

B”H

Intermediate Level Kabbalah

The Unifications of the Emotive Sefirot

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Jews Count

Once the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, heard his disciples repeating a saying that had been handed down in tradition from generation to generation—that Jews are always counting. In other words, Jews like to count.

Counting is a state of mind. Counting something gives it value. It also makes us accountable for what we are counting. We always need to be counting and taking things into account. A Jew always feels accountable to the Almighty; first and foremost for the days and hours of his life. A Jew wants to ensure that he maximizes his time, so in a sense Jews are always counting; always taking responsibility for the gifts they have been given by the Creator and always treasuring those gifts.

But, there is another form of counting as well that this saying alludes to. Someone who has a treasure (or a favorite collection) likes to count it over and over. As God’s chosen people, we possess a treasure that is infinitely more valuable than any material treasure of gold, gems, pearls, or diamonds. Our treasure is the Torah, made up of its letters and words. The opportunity that we have every day anew to study the Torah and perform its commandments gives us the greatest inner pleasure and delight in life. For this reason, as we will see, the sages were constantly counting the letters of the Torah, its words, and its verses. Likewise, everyday we count the number of blessings we say, the number of Jews present (albeit indirectly) in order to form a *minyan* (ritual quorum). And, between Passover and Shavu’ot we count the days of the Omer, in preparation and anticipation of the day on which we commemorate having been given the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

Starting from the Root

One of the most important principles in Kabbalah is that to understand a concept we first have to contemplate the root of its word.¹ The three-letter root of the verb to-count in Hebrew is ספר. This is one of the most important roots in the Hebrew language.



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Though our focus will be on the *Book of Formation*, let us begin by quickly reviewing the first appearances of this root in the Torah. The very first time the root appears in the Torah is in the verse, “This is the book of the generations of man.”² The word “book” (סֵפֶר) stems from this root, and is the meaning of this root that we will be focusing on. The second instance of this root is in the verse describing the migration of Noah’s descendants through his son Shem following the deluge. The Torah writes, “And they dwelled from Meisha all the way to the border of the eastern mountain.”³ The word for “border” (סְפֵרָה) stems from this root.⁴

The third time this root appears is one of the most central events in the lives of the patriarchs. In this instance, the root also appears in the sense of counting,

*He [God] took Abraham outside and said, “Gaze at the sky and count the stars, if you can count them. So [numerous] will your offspring be.” And he [Abraham] had faith in God, and He considered it a charity for him [Abraham].*⁵

These verses reveal something very deep about the act of counting and perhaps about the reason why Jews are always counting. This is the first time that “faith” appears in the Torah. The Torah is telling us that there is something about counting that leads one to faith. Somehow, through the act of counting, Abraham became the first believer.

Indeed, the contents of the very first Kabbalistic book, the *Book of Formation*, are attributed to Abraham and focus on two central topics, counting and the meaning of the stars. It is clear then that there is a deep connection between the verse in which God tells Abraham to count the stars and the *Book of Formation*.

The *Book of Formation* begins with the statement that,

God created the world with three books: an author, a book, and a story.

All three nouns, a book (סֵפֶר), an author (סוֹפֵר, which can also be translated as a scribe or someone who counts, as we shall see), and a story (סִיפּוּר), stem from the same three-letter root (ספּר). The first Kabbalistic work describes the three tools of creation as related to the same three-letter root from which the verb to count comes. Using the simplest noun, “a book” (סֵפֶר), the *Book of Formation* is telling us that (metaphorically, of course) God created the world through three aspects of a book.

Let us begin to meditate upon what the image of a book might suggest. We know that we, the Jewish people, are commonly referred to as the people of the book. This has to do with the fact that we are the eternal people on earth. We are eternal in merit of our hold on the Book—i.e., the Torah. One way then of understanding the metaphor of God creating the world with three aspects of a book is to say that God created reality with

three dimensions of the Torah. But, we can also take this statement at an even more conceptual level and say that every book has three dimensions to it and it is with these concepts that God created the world. As we continue we will define these three aspects of a book conceptually.

Counting and the Sefirot

The three-letter root of “book” (סֵפֶר) is also the root of what is perhaps the most important concept in Kabbalah, the *sefirah* (סְפִירָה). God created the world through the 10 channels of emanation called *sefirot*.⁶ This of course suggests that if we were able to see how the three aspects of a book correspond to three of the ten *sefirot*, we would have a very good conceptual understanding of what each aspect represents.

But, which three *sefirot* represent the 3 dimensions of a book? According to the commentaries on the *Book of Formation*, the three books (or aspects of a book) correspond to the three intellectual *sefirot*, wisdom understanding and knowledge. More specifically,

- the author (or scribe, or counter) of the book (סוֹפֵר) corresponds to the *sefirah* of wisdom.
- the book itself (סֵפֶר) corresponds to the *sefirah* of understanding, and
- the story (סיפור) corresponds to the *sefirah* of knowledge.

The relationship between wisdom and understanding is likened to that between a father and mother. The father principle then is wisdom and it is the book’s author. The book itself is the mother. The story related in the book, knowledge, is the force that binds the two together.

An author sits down to write a book if he has a story to tell. So, it is the story that is binding the author with the book he or she is producing. Similarly, knowledge is the binding connection between a man and wife, as in the verse, “And Adam knew his wife, Eve.” But, knowledge is not only the *sefirah* that (more than any other) unites the masculine and feminine, it is also the product of every such successful union. For this reason, just as the product of a physical marriage between a man and a woman is offspring, so the *sefirah* of knowledge is also called “the firstborn son” (בְּרֵא בּוֹכֵרָא). The Torah demands that we should not only respect our parents, but their firstborn son or daughter as well, because spiritually, the firstborn already includes all the other children that the couple will have. Since the firstborn son is the *sefirah* of knowledge, then it follows that the rest of the offspring correspond to the remaining 7 *sefirot*, from loving-kindness to kingdom.

From the first sentence of the *Book of Formation* we have learned that creation began with only the 3 intellectual *sefirot*, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Normally,

we associate the 7 days of creation with the 7 lower *sefirot*, from loving-kindness to kingdom, each *sefirah* corresponding to one of the days,

1 st day	loving-kindness
2 nd day	might
3 rd day	beauty
4 th day	victory
5 th day	acknowledgment
6 th day	foundation
7 th day	kingdom

Still, there are many explicit verses in the Bible that describe one or more of the 3 intellectual *sefirot* as the tool with which God created the world. For instance, “God founded the earth with wisdom; He placed the heavens with understanding.”⁷ To mediate between these two descriptions of creation, we need to understand how the three intellectual roots reflect themselves in the seven emotive powers of the soul that correspond with the seven days of creation.

Chabad and Its Children

Since the acronym for the intellectual *sefirot* is *chabad* (חִבְדָּה בִּינָה דַעַת), another way of stating this last point is that we are interested in how the *chabad* is reflected in all its children.

Leah, our matriarch, had six sons and one daughter. She is the perfect model for the relationship between the intellectual and emotive *sefirot*. Indeed, Leah is the archetypal soul of understanding, or the mother principle.

The six sons are the *sefirot* from loving-kindness to foundation, the daughter is kingdom. Each of the *sefirot* is associated with an inner experience and motivating force.⁸ For the lower seven *sefirot* these are (on third line of each *sefirah*),

<i>gevurah</i> גְבוּרָה		<i>chesed</i> חֶסֶד
might		loving-kindness
Awe		love
	<i>tiferet</i> תִּפְאֶרֶת	
	beauty	
	mercy	
<i>hod</i> הוֹד		<i>netzach</i> נִצְחָה
acknowledgment		victory
Sincerity		confidence
	<i>yesod</i> יְסוּד	
	foundation	
	truth	
	<i>malchut</i> מַלְכוּת	
	kingdom	
	lowliness	

Wisdom: A Counter, a Scribe, and an Author

The key to understanding how the intellectual *sefirot* project onto the seven lower *sefirot* can be found in the three different meanings of the word *sofer* (סוֹפֵר). We noted earlier that though we initially translated this word as “author,” it also means “counter” and “scribe.”

Let us begin by noting that the sages are called *sofrim* (the plural form of *sofer*). But, in which of these three senses of the word? The Talmud writes that the reason they were thus called was because they counted and recounted the letters and the different phenomena contained within the Written Torah. Though their aim was to ensure that the Torah would not be altered, their motivation was their intense love for every minute detail of the Torah. Nowadays, we have computers that can do the same task, and faster. But, for them, their mind was a spiritual and emotional computer that counted. People who are engaged in this type of study realize that it creates the deepest emotional bond with the Torah and provides tremendous pleasure.

A *sofer* also means a scribe, someone who actually writes the written Torah, *tefilin*, or *mezuzot*. The Torah cannot be copied with a machine, because the soul has to participate in the act. In English, a scribe and a counter are very different concepts. Certainly, a scribe and an author are very different. The scribe is not the author. He just copies what was handed over to him. Actually to copy (לְהַעֲתִיק) is another verb in Hebrew, from which stems a very deep concept in Kabbalah called Atik (עֲתִיק), the highest and deepest part of the super-rational crown. It is so named because it has the capacity to copy higher worlds onto lower worlds.

In any case, to be a scribe, one who copies the Torah does not mean that you are the author. The author is God who gave the book. Author, as noted, is the meaning of *sofer* we mentioned first.

As noted, the *sofer* corresponds to the *sefirah* of wisdom. By going a little deeper we can find an allusion to these three different capacities of wisdom. In God's essential Name, *Havayah*, wisdom is represented by the first letter, the *yud*. In the *Zohar*, the letter *yud* is called a point. Unlike the geometric notion of a point, which is dimensionless, the *yud* is a point that has form or shape. For this reason it is called a "drawn point" (נקודה מְצוּיֶרֶת) and when inscribed in a Torah scroll looks like this,



The form of the letter *yud* has 3 parts to it, the upper tip, the body of the *yud*, and the lower tip. These 3 parts of the *yud* correspond to the 3 meanings of *sofer*.

Three Unifications of Wisdom and Understanding

Now that we have said something about the three meanings of the first aspect of the book (the *sofer*), which earlier we related to the *sefirah* of wisdom and the father principle, we can explain that each of these meanings results in a different relationship between the father and the mother, the book itself. In each case, the unification is by means of the higher (hidden) *sefirah* of knowledge, representing the story. The three forms of unification are,

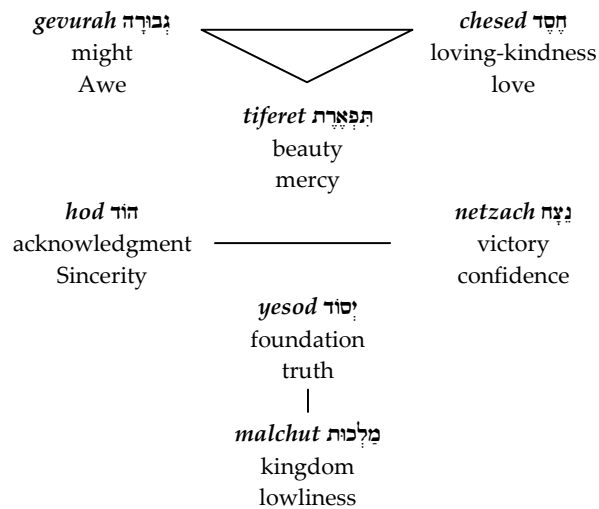
- author with book
- scribe with book
- counter with book

All three forms of unification are about the way that wisdom unifies with understanding, but each time the relationship between them is different. Because the relationship is different, what it produces is also different. Earlier, we called the product of the unification of wisdom and understanding (by means of higher knowledge) the offspring. Now we will be more specific and say that the offspring are not simply the seven lower *sefirot*, but the power of unification that unites them, in and between themselves. This power of unification is called the lower (revealed) *sefirah* of knowledge.

Three Unifications in the Lower Sefirot

The 3 different unifications between wisdom (as author, counter, and scribe) and understanding produce the power of the three different unifications that take place in

the seven lower *sefirot*. Looking at the three-axes chart of the lower *sefirot*, let us explicitly mark the three unifications,



The first unification is the unification of loving-kindness and might as they come together in the *sefirah* of beauty. This is the unification of the two hands that embrace, corresponding to Abraham and Isaac who unify into the third patriarch, Jacob. This triplet is the first unification.

Then second unification is between victory and acknowledgment, or using their experiential expressions, between confidence and sincerity. These are the two *sefirot* that work together like the two legs of the body. The right leg is relatively masculine, and the left feminine. Unlike the hands, where one can do something with one hand alone, the legs cannot walk (their primary function) independently. Thus, the second unification is considered stronger than the first. In the introduction to *Tikunei Zohar*, the *sefirot* of victory and acknowledgment are also likened to the two cups of a measuring scale. If you remember what these contraptions look like, you will recall that you can only measure with them if you have both cups. Like our legs, once cup cannot perform its function alone.

The third unification is the one that is most explicit and straightforward: between foundation and kingdom. In the human form, foundation is likened to the male's procreative organ and kingdom to his wife. Whenever we think of masculine and feminine in the *sefirot*, the strongest correlation is the relationship between foundation and kingdom.

So the first unification is between 3 *sefirot* and the second and third, between two.

The Unification of Foundation and Kingdom

Of the three unifications, the easiest to understand is the last one. One of the metaphors found for the way that foundation and kingdom are connected is that of a bow and arrow. This metaphor is universal, appearing throughout the revealed and concealed traditions of the Torah. The bow shooting an arrow is a metaphor for the way in which foundation shoots its seminal light in order to impregnate kingdom.

Foundation is called the *tzadik*, the foundation of the world (צַדִּיק יְסוּד עוֹלָם).⁹ The *tzadik* of the generation is the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation whose arrows are his teachings. He aims them at the bride, the congregation of Israel, in order to impregnate her as well as to heal her of her various maladies.¹⁰

The unification between foundation and kingdom can also be pictured as a scribe writing ink letters on a parchment. The quill that the scribe uses represents foundation and the drops of ink are what unify it with the parchment, which represents kingdom. From this image it is clear that the power that unifies foundation and kingdom stems out of wisdom as a scribe, unifying with understanding.

Let us add another point about the image of the scribe and the parchment. The Hebrew word for “ink” (יֵי) is a permutation of the name of the letter *yud* (יוד), which we described above as alluding to all three aspects of wisdom. Indeed, of all three unifications between the lower seven *sefirot*, this one is considered the most inclusive, as it represents the archetypal unification of male and female. This particular image is commonplace, even though most people use a computer today. It provides us with an example of how everyday actions should be understood conceptually in the light of Kabbalah. As the Ba’al Shem Tov taught, everything that one does represents what is happening in the supernal reality.

The Unification of Victory and Acknowledgment

The second unification is between victory and acknowledgment, which we said are likened to the two cups of a measuring scale. Since the act of measurement is an act of counting, this unification is the result of the wisdom as a counter, unifying with understanding.

Let us say a few words about measurement.¹¹ Measurement is the act of dividing things into very small bits. These can be bits of matter or bits of information.

The sages describe that the heavens contain seven firmaments, corresponding to the seven lower *sefirot* and knowledge.¹² The third firmament from below is called *shechakim* (שְׁחָקִים), literally meaning “stone grinders.” It corresponds to the *sefirot* of victory and acknowledgment together and is considered the spiritual source of the manna that the

Jewish people ate during their 40 years in the desert.¹³ Like two stones that grind wheat, victory and acknowledgment produce fine grain, fine bits of matter. So the power that unifies them indeed gives them the power to measure, divide, or just resolve things into smaller and smaller bits. Just as manna has to be ground into small bits that can be fed one at a time, the act of measurement requires the ability to resolve something into its smallest individual parts and by doing so gives each quanta reality.

Normally, when we think of counting phenomena in the Torah (as noted earlier regarding the sages that were called *sofrim*—counters) we think of counting the number of verses, words, or at most, single letters (e.g., how many time the letter *samech* appears in the Pentateuch¹⁴). One of the differences between the revealed and concealed teachings of the Torah is that the revealed teachings usually do not go beyond the level of phenomena or meaning related to a single word. In other words, the resolving power of the revealed tradition of interpreting the Torah, for the most part, stops at the level of a word. But, the concealed tradition resolves the Torah even further, delving into smaller and smaller quanta of the text. There is a Kabbalistic work titled *Sefer Temunah* attributed to the Tannaic school of Rabbi Nechunyah the son of Kanah that studies not only individual letters but even the structure of each letter, which can be further subdivided into smaller bits. We saw an example of this earlier when looking at the three parts of the letter *yud* (י). The same is true of the other letters. Let us see a beautiful example of this principle.

Lag Ba'omer, the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer is the day on which Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai passed away and the day on which he revealed the deepest secrets of the Torah. For this reason, *Lag Ba'omer* is called the day of the giving of the inner dimension of the Torah. Each of the 49 days of the Omer corresponds to an inter-inclusion between the seven lower *sefirot*. *Lag Ba'omer* represents the acknowledgment of acknowledgment, the inter-inclusion of acknowledgment with itself. With what we have just seen, it is clear that *Lag Ba'omer* reflects the greatest resolving power of the entire year, so it is the day most representative of the ability of the inner dimension of the Torah to help us appreciate even the smallest particle of Torah. As soon as a person enters Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's world, the resolving limit on the Torah is broken and the examination and understanding and insight into much smaller phenomena can begin, even to the parts of letters. In the inner dimension, everything is counted and everything counts. Like a Count, everything is noble and special. The more we connect with Kabbalah and Chassidut, the inner soul of the Torah, the more we get a sense that smallest of the small counts just as much as the biggest of the big.¹⁵

Let us give another example of the measurement and resolving power that the inner dimension of the Torah has. We see that though we have only 3 patriarchs and 4 matriarchs, they divided into 12 tribes. Later, these 12 tribes divide into the 70 souls that descended to Egypt. Finally, the greatest division of the Jewish people in the Torah (and the revealed tradition, in general) is the 600,000 souls that came out of Egypt. Kabbalah recognizes these as 600,000 as representing the 600,000 soul roots of congregation of Israel. But, Kabbalah also recognizes a further division. Each of the 600,000 soul roots contains 600,000 sparks. Each of these sparks can enliven an entire body for an entire lifetime. This is the smallest spiritual particle. So the inner dimension of the Torah measures the potential of the Jewish people as 600,000 squared individuals!

We mentioned that in respect to the human form, victory and acknowledgment correspond to the two legs. Just as much as Jews are always counting, we are also always on the move, always walking. The sense of the month of Sivan is the sense of walking, or progress. The revealed aspect of the Torah was given in the month of Sivan. The revealed part contains the legal tradition of the Torah. A particle of the legal part of the Torah is called a *halachah* (הֲלָכָה), which stems from the same root as “walking” (הֵלֵךְ). Thanks to our dedication and observance of the *halachot*, we are called walkers, especially in contrast to the angels who are relatively static and referred to as “standers.” Souls are always on the move and therefore always dividing reality further and further seeking the most elementary particles of the Torah. This is also what keeps modern physicists on the move as they search for smaller and smaller particles of matter, time, and energy.

Between victory and acknowledgment, the dividing and resolving power is associated with victory, while acknowledgment represents the material that is being divided and resolved into smaller and smaller bits.

The Unification of Loving-kindness, Might, and Beauty

We now arrive at the first unification between loving-kindness, might, and beauty. The inner experiences of loving-kindness and might are love and awe (or fear), respectively. To understand the nature of this unification let us prelude with the very deep teaching that God is continually recreating the world through love and fear.¹⁶ What does this mean?

Love represents creation *ex nihilo*, or the creation of something from nothing. The nature of something that is created *ex nihilo* is that it is in essence fleeting and therefore must continually be recreated anew. Since all of us are the product of such creation, if we were to experience it happening (it happens too fast, as it were for us to perceive it),

we would find it impossible to feel ourselves anything but transitory events. Even though God continually recreates us, were we to perceive this continual recreation, we would still have no identity as one moment of our existence would be completely unrelated to the next, our only continual state of consciousness would be that of God the Creator and His unconditional love for all. This is where God's might comes into play. Giving an *ex nihilo* creation a sense of independent being, requires the Creator to hide Himself from his creation, thereby concealing the act of creation itself, at least experientially. God hides Himself and His creative power with the power inherent in the *sefirah* of might, or fear. In this case, the two hands (representing loving-kindness and might) work together, in unison. One hand creates and at the same time the other hand conceals the Creator from what He has created thus giving creation a sense of independence. Without this sense of independence and identity there would be no free-will and no justification for reward and punishment, the awareness of which reflects primarily the emotive attribute of fear (the inner motivating force of the *sefirah* of might, represented by the left hand).

Creation itself is represented by the *sefirah* of beauty. Even given God's application of His might in order to conceal Himself and allow creation to exist seemingly independently, creation remains unsustainable. As the sages state, "God wanted to create the world using His power of might. But, He saw that it could not sustain, so He added His measure of mercy." Mercy, or compassion, is the inner experiential motivator of beauty.

The unifying power that connects living-kindness, might, and beauty in this manner is the unification of wisdom as an author and understanding. What is keeping creation intact—from its source in nothingness to its sustainable state is God's will to tell a story. The story being told by the Creator is all of creation. Everything that was, is, and will be, is one story told by the greatest storyteller of all.

Writing the Story of Your Life

Indeed, every facet of the world is a whole story in itself. This is most strongly reflected in *tzadikim*, the righteous and holy individuals whose stories we continue to tell and retell because it is so clear to us that they are a clear reflection of the story that the Almighty wants to tell.¹⁷

Famous in this respect is Rebbe Dovid of Lelov, who once said, "Now we learn the tractate of *Baba Kama*, but in the World to Come there will be an additional tractate called Rebbe Dovid of Lelov." Apart from what we can learn about proper conduct from

the stories of *tzadikim*, the life-story of every *tzadik* is actually Torah (just as most of the Torah is the story of people that actually lived).

But, the lives of the *tzadikim* are not the only stories told by the Creator. Since God creates each and every one of us at every moment anew, every person has to know that he too is a story being told by the Creator. And, the reason that God gives us free-will is so that we can write our own story.

How do I create my story, my world, and my life? Through love and fear of God and through love and fear of people. Love and fear of God are two of the continuous commandments commanded by the Torah. We are commanded to love and fear the Creator every moment of our lives.

But, it is important to note that fear in respect to people does not mean the same thing that it does in respect to God. To fear people means not to be afraid of them but rather not to suffocate them. This is the principle of the right hand draws near and the left hand pushes away. The story itself is beauty/mercy or we might say empathy with reality. The inner soul of beauty is knowledge, or consciousness. One cannot be compassionate and empathize with someone unless one has a sense of identity. To create my story means to always experience Divine Providence. Divine Providence (הַשְׂגָחָה פְּרָטִית) means experiencing how God is always helping me and guiding me so that I do not fall. To create my own world is to create a story in the world. I am right now writing another tractate in the Torah. This is certainly the inner meaning of the sages' saying, "The words of the *sofrim* [authors] are more beloved before Me [God] than the wine of Torah."¹⁸

Writing a Best-Seller

Here is a practical piece of advice that stems out of this analysis. If a person is writing a story or script, to be successful, to be interesting, it was to have two essential ingredients: love and courage. These are the expressions of loving-kindness and might in story-telling. Courage is exhibited when there is some challenge to overcome. This brings out the character in a protagonist. If there is no love in a story, the story lacks value. If there is no courage, no heroism, it is not interesting.

In Hebrew, there is a synonym for author, which is pronounced *mechaber* (מְחַבֵּר). This word stems from the root that means to connect things together and as such is directly related to the *sefirah* of knowledge, whose inner experience is unification. So an author in Hebrew is also a "connector." Now, we understand that indeed the author's task is to connect loving-kindness and might into a story. When loving-kindness and might, love and fear, are successfully combined the result is compassion or empathy. In terms of

storytelling this means that the story can be identified with—the reader feels empathy and identifies with the hero. When a person reads a good book he identifies with the book's protagonist. The ultimate form of empathy is when the reader wants to become the hero himself. The stories told about *tzadikim* are so good because they make us want to be like the *tzadik*. They make us yearn for the same sense of Divine Providence and meaning that each *tzadik* projects through the events of his life. If the tractate of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov is good, then anyone reading it will want to be like Rebbe Dovid of Lelov.

3 More Meanings: Sapphire, Border, and Scissors

Now let us continue one final step further.

So far we have seen three meanings for the root ספר, author, book, and story. But, in the Bible and Rabbinic literature we find that there are three additional meanings. One we mentioned earlier.

The fourth meaning of this root appears explicitly in the Torah: sapphire, *sapir* (ספיר).¹⁹ Sapphire is a precious and brilliant stone.

The fifth meaning is “border” or “boundary,” (סָפַר). This meaning was mentioned earlier as an interpretation of the second appearance of this root in the Torah. It frequently appears in the language of the sages. Originally the sages used it as “coast,” but eventually it came to designate any border.

The sixth and final meaning of this root is found in the word for “scissors” (מִסְפָּרִים).²⁰

Submission, Separation, and Sweetening

Since the Torah is complete in every way, these three additional meanings, though not explicitly mentioned in the Book of Formation, must relate somehow to the unifications of the seven lower *sefirot* by the unification of the intellectual *sefirot*. To understand how we must first explain that any unification between masculine and feminine principles requires a 3 stage process revealed by the Ba'al Shem Tov. The three stages are known as submission, separation, and sweetening.²¹ Each of the three unifications in the lower *sefirot* requires this 3 stage process.

Because we have covered the topic of submission, separation, and sweetening in an entire volume,²² we will quickly describe the relationship between these three meanings and the three parts of the process.

The whole process of submission, separation, and sweetening has to do with the rectification of our self limitations. Submission is about controlling one's behavior at the most basic level, by conquering our negative inclinations and subduing them. The first

step is to be aware of my limitations, or boundaries. Thus submission corresponds with ספר as a boundary, or border. The second step is to cut away and separate out anything that is extraneous—any behavior that is unbecoming and unfitting. This of course relates to ספר as scissors. Finally, even what was originally negative can begin to shine forth as something positive as the darkness is transformed into light, represented by ספר as a sapphire stone. Indeed, “the light is sweet.”²³

submission	boundary	ספר
separation	scissors	מספרים
sweetening	sapphire	ספיר

The Unifications within Ourselves

The process of submission, separation, and sweetening is usually associated with human development. How does it relate to the *sefirot*? Do the *sefirot* in the world of Emanation have any kind of limitations that need to go through this same process?

When first introducing the *sefirot*, the Book of Formation states, “Ten *sefirot* without end; Ten and not nine; ten and not eleven.” On first glance, this may seem to be a contradictory statement. On the one hand, the statement begins with a definition of the *sefirot* as limitless, on the other hand it immediately tells us how many there are. The solution to this seeming contradiction is that though each of the *sefirot* has an infinite nature to it, it is particular and individual. One *sefirah* cannot become another, and therefore there are ten *sefirot*. So, as much as wisdom is an infinite wisdom, it is not understanding, and so on.

But, like all statements in Torah, this one too is not without context. Only in the world of Emanation is each of the 10 *sefirot* limitless in and of itself. In other worlds, wisdom has a limit, as do each of the other *sefirot*.

And so, when we look at the world of Creation (בְּרִיאָה), we see that not only can wisdom not be understanding, but that wisdom itself is finite. Thus, in the lower three worlds, the *sefirot* have two limitations. They are individual and they are limited. So certainly, the process of submission, separation, and sweetening applies to the *sefirot* in the lower three worlds.

For example, let us see how the *sefirot* manifest in our own reality, a reality that is usually bounded by our consciousness in such a way that we relate to one another and to ourselves only in the context of the three lower worlds. When the *sefirah* of loving-

kindness manifests in me as love, I cannot love infinitely. If I were to love infinitely, I would explode; I would not be able to contain such an experience.

So not only when I love I do not fear and when I fear I do not love, I also cannot love infinitely, nor can I fear infinitely. Thus, when the *sefirot* manifest in the lower three worlds, as they manifest in our souls for instance, we must be aware of these two types of limits that they carry with them. In order for the unification between the *sefirot* to occur, these limitations have to be rectified, and the method for doing so is submission, separation, and sweetening. In other words, for me to be able to correct my emotions, I have to feel that I am limited in two respects, and then correct these inherent limits in the proper manner.

It is only once we go through this process of submission, separation, and sweetening that the real unification between the powers of our soul can occur. But, once that happens, it becomes possible to unite with any person in a positive and constructive manner. This is something that we should be working on all year long, but most strongly during the Counting of the Omer, the time of year when we focus on rectifying the manifestation of the seven lower *sefirot* in our animal soul. At the end of the process, each of our spiritual faculties shines brightly and brilliantly like a sapphire.

(based on a lecture given on Iyar 17, 5769 in Jerusalem)

1. *Tanya, Sha'ar Hayichud Veba'emunah*, ch. 1.

2. Genesis 5:1.

3. *Ibid.* 10:30.

4. There is another opinion that "border" as a meaning of this root appears only in the time of the *Mishnah*. In this case, this word should be understood as a proper name.

5. *Ibid.* 15:5-6.

6. Very often, in modern literature about Kabbalah, *sefirah* is mistranslated as "sphere" based of course on the phonetic resemblance between the two words. This is not a total mistake, first of all because the two words *sefirah* (סְפִירָה) and *tzefirah* (צִפְרָה), a synonym for "circle," possess a strong phonetic resemblance (phonetically, the two letters *samech* and *tzadik* are interchangeable), and secondly because the *gematria* of *sefirah* (סְפִירָה) is 355, which as we have discussed elsewhere is intrinsically related to π (3.14159...), the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter (circumference 355, the "circle" of the circle, over diameter 113 gives 3.1415929... for π !).

Conceptually, there is in fact a circular aspect to the *sefirot*. As explained in the beginning of *Etz Chayim*, when God emanated the *sefirot* out of the ray of infinite light, the first form of their emanation was as concentric spheres (the second form of emanation was along a single axis).

7. Proverbs 3:19.

8. See in length in *What You Need to Know About Kabbalah*. See also our video lecture, <http://www.inner.org/kabbalah/intermediate/foundations-of-sefirot.php>.

⁹. Proverbs 10:25.

¹⁰. When the world is in exile, kingdom, representing the Divine Presence (שְׁכִינָה) is considered ill, as it were. The light coming from foundation and inseminating kingdom heals it, just as the words spoken by the *tzadik* of the generation heal the Jewish people and the entire world.

¹¹. Measurement stems from the ray of infinite light mentioned in note 6, which is also called “the ray of measurement” in the *Zohar*. See in length in our forthcoming expanded edition of *The Torah Academy*.

¹². See in more detail in *Living in Divine Space*.

¹³. Additionally, the firmament of *shechakim* will grind the manna for the *tzadikim* in the World to Come. The higher *tzadik* is foundation and the lower *tzadik* is kingdom.

¹⁴. There are two letters that appear less than 2000 times in the Pentateuch, the *samech* (ס) and the *tet* (ט), a topic that was discussed in length elsewhere.

¹⁵. For this reason, it was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *tzadik* of our generation and a master of the concealed tradition, was a stonewall of opposition to receding even a grain of the Land of Israel to other nations. Likewise, the Rebbe was unwilling to give-up on any Jew, stressing time and again that if even a single Jew is lost, the Jewish people are incomplete just as a Torah scroll that lacks even a single letter is ritually unkosher.

¹⁶. *Tanya*.

¹⁷. One of the intentions we have when looking at the light of the 36 candles of Chanukah, which correspond to the 36 *tzadikim* of the generation, is to hear the story that each one is telling (thus unifying sight with sound). Each one is like a “violin” (גַּר יִהוּה = כְּנֹר), “[The soul of man is] the candle of God”) playing a Chassidic melody.

¹⁸. See *Rashi to Avodah Zarah 35a*.

¹⁹. There is some amount of debate as to the modern identity of the stone called *sapir*, סַפִּיר, in the Torah. But, we for now will accept the standard identification of *sapir* as sapphire. Surely it is by Divine Providence that the Hebrew *sapir* is the etymological root of sapphire.

²⁰. During the Counting of the *Omer* we do not use scissors to cut our hair, except on the final day, which corresponds to the kingdom of kingdom. A king has to cut his hair every day in order to be beautiful. So there is some deep intrinsic connection here between the Counting of the *Omer* (סַפֵּר as counting) and scissors.

²¹. In relation to the Counting of the *Omer*, the names of these three stages in Hebrew (הַכְנָעָה) equal the verb “you shall count” (תִּסְפֹּר), the verb that appears in the Torah’s commandment to count the *omer*.

²². *Transforming Darkness Into Light*.

²³. Ecclesiastes 11:7.