jewish mysticism. It is a mystical commentary on the Torah, written in Aramaic, and is purported to be the teachings of the 2nd century Palestinian Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai. Legend relates that during a time of Roman persecution, Rabbi Shimon hid in a cave for 13 years, studying Torah with his son; During this time he is said to have been inspired by G@d to write the Zohar. However, there is no real mention of this book in any Jewish literature until the 13th century.

In the 13th century, a Spanish Kabbalist by the name of Moses De Leon [1240-1305] claimed to discover the text of the Zohar, and the text was subsequently published and distributed throughout the Jewish world. However de Leon denied authorship his entire life.

However, there is a school of thought (based on the writings of historian Gershom Scholem) that de Leon himself was the most likely author of the Zohar. Among other things, Scholem noticed the Zohar's frequent errors in Aramaic grammar and its highly suspicious traces of Spanish words and sentence patterns. This is still highly disputed by most (but not all) Orthodox Jews.

Whoever the author is, the content of the book is not fraudulent. It definitely is based on older works, and it was a common practice to ascribe the authorship of a document to an ancient rabbi in order to give the document more weight.

The Zohar contains and elaborates upon much of the material found in 'Sefer Yetzirah' and 'Sefer Bahir', and without question is the Kabbalistic work par excellence. Among the issues discussed at length are the divine creation process [through a series of ten spheres] and the problem of evil. It stresses the cosmic significance of human deeds.

Answer from the soc.culture.jewish FAQ

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The Creation Of Elohim

In the Beginning

When the King conceived ordaining He engraved engravings in the luster on high. A blinding spark flashed within the Concealed of the Concealed from the mystery of the Infinite, a cluster of vapor in formlessness, set in a ring, not white, not black, not red, not green, no color at all. When a band spanned, it yielded radiant colors. Deep within the spark gushed a flow imbuing colors below, concealed within

the concealed of the mystery of the Infinite. The flow broke through and did not break through its aura.

It was not known at all until, under the impact of breaking through, one high and hidden point shone. Beyond that point, nothing is known. So it is called Beginning, the first command of all.

"The enlightened will shine like the zohar of the sky, and those who make the masses righteous will shine like the stars forever and ever" [Daniel 12:3]

Zohar, Concealed of the Concealed, struck its aura. The aura touched and did not touch this point. Then this Beginning emanated and made itself a palace for its glory and its praise. There it sowed the seed of holiness to give birth for the benefit of the universe. The secret is: "Her stock is a holy seed" [Isaiah 6:13]

Zohar, sowing a seed for its glory like the seed of fine purple silk. The silkworm wraps itself within and makes itself a palace. This palace is its praise and a benefit to all.

With the Beginning the Concealed One who is not known created the palace. This palace is called Elohim. The secret is: "With Beginning, created Elohim" [Genesis 1:1]

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The Hidden Light

God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light.

[Genesis 1:3]

This is the light that the Blessed Holy One created at first. It is the light of the eye. It is the light that the Blessed Holy One showed the first Adam; with it he saw from one end of the world to the other. It is the light that the Blessed Holy One showed David; he sang its praise: "How great is Your good that You have concealed for those who fear You!" [Psalms 31:20]

It is the light that the Blessed Holy One showed Moses; with it he saw from Gilead to Dan. But when the Blessed Holy One saw that three wicked generations would arise: the generation of Enosh, the generation of the Flood, and the generation of the Tower of Babel, He hid the light away so they would not make use of it. The Blessed Holy One gave it to Moses and he used it for the three unused months of his gestation, as it is said: "She concealed him for three months" [Exodus 2:2]

When three months had passed, he was brought before Pharaoh and the Blessed Holy One took it away from him until he stood on Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah. Then He gave him back that light; he wielded it his whole life long and the children of Israel could not come near him until he put a veil over his face, as it is said: "They were afraid to come near him" [Exodus 34:30]

He wrapped himself in it as in a tallit, as it is written: "He wraps Himself in light as in a garment" [Psalms 104:2]

"Let there be light! And there was light." Every subject of the phrase "And there was exists in this world and in the world that is coming.

Rabbi Isaac said, "The light created by the Blessed Holy One in the act of Creation flared from one end of the world to the other and was hidden away. Why was it hidden away? So the wicked of the world would not enjoy it and the worlds would not enjoy it because of them. It is stored away for the righteous, for the Righteous One! As it is written: 'Light is sown for the righteous one, joy for the upright in heart' [Psalms 97:11]

Then the worlds will be fragrant, and all will be one. But until the day when the world that is coming arrives, it is stored and hidden away...."

Rabbi Judah said "If it were completely hidden the world would not exist for even a moment! Rather, it is hidden and sown like a seed that gives birth to seeds and fruit. Thereby the world is sustained. Every single day, a ray of that light shines into the world and keeps everything alive, for with that ray the Blessed Holy One feeds the world. And everywhere that Torah is studied at night one thread-thin ray appears from that hidden light and flows down upon those absorbed in her, as it is written: 'By day YHVH will enjoin His love; in the night His song is with me' [Psalms 42:9] as we have already established...

Since the first day, it has never been fully revealed, but it plays a vital role in the world, renewing every day the act of Creation!"

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Adam's Sin

YHVH Elohim expelled him from the Garden of Eden

He drove out et Adam.

[Genesis 3:23-24]

Rabbi El'azar said "We do not know who divorced whom, if the Blessed Holy One divorced Adam or not. But the word is transposed: 'He drove out et.' Et, precisely! And who drove out Et? 'Adam' Adam drove out Et! Therefore it is written: 'YHVH Elohim expelled him from the Garden of Eden.' Why did He expel him? Because Adam drove out Et, as we have said."

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Male And Female

This is the book of the generations of Adam

On the day that God created Adam, in the likeness of God

He created him; male and female He created them. He blessed them

and called their name Adam on the day they were created.

[Genesis 5:1-2]

Rabbi Shim'on said "High mysteries are revealed in these two verses. 'Male and female He created them' to make known the Glory on high, the mystery of faith. Out of this mystery, Adam was created.

Come and see: With the mystery by which heaven and earth were created Adam was created. Of them it is written: 'These are the generations of heaven and earth' *[Genesis 2:4]* Of Adam it is written: 'This is the book of the generations of Adam.' Of them it is written: 'when they were created.' Of Adam it is written: 'on the day they were created.'

'Male and female He created them.' From here we learn: Any image that does not embrace male and female is not a high and true image. We have established this in the mystery of our Mishnah. Come and see: The Blessed Holy One does not place His abode in any place where male and female are not found together. Blessings are found only in places where male and female are found, as it is written: 'He blessed them and called their name Adam on the day they were created' It is not written: 'He blessed him and called his name Adam' A human being is only called Adam when male and female are as one."

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After The Flood

Rabi opened "'YHVH smelled the pleasing aroma and said

"Never again will I doom the world because of humankind" '

[Genesis 8:21]

When Noah came out of the ark he opened his eyes and saw the whole world completely destroyed. He began crying for the world and said 'Master of the world! If You destroyed Your world because of human sin or human fools, then why did You create them? One or the other You should do: either do not create the human being or do not destroy the world!' He offered up offerings and began to pray before Him and the aroma ascended before the Blessed Holy One and was sweet."

Rabi continued "A triple aroma ascended to God: the aroma of Noah's offering, the aroma of his prayer, and the aroma of his actions. No aroma in the whole world was as pleasing to Him. Therefore He commanded: 'Be observant and present to Me in due season My pleasing aroma' *[Numbers 28:2]* This means: 'Be observant: Present to me the aroma that Noah presented to Me: the aroma of offering prayer and right action. ' "

Our Rabbis have taught: How did the Blessed Holy One respond when Noah came out of the ark and saw the whole world destroyed and began to cry over the holocaust! Noah said, "Master of the world, You are called Compassionate! You should have shown compassion for Your creatures!" The Blessed Holy One answered him, "Foolish shepherd! Now you say this, but not when I spoke to you tenderly, saying 'Make yourself an ark of gopher wood ... As for Me, I am about to bring the Flood ... to destroy all flesh ... *[Go into the ark, you and all your household]* for you alone have I found righteous before Me in this generation' *[Genesis 6:14, 17; 7:1]* I lingered with you and spoke to you at length so that you

would ask for mercy for the world! But as soon as you heard that you would be safe in the ark, the evil of the world did not touch your heart. You built the ark and saved yourself. Now that the world has been destroyed you open your mouth to utter questions and pleas"

Seeing this, Noah presented offerings and sacrifices, as it is written: "Taking of every clean animal and of every clean bird, he offered up offerings on the altar" [*Genesis 8:20*]

Rabbi Yohanan said "Come and see the difference between Noah and the righteous heroes of Israel!

Noah did not shield his generation and did not pray for them like Abraham. For as soon as the Blessed Holy One said to Abraham 'The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great,' immediately, 'Abraham came forward and said "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty" ' [*Genesis 18:20, 23*] He countered the Blessed Holy One with more and more words until finally he implored Him to forgive the entire generation if just ten innocent people could be found. Abraham thought there were ten in the city, counting Lot and his wife and his sons and daughters; that is why he entreated no more.

Moses also shielded his entire generation. As soon as the Blessed Holy One said 'Israel has sinned, "quickly they have turned from the way,"' what is written 'Moses implored' [*Exodus 32:8, 11*] What does 'implored' mean? It means that he prayed until he was overtaken by trembling."

Our Rabbis have said: "Moses did not leave the Blessed Holy One until he pledged his life for them both in this world and the world that is coming, as it is written: 'And now if You would only forgive their sin! If not, erase me from the book that You have written'" [*Exodus 32:32*]

Rabbi Yose said "[Moses' bravery is demonstrated] from this verse: 'He would have destroyed them had not Moses, His chosen, confronted Him in the breach'" [*Psalms 106:23*]

So all the righteous heroes shielded their generations and did not allow the attribute of Judgment to have power over them. And Noah' The Blessed Holy One lingered with him and spoke many words to him; perhaps, he would ask for mercy for his generation. But he did not care and did not ask for mercy. He just built the ark and the whole world was destroyed.

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Abram, The Soul-Breath

YHVH said to Abram "Go forth from your land, your place of birth, your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you; he who curses you I will curse; all the families of the earth will bless themselves by you."

Abram went forth as YHVH had directed him and Lot went with him.

[*Genesis 12:1-4*]

Rabbi Jacob son of Idi said "All soul-breaths of the righteous have been carved from the bedrock of the Throne of Glory to guide the body like a father guiding his son. For without the soul-breath, the body could not conduct itself, would not be aware of the Will, could not actualize the Will of its Creator. As Rabbi Abbahu has said: 'The soul-breath directs and trains the human being and initiates him into every straight path.'

When the Blessed Holy One sends her from the place of holiness He blesses her with seven blessings, as it is written: 'YHVH said to Avram,' this is the soul-breath who is av, 'a father,' to teach the body and ram, 'high' above him for she has come from a high and lofty place. What does He say to her?

"Go forth from your land, your place of birth," your dwelling, your place of bliss."

"And from your father's house" Rabbi Jacob said, "This is the mirror that shines. 'To the land that I will show you' means to such and such a body, a holy body, an upright body. And even so, 'I will bless those who bless you,' those who treat you correctly and virtuously, those who bless Me for you, saying 'As long as the soul breathes within me I acclaim in Your presence: YHVH is my God.'

'He who curses you I will curse,' those who curse you by acting perversely.

'Abram went forth as YHVH had directed him.' Blessed with these seven blessings, Abram, the soul-breath, went forth, father to the body and high from the place of the highest. 'As YHVH had directed him' to enter the body that she had been commanded to guide and train."

Rabbi Jacob continued "Look what is written about her once she has entered the body: 'And Lot went

with him.' This is the Devisor of Evil, destined to enter along with the soul-breath once a human is born. How do we know that the Devisor of Evil is called by this name? It is said: 'The devisings of the human mind are evil from youth' [*Genesis 8:21*] This is Lot, who was cursed. This corresponds to what Rabbi Isaac has said: 'The serpent who seduced Eve was the Devisor of Evil.' We know that he was cursed, as it is said: 'Cursed are you above all animals' [*Genesis 3:14*] Therefore, he is called Lot, Cursed. When the Soul-breath enters the body, immediately, 'Lot went with him.' For he is destined to enter with him, to mislead him and challenge the soul-breath."

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Abram's Descent Into Egypt

And Abram went down to Egypt.

[*Genesis 12:10*]

Rabbi Shim'on said "Come and see: Everything has secret wisdom. This verse hints at wisdom and the levels down below, to the depths of which Abraham descended. He knew them but did not become attached. He returned to face his Lord, was not seduced by them like Adam, was not seduced by them like Noah.

When Adam reached that level, he was seduced by the serpent and dragged Death into the world.

When Noah descended to that level, what is written 'He drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself within his tent' [*Genesis 9:21*] The spelling implies 'her tent.'

But what is written of Abraham 'Abram went up from Egypt' [*Genesis 13:1*] He went up and did not come down. He returned to his domain, the high rung he had grasped before.

This story appears in the Torah to reveal wisdom. Abraham fulfilled himself, was not seduced, rose to his full stature, returned to his domain: 'into the Negev' [*Genesis 13:1*] the South, the high sphere he was linked to before. Before, it was written: 'Abram journeyed by stages toward the Negev' [*Genesis 12:9*] Now, 'into the Negev, the domain he adhered to before.

Come and see the secret of the word: If Abram had not gone down into Egypt and been refined there first, he could not have partaken of the Blessed Holy One. Similarly with his children, when the Blessed Holy One wanted to make them unique, a perfect people, and to draw them near to Him: If they had not gone down to Egypt and been refined there first, they would not have become His special ones.

So too the Holy Land: If she had not been given first to Canaan to control, she would not have become the portion, the share of the Blessed Holy One. It is all one mystery."

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Openings

He [Abraham] was sitting in the opening of the tent

Sarah heard from the opening of the tent.

[*Genesis 18:1, 10*]

Rabbi Judah opened "'Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land'

[*Proverbs 31:23*]

Come and see: The Blessed Holy One has ascended in glory. He is hidden, concealed, far beyond. There is no one in the world, nor has there ever been, who can understand His wisdom or withstand Him. He is hidden, concealed, transcendent, beyond, beyond.

The beings up above and the creatures down below-- none of them can comprehend. All they can say is:

'Blessed be the Presence of YHVH in His place' [*Ezekiel 3:12*] The ones below proclaim that He is

above: 'His Presence is above the heavens' [*Psalms 113:4*] the ones above proclaim that He is below:

'Your Presence is over all the earth' [*Psalms 57:12*] Finally all of them, above and below, declare:

'Blessed be the Presence of YHVH wherever He is!' For He is unknowable. No one has ever been able to identify Him. How, then, can you say: 'Her husband is known in the gates!' Her husband is the Blessed Holy One!

Indeed, He is known in the gates. He is known and grasped to the degree that one opens the gates of imagination! The capacity to connect with the spirit of wisdom, to imagine in one's heart-mind-- this is how God becomes known.

Therefore 'Her husband is known in the gates,' through the gates of imagination. But that He be known as

He really is 'No one has ever been able to attain such knowledge of Him.'

Rabbi Shim'on said "'Her husband is known in the gates.' Who are these gates? The ones addressed in the Psalm: 'O gates, lift up your heads! Be lifted up, openings of eternity, so the King of Glory may come!' [Psalms 24:7] Through these gates, these spheres on high, the Blessed Holy One becomes known. Were it not so, no one could commune with Him.

Come and see: Neshamah of a human being is unknowable except through limbs of the body, subordinates of neshamah who carry out what she designs. Thus she is known and unknown.

The Blessed Holy One too is known and unknown. For He is Neshamah of neshamah, Pneuma of pneuma, completely hidden away; but through these gates, openings for neshamah, the Blessed Holy One becomes known. Come and see: There is opening within opening, level beyond level. Through these the Glory of God becomes known.

'The opening of the tent' is the opening of Righteousness, as the Psalmist says: 'Open for me the gates of righteousness ...' [Psalms 118:19] This is the first opening to enter. Through this opening, all other high openings come into view. One who attains the clarity of this opening discovers all the other openings, for all of them abide here.

Now that Israel is in exile, this opening is unknown; all the openings have abandoned Her. It is impossible to know, impossible to grasp. But when Israel comes forth from exile, all the soaring spheres will touch down upon this opening, one by one. Then human beings will perceive wondrous, precious wisdom never known by them before, as it is written: 'The spirit of YHVH shall alight upon him: a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of design and power, a spirit of knowledge and awe of YHVH' [Isaiah 11:2] All these are destined to alight upon the opening below, the Opening of the Tent. All these are destined to alight upon King Messiah so that he may judge the world, as it is written: 'He shall judge the poor with righteousness...' [Isaiah 11:4]

Therefore when Abraham received the good news, this sphere delivered it, as has been said, for it is written: "Then one said, "I will return to you when life is due" [Genesis 18:10] 'One said' Who it was is not spelled out. It was the Opening of the Tent!

Now the same verse says: 'Sarah heard.' She heard this sphere speaking with her husband; someone she had never heard before. And so it is written: 'Sarah heard the Opening of the Tent' who was delivering the good news: 'I will return to you when life is due and your wife Sarah will have a son.' "

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An Offering To God

Rabbi Shim'on opened and said "Anyone who rejoices on the festivals and does not give the Blessed Holy One His portion, that stingy one with the evil eye, Satan, Archenemy, appears and accuses him, removes him from the world. Oh, how much trouble and suffering he brings upon him! What is the portion of the Blessed Holy One? To gladden the poor as best as one can. For on these days the Blessed Holy One comes to observe His broken vessels. He enters from above and if He sees that they have nothing to celebrate He cries over them. Then he ascends to destroy the world! The members of the Academy of Heaven appear before Him and declare: 'Master of the world! You are called Compassionate and Gracious. May Your Compassion be aroused for Your children!'

He answers them: 'Does not everyone know that I based the world solely on love? "I have said, 'The world is built by love' " [Psalms 89:3] It is love that sustains the world!'

The angels on high then declare: 'Master of the world! Look at so-and-so who is eating and drinking his fill. He could share something with the poor but he gives them nothing at all!' Then the Accuser steps forward, claims authority and sets out in pursuit of that human being.

Who in the world was greater than Abraham? He was kindhearted to all creatures. One day he prepared a feast, as it is written: 'The child grew up and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned' [Genesis 21:8] To this feast Abraham invited all the great people of his time.

Now we have learned that the Accuser comes to every joyous meal to see if the host has already provided for the poor or invited the poor into his home. If so, the Accuser departs and does not enter. If not, he enters and witnesses this chaos of joy without poor, without gifts for the poor. Then he rises above and accuses the host.

When Abraham welcomed all those great people the Accuser descended and stood at the door disguised as a poor man. But no one noticed him. Abraham was serving the kings and celebrities. Sarah was

nursing all their children, because no one believed that she had given birth; they said, 'It is a foundling from off the street!' So Sarah took their children who had come along and nursed them in front of everyone, as it is written: 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children' [*Genesis 21:7*] 'Children,' in the plural!

Meanwhile, the Accuser was still at the door. Sarah said, 'God has made me a laughingstock. At once, the Accuser rose to face the Blessed Holy One. He said, 'Master of the world! You call Abraham "My friend"' [*Isaiah 41:8*] He held a feast and gave nothing to me and nothing to the poor; not even a single dove did he present to You! Furthermore, Sarah says that You made fun of her!' The Blessed Holy One responded 'Who in the world is like Abraham?'

But he held his ground until he ruined the whole celebration and the Blessed Holy One commanded that Isaac be brought as an offering and it was decreed that Sarah would die in anguish over her son's ordeal. All that suffering he brought about because he gave nothing to the poor!"

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The Binding Of Abraham And Isaac

And it came to pass after these devarim that Elohim tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham.'" and he answered, "Here I am. " He said, "Take your son, your favored one, whom you love, Isaac and go to the land of Moriah and offer him up as an offering..." [*Genesis 22:1-2*]

Rabbi Shim'on said "We have learned that the expression 'And it came to pass in the days of' denotes sorrow, while the expression 'And it came to pass' even without 'in the days of' is still tinged with sorrow.

'And it came to pass after, after the lowest of all the higher spheres. Which is that' Devarim. As Moses said: 'I am not a man of devarim' [*Exodus 4:10*] And who came after this sphere' 'Elohim tested Abraham.' The Devisor of Evil came to accuse him in the presence of the Blessed Holy One.

Here we must reflect: 'Elohim tested Abraham. The verse should read: 'tested Isaac,' for Isaac was already thirty-seven years old and his father was no longer responsible for him. If Isaac had said, 'I refuse, his father would not have been punished. Why, then, is it written: 'Elohim tested Abraham,' and not 'Isaac'!

No, it had to be Abraham! He had to be crowned with Rigor. For until now, Abraham had no rigor at all. Now Water was crowned with Fire. Abraham was not complete until now when he was invested with the power to execute Judgment, to ordain it in its domain. His whole life long, he had not been whole until now when Water was crowned with Fire, and Fire with Water.

That is why 'Elohim tested Abraham,' not Isaac. He summoned Abraham to be crowned with Rigor. When he had done so, Fire entered Water, each completing the other. One was judged and one executed judgment, each crowning the other.

That is why the Devisor of Evil appeared to accuse Abraham. For until he had executed judgment by binding Isaac he could not attain perfection. The Devisor of Evil always appears behind things and words; he comes to challenge.

Come and see the secret of the word: Even though we have said that Abraham, not Isaac, is designated in the verse, Isaac is secretly implied, for it is written: 'Elohim tested et Abraham.' Not 'Abraham,' but 'et Abraham.' It is precisely this et that refers to Isaac. For until now, Isaac was dwelling in the sphere of low power. As soon as he was bound on the altar, initiated into Judgment by Abraham, he was arrayed in his own sphere alongside Abraham. Fire was crowned with Water; both rose higher. Thus the battle was joined: Water versus Fire Who has ever seen a compassionate father turn cruel? It was only to reveal the polarity: Water versus Fire, each one arrayed in its own sphere, until Jacob appeared and everything harmonized: the triad of the Patriarchs, the symmetry of above and below.

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Jacob's Journey

Jacob left Be'er Sheva and set out for Haran.

[*Genesis 28:10*]

Inside the hidden nexus, from within the sealed secret, a zohar flashed, shining as a mirror, embracing two colors blended together. Once these two absorbed each other, all colors appeared: purple, the whole

spectrum of colors, flashing, disappearing. Those rays of color do not wait to be seen; they merge into the fusion of zohar.

In this zohar dwells the one who dwells. It provides a name for the one who is concealed and totally unknown. It is called the Voice of Jacob. Complete faith in the one who is concealed and totally unknown belongs here. Here dwells YHVH, perfection of all sides, above and below. Here Jacob is found, perfection of the Patriarchs, linked to all sides. This zohar is called by the singled-out name: "Jacob, whom I have chosen" [*Isaiah 41:8*] Two names he is called: Jacob and Israel. At first, Jacob; later, Israel.

The secret of this secret: First he attained the End of Thought, the Elucidation of the Written Torah. She is the Oral Torah, called Be'er, as it is said: "Moses began be'er, to explain, the Torah" [*Deuteronomy 1:5*] She is a be'er, a well and an explanation of the one who is called Sheva, Seven, as it is written: "It took him sheva, seven, years to build it" [*1 Kings 6:38*] Sheva is the Mighty Voice, while the End of Thought is Be'er Sheva.

Jacob had entered this gateway to faith. Adhering to that faith, he had to be tested in the same place his fathers had been tested, entering in peace and emerging in peace.

Adam entered but was not careful. Seduced by her, he sinned with that whore of a woman, the primordial serpent.

Noah entered but was not careful. Seduced by her, he sinned as well, as it is written: "He drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself within his tent" [*Genesis 9:21*]

Abraham entered and emerged, as it is written: "And Abram went down to Egypt ... And Abram came up from Egypt" [*Genesis 12:10; 13:1*]

Isaac entered and emerged, as it is written: "Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar ... From there he went up to Be'er Sheva" [*Genesis 26:1, 23*]

Jacob, having entered into faith, had to continue and probe the other side. For one who is saved from there is a loved one, a chosen one of the Blessed Holy One. What is written? Jacob left Be'er Sheva" the secret of the mystery of faith, "and set out for Haran" the side of the woman of whoredom, the adulteress.

The secret of secrets: Out of the scorching noon of Isaac, out of the dregs of wine, a fungus emerged, a cluster, male and female together, red as a rose, expanding in many directions and paths. The male is called Sama'el, his female always included within him. Just as it is on the side of holiness, so it is on the other side: male and female embracing one another. The female of Sama'el is called Serpent, Woman of Whoredom, End of All Flesh, End of Days. Two evil spirits joined together: the spirit of the male is subtle; the spirit of the female is diffused in many ways and paths but joined to the spirit of the male. She bedecks herself with all kinds of jewelry like an abhorrent prostitute posing on the corner to seduce men. The fool who approaches her- she grabs him and kisses him, pours him wine from the dregs, from the venom of vipers. As soon as he drinks, he strays after her. Seeing him stray from the path of truth, she strips herself of all her finery that she dangled before that fool, her adornments for seducing men: her hair all arranged, as red as a rose, her face white and red, six trinkets dangling from her ears, her bed covered with fabric from Egypt, on her neck all the jewels of the East, her mouth poised, a delicate opening, what lovely trappings! The tongue pointed like a sword, her words smooth like oil, her lips beautiful, red as a rose, sweet with all the sweetness of the world. She is dressed in purple, adorned with forty adornments minus one.

This fool follows her, drinks from the cup of wine, fornicates with her, deviates after her. What does she do? She leaves him sleeping in bed. She ascends, denounces him, obtains permission, and descends That fool wakes up and plans to play with her as before. But she removes her decorations and turns into a powerful warrior confronting him. Arrayed in armor of flashing fire, his awesome terror vibrates the victim's body and soul. He is full of fearsome eyes; in his hand a sharp-edged sword drips bitter drops. He kills that fool and flings him into hell.

Jacob descended to her, went straight to her abode, as it is said: "and he set out for Haran." He saw all the trappings of her house and was saved from her. Her mate, Sama'el, was offended and swooped down to wage war but could not overcome him, as it is written: "And a man wrestled with him..." [*Genesis 32:25*]

Now he was saved and perfected, raised to a perfect sphere and called Israel. He attained a high rung, total perfection! He became the central pillar, of whom it is written: "The center bar in the middle of the planks shall run from end to end" [*Exodus 26:28*]

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Joseph's Dream

Joseph dreamed a dream and told it to his brothers,
and they hated him even more.

[Genesis 37:5]

Rabbi Hiyya opened and said "He said, "Hear my words: If there be a prophet among you, I, YHVH, make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream" *[Numbers 12:6]*

Come and see how many levels within levels the Blessed Holy One has made, arranged one on top of the other, step by step, this one higher than that one, these absorbing those, as they should, these on the right, those on the left, each one assigned its domain, all as it should be.

Come and see: All the prophets of the world were nurtured from a single aspect through two well-known levels. Those levels appeared in the mirror that does not shine, as it is written: 'I make Myself known to him in a vision, mar'ah.' What is this mar'ah? It has been explained: a mirror in which all colors appear. This is the mirror that does not shine.

'I speak with him in a dream.' This is one-sixtieth of prophecy, as they have established. It is the sixth level from the level of prophecy, the level of Gabriel, appointed over dreams. This has already been said. Come and see: Every proper dream comes from this level; so you cannot have a dream without false imaginings intermingling, as we have established. Therefore parts are true and parts are false. You cannot have a dream that does not reflect both this side and that.

Since everything is contained in a dream, as we have said, all dreams of the world follow the interpretation of the mouth. They have established this based on the verse: 'As he interpreted for us, so it came to pass' *[Genesis 41:13]*

Why? Because a dream includes illusion and truth, and the word rules over all. So a dream needs a good interpretation."

Rabbi Judah said "Because every dream is from that lower level, and Speech commands that level; that is why every dream follows the interpretation."

He opened and said "In a dream, a vision of the night, when slumber falls on humans as they sleep upon their bed, He uncovers human ears, terrifies them with warning' *[Job 33:15-16]*

Come and see: When a person climbs into bed, first he must enthrone and accept the Kingdom of Heaven, then say a verse of mercy, as the Comrades have established. For when a person sleeps in his bed, his soul leaves him and soars up above, each one on its own path. She ascends in this way, as has been said. What is written! 'In a dream, a vision of the night,' when people are lying in their beds asleep, the soul leaves them, as it is written: 'as they sleep upon their bed, He uncovers human ears.' Then the Blessed Holy One reveals to the soul, through that level presiding over dreams, things that are destined to come about in the world or things corresponding to the mind's reflections, so that the dreamer will respond to the warning.

For nothing is revealed while the person is still under the spell of the body, as we have said. Rather, an angel tells the soul, and the soul, the person, and that dream is from beyond, when souls leave bodies and ascend, each on its own path.

There are levels upon levels within the mystery of a dream, all within the mystery of wisdom. Now come and see: Dream is one level, vision is one level, prophecy is one level. All are levels within levels, one above the other.

'Joseph dreamed a dream and told it to his brothers... and they hated him even more because of his dreams' *[Genesis 37:5, 8]* From here we learn that a person should only tell his dream to one who loves him Otherwise the listener interferes, and if that dream is transformed, he is the cause.

Come and see: Joseph told the dream to his brothers, and they made the dream disappear; for twenty-two years it was delayed."

Rabbi Yose said, "How do we know this' Because it is written: 'They hated him even more.' This implies that they provoked accusations against him. What is written? 'He said to them, "Please hear this dream that I have dreamed" *[Genesis 37:6]* He begged them to listen; then he revealed the dream to them. If they had transformed its meaning, it would have come true according to their words. But they responded: 'Will you reign over us! Will you rule over us" *[Genesis 37:8]* Suddenly they had revealed the interpretation of the dream and sealed their own fate! That is why 'they hated him even more.' "

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Seduction Above And Below

And it came to pass after these things
that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said,
"Lie with me!" And he refused.
Though she urged Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her,
to lie beside her, to be with her.

[Genesis 39:7-8, 10]

"Though she urged him day after day" Rabbi El'azar opened and said "' [TO guard you from the evil woman, the smooth-tongued alien' *[Proverbs 6:24]*

Happy are the righteous who know the paths of the Blessed Holy One, who learn how to follow them by striving for Torah day and night!

For everyone who engages Torah days and nights occupies two worlds: the higher world and the lower world. He obtains this world even if he engages in Torah with selfish motives; he obtains that world if he engages in Torah for the Name within her.

Come and see what is written: 'Long life she offers with her right hand, with her left hand riches and honor' *[Proverbs 3:16]* One who walks on the right side of Torah is extended long life in the world that is coming. There he acquires the splendor of Torah, for the crown of Torah is in that world. 'With her left hand riches and honor' in this world. Even if he hasn't studied Torah for the Name within her he still obtains in this world riches and honor.

Now when Rabbi Hiyya came from Babylonia to the land of Israel he read from the Torah until his face shone like the sun, and when everyone studying Torah stood before him he would say: 'This one engages Torah for the Name within her; that one does not.' He would pray for the first one that he always be like that and obtain the world that is coming. He would pray for the other that he discover how to study Torah for the Name within her and obtain eternal life.

One day he saw a student toiling over Torah whose face turned pale. He said, 'This one is conceiving sinful thoughts!' He held him and looked into his eyes and emanated words of Torah to him until he became calm. From that day on, he resolved not to pursue those evil imaginings and to strive to study Torah for the Name within her."

Rabbi Yose said "When a person sees that evil imaginings are assailing him he should occupy himself with Torah and they will pass away."

Rabbi El'azar said "When that evil side approaches to seduce a human being he should pull it toward Torah and it will leave him. Come and see what we have learned: When that evil side confronts the Blessed Holy One, accusing the world of evil doings, the Blessed Holy One feels compassion for the world and offers a device to human beings to save themselves from him, to neutralize his power over them and their actions.

What is the device? Engaging in Torah! This saves them from him. How do we know? Because it is written: 'A mizvah is a lamp; Torah is light; rules of discipline lead to life' *[Proverbs 6:23]* What is written in the following verse? 'To guard you from the evil woman, the smooth-tongued alien.' This is the unclean side, the Other Side, who constantly confronts the Blessed Holy One to press charges based on human sin, who constantly confronts human beings to pervert and mislead them below. He constantly presents himself above to report the sins of humans and accuse them of their doings so that they be delivered into his power as was done to Job. At the same time, he looms over humans below to mislead them and remind them of their sins, everything they have done.

Especially when the Blessed Holy One stands in judgment over the he rises to indict them and enumerate their sins. The Blessed Holy One, however, felt compassion for Israel and gave them a device to save themselves from him. What! A shofar on Rosh ha-Shanah, and on Yom Kippur a scapegoat to give to him so that he leave them alone and occupy himself with that portion of his. This has been established. Come and see what is written: 'Her feet lead down to death, her steps grasp the netherworld' *[Proverbs 5:5]* But of the mystery of faith, it is written: 'Her ways are ways of delight, all her paths are peace' *[Proverbs 3:17]* These are the ways and paths of Torah. All is one, this peace and that death, reverse sides of each other.

Happy is Israel's portion! They are perfectly linked to the Blessed Holy One. He offers them guidance on how to be saved from all other tendencies in the world since they are a people consecrated to Him. He

offers them guidance on everything. Happy are they in this world and in the world that is coming!

Come and see: When this evil side comes down and roams through the world and sees how human beings act, how they all stray from their paths in this world, he ascends and accuses them. If the Blessed Holy One did not feel compassion for the work of His hands, no one would survive!

What is written 'Though she urged Joseph day after day' She rises faithlessly every single day and uncovers for the Blessed Holy One so much evil news so that she can destroy humankind.

What is written! 'He did not yield to her, to lie beside her, to be with her.' He does not yield to her request because He feels compassion for the world. 'To lie beside her' Why does she want Him to lie beside her' So she can take control and dominate the world! Her control does not prevail until she is given power.

Something else about 'to lie with her': as it is said: 'and the man who lies with an unclean woman' [Leviticus 15:33]

'To be with her,' to give her dignity, blessings, and help. For if she had help from above, not even a single person would remain alive. But the Blessed Holy One feels compassion for the world; so the world remains in existence."

Rabbi Abba said "It is all one path, but it is the Devisor of Evil who comes to seduce human beings, to pervert their paths, to cling to them day after day. Time after time, he diverts one from the path of truth to force him off the path of life and draw him on toward hell.

A righteous person--what does he do? He watches his step on the path so the Devisor of Evil cannot cling to him, as it is written: 'Though she urged Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her,' to what she proposed day after day. For the unclean spirit, the Devisor of Evil, seduces a man every c 'to lie beside her' in hell, to be condemned there 'to be with her.'

Come and see: When a person joins that side he is drawn to her more and more; he defiles himself with her both in this world and the other world.

Come and see this unclean side: it is ugly, it is filth. "'Out!" you will call to it' [Isaiah 30:22] Excrement! One who turns away from Torah is punished in excrement! Sinners of the world who do not believe in the Blessed Holy One are punished in excrement!

What is written? 'One such day, he came into the house to do his work. There was no man of the household there inside' [Genesis 39:11] 'One such day,' a day when the Devisor of Evil is at large in the world, coming to lead humans astray. When is that day? The same day a person acknowledges his sins and begins to turn himself around, or when he engages Torah and resolves to obey her commands. At that very moment, he descends to lead humans astray.

'He came into the house to do his work,' to engage Torah and obey her commands, for that is the work a person should do in this world. Now since a person's real work in this world is the work of the Blessed Holy One, he must be as strong as a lion on every side so that the Other Side will not overpower him or be able to seduce him.

What is written? 'There was no man,' no man to stand up against the Devisor of Evil and wage war with him as one should.

How does the Devisor of Evil operate? Once he sees that no man stands in his way, ready to fight him, immediately 'she grabbed him by his coat and said, "Lie with me!"' [Genesis 39:12] She grabbed him by his coat because when the Devisor of Evil takes control of a person he dresses him up in beautiful clothes and curls his hair and says, 'Lie with me! Join me!' One who is pure steels himself and wages war. What is written? 'But he left his coat in her hand and fled outdoors.' One should abandon him, harden oneself against him, flee from him to be safe from him. Then he cannot take control."

Rabbi Isaac said "The righteous are destined to see the Devisor of Evil in the shape of a huge mountain. Astounded, they will say: 'How were we able to overturn that huge mountain!' The wicked are destined to see the Devisor of Evil as thin as a thread of hair. Astounded, they will say: 'How could we fail to overcome a thread of hair so thin?' These will cry and those will cry. The Blessed Holy One will sweep the Devisor of Evil off the earth and slaughter him before their eyes, and his power will be no more. Seeing this, the righteous will rejoice, as it is said: 'Surely the righteous will praise Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your Presence' " [Psalms 140:14]

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Jacob's Garment Of Days

The days of Israel drew near to die.
He summoned his son Joseph and said to him,
"If I have found favor in your eyes,
place your hand under my thigh; act toward me out of true love:
please do not bury me in Egypt. I will lie down with my fathers;
then take me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

[Genesis 47:29-30]

The days of Israel drew near to die. He summoned his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, place your hand under my thigh; act toward me out of true love: please do not bury me in Egypt. I will lie down with my fathers; then take me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place. "

[Genesis 47:29-30]

Rabbi Judah opened and said "Listen, you deaf ones! You blind ones, look up and see!" *[Isaiah 42:18]*
'Listen, you deaf ones!' you human beings who do not hear Torah speaking, who do not open your ears to let in the commands of your Master. 'You blind ones' who do not examine your own foundations, who do not seek to know why you are alive! Every single day a herald comes forth and proclaims but no one hears his message!

It has been taught: When a human being is created, on the day he comes into the world, simultaneously, all the days of his life are arranged above. One by one, they come flying down into the world to alert that human being, day by day. If, when a day comes to alert him, he sins on that day before his Master, then that day climbs up in shame, bears witness, and stands alone outside.

It has been taught: After standing alone it sits and waits for that human to turn back to his Master, to restore the day. If he succeeds, that day returns to its place; if not, that day comes down to join forces with the outlaw spirit. It molds itself into an exact image of that human and moves into his house to torment him. Sometimes his stay is for the good if one purifies himself. If not, it is a horrible visitation. Either way, such days are lacking, missing from the total. Woe to the human being who has decreased his days in the presence of the Holy King, who has failed to reserve days up above-- days that could adorn him in that world, days that could usher him in to the presence of the Holy King!

Come and see: When those days draw near to the Holy King, if the person leaving the world is pure he ascends and enters into those days and they become a radiant garment for his soul! But only his days of virtue, not his days of fault. Woe to him who has decreased his days up above! For when he comes to be clothed in his days, the days that he ruined are missing and he is clothed in a tattered garment. It is worse if there are many such days; then he will have nothing to wear in that world! Woe to him! Woe to his soul! He is punished in hell for those days, days upon days, two days for every wasted day! For when he left this world, he found no days to wear, he had no garment for cover.

Happy are the righteous! Their days are all stored up with the Holy King, woven into radiant garments to be worn in the world that is coming

We have learned in the mystery of our Mishnah: Why is it written: 'And they knew that they were naked' *[Genesis 3:7]* Adam and Eve knew the naked truth: the radiant garment woven from their days had faded away. Not one single day was left to wear, as it is written: 'Your eyes saw my unformed limbs; in Your book they were all recorded. The days that were fashioned-- not one of them is left' *[Psalms 139:16]* Exactly! Not one of those fashioned days was left to be worn. And so it remained until Adam made the effort to turn back to God and mend his ways. The Blessed Holy One accepted him and made him different garments but not from his days, as it is written: 'YHVH Elohim made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and He clothed them' *[Genesis 3:21]*

Come and see: Abraham, who was pure, what is written of him! 'He came into days' *[Genesis 24:1]*
When he left this world he entered into his very own days and put them on to wear. Nothing was missing from that radiant garment: 'He came into days.'

But what is written of Job' 'He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there"' *[Job 1:21]* No garment was left for him to wear.

It has been taught: Happy are the righteous for their days are pure and extend to the world that is coming. When they leave this world, all their days are sewn together, made into radiant garments for them to wear. Arrayed in that garment, they are admitted to the world that is coming to enjoy its pleasures. Clothed in that garment, they are destined to come back to life. All who have a garment will be resurrected, as it is written: 'They will rise as in a garment' *[Job 38:14]*

Woe to the wicked of the world whose days are faulty and full of holes! There is not enough to cover them when they leave the world.

It has been taught: All the righteous who are privileged to wear a radiant garment of their days are crowned in that world with crowns worn by the Patriarchs from the stream that flows and gushes into the Garden of Eden, as it is written: 'YHVH will guide you always and satisfy your soul with sparkling flashes' [*Isaiah 58:11*] But the wicked of the world, unfit to wear a garment of days, of them it is written: 'He shall be like a bush in the desert, unaware of the coming of good, inhabiting scorched wilderness'" [*Jeremiah 17:6*]

Rabbi Isaac said "Happy is the destiny of Jacob! He had such faith that he could say: 'I will lie down with my fathers.' He attained their level, nothing less! He surpassed them, dressed in his days and in theirs!"