The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah:
Rabbi Isaac the Blind's *Commentary on Sefer Yeẓirah*
Translation and Annotation

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Volume Two
Chapter 1

In thirty-two:¹ The letter bet is an allusion to Ḥokhmah and Haskel² and it alludes to all that the

¹ Sefer Yezirah, (henceforth SY) in "A Preliminary Critical Edition of Sefer Yezirah, ed. I. Gruenwald, Israel and Oriental Studies, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1971), 1:1 (sec. 1) 140. References to SY from this work follow Gruenwald notational conventions. Bold type signifies direct quotations from SY. The order and general text of R. Isaac's quotations from SY follow what Gruenwald calls the "short recension." This is especially clear in his treatment of SY 1:5-8. Compare secs. 7, 8, 6, 5 of the long recension, respectively. See, too, G. Scholem's note, Hak-Kabbalah be-Provence, 16, n. 33, demonstrating that R. Isaac followed what Gruenwald came to call the short recension.

Of the short recensions brought by Gruenwald, the following match R. Isaac's citations frequently, but not in all respects: Parma De Rossi 1390, foll. 36b-38b; Leiden Warn. 24 (5) Cod. Or. 4762, foll. 140b-42a; British Museum 600 (1), foll. 2a-3b; British Museum, Gaster 415, foll. 29a-32a; Moscow Ginzburg collection 133, foll. 198a-99a. It should be noted that Gruenwald examined over one hundred manuscripts for his critical edition of SY, but selected only nineteen for publication in his apparatus, based on criteria he explains, 134-35. It is not surprising that the text R. Isaac followed is not precisely one of these. The pivotal text variants in R. Isaac's Commentary are found in lines 17, 40, 75, 136, 151-52, 163-64, 261 and 343. See the notes to those passages, below.

² Note the abbreviated construct, without use of ש. See M. Goshen-Gottstein, Tahbirah u-Milonah Shel hal-Lashon ha-Ivrit, (Jerusalem, 1951) 29-30, secs. 81.1.2, who considers this form a non-indigenous development through Arabic influence, citing a similar Maimonidean usage, Yesodei hat-Torah, 4:11. See, too, Gen. R. 12:1, one of the source-texts for this passage of the Commentary, cited below: עוזריו ותשמיעו בים פן ישמיעו ימין יתירה. R. Isaac may have had this passage in mind both explicitly and subliminally.

³ The sefira Wisdom and semi-sefirotic hypostasis Intellection. See discussion, supra, ch. 8.3. Henceforth, the term supra signifies references to
apprehension of thought\textsuperscript{4} apprehends\textsuperscript{5} unto \textit{Ein Sof},\textsuperscript{6} and all the more so what is included within itself.\textsuperscript{7} From those

...
wonders which cause wonder* [come] the pathways [which] are
like strands of flame that are pathways to embers:9 by the flames a person sees the ember as in the manner of a ball of thread, for by the strand a person walks to the place of the ball.10 So, too, with a tree, by the many leaves and twigs and branches and boughs and trunks a person finds the veins of the stock and the subtle existence of the root, which is not visible because of its great subtlety11 and innerness.12

propriety of דמארתך as an introductory prepositional phrase, see M. Goshen-Gottstein, *Tapbirah*, 96 (sec. 207.6.b), who considered such a usage to be influenced by Arabic syntax.

9 The flame-and-ember image comes from *SY*, 1:7 (sec. 6).

10 *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*, 12:1, applies this Ariadne-and-Theseus image from Greek mythology to approaching the difficulty of understanding the order of the cosmos: משל נלאס דוגלה שלוחה שלחון של החושר וברוח.虫 אל יפה גבגש לכל ההתחז厳 והבגש רז מראות וזרת המיתות. של מפי ופיו בכנפיו בכנפיו וכנפיו רז מראות וזרת המיתות (It is compared to a large palace with many doors: whoever would enter it became lost. What did one clever fellow do? He took a ball of string and tying one end to the entrance, entered by way of the ball of string and left by way of the ball of string. Then everyone began to enter and leave by way of the ball of string.)

11 While רֹּד in the sense of fine and refined is a good biblical term (Ex. 16:14; Is. 29:5), it is also used in Hebrew philosophical literature to convey refined spiritual existence. See Saadia b. Joseph, *Sefer ha-*Emunot ve-*ha-De*\'ot*, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, ed. J. Fischel, (New York, 1947 reprint of Leipzig, 1859) 120: כֶּנָּו מְאַשֶּׁר הַמַּכָּה מִי הַמַּכָּה בְּרָדָּה...שְׁמַמְחֵת בָּרוּךְ 120: כְּנַקְוָחָה הָגַנְפָּלְתָה...אֶבְּלַמְחֵת יֵחְרֵר בַּקְוַת הָגַנְפָּלְתָה.

Every word which has a *bet* at its beginning indicates both itself and what is within it." So, too, *bet* of in thirty-two, in which He engraved, meaning: that which thought does not apprehend." He engraved two letters," which are

association of tree imagery with the *Sefirot*. With these images of ball of thread and ramified tree, R. Isaac sets out his central epistemological vision: the possibility of a reliable continuity of inference from the concrete world of multiplicity to the progressively unified abstract world of the *Sefirot*, from the finite to the infinite. See *supra*, ch. 7.1.

For the term תִּנְפָּרָא in the sense of spiritual innerness, see Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, trans. J. Alharizi, intro., 16, in his rendering of the golden apple with silver filigree image. The golden apple is called סַפְּרָא, and by extension: שַׁפְּרָא, שַׁפְּרָא, אָּסַפְּרָא, אָּסַפְּרָא, רַפְּרָא, רַפְּרָא, רַפְּרָא, רַפְּרָא, רַפְּרָא. See *supra*, ch. 7.1.

Thus are the parables of the prophets: their external sense is wisdom beneficial in many ways, one of which is the rectification of the needs of human society...while their innerness is wisdom concerning the knowledge of truth according to its proper disposition). The term תִּנְפָּרָא and its permutations was also used extensively by Solomon Ibn Gabirol, e.g., *Keter Malkhut*, 52, sec. 25, line 4: תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּסָא תִּנְפָּרָאָּs

I. Twersky notes that Ibn Tibbon and Alharizi employed the term הֵנָיִם, denoting "hidden" or "internal," to describe the "internal senses," and that R. Abraham b. Nathan ha-Yarhi of Lunel, one of R. Abraham b. David's students, was the first to use the term הֵנָיִם to characterize the genre of esoteric literature as a whole. See I. Twersky, *Rabad*, 243, n. 16.

See note 7, above.
thirty-two, which are divided into three divisions.

18 R. Azriel of Gerona, PSY, Kitvei Ramban, vol. 2, 453, offers a *gematria* to bridge the relationship between the two letters and the thirty-two paths: according to the verse Is. 26:4, God formed the world ית ת, two plus the letters י"וי added forwards and backwards, for a total of thirty-two. This particular verse was a favorite of the Heikhalot mystics: see *Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit*, Bateil MidraShot, vol. 1, 19. R. Isaac of Acre, PSY, 382, lines 3-4, offers a variant *gematria* to arrive at the sum thirty-two out of the two-letter divine Name: י"וי equals fifteen, permuted twice equals thirty, plus the Name itself taken twice, read forwards and backwards, equals thirty-two. R. Isaac the Blind, however, may not have had such a formalistic approach in mind. Rather, the thirty-two units of creative signs, ten sefirot and twenty-two letters, are understood as unfolding by emanation out of the two-letter divine Name. Nahmanides is also satisfied to explain the relationship between the two letters of the divine Name and the thirty-two paths in this way, without resorting to extrinsic arithmetical methods (PSY 403, lines 5-6).

17 These are the three *sefarim* discussed in the
In three sefarin: these are three Names\(^{18}\) which are in three letters\(^{19}\) which receive from and are received by them.\(^{20}\) The beginning\(^{21}\) of those essences\(^{22}\) that are given passage immediately following. The MS Harvard Heb. 58/11 reads "He engraved in the letters, which are twenty-two, which are divided into three divisions." The point would then be that the process of engraving applies to the letters specifically, which are divided into three letter categories of Sefer Yezirah: matrices, doubled and simple letters. This is clearly a later attempt at reworking this obscure passage into a more readily coherent form by a scribe unacquainted with the kabbalistic interpretation under discussion.

\(^{18}\) According to R. Asher b. David, the three Names are those three listed in the first section of Sefer Yezirah, 1:1 (Kabbalah R. Asher b. David, 16, lines 32-35; 58). These are פ" ninguna יזדו"ה. Scholem notes that R. Isaac the Blind and R. Ezra of Gerona did not use those recensions of Sefer Yezirah that include a longer string of divine epithets (Naḥmanides, PSY, 404, n. 1). Among the short recensions R. Isaac follows most closely, Moscow Ginzburg collection 133, foll. 198a-99a has just these three Names. Naḥmanides also seems to endorse this interpretation of the three sefarin, associated with Hokhmah, Binah, and the lower seven sefirot, respectively (PSY, 405, lines 1-5; and compare 403, lines 5-12, 404, lines 1-2).

R. Isaac of Acre identifies the three corresponding Names with an overlapping sequence of letters: פ-ג-ד-ו-ד. He correlates this sequence with the upper three sefirot, each successive pair of letters standing as a "Name" corresponding to Keter, Hokhmah, Binah, respectively (PSY, 382, lines 13-19).

\(^{19}\) These are the three constituent letters of the Tetragrammaton, ו"ת י"ה ר"ז. See Azriel of Gerona, PSY, 1:1: מ"ה ר"ז י"ה ו"ת י"ה ר"ז י"ה ר"ז י"ה ו"ת י"ה ו"ת י"ה ר"ז י"ה ו"ת י"ה ר"ז י"ה ו"ת י"ה. See also Naḥmanides, PSY, 403, lines 7-11 and 405, lines 1-3; Isaac of Acre, PSY, 382, lines 17-19.

\(^{20}\) R. Isaac's usage of the reflexive מתקגל is varied throughout the Commentary. In some instances it is reflexively self-referential, in others it has a passive voice, both of which are frequent talmudic usages. See E. Ben Yehudah, Milion ba-Lashon ba-Ḥivrit, vi, (New York, 1930) 5692a,b for examples. Instances of
to think about are the wonders within Hokhmah,\textsuperscript{23} for the passive usage are: lines 37, 109, 133. Instances of reflexive usage are: lines 34, 95, 103, 132. In line 280, R. Isaac uses \textit{nachmeh} in a passive, reciprocal sense, with the reciprocity made explicit through prepositions. Here, paired and contrasted with the \textit{pice}, \textit{nachmeh} is passive and reciprocal. המה modifies \textit{המקהלות}.

In R. Isaac's system, \textit{מקבל} is the receiving of efflux by a lower ontological level from a higher level. By contrast, \textit{מקדם} is usually reception of or from the lower by the higher, or the preparation for such reception. The idea here is that the three constitutive letters of the divine Name represent the ontological sequence and mutual relationship of the sefirot themselves, which are signified by the three sefarim and their representative divine Names.

Generally speaking, in R. Isaac's system, the sefirot are conceived as \textit{in} the letters. R. Isaac explains this concept of inclusion below, lines 264-65, saying "Each of the ten sefirot are in each and every letter." This corresponds to Nahmanides' explanation that "even though we have said that the ten sefirot are included in the letters, they are not the letters themselves, but their innerness (\textit{PSY}, 401, lines 2-3)."

In the present case, the three letters of the Tetragrammaton have a unique relationship to the sefirot they represent. According to R. Asher b. David, who appears to be expounding R. Isaac's position, these three letters reflect the three sefarim in their entirety, that is, the full set of sefirot, but as they appear engraved in the sefirah Hokhmah (\textit{Kabbalah R. Asher b. David}, 14, lines 27-28).

\textsuperscript{21} The term "beginning" as R. Isaac uses it, while based on the passage in \textit{Sefer Yezirah}, 1:7 (sec. 6) "their beginning is fixed in their end," is employed here specifically along lines developed by R. Judah b. Barzillai in his theory of prophecy, described in his \textit{PSY}, 31. According to R. Judah, God "created light and great fire for glory, that is called holy spirit and is also called Sekhinah, as the dwelling of His glory. Neither angel nor seraph nor prophet can gaze at all at the beginning of that great light... But from the end of that light the Creator, when He wishes, shows lights and sparks to His angels, seraphs and prophets. Sometimes from the end of that light there goes forth sparks and lights to his angels, seraphs and prophets; sometimes from the end of that light there is shown to them certain forms and visions and dreams or a visual
pathways are wonders within it. About this it is said "God

image to whomever God wishes." In R. Judah's scheme, the inception of this light is too overwhelmingly powerful for any creature to behold. R. Isaac the Blind, in his emanation doctrine, plays off this notion of the incomprehensibility of the beginning of the emanative process, and its gradual attenuation, such that the "beginning," or first opportunity to grasp any aspect of this process is at the level of the "wonders within Hokhmah," as he goes on to explain. "The beginning of those essences that are given to think about..." implies the process begins earlier, but cannot be perceived. For conceptions of the prophetic process similar to R. Judah b. Barzilai's, see Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 4:3; R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, Perushei ha-Torah, short recension, 33:18, ed. A. Weiser, vol. 2, 342-43.

22 For the term דديدة used in the plural, see Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Tikun Middot ha-Nefesh, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, (Jerusalem, 1883) 3: תורワイותה תערובת . Scholem suggests that דديدة derives from the Latin essentiae. The term was also in contemporaneous use among the Hasidei Ashkenaz, though Scholem detects a difference of nuance: for the Hasidei Ashkenaz it denotes presences or immanences; for R. Isaac, something closer to central, inner qualities of being. See J. Dan, Torat ha-Sod, 94-103; M. Idel, Has-Sefirot Se-me-'al ha-Sefirot, 268, n. 153. Scholem correlates R. Isaac's conception with that of the Gerona kabbalists, who held that "the essences were, but the emanation came into being (Sefer Bialik, 158; Kiryat Sefer, 9 (1932) 126)." See R. Meir b. Solomon Abusahulah, Be'ur le-Pesah ha-Ramban 'al ha-Torah, Gen. 1:3, ed. J. Shapiro, (Warsaw, 1875, reprinted Jerusalem, 1973) 3: תוריין תוארי מסיימים . According to Scholem, these "essences" are the inner root of the sefirot and letters, the very highest ontological degree of differentiation, yet he notes that on occasion, R. Isaac seems to use "essences" interchangeably with both sefirot and letters (Bak-Kabbalah be-Provence, 145-6; Origins, 279-281; "Te'udah Hadashah," Kiryat Sefer, 158, n. 6.) By contrast, R. Isaac of Acre defined these essences as the sefirot as manifest clothed in letters, an ontological level one step below the sefirot themselves (Isaac of Acre, PSY, 384). See Idel, "Ha-Sefirot she-me-'al ha-Sefirot," 241-2, n. 12, who also flags this discrepancy.

Ultimately, all these interpretations attempt to pin down the term as referring to a specific set of
understands its byway (Job 28:23)," understands the byways and pathways that are within it. By virtue of the permanent entities on a specific ontological level. It seems, however, that R. Isaac the Blind uses this term as a generic designation for entities of ontological permanence, on whatever sefirotic level they may appear. It can refer to sefirot, to letters, to the pathways and to the inner principles from which all these originate. See lines 10-12, 15, 19, 23, 36-37, 64-66, 75-76, 79, 136, 218-20, 224-25, 233, 236, 267, 270-71, 289, 319. In the sentence under consideration, it is only those essences within the sefirot Hokhmah which are given over to contemplation, implying there are other essences which are not. This implication is explicit in lines 64-66, 79.

R. Isaac's definition of essences as entities of permanent being comes close to the regnant twelfth-century Latin use of the term *essentiae*, as Scholem suspected. See R. LeMay, *Abu Maʿashar and Latin Aristotelianism in the Twelfth Century*, (Beirut, 1962) 198-217, for a discussion of the definition of *essentiae* as formulated by Hermann of Carinthia, in his *De Essentis*, written in 1147, through the influence of Al-Kindi and Abu Maʿashar on the one hand, and Boethius on the other, as "those entities...which have a simple and unchanging nature and are therefore unable to receive any alteration" (Ibid. 199; Hermann de Carinthia, *De Essentis*, ed. P. Manuel Alonso, (Santander, 1946), 25). According to LeMay, while there was no limit to the varieties of such *essentiae*, Hermann focussed his discussion on certain permanent genera whose role was to bring into existence entities of intermittent being (Ibid.). It is this definition of *essentiae* that is at the root of the maxim of R. Ezra and the Gerona kabbalists: "the essences were, but the emanation came into being." See supra, ch. 8.1.

23 This restates the argument of line 1, that the thirty-two paths are contained in the sefirot Hokhmah, adding that these constitute the primary categories of comprehension that are first perceived as differentiated.

24 This seemingly redundant identification may have been prompted by an understanding similar to Naḥmanides' definition of נָמִיָּה as "separate and distinct effects," based on Targum Onkelos, Dt. 17:8 (Naḥmanides, *PSY*, 402).

See, too, R. Azriel of Gerona, *PSY*, in Kitvei
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The pathways are sources of the byways: for a

The term קבוגות is found in SY, 1:13 (sec. 15), 2:3 (sec. 17), in the sense of "fixed" or "set." In this phrase, however, הקבוגות דהויות, "the permanent essences," appearing here and at the end of this sentence, the term "permanent" is intended to provide a definition, qua modifying synonym, of the nature of these essences themselves, as permanent entities. See above, note 22. Compare line 207, below.

R. Isaac of Acre discusses the referent of the pronouns "him" in this sentence. He asserts that R. Isaac the Blind understood them to denote the kabbalistic adept, which he interpreted midrashically as the אלהי of the verse Job 28:23. Scholem questions how R. Isaac of Acre arrived at this reading (Isaac of Acre, PSY, 382, n. 12). R. Isaac of Acre himself, however, criticizes this interpretation and suggests that it is God who "understands its byway." Projecting his own opinion upon R. Isaac the Blind's words, he claims it is the sefirot Binah in which the fixed essences are engraved and that has within it the power to comprehend Hokhmah (PSY, 382, lines 22-29).

It seems, however, that the correct reading lies between these two poles. While the referent of "him" in both instances in the sentence is clearly God in the aspect of the sefirot Binah, consonant with the kabbalistic reading of Job 28:23, as R. Isaac of Acre suggests, the "power to comprehend" is a power conferred upon, or accessible to, the adept, who can participate in the activity of this sefirot. Thus, it is the term להתחנון, to comprehend or contemplate, that refers to the action of the human adept. To paraphrase: "By virtue of the permanent essences engraved in the sefirot Binah, there is power that enables man to contemplate the subtle, permanent essences that have no

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Ramban, vol. 2, 457: (That which is called "pathways" in the first power is called sefirot in the second power, and in the third power "letters"). This means that at the highest sefirotic level, Keter, the principles are called pathways; at the second ontological level, Hokhmah, these principles are called sefirot, and at the third ontological level, Binah, they are called letters.

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pathway is the "source of a byway (Ez. 21:26)." The pathway is a generality and a principle, for the byways disperse and separate and spread out from there. The pathways of the wonders are like veins within the stock of a tree, and Hokhmah is the root. They are inner and subtle essences, which no creature can contemplate except that which suckles from it, a mode of contemplation by way of suckling, not limit."

27 This is a restatement of R. Isaac's basic epistemological argument, that the infinite can be grasped in stages and levels from the finite. See above, note 12, and supra, ch. 7.1.

28 This is also an allusion to the term מָכוֹן, matrices, as used by SY itself, chs. 2 and 3.

29 R. Isaac the Blind interprets the term נתיב of SY 1:1 as the general principle, the main road, from which specifics radiate like byways. While this runs counter to usual Hebrew usage, it receives some support from Yonah Ibn Jannah, Sefer Haş-Sorašim, trans. Yehudah Ibn Tibbon, ed. W. Bacher, (Berlin, 1896), p. 327, entry נתיב: "One speaks of a pathway (נתיב) with regard to a byway (דדך) in the general sense, when you regard and speak of that which is customary, which is the clear path." Compare, too, Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Sehitah, 14:16, who uses the term נתיב in this general sense.

This definition of the term נתיב as general path is necessary in the conceptual context of R. Isaac's system, where the more ontologically superior principles are also the most general. Nahmanides, by contrast, preserves the usual Hebrew meaning of the term as "narrow trail," focussing on its obscure quality, consonant with the concept that the more ontologically superior principles are also the more recondite and difficult to perceive (PSY, 402, lines 2-7). This is one instance of Nahmanides' divergence and independence from R. Isaac the Blind's thought. See R. Isaac of Acre, PSY, 383, 3-5, who also noted this disparity.

30 See Scholem, Provence, 221, who states "Of
course, it is most probable that the entire commentary of R. Isaac the Blind does not refer at all to the creature in the sense of the contemplative man, but to the sefirot themselves... Therefore there is within them, in these sefirot, a contemplation, that their suckling is from their root, and not for the kabbalists below." With all due respect, R. Isaac refers here very plainly to contemplation by the creature, and though he is often ambiguous as to the subject of the mental processes he describes, here the intent is unmistakeable. The ambiguity may be partly intentional; R. Isaac's mystical psychology is predicated on a continuum and parallelism between the divine and human mind.

31 R. Isaac's epistemology distinguishes between conceptual knowledge and an intuitive, continuous contemplative awareness which draws upon the already abiding relationship between the knower and the known. He contrasts these two modes through a play upon the double-entendre in the biblical usage of the term "knowing," in both the carnal and conceptual sense. "Knowing," between man and woman, connotes a less intimate relationship than "suckling" which refers to the totally engaged and dependent relation of a nursing child to its mother, which R. Isaac recruits to metaphorically evoke a more intimate, direct, continuous and intuitive form of awareness. See I. Tishbi, Perus ha-Aggadot le-R. Azriel, 82, n. 5, 7. The image of drawing liquid standing for intuitive knowledge is used in the Bahir, secs. 87, as מָגוּל לָאֵל, drawing water; and in Perus Sir Ha-Sh-Sirim le-R. Ezra, 504, where מָגוּל לָאֵל, "drawing" is associated with the concept of emanation. "Suckling" is the epistemological counterpart of the ontological process and relationship of emanation. See Scholem, Provence, 220-22. C. W. Bynum, Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages, (Berkeley, 1982), notes that the image of suckling became extremely popular in the twelfth century among French Christian thinkers. For them, the paradigm of the nursing child was used variously to express the relation of the soul to God, the individual to the Church or to ecclesiastical authority, and of the world as child to God as mother (113-34). Bynum considers this an aspect of the feminization of Christian spirituality and symbolism and a sign of the higher social status of women in the twelfth century in general. (135-39) She
also suggests an anti-Catharist polemical component in the image of suckling in particular. Suckling conveys a positive sense of the body, the inherent goodness of Creation, and the continuity of the soul with Heaven, all concepts running counter to Catharist dualism and acosmism (134). It may well be that the image of suckling served similar purposes for R. Isaac, and was in part a reflection of its broad popularity in the general culture at-large. See, too, C. W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Berkeley, 1987) 269-73.
Sefer includes ha-sefer and sefer includes ha-sippur.³²

Three matrices³³ are sealed³⁴ with [the letter] yod, and

³² The reading of the three לְבָּטְכוּ of SY 1:1 as לְבָּטְכוּ, that is, writing, counting and speaking, is already explicit in R. Saadiah Gaon's commentary, Sefer Yeẓirah, trans. J. Kafah, 35. How these three are associated with the sefirot is not stated outright in R. Isaac the Blind's Commentary. Nahmanides associates writing with Ḥokhmah, counting with Binah, and speaking with the lower sefirot (PSY, 405, lines 1-3). R. Isaac of Acre repeats this lineup, but also offers a more interior series: writing is Keter, counting is Ḥokhmah, speaking is Binah (PSY, 382, lines 17-19; 383, lines 9-11.

The statement that each term includes the following term refers to the notion that in the process of emanation, the higher includes the lower, which issues forth from it and is thus included in it. See below, line 268: "All that would in the future be hewn from them was in them, just as within a man are all his offspring." Compare Isaac of Acre, PSY, 383: יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּلوּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּלוּ יָבְּל

³³ SY, 1:2 (sec. 2). See I. Gruenwald, "A Preliminary Critical Edition of Sefer Yeẓirah," 140 n. 1, who observes that this reading, which mentions the three matrices in SY 1:2, appears only in the short recension versions and one of the long recensions (Firenze Mediceo-Laurentiana Pluteo II, codex V (8), fol. 227a).

R. Isaac's comment here is based on his reading of SY 1:13 (sec. 15), which is interpolated at this point. Compare SY, 2:1 (sec. 23), where the three matrices are identified with the letters ב-כ-ש. R. Isaac associates them with the three sefirot Binah, Ḥesed, Paḥad, (line 152) and describes them as "things that emanate and are emanated and received each from each other (line 280)." See, too, R. Azriel PSY, 456. R. Isaac of Acre, while purporting to expound R. Isaac the Blind's Commentary, associates these letters with the sefirot Binah, Tiferet and the pair Yesod-Malkhat (PSY, 383, lines 14-15).

³⁴ "Sealing" is a metaphysical concept employed in
those that are sealed are sealed in the zenith with yod.\textsuperscript{35}

the cosmogony of the Heikhalot and related literature, as well as in Sefer Yeẓirah itself (1:13, sec. 15; 3:2, sec. 24; 3:5, sec. 31). See, e. g., Seder Rabbah de-
Beresit, ed. Wertheimer, vol. 1, 21, notes 10, 11: 23-
24, and Ṫiqqot de-R. Akiva, ed. Wertheimer, vol. 2, 363-
6, where sealing by letters of the divine Name
functions to secure and protect the created world from
dissolution through contact with heavenly fire aroused
through the letter contemplations of the mystic.
Compare Berayta de-Ma’aseh Beresit, ed. N. Séd, REJ,
124 (1965) 28, 46, where it seems that only the mystic
himself is endangered by the fire engendered in his
meditations. See, too, Sefer hab-Bahir, secs. 107, 110.

R. Isaac the Blind in this passage is working off
SY, 1:13 (sec. 15), see note 34, below. R. Asher b.
David, Sefer ha-Yibud, Rabba lat R. Asher b. David, 57,
explains this concept of sealing with the great Name as
a setting of limits of a created being and sustaining
that being in its form:

ב' איותיו אליא של שם הגדול

These three letters of His
great Name build six extremities. For each side is
sealed with them, and each side is sustained with the
efflux of blessing in them. Regarding this it is said
"I shall seal," like a person who carries the seal of
the king in his hand, such that no one can harm him.
So, too, each extremity stands and it sustained by the
power of the blessing that is in these three letters).
Here, as in the Heikhalot texts, sealing serves a
preservative function.

Developing this idea systematically, R. Isaac of
Acre explains the concept of sealing as analogous to
the clothing of a higher level of emanation in the
garment of a lower level (\textit{PSY}, 383, lines 23-25).
Sealing in this sense represents the final step in the
creation of an entity or essence, granting limit,
permanence and endurance. In the present case, as R.
Isaac uses the concept with respect to the sefirot,
sealing functions to stabilize a divine hypostasis at a
permanent level in the process of descending emanation.

\textsuperscript{35} This comment, precipitated by the introduction of
the term "matrices" in the context of the imbedding
of the emanated effect in the emanating cause, is based
upon R. Isaac's reading of \textit{SY} 1:13 (15), following the
short recension versions found in Leiden Warn. 24 (5)
When they are sealed with yod they are placed in His great Name and compose a single structure, they within the Name and the Name within them, faces within faces,\(^{36}\) essences.
from within essences. The sefirot are a foundation, and
ten to the nature of angelic entities. This was quoted
and developed by R. Judah b. Barzilai, *PSY*, 163: [המדים מכל גפנים
([the numbers and the letters]
are represented in faces from all directions and
sides). R. Judah makes the similarity between angelic
qualities and the numbers and letters of *Sefer Yeziarah
more explicit, but does not entirely spell out the
application to the numbers and letters of the concept
of faces-only. R. Isaac develops and extends this
concept of faces to the sefirot, saying "He made faces
above, for a person finds them on all sides, for there
is nothing above but faces, for Hokmah surrounds from
all sides (lines 153-54)." This is to say that the
upper world is a realm composed entirely of multiple
faces or aspects of the same set of principles,
emanating and unfolding from multiple perspectives. See
Scholem *Origins*, 282.

R. Isaac uses this phrase pattern "x within y"
frequently enough that it is one of the signatures of
his style. See lines 105, 186, 190, 236-37, 247, 250-
51, 344. As such, it is recognizable in citations by
his students, such as R. Ezra, "Perush le-Shiur haSh-
Sirim," introduction, in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. H. D.
Chavel, vol. 2, 478: בך ג' חותם מ"ב אتوز מות חותם במות 만רב מונימ ויריאת (כשת
בו, 'Shomot mi'bat Avotov Shemot Minim BeTovim Veyirvat [Moses], at that holy convocation,
received knowledge of God as comprised in three divine
Names composed of twelve letters, which are faces
within faces and essences within essences). This phrase
pattern can be traced back directly to the
grandiloquent style of *Heikhalot* literature. Compare,
e.g., *Seder Rabbah de-BeraSit*, *Batel Midrasot*, vol. I,
57: [המדים מכל גกี้ (This within that and
within that), and 60:
(בך ג' חותם מ"ב אتوز מות חותם במות
Twenty faces within four faces...it has faces within
seven faces and it has wings within wings) This
demonstrates not only that R. Isaac has internalized an
aspect of *Heikhalot* rhetorical style, but precisely
that aspect and its underlying conception which
corresponds to his central epistemological and
ontological theory: the successive layers of being, one
nested within the other, mutually influential and
inferential. It would seem that R. Isaac recognized the
similarity between the *Heikhalot* descriptions of
multiple levels of heaven, and the Neoplatonic concept
of a layered existence. The confluence of both
conceptions, synthesized in his thought, represents the
they are an innerness.\textsuperscript{38} The \textbf{foundation} of the structure\textsuperscript{39} made by them are the \textbf{letters},\textsuperscript{40} like stones from the mountain.\textsuperscript{41} In a mountain there are numerous veins like foundation of his entire theology.

At the risk of overinterpretation, the phrase "faces within faces, essences from within essences" may be understood: faces within faces, when viewed from the perspective of the adept contemplating upwards; essences from within essences from the perspective of the unfolding of creation downwards. In R. Isaac's Neo-Platonic epistemology, that which is more inner and spiritual is the basis for the more outer and material.

\textsuperscript{38} In \textit{SY} 1:2 (2), the letters are called a foundation. Here it is stated that the \textit{sefirot} are also a foundation in the general sense, one that is more fundamental because, in R. Isaac's Neoplatonic conception of the hierarchic continuum of emanation, they are spiritually and ontologically more interior than the letters. R. Isaac of Acre explains that R. Isaac the Blind was prompted to make this comment because, while the letters are called a foundation, "this is not to say that the letters are a foundation for the ten \textit{sefirot}, for this cannot be, for the \textit{sefirot} are a cause and the letters are effects, and how can an effect be the foundation of a cause? Rather, according to that which was in the future to issue from them they are called a foundation (R. Isaac of Acre, \textit{PSY}, 384, lines 12-14)." Compare R. Isaac the Blind, \textit{PSY}, lines 26-27.

\textsuperscript{39} See \textit{supra}, ch. 8.3, on the term "\textit{binyan}." See, too, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, \textit{Keter Ma'akhut}, 2:1, ed. D. Yarden, 39: כַּל וּיסָדוֹן סֵגִינוֹ, כֵּל דָּא* אחד אַמד (You are one, the first of all number, the foundation of all structure).

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{SY} 1:2 (2).

\textsuperscript{41} The letters are a foundation in the sense that stones comprise the foundation of a building. The stones themselves, however, are quarried from an even more fundamental source, the mountain to which the \textit{sefirot} are likened. This comparison of letters to the foundation stones of a building comes from R. Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 69: אַדְמוֹת בְּנוֹת בֵּית רַמְצִית אֶשֶּׁר לְתוֹאֵז (a man builds a house and arranges stones to be foundations). See, too, Abraham Bar Hiyya, \textit{Hegyon ban-
tunnels in the earth, which is composed of tunnels upon tunnels, and therefore "the pit cannot be filled from its hollow," for in the filling of the hollow places, the once full places remain lacking dirt, for deficiencies, by

Nefes, 37.

42 R. Isaac's use of the term תודלות המראה יבש והלאה for חולי is based on his interpretation of Berakhot 3b, 59a; see following note. For the general idea of cavities in the earth, compare Ketubot 11a, concerning how the dead roll their way to the Land of Israel through the underground tunnels: מרחיקותלות הן הבתרות (tunnels are made for them in the ground). R. Isaac here seems to have in mind a permanent geological feature of mountains and of the earth in general. See supra, ch. 7.2, concerning the image of subterranean passages to represent the recondite nature of truth as used by William of Conches in his unpublished commentary on Macrobius, cited in P. Dronke, Fabula, 48-49.

43 Berakhot 3b, 59a.

44 Most medieval commentators interpreted the term חולי to refer not to the hollow of a pit, but to the earth dug from the pit: Rashi, Berakhot 3b, R. Isaac of Dampierre, Tosaphot Berakhot 3a, R. Nissim Gaon, Berakhot 4a, R. Hananel, Sanh. 16a, Sefer be-Arukh, entry חולי. It is this earth which the proverb says cannot refill the pit from which it was taken. Tosaphot Sanh. 16a also mentions another interpretation: the dirt taken from a pit and used to rim the pit as an entrenchment.

Ben Yehudah, Milon, II, p. 1465-6, note 2, cites Shab. 99 and Eruv. 83, where חולי evidently refers to a perforated stone used to rim a well. He cites Arabic parallels, and associates this usage with חולי as denoting the hollow spinal vertebrae. This is the definition R. Isaac seems to have in mind: a hollow space, from the Hebrew root חולות, which he takes as synonymous with חולי, used above, line 14, and below, line 24. R. Isaac therefore explains the proverb differently: The pit cannot be filled from its hollow, or on account of its hollow. The explanation he gives, however, that in filling the hollow places the full places become hollow, is similar to that of Rashi and R. Isaac of Dampierre, Berakhot 3b.
their nature, cannot be filled. Thus the essences are subtle, until a person reveals them and makes impressions in them and engraves engravings and hews hewings: then the cavity appears from whatever place it starts.

Bellinah they are all suspended. The lamed is a letter in Hokhmah. Yod is in all. The mem and the heb

The idea is that deficiency is to be understood as an abstract essence whose existence persists irrespective of the place it is shifted to.

R. Isaac reads the talmudic dictum as a mining image. The persistence of a deficiency or hollow space as dirt is shifted from one location to another, serves as an image for the process of tracking and uncovering a subtle, abstract essence by following its traces in the phenomenal world to their source.

SY 1:2 (2) "is usually translated "insubstantial." R. Isaac here will expound the word according to the notarikon method, as an acrostic in which each letter stands for a sefirot, and the whole word expresses the process of emanation.

Job 26:7: (He suspended the earth on nothing). This is to say that the sefirot are all suspended in a manner signified in the word "belyema". The letter bet is to be read here as a preposition, as well as a reference to the sefirot Hokhmah, "in" which all are comprised, as in lines 1-2, above. This sentence can be paraphrased: "in lamed-yod-mem-heh they are all suspended."

According to this reading, the letter lamed signifies the sefirot Binah, which is in the sefirot Hokhmah, represented by the letter bet, according to line 1, above. Lamed is clearly associated with Binah in later kabbalistic works. Among R. Isaac's students, see Jacob b. Sheshet, Nešiv Devarim Nekhošim, ed. G. Vajda, (Jerusalem, 1969) 95 (ch. 5, line 76-77):

The lamed... is called in rabbinic terms "the castle floating in the air [Hag. 15b]. Therefore I say that it indicates the return of all creatures to the first principle). The return of Creation to its source is the
become spirit from which comes the governance of their offspring.\textsuperscript{51} **Foundation:** it does not say they are a foundation except with respect to what is to come from them in the future, and the cause is the beginning of the foundation.\textsuperscript{52} So too, the mountain is the beginning of all the structures that come from it, for it is the beginning of the impressions.\textsuperscript{53} After the impressions He engraved the special function of the sefirah Binah. See supra, ch. 8.4.1. See, too, Sefer hat-Temunah, (reprint of Lemberg, 1892) 17b; Zohar, II, 159a; Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim, ch. 27.15. What suggested this association to R. Isaac the Blind is not entirely clear. Possibly, the number value thirty for \textit{lam\textdblash}, representing the third set of ten principles contained in \textit{Binah}, contributed to the association. See M. Idel, "Has-Sefirot se-me-'al has-Sefirot," 245-46, regarding traditions ascribed by Ibn Shuib to R. Isaac the Blind, concerning the orthographic representation of the divine Name with three letters \textit{yod} associated with three sets of ten principles: נספ סֶזירא תませ פא"מ צא"מ , יד רד מ , יד דגרד ד . \textsuperscript{50} This is to say, it represents all ten sefirot, according to the numerical value of the letter. R. Isaac identifies the letter \textit{yod} with the sefirah \textit{Hokhmah}, lines 41-42 below. \textsuperscript{51} According to R. Isaac of Acre, the letters \textit{mem}, \textit{beh} represent the Tetragrammaton as a whole (\textit{PSV}, 384, lines 29-30), that is, the entire sefirotic structure which emanates from \textit{Hokhmah} and \textit{Binah}. The word \textit{תמרים} is read as a notarikon representing the unfolding of the entire sefirotic process. MSS Harvard Heb. 58/11 and Cambridge Or. 2116,8/9, read: "\textit{Beilmah}: all whatness is included in \textit{Hokhmah}, which is the letter \textit{yod}, and \textit{yod} is in all, and the \textit{mem} and \textit{beh} become a power from which issues the governance of their offspring." \textsuperscript{52} See line 19 and note, above. The "cause" refers to the sefirot, which are the beginning of the foundation, here, the letters. \textsuperscript{53} See line 20, above.
Letters and signs are different, for signs sometimes have no image, but only an appearance, such as the appearance of white and of red and so forth. For a sign is the appearance of a change in something, which has changed from its color and from its condition of being, as was said, "lie on your left side (Ez. 4:4)," and it is written, "it is

54 R. Isaac here employs a series of terms taken from Sefer Yezirah, and treats them as precise technical terms representing successive levels of divine creative action through the image of successive depths of "carving." According to R. Isaac, "engrave," from SY itself, denotes the second most refined degree, while שור, inscribe or impress, a term he himself adds, is the first degree, these being the first steps towards the sculpting of a complete material entity, as yet too subtle for the apprehension of human thought. "Inscribe" is used in sense of lightly marking before writing, as in Gen. R. 81 with reference to Dan. 10:21.

55 For מראה as image or shape, compare Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 1:1,3.

56 The term מראה as mere appearance or accident, in contradistinction to essence, is used by Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 4:3, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon: כל מה שישו הם מראה של מה שקרוי גיא genom מ_of_the_marks_or_symbols_of_the_changes_in_the_heavens_is_not_frightening (and of the signs which change in the Heavens do not be afraid). The idea is that a sign is something which has become distinctive by being out of the ordinary. This definition has a precedent in rabbinic legal thought, in the laws concerning lost objects, where anomalous change functions as a sign of ownership. See Bava Mezir'ah 21a.
a sign to the house of Israel (Ez. 4:3)"; a sign, without change of form or nature, for there is no form separate and changing from another, rather one thing that is turned into several matters. So, too, voice and appearance are signs. But letters are things which come from their cause, from the term ba'al, for a letter is something which derives and is shaped and receives from the place from which it was hewn.88

The number ten.59 What was mentioned in the two aforementioned sections60 were the pathways and letters from which essence is apprehended.61 Therefore it delayed until here to say the number ten, whose meaning is the apprehendable essences,62 that are received in their

58 This passage is based upon Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 4:25, regarding the distinction between signs as used in human thought, speech and writing, and divine language. See supra, ch. 7.5, for an analysis of lines 29-35.

59 SY 1:3 (sec. 3), 141.

60 Sefer Yeẓirah 1:1 (1), 1:2 (2).

61 The pathways and letters, which constitute the divine Names, enable the apprehension of the essences, or sefirot.

62 Sefer Yeẓirah first introduced the modes of cognition by which the essential categories, the ten sefirot, may be grasped. Now it proceeds to focus discussion on those categories. R. Isaac's definition of sefirot as apprehendable essences combines ontological and cognitive dimensions. The sefirot are subsistent and permanent, that is, essences, whose number is determined by what the mind can properly grasp of them. See lines 47-60 for his key discussion of the cognitive conditions for recognizing and enumerating the sefirot.
in the "lifting of their hands" upwards. Five are Nezah, Hod, Tiferet, Hesed, Hokmah, behold five.

For R. Isaac, the process of reception and elevation is the means for the cognition of metaphysical principles. R. Isaac developed this theory as a Neoplatonic interpretation of a conception of R. Saadiah Gaon as presented by R. Judah b. Barzilai. According to R. Isaac, spiritual forms descend to be received by the human mind, after which they ascend to their origin, an ascent which the mind traces intellectually in order to grasp the true nature of the forms it has apprehended. The mind's tracing of the ascent represents the process of abstraction of the originally received intimation of the forms. This theory, rooted in Middle Platonic epistemology, also bears strong resemblance to the twelfth-century French theory of symbolic signification, comprising a collatio and elevatio. See supra, ch. 7.6 in detail.

Neh. 8:6. This is an elegant poetic insertion of a verse. The section Sefer Yeẓirah 1:3 (sec. 3) under discussion compares the ten sefirot to the ten fingers, in what I. Gruenwald identifies as the first instance of macrocosm-microcosm theory in Jewish mysticism ("Critical Notes on the Sefer Yeẓirah, 486). R. Isaac takes the image of sefirot as fingers of the hand, plus his theory of the mode of apprehension or "grasp" of metaphysical principles through an elevation of thought parallel to the elevation of the principles themselves, and ties them together with the biblical image of a pious raising of hands in praise of God. The third person plural possessive of "hands" in the verse refers to the assembled congregation. In R. Isaac's insertion, "their hands" can refer both to the sefirot and to those who apprehend them, a microcosmic act parallel to a macrocosmic process, and very much an act of praise of the divine.

R. Asher b. David explains more explicitly: Sefer ha-Yihud, in Kabbalat R. Asher b. David, 59: "When there are adepts in Israel, when they raise their hands in prayer, they raise their hands to the heights of heaven and hint with their ten fingers that efflux should flow from the ten sefirot, to bestow blessing upon us)."
'Atarah with Ẓaddik, which are the power\textsuperscript{65} of the dimension\textsuperscript{66} of Paḥad, with Paḥad and with Binah; and Ḥokhmah\textsuperscript{67} mediates all:\textsuperscript{68} behold, five overagainst five.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} The term אַתָּרָה here is used in the sense of effective power or force that derives from a higher source. See E. Ben Yehudah, vol. 3, 2316b-2317b for numerous examples. The idea is that 'Atarah and Ẓaddik enforce the attribute of Paḥad.

\textsuperscript{66} The term פָּהַד is one of a set of designations for sefirah R. Isaac employs in the Commentary (lines 75-76, 124, 353). See supra, ch. 8.4. As a standard term for divine "attribute" in Hebrew philosophic literature, it indicates R. Isaac's association of his sefirah theory with the philosophic doctrine of divine attributes (See E. Gottlieb, andExpect, 298). R. Isaac, however, following R. Judah b. Barzilai (PSY, 148), also stresses the etymological connection to the notion of measurement and number (lines 75-76). Accordingly, it is translated here and henceforth as "dimension," to convey measure as well as aspect, quality, attribute.

\textsuperscript{67} See supra, ch. 8.3 for a discussion of the names for the sefirot.

\textsuperscript{68} The term "mediate" comes from Sefer Yeẓirah, 2:1 (23); 3:3 (28); 3:4 (29, 30); 6:1 (25, 26), where it signifies the action of a middle, moderating principle between two extremes. Certain sefirot in R. Isaac's system, those associated with the "middle line," also function as such mediators. See H. Padaya, "Pegam we-Tikkan," 164 n. 30. Hokhmah has the distinction of mediating all the sefirot, as R. Isaac explains below, line 42.

\textsuperscript{69} Several group configurations of the sefirot appear throughout the Commentary. Here, in a formulation whose main outline became highly influential in the history of Kabbalah, they are divided according to the concept of right and left hands. This is an extension of the fingers and hands image of SY 1:3 (3) and its correlation with the midrashic motif of the right hand of divine mercy and left hand of divine rigor (E. g., Pirke de-R. ḤEliezer, ch. 48; Tanḥuma, Beshallah, 15, on Lam. 2:3, Ps. 118:16).

In R. Isaac's system, the five sefirot Neẓah, Hod, Tiferet, Ḥesed, Hokhmah are implicitly associated
Regarding that which it says and the covenant of one: the yod,\(^70\) that was upright and became bent,\(^71\) is aligned in the

...
David, 27, lines 1-5. In this scheme, R. Asher correlates the four letters of one divine Name to the other, letter by letter in sequence.

The aggadic source for the image and terminology of the bent letter yod is Menahot 29b: "and below it is bent in the middle, above, in the tongue," and below it is bent in the tongue.

Why was the world to come created with the letter yod? Because the righteous there are few. Why is its head bent? Because the heads of the righteous there are bent because of their deeds, which do not resemble one another. In this aggadah, however, the form of the yod is bent in essence, whereas R. Isaac’s formulation indicates a temporal dimension: it was straight at one time and became bent. R. Asher’s paraphrase indicates that the midrashic version of the Tzioni de-R. Akiva, version B, Batel Midraṣot, vol. 2, 406, may also have been influential in suggesting this temporal sequence: "whoever diminishes himself in this world...inherits the life of the world to come that was created with yod." Compare Ma’aseh Merkavah, Batel Midraṣot, vol. 1, 62. Also in the background may be a nexus of midrashim that speak of the diminishing of Adam from an upright stance, due to his sin, and the reinstatement of that upright stance in the Messianic Age, from Hag. 12a; Torat Kohanim, Behukotai, 3:7; Beresit Rabbi 12:5; Bemidbar Rabbi 13:11; Tanhumah, Bereshit, sec. 6; Tzioni de-R. Akiva, version A, Batel Midraṣot, vol. 2, 373 and n. 90.

R. Asher indicates that the overall context in which these midrashim were placed is R. Isaac’s theory of the relationship of the letters of the divine Name. In this theory, as it is reflected in the writings of R. Asher and the Gerona circle, the letter waw is regarded as implicit in the letter yod, that is, yod must be pronounced by means of waw. See R. Azriel, Perus hak-Kaddis, in G. Scholem, Seridim Ḥadasha, 216:11 (there is no yod without waw), 217: 11 (there is no hidden yod in the letter yod); and Perus Yipud ha-Sem, 218, and n. 8: "there is no yod in which a waw is not generated as its hidden vowel." See, also, R. Goetschel, "Hy'hy'asher Hy'hy'ezel Mekubalei Gerona," Neḥkeret Yeruslayim be-Mahsevet Yisrael, 6:3-4 (Jerusalem, 1987) 287-98; H. Padaya, Pegam We-Tikkan, 176-85.

Putting these elements together, the aggadic and midrashic motifs are interpreted by the Provencal kabbalists as encoding an ontological comparison of the
covenant (of circumcision), and they are in the middle, this parallel to that, resembling the yod that is in [the shape of] the brain in the head, standing for the Ḥokhmah which is within, and surrounds all. So, too, the brain

divine Names Ḫybh and Yhwh in terms of the letters yod and waw. In the higher divine Name, Ḫybh, which corresponds to the world to come, from which all emanated and to which all returns, the yod, the third letter, is upright. This uprightness means that the letter waw, a vertical line signifying the principle of uprightness, remains implicit and hidden within this letter yod, apparent only when the letter is articulated. By contrast, the yod of the lower divine Name, Yhwh, corresponding to this world, is bent, and the waw, now the third letter, is precipitated out as a distinct letter of that Name, a hint of the yod of the higher divine Name.

72 According to R. Isaac of Acre, PSY, 386, this represents the sefirah Binah.

73 According to R. Isaac of Acre, PSY, 386, this represents the sefirah Yesod.

The overall idea of these lines seems to be that the Tetragrammaton represents the lower sefirot, and is designated in terms of the letter waw and the sefirah Yesod, its lowest element. As such, the initial letter yod is "bent" and contained "in the covenant (of circumcision)." This is to say it is in a compressed and diminished form in the lower sefirotic realm, as compared with its full, upright stature in the upper sefirotic world, in the divine Name Ḫybh. This diminished form is symbolized by circumcision, both graphically, and morally, signifying the curbing of the sexual appetite. Whether this "bent" condition is an aspect of cosmic catastrophe, similar to Padaya's interpretation of the relationship between the letters waw and heh of the Tetragrammaton (Pegam we-Tikkun, 157–280), or whether this is just the essential deficiency in quality of being of a lower level of emanation as compared to a higher, is not entirely clear from this passage.

74 While the term中间 in Sefer Yezirah generally means the middle between extremes, R. Isaac also uses it in the sense of "within," that is, that which is
is in the middle of the head, and from there they receive, this way and that, and from every side and every corner there is from it a suckling for all.\textsuperscript{76} Therefore it was necessary to say, after this section, ten and not eleven, for they are only ten, for the \textit{Hokhmah} is counted with all of them, just as the Name whose beginning is \textit{h} is counted with all of them.\textsuperscript{77} \textbf{Is aligned: when you take two \textit{yodin},}

both central and inner. This is similar to R. A. Ibn Ezra's usage in Ex. 8:18: וְדַרְצָתַהוּ לֶחְוֶית עַל כַּוָל הַעֲבָדָה (the spirit of man is within the body). See H. Padaya, "Pegam we-Tikkun," 168 nn. 42, 43.

\textsuperscript{75} See A. Ibn Ezra, \textit{Sefer ha-Sem}, 6a, describing the letter \textit{yod}: וְדַרְצָתַהוּ לֶחְוֶית עַל כַּוָל הַעֲבָדָה (its shape is like a semicircle, to teach about its entire nature, which means that it encompasses all). Compare \textit{Yesod Mor}a, 19; \textit{Sefer ha-\textit{Zahut} 27a.}

The idea that the spiritually and ontologically superior entity is both within and surrounding that which is inferior is a Neoplatonic concept rooted in the nature of emanation. In the emanation continuum, the higher is both more interior and more general. This paradox is expressed by Ibn Gabirol in numerous formulations, especially with respect to the general intellect, which, in its oneness, as the origin of all entities, penetrates all entities, and encompasses all entities. See \textit{Mekor Hayyim}, 2:8, 20; 3:15; 5:30. See J. Guttman, \textit{Philosophies}, 99. See, also, \textit{Sir ha-Yihud}, day 3, describing God: \textit{וְעָלֶה בָּךְ כָּל, וּבָּךְ תַּהֲקָם כָּל תָּחַת בָּךְ} (Surrounding all and filling all, when all came into being, You are in all).

\textsuperscript{76} The example of the brain that is both within the head and yet influences all parts of the body is meant to illustrate that which is both centered within and yet encompasses that in which it is centered, in the sense of influencing it. For the association of \textit{Hokhmah} and the brain, see Abraham Ibn Ezra, Torah Commentary, Ex. 23:25: \textit{כִּי בֵינָם הָאָדָם וְהָאָלָם, וְדַרְצָתָהוּ לֶחְוֶית עַל כַּוָל הַעֲבָדָה, וְעָלֶה בָּךְ כָּל תָּחַת בָּךְ, וּבָּךְ תַּהֲקָם כָּל תָּחַת בָּךְ} (For the soul is wisdom, and its place in the brain of the head, and from it issues the power of all the senses and the movements of the will).
this facing that, they encompass all that is between them,\textsuperscript{78}
and all suckle from there.

\textsuperscript{77} The Name \textit{ṣḥḥḥ} refers to \textit{Keter} (Isaac of Acre, \textit{PSY}, 383), which is hidden in \textit{Hokhmah}, and implicit in all \textit{sefirot}. In a similar way, \textit{Hokhmah} is counted with all \textit{sefirot}. R. Isaac states that this aspect of \textit{Hokhmah} explains the thematic transition from \textit{SY} 1:3 (sec. 3) to 1:4 (sec. 4): since \textit{Hokhmah} and \textit{Keter} are counted with all the \textit{sefirot}, it is necessary to clarify which are counted as \textit{sefirot} and what the total number of \textit{sefirot} are. See lines 47–54, below.

\textsuperscript{78} A. Ibn Ezra, \textit{Sefer ha-Ṣe'arim}, 6b: the letter \textit{yod}, graphically a semicircle with the value ten, is pronounced by use of the letters \textit{י"ע}, which add up to twenty (10+6+4=20), to indicate a full circle that encompasses all: \begin{quote}
בעבר ר"י יותיע ו phủי, במובמה וה זכה כולם
הרובות על ענפי.
\end{quote}
R. Isaac applies this idea to his enumeration of the \textit{sefirot}. According to R. Asher b. David:
\begin{quote}
ויושן י"ע וה ה"ע פ פרס תכלת, ורות מי סופר ר"י כולם
 penet המלך לע ה"ע ו יותיע, י"ע סופר יותיע למכה.
\end{quote}
(There are those who count \textit{Hokhmah} as two, because it surrounds all, and this is what the Rabbis said, that just as there is a divine Presence above, so there is a divine Presence below, for so too, you find that regarding the six extremities that were sealed with the great Name, that \textit{yod} is above and \textit{yod} is below). R. Asher here clearly refers to R. Isaac, though as an anonymous opinion dissenting from the consensus, as counting the \textit{sefirah} \textit{Hokhmah} with both groups of \textit{sefirot}, that is, with all, twice. As such, \textit{Keter} is not counted separately and explicitly as one of the ten, but remains joined with \textit{Hokhmah}, as in lines 48–51, below.
Ten and not nine: even though **Hokhmah** is with all, do not say "how can I say it is a *sefira*?" And not eleven: and if you say that since **Hokhmah** is the beginning of the thought of speech, how can I not say eleven? Do not say so, and do not separate **Hokhmah**, [for **Hokhmah** is] from **Keter**. Another version: **Binah** is considered the

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79 *SY* 1:4 (sec. 4), 141.

80 See lines 44-45 above.

81 Even though **Hokhmah** is associated with all the *sefirot*, as stated above, lines 42-45, it is distinguished as a principle in itself, and as such qualifies to be enumerated as a *sefira*.

82 The emanative order of the *sefirot* is correlated with the process of speech, divine and human. R. Isaac distinguishes the beginning of speech, the thought of speech, and the cause of the thought of speech, corresponding to **Binah**, **Hokhmah**, and **Keter**, respectively.

83 MS Leiden 24/25 has this insertion as part of the text.

84 Improper separation of *sefirot* is the cardinal sin of Kabbalah. See G. Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, 79, n. 2, quoting R. Abraham b. David concerning the crucial importance of the lack of separation between the divine attributes of judgment and mercy: ונה גם כל המאת השפירה האמת עמה הפרפרים מזרתطلقין צוים בה, כי ידוע זה האות ראו הכך זה התאוד צורה זכר בחרות והחרים גמרין דמיט לא חצלו ידי הפרפרים ורחייה לכל חצץ הפרל יהיה הפרמל יראת יסוד רוחות וה photoshop של האות שמשתמש וירחית פיל כל חצץ בחזרה שלף ויסוד תכל(settings שלף ויסוד תכל) וכאן יסמך pode of truth whose work is true there are two reasons for [being double-faced]. The first is that it is known that two contrary principles were emanated: one that is entirely judgment and its partner that is entirely mercy. If they were not emanated as double-faced, each one would act according to its attribute, and they would appear as two independent divine powers, each one acting without connection to its partner and without its assistance. But now that they were created
double-faced, all their actions are together, in equality and with complete unity, and there is no separation between them). This is the first recorded instance of kabbalistic concern for the impropriety of separating divine attributes in consideration of the danger of imputing divine dualism or polytheism. See supra, ch. 5.4, concerning R. Isaac's letter to Gerona, where he identifies Elisha b. Abuya's theological sin of "uprooting the plantings," (Hag. 15a) with the separation of sefirot from Ein Sof and from each other.

This issue should be located in context of philosophical discussions of the unity of God, such as Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Hovot hal-Levavot, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, 1:7, concerning Euclid's definition of absolute one: ה FLAC מראזול הכנור בוגר ודרבר, שאר עליון יאנוג המיתות על אך עוגה פא, האחדות הוא האחדות. הוא תיירות מדורה רבודר, שאר עליון יאנוג. שכל התת_merge ספיגר בושם פוגים, מקום התת_merge לא דיבר ולא התת_merge פמיד (The matter of which we must be aware concerning unity is that it is complete oneness and aloneness, it has no connection or comparison to any matter, no multiplicity and no number in any aspect, it is not joined to anything nor separated from anything). See, too, 1:8, 9, and 10: המדרום ממאקד ממאקד המ.setLayoutParams האירוג הכסף המרגל ודרבות, כי מצרי עשר לכל עליון המ(Csqu ממאקד עם תון ממאקד בהנה התת_merge המ다가 קורא עה). The inseparability of divine attributes as understood by the Jewish philosophers becomes an essential aspect of the kabbalistic concept of the unity of the sefirot in the thought of R. Abraham b. David and his son, R. Isaac.

In the present instance, the issue of separation takes on a further significance, as part of what appears to have been an internal debate among kabbalists. R. Isaac's definition of sefirotah on the basis of this passage is that divine principle which can be distinguished by thought and therefore counted. In this sense, the sefirot, while essentially unified, have distinctly discernable qualities. In lines 38-45, above, R. Isaac notes that Hokhmah is listed with two sets of sefirot, that it "mediates all," and that "it is central and it surrounds all." He says that on this basis, SY warns not to count eleven, but only ten sefirot: Hokhmah should not be counted twice, inner and outer, above and below. Here, lines 46-49, he notes that even though Hokhmah has two aspects, as "with" all beginning of speech. Even though you cannot apprehend the
thought of the Scribe, the Author, so as to reflect upon

the sefirot and yet also as the "beginning of the thought of speech," it should not be counted as two. By way of corroboration, R. Asher b. David (Kabbalat R. Asher b., David, 23) comments that "there are those who count Hokhmah twice because it surrounds all." R. Asher actually seems to justify this view with a statement from the Bahir, 171: (Just as the divine Presence is above, so the divine Presence is below), that is, there Hokhmah is both above and below the other sefirot. It should be noted that in context, the Bahir seems, in fact, to count Hokhmah as one sefirah surrounding all. R. Isaac interprets "ten and not eleven" as a refutation of the view of a double Hokhmah, one above and one below the other sefirot, a view that "separates" one aspect of Hokhmah from Keter. Instead, R. Isaac asserts that Hokhmah comes directly from Keter or Naḥsavah.

This, R. Isaac's first interpretation of ten and not nine... ten and not eleven is significantly different from those of R. Azriel and Nahmanides. His alternative version is similar to theirs, see below.

85 This follows MS Harvard Heb. 58/11. Other MSS have: "Binah is the thought of... " redefining Binah in the terms used previously for Hokhmah.

86 There are two major variants to lines 47-49, with minor differences within each group. The translation follows MSS Harvard Heb. 58/11, Cambridge Add. 671, Cambridge Or. 2116,8, Cincinnati 524/3, Montefiore 313.

The other main variant, beginning at line 47, is as follows: "even though it is with all, do not say "how can one say it is a Sefirah?" And not eleven: and if you say that since Hokhmah is the beginning of |the thought of| speech, how can one not say eleven? Do not say so, and do not separate Hokhmah from Keter, which is the thought of the beginning of speech." That which is "with all" is clearly Hokhmah, as in the other variant, based on line 44, above. The argument ten and not eleven is not quite clear, however. Scholem suggests that the phrase "the thought of" is a mistaken insertion. Hokhmah is "the beginning of speech," and Keter is "the thought of the beginning of speech." The implication seems to be that Hokhmah and Keter should not be separated as distinct sefirot, a position that is difficult to maintain, since Keter is listed here and elsewhere as a sefirah.
and extend\textsuperscript{88} to the cause of the thought of the beginning of speech, they are nought but ten.\textsuperscript{89} And do not say nine, since there is no end to the cause of the thought of the

\textsuperscript{87} These two epithets for God seem, in context, to refer to His role as enumerating sefirot and composing the letters of divine speech, respectively. The term מדריך, writer or scribe, is related to counting, as one who counts letters, in Hagigah 15b, Kiddushin 30a. This is strictly a human professional title, however. Exodus Rabbah 28:3 alludes indirectly to God as מדריך, but in the sense of a teacher of Torah. Abraha Ibn Ezra speaks of God as מדריך, defined as מדריך (author of the [Hebrew] language) in Sefer Ga\textsuperscript{88}ot, ed. G. H. Lipman (Fiorda, 1827, reprinted Jerusalem, 1970) 14.

\textsuperscript{88} The term מדריך seems to be used here as a kind of calque intended to convey the double entendre of the term s'étendre, as extension in space and in thought, such as s'étendre sur un sujet. It connotes the expansive reach and mastery of thought over an idea or object of thought. There is here a reflection of R. Isaac's theory of cognition, as the expansion of mind along a continuum of hierarchic relations, to the source of a given object or idea. The term מדריך is later used in this sense by Yehiel Nissim da Pisa, Minh\textsuperscript{89}ot, ed. D. Kaufman (Berlin, 1898) 25: מדריך סת.RequestMethod א"י לאו גמסיר וידוע א"י ידע ידוע וידוע הקשה דוחה. Compare line 110 below.

\textsuperscript{89} Keter is the cause of the thought, Hokhm\textsuperscript{88}ah, of the beginning of speech, Binah. Even though Keter cannot be apprehended, it can still be inferred as the tenth sefirot.

This is similar to the interpretations of Na\textsuperscript{88}manides and R. Azriel. For Na\textsuperscript{88}manides, ten and not nine means that even though thought cannot grasp Keter, a person can perceive that it is a source, however hidden, and therefore fit to be counted as a sefirot. (PSY, in Kiryat Sefer, 6, (1930) 406, lines 13-17). Similarly, For R. Azriel, ten and not nine means not to exclude Keter from the sefirot when counting upwards. He adds that it also means not to exclude Ma\textsuperscript{88}h\textsuperscript{88}ah when counting downwards. For both, ten and not eleven means do not include Ein Sof in the count of sefirot (PSY, Kit\textsuperscript{88}vei Ramban, vol. 2, 454). Na\textsuperscript{88}manides' interpretation is similar.
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beginning of speech, how can I deem it a sefirah?\(^90\) Do not say they are eleven, nor nine. Even though speech is within \(^2\)Eln Sof, even so, there is a subtle cause or subtle essence which thought apprehends, through reflection upon a hint of it. Therefore it is a sefirah in thought, for it is a subtle essence by which there is ten.\(^91\) The things\(^92\) have dimensions and measure, but thought has no measure, so they\(^93\) proceed ten by ten.\(^94\) Therefore, from the subtle come

\(^90\) This is a restatement of the previous argument.

\(^91\) R. Isaac here defines a sefirah at its abstract limit as that which can be distinguished, even indirectly, as an identifiable cause or essence by the faculty of thought. His position is based on the principle cited by Moses Ibn Ezra in the name of Hermes Trismegistus, in \(< Arugat hab-Bosem, 123, 134, that the finite mind cannot grasp the infinite. Even though divine speech is rooted in the infinite, it has an essence or causal principle which can be discerned as distinct or discrete in its manifestation, and therefore grasped in an allusive way.

\(^92\) The "things" are the sefirot. The term is probably derived from Hagigah 12a, evoking the sense of rei, expressing the substantiality of the sefirot as real attributes. Scholom translates יבריו as logos, Origins, 114-18. This reading receives support from Azriel of Gerona, Perush ha-Aggadot, 56b, lines 17-18: ומן ומן והשו הוה שמה בצלאל borne רדיני הבור וגו' והשמש (From the Will and the Words come the sayings, which comprise the Will and the Speech that is completed in speech and action). Compare ibid, 41b, lines 5-6. R. Azriel uses the term tuyên clearly in the sense of words, compared to "sayings" and generalized as דברי. Here, too, in R. Isaac's Commentary, דברי are contrasted with thought (line 54) and used in a sense parallel to דברו (lines 48-53). Nonetheless, the vagueness and ambiguity of the term may be intentional, to convey both meanings.

\(^93\) The antecedent of the feminine plural here is the sefirot.
the inscribed, for ten come from ten, subtle ones from the
innerness of the subtle ones.\textsuperscript{85} We recognize, by the power
of the intimation of thought, that which we apprehend and

\textsuperscript{84} This is an interpretation of the end of the
current mishnah, \textit{SY} 1:4 (4): \textit{וְיִדְמוּת בְּשֵׂרָאֹלָאִית לַכְּחָזָא שְׁכִית} (Their measure is ten, for they have no limit). See
next note.

\textsuperscript{85} Prior to R. Isaac, the usual interpretation of
the endless quality of the ten \textit{sefirot}, understood as
principles of number, is the progression of the base
ten number system in sets of ten \textit{ad infinitum}. See
Saadiah b. Joseph, \textit{Sefer Yeẓirah}, 54; Dunash Ibn Tamim,
\textit{Perush Sefer Yeẓirah}, (London, 1902), 26-27; Abraham Ibn
Ezra, \textit{Sefer ha-Mispar}, ed. M. Silberberg (Jerusalem,
1970) 3; Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 161. There is one
distinctive interpretation, however, brought by Judah
b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 148, which takes a different
approach, positing a set of ten existential categories
which are, in themselves, infinite: "There is one
interprets saying that the Holy One, blessed be He,
created ten unique things, numbered in correspondence
to the ten \textit{sefirot}, and the measure of these ten unique
things has no limit. The meaning of "their measure" is
from the term "measurement," which is to say that the
measure of these ten things has no end, and these are
"the depth of beginning and the depth of end." This
interpretation has a proto-kabbalistic conception of
\textit{sefiraḥ}-like entities which are created yet infinite;
not \textit{sefirot} \textit{per se}, in the standard pre-kabbalistic
sense, rather, entities of a transcendent nature.

R. Isaac puts the standard conception of the
infinitude of the \textit{sefirot}, in progressive sets of ten,
in a hierarchic, Neoplatonic setting. Refined states of
being emanate forth less refined states of being, or in
the upward direction, refined, ontologically superior
states of being can be inferred from less refined
states, in progressive series. The interpretation of
the \textit{sefirot} brought by R. Judah b. Barzilai, with its
conception of a set of ten unique, infinite principles
parallel to the \textit{sefirot}, may have contributed to
shaping his conception. See, too, M. Idel, \textit{Pas-Sefirot
Se-ae-cal has-Sefirot}, 241-46 regarding three sets of
ten \textit{sefirot} contained in the upper three \textit{sefirot}
that which we should leave, because there is no apprehension by thought through intimation from there on. For in a creature's apprehension through the innerness of the intimation of thought there is no power to apprehend Ein Sof, for all comprehension is within Hokhmah from Haskel, which is the subtle intimation of His thought in Ein Sof. Therefore it says ten and not nine, for thought cannot apprehend so as to give measure above Hokhmah, nor even within Hokhmah, except through comprehension, as it says, comprehend in wisdom. Comprehend could only be an

themselves.

The term דפז, "intimation," is used here in a technical sense, following the discussion which opens Halevi's discourse on divine Names in Kuzari, 4:3. Commenting on the divine Name "Adonai," HaLevi states: יהו פרש אִל הַדָּבָר, וַאֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ מִמֵּעֲשָׂה, יִכְוּנָּה דפז, כְּי יִסְּרֵמוּ אֶל הַדָּבָר הַהוֹדוּל בֶּן מַכְּלָל מַמָּטָּה, מֵהַמשֵׁש יִלָּשׁוּ רַאשּׁוֹ, נַעֲשֶׂה יִרְפָּר אֶל הַשָּׁפָל רוֹמֵרָה שַּׁאָה בַּל הָאוֹר בָּנוֹת, רוֹמֵרָה חַלְלָה אֶל חַלְלָה הַלְוָת, רוֹמֵרָה רוֹבָּה אָל רוֹבָּה, דַּעַת רַעַת בָּאָשֶׂר נְפֹלָה נְבָעָל. (It is like an intimation of a thing which, in truth, is elevated beyond intimation. For intimation applies to that aspect which transcends specification, for there are [terms] which intimate matters which are influenced by Him, that serve Him directly, just as one intimates the intellect, saying it is in the heart or brain, or one intimates this or that intellect, even though in truth there is no intimation of that which is not bounded by place). The expression דפז, in the sense of that which is excluded from, or transcends, a general category, is noted as a Judeo-Arabic idiom by M. H. Gottstein, Tahbirah, 78, sec. 179.3.4. Halevi here uses דפז, "intimation" in a manner similar to Moses Ibn Ezra's use of הערכה, "metaphor": an indication in finite terms of that which is infinite or transcendent (Arugat hab-Bosem, 134-37. See supra, ch. 7.2). R. Isaac follows HaLevi's usage.
infinitive, but if it is an imperative, it is only for the adepts. It does not say "comprehend wisdom" or "know wisdom," but comprehend in wisdom, for wisdom comes through comprehension, for comprehension is comprehending within wisdom and not comprehending of wisdom, rather to comprehend the comprehension there is in wisdom. And how is this

98 The phrase "ten and not nine" is explained here as addressing the possibility that the sefirot Keter and even Hokmah would not be discernable, that is, counted to yield a sum of ten, were an intimation of them not facilitated through Binah.

The various permutations of the term , when used in the sense of mental activity rather than for the sefirah itself, are here translated as a form of the term "comprehension," rather than the usual term "understanding," to convey the function of the sefirah Binah as that which gathers and assesses multiple principles, as in line 74, below.

99 As an infinitive, "to comprehend in wisdom" describes a paradigmatic cosmic process. As an imperative, an intellective act at such an exalted level of mind could only be expected of an adept. The term as denoting an intellectual and spiritual elite, especially one privy to an esoteric understanding of Torah, was used by R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, e.g. in his Torah commentary to Gen. 4:24. From R. Isaac the Blind on, it became the stock designation for kabbalistic adepts.

100 Wisdom is filtered to the lower world, and the lower faculties, through comprehension. See next note.

101 R. Isaac's attention to the prepositional prefix bet, "in," echoes his comments above, lines 1, 6-7, as well as Bar Hyya's discussion of nine modes of logical inclusion signified by the prefix bet, in Megillat ha-Megalleh, 6-8, especially his observation concerning the inclusion of species in the more particular individual, 8, lines 7-13: אם ייחס אליהם צורה ליצין יספור צורה ליצין ממון ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכל צורה ליצין מאכל צורה ליצין ממון ליצין אוכ
comprehending? Comprehend in wisdom and be wise in comprehension, for they are hidden essences that have no inscription in them: there is no power to comprehend them, but rather [to comprehend] that thing which emanates from them. What is the comprehending for that thing, or for an adept who comprehends it? From the inscribed essences there is a comprehending of those that are not inscribed, and from the inner apprehension of their thought there is a

102 Both combinations of wisdom and comprehension, corresponding in R. Isaac's system to the sefirot Hokhmah and Binah, respectively, refer to processes in Hokhmah, beyond inscription.
comprehending of their cause in 'Ein Sof.

Probe in them, probe the Binah in them, for the term probe only applies in something. A person does not say "I probed from it" but "in it", in the cause. Probing is by use of something else\(^{104}\) that can probe the Binah in Hokhmah.\(^{105}\)

And inquire of them,\(^{106}\) of merit and guilt\(^{107}\) as it is written concerning them "there is no inquiring (Is. 40:28)." Therefore it did not say "inquire in them."\(^{108}\) The explanation of "inquire of them" is build the frame\(^{109}\) that is apprehended through perception, and evaluate\(^{110}\) it

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\(^{103}\) The contemplative process of the adept parallels that of divine mind itself.

\(^{104}\) The "something else" is most likely "that thing which emanates from them" from line 65, above.

\(^{105}\) The penetrating quality of the term "probe" is related to that which is "in" par excellence: Binah which is in Hokhmah.

\(^{106}\) See I. Gruenwald, SY, 1:4 (4), 141, for the versions that read יהמה as opposed to 재זך, including Leiden Warn. 24 (5) Cod. Or. 4762.

\(^{107}\) Or "innocence and guilt." The allusion seems to be to the sefirot Ḥesed and Gevurah, merit and guilt, respectively. Compare Bahir, 187. R. Isaac interprets the term "inquire" according to its halakhic connotation, as the process of inquiring into testimony concerning the innocence or guilt of a defendant, e. g. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1, 5:1.

\(^{108}\) The full relevant phrase of the verse is יָמָא לָתוּר עֵינָ לָתוּר. In R. Isaac's reading this means that the process of "inquiry" does not assess Binah directly, but only that structure which derives from it, the sefirot emanating from it, "of it."

\(^{109}\) See supra, ch. 8.2. The reference is to the lower sefirot.
according to the dimensions of the causes, which emanate from them and are constructed of them. Each matter on its firm footing, its seat. The [Aramaic] translation of "its support" is "firm footing," from the expression "Your staff and Your support (Ps. 23:4)." This is the line aligned

110 The terms הרז"ג are paired frequently by Judah Alharizi, in his translation of Maimonides' Moreh Nevukhim, 2:39 (compare S. Ibn Tibbon's version, 2:38). On their own, Alharizi translates הרז"ג as "that which a person senses with the feeling of one of his limbs; מוד as "correct thought" (translator's introduction). He uses them together in 2:39, however, when speaking of the prophet's clairvoyant ability, the power of mind to intuit the future: הרז"ג בני המשכיל, הרז"ג בני ידינו (the strength of the power of intuitive perception through which he tells, in an instant, what will be in the future).

Judah Ibn Tibbon uses הרז"ג in the sense of feeling or sensation, e.g., in his translation of Judah Halevi's, Kuzari, 3:16. He translates the passage in 2:38 cited above (2:39 in Alharizi's version) with the term הרז"ג, defined in his Perush me-ham-Nilot Zarot, entry הרז"ג, as "the term for that power by which a person considers, without any knowledge, that things will be so."

In the present case, R. Isaac uses these terms to convey the method of inductive thinking, beginning with the abstraction of perceptible phenomena and the evaluation of the results into categories according to the more general principles that stand behind them, a two-step intuitive process.

111 That is, the dimensions that emanate from the causes, or sefirot, and are built of them. In so defining the term הרז"ג, from SY, as the two-step process of comparing categories abstracted inductively from sense with ideal categories corresponding to the lower seven sefirot or "frame," R. Isaac may have had in mind the halakhic judicial procedure of hakkirah, the examining of the empirical testimony of witnesses according to seven pre-established categories of inquiry, Mishnah Sanhedrin 5:1 and Talmud Sanhedrin 40a-42a. As a cognitive process, this is an elaboration of R. Isaac's theory that the sensible world can be abstracted into forms corresponding to the metaphysical
in the middle,113 which is Yesod ’Olām.114 And restore Tiferet, the Creator upon his dwelling-place. His dwelling-place is His Nezah and His Hod, which are below,115 to unite with Binah16 which gazes upon them.117

Their measure is ten.118 Every thing is a dimension118 and what is above it is its filling,120 for dimension is a

structure from which it emanates.

112 Targum Onkelos to Ex. 21:19.

113 I.e., "support" is established as synonymous with "staff" of Ps. 23:4, which evokes the "line aligned in the middle."

114 "Foundation of the world," Prv. 10:25. The reference is to the alignment of Tiferet and Yesod. See SY 1:3 (sec. 3), which describes a central line between the circumcised tongue and the circumcised male member, associated with these two sefirot respectively.

115 Tiferet is "the Creator" upon His throne of Nezah and Hod. See Scholem, Origins, 209-14 regarding the Provençal kabbalists' identification of Yożer Berešit, the divine epithet drawn from the mystical schools of the Merkavah and Sicur Komah, with Tiferet, and the use of the term Yożer Berešit in the kabbalistic fragment cited in the name of R. Abraham b. David, Scholem, Rešit hak-Kabbalah, 73, n. 2.

116 The process of unification with Binah is an interpretive reference to the phrase יתנ , restore or return, from SY 1:4 (sec. 4), cited line 73. Among the cognomina for Binah is the term Tešuvah. See supra, ch. 8.4.1.

117 Is. 18:4 speaks of God as gazing on His dwelling-place. פה is used frequently in Scripture for a spiritual gazing, e. g. Ps. 33:13, 102:20, et al.

118 SY 1:5 (sec. 7), 143.

119 This translation was chosen rather than the standard, abstract philosophical term "attribute," based on R. Isaac's emphasis here on the metrical aspect of the term.
power which is emanated from the dimension of the measurer, the essentiality of dimension and the emanation.

120 R. Isaac here gives a literal rendering of the biblical phrase "the earth and its fullness," Ps. 24:1, 50:12, 89:12, placing it in a multiple, relativistic, hierarchical Neoplatonic scheme in which "fullness" is any given ontologically distinct level of being causally prior to a lower level which contains it. See S. Gersh, From Iamblichus to Eriugena, 19, who notes that of the metaphors used by early Neoplatonists, "...the verb 'to fill' and its compounds, [are] the most common terms applied to the causal relationship. Each effect is literally filled by its cause..." See his note 26 for numerous examples from Proclus and Damascius. There may also be a hint here of talmudic usage of the term המידה as measuring vessel, as in Mishnah Be'eha, 3:8. See Scholem, Origins, 285. See supra, ch. 8.1.

121 Power, כוח, is used here in the sense of property and agency, rather than to convey the formal Aristotelian concept of latent potentiality. For similar philosophic usage, compare, e.g., Abraham Ibn Ezra, Torah Commentary, Gen. 2:3, 31:19, Dt. 5:26.

Judah Alharizi, in his translation of Maimonides' Moreh Nevukhim, 1:53, relates the terms כוח and מידה, as in the following passages:

וכנה התובא לכי הבבירה ["ל" הדרכים

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It has been explained that the paths [Moses] sought to know, and of which he was informed, are the effects that come from the power of the Creator, blessed be He, which the sages call attributes... This term has customarily been applied to the powers and faculties of man). Similarly, loc. cit.: זוהなし התתובא לכי הבבירה ["ל" הדרכים

It has been explained that the [paths] and attributes are one and the same. They are the actions that come from the Creator, exalted be He, in this world. They describe the Creator by whatever they grasp of the actions of His agency, by an attribute from whose power that action comes, according to the term defined by that action). R. Isaac apparently agrees with this characterization of מידה as the agency resulting from a property, a כוח.
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of essence in 3Ein Sof. Depth is the Haskel unto 3Ein Sof. Beginning is the emanation of the power of the depth, which is Hokhmah, and the depth is from 3Ein Sof, and all is one. And since thought does not apprehend it, it says ten and not eleven. The depth is the end of the apprehension of thought unto 3Ein Sof. End is Binah, which is a principle called heh, like the end of the [divine]


123 The term "middah," one of the terms used in Hebrew philosophical writing to denote divine attributes, applies to the aggregate lower six sefirot. See R. Asher b. David, Sefer ha-Yihud, in Kabbalat R. Asher, 59: 'SEFIROT MESHIRE SEFIROTH VOGDKA MEHIRA SHL HEBE' (Six of the ten sefirot are called the dimensions of the Holy One, blessed be He, by which all actions are effected that were prepared in potentiality from the six days of creation). The "measurer" refers to Binah, which presides over the lower, measured sefirot. The "essentiality of dimension" refers to Hokhmah, the interior essence of Binah. R. Azriel of Gerona associates the term תריה, essentiality, principally with the sefirah Hokhmah, in which the essences begin. See Perush ha-Aggadot, 170, lines 1-2. The "emanation of essence" refers to the action of Mahshavah, the highest sefirah. To sum up, three hierarchic levels of being are described here, working upwards from dimensionality to essentiality to the initial stage of emanation, corresponding to three sefirotic levels, all part of one, unfolding emanative process.

124 See supra, ch. 8.3, regarding this term. R. Isaac associates Haskel with the qualifying term "depth" in the list of sefirot in SY 1:5 (sec. 7). It is not a sefirah, but the extension of the sefirot towards 3Ein Sof.

125 Haskel is not counted as a sefirah.

Name. All the essences and pathways have no impression apprendable in Hokhmah, for that which we mention are the headings of the dimensions, the principle of the beginning of the causes of the separate entities. For those dimensions which have been mentioned are all in Ein Sof. In our language there are only the headings of the dimensions. Their simplicity is without separation.

1, 233, vol. 4, 190-91, for use of the term תחלת, one of the Tibbonite terms of choice for rendering "principle."

R. Isaac justifies the association of Binah with "end," through its correspondence with the letter beh at the "end" of the Tetragrammaton. While Binah actually corresponds to the beh that is the second letter of the Tetragrammaton, it is "like" the beh which is at the "end." R. Isaac may also be referring to the two-letter divine Name that ends in beh.

The phrase תᄅוה задא appears in Heikhalot Rabbati, ch. 3.3, in Batel Midrashot, ed. A. J. Wertheimer, 71, but its significance is not clear, and its context sheds little light on its meaning, or its utility for R. Isaac: 14 (142-45), Maimonides, Moreh Nevakhim, 1:10 (142-45), Maimonides, Moreh Nevakhim,
for they are the principles of the causes of the separate
entities. Zenith is that which supports all, therefore it is placed in the middle; and also since he was obliged to discuss from the mediator which is elevated, from it in emanationist terms, in which the attributes or dimensions which appear in the phenomenal world are coarse indications of real attributes as they exist, unified, in the sefirotic realm, or ultimately, in the Infinite.

Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 1:58, describes God as מתכלית (He is simple in the ultimate degree of simplicity). See S. Ibn Tibbon, Perush Ne-ham-milot Zarot, entry שמה . See, too, הובט hal-Levavot, 1:10 (157): מַעַן בִּשְׂפָט שְׁפַט לְהַבָּיִם יִזְכָּרוּ וְהָאִים - התוֹס־torrent. (He whose intellect is too narrow to understand simplicity, should utilize the names).

The idea that all attributes are one in God's essence appears in Saadiah Gaon, Ha-Emunot we-had-Decot, ed. Landauer 84.14-86.2; Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Hovot ha-Levavot, 1:10 (142). On the development of R. Isaac's unique usage of דדיס as the "separate entities" and its relation to the Aristotelian term "separate intellects," see supra, ch. 5.2.

The identification of מַעַן, Zenith, as "that which supports all," summarizes R. Judah b. Barzilai's association of מַעַן, as representing the heavens, with the spirit which, despite being lighter and higher, supports the world, according to Onkelos' answer to Hadrian's question עומד וַתִּשְׁלָם עַל דִּלְוְלָם. (PSY, 159, with reference to Y. Hagigah, 2:1, fol. 7a). R. Isaac does not merely identify Zenith as the heavens, however. According to R. Asher b. David, Perush Sem ham-Meforas, in Kabbalat R. Asher b. David, 18, lines 25-26, and R. Isaac of Acre, PSY, 388-89, Zenith is the sefiarah Keter, and this tallies well with R. Isaac's allusive reference to "that which supports all," and "is elevated with all in the Zenith unto 2Ein Sof (lines 83-84)."

Zenith, or Keter, does not appear at the beginning of Sefer Yezirah's list of sefirot, 1:5 (sec. 7), as might have been expected given its status as the first emanation. Rather, it appears in the midst of the list, in fifth place. R. Isaac justifies this with the argument that its central position conveys the notion
above to below and from below to above, for it is sealed and
elevated with all\textsuperscript{135} in the \textit{Zenith} unto \textit{Ein Sof}.

\begin{quote}

\texttt{that it supports all emanations below it.}
\end{quote}

\texttt{134} The mediator is the \textit{sefirah} \texttt{Hokhmah}, according
to line 39 above. The point is that \textit{Sefer Yezirah}'s
list of \textit{sefirot}, which might have been expected to
begin with \texttt{Keter}, the first emanation, begins with the
principle which, in R. Isaac's system, signifies
\texttt{Hokhmah}, the \textit{sefirah} which mediates all other.

\texttt{135} The list of dimensions in \textit{Sefer Yezirah} 1:5
(sec. 7) is clear and orderly enough when read simply
as cardinal directions and dimensions, but oddly
jumbled when read according to their associations with
kabbalistic \textit{sefirot} (see line 84). R. Isaac tries to
explain why the list of \textit{sefirot} begins with \texttt{Hokhmah},
not \texttt{Keter}, and why the list alternates back and forth
between higher and lower \textit{sefirot} when read
kabbalistically. He suggests this conveys the special
role of \texttt{Hokhmah}, which is "with all," and "surrounds
all (line 42)," which mediates and controls the ascent
and descent of divine efflux, "from above to below and
from below to above," and which is sealed, that is,
limited from below by each \textit{sefirah}, and elevated to
\texttt{Keter} and \textit{Ein Sof}.
Nadir is Zaddik, east is Tiferet, west is Nezah, north is the fierceness of Gevurah,\textsuperscript{136} south is Hod.\textsuperscript{137} Regarding this comes the verse that says "To You, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the splendor and the eternal victory and the majesty, for all in heaven and earth is Yours, Lord, the kingdom and the exaltation as head above all (1 Chr. 29:11)." It does not follow the order of the directions,\textsuperscript{138} rather the order of the powers, as they are

\textsuperscript{136} One group of MSS has a variant reading: צומח והקדש מ.Emitריו פונות רבים ודומם (North is Gevurah, and there are those who speak of fierceness for Gevurah, south is Hod. See Leiden 24/25 (Cod. Or. 4762), Jewish Theological Seminary 2325/10, Cambridge Or. 2116,8. MS Harvard has : צומח ומשמירה ומנזר ו臧וב (There are those who say north is for Gevurah, south is Hod).

Compare line 340, below, where north is the sefirah Malkhut. See I. Tishby's note, Azriel of Gerona, Perus ha-^Aggadot, 142, n. 3, that 'oz stands for either Gevurah or Malkhut. Compare ibid., 133 and n. 4.

\textsuperscript{137} Rationales for the associations between certain directions and sefirot are offered in lines 93-98, below. These associations underwent numerous revisions throughout the history of Kabbalah, (see Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim, part 23, under the appropriate entries for the cardinal directions). R. Isaac's Commentary itself contains a number of apparent inconsistencies. West is associated with Nezah, lines 84, 340, yet is described in terms applicable to Malkhut, lines 87, 95, 338. North is associated with Gevurah, line 84, but with Namlakhah, line 340. In one group of MSS there is an indication that R. Isaac himself recognized the existence of other kabbalistic opinions supporting different positions. See previous note.

\textsuperscript{138} This refers to the directions as listed in order in SY, 1:5 (sec. 7).
aligned to pray towards the west. The order of tefillin is from east to west. For the four-headed Sin is Hokhmah and Binah, Hesed and Paḥad, this is by day; and the three-headed Sin is to the right of the person who lays tefillin, which is east when he stands in the south, and the

139 This version also appears in MSS Cincinnati 523/3, Cambridge Add. 671, Jewish Theological Seminary 1990, Halberstam 444. Other MSS, Harvard Heb. 58/11, Leiden 24/25 (Cod. Or. 4762), Jewish Theological Seminary 2325/10, Montefiore 313, Cincinnati 524/3, Cambridge Or. 2116,8 read: ינוגות (as they are contemplated...)

140 Compare lines 340-41, below, where this verse is cited as listing the sefirot in the order of the cardinal directions as presented in SY 4:2 (sec. 38), recension z (158). Here, however, the order of directions in SY 1:5 (sec. 7), has north before south, and the order of directions is not parallel to the names of sefirot taken from the verse.

Regarding prayer towards the west, see Sanh. 91b, concerning the transit of the sun: מַרְבִי נָתַן מַעֲשֵׂה. See, too, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Keter Maqiat, ch. 16, line 147; ch. 23, lines 3-4.

Padaya suggests that "west," here, may refer not to the sefirah Nezah, as in line 84 above, but to the talmudic dictum "the divine Presence is in the west (Baba Batra, 25a)," indicating Malkhut. See H. Padaya, Pegam we-Tikkun, 171 n. 50. If so, the gist of the sentence is that the designations of 1 Chr. 29:11 are not in order of the cardinal directions, but in descending order of emanating powers from upper to lower, all bestowing efflux, or praying, in the direction of the lowest sefirah, Malkhut. See below, line 95. See, too, Sefer hab-Bahir, 156, and Isaac of Acre, PSY, 389, both supporting this interpretation.

If west, here, were to indicate the sefirah Nezah, as in line 84 above, then the westerly direction of the verse may refer to the east-to-west order represented by Tiferet followed by Nezah, and the list of sefirah names in the verse would follow a top-to-bottom, east-to-west order.

141 Which represents Tiferet, Nezah, Hod.
four-headed Sin is in the west. By night, these four are to the south, namely Nezah, Hod, Tiferet, Hesed, and the three-headed Sin to the north: Zaddik, Atarah, Papad. One who prays to the west has his left to the south and his right to the north, where the three-headed Sin is. This is [what is alluded to in] "Your right hand" [repeated] twice (Ex. 15:6): the first is said regarding Tesuvah over Tiferet, which is toward the right, like "the Menorah in the south," and the second is said regarding Tiferet over Atarah, which is His right when one turns to the

142 At night there seems to be a general shift downward in terms of which sefirot are represented by the letters Sin: all the left-handed sefirot of rigor are group together with the three-headed Sin to the north; the seven "heads" of the two letters refer only to the lower seven sefirot.

The wearing of tefillin at night is cited in Menahot 36b as permissible according to the opinion of R. Ashi, but is classified as a precept which should not be divulged. This position was endorsed by R. Abraham b. Isaac of Narbonne, Sefer ha-Eskol, ed. S. Albeck, (Jerusalem, 1984) 229-30. See, too, Tur, O. H. 30, and commentaries.

The notion that the alignment of sefirot differs between day and night first appears with regard to prayer, in the position recorded in the name of R. Jacob ha-Nazir in the fragments of the debates between R. Abraham b. David and R. Jacob ha-Nazir, in G. Scholem, Resit hak-Kabbalah, 73 n. 2.

143 This is tefillin by day, with the four-headed Sin representing the grouping of sefirot centered around Binah or Tesuvah, and the three-headed Sin centered on Tiferet.

144 Yuma 21b. That is, by day, when the wearer of tefillin stands in the south, the three-headed Sin with the sefirah Tiferet is to the right, in the east, as in lines 89-90 above.

145 This is tefillin by night, with the four-
west. The term mizrah (east) refers to that which receives light in order to shine, for it does not say mazriah but mizrah, a cause of light which receives the headed sin representing sefirot centered around Tiferet, and the three-headed sin representing sefirot grounded in Atarah.

This exegesis grapples with certain kabbalistic anomalies in the verse Ex. 15:6, the full text of which is: "Your right hand, Lord, is glorified in power, Your right hand, Lord, shall crush the enemy." The problems with the verse are: first, that the right hand is portrayed with two different sets of attributes; and second, that the right hand, which for the midrashic and especially the kabbalistically-minded typically represents the agency of divine love, is here an agency of divine destruction, a left-handed function. R. Isaac solves both problems by interpreting the handedness of the verse as a reference to the differing positions of the three- and four-headed sin on the tefillin under two different circumstances: by day and by night. The glorification of the right hand refers to tefillin by day, where the right side, representing Tiferet, Nezah, Hod, is crowned or glorified by the superior four-headed sin representing the sefirot above it, collectively termed כוחות, power. See Azriel of Gerona, Peruselah Aggadot, 9b. 10a, 42b, 55a, 60b, who generally associates this term with the upper sefirot Hokmah or Binah. The destructive agency of the right hand is explained by the tefillin by night, in which the three-headed sin is to the right, yet represents the sefirot of divine destruction and judgment, Yesod, Atarah, Pahad.

Regarding those sefirot associated with the right hand and those with the left, see Asher b. David, "Perush Shem ha-Meforash," Kabbalec R. Asher b. David, 13.

"Cause," as that which serves as receptive capacity as well as agent, is used here in the standard Neoplatonic sense of "intermediate cause." See Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 1:1, and especially 5:20: The second premise is the acknowledgment of intermediate causes, which are not active, but causes in the sense of the material cause or instruments). See, too, Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 2:48.
shining of light. Since its face is always towards the west, and it goes that way, west is called "that to which the sun comes (Dt. 11:30 et al.)." Ne'arav (West) is that which is received in surety from those mixed things which have no impression.  Darom (South) [from] di-rom (which elevates) Tiferet, which is received in prayer and activates that which was given to it in custody.  

148 R. Isaac's etymology recognizes a passive, receptive quality to the al- prefix, patterned after zarak-mizrak: a mizraḥ, bowl, is that which receives what is thrown or to be thrown. He does not cite any source, but Jonah Ibn Jannah, Sefer ha-Rikmah, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, ed. M. Wilensky (Jerusalem, 1964) 72 (lines 8-13), suggests that the ne'em prefix to nouns and adjectives often serves as the nominal equivalent of a verbal nif'al. The conceptual point is that mizraḥ is an appropriate term for Tiferet as expressing its middle position in the hierarchy of sefirot, receiving from above and bestowing below. Compare Bahir, sec. 155.  

149 R. Isaac adduces further proof for the receptive connotation of the prefix al- or ne- from the biblical expression רֵחַ for west, the direction which receives the sun.  

150 Nezah is received, in the sense of collatio, by the contemplative mind. Compare the similar and obvious passive sense of בהמה in the following sentence.  

151 Nezah transmits efflux from the upper sefirot, "mixed" in unity.  

152 Hod, which is below, elevates Tiferet above it.  

153 This refers to the activity of the sefirah Hod. The functions of the sefirot Nezah and Hod are the subject of ongoing debate and confusion among kabbalists of the thirteenth century. See Asher b. David, "Perush Sem ha-Meforash," Kabbalat R. Asher b. David, 13, lines 9-17. In this lines 95-96, R. Isaac apparently regards both Nezah and Hod as more
(North) is that which is hidden from one who turns toward it; it is the dimension that has within it the hidden satisfaction of the will of those things which turn toward it.\textsuperscript{184} The (shewbread) table was in the north, an allusion [to the fact] that from before God, be He blessed, there is given to each and every corporeal being sufficient for its need.\textsuperscript{155} And the unique Lord rules... ever upwards over all.\textsuperscript{156} Unique, in that He is unified with all and all is unified in Him.\textsuperscript{157} Rules in all of them: this is the accessible objects of contemplation and prayer, which reflect or transmit to the mind that which is deposited in them in "surety" and "custody" by the upper, more arcane, sefirot.

\textsuperscript{184} The point is that North, \textit{qafon}, derives etymologically from \textit{zafun}, hidden, representing that principle of divine rigor and justice, which does not accede to the will of its petitioner in any apparent way, its beneficence present but remaining hidden.

Compare David Kimhi, \textit{Sefer ha-\textit{mamorim}}, ed. J. H. R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht (Jerusalem, 1967, reprint of Berolini, 1847) 317, entry \textit{qafon}.\textsuperscript{154} (He calls the good of this world "hidden" because man has not the ability to grasp it at will, but rather according to the Will of the Creator, and thus the good is withheld from him as if it is hidden). R. Isaac's and R. David's comments bear a conceptual similarity, and share references to hiddenness and the will of man. Whether they were mutually aware of each other's comments, or whether they had another common source, requires further investigation.

\textsuperscript{155} Yuma 21b.

\textsuperscript{156} SY 1:5 (sec. 7) reads: המיעדו ובראשו מפיו (The unique Lord rules over all of them... for ever and ever). R. Isaac reads one of these redundant terms \textit{שא} as a reference to spiritual direction, upwards, rather than as temporal duration.
rulership that is comprised of all the aforementioned dimensions in \( ^2 \text{Ein Sof} \). From His holy dwelling: these are the patrices. For ever: support, standing, stability, uprightness, regarding something which still is, from the word \( \text{‘od} \), which is to say, that it still stands.

157 R. Azriel identifies the "unique Lord" as a reference to \( ^2 \text{Ein Sof} \), in PSY, 455.

158 The phrase "all of them," from SY 1:5 (sec. 7), is interpreted as a reference to the sefirah Atarah or Malkhut, here called Menshallah, gathering and comprising all the sefirotic powers above it. R. Isaac's choice of the term Menshallah in this instance is apparently an intentional variation on \( \text{‘adam} \) from SY, representing the feminine transformation of the rule of \( ^2 \text{Ein Sof} \) into the empowered rulership of the lowest sefirah which comprises all sefirot above it. In which and through which all rule. Here, again, as in lines 93-94 above, R. Isaac, in his choice of the term, may be employing an allusion to the receptive connotation of the me- nominal prefix.

159 The MSS Angelica and Hebrew Union College Cincinnati 524/3 have תורות. The תורות "patrices," referring to the sefirot Hesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, makes better sense. See Azriel of Gerona, PSY, 455: בְּמִשְׁלֹהוֹ הַשֵּׁמֶשׁ מִשְׁתָּמֵץ. תְּרוּמָה וְתַחַת בְּגֻפַת תְּרוּמָה מִשְׁתַּמֵּץ (From His holy dwelling, which is called Gedulah, Gevurah, Tiferet, as you say, "the dwelling place of God from yore (Dt. 33:27)." See, however, Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim, 23:7, where he explains that the term תורות, "merit," can itself designate the sefirot Hesed, Gevurah, or Tiferet, citing the opinions of the Zohar, II, 251 (Gevurah); Tik\( \text{k} \)unei Zohar, 10 (Hesed); Joseph Gikatilla, Sa\( \text{c} \)arei \( ^2 \)Orah, ed. J. Ben-Shelomo, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1981) 14-16 (implying Gevurah); Isaac of Acre, Ne\( \text{p} \)irat \( ^2 \)Einayim, ed. C. Erlanger (Jerusalem, 1975) 69 (as Tiferet). In each of these sources, however, reference is to one or the other sefirah. R. Isaac here, however, speaks in the plural, referring to a group of sefirot.

160 While the idiomatic meaning of \( \text{‘od} \) as forever is clear enough, R. Isaac seems concerned to preclude any interpretation of \( \text{‘od} \) that might imply limitation. He therefore places the word etymologically
Their envisioning: Envisioning is contemplation of one thing from another, as it says "I will envision to see (Hab. 2:1)," for the divine word appeared to him. Envisioning means that each and every cause receives from a cause higher than itself. For a dimension draws from a dimension that is hewn, and the hewn from the engraved, and the engraved from the inscribed, and the inscribed from the

in an existential context, connoting "standing existence." See Abraham Ibn Ezra, Torah Commentary to Ex. 3:15, regarding the supernal world: Entire world is glory, and it is entirely permanent).

161 SY 1:6 (sec. 8) 143.

162 Compare Abraham Bar Hiyya, Hegyon ban-Nefes, 38: (the power that enables one to understand one thing from another); also Maimonides, Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 1:11: (and deduce one thing from another). This echoes the the talmudic expression for halakhic reasoning, Berakhot 19a, Yebamot 109b: .

163 The full relevant phrase of the verse is: "I will envision to see what He will say to me." While is generally defined in the Merkavah and Heikhalot literature in visual terms (e.g., Hagigah 15a, Beresit Rabbah 2:6, Heikhalot Rabbati, ed. A. J. Wertheimer, vol. 1, 67), the fact that it is followed here by "to see" renders that definition redundant. This, together with the fact that what is to be seen is not itself a visually-related object, but of a different sense-related realm, the divine word, makes this an excellent proof-text for R. Isaac's contention that means not just envisioning or gazing as an act of spiritual sight, but another and very specific intellectual process. It refers to the contemplation or inference of one thing from another, in this case, an object of inner hearing grasped through an object of inner sight.

164 This passage and its Neoplatonic character is discussed supra, ch. 6. R. Isaac's interpretation of "zefiyat_an, their envisioning," in the sense of
hidden. 185 Everything is this is within that, and this is from within that, and all are tied, this in that and this with that. 186 How do they receive? The manner of their receiving is of something subtle and an essence. 187 Like the appearance: contemplation that has no substance. Appearance is the radiance of the subtle purity 188 of the apprehension

"layering," follows Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 163.

185 Keter. M. Idel examines the identity of the term rešīmah, inscribed, according to the Provençal and Gerona kabbalists, and concludes that "the inscribed" is usually associated with the sefirah Ḥokhmah. See "Ha-Sefirot she-me-ʿal ha-Sefirot," 240, n. 9. Azriel of Gerona, PSY, 456, identifies "subtle inscription" with Ḥokhmah, "engraved" with Binah, and "hewn" with the letters within Binah, and this is in agreement with R. Isaac's hierarchy. This leaves "the hidden" as a reference to Keter.

See also supra, ch. 6.

186 Compare line 19, above.

187 The question of what, exactly, is transmitted in the process of emanation was examined by Maimonides at length in the Moreh Nevukhim, 2:4, 12. While R. Isaac here does not reflect the Tibbonite vocabulary of the discussion, his concern to get across the spiritual nature of the substance transmitted is consonant with Maimonides' position. See, too, Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 5:12: קספ ית 아ס איהב את אס מלקות וספנימ (if so, this emanation is an intellectual essence, without corporeality, existing in its essentiality). See discussion supra, ch. 5.1.

188 The term זכות as applied to the purity of perception and apprehension appears in Samuel Ibn Tibbon's translation of Maimonides' introduction to Avot, "Shemonah Perakim," ch. 2:idents, recognize and understand quickly (purity of understanding and excellence of comprehension is to have a firm grasp of a matter and to understand it quickly, without taking much time).

The pairing of זכות and radiance, appears in one of the recensions of Pirkei Heikhalot Rabbati cited by Wertheimer (recension 'ס,
of that which is received, concerning which was said "and they called one to another (Is. 6:3)" and the [Aramaic] Translation of Jonathan [ben Uziel] is "And they receive one from another." Like the appearance of lightning: this is the subtle purity of the apprehension of that which is received. Their limit is not like their dimension. A dimension is something received by the separate things, for called Sefer Heikhalot, in Batel Midrashot, vol. 1, 110, note 2). The language of this passage is an interesting mix of philosophic and Heikhalot diction.

169 R. Isaac generalizes this phrase from SY to apply not just to the appearance of the sefirot, but to all modes of appearance and perception per se, in a formulation strikingly phenomenological in quality. In this he follows in the general direction of R. Saadiah Gaon in his PSY, 2:1, 70, quoted by Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 162, who explains "like the appearance of lightning" as the initial flash of illumination of any object to the mind: רמ"א ר"א תhtable צלבים כי תרמאו לאמת בהשתת המר לבוב עם חומת הרבר כים יברת הברבר אצלבר בראותה כים יבגל לבבר ותתקף הנפ 대한 פסט ד"ש יברת בברבר הוונק (it alludes to the fact that the beginning of every thing that appears to a person in his mind flashes like lightning, like the blade of a sword; thus it appears to him at first. Afterwards the thing is revealed to him and gradually established until it is ready and set before him). The comparison of fleeting comprehension to lightning and the "flashing blade of a sword," Gen. 3:24, was also used by Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, introduction. While R. Isaac does not use R. Saadiah Gaon's or R. Judah b. Barzilai's terms, his general notion of "appearance" as insubstantial, as the pure and subtle radiance of that which is grasped, is meant to convey this initial moment of perception or apprehension, as yet without substance, a mere flash.

See, too, Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 4:3, 213, lines 6-15; 214, lines 8-16. See supra, ch. 7.

170 The proof-text shows that what is "received" in the heavenly realm is a "calling," something insubstantial.

171 SY 1:6 (sec. 8) describes the sefirot in terms
the prophets saw dimensions according to their apprehension, and by virtue of receiving their power they expanded their consciousness more than other human beings, for they gained by this a breadth of soul to extend to particulars within **Ein Sof. But their limit

of , while SY 1:5 (sec. 7) describes them in terms of . R. Isaac draws attention to the distinction and explains it.

Judah Halevi, *Kuzari*, 4:3, 208, lines 1-3; 212, lines 15-18; 216, lines 1-6; 222, lines 2-8. Maimonides, *Yesodei ha-Torah*, 7:1, 2; *Moreh Nevukhim*, 2:36, regarding the different ranks of the prophets according to the degree of their intellectual capacities.

Regarding the effect of prophecy in expanding the mind of the prophet, see Maimonides, *Yesodei ha-Torah*, 7:7: (It is possible that a prophet's prophecy be for himself alone, to expand his heart and increase his mind until he knows what he had not known of the great matters). See, too, *Moreh Nevukhim*, 2:37.

The concept of the reception of the emanation of multiple supernal powers by the mind of the prophet appears in *Sefer ha-'Azaqim*, 12:13: (The second way is the emanation of a power that emanates from the supernal world, that is, from the separate intellects, upon the intellectual capacity until it is strengthened with their strength and formed in their form, that is, the form of the intellect, and becomes intellectual to the highest degree that is within its power).

The comparison of the expanded intellectual powers of the prophets to the minds of other human beings also appears in *Sefer ha-'Azaqim*, 12: (And there will be transmitted to his soul matters through which he will be aroused to understand many matters not within the ability of people other than himself to know, of which they will not understand what he understands in any way). See, too, Maimonides, *Moreh
is the limit of their investigation.176 For every dimension has a limit and every finite thing has an end, like that which is written “for all finite things I have seen an end” but “Your commandment,” even though its beginning has a limit, continually expands “exceedingly (Ps. 119:96)” unto 3Ein Sof.177 While everything that perishes has a limit.

Nevukhim, 2:36, 37, 38.

174 See line 50 and note, above.

175 The theory of knowledge which has as its goal the clear and appropriate comprehension of particulars in their ultimate, general context derives from Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Torah Commentary, Ex. 33:21: כיезוזי י kald (for He alone knows the particulars and their parts in terms of the general). See, too, his commentary on Gen. 18:21. See Ibn Ezra, Perushei hat-Torah le-Rabbeu Avraham Ibn Ezra, ed. A. Weiser, (Jerusalem, 1976), introduction, 36-37. R. Isaac’s formulation “to extend to particulars within 3Ein Sof,” that is, setting particulars within their infinite context, is essentially a kabbalistic paraphrase of Ibn Ezra’s "to know the particulars...in terms of the general."

The general definition of intellect and knowledge as the grasp of specificity or particularity can be traced back to Isaac Israeli, and to al-Kindi. See A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, Isaac Israeli, 37-39. See, too, Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 1:58, who bases his discussion of divine attributes on the same epistemological goal of the knowledge of particulars.

176 Investigation was defined by R. Isaac, lines 70-71 above, as the inductive process of extrapolating from the phenomenal to the noumenal. Thus ṣefer refers to the sefirot from the perspective of an upward movement: the contemplation of the sefirot by the mind, which begins with a finite manifestation and extrapolates endlessly. By contrast, ṣeel refers to the sefirot from the perspective of a downward movement: the limitation and measure placed upon the emanative descent of the influence of the sefirot in the creation and governance of the lower world of separation.
"Your commandment" cannot be apprehended by man to the utmost degree of apprehension, for a man grasps nothing but the headings of the dimensions.178 His word: Tiferet, the

177 With the qualification "even though," R. Isaac seems to acknowledge that this argument runs counter to the premise laid down by R. Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Hovot hal-Levavot, Sar ha-Yihud, ch. 5: "אין载体 התחלות כלל (for there are no beginnings without a limit to their beginning).

R. Isaac may also have in mind R. Bahya's homiletic exposition of Ps. 119:96, loc. cit., ed. A. Zifroni, Introduction, 76. While R. Isaac does not pick up R. Bahya's definition of "commandment" par excellence as "duties of the heart," his description of "commandment" as endlessly branching and spreading out may be at work subliminally in R. Isaac's discussion here.

The term "极大", "exceedingly," is interpreted technically as Ḥokmah by Asher b. David, "Ma'aseh Bereshit," Kabbalah R. Asher b. David, 55, and correlates well with the expansive ascent of which R. Isaac speaks.

178 This passage is alluded to and developed by Azriel of Gerona, Perush ha-‘Aggadot, 100-01 (fol. 16b): "כתובות כל הקדשות חלקן ידリンクן השם, הואר"מ ששה פרעות כולם רוח美貌י כל הפרעות הם כבדים... כי כל הפרעות יש להם חכמים ג devuelveו רבים אלוהים וצלי Yi as they are called truth, as it says "all Your commandments are truth (Ps. 119:151)." Even though there are minor commandments and major ones, all commandments are glory... For all commandments have one end, and their goal is without limit. All who engage in the commandments must have the awe of the commandment upon him as if he were crowned and coronated with its glory). Tishby suggests that the statement "all the commandments are glory" means "their origin is from the sefirot (100, n. 13)." While "glory" could be interpreted to refer to specific sefirot, Tiferet and Malkhut, and the concept "commandment" was so interpreted by later kabbalists (Zohar, III, 82b; Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim, 'Erkhei ha-Kinuyim, ch. 13, entries וודא, ומסר), Tishby's more general reading, as referring to the entire realm of the sefirot, is justified by the phrase הרוח_wfحكمב החכמה, an allusion to the full range of sefirot from Keter to
elevation of the word in all of them,¹⁷⁹ for it is almost as if the intent is that the word is elevated,¹⁸⁰ as it is

Naḥal. In a similar way, R. Isaac's treatment of "Your commandment," from context corresponding to the "ten sefirot...their limit has no end," from SY 1:6 (sec. 8), seems to mean the entire realm of the sefirot, as the entire realm of divine expression directed to man.

¹⁷⁹ This passage is at the root of the comments of Azriel of Gerona, PSY, on this mishnah in SY, 1:6, in Kitvei Ramban, vol. 2, 455: המוחסнят מומלץ להמאים לעסקנין להם, and their limit has no end. יאהת תחיית ראותית המוחסנה לעסקנין שלום, אוות ממושכת קורי ר特色的すれば א saçני בוה, והשורות המפלגה לקפל פסק מאות הדורים במ擴ל ייזויר ייציוור והיתש Cavaliers רועש (the natural ascends in their vision to gaze at the sensible, and the sensible at the intelligible, and the intelligible at the hidden, and in each and every one of them the middle line is called "His word," which is central in them, and it ascends to receive the efflux of Ḥesed, the Will, with extreme rapidity, running forth and returning). R. Azriel, Perush ha-Aggadot, 100, lines 13-16, identifies the term דבר with the sefirot Tiferet and Malkhut (see I. Tishby, loc. cit., note 10). More specifically, in his PSY 1:4, דבר is identified with Malkhut, while in 1:6, quoted above, דבר is identified with Tiferet.

Putting all this together, R. Azriel's comments can help shed some light on R. Isaac's intent. R. Isaac here is interpreting דבר, with the third person singular suffix, as a reference to Tiferet, as דבר, with vav representing the six directions unified in Tiferet. As such, דבר, Tiferet, is the ascent of דבר Malkhut, in all the sefirot.

¹⁸⁰ MSS Angelica and Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati 523/3 have כמע כי wollen ראותית דברת מהם מתעלא, while the other MSS, Cambridge Add. 671, Harvard Heb. 58/11, Cambridge Or. 2116,皮肤 524/3, Montefiore 313, Milano-Ambrosiana 57, 32 read הוות דברת בהלאה מתעלא. In either case, the idea is that the phrase in SY 1:6 (sec. 8): דברת בהלאה (It is as if His word runs in them) is to be kabbalistically decoded as "Tiferet runs, or is elevated, among them, the other, lower, sefirot." This reading takes כמע כי wollen as an idiomatic expression introducing an interpretive nuance. An entirely different reading could be: "the will of the word ascends." Compare Azriel of Gerona, Perush ha-
written, "God, praised in the great council of the holy ones (Ps. 89:8)." In running forth: it did not say "running," because it is more interior than the Holy Beasts. And according to His statement...they prostrate themselves: prostration is like

181 The verse continues: כל צל ונורא (and awesome over all those around Him). R. Isaac's kabbalistic decoding of this verse is: the ten sefirot, called "the great council (or mystery) of the holy ones," is quintessentially "awesome," Tiferet, the median, mediating, unifying sefirot, which is "over all," the word elevated above all others. The pivotal words in this and the following citation are צל ונורא , signifying "the elevation of Tiferet over all the other lower sefirot." See the next note.

The association of צל ונורא with Tiferet, third of the lower seven sefirot after Gedulah or Hesed and Gevurah, was probably based upon Dt. 10:17 and its popularization in the first benediction of the Amidah, when it is the third term of praise: הגדולם והמשובה והנורא.

182 This is part of a phrase from the 'Amidah, of Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom ha-Kippurim. The full relevant phrase here is Your Name is awesome over all You created. R. Isaac's kabbalistic exegesis is: God's Name, which is comprised of all the...
one who puts aside his [moral] qualities and occupies himself with nothing but thought alone, attaches to Thought, and exalts thought and subdues the body to strengthen his soul.

sefirot, is epitomized in Tiferet, the awesome, which is "over," or elevated above all. See preceding note.

183 "In running" conveys the higher interiority of sefirotic process, as opposed to the mere "running" of the Holy Beasts, (Ez. 1:14) on the angelic level. See R. Isaac's exegetical comments on the letter bet, lines 1-2, 6-7, above.

184 Compare Yuma 23a, Ta'anit 25b: סמעו על מעבד; ממידותיו
והם משכתב על מסותיהם;Megillah 28a: מדומתי על עמדתי ולמד

185 The contrast between moral qualities, תוארי, and thought or intellect, the former considered on a lower level than the latter, occurs in Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 3:54. For R. Isaac, this contrast, on the human level, parallels a similar contrast between the lower sefirot, called middot, associated with moral qualities, such as love, rigor and mercy, and higher sefirot, associated with intellectual functions such as thought, wisdom and discernment.

186 Thought, here, apparently refers to the highest sefirah; compare line 132, below. Regarding this usage of the term מחבד for the highest sefirah, see I. Twersky Rabad, 274, and G. Scholem, Origins, 270-77, who cite Abraham Bar Hiyya's concept of מחשבתי שבינה (Pure Thought), as the likely source: Hegyon han-Nefesh ha-AGuvah, 39, 41. See, too, Azriel of Gerona, Perush ha-AGgadot, 82.

187 The exegetically problematic nature of the
phrase in SY 1:6 (sec. 8), "..." and with its anthropomorphic imagery applied to spiritual entities, was picked up by Judah B. Barzilai, who comments in PSY 163: "..." which is to say, they obey Him, and His commands to them, whatever His will, so it is. This is the significance of all prostration, which does not depart from its meaning and plain sense). Compare Saadiah b. Joseph, Sefer Yezirah, 73; Torat ha-Nefesh, trans. Y. D. Brody (Paris 1896) 11. R. Judah, following R. Saadiah Gaon, shows that the social significance of prostration, as a sign of obedience, can be easily abstracted to refer to a spiritual action. While R. Isaac also sees the need to interpret the notion of prostration abstractly, he takes a different approach, depicting prostration as an image for intellectual contemplation and sefirotic ascent.

The ascetic orientation evident in this passage reflects earlier sources and contemporary parallels. See Moses Ibn Ezra, Arugat hab-Bosem, 120-21, who cites Pythagoras, Aristotle and Ibn Gabirol; Judah Ha-Levi, Kuzari, 5:12 (end); Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 3:51: כעכלאש שולש חות שחרית הכבacent של התוארת. יחיו (the more the powers of the body are weakened and the fire of the lusts extinguished, the more the intellect is strengthened, its light is increased and its grasp purified, and it rejoices in what it grasps). For a strong contemporary parallel that combines the same ascetic notion with physical collapse, see Abraham Ibn Hasdai, Ben ha-Melekh ve-ha-Nazir, 207: "..." (After we have explained that the soul is not a body, it is appropriate that we explain that it has no pain or suffering except for its being in the body, and when it separates from it, it becomes strong and capable in its activities. The sign and proof for this is that when we want to understand a difficult and deep matter, the soul gathers unto itself and throws off from itself all the physical senses..."
until it becomes as if separated from them. Then it is able to understand and conceive and elicit from the deep and difficult things whatever it desires, like the prophets, peace be upon them, when the spirit rested on them, their souls gathered unto themselves and threw off the physical senses and fled from them until they no longer retained the strength to stand, and they would fall down and tremble). Compare, too, Maimonides, *Yesodei ha-Torah*, 7:2. In prophecy as described by Maimonides and Ibn Hasdai the body collapses from the overwhelming force of the experience. R. Isaac's concern is different: to explain the intentional ritual action of prostration, understood symbolically as the expression of this falling-away of the physical, and to show how it is appropriately predicated of spiritual entities such as *sefirot*. R. Isaac's contemplative interpretation of prostration combined the exegetical concerns of R. Judah b. Barzilai and sources with the ascetic formulae of Maimonides and R. Moses Ibn Ezra.
Set: 188 things that are joined together, resting on their sides, and from above them they are raised, like something raised by something else, like a magnet above and a magnet below. 189 The [Aramaic] translation of "placed" is set, 190 something placed and resting on something else. 191

188 SY 1:7 (sec. 6) 142.

189 From Plato on, the magnet was a favorite model for conveying the idea of a higher principle supporting, in the sense of lifting, a lower one. See Plato, Ion, 533d,e, in Collected Dialogues, trans. Lane Cooper, (Princeton, 1971) 219-20: "As I just now said, this gift you have of speaking well on Homer is not an art; it is a power divine, impelling you like the power of the stone Euripides called the magnet...This stone does not simply attract iron rings, just by themselves; it also imparts to the rings a force enabling them to do the same thing as the stone itself, that is, to attract another ring, so that sometimes a chain is formed, quite a long one, of iron rings, suspended from one another. For all of them, however, their power depends upon that loadstone (Jowett: that one stone)." See, too, Eriugena, Periphyseon, vol. 1, 520b; Adelard of Bath, De Eodem et Diverso, ed. H. Willner, (Münster, 1903) 33. Compare Judah b. Barzilai, PSY 246, who compares the magnet that lifts the heavy object to the Creator Who sustains the world; Asher b. Saul, Sefer ha-Minhagot, in Sifran shel-Rishonim, ed. S. Assaf, 144: "הזכירהיהם מברך הנמלים...זרמתה היום שאופכת את המינח מהתחיה (the Glory, be it blessed, is from the Holy Temple which is in the middle, and carries all...A model for this is a magnet which one places above, and carries the iron below it).

Unusual in R. Isaac's image is the two magnets, below as well as above, rather than one magnet lifting several pieces of iron. This may be meant to convey the equivalent power of each of the sefirot, represented by equally powerful magnets.

190 Gen. 28:12, in Targum Onkelos.

191 This interpretation comes from Saadiah b. Joseph, Sefer Yezirah, 91-92, by way of Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 163-64.
Their end in their beginning: a spreading fountain:\textsuperscript{192} whatever spreads out is all from the source, and if the source ceases, everything ceases;\textsuperscript{193} and since at all times they spread from the \textit{beginning},\textsuperscript{194} it has no end.\textsuperscript{195}


\textsuperscript{193} The occasionalist notion of continuous divine involvement in continuous creation was endorsed by Abraham Ibn Ezra, Torah Commentary, Ex. 3:2. See, too, Judah Halevi, \textit{Kuzari}, 4:26.

\textsuperscript{194} Or spread anew. Compare \textit{Moe\ced Katan} 2a: ימקין והם ממקין (whether from a spring that has flowed forth for the first time...).

\textsuperscript{195} R. Isaac, for whom the \textit{sefirot} are not merely numbers but metaphysical principles, omits the standard explanation of this passage offered by most commentators on \textit{SY} up to his time: the characteristic of numbers in base ten to double back on themselves after every series of ten. Rather, he reads it Neoplatonically, as expressing the nature of emanation: the end, as placed or dependent upon the unceasing
Therefore it says their end in their beginning, for many strands are extended from the coal, which is one.\textsuperscript{196} For the flame cannot stand by itself, but only by something else.\textsuperscript{197} For all the things\textsuperscript{198} and all the dimensions that appear to be separate have no separation in them,\textsuperscript{199} for all is one, like the beginning that unifies all.\textsuperscript{200} The word "unique", for the unique Lord,\textsuperscript{201} now alludes\textsuperscript{202} to a dimension in \textit{Ein Sof},\textsuperscript{203} that has no end from any side.\textsuperscript{204}

emanation from the beginning, obtains, itself, the quality of endlessness.

\textsuperscript{196} See above, lines 3-4.

\textsuperscript{197} This is a paraphrase of Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 164: \textit{לעמוד יכולד *להבת ך דאי לוה התלאת יבר הלאלות להברת ספיאת שלחה וחיללה בל בהتعلي.}

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Sefirot}. See line 54, above, and note.

\textsuperscript{199} See \textit{supra}, ch. 8.4.

\textsuperscript{200} That is, according to the image of the fountain, above.

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{SY} 1:7 (sec. 6).

\textsuperscript{202} Now alludes, as opposed to earlier, \textit{SY} 1:3 (sec. 3), where \textit{יחיד} referred to the centralizing function of the lower \textit{sefirah Yesod}.

\textsuperscript{203} That is, the \textit{sefirah Keter} in \textit{Ein Sof}.

\textsuperscript{204} This expression, its parallels (e. g. line 337, below), and its underlying conception, derive from the \textit{Heikhalot} tradition, its doctrine of divine Names, and its treatment of the mysteries of the non-spatial quality of the spiritual and of divine omniscience, expressed in terms of omnidirectionalism. See \textit{"Otiot de-R. ʿAkiva"}, \textit{Batei Midrashot}, ed. A. J. Wertheimer, vol. 2, 364, regarding the sealing of the six cardinal directions with the letters of the divine Names: וַהֲכֵן רַבֵּנָא יִבְיֶרֶת לְכָל אוֹתָי וְיִרְדֵּר (and in what way are they sealed with them? Four by four letters in each and every direction). See, too, "Maʿaseh
pondering\textsuperscript{205} the things hidden from thought, lest it become confused.\textsuperscript{206} For from that which one apprehends one can recognize what one does not apprehend,\textsuperscript{207} and for this the Merkavah," \textit{ibid.}, vol. 1, 60, regarding the ministering angels: \textit{וּכְלָמָה} יִרְצְגָהּ וְיִכְרֹזֵהּ כָּלִים (all are discerning, and face each and every side).

Compare, too, Maimonides, \textit{Yesodei hat-Torah}, 2:10:

Azriel of Gerona deals at length and in great detail with the theme of divine unity expressed in the omnidirectionality of the divine Names in his monographs "Peruš hak-\textit{kaddiš}," and "Peruš Yi\textit{hud ha-Sem}," in G. Scholem, \textit{"Seridim Hadašim"}, 216-19. There, the palindrome of the divine Name \textit{hyb} is interpreted repeatedly and in a variety of formulations as expressing the notion of blessing, or equivalence of power, from all sides:

\begin{quote}
שַׁדָּא מְהַמֶּה מְהַמְּבֵר מְסַמְּרֵה יְבָּעֵל (in that He is increased and blessed from His essence (Scholem, note 4: \textit{\textit{"Ein Sof}}) on every side [217]). R. Isaac's formulation is the bridge between the \textit{Heikhalot} concept and R. Azriel's more technical development. R. Isaac's own opaque statement below, line 337, q. v., may well be the source upon which R. Azriel expatiates.
\end{quote}

\textit{SY} 1:8 (sec. 5) 142.

For precedents for this cautionary advice against intellectual overreach, see the discussion of this passage, supra, ch. 7.2, with reference to Bahya Ibn Pakudah and Moses Ibn Ezra. See, too, Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 66.

\textsuperscript{205} See \textit{supra}, ch. 7.2, 191-209. See, especially, Bahya Ibn Pakudah, \textit{Hovot hal-Levavot}, 1:10: \textit{וּהַשֵּׁלָלִים יָשְׁאֵדַל לְעַשְּׁיָם קְיוֹם הַמַּלְאָךְ הַמְּלָכֹת הַסְּמֹרָתָם מֶלֶק הַמַּעֲצָרָי הַיְּבָּעֵל} (The understanding adept will attempt to abstract the shells of the words and their corporeality from the matter and ascend in his thought from level to level, until he arrives, by the truth of the matter that is sought, at what is within his power to grasp).

Compare the opposing epistemological view, taken by Azriel of Gerona, \textit{PSY} 1:8 in \textit{Kitvei Ramban}, vol. 2, 456, who cautions: \textit{לִבּוּנָא מחוֹרָת. שַׁדָּא לְדָמָה מְהַמְּבֵר לְדָעַ גִּבּוּרָה (Your heart from ruminating. One should not compare the hidden to the revealed). He limits the incommensurability of the revealed to the hidden to one
dimensions were made. For language does not apprehend other than that which comes from it, for man does not apprehend the dimension of speech and letters, rather, its dimension is itself, and apart from the letters there is no specific issue, however: while the phenomenal world is manifest as a plurality, the hidden world of the sefirot, is complete unity.

This analysis of the nature of language is, in part, an extrapolation from Bahya Ibn Pakudah's discussion of the ineluctable and isolated modality of the individual senses and of the intellect, each limited to its own sphere of receptivity, in Hovot ha-Levavot, 1:10:

"Each sense has a unique subject to grasp, and cannot grasp anything else, such as appearances and forms, which can only be grasped by the sense of sight alone, and sounds and music, which can only be grasped by the sense of hearing alone...A sense object can only be grasped by the sense appropriate to it...So, too, we assert regarding the intellect, which grasps intelligible things)."


R. Isaac extends these arguments, with profound insight, to the self-contained, even circular, nature of language, whose adequate correspondence to reality is based on the fact that Creation, according to the tradition of Sefer Yezirah, and the Torah itself, is a linguistic process.

Compare, too, line 81, above, and note.
R. Isaac's statements on the self-contained, self-referential nature of language, and the identity of the act of intellect with speech or letters as its object, use as their idea structure the speculations of Maimonides, Moreh Nevukhim, 1:68. Maimonides employed the Aristotelian concept of the active intellect in actu to take the philosophical doctrine of the identity of knower, knowing and known with respect to God and extend it to all intellectual activity in general, human as well as divine:

For the intellect is not something other than the object of intellection. Behold, it has already been explained to you that the object of intellection is the abstract form of the tree, and this is the intellect itself in actu. The intellect and the form of the tree that is the object of intellection, for the intellect in actu is not something other than the object of intellection. That by which the form of the tree has been intellected and abstracted, which is the act of intellection, this is the realized intellect in actu, without a doubt. For regarding all intellect, its action is itself...For the truth of the intellect and its essence is apprehension...If so, that by which the form of the tree is abstracted and apprehended, which is the intellect, is the act of intellection, for the intellect itself is that which abstracted the form and apprehended it).

Maimonides' analysis is built upon the doctrine of essential divine Attributes as it appears in Saadiah b. Joseph, Ha-Emunot we-had-De'ot, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, ed. Y. Fischel, ch. 2, 53. See, too, Maimonides, Sefer ha-Pe'arim, ch. 8: God, be He blessed, does not know with knowledge and does not live with life, such that He and knowledge are two things...He, blessed be His Name, is His attributes and His attributes are Him; idem, Yesodei ha-Torah, 2:10:

(For the intellect is not something other than the object of intellection. Behold, it has already been explained to you that the object of intellection is the abstract form of the tree, and this is the intellect itself in actu. They are not two things, the intellect and the form of the tree that is the object of intellection, for the intellect in actu is not something other than the object of intellection. That by which the form of the tree has been intellected and abstracted, which is the act of intellection, this is the realized intellect in actu, without a doubt. For regarding all intellect, its action is itself...For the truth of the intellect and its essence is apprehension...If so, that by which the form of the tree is abstracted and apprehended, which is the intellect, is the act of intellection, for the intellect itself is that which abstracted the form and apprehended it).
comprehend, for every dimension is from a dimension that is above it, and they are given to Israel to comprehend, from

He is the knowledge itself, all is one).

R. Isaac seems to have taken Maimonides' discussion of the identity of intellect, its activity and its object, and applied it formally to the activity of speech and letters, both in the human sphere and in the realm of divine attributes, dimensions or sefirot. R. Isaac's emphasis is different, however, and lies closer to the emphasis of the doctrine of the identity of divine attributes and essence: just as there is no divine attribute other than divine essence, there is no attribute or dimension apart from the letters or speech which establish dimensionality in the first place.

R. Isaac may also have used as a reference point the comments of Judah b. Barzilai, *PSY*, 211: והוא והס כע a 고ל ג* ס* ג' תכנו לא ה* ס* לתי מ* וב* ב* בלתי התכنو לא זכר...ו تماما על חזור יכל הדגון יוצא בשם整车 על אותו חדロック (the name is that which reveals, for without a name a creature's existence is not established, and with a name each thing can be recognized. By a name a person can understand, through the name even without the physical substance, but with the physical substance alone it is not recongized...It turns out that all Creation and all speech proceeds by one name, and there is no object without a name or signifier).

In context, the flow of R. Isaac's argument is that the precise referentiality of language to its object is the guarantee that one can accurately infer and extrapolate from the revealed to the hidden.

A variant reading of this passage is found in MSS Cambridge Or. 2116,8 and Harvard: "For from that which one apprehends one can recognize what one does not apprehend, but which comes from it. For a person does not apprehend the speech and the letters, rather the dimension itself; apart from the letters [is] the dimension." This reading, missing the linguistic comments and lacking syntactic and semantic coherence in general, seems to be corrupt.

210 Judah Halevi, "Elohim *el mi *amšilekhah,": ומכסה פנים לפלוגות הנושאים, ובכמה השלבים למשה Горמים (several faces to the awesome face, and several backs to the visible back): the term "awesome" stands for the most recondite aspect of the divine, in contradistinction to that which is revealed; so, too, for R. Isaac.
the dimension that appears in the heart, to comprehend unto Ein Sof. For there is no way to pray other than by the finite things a person receives and elevates in thought unto Ein Sof. Thus it says running forth and returning, it returns to the place for the things, in their swiftness, ascend in their mystery and return to their

211 Supra, ch. 7.2.

212 Or words. The reference may also include the sefirot as bounded or measured, as discussed by R. Isaac above, line 75, and expounded by Azriel of Gerona, PSY, 454, with reference to SY 1:5: ההנה מסתכל מהר סותית והנה מסתכל מהר שבירות יש להם ישיבו רֶמֶז מִזְאָג המִדָּה, אֵין מִזְאָג לְהַלְּכָּה אֵין לְשָׁוְהוּ, כַּמָּה המִדָּה פָּרֹבָּה, הוא מִזְאָג מִזְאָג מהר שבירות מהר גֵּרֶנָּה אֵין לְשָׁוְהוּ, כַּמָּה המִדָּה פָּרֹבָּה, הוא מִזְאָג מִזְאָג מהר שבירות מהר גֵּרֶנָּה אֵין לְשָׁוְהוּ, כַּמָּה המִדָּה פָּרֹבָּה, הוא מִזְאָג מִזְאָג. Hence, the things, in their swiftness, ascend in their mystery and return to their (In this mishnah it states that all is from Ein Sof. Even though the things [i.e., sefirot] have dimension and measure, and they are ten, that measure which they have is endless. For the natural is from the sensible and the sensible is from the intelligible, which is from the hidden zenith, and the hidden is infinite. If so, even the sensible and the intelligible and the natural are infinite. Therefore the dimensions were made, in order to contemplate through them unto Ein Sof).

213 See supra, ch. 7.6 for an exposition of this passage.

214 SY 1:8 (sec. 5).

215 Neheiv in the sense of the swiftness and accuracy of divine causality is used to describe the action of divine Names in Sefer ha-’Agamim, 12: ארץ אַרְץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָר הָאָרֶץ. See, too, Rashi’s gloss, Hagigah, 12b: שְׁלָל פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן פְּסֵל הַיְּן (for all earthly actions are slow, while acts of heaven are done swiftly). The direct thematic source, however, is R. Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 161.
places after their reception.\textsuperscript{216} \textbf{Cut}:\textsuperscript{217} a thing apportioned and made a measure; and it is called a covenant, for all is created and clarified.\textsuperscript{218}

\textbf{One}\textsuperscript{219} is the beginning of the essences. \textbf{One: the breath of the living God: for from the breath is all.}\textsuperscript{220} 
Blessed and blessed be...for this is breath: for the voice is by breath;\textsuperscript{221} it is the tone of the drawing forth of the

\textsuperscript{216} See supra, ch. 7.6, for an exposition of the entire passage, tracing the origins of this theory of the process of the cognition of metaphysical principles, developing concepts from R. Saadiah Gaon and Judah b. Barzilai, and with parallels to Middle Platonic, Hermetic and contemporary Victorine epistemology.

\textsuperscript{217} SY 1:8 (sec. 5).

\textsuperscript{218} R. Isaac connects the idiomatic expression \כדת\בדית as "establishing a covenant" with its literal, etymological root, \כד as "cut", and the term \כד asociated with its etymological root family, \כד\בד, created, clarified. His argument is that creation proceeds by a "cutting," that is, a measuring and apportioning of the infinite into the finite. He may be alluding, further, to this creation-by-limitation as a "covenant," as a guarantee that the measured phenomenal realm will adequately transmit commensurate impressions of the immeasurable noumenal to the contemplative adept. In keeping with the epistemological position R. Isaac has laid out in lines 127-33, such indirect apprehension is the only appropriate access to the noumenal; any more direct route would result in mental distress.

\textsuperscript{219} SY 1:9 (sec. 10) 144.

\textsuperscript{220} Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 179: \כד\בד\כד\כד (Indeed, all voices are from the breath).

\textsuperscript{221} R. Isaac is commenting on the complete phrase cited from \textit{SY} 1:9 (sec. 10): \textit{blessed and blessed be His Name...voice, breath and speech, this is the [Holy] Spirit}. His version, \כד\כד\כד, apparently corresponds to MSS 'כככ" cited by I. Gruenwald, \textit{SY}, 144. Compare
breath.\textsuperscript{222} By the voice is the hewing, for the drawing forth of the voice is interior. With \textit{breath He engraved:}\textsuperscript{223} engraving is by voice and hewing is by breath by way of voice.\textsuperscript{224} Voice has substance and is nothing but a vessel.\textsuperscript{225} \textit{And hewed in it:} by breath itself there is

line 1, note 1, above. This is to say that Name, breath, voice and speech, are all of a piece. What, exactly, their relationship is, R. Isaac goes on to discuss. See Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 179: \textit{כל הקולות מאלתרות (all the voices are from breath)}.

\textsuperscript{222} Compare Abraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary on Psalms, Ps. 150:6: \textit{וקצר הרוח אריכות כעי הנעימות וי*תנו (מהירותו או *עלותו או גגהותו The tones change according to the length of the breath, the shortness of the voice, its high or low pitch, or its quickness).}

\textsuperscript{223} \textit{SY} 1:10 (sec. 12) 144.

\textsuperscript{224} Judah b. Barzilai, \textit{PSY}, 208: \textit{וביציאת הקול מץ המתרח Ми ז鄗א ואיתס דמית התあって hewed in it: when the voice comes out of the throat, the vapor comes from the mouth and hews the shape of letters). This is based on Saadiah b. Joseph, \textit{Sefer Yezirah}, 3:3, 111. According to this account of the process of speech, the voice, originating deeper in the throat, is more interior than the locus of the shaping of the the letters, which is the mouth. This served R. Isaac as his model for the relationship between the more interior engraving by voice and the more exterior hewing by breath, in divine as well as human speech. See, too, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Ex. 3:2, for a similar linguistic model of creation.

\textsuperscript{225} Compare Dunash Ibn Tamim \textit{PSY}, ed. M. Grosberg (London, 1902), ch. 6, 48: \textit{גו מותי動物 הלברות על כ"ב נטipients of the twenty-two letters indicate twenty-two sounds, sound is the material for speech, and speech indicates matters in the soul...these sound are breath articulated by the organs of speech). This notion of sound as material is similar to R. Isaac's description of voice as substance and vessel. Whether this or another translation of Ibn Tamim's Commentary was available to R. Isaac directly or indirectly, other than citations in Judah b. Barzilai's \textit{PSY}, is not clear. R. Isaac's comments on
engraving and hewing: according to its subtlety is the subtlety of its hewing, and according to its coarseness is the coarseness of its carving. **And breath is one of them:**

it is *Tešuvah*, in which twenty-two letters are inscribed.

Not that the letters are something other than the breath, for from the breath itself they are hewn, and the letter is the thing itself; letters, from which issue the

the relationship of breath, voice and speech do have the general ring of Dunash Ibn Tami's description of the process of speech, *PSY*, 19-20.

This designation of voice as a vessel falls in a middle position, between the concrete and the abstract use of the term *כלי* in medieval Hebrew. In Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*, trans. J. Ibn Tibbón, 5:12, "vessel" is used in a fully abstract sense, as the sustaining form of spiritual and psychological activities (279, line 18): (Its primary instruments are the spiritual forms shaped within the brain from the living spirit by the power of the imagination).

226 *SY* 1:10 (sec. 12).

227 Breath, that is, breath from breath, the second breath, designated יוחז נשימה, corresponds to *Tešuvah*, the *sefira* *Binah* in which the letters are engraved. The identification of Breath as *Binah*, the third *sefira*, and as the quarry and storehouse of the engraved letters, appears in *Sefer hab-Bahir*, sec. 143. See Azriel of Gerona, *PSY*, in *Kitvel Ramban*, vol. 2, 456, who explains that the first "breath" mentioned in *SY* 1:9 (sec. 10), corresponds to the *sefira* *Hokhmah*, the second, or "breath from breath," is *Binah*. According to Nahmanides, however, the first "breath" is *Keter*, the second *Hokhmah*; see *PSY*, in *KS*, 6, (1930) 409.

engravings.

Water\textsuperscript{229} is \textit{Hesed}.\textsuperscript{230} Mud is lighter than clay: it is poured from vessel to vessel; for clay is thick.\textsuperscript{231} Furrow: it compares water to a furrow consisting of wave-crest upon wave-crest. There is soil by itself, and there are stones, and there are veins of water that are from the viscous rocks,\textsuperscript{232} for the earth has masculinity and femininity. There are veins that receive irrigation from here and from there \textit{via} the cavities.\textsuperscript{233} The letters are engraved and erected and overhung: there is that letter which is engraved as a kind of furrow; there is that which is erected as a kind of wall; and there is that letter which overhangs as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{תֵּאָליֵיָא שֵׁאָהָה בָּרָאָת מִינְּבָּרָה וּמֵאָנִיָּה הָאָלָהָה שְׁלָהָה (for the power of all of them is in the power of Binah. One should not say that they are something distinct from Binah, rather they are Binah. And breath is one of them. Like the letter \textit{Sin} of the tefillin, in which the letter protrudes from the leather, and it nothing but leather).}
\item \textit{SY 1:11 (sec. 13) 145.}
\item \textit{Water represents the sefirah which emanates after Binah.}
\item \textit{SY 1:11 (sec. 13) begins a discussion that appropriates images from nature to explain the generation of the sefirot. Along these lines, R. Isaac takes the opportunity to observe that the geological structure of the natural world reflects sefirotic structure. Stones correspond to the letters (line 20, above) and veins of water correspond to the paths, essences and relations between the sefirot (lines 20-24).}
\end{itemize}
kind of ceiling. Therefore, when David dug the pits, and the deep sought to inundate the world, Ahitofel taught David the forty-two letter divine Name, and he wrote it on a clay shard and tossed it into the deep, so that it not inundate the world, such that the entire world dried up, and he had to say the fifteen "degrees" of the Psalms, corresponding to the fifteen inner degrees, and for every degree [the deep] ascended a degree, and the world was restored to its normal condition.

Fire from water: Paḥad from Ḥesed: eight

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234 R. Isaac interprets the furrow, wall and ceiling of SY 1:11 (sec. 13) as referring to the shapes of the letters, with horizontal strokes, furrows and ceilings, below and/or above, and vertical strokes erected left and/or right, a reading that is not at all obvious in context, but which he defends with the aggadah he cites in the following lines. Compare, e. g., Eleazar of Worms, Sodei Razaya, ed. S. Weiss (Jerusalem, 1992) 36, who reads the furrow, wall and ceiling as a reference to the mud and clay of SY.

235 Jerus. Sanh. 10:2; Sukkah 53a,b; Makkot 11a. See, especially, Eleazar of Worms, Sodei Razaya, ed. S. Weiss, (Jerusalem, 1991) 36, who also cites this aggadah in connection with an explication of SY 1:11, and refers specifically to the forty-two letter divine Name, rather than the Tetragrammaton implied in the talmudic version. R. Eleazar of Worms explains that the forty-two letter Name seals the deep and keeps the waters in their place:

He made the earth and created the stone that is on the deep and engraved upon it the explicit divine Name of forty-two letters and affixed them upon the face of the deep in order to contain its waters). Eleazer of Worms also alludes to a passage from Seder Rabbah de-Berešīt, 8, in Batel Midrasot, ed. A. J. Wertheimer, vol. 1, 24, which discusses the sealing power of the forty-three (!) letter divine Name. See note 34, ibid.

R. Isaac offers a variation on this theme: the forty-two letter divine Name, which comprises most of the letters of the alphabet, demonstrates the principle
times eight is sixty four, which constitutes the entire frame, and this is $h-s-d$. His habitation is the entire frame. Elevation, like sanctified and elevated, more elevated. Elevation is sealed in yod, for this is

that the structural forms of the letters enable them to influence the structure of the world: specifically, that the letters, shaped as furrows, walls and ceilings, are the basis of the power of this extended divine Name to contain the deep.

The pits referred to served as drainage conduits for the altar of the Temple. The "degrees" refer to Pss. 120-34, which begin with the phrase "A Song of Degrees."

236 SY 1:12 (sec. 14) 145.
237 See supra, ch. 8.3.
238 The reference is to the gematria value of the Hebrew letters of the sefirot Hesed, as reflecting the numerical value eight, 'י and eight squared, י'ו, which constitutes the numerical value of that subdivision of the sefirot termed י'ון, the frame or structure, usually considered to comprise the seven lower sefirot, but in this case apparently including Binah as the eighth component. The notion of squaring the sum apparently refers to combining each of the eight sefirot with itself and all others, to express the concept of the unity of the dimensions. The idea is that all of the lower sefirot are contained in the sefirot Hesed, and like "fire from water," they unfold from Hesed.
239 The term י'ון, as an underlying place, corresponds to the הוהי.
240 SY 1:13 (sec. 15) 146.
241 Isaac of Acre, PSY, 396, comments on SY 1:13 (sec. 15): י'ון יָוֵית רְכִּי יָוֵית י**וֹהֵי נּוֹבָן ה**מֶלֶט נּוֹבָן הֵא כָל וֹדֵה (Elevation here is [vocalized] with a holam, for from it comes the totality, for elevation is Keter, but [vocalized] with a suruk it refers to Tiferet). This seems to be a reading of R. Isaac's phrase י'ון וּ*וֹדֵה, that "elevation," י'ון, Keter, is "more," that is, higher, than "elevated," י**וֹדֵה, Tiferet.
in Ḥokhmah, and sealed in it are three matrices, which are Binah, Hesed, Paḥad. And He set them in His great Name...and sealed in them six extremities, and faced above:

He made faces above. For a person finds them on all sides, for above there is nothing but faces, for Ḥokhmah

This passage might be explained in a slightly different way, though with the same result. The phrase דום קד in some MSS, may indicate that דום here means Keter, that is, the term "sanctified" is another epithet for Keter, which is דום קד , that is, more elevated, more than any other sefirah, and especially more than Tiferet. See Azriel of Gerona, Perus ha-aggadot, 49a and 97, note 1; idem, PSY 1:9, 456: דום קד (The holy is the power of elevation, prepared to receive from Ein Sof). Compare Sefer ha-Bahir, 70/30. R. Azriel also explains that Sefer Yeẓirah's list characterizing the sefirot as breath, breath from breath, water and air, began from the second sefirah, Ḥokhmah, and only in the present mishnah, 1:13, is the first sefirah, Keter, mentioned. (PSY, 1:9, 456). Since the term דום is also used in conjunction with Tiferet, which would have been the next sefirah in order of descent, R. Isaac is making clear that here the term refers to Keter.

242 R. Isaac reads SY 1:13 (sec. 15) דום קד not as a list of verbs, but as "He sealed elevation."

243 R. Isaac has SY 1:13 versions י.ט , ed. I Gruenwald, 146.

244 The lower sefirah Ḥokhmah, seals, sets an ontological limit, to the upper sefirah Keter. The letter yod corresponds to Ḥokhmah: see line 41 above.


246 R. Isaac translates דום קד , He turned, according to its literal root, to face.

247 The source text here is Saadia b. Joseph, PSY, 72, regarding the angels: (for they consist of faces in all directions). This
surrounds from all sides. But there are powers above more interior than the other receivers. But the "back" is according to the paucity of reception one receives. And that thing is a face for the receiver that is close.

Image was extended by Judah b. Barzilai, *Psy*, 163, to the angelic lightning: (they consist of faces in all directions and on all sides). R. Isaac develops the notion to become a quality of the upper world, and the world of the sefirot, in general.

See lines 41-46. "Faces" is interpreted as the open flow of emanation from its source, *Hokhamah*, as viewed by its receivers, i.e., all the sefirot and beings below it.

MS Angelica: קשמ buffet.

While all is faces above, there is nonetheless a graded hierarchy of powers.

The word אל here and in the previous sentence may be intended to convey the sense "not only this, but...," in a Judeo-Arabic fashion. See M. Gottstein, *Taḥbiraḥ*, 59 (16:145a).

In full reception, the source is characterized by "face," in diminished reception, by "back." R. Isaac places the distinction from Ex. 33:23 in an emanation context. While everything above is "faces," since these powers are arranged in graded hierarchy, it gives rise to degrees of receptivity, and the possibility of poor reception, or "back."

to receive from its flow. North and South: North comes to South.
The order of directions in this mishnah, which summarizes the order laid out in the previous five sections, is also the order of hierarchic descent of divine efflux. This is also possibly an allusion to Cant. 4:16: מורי מורי וביאי תימן.
**Chapter 2**

**Twenty-two letters:** it was not necessary to mention the ten sefirot, for it has already mentioned them; therefore it only came to mention the twenty-two letters. **Simple:** each one extends by itself and does not invert. Even though we find that the counterpart of odor is odorlessness, and the counterpart of talk is muteness, and so with all the simple letters, even so, they do not resemble the geminates. For muteness and odorlessness and those similar to them are only absence and lack, like darkness, which is the absence of light, but the geminates,

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1 *SY* 2:3 (sec. 17) 147.

2 R. Isaac plays on the double meaning ofםש as "simple" and "extended," to place the letters in the context of the process of emanation. See Judah Alharizi's definition ofםש in his introduction to his translation of Maimonides' *Noreh Nevukhim* (Vilna, 1912) 8: and the power of a thing disperses and continues to expand). Inversion is a quality of the geminate letters. See below, lines 313-19.

3 The examples of contrary qualities come from the categories of biological functions listed in *SY* 5:1 (sec. 45) 162: (Twelve simple letters...their foundation is sight, hearing, smell, speech, eating, sexuality, walking, anger and laughter, though and sleep). 

4 Isaac Israeli, *The Book of Substances*, in *Isaac Israeli*, ed. and trans. A. Altman and S. M. Stern, (Oxford 1958) 87: "Firstly, because ignorance has no form or existence; it cannot be a thing's form and cannot be predicated of a thing, because it is
the weak and the emphatic, each one has a cause unto itself.⁵

And the tongue is a rule:⁶ Tiferet is called "rule," as it is written: "For it is a rule for Israel (Ps. 81:5)."⁷ But aleph is a rule,⁸ signifies the elevating of the rule and the exalting of its crown,⁹ but it does not mention it privation, and privation has no existence or form; for instance blindness, which has no form or existence, because it is the privation of sight. Similarly, darkness has no form or existence, because it is the privation of light."

See, too, Abraham Bar Hiyya, Megillat ha-Megaleh, ed. A. Poznanski (Berlin, 1924) 5: ויהי המגלה (So, too, darkness is the absence of light).

⁵ That is, each pair of geminates represents active, opposing qualities, rather than a quality and its absence. Compare lines 313-19 below.

⁶ See SY 2:3 (sec. 17) 147 note 1. Compare SY 2:1 (sec. 23) 151. Hok denotes statute, rule, line, boundary and portion, all of which share the sense of something straight, limiting and determined. Therefore the term "rule," in the sense of regula, with its legal as well as geometrical connotation, was chosen as the translation for all occurrences in this passage.

⁷ "Israel" is an epithet for Tiferet. See Tishbi's note, Azriel of Gerona, Perus ha-`Aggadot, fol. 2b, 68 note 2, to the effect that "Israel" was used most frequently by the Gerona kabbalists as an epithet for Tiferet, though on occasion it seems to have stood for Keter instead, particularly in the form רוחם פרוע (Grandfather Israel). See Sefer hab-Bahir, 91/40.

⁸ SY 3:2 (sec. 26) 152.

⁹ This is an allusion to Keter. See line 273 below. R. Isaac compares Tiferet and Keter, both described as "rule," and both sefirot serving as mediators balancing between two extremes.
with reference to that elevation until chapter three,\textsuperscript{10} where it mentions the innerness of merit and demerit.\textsuperscript{11} Since it mentioned here the twenty-two letters, it mentioned the three matrices, even though it was not necessary.\textsuperscript{12}

He engraved them\textsuperscript{13} in \textit{Tesuvah}.\textsuperscript{14} He made amorphous

\textsuperscript{10} This refers to chapter three as it appears in certain of the short recensions listed by I. Gruenwald, \textit{SY}, 3:2 (sec. 26) 152: כנעב.

\textsuperscript{11} "Merit" and "demerit" refer to \textit{Hesed} and \textit{Gevurah}: see Azriel of Gerona, \textit{PSY}, 2:1, 458.

R. Isaac, here and below, line 273, is comparing \textit{SY} sec. 23: שלושה חותים... והם י SERIAL, with \textit{SY} sec. 23: והם י SERIAL. He explains the latter as the inner, ideal dynamic of the former condition, the ascent of \textit{Tiferet} towards \textit{Keter}.

On the meaning of elevation, see line 245-46, below, and note 11.

\textsuperscript{12} The point is that chapter two of \textit{SY} is devoted to discussing principles that apply to the twenty-two letters in general. A discussion of the three matrices in particular is out of place, and belongs in chapter three. R. Isaac here justifies what is essentially an editing problem in the recension he was using by deeming it a case of association. See \textit{SY}, I. Gruenwald, 147, n. 1.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{SY} 2:2 (sec. 19).

\textsuperscript{14} Engraving is the degree of carving of form that occurs at the level of the \textit{sefirah} \textit{Binah}. The forms that are engraved are the letters. Compare \textit{Sefer hab-Bahir}, 143/49: שלושה, serial, \textit{Hokhmah}, \textit{Keter} the house, \textit{Keter} the house, the quarry of the Torah, the storehouse of \textit{Wisdom} (\textit{Hokhmah}), its quarry is the Holy Spirit, which teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, hewed all the letters of the Torah and engraved them in spirit and made His forms). On the cognomen \textit{Tesuvah for Binah}, see \textit{supra}, 8.4.
matter. But he did not wish to speak of inscription, even though we find "inscribed in a true writ (Dan. 10:21)," because inscription is not yet a form until it is first in writing. And heewed them from the letters that were the

15 The word גולם for pure, amorphous or primal matter appears in Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 14: ותא电子产品 יבשות וביצותך והגולם גולו והיה בו כל הת褥ויי עשה והיה בטוח בחדש ורדה (There is also among creatures something that is amorphous matter and body, that has the power to be self-subsistent, and which is called "substance" (יוודא) in Arabic). See, also, Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 211. It was the term of choice for Maimonides to represent primal matter throughout Hilkhot Yesodel bat-Torah: 2:3; 3:10; 4:6,7. R. Azriel continues use of this term for primal matter (PSY, 151, lines 15, 16).

Among the kabbalists, Binah is associated with the philosophical category of primal matter, Hokhmah with primal form. See Azriel of Gerona, Perus ha-2Aggadot, 151, note 7, where Tishbi observes that for the Gerona Circle, based on the teachings of R. Isaac, tohu corresponds to Hokhmah, bohu corresponds to Binah. See below, lines 218-20. See Nahmanides, Torah Commentary, Gen. 1:1, Azriel of Gerona, PSY 1:11, 457; 2:6, 459, and especially R. Jacob ben Sheshet, Mesiv Devarim Nekhoah, ch. 9 (32a-33b, 120; 37b-38a, 129), who, as Tishbi notes, consciously cites Abraham bar Hiyya, Hegyon han-Nefes, ed. G. Wigoder, (Jerusalem, 1971) 42, and n. 20, for the identification of tohu with primal matter and bohu with primal form.

In R. Isaac's scheme, according to the passage under discussion, Tesuvah or Binah is not itself identical with primal matter. It is the act of engraving letters within Tesuvah that creates primal matter per se.

16 Judeo-Arabic philosophic usage of the preposition יִה . See M. Gottstein, Tahbirah, 96, 6.a,b.

17 Inscription is the carving activity appropriate to the Sefirah Hokhmah. Even though the verse Dan. 10:21 seems to imply that the forms of the letters apply to Hokhmah, that is, they are inscribed, nonetheless they remain hidden until they are engraved in Binah.

R. Isaac is addressing the exegetical issue that SY begins its account of the process of creation via
prior foundation,\textsuperscript{18} engraved in \textit{Teshuvah}, after the making
of the boundaries\textsuperscript{19} by the engraving that followed the
inscribing. \textbf{He weighed them}, this against that, in order to
couple them to make fruits, for it is impossible that there
emanate one thing from another without a plumbline.\textsuperscript{20} \textbf{And}
exchanged them: exchange is included in transformation,\textsuperscript{21} as
carving with the action of engraving, rather than the
prior and more subtle action of inscribing. See \textit{supra},
ch. 6.

\textsuperscript{18} See above, line 20; \textit{SY} 1:2 (sec. 2).

\textsuperscript{19} See Azriel of Gerona, \textit{Perush ha-\textsuperscript{2}Aggadot}, 89,
lines 7-17, who explains that "boundary" is the first
step and \textbf{minimum} degree of differentiation in the
creation of form.

\textsuperscript{20} Compare Abraham Bar Hiyya, \textit{Hegyon han-Nefes},
ch. 1, 42-43, where the relationship between amorphous
matter and form is compared to the plumbline-and-chaos,
plumb bob-and-substance image of Is. 34:11.

Perhaps this passage should read "for it is
impossible that there emanate one thing from another
without weights (מעקלות)." This would mean that the
descending process of creation by emanation can only
occur through a progressive weighing-down and
materialization. That is, in a very literal sense,
emanation, as progressive corporealization, involves an
increase in the "weight" of the emanating entity with
respect to its source. No MSS have this reading,
however.

\textsuperscript{21} The term "transformation (תמרה), does not
appear in \textit{SY} 2:2 (sec. 19). The digression which
follows, comparing the term תמיסה, exchange, with
תמרה, transformation, apparently derives partly from
their association in the biblical verse Lev. 27:10 and
its explication in \textit{Temurah} 9a, where these two terms
are compared and contrasted.

While the sensibility to distinguish these two
terms may be supported by the talmudic passage, R.
Isaac does not adopt their actual talmudic definitions.
Rather, in the ensuing passage, to line 180, the
technical differences he defines among various Hebrew
terms for "change" reflect, in part, conceptual
it is written: "the rain has transformed and gone (Cant.

distinctions used by Abraham Bar Hiyya. See Megillat bam-Megalleh, 5-6, especially 5, lines 7-12 and following: יֵפֵק הֵדֶרֶךְ הָיוֹתָה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל כְּלַת הָוָלַפָּס הָוָלַפָּס אֶלֶּה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל לְהוּס הָפוּוּשׁ הָפוּוּשׁ הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֵלֶּה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֱלֹקָה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֱלֹקָה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֱלֹקָה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֱלֹקָה הַמַּכְרֶאֶל אֱלֹקָה Hегyon han-NefeS, 46: The third kind of form...transmutes and transforms from form to form in two ways. Some divest a form and put on another form, and are unable to expand or enlarge their form. Others expand their form and enlarge it and do not divest it). See the entire discussion, in which he examines the subject of categories of change at great length, 38-50. In the course of his discussions, Bar Hiyya uses the terms , but more or less interchangeably, not in the consist manner in which R. Isaac tries to define them. Compare, too, Joseph Ibn Zaddik, Sefer Olam bak-Katan, ed. S. Horovitz (Breslau, 1903) 9-15 for a similar discussion.

While R. Isaac's own discussion does not follow Bar Hiyya's or Ibn Zaddik's in all respects, there is, nonetheless, a general commonality in their empirical interest in distinguishing various categories of the phenomenon of change. More specifically, R. Isaac puts to use Bar Hiyya's conceptual distinction between substantive change versus a change in accidental qualities, a distinction based, in turn, on straightforward Aristotelian doctrine, particularly Aristotle's differentiation between between changes of substance and changes of qualities, in On Generation and Corruption, 1.4, 319b-320a. Even the illustrative examples of change used by Ibn Zaddik, such as the rain...
"For with respect to the rain, which is sent forth from its cause and returns, as it is written, "unless it has done what I please (Is. 55:11)," "transformed" is written, for it returns to its amorphous matter, and it is possible for it to perform its mission another time by transformation: if a coarse rain is materialized, or a subtle rain. But transformation is not included in exchange, for transformation is a thing that changes from cycle, which R. Isaac uses as well, come originally from Aristotle.

In sum, R. Isaac explains the term "exchange" in SY on the basis of its appearance in the biblical verse, as expounded in the Talmud in a halakhic context, and placed in an Aristotelian conceptual framework supplied by Bar Ḥiyya, and possibly other philosophical sources such as Ibn Ḥaddiq. From Jewish traditional sources he gets the terminological distinctions. From philosophic sources he gets the matching conceptual differences which flesh out his definitions of the terms.

22 See above, note 15.

23 The choice of the terms "sent forth," "returns" and "mission" in this sentence was also suggested by the verse Is. 55:11.

24 The idea is that "transformation" involves a complete change in the subject. The rain that reappears after a period of formlessness may have an entirely different form than the original manifestation.

See Joseph Ibn Ḥaddiq, Sefer 'Olam hak-Katan, ed. S. Horovitz (Breslau, 1903) 14, for a similar example of the change from form to formlessness and back to form, drawn from the example of the water and rain cycle. Whether R. Isaac was acquainted with this work is unclear. See the editor's introduction, xiii, n. 57, where Horovitz cited various suggestions as to the identity of the translator, including Naḥum ha-Maʿaravi, a later contemporary of R. Isaac's.

25 Exchange is a more restrictive category within transformation. Compare Aristotelian logic, Prior..."
its root, as it is written, "like a garment You shall transform them, and they shall be transformed (Ps. 102:27)," "a transfer of clothes (Gen. 45:22)," "all transient ones (Prv. 31:8)," for they change from their root. But change is the changing of a thing from dimension to dimension and from color to color and from place to place. Exchange is like a king who has arrived at the limit of his reign, and they remove him from his kingdom and another rules in his stead, better than him or similar to him. For exchange goes from cause to cause and from generation to generation, like David, upon whom was bestowed the majesty of kingship, and that agency operated until the completion of his

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26 To evoke R. Isaac's flexible use of the term חלף, synonyms based on the prefix trans- have been used. All trans- words in this passage translate forms of the word חלף. The idea is that חלף connotes essential change in a single, persisting subject, the people of Ps. 102:27, the genus "clothing" of Gen. 45:22, and the mortals of Prv. 31:8. By contrast, the term מודד, "exchange," refers to a change of subjects. Transformation is the more essential form of change, and therefore the more inclusive category.

27 Change of color is one of the examples of inessential change offered by Abraham Bar Ḥiyya, Megillat ham-Megalleh, 5.

28 Change of place as a form of change is discussed at length by Abraham Bar Ḥiyya, Hegyon han-Nefes, 46-48.

29 1 Sam. 15:28.

30 Samuel Ibn Tibben in his translation of
allotted destiny arrived. After that began the kingdom of Solomon, upon whom was bestowed the majesty of kingship that was given to his father, until the completion of his allotted destiny, and this one was exchanged for that one. So, too, is the matter of the fluctuating, extending letters, and therefore it says "exchanged them," and not "transformed them."33

And He combined them: Thus far, it spoke of the upper world.34 Now, it speaks of that place from which the separate entities are affected35 by the extension36 of the

Maimonides' Moreh Nevukhim, 2:12, uses the term לְבָעָתָה in the sense of agent or cause, in the generic sense. So, too, does Jacob b. Reuven, Milḥamot Haš-Šem, 179 et passim.

31 See line 214, below.

32 See line 158 above.

33 The letters themselves do not change or transform, rather, one letter replaces another to create different effects. Therefore Sir′s use of the term "exchange" is appropriate and precise.

34 See supra, ch. 5.3, regarding the sources for R. Isaac's concept of the upper world in his Commentary on Sefer Yeẓirah, as the world of sefirotic unity, in contrast to the world of the separate entities; and as compared with his tripartite system of worlds in his gloss on the first chapter of Genesis, in MS JTS 1887, fol. 29a-b.

35 The term נפמלו was used in this sense by Ibn Tibbon in his translation of Judah Halevi's Kuzari, 5:10, 20; and by Judah Alharizi, in Maimonides' Moreh Nevukhim, 1:51.

36 See Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Hovot ha-Levavot, 8:4: דַּרְגוֹת עָשִׂים (the extension of the sphere). See J. Klatzkin, Thesaurus Philosophicus, 221, entry 2. Compare Judah Alharizi's definition of לעבה as "when
letters. Combined them: He coupled them many times. It varied the terminology, saying weighed them and combined them, for both are an aspect of coupling, according to their innerness, as in the case of inscription, which is more interior than engraving, and engraving which is more interior than hewing. So, too, weighing is more interior than exchange, and exchange than combination. As in the case of flames, as long as they are separate, there is no ability to accomplish an act, until they are all joined with the coal. So too with a tree: each single branch has no strength, each one on its own, except by their joining this one with that one, and this one within that one. Combination itself, as mentioned, is applied to everything that has been mentioned, for nothing is joined without combination. For he wanted to speak by degrees and in order of primacy. For first He made men and then women. First He made Jacob and Esau, with a woman on this side and a woman on that side, and He weighed who was fit to be the mate of this one and who the mate of that one, and this is the weighing: after this shall be that, and after this shall be that. Thus, from the power of a thing spreads and continually extends," in his introductory lexicon to Maimonides' Moreh Nevukhim.

37 Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 215, speaks of the procedure of weighing, combining and exchanging of letters as a "coupling (אֶלֶף).

38 The examples given above, the flame needing to be joined to the coal for effectiveness, the parts of a tree needing to be joined together for strength, are
the first were created all the souls that would exist in the future, and all the forms that would receive spirit in the future.

all illustrations of the principle of combination.

40 R. Isaac is commenting on the passage from SY 2:2, 4 (sec. 19), which reads (לך יוצר רוח כל העצמים ועטויי לעזרו (He formed in them the souls of all creatures and the souls of all that would be formed in the future). Thus he comments on both "souls" and "forms," reflecting the terms of the passage. He accentuates the Neoplatonic quality that is already apparent in the passage. Also underlying his language and formulation seems to be Rashi's gloss to Avodah Zarah 5a: "The descendant of David shall not come until all the souls of the body have been consumed." Rashi comments: (לך העצמים ועטויי לעזרו (There is a storehouse, and its name is "body," and from the beginning were created all the souls that are to be born in the future, and they were placed there). Compare Niddah 13b. See Judah b. Barzilai's summary of commentaries on these talmudic dicta and related midrashic sources, PSY, 208. Compare Rashi, Gen. 1:14, based on Gen. R. 1:19, that all creatures were created on the first day, and put in place on their appropriate succeeding days.

R. Isaac's point is that SY depicts the divine activity of "combination" as part of the preparatory process of creation, operating with the souls and forms before they become fully manifest in creatures, a position supported by traditional and philosophic theories of cosmogony. See, e.g., Abraham Bar Hiyya, Negillat ham-Megalleh, 8-10; 17-19, and see following note.

41 This is a statement of the principle of creation as a process proceeding from potential to actual couched in philosophic terms picked up from SY 2:2, 4 (sec. 19), and supported by mainstream Neoplatonic doctrine. Abraham Bar Hiyya, Negillat ham-Megalleh, 17-19 says specifically that it is the form of a thing that has prior existence in potentia, to be actualized at a later time; for example (17): (לכל здесь ודיורוável"

רמר הנותנה את כל זורו מקורה וסימורו היה בטוח יום אחרון ושרוד השם אחרון ופייריו נגיה נספתצת מפוהרים (regarding...
And He formed in them, in the letters themselves He made a form, in order to form another form from it below. So, too, each and every thing is cause from cause, until it arrives at the separate entities, which are below the ten sefirot, and the separate entities suck from them like fruits of the tree until the end of the completion of their ripening. With the completion of their ripening, they fall from the place of their sucking and in their place others are regenerated in their stead. Sometimes those which fall, fall in a place such that they make great trees that issue forth their

each and every thing that exists in every generation, its form and image were created at first, the root of the species and its essence existed from before). See, too, Hegyon han-Nefes, ch. 1, 40-43. Bar Hiyya notes that this theory of cosmogony is both the prevailing gentile philosophic view, and a view consonant with, even based upon, Torah tradition (ibid. 41, and note 19, where G. Wigoder notes the Neoplatonic provenance of this theory).

R. Isaac's formulation, picking up on the precise word-choice of the passage from SY and its double structure ("He formed the souls of creatures, and all that would be formed in the future") has the effect of highlighting the parallelism and agreement between a traditional Jewish conception of the pre-existence of souls, based on midrashic sources, cited by Rashi, and the mainstream Platonic, Neoplatonic and Aristotelian doctrine of the pre-existence of abstract forms.

SY 2:2,4 (sec. 19).

While the preposition וּגָנַן in SY itself should probably be translated "with them," "with" the letters, R. Isaac reads it in terms of his overall Neoplatonic conception of an imbedded hierarchy of ontological levels, one level nested within another, forms within letters within sefirot. See supra, ch. 5.

For an analysis of this passage, see supra, ch.
fruit, and so too with their fruit and the fruit of their fruit forever: each one according to the level of the place of its sucking, which was its cause, by virtue of its importance and the importance of its fruit. That are to be formed in the future: these are the spirits, which are subtle essences bound in one place. All of them were made

5.1.

R. Isaac uses the image of fruit to represent the "separate entities": the falling of the fruit from the tree expresses the notion of separation from the source, as well as from each other.

45 The notion that beings can be graded in their perfection according to the level or position of their attachment to the emanated hierarchy can be found in Isaac Israeli's "Book of Substances," Isaac Israeli, 93-95; and in Abraham Ibn Ḥasdai, Ben ha-Melekh we-Ben Han-Nazir, 200: alluded to 1 Sam. 25:29, based on the terms of SY 2:2 (sec. 19), "generation...creation...creation defined not only as "to form" but "to tie, bind." The verse associates binding with the condition of the soul, and R. Isaac plays on this meaning. Behind this interpretation may lie the passage from the midrash Eccles. R. 8:11: "it is written 'He forms the spirit of man within him,' [meaning] He tied the spirit of man to his body, for were it not so, when suffering comes upon him, he would take it and cast it from within him." R. Isaac's use of
from the beginning of creation, though the life of the forms of the souls were formed from an inner power, from something that the heart is not able to ponder. So, too, the perceptible forms are from the power of the awesome causes, that can be apprehended through perception, which are the vessels of the unique inner souls.

the term דוחות, spirits, rather than souls, matches the midrashic text. If so, the "one place" to which R. Isaac says these spirits are bound would be the body, in the sense of individual bodies. On the other hand, this "one place" in which the spirits are bound, in the sense of gathered, may be that "body" to which Rashi refers, as the metaphysical storehouse of souls, Aptah Zarah, 5a.

47 See notes 40, 41 above.

48 The identification of soul and spirit with form is an Aristotelian doctrine found in Maimonides, Yesodei hat-Torah, 4:8, 9; TeSuvah, 8:3; Moreh Nevukhim 1:41. Compare Aristotle, De Anima, 2:1-3 (412a-415a).

49 This reference to the innermost origin of the soul may allude to to Gen. R. 14:11: והם נורא תבנה נפשות תFalsy. יתרכי... (The soul) is called by five names...). The level of "unique" may be what R. Isaac refers to in line 198 as "bound in one place," and in line 201 as "unique." The "life" he speaks of in line 199 may also refer to this dictum. The innovative point is that the originary essence of human being itself is rooted in the most recondite dimensions of the divine. Compare Nahmanides, Kitvei Ramban, vol 1, משפטו שלו במכומיו befematav behemesh vehemesh 392: כשלשת תי_HOT_E המוסכם...

50 See line 71 and not, above. It is the forms that can be apprehended through intuitive perception, and which, as R. Isaac goes on to say, are the vessels of the souls.

51 See Judah HaLevi's Kuzari, trans. J. Ibn Tiebon, 5:12, where mental forms are described as the vessels of the soul, and the term "vessel" is used in a fully abstract sense: becolh rosh tavon...
Engraved in voice: in the drawing out of the tone of the voice the letters are emanated and engraved, as it is written, "the voice of G-d engraves flames of fire (Ps. 29:7)," for the voice divides one letter into many letters through its drawing-out. Voice is inner, for its nature is very subtle, and none apprehend it. Hewn in breath: by the...
power of Teshuvah they are hewn, and they are within Teshuvah.\textsuperscript{55} The letters have a body and a soul.\textsuperscript{56} Fixed in

\textsuperscript{54} For the concept of a subtle voice that is not perceived, compare Gen. R. 6:12: ד"ב 'דברים קולות לפי וilestone פסות וקטורתunos וקיימות ימי העם (The voices of three things travel from one end of the world to the other, yet the people in between do not perceive them: the day, the rain, and the soul when it leaves the body). Similarly, Pirke de-R. Eliezer, ch 34. ו' קולות בו ימות ומתות ים ים קולות סלמה וכם (The voices of six things travel from one end of the world to the other, and their voices are not heard).

R. Saadiah Gaon, in his Commentary on SY, 2:2, 53, compares voice and speech: והשלהת כלים אמרים אחרים א"יוספ ג"א יאו歳 ו"ב צ"א קולות יתא קולות יתא ת"א (regarding these three the verse says "there is no speech, no words, their voice is not heard (Ps. 19:4), for behold, voice is that which is not understood, words are separate, speech is the composite of two or three words). Whether R. Isaac had R. Saadiah's commentary in mind, or even available to him, is not clear. In any case, R. Isaac conception of voice goes beyond R. Saadiah's notion of mere inarticulateness. For R. Isaac, it is not just physical sound, but the underlying agency or intention of expression. Compare Maimonides' exposition on the voices of the celestial spheres in praise of the Creator, based on his own exegesis of Ps. 19:4, in Moreh Nevukhim, 2:5, in which the non-verbal praise of the spheres is regarded as a higher level of intellectual activity than articulated speech.

Judah b. Barzilai, PSY, 208, distinguishes between voice and speech, though not in the same manner as R. Isaac: ו'א"י ד"א"י כ"א י"א קולות ילווי, וי"א ו"א קולות ילווי י"א (voice is not like speech, for voice is inferior, and is not necessarily lingual, while speech is lingual!). See, too, 216-17. Compare, too, Theology of Aristotle, 18.13-19 in Plotini Opera, vol. 2, ed. G. Lewis (Paris and Brussels, 1959) 39, regarding spiritual communication without words.

\textsuperscript{55} See line 166, above, and notes.

\textsuperscript{56} Compare Judah Halevi, Kuzari 4:3, trans. J. Ibn Tibbon, ed. A. Zifrinowitsch, 209 line 6, regarding the four vowel letters י"א"ו"ז that: 'וככם כרותים ושם他们在 תאות וב帳號 (they are like spirits, and the rest of
the sinews of the head.87 In the breath are all the
letters,58 and the breath is fixed in the mouth. For there
is a distinction between the movements of the tongue and the
movements of the mouth,59 for the vessel of the breath is

the letters are like bodies). Compare Abraham Ibn Ezra,
Yesod Mor's, ch. 1, (Jerusalem, 1970) 1: סימני התיבות (for the words are like bodies
and the cantillation signs like souls); Commentary to
Ex. 20:1 in Perusei ha-Torah, ed. A. Weiser, 127: כי
הלוות כתובות ישבים ; Sefer hab-Bahir
sec. 115/47 and note 2 (the "Yerushalaim" to which R.
Shimon b. Žemah Duran refers, in Magen Avot, 74b, cited
by Margoliot, may well be the Zohar, which was so
called by R. Moses de Leon; see G. Scholem's article on
the Zohar, Encyclopedia Judaica, vol 16, 1210).

57 SY, 2:3 (sec. 17): גחמ גפה קבועות
(fixed in the mouth in five places). In the long
recension, this section goes on to list the five
places, along the length of the tongue. See "A
Preliminary Critical Edition of Sefer Yeẓirah," 147,
note 2.

See, too, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Torah Commentary, Ex.
3:15, ed. A. Weiser, vol. 2, 29: גוחל שפ Maher דהא צים
מש מוקפת בהם מוצאי התיבות (The master of the Hebrew
language observed that there are five places [in the
head] which emit [the sounds of] the letters). He goes
on to list the throat, the palate, the tongue, the
teeth, the lips. Compare Dunash Ibn Tamim, PSY, 38-39:
 clasMother את מי המוחוכי האל הראות גורץ ותיך וששלום ושליים
(for human speech is made physically manifest by the organs
of the lungs, the throat, the palate, the tongue, the
teeth and the mouth, and all these organs cut the
breath that issues from the lungs) R. Judah b.
Barzilai, PSY, 208 lists the five places as 1) the
lungs with the throat, 2) the lips, 3) the palate, 4)
the tip of the tongue against the teeth, and 5) the
middle of the tongue. Compare line 139.

58 This is not just a description of a physical
reality, but also a parallel kabbalistic statement:
breath, signifying the sefirah Binah, contains all the
letters. Compare Sefer hab-Bahir, sec. 143/49. This
intended parallelism between physical and sefirotic
structure is true, explicitly or implicitly, of all R.
Isaac's descriptions.
the movement of the organs of speech that move with them, and they have a fixed place, from which place it is impossible to move.

59 R. Isaac accounts for the fact that SY specifies that the breath is fixed in the mouth, not the tongue, and possibly accounts as well for the distinction made between tongue and mouth, e.g., in a section such as SY 1:3 (sec. 3), i.e., between the covenant of the tongue and the covenant of the mouth. By rights, tongue and mouth should be one general locale, the locus of speech. R. Isaac explains the distinction in terms of their differing movements contributing to the process of speech.