

***Sod ha-Nachash u-Mishpato  
ve-Maasehu***  
**The Secret of the Serpent,  
His Law and His Deed**  
– Translation of the Treatise  
by R. Yosef Gikatilla (1248–1325)<sup>1</sup>

Für Rabbiner Shlomo Bistrizky – mit Dankbarkeit

Preface

ואנכי תולעת ולא איש  
יי איש מלחמה יי שמו

Presented translation<sup>2</sup> of the treatise authored by XIII century kabbalist, r. Yosef Gikatilla should be treated as a continuation of the content elaborated in the

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- 1 The study related to the notion of the serpent is a part of ongoing research project realized within the program of Rabbinical Seminar *Kollet Or Yonatan* in Hamburg.
  - 2 When I already completed the translation of the text, I was advised that there is already an extant version, published as: “Secret of the Serpent: *Sod ha-Nachashah*” [sic!] transl. Rab Yaqob bar Ilah, North Haven 2020. Though linguistically the translation seems to be overall correct, there is hardly any apparatus applied. Also emendations from the scribe are not taken into consideration and the translator’s corrections in several disputed details are either not mentioned as such (which gives impression that these constitute part of the text) or are absent. Additionally, the publication seems to be a part of peculiar neo-sabbataian movement, which is hinted at in scarce references applied to the text. I have applied few references mentioned there to my edition, but did not follow the translatory choices.

previous article,<sup>3</sup> where I published the Hebrew original of the text.<sup>4</sup> This relatively short exposure constitutes a part of so-called *Sodot*, “secrets” cycle, within which r. Gikatilla presented kabbalistic explanations regarding various aspects of Jewish ritual. The treatise dedicated to the notion of Primordial Serpent focuses predominantly on the question of the origin of evil: was the Serpent evil within his entity or the evil related to him originated from another source? Whatever is the answer, Author claims that the repair and restitution of serpent’s evil is about to happen in the times of *Mashiach*. What is then the crucial theme with *Sod ha-Nachash*? The Author underlines that the most ground-breaking and difficult episodes in the Jewish history, described in the Torah (consequences of the birth of *Ishmael* and *Esau*, *Yaakov*’s struggle with the protective angel of *Esau*, *Amalek*’s attack on the rear-guard of *Israel*, the temptations and curses of *Bileam* etc.) are rooted in the key event that took place in *Gan Eden*, when the Serpent got in touch with the Woman. All the consequences of this “touch” on the plane of ontology, human sexuality, cosmology and biology reveal themselves during the consecutive stages of history as a repetitive imperfection, some sort of “inherent vice” of the Creation. It is especially worthy to pay attention to the biological aspect of this drama, because as a result of the connection with the Serpent, the Woman received her “serpentine” name *Chavah*, and the Serpent became incorporated as a part of human’s body, entering its blood, that is the basis of *nefesh*, the vital soul. Although the Author does not explicitly refer to this singularity, nevertheless the analogy of gematria for “vital soul”, *nefesh*: 50–80–300, for “serpent” *nachash*: 50–8–300 and for the “fall”, *nafal*: 50–80–30 is obvious, not only in the kabbalistic circles.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly to the main idea hinted at in the article from the year 2017 mentioned above, also now I would like to focus exactly on the same topic – **to treat the story of the serpent as an kabbalistic illustration of dynamics within the biological Life.**

Therefore, I propose the Reader to follow me on the out-of-the-box thought experiment, that requires some imaginative bravery. In Stanisław Lem’s novel *Solaris* we encounter a theme of a planet-organism. **Let us be inspired by this vision and imagine that all Bios in Gan Eden was initially comprising of one immortal, living cell.** The word *gan* refers to the idea of “protective, barriered area”. Let us say that it was supposed to be **The Life to encompass all and persists as such.** Thus, whenever the Author of *Sod ha-Nachash* speaks of “**the inner palace**”, let us imagine that this

3 Aryeh Yosef Krawczyk, “General Remarks on *The Serpent* as the Central Notion of the Torah and the Symbol of Life Itself”, *Jewish History Quarterly* nr 3 (263), September 2017, pp. 473–494.

4 Based on the edition: [http://www.hebrew.grimoar.cz/gikatilla/sod\\_ha-nachas.htm](http://www.hebrew.grimoar.cz/gikatilla/sod_ha-nachas.htm), amended according to XV century manuscript Paris BN 841 [https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL\\_ALEPH000081865/NLI?volumeItem=1#\\$FL54866919](https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000081865/NLI?volumeItem=1#$FL54866919), pp. 549–569 [273a–279a]. The exhaustive analysis of extant *Sod ha-Nachash* manuscripts and excellent commentary on impurity (contamination) – purity dialectics in r. Gikatilla’s works is provided by Naama ben Shachar (in collaboration with Tzachi Weiss): *Israel and the Archons of the Nations: War, Purity and Impurity*, Los Angeles 2021 [in Hebrew], esp. pp. 64–74 and 34–36. I will refer to this work further below.

5 Friedrich Weinreb, *Roots of the Bible*, Zürich [1963], 2013, p. 44.

expression refers to the **Life enclosed in the cellular processes of such understood Gan Eden**, and whenever he speaks of “**the entering of the serpent inwards**” – it would refer to the description of a hostile intrusion of some sort of a **virus** from the outside environment, resulting in degeneration of the primordial “Life” from before the time of the fall in *Gan Eden* into the form of “life” as we know it – the biological life that always results in disintegration and death. This hypothetical virus, when it was outside of the cell, served as its support and constituted a protective fence for the cell’s walls. However, when it trespassed and entered inside, it caused the cell to distort. One could thus attempt to describe the process of repair of this state of fall (with the advent of *Mashiach*, strictly connected to *Nachash*) as a process of restitution of “life” back into the state of “Life”. It would be accomplished by pushing out the virus from the inner space of the cell and bring him back to serve the role of its outward protector. The breach that was supposed to be done by the virus-Serpent, would be sealed exactly by its own serpent-like “body”. In other words, as I put it in the last sentences of the simultaneous commentary to r. Gikatilla’s work:

Thus, one might see the clear reference to one of the key ideas presented in this treatise, when it is said that the serpent does not constitute evil by himself. It is just his present misplacement that creates evil. However, the serpent as such, when occupying appropriate place, constitutes the protective force for the life itself. One can be therefore tempted to state that in the time of *Mashiach*, *HaShem* would encircle the inside of the palace by means of the serpent’s body, protecting its inner space from the consequences of the breach, originally performed by the same serpent. In other words, *Mashiach* will repair the negative effects of serpent’s act with the help of the serpent himself.

This conclusion naturally triggers hermeneutical attention towards the messianic statement present in *Tehilim* 22, where *Mashiach* reveals his relationship to *Nachash* in a straightforward pun:

ואנכי תולעת ולא איש

“And I am a Worm, not a Man”<sup>6</sup>

It is so, because Serpent-Worm, an Ouroboric form of repetitive cycles of the phenomena of life and death, being at the same time beyond it – being the Life Itself – is all visible within the Man *par excellence*: Man – that is *Mashiach*. And *HaShem*’s Presence in the Worm (as we see the self-representation as *Anochi* there, it definitely refers to the identity of YKVK) pushes the Life Itself towards the transformation into *Mashiach*. It is so, because:

יִי אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יִי שֵׁמוֹ

“*HaShem* is the Man of War, *HaShem* is His Name”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Tehilim* 22:7.

<sup>7</sup> *Shemot* 15:3. On the significance of this verse, see: Aryeh Yosef Krawczyk, “The Names, The Heights and The 26. Significance of Gematria Method.

## R. Yosef Gikatilla

Secret of the Serpent and his Law<sup>8</sup> and his Deed

You have asked me, my brother soul, to teach you about the secret of the serpent, his law and his deed.

However, before I will discuss this subject in order to clarify it, I feel compelled to pass you the knowledge about the crucial fundamentals. These are extremely important for the proper understanding [of the topic]. Thus, I have mentioned to you, my son, that from the [level] of *sefirah Binah* and above it there is no possibility to know and comprehend anything by means of any created [being], cause “eye has not seen *Elokim*, except of you”.<sup>9</sup> However, from the [level] of *sefirah Gedulah* and *Gevurah* and below, there are the highest archons<sup>10</sup> [of impurity] connected to [both] sides of forefathers – from [the right] side *Avraham* and from [the left] side *Yitzchak*, respectively. And their number is seventy. Thus, *Avraham* represents the secret of the right side – within him are thirty-five rulers stemming from *Ishmael*<sup>11</sup> and *Mizrayim* that accompanies him – and this land is next to the Land of *Israel*.<sup>12</sup> However, the rest of thirty-five kingdoms of archons are connected to *Mizrayim*, represented by *Avraham*, from the right side. All of them are attached to *Avraham* through *Mizrayim* – the first and foremost of all these kingdoms connected to *Avraham* through *Ishmael*.

It is also a secret that *Hagar*, stemming from *Mizrayim*, bore *Ishmael* to *Avraham*, as it is written: “his mother took for him a wife from the land of *Mizrayim*”<sup>13</sup> – indeed, from the land of *Mizrayim*. She is the attachment of *Mizrayim* to *Avraham* accomplished through *Ishmael*. From the side of *Avraham* [*Hagar* and *Ishmael*] are clung to the thirty-five archons. Behind the row of thirty-five archons yet another [set of] powers are attached to them from the outside – these [are stemming] from the side of *Avraham*; these powers are called “the sons of concubines”. It was written: “*Avraham* took again a wife, and her name was *Ketura*”.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, *Ketura*, because

Further Findings on Gematria 26 Structures within the Torah”, *Jewish History Quarterly* nr 2 (278), June 2021, p. 369 and also below, in the postface of this paper. See also *Sefer ha-Bahir* transl. W. Brojer, J. Doktor, B. Kos, Warsaw 2022, pp. 145–147 [Hebrew and Polish].

8 In Paris BN 841 manuscript one finds the term *mishpatav*, “his laws”. In other edition one sees however the version in singular form, therefore I have decided to keep it.

9 *Yeshayahu* 64:3. All translations from *TaNaCh* and other sources are my own. In many instances they follow the context, as per Author’s intention.

10 *Sarim*, the protective angels or rulers. In the Appendix I provide the graphic structure of *sefirot* of purity and contamination as described in *Sod ha-Nachash*, based on the one provided by N. Ben-Shachar, *Israel and the Archons...*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

11 Note that this topic is discussed in similar vein in *Zohar*, in *parashah Pinchas* 95:652, <https://www.zohar.com/zohar/Pinchas/chapters/95>.

12 It is a pun on the words: *shniya la-Aretz Israel* means also: “second to the Land of *Israel*” or “twice [times greater] than the Land of *Israel*”. It is an obvious hint to the gematria of *Mizrayim* = 380, which, when divided by half, gives the gematria value of 190 – the original name of the Land of *Israel*, *Kanaan*.

13 *Bereshit* 21:21.

14 *Bereshit* 25:1.



in order to drive away [these powers] from the *merkavah*<sup>15</sup> an incense is needed,<sup>16</sup> [as the verse says]: “they shall place an incense<sup>17</sup> in front of You”.<sup>18</sup> It is also written: “and regarding the sons of concubines, that *Avraham* [had with them], gave them *Avraham* gifts and sent them away”<sup>19</sup> and forth. They surely had to be sent away. And he passed them [the knowledge] about the names of contamination,<sup>20</sup> cause they were completely the sons of the concubines and [therefore] were utterly susceptible to contamination and uncleanness. That is why he gave them [in their role of the sons of the concubines] the place of connection. Know also, that from the left side *Yitzchak* and thirty-five archons [are established]. They are connected to [*Yitzchak*] from the side of *Esau*. All these archons are known in general as “the people”.<sup>21</sup> [And among them] the first people is *Amalek*, son of *Esau*. As it is written: “*Amalek* is the first among the people”.<sup>22</sup> His precedence is connected to the “arms of the world”, to *Yitzchak*, cause he is the true origin of the people. Because from *Amalek*<sup>23</sup> and above [nobody] rose up except of *Yaakov*, peace be with him. And from the arms below he<sup>24</sup> is the first among the people. It was written: “He gave you [the status] to be the highest among the nations”.<sup>25</sup> To be the highest one and the depth of the abyss are exceptionally [given] to *Israel* through *Yaakov*.

15 The term *merkavah* is usually translated as: “the chariot”. It might be maybe better, more precise, to render it as: “assembly, composition”, in order to avoid the problematic implication stemming from the metaphoric language. Such translation choice would refer to broader meanings of the verb *leharkiv*. However, in the presented translation I have decided to leave the term untranslated. The reason for such decision is the conclusion that *merkavah* has broad, iridescent meanings: it is some sort of “subordinate subject”, “foundation”, “tool that makes impact”, “carrier”, “appearance”, “form of expression of higher power that steers it”, “something that is ridden or taken into possession, in order to perform some action”. Such broad meanings are apparent in the first chapter of *Yechezkel*, which in its totality is referred to as *maase merkavah*, “the work of a chariot” – namely, in the description of *HaShem*’s induction on the creation. One can also refer to the expression: “*Avraham* and his descendants are *merkavah*” (*Shnei Luchot ha-Brit, parashah Lech Lecha, Tora Or*, paragraph 35, according to the edition: [https://www.sefaria.org/Shenei\\_Luchot\\_HaBerit%2C\\_Torah\\_Shebikhtav%2C\\_Lech\\_Lecha%2C\\_Torah\\_Ohr.35?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Shenei_Luchot_HaBerit%2C_Torah_Shebikhtav%2C_Lech_Lecha%2C_Torah_Ohr.35?lang=bi)) [accessed 5 IX 2022]. Therefore, in order to avoid the using of a metaphoric translation without showing its semiotic range, I concluded that this particular term should be left in its original form.

16 *Ketoret*.

17 *Ketora*.

18 *Devarim* 33:10.

19 *Bereshit* 25:6.

20 See *TB Sanhedrin* 91a.

21 *Goyim*.

22 *Bamidbar* 24:20.

23 In the text the name *Anak* appears. Most probably it is a mistake of the scribe or the substitute name for *Amalek* is used intentionally.

24 That is *Amalek*.

25 *Devarim* 26:19. The verse speaks here about *Israel*. Author’s indication follows the same vein.

And here is the secret of the World to Come: [it is alike] the preserved wine made of secured grapes, in which there is no addition of [idolatrour] libation wine. None of the archons of the nations had access to it and it was never poured in front of [*elim*] of forbidden ritual practice.<sup>26</sup> From there and from the places below they create the places for nations to dwell and with their arms they sustain [other] nations. From the side of *sefirah Gevurah* it is non-preserved wine, therefore it becomes the libation wine.

And here is *Yitzchak*: in him there is a place of connection of thirty-five archons of the nations, attached through *Esau* and *Amalek*. What verse says about *Yitzchak*? “Bring me the catch”.<sup>27</sup> It is written, too: “He brought the wine and he drank”<sup>28</sup> and “And *Elokim* will give you”.<sup>29</sup> He wished to bring him<sup>30</sup> back and connect through the *sefirah Binah*, that is the source of descending dew<sup>31</sup> – he desired him to be attached. [As the verse says] “And from the abundance of the earth”.<sup>32</sup> Even though that *Esau* did not deserve to [have access to] the *sefirah Binah*, which is the [sources of the] dew, nevertheless [*Yitzchak*] desired to attach him to the same place, because *Esau* sold his pace [of the source] of the dew [to *Yaakov*].<sup>33</sup>

And here is the secret of the *sefirah Gevurah*: “Separate in sanctity for me”,<sup>34</sup> through the secret of the *sefirah Chochmah*: “Cause he is the beginning of his might, his is the right of the firstborn”.<sup>35</sup> The dew descends from *Gevurot*,<sup>36</sup> and the rains flow from *Gevurah*. Therefore the dew never ceases, and yet the rains do stop. Here *Gevurot* represent the secret of the preserved wine, and *Gevurah* is the place where the libation wine is made. It is written: “He is *Elokim* of Life”<sup>37</sup> and also: “You will not have other *elohim* beside me”,<sup>38</sup> “Living *KEL* among you”<sup>39</sup> and also: “By the Name of *HaShem*, *KEL* Eternal”.<sup>40</sup> [It is written, too]: “No foreign *el* was with him”<sup>41</sup> and: “you shall not prostrate in front of foreign *el*”.<sup>42</sup>

From the arms<sup>43</sup> below [the foreign *elim*] are called *Gevurah* – [there] the libation wine is created. It is poured during the foreign service, through the touch of a non-Jew, according to which places did the wine have contact with. However, from

<sup>26</sup> *Avodah zarah*.

<sup>27</sup> *Bereshit* 27:7.

<sup>28</sup> *Bereshit* 27:25.

<sup>29</sup> *Bereshit* 27:28.

<sup>30</sup> That is *Esau*.

<sup>31</sup> *Tal*, dew. Its gematria is 39 (3 x 13). It refers to the mentioned verse: “And *Elokim* will give you the dew from the heaven”. Dew symbolizes the blessing.

<sup>32</sup> *Bereshit* 27:28.

<sup>33</sup> Author refers to the act of selling of the blessing of the firstborn.

<sup>34</sup> *Shemot* 13:2. I follow the *Rashi*’s rendition of *kadosh* as “separate”.

<sup>35</sup> *Devarim* 21:17.

<sup>36</sup> As Author mentions it above, it refers to the *sefirah Binah*.

<sup>37</sup> *Yirmiyahu* 10:10.

<sup>38</sup> *Shemot* 20:3, *Devarim* 5:7.

<sup>39</sup> *Yehoshua* 3:10.

<sup>40</sup> *Bereshit* 14:22.

<sup>41</sup> *Devarim* 32:12.

<sup>42</sup> *Shemot* 34:14.

<sup>43</sup> This is a reference to the structure of the *sefirot tree*, analogous to the shape of man’s body – where *sefirah Gevurah* and *Chesed* represent the arms.

the arms upwards it is a place of *sefirah Binah* and *Chochmah*,<sup>44</sup> where the libation wine is no longer created cause there no non-Jewish archon can possibly enter. This [place] is called the preserved wine. This is the secret of the World to Come, where *Yaakov* himself managed to enter, as it is written: “cause *HaShem* chose *Yaakov* for himself”.<sup>45</sup> And it was written: “because there entered the tribes, tribes of *HaShem*”.<sup>46</sup> And everyone from the people of *Israel* has a share in the World to Come. However, if [*chas ve-shalom*] someone from the people of *Israel* deliberately tastes of the libation wine, their share are thorns and spikes of the idolatrous *elohim*.<sup>47</sup> Afterwards, they are unable to get free of it and eventually lose their share in the preserved wine, which is the essence of the Life of the World to Come. It is written: “entangled thorns, drunken from their potion”<sup>48</sup> and “who ate the fat of their sacrifices”<sup>49</sup> and it is written, too: “wine joys the heart of a man”.<sup>50</sup> As our rabbis of blessed memories taught, wine was created only for the purpose of consoling those who bereave. As the verse says: “give the strong potion to the one who dies”,<sup>51</sup> because the wine comes forth from the place of joy, where there are no sorrows.<sup>52</sup> It stems from the inner spheres,<sup>53</sup> as it is described as “majesty and glory”,<sup>54</sup> and also: “rejoice [wine] *Elokim* and people”.<sup>55</sup>

Know that “above” [indeed] “rejoices *Elokim*”, because the outflow of the preserved wine<sup>56</sup> comes from the *sefirah Gevurah*. [And this wine] sometimes is poured and [causes the joy],<sup>57</sup> as it is written: “And he brought him the wine and he drank”.<sup>58</sup>

44 In the manuscript there is an amendment made by the scribe. Originally the text says: “*sefirah Gevurah*”. The scribe writes in parenthesis: “I assume it should have been *Chochmah*”. Obviously, such correction follows the logic of the text and was rightly applied.

45 *Tehilim* 135:4.

46 *Tehilim* 122:4.

47 Literally: “of cast image of *elohim*”. The Hebrew term is *elohei ha-masecha*.

48 *Nachum* 1:10.

49 *Devarim* 32:38. The verse refers to the rhetorical question regarding *elohim acherim*.

50 *Tehilim* 104:15.

51 *Mishlei* 31:6.

52 The preserved wine comes from the level of *sefirah Binah*, which is above any foreign influences.

53 Here we encounter the technical kabbalistic term: *mibatei gavva*. It refers to the spheres and items that designate the inner ritualistic domain – for example, objects like *tzitzit* or *tefilin* are named by this term.

54 *Tehilim* 96:6.

55 *Shoftim* 9:13.

56 In the original the subject is inverted. However, should one wish to keep such structure, then the literal translation would be deprived of any sense: “from the reserved wine comes the outflow of the *sefirah Gevurah*”. Most probably this reversal of the words is a scribal error or inaccuracy of the Author.

57 The term *mitnasech* has multiple meanings – it denotes “pouring out” but also “rejoicing”. This word was used on purpose, in order to relate to the apparent contradiction: libation wine seemingly stems from the *sefirah Gevurah*, however the Author indicates, that this is also the source of the outflow of the preserved wine, used to “rejoice *Elokim*”.

58 *Bereshit* 27:25. This verse refers to the transfer of the blessing from *Yitzchak* to *Yaakov*. *Brachah*, “the blessing” is to be treated as something tangible –

And if *Yaakov* would not have earlier brought the wine, how [much more so] would be the might of the foreign ritual service, related to the libation wine, as it is written: “I will come towards you”.<sup>59</sup> And there would not be a king, an archon,<sup>60</sup> a sacrifice,<sup>61</sup> a statue,<sup>62</sup> an *ephod*<sup>63</sup> and *terafim*<sup>64</sup> – all this is due to the merit of *Yaakov* that he managed to forestall the [powers] of *avodah zarah*, the foreign service and to bring earlier the [preserved wine].

Know that the highest seventy crowns are connected to *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* [exactly] by means of this wine, according to the fact that certainly its place is in the brain.<sup>65</sup> As I have already told you, know that thirty-five archons are attached from the left side to *Yitzchak*, mediated in *Edom* and in *Amalek*.<sup>66</sup> Know that *Amalek* is the head of the Primordial Serpent. He is included in the spells,<sup>67</sup> and his *merkavah* is the snake. It was written: “I will stand before you there”<sup>68</sup> and forth. It happened in *Refidim* and in the same place was the serpent and *Amalek*, connected with each other as one. It is written: “the road of the serpent on a rock”<sup>69</sup> and “*Amalek* came to fight”<sup>70</sup> – surely: the rock, the serpent and *Amalek* were juxtaposed on purpose. It

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as some sort of significant quantum of energy that is passed from one subject to another, whether it is *HaShem* to the people of *Israel* or vice versa, or any other pair that builds relationship.

59 *Bereshit* 33:12. These words refer to the utterance of *Esau*, when *Yaakov* came back to the land of Kanaan. *Elcha lenegdecha* is translated as “I will walk with you”, however the literal sense is: “I will go against you”, meaning: “I will be your enemy”.

60 *Sar*. Reference to the fight of *Yaakov* with the archon of *Esau*.

61 Establishment of the sacrificial ritual practice.

62 *Matzevah*. It refers to the episode when *Yaakov* built the altar in *Bet Kel* and brought there sacrifices after the night spent on *Har ha-Moriah*, when he experienced his vision.

63 Worn by the *Kohen ha-Gadol*.

64 This refers to the story of *Rachel*’s stealing the *terafim* that belonged to *Lavan*. When *Lavan* pursued after the camp of *Yaakov* and demanded the return of the *terafim*. *Rachel* sat on them on purpose and refused to stand up. This way she showed disrespect to the idols.

65 *Moach*. This is a kabbalistic expression, referring both to the place in the structure of the *sefirot* tree and to the analogy of man’s body. Even though *sefirah Chesed* and *Gevurah* are called “the arms”, they are also called “the brain”, because three upper *sefirot* (*Binah*, *Chochmah* and *Keter*) exist above and outside of the body, so to speak.

66 See above, when the connection of thirty-five archons to *Esau* and *Amalek* is mentioned. *Edom* is yet another name for *Esau*.

67 The word *lachash* is obviously a homoiophone to *nachash*. *Lenachesh* means also “to guess, to foretell, to put a spell” – this motif appears in several places below, whenever the Author wishes to corroborate the presented idea by quoting the verses from *TaNach*. *Lilchosh* means “to whisper, to hiss, to murmur, to enchant, to silence”. Generally speaking, it is about the association of magic and enchantment with the power of the serpent.

68 *Shemot* 17:6. This fragment refers to the quarrel and disagreement within the people of *Israel*. Because of this internal animosity, *Israel* is punished when *Amalek* attacks them.

69 *Mishlei* 30:19.

70 *Shemot* 17:8.

is written: “*Amalek* is the first among the people”.<sup>71</sup> And the following verse speaks about *Amalek*: “the one who stood on the road, when [*Israel*] went out of *Mizrayim*”.<sup>72</sup> In the place called “the road” he lurked at *Israel*. [The same] place where *Adam* dwelled after the fall of [angel] *Sam-kel*, as it is written: “on your belly you shall crawl”.<sup>73</sup>

And forever<sup>74</sup> his source<sup>75</sup> is to be found in a woman. He will first receive a blow, as the verse states: “and he<sup>76</sup> will crush your head”.<sup>77</sup> [These words refer] to all kinds of enchanters,<sup>78</sup> necromancers and sorcerers, as well as to “those who fell, whose eyes are open”<sup>79</sup> and “the fate of *Azazel*”.<sup>80</sup> That was the fate of *Bileam*, too, “the one who falls and his eyes are open”.<sup>81</sup> It is also written: “the fallen ones<sup>82</sup> were on the earth at that time and also later, when they came”<sup>83</sup> – they were those [called] the mighty ones,<sup>84</sup> from the side of *sefirah Gevurah*.

It is said regarding *Amalek*: “when he came across you on the road”,<sup>85</sup> in the place of *sefirah Yesod*,<sup>86</sup> which is the “road” for “[the attack] on your rear guard”,<sup>87</sup> indeed [attacked] his tail,<sup>88</sup> the place of his downfall: “there, where he collapsed, there where he fell dead”.<sup>89</sup> Our rabbis of blessed memory taught, that [*Bileam*] was having sexual intercours at night with his she-donkey. Without a doubt it allowed him – thanks to the ejaculation<sup>90</sup> that he experienced [during such intercours] with

71 *Bamidbar* 24:20. One must bear in mind that these words are uttered by *Bileam* son of *Peor*, who is mentioned below in the book.

72 *Shmuel* 1 15:2.

73 *Bereshit* 3:14. The Author mentions below that the serpent is the *merkavah* for the angel *Sam-kel* – the one responsible for arousing the first man to break the negative commandment.

74 Or: “in this world”.

75 *Motzao* – term with manifold meanings: „[his] descent, source, rise, exit, utterance”. Also sexual overtones are apparent as it may relate to “sperm, ejaculation”.

76 “He” that is the progeny of *Chavah*.

77 *Bereshit* 3:15.

78 *Menacheshim*.

79 *Bamidbar* 24:4. These words refer to *Bileam*.

80 *Vayikra* 16:8.

81 *Bamidbar* 24:4.

82 *Nephilim*.

83 *Bereshit* 6:4.

84 *Ha-giborim*.

85 *Devarim* 25:18.

86 *Sefirah Yesod* in relation to the analogy of human body represents the male sexuality.

87 *Devarim* 25:18. The expression *va-yezanev* literally means “came from the side of a tail” or in the contextual meaning “attack with his tail”.

88 *Be-znavo* literally means “in his tail”, which refers to “the rear guard” or “the rear part of the camp” according to the basic level of the sense. But within the context, it refers to the shape of the serpent’s body. It has also sexual overtones related to the phallic sphere. Thus the attack on the rear guard might be interpreted as “sodomy” in the cultic aspect of *Baal Peor* and the curse and the practice of *Bileam* mating with his she-donkey.

89 *Shoftim* 5:27.

90 *Keri*. Below is a pun on *keri* and *ikar*, written with the same consonants.

his she-donkey – to achieve the state of clairvoyance; as it is written: “*Elokim* got to know *Bileam*”<sup>91</sup> and “the angel of *HaShem* stood on the road in order to oppose him, and he was riding a she-donkey”<sup>92</sup> – indeed, he was riding.<sup>93</sup> It was written, too: “the custom of a snake is to lay on the rock, the custom of a ship – to be among the seas, and the custom of a man – is to be inside a young woman”.<sup>94</sup>

Know, that as *Moshe* was the first leader<sup>95</sup> of all the prophets and – by exceeding them all – he reached [the level of] *sefirah Tipheret*, presenting himself the ideal ritual purity,<sup>96</sup> similarly the wicked *Bileam* was the first among the enchanters<sup>97</sup> and sorcerers<sup>98</sup> – exceeding them all – and he reached to the external side, *sitra achra*, of [the level] of the arms,<sup>99</sup> presenting himself total ritual contamination<sup>100</sup> and degeneration.<sup>101</sup>

This is what our rabbis of blessed memory taught in the midrash<sup>102</sup> [when referring to the verse]: “there was no prophet like *Moshe* among *Israel*”<sup>103</sup> – among the *Israel* there was none, however among the people of the world indeed there was one – and his name was *Bileam*. They taught: what was the difference between the prophecy of *Bileam* and the prophecy of *Moshe*? *Moshe* did not know with Whom he speaks<sup>104</sup> and when he will speak with Him. However, *Bileam* knew... Fathom what we already said in that matter – this first [type of prophecy] is a throne for the *sefirah Tipheret* from the inner side,<sup>105</sup> however [the second type] relates to the notion of the serpent, from the outside.<sup>106</sup>

And these are symbolized by the *efod* and the *teraphim*, respectively. Therefore, the curse of *Bileam* exists because it is the secret of the serpent. His curse and his

91 *Bamidbar* 23:4. Here we have a word *ikar*, an anagram to *keri*.

92 *Bamidbar* 22:22.

93 In the sexual meaning.

94 *Mishlei* 30:19. The expression *ve-derech ge'ever be-alma* is usually translated as: “and the way of man is to be with a young woman.” The term *derech* refers to “the custom, the way of being” – similar to the expression *derech eretz*, “manners, etiquette”. It literally means “the way of the land”. The above context is strongly oriented towards the sexual connotations. Therefore, one should translate the verse in such vein – not as “to be with a young woman” but as applied above: “to be inside a young woman”. This is opposed to the sexual act of “being inside of a she-donkey”. R. Gikatilla seemingly builds such connotation based on the usage of the prefix *be-*, “in, inside” instead of *im-*, “with”.

95 Here we have a term: *ro'eh*, “the shepherd”. However, the context suggests to apply the term: “leader, guide, the first of the group”.

96 *Ha-tahara*.

97 *Ha-menacheshim*.

98 *Ha-kosemim*.

99 That is *Gevurah* and *Chesed*.

100 *Ha-tumah*.

101 *Ha-zomah*.

102 *Sifrei* to *Devarim* 34:10.

103 *Devarim* 34:10.

104 In the Hebrew edition there is a mistake: instead of *medavech* it should be *medaber*.

105 Literally: “from the inside”.

106 Literally: “from the outside”.



blessing exist when the accuser<sup>107</sup> demands from him to [utter them]. This is the secret of the verse: “I will not let you go, lest you first bless me”.<sup>108</sup> It is written: “he blessed him there”<sup>109</sup> and “he called this place *PeniKEl*”<sup>110</sup> and also “the countenance of *HaShem* before the evildoer”.<sup>111</sup> It is written, too: “*HaShem* will shine his countenance before you”<sup>112</sup> and “when he noticed that he will not prevail, he stroke him in the inner side of his hip”.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, it was the same “road” and the same “place” where the serpent fell to be [ridden] as *merkavah*. And *Sam-kel* started to ride him<sup>114</sup> – and this place is the ejaculation of the semen. It is also the place of *David*. This place is also the Temple.<sup>115</sup> And also, this place is “coming closer of *Chavah*”, to which place there is no other way to access and [the serpent cannot] connect with the man<sup>116</sup> other than through a woman.

Therefore it is written: “when he came across you on the road and attacked your rear guard”<sup>117</sup> and “he<sup>118</sup> will crush your head, and you<sup>119</sup> will crush his feet”.<sup>120</sup> It was also written: “*Dan* will be the serpent on the road”.<sup>121</sup> According to this, through *Dan* the serpent will be in future eradicated from the world, as it is written: “and he hold with his hand the foot of *Esau*”.<sup>122</sup> and “you will hear about the foot”<sup>123</sup> and also “foot

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107 *Ha-mekaterg*.

108 *Bereshit* 32:27. This verse refers to the struggle at the river *Yabok* and the conversation between *Yaakov* and his adversary – the protective angel of *Esau*.

109 *Bereshit* 32:30.

110 *Bereshit* 32:31.

111 *Tehilim* 34:17. In the manuscript one finds the form *ose* instead of the source one: *osei*. Most probably this change was intended in order to receive the singular form instead of the plural and to directly refer to the character of *Bileam*. The original verse conveys the meaning: “the countenance of *HaShem* before the evildoers”.

112 *Bamidbar* 6:25.

113 *Bereshit* 32:26.

114 *Rochev* – the root is related to *merkavah*.

115 *Beit ha-Mikdash*.

116 *Adam*.

117 *Devarim* 25:18. Literally “he attacked from the side of the tail”. The tribe of *Dan*, mentioned immediately below, was located in the rear of the camp. It constituted “the tail” and therefore – being the weakest and the most susceptible element of the people of *Israel* – was the potential “snake-like” place, where the breach could take place, as visible in the story of the attack of *Amalek*.

118 “He”, that is the progeny of *Chavah*.

119 “You”, that is the progeny of the serpent.

120 *Bereshit* 3:15.

121 *Bereshit* 49:17.

122 *Bereshit* 25:26.

123 *Devarim* 7:12. This is of course a literal translation of: *we-haya ekev tishmeun*. Commonly accepted metaphorical rendition goes as follows: “They time will come, because you have listened”. *Ekev*, lit. “foot” is translated in this verse as “because, as a result of” and thus: “[this] will be as a result of you hearing...”

about which *Avraham* heard in my voice”.<sup>124</sup> And because *Sam-kel*<sup>125</sup> did not defeat *Yaakov* in this very place, it was *Bileam* who attempted to defeat exactly there the people of *Israel*. The ministering angels came and “stood on the path between the vineyards, and the fence was from one and the other side”<sup>126</sup> – in the place of *sefirot Netzach*<sup>127</sup> and *Hod*,<sup>128</sup> effectively preventing the passage. At that time *Bileam* started shrieking: “what can I curse that was not previously cursed by *KEI*?”<sup>129</sup> – [*Bileam* continued]: “I did not find the breach in order to enter [with my curse] and should I [try] to get through by the means of The Name *YKVK*, surely I would die”. [Also] one of the prophets admonished with cry: “Oh my people! Remember what *Balak*, the king of *Moav* had plotted”,<sup>130</sup> and forth.<sup>131</sup> It was written [further in this verse]: “in order to know the justice of *YKVK*” – indeed, that what [*Bileam*] plotted was eventually for him to really know the justice of *YKVK*. When *Bileam* understood this, he shouted out loud: “cause there is no serpent<sup>132</sup> in *Yaakov*”<sup>133</sup> and consequently, he could not find any other place, from which he would curse [him] by means of the serpent.<sup>134</sup> For every place is affected by the curse if it was previously touched by the serpent. Since the throne of assembly of *Israel* is constituted by the *brachot* (blessings), and the throne of the serpent is made of *klalot* (curses). Each time the place [of the serpent] enters and breaks through the fence of the world, effectively the earth becomes cursed.

I have presented you these matters below, so that you comprehend that *Moav* and *Amalek* joined forces into one in order to annihilate *Israel*. And *Ishmael* echoed them in their curses. [It was so] because they<sup>135</sup> are attached to the *merkavah*, as it is written about *Avraham*: “and *Lot* went with him”<sup>136</sup> – [*Lot*] constituted the throne of the serpent, that was placed in the dregs [removed] from *Avraham*. Only when *Lot* separated himself from him, did [*Avraham*] separated himself from [the serpent]: “and went to *Sedom*”<sup>137</sup> – to the place of promiscuity and bloodshed. It is written: “*Lot* raised his eyes”:<sup>138</sup> [he saw that] indeed two nations born of him, i.e. *Moav* and *Amon*, were designated [to emerge] on his further path. *Moav* clung to *Bileam* in

124 *Bereshit* 26:5. Literal rendition of the verse: *ekev asher Avraham shama be-koli*, “because *Avraham* listened to my voice”.

125 *Sam-kel* also served the role of *saro shel Esau*, “*Esau*’s archon”, during the struggle at *Yabok* river. (*Yalkut Shimoni* I, 110).

126 *Bamidbar* 22:24.

127 *Netzach* means “victory or eternity”.

128 *Hod* means “glory”.

129 *Bamidbar* 23:8.

130 *Michah* 6:5.

131 Verse speaks further: “and what *Bileam* son of *Peor* replied him”.

132 Again, the translation following the Masoretic vocalization is: “because there is no sorcery in *Yaakov*”.

133 *Bamidbar* 23:23.

134 Again, we encounter here the dual meaning of the term *nachash*: “serpent” and/or “sorcery”. In translation we follow consequently the Author’s intention.

135 That is *Moav*, *Amalek* and *Ishmael*.

136 *Bereshit* 12:4.

137 *Bereshit* 13:12.

138 *Bereshit* 13:10.

order to curse Israel, because he deserved it. [It was so] because *Lot* as *Amon* clung to *Amalek* in order to contaminate [later] the Temple, as it is written: “*Gebal, Amon and Amalek*”<sup>139</sup> and “And *Timna* was the concubine of *Elifaz*, son of *Esau* and she bore *Amalek*”,<sup>140</sup> and also “*Timna* was the sister of *Lotan*”.<sup>141</sup>

Know that YKVK, blessed be His Name, found king *David*, peace be with him, in the very midst of *Sedom*.<sup>142</sup> As the verse says: “I found *David*, My servant”<sup>143</sup> and forth. As our rabbis of blessed memory taught us: “where did I find him? In *Sedom*”, as it is written: “and his two daughters, that were [by you]”<sup>144</sup> – and it was *Rut* [stemming from] *Moav* and *Naamah* [originating from] *Amon*; two good women, who separated themselves from [these nations]. It is also written: “The separated one follows the desire”<sup>145</sup> and “and they will not come to see, cause they will be devoured...”<sup>146</sup> Comprehend and believe that in the beginning the serpent was extremely needed entity. The whole [process] of reparation of the world rested upon him, in his unique place within the creation. He was the great servant<sup>147</sup> created only to carry on himself the yoke of the Kingdom<sup>148</sup> and servitude. His head was on the heights of the earth and his tail reached as deep as *Sheol* and *Abaddon*. For in all the worlds there was his place and the great need to retribute all *merkavot*, each one of them in its position.

And this is exactly the secret of the cosmic serpent, *Teli*, of whom we know from the Book of Formation.<sup>149</sup> It is him who moves the circles of [heaven] through the word expressed by The Creator, blessed be His Name. He revolves them from the east to the west and from the north to the south. And without him the life would not exist within the framework of creation, in any of the worlds below the sublunar sphere – [there would not be] sowing or growth and there would not be a stimulus to motivate the development of the generations of all that was created. Initially he was placed outside, beyond the walls of the camps separated in holiness<sup>150</sup> and he was connected to their external wall. His rear side clung to the wall, and his front faced outward. There was no place for him, through which he could enter inwards. Situated this way, he performed his service [of stimulating] the sowing and growth – as he acted from the outside.

139 *Tehilim* 83:8.

140 *Bereshit* 36:12.

141 *Bereshit* 36:22.

142 See *Bereshit Rabbah* 41:4 and 50:10.

143 *Tehilim* 89:21.

144 *Bereshit* 19:15.

145 *Mishlei* 18:1.

146 *Bamidbar* 4:20. Whole verse goes as follows: “and they will not come to see, because what is separated in holiness (*ha-kodesh*) will devour and they will die.”

147 *TB Sanhedrin* 59b.

148 *Ha-Malchut* – it refers to the tenth *sefirah*, too.

149 *Sefer yetzirah* 6:1. For a comprehensive analysis of the theme *Teli* in r. Gikatilla's works, see: F. Dal Bo, “*Teli*” as a principle of cosmological order and corruption. R. Gikatilla reading the “*Sefer yetzirah*” [Hebrew], forthcoming 2023.

150 *Kedushah*.

And this is the secret of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. *YKVK*, blessed be His Name, warned the first man<sup>151</sup> not to touch the tree of knowledge during the time when both good and evil was clung to it – even though that [good] was inside and that [evil] was outside. [Adam] was supposed to wait till the *orlah* was about to be separated from the [tree], as verse states: “you will recognize their fruits as *orlah*<sup>152</sup>”.<sup>153</sup> It is written, too: “she took from the fruits of [the tree] and ate”<sup>154</sup> – [first] he entered the image of the palace,<sup>155</sup> and [afterwards] ritual contamination<sup>156</sup> occurred and it entered inside, as it is stated: “and the serpent was the most cunning of all the beasts”<sup>157</sup> and “fool<sup>158</sup> will believe in every word”<sup>159</sup> and “if one would seduce<sup>160</sup> a virgin”<sup>161</sup> and “to keep prudence before the fools”<sup>162</sup> and “the cunning ones will be crowned with knowing”<sup>163</sup> – and all was explained.

However, if you say that it is written: “*Elokim* looked on all what he has done and it was indeed very good”,<sup>164</sup> know, that all of the creations of *Elokim* are good, providing that each of their location is identical with the place where He prepared, set and created them. [One] verse speaks exactly about it: “the cunning ones will be crowned with knowing”.<sup>165</sup> But if [such creation] rebels and leaves its designated place, then it becomes utterly evil – and this is the fundament of holistic wisdom. Ultimate good within the creation of the world depends on setting each of the thing created by *HaShem*, blessed be his name, according to the form and the place that fits it – where he formed and arranged place for it. [If these conditions are fulfilled] then [such creations] are called “good”. Otherwise, they are called – “bad”. Therefore it is written: “makes peace and creates evil”.<sup>166</sup> [Prophet *Yeshayahu*] used the term “make” in reference to the word “peace”. However, in reference to the “evil” it is different – there we have a term “create”. It is so, because there is a great difference between both actions: “creation” does not lead to bringing into being the complete, finished thing, whereas “making” does that. As it is written: “everyone who is called in My Name,

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151 *Adam*.

152 Literally: “uncircumcised”.

153 *Vayikra* 19:23.

154 *Bereshit* 3:6.

155 *Tzelem heichal*. I assume that one should understand this fragment as if it was written here *be-tzelem heichal*. Therefore, the chosen rendition.

156 *Tuma*.

157 *Bereshit* 3:1.

158 *Peti* phonetically refers to peten, “viper”. However, semantically it is connected to *Chavah*. Following sentences present peculiar word-play that supposedly is to build the structure of cross-meaning connotations.

159 *Mishlei* 14:15.

160 Again, phonetically *yefate* refers to *peti* and further to *petaim*.

161 *Shemot* 22:15.

162 *Mishlei* 1:4. Here we see the term *petaim*.

163 *Mishlei* 14:18.

164 *Bereshit* 1:31.

165 *Mishlei* 14:18.

166 *Yeshayahu* 45:7. There are interpretations claiming that *bara* in the most parts of *TaNach* should be translated as: “to separate, to cut out off”. However, in the context presented by the Author the primary meaning seems to fit better.

whom I created for the sake of effecting through my glory<sup>167</sup><sup>168</sup> and: “which [work] *Elokim* created to be made”.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, there is the tree of knowledge of good and evil to which [both good and evil] cling. “Good” reveals itself as the existence of the serpent on the outside, in the place known to him. However “evil” reveals itself when [the serpent] enters inwards, to the palace of separated holiness.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, both good and evil cling to one place. They connect with each other by the means of the notion of [above mentioned place called] “the road”,<sup>171</sup> indeed because of the woman.

Now, when you got knowledge about what I explained above, know, that *HaShem*, blessed be He, wrote in the Torah: “he will not get close to the woman in the time of *nidah*,<sup>172</sup> in her ritual contamination”<sup>173</sup> and: “and she who suffers from the state of *nidah*”,<sup>174</sup> and also: “but if she will clean herself from her discharge and she will count [days]”.<sup>175</sup>

It was written: “you will separate it as *orlah*<sup>176</sup> from its fruit crop”.<sup>177</sup> Indeed, “from its fruit crop” – because the tree itself is good and there is no evil in it, however in the fruits both good and evil is present. It was also written: “the woman saw, that the tree is good to eat [from it]”<sup>178</sup> and: “she took from the fruits and ate”<sup>179</sup> and as stated above “you will separate it as *orlah* from its fruit crop”.<sup>180</sup> It is also written:

167 *Kavod*. In the background of the semantic potential of the term *kavod* one finds the meaning of: “weight, heaviness, induction, effecting through pressure”, even though it is commonly translated as “glory”.

168 *Yeshayahu* 43:7.

169 *Bereshit* 2:3.

170 *Kodesh*.

171 Term “the road” alludes here specifically to the joining of serpentess-woman, *Chavah* with the primordial serpent, *Nachash Kadmoni*. Again, to reiterate: before the contact with the serpent, “woman” is referred to as *ishah*, whereas afterwards she receives the name *Chavah*, which semiotically corresponds to Aramaic *Chivyah* – “the serpent”. Sexual connotations are also apparent – “the road” would mean “the passage”, i.e. vaginal sphere. Such reading would be corroborated, too, by *Chavah-Chivyah* and *Nachash* unification dynamics of Serpentess and Serpent, pointing at connection of phallus and vagina during sexual intercourse.

172 That is menstruation period and the specific number of days afterwards. It is worthy to bring into attention that within the human body, both female and male, the biological aspect of the snake manifests in the following manner: in case of a man, it is obviously a phallic form, whereas in case of a woman it is the uterus, which periodically loses its inner dermal cover during the menstruation, alike snake that repeatedly sheds its skin. As mentioned already, the serpent is also simply identified with the blood, which is a carrier of the *nefesh*, the vital soul. The latter is alluded in the analogous structure of the *gematria* of *nefesh* (50–80–300) and *nachash* (50–8–300).

173 *Vayikra* 18:19.

174 *Vayikra* 15:33.

175 *Vayikra* 15:28.

176 Literally: “uncircumcised”.

177 *Vayikra* 19:23.

178 *Bereshit* 3:6.

179 *Bereshit* 3:6.

180 *Vayikra* 19:23.

“of the fourth year”<sup>181</sup> – this refers to the “road”.<sup>182</sup> It is written, too: “of the fifth year”<sup>183</sup> – this refers to “the woman”.<sup>184</sup>

Now, when we taught you about these key matters, it is proper to straighten in front of you the way of knowing the *merkavot*<sup>185</sup> – then your eyes would see [the whole sense of] the theme of the serpent. Know that *HaShem*, blessed be He, established the orders of the *merkavot*, from the *sefirah Gedulah*<sup>186</sup> to the *sefirah Gevurah* and down below, according to what I will explain you [further]. The palace of separated sanctity<sup>187</sup> placed inside is the *sefirah Tiferet* itself, the splendour of *Yaakov Avraham*<sup>188</sup> constitutes a wall [emerging] from this place, that encompasses this palace from the right side. However, *Yitzchak*<sup>189</sup> and *Sam-kel* cling from the left side to *Avraham*. *Ishmael* establishes another column<sup>190</sup> and he is called “the son of the concubine” – there are thirty-five archons attached to him.<sup>191</sup> Still, positioned on the outer side from them, there are sons of *Ketura*, [also] called “the sons of concubine”. Above we have already explained in depth this topic, also in reference to *Yitzchak*. Know that those who are close to the palace of separated sanctity are deprived of contamination and are purified in higher grade. However, [regarding] those who are positioned farther from the palace of separated sanctity – the greater the distance, the stronger is the contamination.

Know that there are several shells<sup>192</sup> that surround seventy archons and their seventy crowns. Similarly, also below, in reference to the *sefirah Netzach*, *sefirah Hod* and *sefirah Yesod*. There are also camps, like these archons and higher shells – all of them are called “the camps of purity”, and from them stem “the camps of contamination”.<sup>193</sup> Those that are called the “[camps] of purity”, are closer to the palace, and the other ones are gradually distanced from them.

Hereby you were given a great key. Know that there is not in the world a contaminated thing if it is in its proper place, designated from the beginning of the world. Similarly, there is no such division that would not contain in itself both contamination and purity, unless it is set inside the palace. There is no thing called

181 *Vayikra* 19:24.

182 That is the relationship of *Nachash* and *Chavah*. Here it is referring to the state of ritual contamination of the fruit.

183 *Vayikra* 19:25.

184 That is *Ishah*. Here it is referring to the state of ritual purity.

185 The explanation below explains how the characters mentioned in the Torah are identified with the particular *sefirot*, acting as *merkavot*, “the carriers” of specific powers that they personify.

186 Called also *Chesed*, which term has been already used by the Author.

187 *Heichal ha-kodesh*.

188 Identified with *Chesed*.

189 Identified with *Gevurah*.

190 *Shurah*. Another potential translation: “row, line”. The reference to the plane of *sefirot* would indicate to the connection with the contaminated aspect of *Chesed* (because *Ishmael* is the son of *Avraham*).

191 *Sarim*.

192 *Klipot*.

193 Here one finds teaching regarding the tree of *sefirot* stating that the *sefirot* of “purity” are the source of the power taken by the *sefirot* of “contamination”, belonging to the “external side”, *sitra achra*.



“pure” that sometimes could not have been called “impure”, apart from [those from among] the inner column. And from among all the impure things there is none that sometimes could not have been called “pure”, apart from [those stemming from] the externality, which is completely impure.<sup>194</sup>

This is the secret [of the verse]: “*Elokim* separated light from darkness”<sup>195</sup> – it refers to the secret of ten separated sanctities<sup>196</sup> collected within the Land of *Israel*, one within the other, and [it refers to] the ten contaminations stemming from the man, one above the other. This is the secret of the three camps, as it was written: “so that each affected by *tzaraat*, each suffering from discharge and each contaminated through the contact of the body of the dead should be sent away to the outside of the camp”<sup>197</sup> – they were sent away beyond the spheres of the three camps.<sup>198</sup> Comprehend, that all these are separated sanctities<sup>199</sup> and contaminations in reference to all the things of which Torah warns [that it is possible for them] to become impure – there is none pure thing among them if it does not possess the aspect of contamination, except of [the case] of the inner column. Also, you will not encounter something contaminated that does not contain in it an aspect of purity, except of [the case] of the column that is found completely outside.<sup>200</sup> All the contaminated and all the pure things are connected above to *merkavot* in their place of attachment, where they were born – it is the source of their existence and their establishment. Each [thing] according to its place and measure, alike sweet and salty waters – they have their own [distinctive] sources, from which they stem, even though there is one common inner source, where all the waters are sweet. Know that the change in their taste is caused by the channels<sup>201</sup> through which [these waters] flow – [initially] these are the sweet waters, afterwards bitter, then salty, and these [consecutively] transform themselves into acid, alkaline, [finally] to become waters that are called “perverted ones” and waters of evil, named several other ways, too.

According to this elaboration, below [on earth] there is no rat, no mouse, no turtle and none of the rest of creeping and crawling creation, no scorpion, none of various types of non-kosher and contaminated birds or fish if they have no place of attachment above, to the three sets: the set of the archons, the set of the camps and the set of the lands. Each of the species below – be it pure or contaminated – originates from its place [above]. It is desirable to exist as an entity [that is] clean within and to leave the contamination outside. Therefore, Holy, blessed be He commanded *Israel* not to consume things that are contaminated for him, nor to eat the vermin that is repugnant for him. It is so, because *Israel* is pure and constitutes

194 Allusion to *sitra achra*.

195 *Bereshit* 1:4.

196 *Kedushot*.

197 *Bamidbar* 5:2.

198 Author assumes that each of the cases of the mentioned ritual contaminations refers to another time and therefore – to another camp. Alternatively, it is a hint at the three camps: *kohanim*, *leviim*, and *Israel*.

199 *Kedushot*.

200 The Author recapitulates here the theses already discussed above.

201 *Maarechot* – translation in accordance with the context of the aquatic metaphors applied by the Author. Literally the term mean: “structures, constructions, sets”.

a part of *HaShem's* Presence<sup>202</sup> – [because the people of] *Israel* dwell in the internal palace. But if [*chas ve-shalom*] they would eat contaminated things, hereby [the members of the people of] *Israel* would cause the contamination of their internal [reason], whenever they would enter the palace – also their bodies would become contaminated and covered with repugnancy identical to the one characterizing [the consumed] things. Such sin<sup>203</sup> [would be] similar to the sin of the first man, who ate from among the fruits of the tree of good and evil. People [who would commit such transgression] would deserve exile and rejection, similarly to the way Holy, blessed be He, exiled the first man from the garden of *Eden*. They should rather separate themselves from any [such contaminated] things, as the verse says: “separate the clean animals from the contaminated ones” and further: “you shall not make your souls repugnant by [consuming] the animals and birds”<sup>204</sup> and also it is written: “Cause I am *YKVK*”,<sup>205</sup> your *Elokim*. It means, the way I am pure and I dwelled in the internal palace, the [same way] you are part of Me and My lot”.<sup>206</sup> Therefore you are obliged not to eat the contaminated things in order not to contaminate the One, who makes you separated in sanctity.

When you already learnt that, know that those contaminated things, all the external powers dwell around the inner palace of separated holiness – whether these are the external powers, that are close to the palace or these are those which are positioned farther. Each of them reaches and sees the beauty and charm of His palace, similarly as the majestic might of *HaShem*, blessed be He, is visible. However, [these powers] do not enter inside and none of them is permitted to cross beyond its border. On the contrary – each of them remains at its place, gazing and reaching towards the cover<sup>207</sup> and the curtain.<sup>208</sup> This way all contaminated powers hear and know [the inner space of the palace], from their designated places, behind their curtains. [It is so] because none of them is permitted and enabled to enter inside, nor to leave outside beyond their constraints. Each such partition is called the curtain.<sup>209</sup> [And as much as] their voice is to be found everywhere,<sup>210</sup> this way I heard [them] from beyond the curtain.

Here, each one of those external powers perceives the beauty of the internal palaces, sublime and full of bliss, with their crowns and streams; joy and radiance is present within these internal palaces – and therefore [external powers] are longing and desire to enter inside. [They wish] to cling to the internal palaces of delight.<sup>211</sup> Because inside [of them] all sorts of joy, bliss, sweetness and aspects of glory<sup>212</sup> are present. However, outside there is no such [thing], only the remnants, bones and

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202 *Makom*.

203 *Chet*.

204 *Vayikra* 20:25.

205 *Vayikra* 21:23.

206 *Chelki u-gorali*. See: *Tehilim* 16:5.

207 *Masach*.

208 *Pargod*.

209 *Pargod*.

210 *Be-kol makom*.

211 *Oneg*.

212 *Minei kavod*.

shells,<sup>213</sup> so that they could not mingle with the [aspects] from within. This is the root of the secret of “the path of the vineyards”<sup>214</sup> and the secret of “the giver of the rain falling on the earth and the external [areas]”.<sup>215</sup> And because of the striving force of the external powers and their desire to breach inside, their hunger and longing – they do not remain silent even for a while because of this piercing craving to enter and cling to the inside. Know, that only the man has the power and desire to enter inside and leave outside.

This is the secret of the [verse]: “let us make a man according to our image<sup>216</sup> and our likeness”<sup>217</sup> and: “hereby a man became as one of us, he comprehended good and evil”.<sup>218</sup> Forasmuch man is perfect<sup>219</sup> in all his aspects, as above so below, therefore Holy, blessed be He let him enter both the palace of the separated holiness and also to leave it to outside [realms] – to introduce [inside] and to take out [to the outside]. He commanded him and advised, too, rather not to insert contaminated things inside and not to take out the pure things outside, alike. Thus Holy, blessed be He ordered the first man and placed him in the garden of *Eden*, so that [man] would cultivate it<sup>220</sup> and protect – indeed, so that [he] tend and safeguard it. Comprehend from this what is the man’s capacity as far the fulfilment of the *mitzva* or the act of committing offence<sup>221</sup> is concerned. As the man is the foundation of the higher and lower *merkavot* – he possesses the power to enter and leave, bring forth and take out. [It is the supremacy] established *via* the commandment in the garden of *Eden* at the very beginning and sealed *via* the *mitzva* on the mount *Sinai* at the very end.

Now, when you comprehended this, know, that all the external, contaminated powers that dwell outside – they gaze from there at the perfection, bliss, pleasures, beauty and glory of the inner palace. They know at the same time, that they are unable to enter therein from any side unless *via* man. [Therefore] they long and wish to cling to him. However, they cannot unite with a man if he does not commit any trespass, so that a transgression would occur that would cling to him. Whenever a man commits [*chas ve-shalom*] such wrongdoing, then these powers attach to him and together they enter the palace of the separated holiness, where he himself enters, too. This way the image<sup>222</sup> enters the palace, cause [these powers] have no access to pass into independently – and only through a man [they can cross the threshold].

This is the foundation of the secret of the verse: “lo, here I placed before you today life and good, also death and evil”.<sup>223</sup> For in a man there are present all sorts of purities and all sorts of contaminations. These cling to him – and it is a man that can cause either the repair or the annihilation of the world. This was exactly the

213 *Klipot*.

214 *Bamidbar* 22:24.

215 *Iyov* 5:10.

216 *Tzelem*.

217 *Bereshit* 1:26.

218 *Bereshit* 3:22.

219 *Meshuchlal*.

220 *La-avoda*.

221 *Aveira*.

222 *Tzelem*.

223 *Devarim* 30:15.

mission, the task and the deed of the first man: *HaShem*, blessed be He, placed him in the garden of *Eden* and commanded him to prevent the purities to leave outside and to protect the inside from the contaminations. [He instructed him] also not to mix the purities with the contaminations, neither by act, nor by word, nor by food, nor by drink. This is the foundation of the secret [of the verse] “to cultivate and guard [the garden].”<sup>224</sup> [*HaShem*] commanded man not to consume the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – as it was the general rule regarding all what we already said, that everything is dependent upon man’s body and what he eats. However, he did commit the transgression and devoured [what was forbidden] and drank from what is called “their wine [that] is the serpent’s venom.”<sup>225</sup> As a result, he caused contamination of what is above and what is below. It is written: “indeed, the cloudy sediments [from the wine] sucked and drank all the wretched of the earth.”<sup>226</sup>

It is thus visible that the first man sinned in the lower and the upper world by the action of his hands – he cut off the creepers and added [the evil] deed. As a result he was expelled from the palace of separated holiness, that is called the inner palace, so that he does not lead to bringing the image [of the contamination] also into the holy of the holies, which would further augment his sin. This is exactly the secret [of the meaning of the verse]: “hereby a man became as one of us, he comprehended good and evil. Let him not then reach out hand also for [the fruit] of the Tree of Life”,<sup>227</sup> [therefore] “*Elokim* exiled him from the garden of *Eden*”.<sup>228</sup>

Now, when we offered to you the insight regarding the above mentioned, key topics, comprehend [the following]. At the beginning of the creation, the primordial serpent was located completely outside of the walls of sanctity, as it is written: “and the serpent was the most cunning<sup>229</sup> of all the field animals”.<sup>230</sup> Nevertheless, he still saw and heard from behind the curtain, yet was unable to leave and pass beyond his own limitation. The serpent stood with his head straight up and [lifted] arms, that were called “the foundation of the world”. And the end of his tail reached down as deep as to *Sheol* and *Abbadon* and his foreskin was still on his [body]. He was ready to perform the work of “the boiling of the nature”,<sup>231</sup> but only from the outside. However, he gazed and saw the glory of a man in the palace of the separated holiness and looked [back] at his own servitude performer from the outside. [Then]

<sup>224</sup> *Bereshit* 2:15.

<sup>225</sup> *Devarim* 32:33.

<sup>226</sup> *Tehilim* 75:9.

<sup>227</sup> *Bereshit* 3:22.

<sup>228</sup> *Bereshit* 3:23.

<sup>229</sup> *Arum*. Or in another meaning: “naked, deprived of clothe” in reference to the sense that he existed as if from the outside of the creation. *Arum* can also refer to the usage of analytical skills, reason focused on calculation.

<sup>230</sup> *Bereshit* 3:1.

<sup>231</sup> *Retichat ha-tevaim*. This expression appears, among others, in the commentary of *Ralbag* to *Shir ha-Shirim* 8:8, where the process of “silencing the boiling of the nature” is mentioned, meaning: to restrain man’s temper or instincts. In a similar vein Moshe ibn Tibbon uses it in his commentary to *Shir ha-Shirim* 4:6. [O. Fraisse, *Moses ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm*, Berlin 2004, pp. 310–311 (following Oxford 296 manuscript)].

he realized that there is no other way to be able to enter inwards except of doing it *via* man. And so it was what had happened: he contaminated the inner palace [and this state of contamination would continue] till the time of judgement comes. Even though at the beginning he constituted the complete goodness and fullness of blessing, nevertheless he desecrated himself and curse attached to him. He was cast down from his position to the place that is called “the way”.<sup>232</sup> And there is no “way” to recover him from the place [of his fall] until the proper time comes, as the verse says: “Righteousness will be the belt on his waist and faith the girdle of his loins”.<sup>233</sup>

Know that it is related to the secret of the sciatic nerve<sup>234</sup> that is located near the joint of the hips [of the rear legs of the kosher animals]. The first man let him in<sup>235</sup> and although *gid hanashe* [still] remained in the body of our forefather *Yaakov* (may “his bed stay perfect”<sup>236</sup>), nevertheless [the nerve] was dislocated<sup>237</sup> from the muscle of the hip joint. [As the verse says]: “he understood that he cannot prevail, thus he sent him a blow in the socket of the hip and wrenched *Yaakov*’s hip”.<sup>238</sup> It is also written: “[*Yaakov*] was limping (*tzolea*)<sup>239</sup> because of his hip”<sup>240</sup> and “He took of

232 *Lemakom ha-nikra derech*. Again, as mentioned above, “the way” or “the road” indicates the place of contact, where the evil attacked. Earlier the Author brings several occurrences that happened consecutively exactly in the same place. The first one from this chain of episodes was the connection of “the serpent” with “the woman”, which resulted in her identity being transformed into “the serpentess”.

233 *Yeshayahu* 11:5.

234 *Gid hanashe* – as is commonly known, there is a prohibition to eat the sciatic nerve of the kosher animals. This injunction stems from the episode of *Yaakov* fighting the archon of *Esau* (*Bereshit* 32:26). The prohibition also extended to the fat area around this nerve. At present, in practice all the rear part of the animal is not eaten in order to avoid the risk of accidental consumption of this forbidden piece. The Author resembles *gid hanashe* to the serpent – introduction of the snakish sciatic nerve into the body of the first man was supposed to be the same as letting the serpent inside the inner palace. Therefore, the Author combines the motive of the serpent with the prohibition of eating the *gid hanashe*, based on *Zohar* (1:170b). There it is explained that the sciatic nerve is strictly responsible for the arousing of the uncontrolled sexual urge. Further elaboration on the topic shows that as far as the first man did not manage to subdue his sexual desire that eventually led to his fall, then *Yaakov* shown that he does control his sexuality by overcoming the protective angel of *Esau*.

235 That is the serpent cloaked in the form of *gid hanashe*.

236 *Mitato shlemah*. This expression is strictly connected to *Yaakov*, because in case of *Avraham* he fathered not only *Itzhak*, but also *Ishmael*. And in case of *Itzhak* he fathered not only *Yaakov*, but also *Esau*. However, all sons of *Yaakov* were “perfect” cause they did not leave the community of *Israel*.

237 Which means that his “serpent power” was weakened. Paradoxically, only when considering the Author’s interpretation can one understand the sense of the blessing uttered by *Esau*’s archon: by means of the act of causing the dislocation of the hip joint, he contributed to the weakening of the *yetzer hara* in *Yaakov* and his progeny.

238 *Bereshit* 32:25.

239 *Tzolea*. What follows in the text is the series of collection of words that are based on the common root *tzade-lamed-ayin*.

240 *Bereshit* 32:32.



his ribs (*mitzalotav*)”<sup>241</sup> and “for I am about to fall (*tzela*)”<sup>242</sup> and “when I stumbled (*uvetzali*), they gathered and laughed”,<sup>243</sup> and also “on the other side (*tzela*) of the *Mishkan*”.<sup>244</sup> Therefore, too, the sons of *Yaakov* took upon themselves this prohibition and did not even wait for [giving of the Torah] on the mount *Sinai* – upon this their glory is founded: “cause there is no serpent in *Yaakov*”.<sup>245</sup>

Now, when you acknowledged that [what was explained above], know, that the primordial serpent had a lot to do with the wall of *merkavah*, from its external side. When the man brought him in, his nerves and his sinews rooted into various things and paths. They implanted into [the man] from the right side, by means of *Lot* and his progeny, and from the left side by means of *Esau* and *Amalek* – and this state of [invasive] attachment continues to be. As it was written: “cause the hand covers the letters *YK HaShem*, the war of *HaShem* against *Amalek* continues”.<sup>246</sup> However, regarding [king] *Shaul* it was written: “give a blow to *Amalek*”,<sup>247</sup> but he did not fulfil the *mitzva* completely, as it [had to] be done exactly [on a level] of *sefirah Malchut*.<sup>248</sup> [For this reason *Shaul*] lost his kingdom, and [after him] came *David*, peace be upon him, and he eradicated from them<sup>249</sup> the heritage of *Amalek*. [Only] afterwards did he accept the crown to rule them.

Know, that there are two *serafim* standing at each side of the [*sefirah*] *Yesod*. They perform “division between what is separated in sanctity and that what is profane...”, etc. “between the seventh day and... etc.”<sup>250</sup> The secret of separated sanctity is founded upon them – and there are three types of holiness to distinguish: separated sanctity of the *Yotzer* [blessing], separated sanctity of the *Amida* and the separated sanctity of the day [of *Shabbat*] – and all of them are attached to the *merkavah*. Those *serafim* defend the access to the internal palace, to prevent the contact from the serpents and contaminated things. They constitute also a *mikve* for cleansing the contaminations. It was them whom saw the prophet *Yeshayahu*, peace be upon him: “In the year of death of the kind *Uziyahu* I saw *ADNI*, etc.”<sup>251</sup> and

241 Or “sides”. *Bereshit* 2:21.

242 *Tzela*. Other possible translations: “stumbling, changing the side, renouncement”. *Tehilim* 38:18.

243 *Tehilim* 35:15.

244 *Shemot* 26:20.

245 *Bamidbar* 23:23. As mentioned, due to Masoretic vocalization the word *nachash* in this verse is translated as: “magic, witchcraft, divination”. However, the Author connects this expression with the serpent and his influence.

246 *Shemot* 17:16. Translation follows *Rashi*’s interpretation. *Kes* does not refer here to the throne of *JK*, but conveys the idea of “covering” – therefore, the Name *HaShem* would not be completely visible as long as the war of *Israel* and *Amalek* is ongoing.

247 *I Shmuel* 15:3.

248 In the world of doing, *olam ha-asiyah*. Due to the fact that king of *Amalek* was not killed instantly, he managed to conceive a child before his death. As a result of this negligence, king *Shaul* lost his title.

249 That is from the people of *Israel*.

250 The Author quotes here the fragment from *Havdalah*, which is uttered as the last blessing upon the conclusion of *Shabbat*.

251 *Yeshayahu* 6:1.



further “*serafim* stand above him”<sup>252</sup> and “woe to me, I am lost, cause I am a man of contaminated mouth”.<sup>253</sup> It is also written: “*HaShem* sent serpents and *serafim* on his people”<sup>254</sup> and “serpent, *saraf* and scorio”<sup>255</sup> and “make yourself a *saraf*”<sup>256</sup> and “*Moshe* made a copper serpent”,<sup>257</sup> and in another place: “he made everything beautiful in its proper time”.<sup>258</sup> It is also written: “what is in your hand? Answered [*Moshe*]: a staff. Said [*HaShem*]: throw it on the ground [...] and it changed into a serpent”,<sup>259</sup> “Rock!”<sup>260</sup> Perfect are His works”<sup>261</sup> and: “looked at the copper serpent and lived”,<sup>262</sup> and also: “he shall be separated in sanctity”<sup>263</sup> and: “he is pure”.<sup>264</sup>

*Saraf* refers to the secret of separated sanctity and the serpent is the secret of purity, as it is written: “through all his days when he has a status of *nazir*, he is separated in sanctity”.<sup>265</sup> It is also written: “cistern”.<sup>266</sup> He is pure, he is the additional sanctity, an emanation from the pure *sefirah Keter*, from which the external powers emerge. It is written: “*ADNI* would shave with the borrowed razor”<sup>267</sup> the head and the hair on the legs”, which refer to the secret of *kohanim* and *leviim*.<sup>268</sup>

Thus, when you comprehend the abovementioned key topics, the secret of the Serpent *Akalaton*<sup>269</sup> and the secret of *Tanin*, the Dragon will become clear to you – cause the Serpent dwells on the dry land and the Dragon on the sea. And all

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252 *Yeshayahu* 6:2.

253 *Yeshayahu* 6:5.

254 *Bamidbar* 21:6.

255 *Devarim* 8:15.

256 *Bamidbar* 21:8.

257 *Nachash nechoshet*. *Bamidbar* 21:9.

258 *Kohelet* 3:11.

259 *Shemot* 4:2–3.

260 The previous verse refers to the transformation of the “form” of a staff to a serpent. In this verse appears the term *tzur*, “rock, structure, form” which here serves as one of the holy names.

261 *Devarim* 32:4.

262 *Bamidbar* 21:9.

263 *Vayikra* 21:8.

264 *Vayikra* 13:13.

265 *Bamidbar* 6:8.

266 Geve. *Yeshayahu* 30:14. This word indicate the Aramean provenience. Its application here is unclear. Perhaps it refers to the Hebrew meaning: “his rear side” in order to express the opposition of the serpent towards the *saraf*. However, the direct rendition from Aramean would point to the following expressions: “to collect”, “to choose”, “to exalt”. Thus, following the verse from the prophet, I chose the variant “cistern”.

267 *Yeshayahu* 7:20. Context of the verse refers to the capturing of the people of *Israel* (“the shaving”) by the “foreign” army of Assyria (“the borrowed razor”).

268 The sense of the comparison of the meaning of the prophetic verse and the work of the *kohanim* and *levites* is unclear. Perhaps it is related to the motif of ritual purification, especially pivotal in the service of both these groups distinguished from the people of *Israel* about whom the Author speaks in this fragment. Another hypothesis would indicate the connection to the *tzaraat* purification ritual that involves complete shaving of the body of the affected person.

269 *Yeshayahu* 27:1.

this constitutes [the process] of restitution of the *merkavah*.<sup>270</sup> [This is also] the secret [of the verse]: “cause there is no serpent in *Yaakov*”.<sup>271</sup> It was also written about *Lavan*, the Aramean: “cause the serpent [made it happen],<sup>272</sup> that YKVK blessed me on your account”.<sup>273</sup> It was also written: “you shall make a railing on your roof... lest someone would fall from it”.<sup>274</sup> Also: “who falls,<sup>275</sup> and [his] eyes are open”,<sup>276</sup> followed by: “if a dead would be found on a ground... where he fell<sup>277</sup> on a field”.<sup>278</sup> Also it is stated: “*Nefilim* were in the land”<sup>279</sup> and also: “For *Yerushalaim* is in ruin and *Yehudah* fell”.<sup>280</sup> It was written, too: “He thrown<sup>281</sup> from the heaven to earth the beauty of *Israel*.”<sup>282</sup> Therefore *HaShem* supports all those, who fell – because in themselves they find their foundation. It was written: *nun samech ayin*,<sup>283</sup> therefore in *Tehilah le-David*<sup>284</sup> there is no [verse in the acrostic pattern starting with the letter] *nun* and in *Eleicha HaShem nafshi esa*<sup>285</sup> there is missing [a verse starting with the letter] *kuf*.<sup>286</sup>

270 *Tikun merkavah*.

271 *Bamidbar* 23:23. As mentioned above, the translation does not take into consideration the Masoretic variant of the text.

272 Translation follows Authors intention to distinguish the role of the serpent. Literally: “I divinated/I obtained the knowledge by means of divination”.

273 *Bereshit* 30:27.

274 *Devarim* 22:8. The verse refers to the idea of the “fall”, *nefilah*. Its initial letter, *nun* refers to *nachash*. Generally speaking, the notion of *nefilah* is frequently combined with the motive of *nachash*, therefore the Author apply the verse to expose this idea. “The railing” mentioned here refers to the aforementioned protective border of the inner palace. “The fall” refers to the ritual contamination related to the sexuality unrestrained by any rules, typically exemplified by Midianite behaviours connected to the cult of *Baal Peor*. It obviously refers to the invasion of the serpent to the garden of *Eden*, too. In other words, following the Author’s intention, whenever we encounter the term *nafal* or *nefilah*, we are dealing with the hidden influence of the *Nun*, “The Serpent”, who is responsible for every fall *per se*.

275 *Nofel*.

276 *Bamidbar* 24:4. These words are said by *Bileam*, who personifies the idea of ritual contamination of sexuality, in vein of Midianite cult of *Baal Peor*.

277 *Nafal*.

278 *Devarim* 21:1.

279 *Bereshit* 6:4. Literally: “they fell”.

280 *Nafal*. *Yeshayahu* 3:8. *Yehudah* mentioned here to connote the part of the territory of *Eretz Israel*.

281 *Hishlich*.

282 *Eichah* 2:1.

283 These are three consecutive letters of alphabet, of which the middle one is *samech*, “the support”. *Samech* refers also to the serpent in the shape of *Ouroboros* and to the name *Sam-kel*, the angel riding on the snake. The Author mentions it above.

284 That is, the prayer *Ashrei*, *Tehilim* 145.

285 *Tehilim* 25 that is also written in acrostic.

286 The sense of this sentence is revealed below, when the Author speaks about the idea of *ki nafalti*, *Kamti* (*Michah* 7:8) – “[after] I fell, I stood up”. The word *nafalti* commences with *nun* whereas *kamti* with *kuf*.

Regarding this, our rabbis of blessed memory<sup>287</sup> spoke, that important man has the right to fall [in humbleness] on his face only if [he is sure that] he is answered alike *Yehoshua*, as it is written: “Stand up, why do you fall on your face?”<sup>288</sup> and also: “[after] I fell, I stood up”<sup>289</sup> – it does not say: “stand up!”, but: “I stood up”, even before [I fell]. From there exactly I “stood up” from *Israel*’s decline. And [afterwards] two *Tehilim* were revealed, one for *sefirah Binah* and one for *sefirah Malchut*. *Tehilah le-David*<sup>290</sup> for *sefirah Binah*, and *Elokai becha vatachti*<sup>291</sup> for *sefirah Malchut* – in the former there is no [verse starting with the letter] *nun*, whereas in the latter there is no [verse starting with the letter] *kuf*. Indeed, “I shall set anew the *sukah*<sup>292</sup> of *David* that fell apart and I shall fence its breaches”<sup>293</sup> – “breaches”<sup>294</sup> through which the [primordial] serpent entered it and by destroying<sup>295</sup> the fence he became the serpent [within the garden of *Eden*]. “And these are the generations of *Peretz*”:<sup>296</sup> therefore, [even though] the brick<sup>297</sup> was crushed, I shall lift up its pieces and I will fence the destroyed [Temple] with the stones. Because two good stones are the two “stones of onyx”.<sup>298</sup> Names of the sons of *Israel* were written on them, on top and below. Thus, below *dar*, and on top alike the stone of *socheret*,<sup>299</sup> one against the other: “after justice, after justice go,<sup>300</sup> so that you live and inherit the land”<sup>301</sup> and therefore: “and I shall take from you and drive away the viper<sup>302</sup> to the dry and desolate land. His<sup>303</sup> beginning will be in the

287 TB Taanit 14b.

288 *Yehoshua* 7:10.

289 *Michah* 7:8. Obviously, one can translate it as: “after I fell, I would stand up”.

290 *Tehilim* 145.

291 *Tehilim* 25.

292 *Sukah*. “Hut” in the sense of the Temple.

293 *Amos* 9:11. Here the term *nofelet* appears.

294 *Partzeihen*. The text that follows is based on the connotations revolving around the root of the verb *lifrotz*, “to break, to crush, to explode, to breach”.

295 *Poretz*.

296 *Peretz*. *Rut* 4:18. The quote was given here in the context of the coming of *Mashiach*, as it refers to the restoration of the kingdom of *David*, who stems from *Peretz*.

297 *Halevenah*. “The brick”. It symbolizes the stones of the Temple.

298 *Avnej shoham*. It refers to the precious stones on the breastplate of the *efod* of the *kohen ha-gadol*, that is *Urim ve-Tumim*.

299 *Ester* 1:6. It refers there to the “precious stones, jems”, however the Author, similarly like few centuries later *RaMaK* in *Pardes Rimonim* 22:4, gives the words *dar* and *socheret* separate, symbolic meaning of duality and dychotomic aspect of the end of days. This explanation we find further down in the text, therefore I leave these terms not translated, in their original form.

300 The Author sets the idea of double precious stones *dar* and *socheret* with the double instance of the the term *tzedek tzedek*.

301 *Devarim* 16:20.

302 *Ha-tzifoni*. Obviously, this verse speaks about “the northern enemy”, *ha-tzifoni*. However, the Author brings this verse with precise intention, as the term should be read according to some sort of word-play and the phonetic resemblance (the word *tzifoni* contains the letter *ayin* which is missing in the quoted verse) that alludes to the viper-serpent-arch enemy motive.

303 It refers both to the *Nachash* and the serpent/viper.

ancient<sup>304</sup> sea, and his end in the final sea.<sup>305</sup> Its pungent stench will rise, cause he acted haughtily. Land, have no fear! Rejoice and be happy, for *HaShem* has done great things.”<sup>306</sup> Indeed, he did! [As the verse says]: “[things] that *Elokim* create to make [them]”<sup>307</sup> [and]: “on this day *HaShem* will be One and His Name will be One”.<sup>308</sup> What is the meaning stemming from [the verse]: “*HaShem* will be the King of all the earth”?<sup>309</sup> [That] the serpent will not enter [again] the Temple: “He will not be able again to enter, contaminated and uncircumcised”<sup>310</sup> [and]: “and the bread of the serpent would be dust and he would not commit evil and would [never] destroy<sup>311</sup> anything on the whole mountain of My separated holiness”.<sup>312</sup> Because the one, who causes the breach in the border<sup>313</sup> is called a destroyer.<sup>314</sup> In that time,<sup>315</sup> that is called “the knowing”: “cause the land would be filled with the knowing of *HaShem*”,<sup>316</sup> the essence of the tree of knowing of good and evil would be filled with this comprehension from all its sides. There would not be then good and evil anymore, but all in the world would become the uncontaminated good. This is the foundation [of the meaning] of *Perez* and *Zerach*<sup>317</sup> – *Perez* at the beginning and *Zerach* at the end, [because]: “the glory of *HaShem* rests on you, *Zerach*”<sup>318</sup> and “the sun of justice will shine<sup>319</sup> for you, [living] in the awe of My

304 *Ha-kadmoni*. Reference to the primordial serpent. Of course, the literal sense would indicate “the eastern”.

305 It refers to the time of coming of *Mashiach* and the victory over the serpent. Just to remind, gematria 358 is the same for *Nachash* and *Mashiach*.

306 *Yoel* 2:20–21. The expression *higdil laasot* appears both as referring to the actions of the serpent and the deeds of *HaShem*. In the first instance the translation: “acted haughtily” conveys the negative aspect of the serpent’s acts. Here we also find the intended pun on the title of the work: “the secret of the serpent, his law and his deed”.

307 *Bereshit* 2:3.

308 *Zecharyah* 14:9, second part of the verse.

309 *Zecharyah* 14:9, first part of the verse.

310 *Yeshayahu* 52:1.

311 *Yashchitu*.

312 *Yeshayahu* 65:25, the second part of this verse appears also in 11:9.

313 It refers to the aforementioned description of serpent’s breaching into the garden of *Eden*.

314 *Mashchit*.

315 When the correction of the misplacement of the serpent will be accomplished thanks to *Mashiach*.

316 *Yeshayahu* 11:9.

317 The birth of *Peretz* and *Zerach*, sons of *Tamar* and *Yehudah* (*Bereshit* 38:24–30) had obvious signs of miracles: *Zerach* started to appear out of the womb as the first one, but he retracted and *Peretz* was finally the first one. It was so, cause *Peretz* means “the one who breaks through, the one who explodes”. From the line of *Peretz*, through *David*, *Mashiach* would emerge.

318 *Yeshayahu* 60:1. Direct translation: “the glory of *HaShem* shines upon you”. *Zerach* means “to shine, to glow”, as in the expression *zrichat shemesh*, “shining of the sun”, i.e. “sunrise”.

319 *Zrichah*.

Name”<sup>320</sup> – “justice” that clings “the sun” between *Tzadik*<sup>321</sup> and *Tzedek*<sup>322</sup> – and on this the secret of the unity is founded.<sup>323</sup> This is exactly the meaning of the verse: “the light of the moon<sup>324</sup> will be like the light of the sun,<sup>325</sup> and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, alike the light of the seven days,<sup>326</sup> on the day when *HaShem* will surround the breach in His people”.<sup>327</sup> If you manage to comprehend this verse in its truth, everything will be revealed to you.<sup>328</sup>

Completed and accomplished for the glory of the Creator of the Universe

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320 *Malachi* 3:20.

321 “between the righteous” – reference to the male *sefirah* *Yesod*.

322 “and righteousness” – reference to the female *sefirah* *Malchut*, in her state of restitution, during the time of coming of *Mashiach*.

323 *Sod ha-yichud*. This expression has wide connotations – from the reference to the sexual unity of husband and wife to the cosmological and theurgical unification of the aspects of creation and *HaShem*’ Name in the time of *Mashiach*.

324 *Sefirah* *Malchut* in the state of restitution.

325 *Sefirah* *Yesod*.

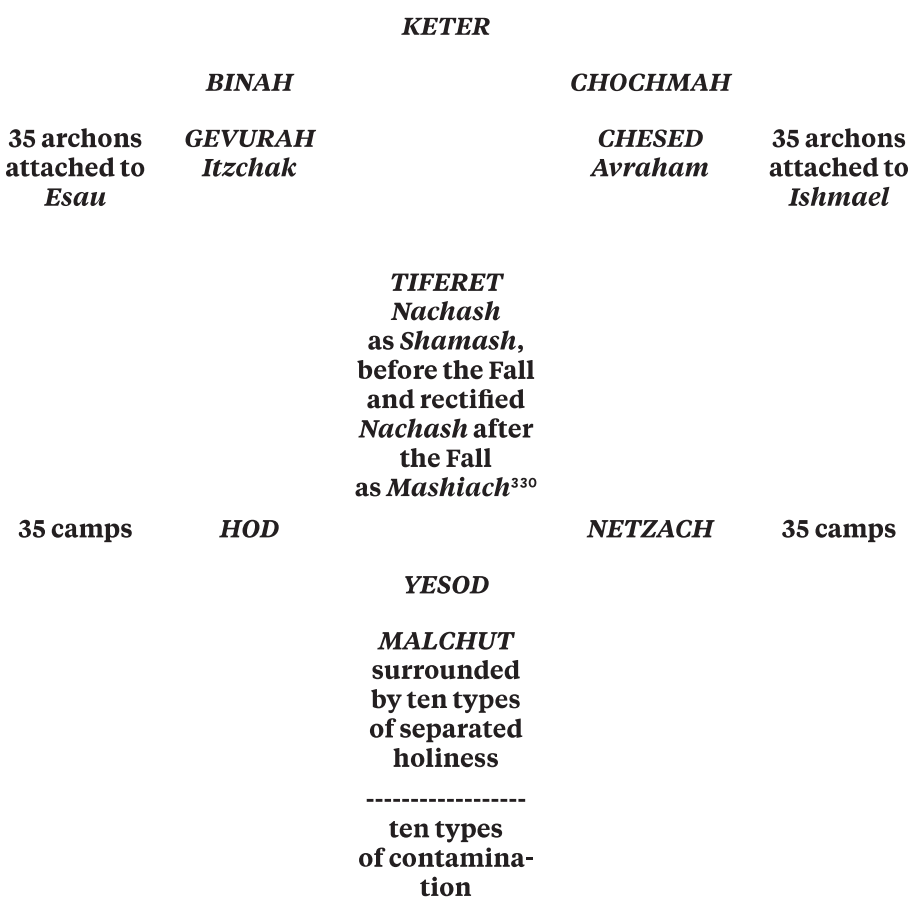
326 According to the most probable kabbalistic understanding, this verse speaks about the forthcoming unification of the lower palace, during the time of *Mashiach*. Once *Malchut* is united with *Yesod*, there will be further merging of the remaining five *sefirot* that – now as sevenfold entity – build this palace, called in zoharic language *Zeir Anpin*, “the small countenance”.

327 *Yeshayahu* 30:26. The translation consequently follows the Author’s intention in reference to the motive of “the breach” made at the beginning of creation by the serpent.

328 Indeed, as the Author explicitly states, the last quoted verse provides recapitulation and concludes the whole theme about the process of primordial fall and the future restitution of the serpent’s right place in the time of *Mashiach*. The term *chavosh* “surrounded” and *shever* “the breach” precisely refer to the idea of setting up the protective fence around the inner palace anew, which would result in the closure of the trespass, through which the serpent influenced the inside through his contamination. Thus one might see the clear reference to one of the key ideas presented in this treatise, when it is said that the serpent does not constitute evil by himself. It is just his present misplacement that creates evil. However, the serpent as such, when occupying appropriate place, constitutes the protective force for the life itself. One can be therefore tempted to state that in the time of *Mashiach*, *HaShem* would encircle the inside of the palace by means of the serpent’s body, protecting its inner space from the consequences of the breach, originally performed by the same serpent. In other words, *Mashiach* will repair the negative effects of serpent’s act with the help of the serpent himself.

## Appendix

The structure of *sefirot* of purity and contamination as described in *Sod ha-Nachash*<sup>329</sup>



<sup>329</sup> As mentioned, this graph is based on the one provided by N. Ben-Shachar *Israel and the Archons...*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>330</sup> The identification of *Tiferet* with *Nachash* and *Mashiach* is a part of mine hypothesis, corroborated by the arguments provided in this and previous paper (A. Y. Krawczyk, *General Remarks on "the Serpent"...*).



## Postface. The Rhythm of The Eight

מרחפת  
כל-הנחשלים  
יי איש מלחמה יי שמו

### Further Notes on the Infra-coding of The Name 26 in Torah that presents the pattern of *HaShem-Amalek* and *Mashiach-Nachash* dynamics of the Creation, the Fall and the Restitution

Presented text constitutes a loose commentary to the content of the work of R. Gikatilla. It is also a direct continuation of a parallel research project that I am continuously dealing with, namely the analysis of complex gematrical patterns and Torah exegesis, inspired by the method of Oskar Goldberg.<sup>331</sup> Progress in the translation and commentary to *Sod ha-Nachash* and the advancement in the English translation of Goldberg's early work *Die Fünf Bücher Moses*<sup>332</sup> went simultaneously. What seemed to be multitasking, concurrent projects that did not directly correspond to each other, at some point – surprisingly or not surprisingly – provided me at some stage an interesting insight into some singular conclusion at one focal point.

As mentioned earlier,<sup>333</sup> I claim that the structural middle of the Torah, related to the letter *nun*, indicating the theme of *Nachash* is definitely not a coincidence. Thus, such thesis goes in par with Goldberg's conviction that all Torah is not structured at random, but rather follows the pattern governed not only by the infra-coding of the number 26 (being gematria of The Name YKVK) but even by the deeper coding of numerical reduction of this number, that is 8. The question how this 8 – being an unit that represent YKVK – appears in the structures and proportions visible in the Torah and what it hints at in the broader perspective was briefly discussed in the afterword of Goldberg's *Die Fünf Bücher* Polish edition.<sup>334</sup>

What however interests me more is to follow the lead that I stumbled upon unexpectedly when analysing the gematrical multiplications of the number 26 within the Torah.

I have noticed that not only the numbers 26 and 8 provide the structure to the numerical value of a very conspicuous verse, but also the **geometrical, proportional and symmetrical qualities radiate from it, providing hyperaesthetic impression of an utmost level**. The impression was that the infra-coding was placed in the Torah on multi-dimensional planes.

331 A. Y. Krawczyk, *The Names, The Heights and The 26...*, op. cit.

332 O. Goldberg, *Die Fünf Bücher Moses: Ein Zahlengebäude* – „The Five Books of Moshe: The Numerical System” (Berlin 1908), *Pięcioksiąg Mojżeszowy jako system liczbowy. Ustalenie spójnego zapisu liczbowego*, Libron, Kraków 2018, transl. K. Hussar-Mizierska). Forthcoming English translation is being prepared.

333 A. Y. Krawczyk, *General Remarks on “The Serpent”...*, op. cit., p. 475.

334 T. Sikora, “Life from Infinitude – differences between goldbergian and kabbalistic hermeneutics”, [in Polish:] “Życie z bezkresu – różnica pomiędzy hermeneutyką kabalistyczną i goldbergowską” [in:] O. Goldberg, *Pięcioksiąg...*, pp. 97–107.

We talk about the verse quoted already above:

יִי אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יִי שְׁמוֹ

“*HaShem* is the Man of War, *HaShem* is His Name”<sup>335</sup>

It would be worthy to bring forth the full reference from the previous article:

This fragment stems from an extraordinary part of Torah, called *Shirat ha-Yam*, “The Song of the Sea”, which *Moshe* sung after passing through the *Yam Suf*, “Sea of Reeds”. The value 832 equals  $32 \times 26$ . The number 32 is Gematria for *lev*, “heart”. Significant is the double appearance of the name *YKVK* itself within this special verse – it acts somewhat as distinct “seal” indicating unusual properties of this verse. Moreover, the verse speaks in self-referential manner about the Name itself (*HaShem Shmo*), adding yet another layer to the compound meanings revolving around the value 26.

And “last but not the least” – the middle word of this verse consisting of 5 words is *milchama*, “war” – and the middle 3 letters within this word **create the word *lechem* – “bread, sustenance”, which in itself has Gematria of  $78 = 3 \times 26$ . *Lechem* itself also has its “heart” within, which is its middle letter (and the middle letter of the entire verse), namely *chet*. Finally, *chet* has value of 8, which – as corroborated by Goldberg’s exposition – is a shorter form for 26 (according to numerical reduction method). Thus, we see that this verse has the symmetrical structure, where its “heart” (32) is directly placed in the middle and serves as the mode of building the entire sophisticated diamond-like arrangement.**

Number of letters in the verse equals 19 (18+1)

יָדוּד 4

אִישׁ 3

מִלְחָמָה 5 – with middle word 26 = 78 = לֶחֶם  $\times$  3. Middle letter 8 = ח, redution of 2 and 6

יָדוּד 4

שְׁמוֹ 3<sup>336</sup>

This finding inspired me to search for other expressions in the Torah that share the same characteristics, namely:

- 1) Letter *chet* – representing *YKVK* at its most hidden aspect – in the **middle**
- 2) Expression is **symmetrical**
- 3) Expression is potent with ideological and/or ritualistic meaning

<sup>335</sup> *Shemot* 15:3. Its gematrical value is  $832 = 32 \times 26$ .

<sup>336</sup> A. J. Krawczyk, *The Names, The Heights and The 26...*, op. cit., p. 369.

The result, as of now, comprises of two very significant sets of data:

### מרחפת

“[ruach] flutters/hovers”<sup>337</sup>

### כל-הנחשלים

“[Amalek... hit the rear guard of] all the weak ones”<sup>338</sup>

The first one constitutes the basis of *HaArizal*'s<sup>339</sup> teaching<sup>340</sup> on sparks of the separated holiness surrounded by shells, *klipot*. The word *merachefet* consists of inner part, *rachaf*. According to *HaArizal*, there are in total 288 holy sparks that fell into the creation. *Rachaf* = 288 is surrounded by the letters *mem* and *tav*, that together build word *met*, “dead”, which refers to the shells encompassing the sparks of separated holiness. *Chet* is surrounded from both sides by two letters on the left and write. Conspicuously, these letters create the expression: *mar pat*, “the bitter bread”, which might refer to the food promised to the serpent (namely the dust) after the fall. In the realm of such exegesis, the *klipot* (*mem* and *tav*) mixed with some of the sparks of separated holiness (*resh* and *pe*) constitute the food for the fallen serpent.

The second one refers to the story of *Amalek*. It is constructed in a way of connection of the word *kol* and *ha-necheshalim*, but it is apparent from the grammatical order that both words shape one unified structure. What is especially noteworthy here is that **the very middle of this expression hides within the term *nachash***, as if to point to R. Gikatilla's argument that the serpent-*Amalek* inherent within the *Israel*<sup>341</sup> was the cause of the “weakening” of the rear guard of the camp of *Israel* and eventually the cause of *Israel*'s fall.

Thus, we face the three verses that represent the triadic meta-construct revolving around the theme of:

- 1) **Creation:** *Merachefet*
- 2) **Destruction:** *Kol ha-necheshalim*
- 3) **Restitution:** *HaShem Ish milchamah HaShem Shmo*

### מרחפת

### כל-הנחשלים

### יי איש מלחמה יי שמו

<sup>337</sup> Bereshit 1:2.

<sup>338</sup> Devarim 25:18.

<sup>339</sup> R. Itzhak Luria (1534–1572).

<sup>340</sup> Etz Chaiim 18:1 after: [https://www.sefaria.org/Sefer\\_Etz\\_Chaim.18.1?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Sefer_Etz_Chaim.18.1?lang=bi).

<sup>341</sup> As also is visible in the exposure of R. Gikatilla above, the main issue with the *Amalek* is that it is both an archenemy from the outside (being the progeny of *Esau*), but also from the inside (being the progeny of *Itzhak* and *Avraham*).

All of them have in their middles the letter *chet*, being infra-coded representation of the Name YKVK.

The “bitter bread” (*mar pat*) of mixed shells and sparks is the reason of the “fall” of the serpent (*nachash*) but is rectified and transformed into the “bread” of  $3 \times 26 = 78$  (*lechem*), both at the exodus from *Mizraim* but also in the times of *Mashiach*. The middle verse has in its own middle the word *nachash* placed.

And again – within the *nachash*, the middle of all the middles, again *Chet*, **The Eight**, is hidden.

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*Aryeh Yosef Krawczyk – Sod ha-Nachash u-Mishpato ve-Maasehu*  
(The Secret of the Serpent, His Law and His Deed) – Translation of the  
Treatise by R. Yosef Gikatilla (1248–1325)

The paper contains the first complete translation of the 13th century kabbalistic treatise. Annotations, foreword and appendix are added. The main theme of this booklet is the figure of the serpent, which – according to the interpretation of the translator – represents the notion of life. Therefore, the biological perspective is proposed to understand the content of the text.

**Keywords:** life, death, serpent, Gikatilla, kabbalah, biology, sexuality.