

ספר

משך חכמה

ספר משך חכמה

מאת

רבן ומאורן של ישראל

הגאון רבי מאיר שמחה הכהן זצוק"ל

אב"ד דווינסק

ספר בראשית

MESHECH CHOCHMAH

Translated and Elucidated
with In-Depth Annotation

Sefer Bereishis

RABBI AVROHOM WAGNER

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Wagner

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מאד שמחתי לראות חבורי המיוחד על הספר "משך חכמה" וניכר מאיר עיני ישראל, וניכר העמל המרובה שהשקיע בחבור זה עם כשרונותיו הברוכים ברוב סייעתא דשמיא. ומקרב לב אברכהו שע"י ספרו המיוחד יהנו רבים ויאירו עיניהם. ויה"ר שיזכה לשבת על התורה והעבודה ויפוצו מעינותיו חוצה מתוך בריות גופא ונהורא מעליא לאורו"ש.

בידידות ובברכה מלוי"נ
חיים מענדל בראדסקי

היצירות והמחבר לאורן
חיים מענדל בראדסקי

ז' מנ"א תשפ"ו

לכבוד ידיד נפשי יקירי ורב חביבי הרה"ג אברהם ישעי' אליעזר ווגנר שליט"א
מאד שמחתי לראות חבורי המיוחד על הספר "משך חכמה" לזיכוי הרבים בבירור מקחו של צדיק מאיר עיני ישראל, וניכר העמל המרובה שהשקיע בחבור זה עם כשרונותיו הברוכים ברוב סייעתא דשמיא. ומקרב לב אברכהו שע"י ספרו המיוחד יהנו רבים ויאירו עיניהם. ויה"ר שיזכה לשבת על התורה והעבודה ויפוצו מעינותיו חוצה מתוך בריות גופא ונהורא מעליא לאורו"ש.

בידידות ובברכה מלוי"נ

חיים מענדל בראדסקי

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רב דק"ק רעים אהובים

אב"ד מיישרים

ליקוואוד

בס"ד

כ"ד ימים לחדש תמוז שני תשפ"ו לפ"ק

It is a source of satisfaction to see the publication of this translation and elucidation of the *Meshech Chochma*, one of the enduring pillars of Torah literature authored by the illustrious gaon, Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, זצ"ל.

Those familiar with this sefer know that its concise style conceals remarkable depth. To present its words in clear English while preserving their precision requires not only linguistic ability, but a thorough grasp of the author's intent and the many Torah sources that illuminate his comments.

My dear friend, Rabbi Avrohom Wagner *shlita*, an erudite author and translator of many seforim, has acquitted himself admirably in this demanding undertaking. His translation is faithful and lucid, and his explanatory notes display broad Torah scholarship, careful analysis, and a mature understanding of the *Meshech Chochma*. His elucidation assists the reader in appreciating the author's profound insights while remaining firmly anchored in the text itself.

This work will undoubtedly prove of great benefit to English-speaking תלמידי חכמים, educators, and all serious students of Torah who seek to study the *Meshech Chochma* with greater understanding. It constitutes a meaningful contribution to the dissemination of Torah and to the appreciation of one of its classic masterpieces.

May Hashem Yisborach grant Rabbi Wagner continued *siyata d'Shmaya* to increase Torah and its glory, and may he merit to continue publishing works of lasting value for the benefit of Klal Yisrael.

הכו"ח לכבוד התורה ולומדיה ועמליה,

יששכר דוב הכהן כהנא

מו"ח הגאון רבי שלמה הלוי סוייבר שליט"א

בס"ד יום כד לחודש תמוז תשפ"ו

מכתב הסכמה

לכבוד חתני כבני הרב הגאון הגדול רבי אברהם ישעיה אליעזר שליט"א,

הנה היו לפני גליונות מספרך הגדול תרגום ופירוש על ספר העיקרי ונפלאה משך חכמה מאת רבן של כל בני ישראל רבי מאיר שמחה כהן מדווינסק זצוק"ל. וידוע ששפתי הכהן ישמרו דעת ודבריו הם דברי אלקים וגם מלמדים לדורות אחריו מהלך הבנה ועיוני המחשבה בתורת ה' שקבלנו בסיני, ומ"מ גם ידוע שלא כל אחד זכה לעטר ראשו בהבנה אמיתית בדברי הכהן הגדול הזה ובפרט בדורות האחרונות האלו קודם שבא הכהן הגדול המבשר הגאולה, והם הוסיפו על מיעוט הבנה עם דמיונות של התרגום רוח החכמה ומשניהם לא עלתה דברי המשך חכמה בידם. על כן החזיקו טובה גדולה להרב הגאון רבי אברהם שליט"א שתרגום דברי הכהן הגדול מדווינסק זצוק"ל בשפה המדובר במדינות אלו, ודע קוראים נעים שרבי אברהם שליט"א ראוי לאותה איצטלא שהוא פיקח ותלמיד חכם גדול במלואה המובן, והוא בעל לשונות נפלאה מאד. ובטוח אני שתרגומו הוא כפי דעת הצדיק הנשגב מדווינסק זצוק"ל. וגם הטיב לנו המחבר שליט"א עם פירושו נובלות חכמה המבאר דברי המשך חכמה בדעת ותבונה כפי רוח המחבר זצוק"ל, ותרגום זה ופירוש הנפלאה נובלות חכמה הם ודאי זיכוי גדול להרבים עם בני ישראל והתעוררות ליום הגדול והנוראה שמלאה הארץ דיעה את ה', ויהי רצון מלפני אבינו שבשמים שזכות מורינו הגאון זצוק"ל יהיה מגן ומליץ על כל המשפחה נ"י שיהיו עוסקים בתורה ועבודה בשלימות בשמחה ובבריאות ובנחת עד (ועד בכלל) ביאת הגואל במהרה בימינו א"ס.

החותם באהבה המצפה להרמת קרן התורה,

חותנך שלמה הלוי סוייבר

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Publisher's Preface

With the benefit of a century's hindsight, it is clear that *Sefer Meshech Chochmah*, by Hagaon Harav Meir Simchah Hakohen of Dvinsk, has become a timeless Chumash commentary, a classic among classics. A rare fusion of the entire scope of Torah genres, it stands out in every facet it touches.

This tightly-worded yet exquisitely written masterpiece flowed from the pen of a prewar titan, a giant among giants. With all its beauty, it is terse, sharp, and often difficult to decipher. *Meshech Chochmah's* ideas are dense and its language spare.

Foremost, *Meshech Chochmah* assumes familiarity with all of Chazal's works and with the entirety of the Rambam's oeuvre. Often, it presupposes mastery of concepts in *derush*, *dikduk* and *kabbalah*. And always, it assumes the reader's analytical capacity.

Recent decades have spawned multiple Hebrew super-commentaries that endeavor to uncover the gems in this Torah beauty. Yet despite their efforts, and despite its prominence, *Meshech Chochmah* remains out of reach for many — particularly English readers — who would benefit from it. Seasoned *talmidei chachamim*, too, often still have difficulty plumbing its depths. This elucidation was undertaken to bridge these gaps: to provide a clear English translation and commentary to open the logic, source the references, and trace the reasoning of the *sefer*, without diluting its depth or altering its character.

Rabbi Avrohom Wagner, whose command of *Meshech Chochmah's* substance and idiom, insistence on precision, as well as mastery of the English language, was a natural for this monumental task. Each phrase is translated to preserve the original's rigor while making its logic accessible to every learner.

We thank all who contributed to bringing this *sefer* to print, and hope it will open *Meshech Chochmah* to a new front of learners — so that anyone drawn to this great *sefer* can approach it without undue difficulty.

Rabbi Shimon Szimonowitz

Rabbi Chaim Dov Greenes

Machon Aleh Zayis

Author's Introduction

ראמות וגביש לא יזכר ומשך חכמה מפנינים (איוב כ"ח י"ח)

ויש מפרש ומשך חכמה כי המושך אותה מן המקום הנסתר אשר היא
שם משך דבר יקר יותר מפנינים (רמב"ן)

ומשך חכמה - המקום שמשם מושכים את החכמה הוא עמוק יותר
מפנינים שמושכים אותם ממצולות ים (מלבי"ם)

The very name “*Meshech Chochmah*” engenders a respectful awe within the hallowed walls of *battei medrash* across the spectrum of Jewish study worldwide. This fundamental work seamlessly blends *parshanus*, *derush*, philosophy, *dikduk*, *kabbalah*, *hashkafah*, and *lomdus*, affording the serious student a glimpse into the mind of one of the premier geniuses of prewar Europe. Attribution of a thought to the great Rav Meir Simchah of Dvinsk automatically lends it gravitas, forcing the listener to carefully evaluate it regardless of how it may challenge his preconceptions.

The very fluidity and versatility of the *sefer*, however, while allowing its several parts to appeal to a broad audience, also make it difficult for even accomplished students to absorb in full. A *lamdan* might enjoy the intricate Talmudic analysis, but find himself lost in the poetic stylings of a piece on *hashkafah*. The seasoned *daykan* can appreciate the incisive explanations of a *passuk*'s wording, but be bewildered by the kabbalistic approaches. Moreover, the author's brilliance often lends itself to abbreviated references and concise verbiage relying on the reader's familiarity with the cited sources and their contextual settings, necessitating time-consuming and laborious research for all but the most erudite.

Compounding the issue, the *sefer*'s name itself alludes to its propensity to “draw forth” hidden wisdom; as the Gemara teaches, even once the “shell” has been removed, the “pearl” must still be sought (see *Bava Metzia* 17b). Even

once the author's words have been fully understood and appreciated, one must often still strive to uncover the underlying intentions. (My *rebbe*, Rav Shimon Alster *zt"l*, would often cite *yesodos* from the *Meshech Chochmah*. When we looked up the source, however, we saw no trace of what Rav Shimon had quoted! Only after careful examination were we able to discern the hidden meaning that the *איש תבונה* had drawn...)

It is said that Rav Meir Simchah authored this work in his youth, but his father instructed him to set it aside, lest he be thought a mere "*darshan*." Only once his fame had spread as a quintessential *lamdan*, through his other works and prolific *rabbanus* of Dvinsk, could he allow the *Meshech Chochmah* to be released to the public. Perhaps it was not for his son's honor that he was concerned, but for the proper appreciation of the *sefer* itself. Dismissing it as a work of *derush* would do it a disservice, as there are layers upon layers of insight which can be taken from its depths. Only once we know, through *Ohr Somei'ach* and the like, of the depths of Rav Meir Simchah's approach, can we appreciate that the words of *Meshech Chochmah* are not mere "*gleich vertlach*," but keys to hidden storehouses of insight.

In this work, I have endeavored to assist the reader by not only translating the text, maintaining as close a fidelity as possible to the original wording without placing undue strain on the flow of the English vernacular, but also by adding elucidative headings and elaborations within the text to promote better comprehension of the points being made. I have also added extensive footnotes to point out source and comparison texts, as well as to further develop what may be the subtexts to which the author alludes. I hope that I have merited some measure of truth in my approaches, but the purposes of this work will have been well served even if the reader vehemently disagrees with my interpretation, for at least he will have been moved to contemplate the words of Rav Meir Simchah on a level greater than mere superficiality.

במה אקדם ה' אכף לאלקי מרום. Mortal words are too puny and ineffective, for we cannot access the verbiage, the ability to speak, nor even the foregoing desire and inkling to initiate speech, without Hashem granting us the

hashpa'ah to do so. May we speedily merit the fulfillment of the prophecy
ומלאה הארץ דעה את ה' במים לים מכסים.

My father, Rav Refoel Menachem Nochum Wagner *zt"l*, spoke English as a third language. Nevertheless, he was a widely sought-after orator, and his letters reached an audience far beyond their originally-intended family circle. Among so many other things, it is from him that I learned the vital importance of precision in language, how a well-chosen word or turn of phrase can pierce to the heart of a matter, opening a concept to the mind and embedding it in memory. Although he was *niftar* at a young age, my mother, Mrs. Batya Wagner תב"ח, maintained his standards with superhuman strength, guiding each of us on the path that he would have wished for us to tread.

I have benefitted from the tutelage of many *rabbeim*, both קרויים and חיים, and it would be too laborious to enumerate all of them. I would just like to mention Rav Shimon Alster *zt"l*, who taught us not to suffice with superficial readings, nor to become bogged down in the minutiae to the point where the forest cannot be seen for the trees, as well as my older brother, Rav Michael Akiva Gershon Wagner *zt"l*, who helped me gain an appreciation for how seemingly disparate threads of differing approaches can be woven into a splendorous fabric. Their loss is still keenly felt.

My father-in-law, Rav Shlomo Cweiber *shlit"a*, always demands no less than excellence when it comes to Torah. A thought, no matter its beauty, must be carefully examined, clearly articulated, conceptually proven, and vigorously defended. This forces us to polish and refine our efforts, ultimately making the final result exponentially enhanced. My *shvigger* truly embodies אשה חכמת לב, and is an עזר בנגדו in every sense of the phrase.

My brother-in-law, Rav Moshe Cweiber, first conceived of this project, suggesting to me that I attempt to translate the *Meshech Chochmah* so as to make its wisdom accessible to a wider audience. I am grateful to Rav Shimon Szimonowitz, head of Machon Aleh Zayis, and to Rav Chaim Dov Greenes, for their considerable toil to ensure that this *sefer* reach publication in as beautiful a manner as possible.

Finally, the one to whom this entire *sefer*, as well as whatever I have

accomplished, belongs. Some time ago, my family underwent a bit of a financial crisis. It occurred to me that I could take on an additional job in the early morning, without interfering with my primary occupation, and add a much-needed additional income stream. Before I was able to implement this plan, however, my wife, Frayda 'שתחי', told me: "If you are prepared to get up so early in the morning, and I am ready to forgo having your help in getting the children ready for school, far better that you utilize this time to go to *shul* and learn than that you spend it in pursuit of material gain." Beyond the fact that it was during this early morning *seder* that the vast majority of this work was completed, it is her attitude of promoting eternal values that has fueled whatever accomplishments I have managed to achieve, and she is truly worthy of the dictum אלו נשותיהן... שמנדרות שינה מעיניהם בעוה"ז ובאות לחיי עוה"ב.

ויה"ר שזכות הגהמ"ח זצוק"ל יעמוד לנו ולזרעינו שלא תמוש התורה מפנינו ומפי זרעינו וזרע זרעינו עד עולם, וימש"ך לנו רוח חכמה ובינה רוח עצה וגבורה רוח דעת ויראת ה'.

Avrohom Wagner

Tammuz 5786

Rav Meir Simcha Hakohen zt”l of Dvinsk

Author of Meshech Chochmah

A Biographical Sketch*

By every conventional measure, the legacy of Hagaon Harav Meir Simcha Hakohen zt”l of Dvinsk should have vanished. He never studied in a yeshivah and never led one. He built no institutions, trained no successor, and left behind no children. Yet a century after his passing, his *Ohr Sameach* stands among the most penetrating commentaries ever written on the Rambam, and countless Jews still approach the weekly *parshah* through the unique lens of his *Meshech Chochmah*.

The Iluy of Baltrimantz

Meir Simcha was born in 1843 in the small Lithuanian *shtetl* of Baltrimantz, to Rav Shimshon Kalonymus Hakohen and his wife Osnas. The story is told that his name was based on a *brachah* his parents received that they would merit a son “who would illuminate the eyes of Yisrael with Torah and bring them joy.” Meir means “light” and Simcha means “joy.” He was known as an *iluy* from childhood, as he studied Tanach and large sections of Shas, largely on his own. When he was thirteen, he was sent to Eishyshok, where the rigorous analytical style of Rav Moshe Danishevsky, the “Iluy of Smorgon,” molded his *derech halimud*.

The Hidden Giant of Bialystok

At the age of sixteen, Meir Simcha married Chaya Makovsky of Bialystok, and for the next twenty-eight years he lived in Bialystok. His wife Chaya was

* Adapted largely from *Reason to Rejoice* by Dovi Safier with Moshe Dembitzer (*Mishpacha* Magazine, March 30, 2026), with their permission.

educated and sharp and had a remarkable memory. She ran a successful business, providing her husband with uninterrupted years of learning. Decades later, people still pointed to the place he sat in the Gemilas Chasadim *beis medrash*: “This is where Rav Meir Simcha learned eighteen hours a day.” It was during these years that the *Ohr Sameach’s chiddushim* and the *Meshech Chochmah* took shape.

Though most people in Bialystok knew nothing of the great *talmid chacham* in their midst, he was no secret to the *gedolei hador*. Rav Yisrael Salanter sent the Alter of Kelm himself to recruit Rav Meir Simcha for the Mussar movement (he was unsuccessful, likely due to the influence of his *rebbe*, Rav Moshe Danishevsky, who was one of the leading opponents of the Mussar movement). Rav Chaim Soloveitchik would ask visitors from Bialystok about “the biggest *lamdan* of them all, Rav Meir Simcha!”

Rav of Dvinsk

In the summer of 1887, Dvinsk lost both of its great *rabbanim*, Rav Leibele Homeler of Chabad and the legendary Rav Reuvele Dinaburger. During the *shivah*, Rav Yaakov Yosef, the future Chief Rabbi of New York, stunned the mourners by suggesting that they take the “shopkeeper” in Bialystok named Rav Meir Simcha Cohen as their next *rav*.

Asked his opinion about this rabbinical candidate, the Beis Halevi of Brisk famously replied: “Why are you asking me about him? You should sooner ask him about me!”

Rav Meir Simcha arrived in Dvinsk right before Pesach of 1888 and led the city for thirty-nine years. He was joined shortly afterward by Rav Yosef Rosen, the Rogatchover Gaon, who led the city’s chassidic community. These two *rabbanim*, two of the greatest *gaonim* of the century, served together in this midsized Latvian city for four decades.

As *rav*, Rav Meir Simcha was known for his warm personality. His door was always open, the poor were received before the wealthy, and he gave more than half his salary to *tzedakah*. He declined the *rabbanus* of Yerushalayim and every other city that was offered to him; his loyalty to the people of Dvinsk

was absolute. When constant German bombardment emptied the city during World War I, he refused to leave. “As long as there are Jews left in this city, I will share their fate.”

His leadership reached far beyond Dvinsk. At the 1910 Rabbinical Conference in St. Petersburg, a position of his was accepted despite fierce opposition from Rav Chaim Brisker and the Chafetz Chaim — both of whom revered him. Rav Chaim declared him the *gadol* of the era, and the Chafetz Chaim wept upon his passing, “Now that Rav Meir Simcha is gone, who will lead us?”

Rav Meir Simcha worked tirelessly for the community despite his private troubles: His only daughter developed a mental illness, his beloved son-in-law predeceased him, and he had no grandchildren. Rebbetzin Chaya passed away in Sivan 5686. A few weeks later, on Friday night, the 4th of Elul 5686 (1926), Rav Meir Simcha was *niftar* in Riga. At his *levayah*, the Rogatchover ordered that his *shtender* be buried with him, to testify to a lifetime of complete dedication to Torah.

The Meshech Chochmah

Toward the end of his life, Rav Meir Simcha pointed to the *Ohr Sameach* and remarked, “I could have authored this *sefer* even now, in my old age. But the *Meshech Chochmah* — I only had the strength to write it when I was young.”

Rav Meir Simcha actually did write the *Meshech Chochmah* when he was young, but it wasn’t published for decades. A family member had advised him to first publish his *halachic* work, since if he first presented his *peirush* on Chumash, he would be dismissed forever after as only a “*darshan*,” no matter what other Torah he would teach or publish. Indeed, the *Ohr Sameach* was published first, in Warsaw, 1902–1910, demonstrating to the entire Torah world some breadth of Rav Meir Simcha’s *lamdanus*.

It has been related that while Rav Meir Simcha did not release the manuscript of *Meshech Chochmah* for publication, he would occasionally show it to *gedolim* when they visited, and amended it based on their feedback.

Rav Meir Simcha did not merit to see the *Meshech Chochmah* in print. During his final illness, he handed the manuscript to his *talmid*, Rav Menachem Mendel Zak of Riga, saying only that it contained “great and hidden things.” It was published in Riga in 1927, a year after his passing. The *sefer* was unlike anything the Torah world had seen: a mix of *pshat*, *halachah*, philosophy, history, and *kabbalah* in a single volume. It traces the arc of *galus* and *geulah* through the weekly *parshah*; reveals a map of human nature in the structure of the *mitzvos*; and explains the essence of Klal Yisrael.

Each *Erev Shabbos*, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky *zt”l* would set aside time to learn *Meshech Chochmah*, and those watching him testified that his face shone as he learned it. When the Imrei Emes of Ger reached *Parshas Bechukosai* and read Rav Meir Simcha’s prediction, decades before the Holocaust, that Jews would come to believe that Berlin was Jerusalem and a storm wind would tear them from their roots, he cried out, “*Chacham adif mi’navi!* (A wise man is preferable to a prophet).”

Rav Meir Simcha left no biological heirs, and when sitting *shivah* for his wife, he wondered who would say *Kaddish* for him. It is now clear that his *sefarim* — the jewels which he bequeathed to Klal Yisrael — are his progeny. It is our hope that the present work makes this treasure more accessible to all.

Bereishis

משך חכמה

א א בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ.
בראשית. תרגם יונתן בחוכמא ברא עלמא, ויעוי' ברמב"ן, וזה דברי
הגמרא סנהדרין ל"ח זו מידתו של הקב"ה שברא את כה"ע בחכמה.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (1:1)

WITH REISHIS. — בראשית

*Yonasan*¹ renders the word *Bereishis* not as “in the beginning”, but thus: “**With wisdom (*chochmah*)² He created the world.**”³ — See *Ramban*, who explains that Hashem used *Chochmah*, so to speak, to create the world.⁴ וזה דברי הגמרא סנהדרין ל"ח זו — מידתו של הקב"ה שברא את כה"ע בחכמה — and this is what is meant by the words of the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 38a): “This is the trait of the Holy One, Blessed is He, Who created the entire world with *Chochmah*”,

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1. Aside from the standard *Targum*, known as *Targum Onkelos*, there is an alternative Aramaic translation of the Torah commonly known as *Targum Yonasan*. A full treatment of the provenance of this *Targum* is beyond the scope of this work.

2. This rendering is actually found not in *Targum Yonasan*, but in an additional version known as *Targum Yerushalmi*. These two *Targumim* have considerable overlap, and are often referred to interchangeably. See *Mavo* in *Sefer Naar Yonasan*.

3. The exact wording of the *Targum* is בחוכמא ברא ה', “*With wisdom Hashem*

created.” The standard editions of this particular *Targum* often consist of brief verse fragments, with only the differences from other *Targumim* recorded. In this case, the operative word is בחוכמא, as the author will explain.

4. *Ramban* states briefly that the word בראשית alludes to the Kabbalistic concept known as *Chochmah*, which is the “First of the Emanations”, i.e., the very first step of distilling pure Godliness into the process that ultimately results in a corporeal Creation. At more length, *Ramban* explains that the world was created in stages, with the first thing created being חומר היולי, primeval

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ונראה להסביר עפ"י מה שהביא בספר עה"ק בפרק ח' מחלק היחוד, ז"ל הקדמונים, אין סוף הוא שלמות מבלי חסרון, וא"ת שיש לו כח בלי גבול ואין לו כח בגבול, הרי אתה מחסר שלמותו כו'. ואני מוסיף,

i.e., the Gemara refers to Hashem's creation, the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, wherein He created a means by which His creatures could begin to perceive Him, by seeing Him as Wise.⁵ This was the first step from which the entire remainder of Creation was derived.

It seems correct to explain the concept of the *Seder Hishtalshelus*, meaning, the way in which Hashem, in His Infinite Wisdom, created a descending order of *Sefiros*, Emanations, through which His world would come into corporeality, **based on what is brought in Sefer Avodas HaKodesh (Chelek HaYichud, Ch. 8):** — ז"ל הקדמונים: — ***Ein Sof*⁶ is completeness, with no deficit whatsoever; וא"ת שיש לו כח בלי גבול ואין לו כח בגבול; if you say that it has power only over infinity, but has no power in finite realms or matters, i.e., that *Ein Sof*, by its very nature, could not effect boundaries, הרי אתה then you are taking away from its completeness by ascribing to it a lack of ability etc."**⁷ **ואני מוסיף — And I would add to the**

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material, which Hashem then expanded and refined into all the myriad aspects of the world He made.

5. It is impossible for our puny intellects to conceive of Hashem's Infinite Essence. He therefore created *Sefiros* (roughly: Emanations) through which He interacts, so to speak, with His creations. These *Sefiros* are limited and therefore perceptible, and through them we can perceive Him.

6. Literally: Infinity, this phrase is used by Kabbalists to refer to the incomprehensibly, unfathomably infinite

Godliness that precedes its distillation into the *Sefiros*.

7. Some early philosophers posited that infinity is inherently incompatible with anything finite, thus an infinite God cannot be the Creator of finite creatures, *chas veshalom*. *Avodas HaKodesh* shows that this is a ridiculous claim, since Hashem's Infinity is absolute perfection, and imposing any limit upon it — such as ascribing to it an inability to create finite matter — is a de facto detraction from its completeness. (See also *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:15.)

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שהרי מובן שמה שיש להא"ס לברוא דבר בגבול בתכלית, גם זה הוא בלא גבול, שהרבה גבולים לבלי תכלית הוא בכח אין סוף לברוא מבלי גבול, רק שבחר בכח הגבול הזה הנברא. ולפ"ז נסביר סוד המוחין, כי המחשבה וההסכם מאין סוף לברוא מציאות גבולי, וגם זה יתכן לבלי גבול באופנים אין מספר, זה נקרא כתר. ולכן נקרא אין שעדיין בזה אין גבול והוא נעלם

words of the *Avodas HaKodesh* שהרי מובן שמה שיש להאין סוף לברוא דבר בגבול — **that it is understandable that the ability of the *Ein Sof* to create something that is infinitesimally bounded, i.e., that has boundaries and limitations that are as small as can be** — גם זה הוא בלא גבול — **that, too, is a factor of its infinity,** שהרבה גבולים לבלי תכלית הוא בכח אין — **for there are many boundaries — beyond count** — **that *Ein Sof* had the power to create,** and that power, itself, is **limitless,**⁸ רק שבחר בכח הגבול הזה הנברא — **for *Ein Sof* could have imposed any limit that He wished, but He chose to implement the power of this specific created limitation upon this specific creature.**

Based on this, we can explain the Secret of the *Mochin*.⁹ — **For the original thought and decision of *Ein Sof* to create a finite existence** — וגם — **which is also infinitely possible, in innumerable possible permutations as explained above** — זה נקרא — **is called *Kesser*,**¹⁰ ולכן נקרא 'אין' שעדיין בזה אין גבול והוא נעלם — כתר

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8. In other words, beyond the point of the *Avodas HaKodesh* that the very infinity of Hashem's power means that He must have the ability to create even finite matter, the power of creating limited creations is also indicative of infinity, for the choice of limits is also infinite, as there are infinite limits that can be imposed. (Consider, by way of comparison, Xeno's Paradox.)

9. In Kabbalistic thought, the *Sefiros*, or

Emanations through which Hashem initiated the process of distilling Godliness into corporeal creation, begin with three levels of *Mochin* (roughly: Mindfulness), before proceeding to the *Middos*, the seven fundamental active Attributes. The author will now use the concept he explained above to elucidate the progression of these three levels.

10. According to the Kabbalah of the *Arizal*, the level of *Kesser* (lit: Crown)