

Shiur in Sefer Yetzira

Mishnah 1:7 — *The End is Bound to the Beginning*

עֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת בְּלִימָה

נְעוּץ סוּפֹן בְּתַחֲלָתוֹ וּתְחִלָּתוֹ בְּסוּפֹן
כְּשֶׁלֶהֶבֶת קְשׁוּרָה בְּגִנְחָלָתָהּ
שֶׁאֵדוֹן יָחִיד וְאֵין לוֹ שֵׁנִי
וְלִפְנֵי אֶחָד מָה אַתָּה סוֹפֵר

Translation

Ten Sefirot Belimah — Their end is embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, like the flame-is bound to the coal.

For the Lord is unique, He has no second — before One, what can you count?

עשר ספירות בלימה... נעוץ סופן בתחילתן ותחילתן בסופן כשלהבת קשורה בגחלת

Most people read this spatially—as though the Sefirot form a circle. But perhaps Sefer Yetzirah is making a metaphysical, not a geometrical, statement.

Aristotle's Four Causes

Aristotle taught that every effect points back to its cause. The cause gives intelligibility to the effect. The effect, in turn, reveals the cause. One cannot truly understand the cause without seeing its realization in the effect.

Perhaps that is exactly what Sefer Yetzirah means.

Keter is the first cause (סיבה ראשונה).

Malchut is the completed manifestation (התוצאה).

Yet the effect is "נעוץ" in the cause because the cause never ceases to be present within the effect.

The Meaning of "נעוץ"

The word itself is fascinating.

The Mishnah does not say:

סופן חוזר לתחילתן

nor

סופן הוא תחילתן

Instead it says

נעוץ

Anchored.

Embedded.

Driven into.

The effect never escapes its cause.

Every level of reality carries within itself the imprint of its origin.

That is why the next phrase is

כשלהבת קשורה בגחלת

The flame appears separate.

Yet every instant it derives its existence from the coal.

The flame is not merely created by the coal.

It is continuously sustained by it.

That is an extraordinary anticipation of what the Baal HaTanya later calls **התהוות תמידית**.

Cause Becomes Known Only Through Its Effect

There is another direction. Normally we think

Cause

↓

Effect.

But philosophically, the cause becomes known only through its effect.

One never sees gravity. One sees falling objects.

One never sees wisdom. One sees wise actions.

Likewise, Keter itself is unknowable.

Only through Malchut is Keter revealed.

In that sense

תחילתן בסופן

The beginning is found in the end.

Not because the end creates the beginning, but because the end reveals it.

The Rambam

This immediately recalls the Rambam's description of God as

עילה ראשונה

the First Cause.

Yet Sefer Yetzirah seems to move beyond Aristotle.

For Aristotle, the First Cause initiates motion.

For Sefer Yetzirah, the cause is continuously present within the effect.

The world is not merely caused once. It is continually rooted in its cause.

Ramak

The Ramak repeatedly teaches that every lower sefirah contains all the higher ones.

Malchut is therefore not merely "last."

It contains Keter implicitly. Just as an acorn contains the oak, the completed kingdom contains the original crown.

A Chassidic Insight

The Baal Shem Tov famously taught:

הסוף של כל דבר נמצא במחשבה תחילה.

This is often quoted superficially.

But perhaps it is the explanation of

נעוץ סופן בתחילתן.

The end is not merely anticipated.

It is already present in the original Divine will. Creation unfolds what was hidden in Keter.

A Mathematical Analogy

A recursive function defines itself.

Every output contains the rule that generated it.

Likewise, Malchut is not independent of Keter. Every manifestation of reality contains the very principle that generated it.

In human experience, **causes precede effects temporally**. But in the Divine, Keter is not merely earlier than Malchut—it is ontologically prior. The "beginning" is not the first event in a sequence; it is the permanent ground of the "end." That, perhaps, is why Sefer Yetzirah chooses the word נְעוּץ rather than מְחֻבֵּר or קְשׁוּר. The end is not simply connected to the beginning; it is fixed within it and derives its very being from it.

VISUAL PARALLEL | האורבורוס — הנחש האוכל את זנבו

The Ouroboros — an ancient symbol of a serpent devouring its own tail — offers a striking visual parallel to the Mishnah's image of beginning and end eternally joined.



*Tutankhamun's tomb, Egypt, c. 1323 BCE — early Ouroboros encircling a royal figure
(Enigmatic Book of the Netherworld; Ägyptisches Museum Kairo)*



Classical Ouroboros (Coptic ms.)
"The All is One" (ἐν τὸ πᾶν)



Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra, c. 3rd c. CE, Alexandria
"The All is One" (ἐν τὸ πᾶν)

Ouroboros	Sefer Yetzirah
A serpent consuming its own tail	Ten Sefirot rooted in the Infinite
Self-contained universe	Universe continuously dependent on God
Circularity for its own sake	Circularity because all emanation returns to its Source
Often symbolizes nature or cosmic cycles	Symbolizes Divine emanation and unity
Can suggest autonomy	Emphasizes dependence on the Creator

COMMENTARY | פירוש הראב"ד

Ra'avad (Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquières, 1125–1198)

נְעוץ סוּפֹן בְּתַחֲלָתָן — End Bound to Beginning

יס"ב נְעוץ סוּפֹן בְּתַחֲלָתָן. כִּי סוּפֹן הוּא כ"ע כִּי נִקְרָא סוּף וְעַלֹת נִקְרָא א"ס, וְאַחַר שֶׁהִזְהִירָד וְאָמַר שֶׁאֵסוּר לְשַׁלּוֹחַ הַמִּחְשָׁבָה בְּכ"ע חֲזָר וְהִזְהִירָד וְאָמַר שֶׁחֵזַב אֶתָּה לְנְעוץ וְלִקְשׁוֹר

ולטע כ"ע בתחילת המציאות שהוא יש מאין ולהודיע שכל מטעי החכמה כולם לקחו מקדם
ונוטעו בעדן החכמה

Beginning Bound to End — ותחלתו בסופו

ותחלתו. של הספירות מטה למעלה והוא עטרת, בסופן שהוא סוף הימים מלמעלה למטה
וזהו הדרך ואמר בשלהבת כשם שאי אפשר להמצא שלהבת בלי גחלת כך אי אפשר מציאות
החכמה מבלי כ"ע וכך אי אפשר מציאות העטרה מבלי יסוד הספירות שעליו אלא בשלהבת
קשורה בגחלת בגימ' אמת ובגימ' אהי"ה [פעמים אהי"ה]

★ עטרת (Ateret) = Malkhut — the “crown from below,” the lowest Sefirah

★ (21× 21) אהי"ה אהי"ה = 441 = אמת (Truth) = Gacheles -gematria = בשלהבת קשורה בגחלת