

Meet G-d

1. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 2:2-3

Names and descriptions and attributes for Gd... all express Gd's linkage to the worlds and their forces from the time of Creation, supporting them and invigorating them and orchestrating them as He desires. According to the changes in the orders of His orchestration...the names and descriptions change. Each specific element of His orchestration has its own name and description.

2. Sefer Yetzirah 1:1 (Kaplan translation)

With 32 paths engraved Kah, the Lord of Hosts...

Kaplan commentary (pg. 13-14): To understand why the author uses the term "engraved" here, we must understand the idea of creation. Before a universe could be created, empty space had to exist in which it could be made. But initially only Gd existed, and all existence was filled with the Divine Essence, the Light of the Infinite (*Or En Sof*). It was out of this undifferentiated Essence that a Vacated Space had to be engraved. The process, known to Kabbalists as *Tzimtzum* (Constriction), is clearly described in the Zohar: "In the beginning of the King's authority the Lamp of Darkness engraved a hollow in the Supernal Luminescence."

3. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 3:7

Tzimtzum is not an expression of removal and travel from one place to another, as though Gd were withdrawing into Himself, as though such a thing were possible, to make space for us, Gd-forbid... It expresses hiding and covering.

4. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 2:5

Gd expands and is hidden within all of the *Sefirot*, and He fills them, and He is their soul, as if it were possible, like a soul expands and is hidden in the body of a person.

5. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 2:4, note

When the *Kavvanot* records to focus on a particular *kavvanah* for a particular *sefirah* in each blessing, that does not mean, Gd forbid, that one should intend for the actual *sefirah* – that would be a cutting of the growth, Gd forbid! To focus on a particular force or *sefirah* would be a desecration; rather, only to the essence of the One Master, the blessed *En Sof*, unity of all forces.

Meet the Universe

6. Zohar, Bereishit pp. 19b-20a

When King Solomon descended into the depth of the nut, as it is written, "I went down into the nut-garden," he took the shell of a nut, and examined all the shells, and knew that all the delights of the "other side", the shells of the nut, consisted only in cleaving to men and defiling them...

Everything consists of an inner kernel, with several shells covering the kernel; and the whole world is constructed according to this pattern, above and below; from the mysterious beginning of the highest point down to the lowest of all levels, it is all one within the other, and one within the other, so that we find that one level is the shell of another, and this other the shell of another.

7. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:5

Each world functions...according to the pull of the force in the world above it, which leads it as the soul leads the body. So it goes, higher and higher, until Gd – who is the soul of all.

8. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:10

A *malach* is greater than a human being, whether in its essential nature or its great holiness or the wonder of its perception; there is no comparison...However, in one way a person has an advantage over a *malach* – in the elevation and joining of the worlds and forces and illuminations...The elevation of the angel to his position, to join with the world above him, is not dependent upon himself; this is why *malachim* are described as 'stationary.'... Only human beings elevate, join and unify worlds and illuminations, through their deeds, for human beings include elements of all. As a result of a person's deeds, the *malach* receives elevation and added holiness.

Why are we here?

9. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:15

The *Nefesh* is the lowest level, entirely within a person's body. The *Ruach* is poured in from above; its upper extreme is tied above in the lowest level of the *Neshamah*, and it descends into the person's body, where it links to the upper extreme of the *Nefesh*...But the *Neshamah* is the breath itself, hidden in its inner nature, and its blessed source is – as if it were possible – in the breath of the Divine mouth. Its essence does not enter a person's body at all.

10. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 2:6

Just as the connection and existence of the human soul in its body is via eating and drinking, and without them the soul will separate and leave the body, so Gd's connection to the worlds is the secret of the great Adam. In order to maintain their existence, and for Gd's spirit not to reject them, the Divine will decreed that this would depend on involvement in Torah and the deeds of mitzvot and the worship of prayer of the special nation....

11. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:6

He created Man last of the deeds of Creation, a marvelous creature, a force to gather all of the camps, including within it all of the purities of the marvelous lights and worlds and celestial *heichalin* which preceded him... All of the individual forces found in all of the upper and lower realms invested a force and portion of themselves in his construction...

12. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:12-14

To mend the world of Deeds requires that one be clothed in the body in the world of Deeds...And so regarding the awakening of forces above via the realm of Speech... And so regarding the awakening above via the realm of Thought... And these three realms, Deed, Speech and Thought, are the sum of the inner realms of a person, which are the realms of *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*.

13. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:6

All of the mitzvot are tied into, and dependent upon, the upper source in the orders of the *Merkavah*, and the totality of all worlds... When a person fully performs a mitzvah... he becomes, in entirety, with all of all his strength and his limbs, a *Merkavah* for those realms, and they are sanctified with their higher sanctity.

14. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:8

Even during a brief time when one is involved in earning a livelihood as needed to survive, still, in one's thoughts he should think only words of Torah.

15. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:4

And so with every sin and iniquity in any Jew, he introduces into his heart a foreign fire, Gd forbid...

16. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 3:12

When one establishes in his heart the declaration that HaShem is the true Gd and there is no other force in the world, and all realms are full only of Gd's simple unity, and he eliminates from his heart entirely and he pays absolutely no attention to any worldly force or will, and he binds and adheres the purity of his thought only to the One Master, then Gd provides for him, such that all forces and wills against him will be cancelled, unable to affect him at all... And he will also decree and it will be upheld for him, to perform deeds and wondrous miracles, the opposite of natural forces...

17. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 1:19

The illness and decrepitude of sin in the *nefesh* may be fixed, and even elevated, via the level of *ruach*. And if the *ruach* is lame, for a person has flawed and warped his *ruach* via sins that depend on the level of *ruach*, then...the repair comes in the level of the *neshamah*.

18. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th century Lithuania/Russia), Nefesh haChaim 3:12

One might cause himself arrogance, when he serves Gd with a pure heart. He might, Gd forbid, take others lightly when he sees someone whose service of Gd is without adherence, and certainly when he sees someone involved in Gd's Torah and he realizes that this person is not doing it with pure intent... In truth, all purity of the heart in serving Gd is a mitzvah, but not a requirement...