

SEFER YETZIRAH 1.4



משנה ד': עשר ספירות בלימה עשר ולא תשע עשר ולא
אחת עשרה הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה בחון בהם וחקור מהם והעמד
דבר על בוריו והשב יוצר על מכוננו:

1.4: Ten sefirot of nothingness. Ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Understand with wisdom, be wise with understanding. Examine with them, and probe from them. Make each thing stand on its essence, and make the Creator sit on His base.

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translation)

1.4: Ten sefirot/declarations of constraint, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding. Examine with them and explore with them, and stand each word and thing on its wellspring, and return the Assembler to its base.

(Doc Benton translation)

A few things are going on in this passage. First, we are reminded that the number of *sefirot* is ten and not nine or eleven. Just ten, and that's important because if there are only ten *sefirot* or utterances, then that corresponds to ten commandments, ten generations from *Adam* to *Noah*, ten generations from *Noah* to *Abraham*, ten fingers, and various other things that come in "*ten*" that are meaningful to us. And remember that at the beginning of *Torah*, *God* creates the world with ten utterances and not nine. This is a reminder that there are really ten times that "*And God said*," is written in *Genesis* if we interpret the first verse as a creative utterance. Furthermore, if *God* made an additional eleventh utterance somewhere, then that would suggest that the *Torah* is incomplete, and that is a conclusion that we are not going to accept.

Next, we read in the text that we need to understand with wisdom and be wise with understanding. As *Kabbalah* evolved, these words, *wisdom* and *understanding*, became synonymous, respectively, with the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain, and the result in *Kabbalah* of the coordination of these two brain functions is *knowledge*. Thus, use all the parts of your brain to explore and examine every facet of this reality.

In the *Bible*, we often encounter the image of *God* riding on a cloud or being carried by *cherubs*, but in many of these images it also becomes clear that *God* is not really moving. Instead, *He* is being carried around or is seated on a throne that is carried around. Consequently, *God* can in this way present an image of activity while at the same also conforming to the dictum found in *Malachi 3:6* that *God* is always unchanging. In a similar manner, our consciousness appears to dart back and forth from one thing to another, but the text suggests that this movement of our consciousness is likewise illusory. Our awareness, instead of moving around, is always fixed and stationary, and in reality every perception points us back towards this silent observer.

What this passage wants us to do is to become aware of that observer and make that the center of our universe. When we learn how to let every perception lead us back to this center, then we will understand what is meant by the phrase “*stand each word and thing on its wellspring.*”

It is very important that as early as this fourth verse, the text essentially gives us a meditation technique. This suggests that this is a skill that must be mastered before any of the other techniques mentioned in this work can be successfully implemented. Further instructions on meditation are given in verse 1.8.

Additionally, the word that I have rendered as *Assembler* is more commonly translated as *Creator*. However, the Hebrew word used in this context is based upon the verb *yatzar*, *to form*, and this refers generally to *something from something creation*. Consequently, I find it more accurate to refer to this as the *Assembler* within us that constructs the reality that we view. And when we establish this observer, this *Assembler*, in its proper place at the center of our awareness, then we will no longer be so caught up in the pursuit of things that lack real substance, and we will have successfully returned *the Assembler to its base*.