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Scholarly Perspectives on Sifra Detzniuta: *With addendum on the Healer-Patient Relationship*

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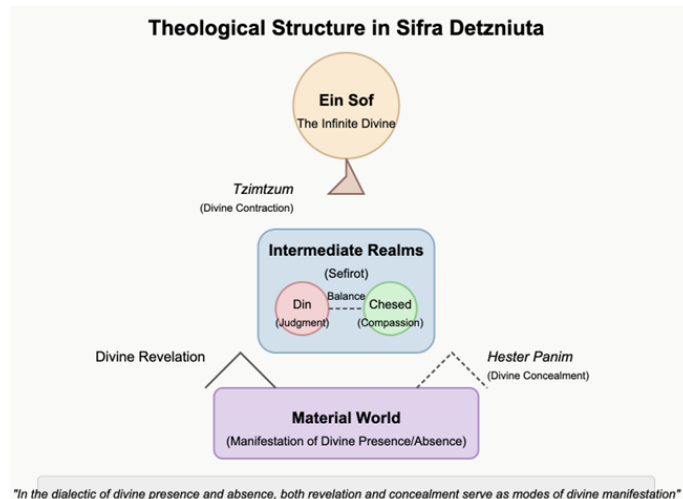
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Introduction

A review of the *Sifra Detzniuta* may initially appear distant from modern clinical concerns. However, its sophisticated understanding of divine presence and absence offers profound insights for contemporary healing relationships. Both the ancient kabbalists and modern healthcare practitioners grapple with similar fundamental questions: How does one become genuinely present to another without overwhelming them? How can absence sometimes manifest as the highest form of presence? What facilitates transformation in the space between two beings? This addendum explores how the *Sifra Detzniuta's* theological framework with its paradoxical understanding of divine withdrawal, intermediary realms, and balanced opposites can enrich our conception of the healer-patient relationship. By bringing these ancient insights into dialogue with contemporary healthcare practices, particularly as explored previously in my essays on healing [1-5], we discover unexpected resonances that deepen our understanding of what constitutes effective therapeutic presence in contexts ranging from nursing to psychotherapy to spiritual care.

History

The *Sifra Detzniuta* (Book of Concealment) has attracted significant scholarly and religious attention throughout Jewish intellectual history. Among the most influential engagements with this enigmatic text is the commentary by Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720-1797), better known as the Vilna Gaon or the GRA. This commentary, *Biur HaGra al Sifra Detzniuta*, represents a watershed moment in the interpretation of this

kabbalistic text and continues to influence both traditional Jewish learning and contemporary academic scholarship.

The Vilna Gaon's commentary was published posthumously in 1820 in Vilna and Grodno, brought to print by his grandson Rabbi Yaakov Moshe of Slonim. What made this first edition particularly significant was the accompanying introduction written by the Gaon's foremost disciple, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821). This introduction, composed shortly before Rabbi Chaim's death, provides crucial insights into the Vilna Gaon's approach to kabbalistic literature in general and to the *Sifra Detzniuta* in particular.

The commentary itself represents the Vilna Gaon's distinctive approach to kabbalistic interpretation, characterized by rigorous textual analysis, extensive cross-referencing with other Jewish sources, and a systematic approach that sought to integrate kabbalistic wisdom with traditional rabbinic learning. The Gaon approached the *Sifra Detzniuta* as a supremely ancient text containing profound cosmological and theological truths expressed in a highly condensed, cryptic form. His commentary sought to unpack these concise statements and reveal their deeper meanings.

In traditional Jewish circles, especially within the Lithuanian tradition of Talmudic learning, the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Sifra Detzniuta* is regarded with immense reverence. The first edition of this work is particularly prized among collectors and scholars of Jewish mysticism. Subsequent editions have included additional glosses and commentaries, but the core text

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of the Gaon's interpretation, accompanied by Rabbi Chaim's introduction, has remained central to traditional study of this kabbalistic work.

While the Vilna Gaon's commentary emerges from a religious rather than academic context, it has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest. Modern academic studies of the *Sifra Detzniuta* often engage with the Gaon's interpretive approach, either as a point of contrast to modern critical methodologies or as an important stage in the interpretive history of the text. This commentary thus serves as a bridge between traditional religious engagement with kabbalistic literature and contemporary scholarly discourse a bridge that the following scholars would traverse in their own distinctive ways.

Context and Significance

The *Sifra Detzniuta* (Book of Concealment) represents one of the most enigmatic and influential texts within the corpus of Jewish mystical literature. This brief but profound work, embedded within the larger framework of the *Zohar*, consists of only five short chapters yet has generated extensive commentary and analysis across centuries of Jewish thought. Its cryptic language, dense with metaphorical and symbolic expressions, addresses fundamental cosmological and theological concepts, including the nature of divine emanation, the structure of reality, and the processes of creation.

Often characterized as the most esoteric section of the already mysterious *Zohar*, the *Sifra Detzniuta* occupies a central place in kabbalistic literature. Its brevity belies its significance; many kabbalists considered it to contain the essence of mystical knowledge in its most condensed form. Traditional attribution places its authorship with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a second-century Tannaic sage, though modern scholarship generally locates its composition within the medieval period, specifically 13th-century Spain, as part of the broader Zoharic literature.

The scholarly perspectives examined in this review reflect diverse methodological approaches to understanding this complex text. Each contributor has approached the *Sifra Detzniuta* with distinct interpretive frameworks and research questions, collectively advancing our understanding of its literary structure, historical context, philosophical content, and cultural significance. From Gershom Scholem's pioneering historical-critical analysis to contemporary phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches, these scholarly contributions illustrate the rich interpretive possibilities that continue to emerge from engagement with this foundational kabbalistic text.

Gershom Scholem

Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), the pioneering scholar of Jewish mysticism, established the critical-historical approach to kabbalistic literature that would fundamentally reshape academic understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta*. Scholem's groundbreaking research challenged the traditional attribution of authorship to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, instead situating the text within its medieval Spanish context as part of the broader Zoharic corpus.

In his seminal work, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941) [6], Scholem presents the *Sifra Detzniuta* as one of the earliest sections of the *Zohar*, which he attributed primarily to Moses de Leon in late 13th-century Spain. Scholem describes it as "a brief outline of the symbolism of the universe as a revelation of the Divine in the form of primordial man," emphasizing its concise yet profound cosmological vision.

Scholem's philological research into the linguistic features of the text provided crucial evidence for its medieval composition. His analysis of the distinctive Aramaic used in the *Zohar*, including the *Sifra Detzniuta*, demonstrated that it was a constructed literary language rather than an authentic 2nd-century dialect. This linguistic evidence formed a cornerstone of his argument for the text's medieval authorship.

Beyond questions of authorship and dating, Scholem explored the intellectual sources that informed the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He identified influences from Neoplatonic philosophy, earlier Jewish mystical traditions such as the *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Bahir*, and Gnostic concepts that had been adapted into a Jewish framework. This contextual approach situated the text within broader intellectual currents while acknowledging its distinctive synthesis of these various influences.

Particularly significant was Scholem's analysis of the *Sifra Detzniuta's* conception of divine emanation and cosmic structure. He elucidated how the text presents a vision of God withdrawing to create space for creation (*tzimtzum*), followed by the emanation of divine light through various stages or worlds. This interpretation emphasized the text's importance for later developments in Lurianic Kabbalah, which would elaborate these concepts into a comprehensive cosmological system.

In *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (1965) [7], Scholem further explored the hermeneutical techniques employed in the *Sifra Detzniuta*, particularly its reinterpretation of biblical verses through symbolic reading. He demonstrated how the text transforms straightforward biblical narratives into complex allegories of cosmic processes, revealing esoteric meanings beneath the exoteric surface.

Scholem's approach to the *Sifra Detzniuta* was characterized by his commitment to historical contextualization without reductionism. While rigorously analyzing its historical and philological dimensions, he maintained a deep appreciation for the text's theological and spiritual significance. This balanced approach established a methodological foundation that subsequent scholars would both build upon and challenge.

The legacy of Scholem's work on the *Sifra Detzniuta* extends beyond his specific conclusions. By bringing critical-historical methods to bear on a text traditionally shrouded in religious veneration, he inaugurated the modern academic study of Jewish mysticism and demonstrated the value of approaching such texts with both scholarly rigor and interpretive sensitivity.

Ronit Meroz

Ronit Meroz, Professor at Tel Aviv University, has significantly advanced the scholarly understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta*

through her pioneering work in textual archaeology and redaction criticism. Her methodological approach represents a sophisticated evolution of Scholem's historical-critical foundation, particularly through her attention to manuscript variations and textual layers.

Meroz's most significant contribution to the study of the *Sifra Detzniuta* is her discovery and analysis of previously unknown manuscript versions of the text. In her groundbreaking article, "An Unknown Version of Zohar, Sifra Ditseni'uta, with an Unknown Theology about Creation and its Destruction" (2016) [8], she presents a shorter version of the text found in manuscript that may predate the version printed in standard *Zohar* editions. This discovery has profound implications for understanding the text's development and original intentions.

Through meticulous comparison of textual variants, Meroz has developed a layered model of the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s composition that challenges both traditional views of single authorship and Scholem's attribution primarily to Moses de Leon. Instead, she proposes a complex redactional process spanning multiple generations, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. This model suggests that the text evolved through successive layers of interpretation, each responding to and building upon earlier versions.

Particularly innovative is Meroz's analysis of theological differences between manuscript variants. She demonstrates that the shorter, earlier version contains a distinctive theology of cosmic destruction and renewal that was partially obscured in later redactions. This finding suggests that the *Sifra Detzniuta* originally contained more radical theological positions that were subsequently moderated through editorial interventions.

Meroz's research also illuminates the relationship between the *Sifra Detzniuta* and other sections of the *Zohar*. By tracing patterns of citation, allusion, and development, she has shown how ideas first articulated in the *Sifra Detzniuta* were elaborated and sometimes transformed in later Zoharic texts. This intertextual approach reveals the dynamic evolution of kabbalistic concepts within the broader Zoharic literature.

Beyond textual analysis, Meroz has explored the historical and social contexts that shaped the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s development. Her work suggests that the text should be understood not merely as a literary product but as reflecting the concerns and intellectual environments of various kabbalistic circles in medieval Spain and beyond. This contextual approach enriches our understanding of how the text functioned within specific communities of interpretation.

Methodologically, Meroz's work is characterized by extraordinary attention to detail combined with theoretical sophistication. She employs digital humanities techniques alongside traditional philological methods, demonstrating how computational approaches can reveal patterns and relationships not immediately apparent through conventional analysis.

The implications of Meroz's research extend beyond the *Sifra Detzniuta* itself to challenge broader assumptions about the

composition and development of kabbalistic literature. By revealing the complex, multi-layered nature of this foundational text, she has opened new avenues for understanding how Jewish mystical traditions evolved through processes of writing, interpretation, and redaction.

Daniel Matt

Daniel Matt, former Professor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, has made extraordinary contributions to the accessibility and understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta* through his masterful translation work and textual elucidation. His approach bridges philological precision with interpretive sensitivity, making this challenging text available to both scholarly and broader audiences.

Matt's most significant contribution is his translation of the *Sifra Detzniuta* as part of his monumental, annotated English translation of the *Zohar*, published in the Pritzker Edition (2003-2017) [9]. This translation represents the culmination of over two decades of scholarly work and stands as the most authoritative English rendering of the text. Matt's translation is distinguished by its careful balance of literal accuracy and literary elegance, capturing both the technical precision and poetic resonance of the original Aramaic.

What sets Matt's work apart is his comprehensive annotation system, which accompanies the translation of the *Sifra Detzniuta* with extensive commentary. These notes elucidate obscure terms, explain symbolic language, identify biblical and rabbinic references, and trace conceptual connections throughout the *Zohar* and related literature. This layered commentary makes the dense and allusive text of the *Sifra Detzniuta* accessible while preserving its intellectual complexity.

Matt's approach to translating the *Sifra Detzniuta* is grounded in rigorous philological methodology. He works from critical editions and manuscript sources, often noting variant readings and their interpretive implications. His sensitivity to the nuances of Zoharic Aramaic allows him to capture subtle linguistic features that carry theological significance, demonstrating how the text's form and content are inextricably linked.

Beyond technical accuracy, Matt pays particular attention to the literary and poetic dimensions of the *Sifra Detzniuta*. His translation preserves the text's rhythmic qualities, wordplay, and symbolic resonance, allowing readers to experience its aesthetic power alongside its conceptual depth. This literary sensitivity reflects Matt's understanding that the *Sifra Detzniuta* functions not merely as a philosophical treatise but as a work of spiritual literature intended to evoke transformative insight.

In *The Essential Kabbalah* (1995) [1] and other works, Matt contextualizes the *Sifra Detzniuta* within the broader landscape of Jewish mystical thought. He traces how its key concepts such as divine contraction (*tzimtzum*), the balance of judgment and compassion, and the structure of the sefirot developed through subsequent kabbalistic traditions, particularly Lurianic Kabbalah. This developmental perspective illuminates both the text's foundational role and its ongoing interpretive evolution.

Matt's work is also characterized by his attention to the hermeneutical dimensions of the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He explores how the text itself functions as a mode of interpretation, transforming biblical verses through symbolic reading to reveal cosmic and metaphysical meanings. This meta-interpretive approach highlights the *Sifra Detzniuta's* status as both an object of interpretation and a model for interpretive practice.

The significance of Matt's contribution extends beyond academic circles to influence contemporary engagement with Jewish mystical traditions. By making the *Sifra Detzniuta* accessible without simplification, his work has enabled broader exploration of this foundational text across religious and disciplinary boundaries, fostering new conversations between traditional and academic approaches to Kabbalah.

David J. Halperin

David J. Halperin, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, represents a distinctive voice in the scholarly conversation surrounding the *Sifra Detzniuta*, bringing expertise in both classical Jewish mysticism and broader cultural history. His approach bridges philological analysis with attention to reception history, illuminating how this enigmatic text has been interpreted and appropriated across diverse contexts.

Halperin's engagement with the *Sifra Detzniuta* is characterized by his attention to the text's historical reception and cultural afterlives. Rather than focusing exclusively on questions of original meaning or composition, he explores how the text has been read, interpreted, and deployed by various communities throughout history. This approach reveals the *Sifra Detzniuta* not as a static document but as a dynamic tradition that acquires new meanings in different contexts.

Particularly significant is Halperin's work on the intersection between Jewish mystical texts and broader intellectual currents. In his scholarly blog posts and articles, he has examined how the *Sifra Detzniuta* and related Zoharic literature influenced and were influenced by developments in philosophical, religious, and scientific thought. This contextual approach situates the text within complex networks of cultural exchange and intellectual transmission.

Halperin's expertise in both Jewish mysticism and comparative religion enables him to identify meaningful parallels between the *Sifra Detzniuta's* cosmological vision and similar concepts in other mystical traditions. While acknowledging the text's distinctive Jewish character, he explores how its themes of divine contraction, cosmic balance, and hidden knowledge resonate with analogous ideas in Christian, Islamic, and Eastern mystical systems. This comparative perspective illuminates both shared mystical patterns and the particular expressions they take within Jewish tradition.

A unique aspect of Halperin's scholarship is his investigation of how the *Sifra Detzniuta* has been appropriated beyond traditional religious contexts. In his exploration of the connections between kabbalistic texts and modern occultism, he examines how figures such as Helena Blavatsky incorporated

elements from the *Sifra Detzniuta* into theosophical writings. He similarly traces connections between this text and Desmond Leslie's work on UFOs, demonstrating the surprising cultural migrations of kabbalistic concepts.

In his methodological approach, Halperin aligns more closely with newer scholarly perspectives on the *Zohar's* composition. Following Ronit Meroz's work on textual layering, he views the *Sifra Detzniuta* as developing through multiple stages of composition and redaction rather than emerging fully formed from a single author. This nuanced view of textual formation informs his understanding of how the text functioned within various communities of interpretation.

Halperin's work on Sabbatian literature, including his book *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah* (2007) [10], provides important context for understanding how the *Sifra Detzniuta's* esoteric cosmology could be reinterpreted in messianic frameworks. His analysis of how Sabbatian thinkers appropriated and transformed kabbalistic concepts illuminates broader patterns of interpretive innovation within Jewish mystical traditions.

The significance of Halperin's contribution lies partly in his intellectual generosity and interdisciplinary orientation. By engaging with both traditional Jewish sources and diverse cultural phenomena, he demonstrates the continuing relevance of texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* beyond conventional religious or academic boundaries. His work invites readers to consider how ancient mystical wisdom continues to resonate in unexpected contexts, challenging rigid distinctions between religious tradition and cultural innovation.

Elliot Wolfson

Elliot R. Wolfson, currently the Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has made profound contributions to the scholarly understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta* through his innovative application of phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches. His work represents one of the most philosophically sophisticated engagements with this enigmatic text, exploring its ontological assumptions, symbolic structures, and gender dynamics.

Wolfson's approach to the *Sifra Detzniuta* is characterized by his attention to what he terms the "hermeneutic of concealment" the text's paradoxical strategy of simultaneously revealing and concealing mystical knowledge. In works such as "Left Contained in the Right: A Study in Zoharic Hermeneutics" [11], he demonstrates how the *Sifra Detzniuta's* title ("Book of Concealment") reflects not merely its esoteric content but its fundamental textual strategy. The text conceals even as it reveals, employing deliberate obscurity to protect sacred knowledge while guiding the adept toward deeper understanding.

A central theme in Wolfson's analysis of the *Sifra Detzniuta* is its distinctive ontology of divine manifestation. He explores how the text articulates a complex vision of divine self-limitation (*tzimtzum*) and subsequent revelation through

cosmic structures. Particularly significant is his examination of how the text conceptualizes the relationship between divine unity and multiplicity, between the infinite Ein Sof (limitless divine) and the finite structures of created reality.

Wolfson's work on gender symbolism in kabbalistic literature has profound implications for understanding the *Sifra Detzniuta*. In *Through a Speculum That Shines* (1994) [12] and subsequent publications, he examines how the text employs gendered imagery to represent divine processes and cosmic structures. His analysis reveals a complex dialectic between masculine and feminine principles in the text's symbolism, challenging simplistic readings of kabbalistic gender imagery.

Methodologically, Wolfson combines rigorous philological analysis with philosophical sophistication. His readings of the *Sifra Detzniuta* are attentive to linguistic nuances and intertextual connections while engaging with contemporary philosophical discourse, particularly phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. This approach illuminates the text's relevance to ongoing philosophical conversations about language, being, and representation.

Particularly innovative is Wolfson's exploration of visual imagery in the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He demonstrates how the text constructs what he terms a "specular visibility" a mode of mystical vision that paradoxically sees what cannot be seen. This analysis reveals how the text articulates a distinctive phenomenology of mystical experience that transcends conventional sensory categories while still being described in sensory (particularly visual) terms.

Wolfson's work also illuminates the relationship between exegesis and eisegesis in the *Sifra Detzniuta's* interpretive strategy. He shows how the text's reading of biblical verses simultaneously draws meaning from and projects meaning onto the scripture it interprets, creating a dynamic hermeneutical circle. This perspective reveals the text's innovative approach to traditional sources, transforming them through creative reinterpretation.

The significance of Wolfson's contribution extends beyond specific interpretations to a broader reconceptualization of how we approach mystical texts. By engaging with the *Sifra Detzniuta* as both a historical artifact and a phenomenological expression of mystical consciousness, he demonstrates how such texts can speak meaningfully across historical and cultural divides, offering insights into fundamental questions of being, knowledge, and transcendence.

Eitan Fishbane

Eitan P. Fishbane, Professor of Jewish Thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary, has made groundbreaking contributions to our understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta* and broader Zoharic literature through his innovative focus on literary analysis and poetics. His approach illuminates the artistic and narrative dimensions of these texts, revealing how literary form and mystical content are inextricably intertwined in kabbalistic expression.

Fishbane's most significant contribution is his pioneering work on the literary dimensions of Zoharic literature, including the *Sifra Detzniuta*. In his landmark book *The Art of Mystical Narrative: A Poetics of the Zohar* (2018) [13], he offers a critical approach to zoharic storytelling, exploring the interplay between fictional discourse and mystical exegesis. While focusing on the broader Zoharic corpus, his methodological innovations provide crucial tools for understanding the *Sifra Detzniuta* as part of this literary tradition.

Central to Fishbane's approach is his argument that Zoharic texts, including the *Sifra Detzniuta*, must be understood first and foremost as works of creative imagination representations of a world invented by thirteenth-century Jewish authors in Spain. As Daniel Matt notes, Fishbane demonstrates how the Zohar is "simultaneously a bold mystical interpretation of the Torah and an experiment in medieval fiction." This perspective illuminates the *Sifra Detzniuta's* relationship to broader patterns of storytelling and literary innovation in medieval Spain.

Particularly innovative is Fishbane's analysis of what he terms "mystical poetics" the distinctive ways in which kabbalistic texts employ literary techniques to convey spiritual insights. He examines how the Zohar and the *Sifra Detzniuta* use symbolism, metaphor, narrative framing, and dramatic dialogue not merely as decorative elements but as essential vehicles for expressing ineffable mystical truths. This approach reveals the texts' profound integration of form and content, where literary elements themselves embody mystical meanings.

Fishbane's work situates the *Sifra Detzniuta* within the broader context of comparative literary studies. By exploring parallels between Zoharic narrative strategies and those found in medieval Spanish literature, both Jewish and Christian, he illuminates the text's participation in wider cultural currents while maintaining attention to its distinctive Jewish characteristics. This comparative perspective enriches our understanding of how the *Sifra Detzniuta* functions as both a religious text and a literary creation.

In his chapter "The Zohar: Masterpiece of Jewish Mysticism" (2011) [2], Fishbane specifically addresses aspects of the *Sifra Detzniuta*, examining its place within the broader Zoharic corpus. He explores how this condensed, enigmatic text functions as a kind of mystical poetry, employing compressed language and vivid imagery to convey profound theological concepts. This analysis highlights the text's distinctive literary qualities and its generation of meaning through concise, symbolically charged expression.

A significant aspect of Fishbane's approach is his exploration of the theatrical and performative dimensions of Zoharic literature. He demonstrates how texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* function as a kind of dramatic literature, in which "the power of revealing mystical secrets is demonstrated and performed for the reading audience." This perspective illuminates how the text's literary form serves not merely to convey content but to enact a transformative mystical experience for its readers.

Fishbane's contribution extends beyond academic analysis to influence how these texts are read and experienced by contemporary audiences. By highlighting the literary artistry of works like the *Sifra Detzniuta*, he invites readers to engage with them not merely as theological treatises but as works of religious imagination that continue to inspire creative interpretation. His own recent poetry, which draws on kabbalistic imagery, represents a contemporary extension of the creative engagement with mystical symbolism that characterizes the Zoharic tradition itself.

The significance of Fishbane's work lies in its demonstration that literary analysis is not peripheral but central to understanding kabbalistic texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta*. By revealing how literary form shapes mystical meaning, he offers a more integrated approach to studying Jewish mystical literature one that recognizes the inseparability of artistic expression and spiritual insight in the kabbalistic imagination.

Moshe Idel

Moshe Idel, Emeritus Max Cooper Professor in Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has revolutionized the field of Kabbalah studies through his critical revision of Scholem's paradigm and his exploration of experiential dimensions of Jewish mysticism. His approach to the *Sifra Detzniuta* emphasizes its place within broader mystical traditions and challenges conventional understandings of its historical development and conceptual frameworks.

Idel's most significant contribution to the study of the *Sifra Detzniuta* emerges from his fundamental revision of Scholem's historical model. While acknowledging Scholem's pioneering role, Idel has questioned the linear developmental narrative that places the *Zohar* and *Sifra Detzniuta* as innovative medieval compositions. Instead, in works such as *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (1988) [14], he argues for greater continuity between late antique Jewish mysticism and medieval kabbalistic literature, suggesting that texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* may preserve older mystical traditions.

Particularly innovative is Idel's exploration of the experiential dimensions of the *Sifra Detzniuta*. Against readings that focus exclusively on its theoretical or speculative aspects, he examines how the text relates to practical mystical techniques and altered states of consciousness. This approach reveals connections between the text's cosmological symbolism and specific contemplative practices designed to facilitate mystical ascent or divine communion.

Idel's distinction between "theosophical-theurgical" and "ecstatic" streams in Kabbalah provides important context for understanding the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s place within Jewish mystical traditions. While the text is often associated with theosophical Kabbalah's focus on divine structures, Idel demonstrates how it also contains elements that resonate with ecstatic traditions focused on mystical experience and prophetic consciousness. This nuanced view challenges rigid categorizations of kabbalistic literature.

In works such as *Absorbing Perfections* (2002) [15], Idel examines the hermeneutical dimensions of the *Sifra Detzniuta*,

particularly its concept of infinite layers of meaning within sacred texts. He explores how the text exemplifies what he terms "infinite interpretation" the idea that divine texts contain limitless meanings that can never be exhausted. This perspective illuminates the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s status as both an object and a model of interpretation.

Idel's comparative approach situates the *Sifra Detzniuta* within broader cultural contexts while maintaining attention to its distinctive Jewish characteristics. He explores parallels between its mystical techniques and those found in Sufi, Christian, and Eastern traditions without reducing its uniqueness. This balanced comparative method illuminates how the text participates in broader patterns of mystical thought while expressing distinctively Jewish theological concerns.

A significant aspect of Idel's work is his attention to the role of language in the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He examines how the text conceptualizes the relationship between divine language and created reality, particularly through its interpretation of Genesis. This analysis reveals a sophisticated philosophy of language that understands divine speech as constitutive of cosmic structure rather than merely descriptive.

Idel's exploration of magical elements in kabbalistic literature also provides important context for understanding the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He demonstrates how the text's emphasis on divine names and their powers connects to broader traditions of Jewish magical practice, challenging sharp distinctions between mysticism, theosophy, and magic. This perspective reveals continuities between the text's theoretical framework and practical applications in traditional contexts.

The significance of Idel's contribution lies not merely in specific interpretations but in his methodological pluralism. By approaching the *Sifra Detzniuta* through multiple disciplinary lenses historical, phenomenological, hermeneutical, and comparative he demonstrates the text's multidimensional character and challenges reductive readings that privilege any single interpretive framework.

Immanuel Etkes

Immanuel Etkes, Professor Emeritus of the History of the Jewish People at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has made significant contributions to our understanding of Jewish mysticism through his sociological and historical analysis of religious movements and intellectual trends. While his primary focus has been on Hasidism and the Musar movement rather than direct analysis of the *Sifra Detzniuta*, his work provides important context for understanding how this text was received and interpreted within Lithuanian Jewish circles, particularly through the commentary of the Vilna Gaon and the teachings of his disciples.

Etkes's most relevant contribution to the study of the *Sifra Detzniuta* comes through his extensive research on the Vilna Gaon, one of the text's most influential interpreters. In his biographical and intellectual studies of the Gaon, Etkes examines how this towering figure approached kabbalistic literature generally and the *Sifra Detzniuta* specifically. He demonstrates that, contrary to popular misconceptions, the

Gaon's opposition to Hasidism did not reflect antipathy toward Kabbalah itself but rather represented a competing vision of how mystical knowledge should be integrated into Jewish life and learning.

Particularly significant is Etkes's analysis of the cultural and intellectual context within which the Vilna Gaon's commentary on the *Sifra Detzniuta* was received. In works such as "The Gaon of Vilna and the Haskalah Movement" and *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* (2002) [16], he explores how Lithuanian Jewish society navigated tensions between rabbinic learning, kabbalistic study, and modernizing influences. This contextual approach illuminates how the *Sifra Detzniuta*, through the Gaon's commentary, functioned within specific historical and social settings.

Etkes has also contributed to our understanding of how Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, the Gaon's foremost disciple, transmitted and interpreted his master's approach to texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta*. Through careful analysis of Rabbi Chaim's introduction to the Gaon's commentary and his independent works such as *Nefesh HaChaim*, Etkes reveals how kabbalistic concepts from the *Sifra Detzniuta* were integrated into the Lithuanian tradition of Torah study and ethical development.

A distinctive aspect of Etkes's approach is his attention to the institutionalization of mystical knowledge. His research on the Volozhin Yeshiva, founded by Rabbi Chaim, illuminates how esoteric texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* were positioned within the curriculum of traditional Jewish education. This sociological perspective reveals the text's role not merely as a theoretical document but as part of living educational traditions.

Etkes's work on debates between Hasidim and Mitnagdim (opponents of Hasidism) provides important context for understanding competing interpretations of kabbalistic literature, including the *Sifra Detzniuta*. He demonstrates how divergent readings of shared mystical texts reflected broader disagreements about religious authority, spiritual practice, and the proper relationship between esoteric and exoteric dimensions of Torah.

The significance of Etkes's contribution lies in his integration of intellectual and social history. By examining how texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* functioned within specific communities and institutions, he demonstrates that the meaning and significance of mystical literature cannot be separated from the social contexts of its reception and interpretation. This perspective enriches our understanding of how the text has shaped and been shaped by the communities that have treasured it.

Comparative Analysis and Scholarly Dialogue

The varying approaches of Scholem, Meroz, Matt, Halperin, Wolfson, Eitan Fishbane, Idel, and Etkes to the *Sifra Detzniuta* illustrate broader trends in the academic study of Jewish mysticism. Scholem's focus on historical contextualization and critical analysis established a foundational paradigm that subsequent scholars have both built upon and challenged. Each contributor has developed distinctive methodological approaches that reveal different aspects of this multifaceted text.

The relationship between philological analysis and literary-philosophical interpretation represents one significant axis of scholarly dialogue. Scholars like Meroz [8] and Matt [9] prioritize careful textual work, reconstructing the text's development and elucidating its linguistic features. Others, like Wolfson [11,12] and Eitan Fishbane [2,13], emphasize literary-philosophical dimensions, exploring the text's narrative strategies, poetic qualities, and ontological assumptions. These approaches are complementary rather than contradictory, revealing both the historical specificity and artistic-philosophical depth of the *Sifra Detzniuta*.

Questions of authorship, composition, and redaction have evolved significantly since Scholem's initial framing. While Scholem [6] attributed the *Zohar* primarily to Moses de Leon, Meroz's work [8] has demonstrated a more complex redactional history involving multiple authors across several generations. This revised understanding has been incorporated into the approaches of scholars like Halperin [10] and Idel [14], who acknowledge the text's composite nature while exploring its coherent thematic structures.

The relationship between traditional and academic approaches to the *Sifra Detzniuta* represents another important dimension of scholarly dialogue. Etkes's work [16] on the Vilna Gaon's commentary illustrates how traditional religious interpretation can provide valuable insights even within academic frameworks. Similarly, Matt's annotated translation [4] bridges academic and traditional approaches, making critical scholarship accessible to religious readers while bringing traditional insights into academic discourse.

Comparative methodologies vary significantly among these scholars. Idel [15,17] employs broad cross-cultural comparison to situate Jewish mysticism within global patterns, while maintaining attention to its distinctive features. Wolfson [11,12] focuses more intensively on internal Jewish developments while engaging with philosophical traditions beyond Judaism. Halperin [10] explores unexpected connections between kabbalistic concepts and modern cultural phenomena. Eitan Fishbane [13] examines parallels between Zoharic literature and broader patterns of medieval fiction and storytelling. These diverse comparative frameworks demonstrate the multiple contexts within which the *Sifra Detzniuta* can be meaningfully interpreted.

The relationship between text and experience represents another axis of scholarly dialogue. While Scholem [6,7] tended to emphasize intellectual history over experiential dimensions, Idel [14] has highlighted the connection between mystical texts and contemplative practices. Wolfson's phenomenological approach [12] similarly explores how texts like the *Sifra Detzniuta* relate to modes of mystical consciousness. Eitan Fishbane's focus [13] on the theatrical and performative dimensions of Zoharic literature illuminates how these texts enact mystical experience through literary form. These perspectives reveal the text's function not merely as a theoretical document but as a guide to and expression of transformative experience.

Questions of gender and body in the *Sifra Detzniuta* have been particularly illuminated by Wolfson's work [12], which explores

how the text employs gendered symbolism to represent cosmic processes. This attention to embodied metaphors and gendered imagery has enriched our understanding of how the text conceptualizes divine manifestation and cosmic structure, revealing dimensions that earlier scholarship sometimes overlooked.

The varying emphases of these scholars ultimately reveal the *Sifra Detzniuta* as a multidimensional text that requires multiple interpretive frameworks. Historical, philological, literary, philosophical, phenomenological, and sociological approaches each illuminate different aspects of the text's meaning and significance. The richest understanding emerges not from privileging any single methodology but from bringing these diverse approaches into constructive dialogue.

Conclusion

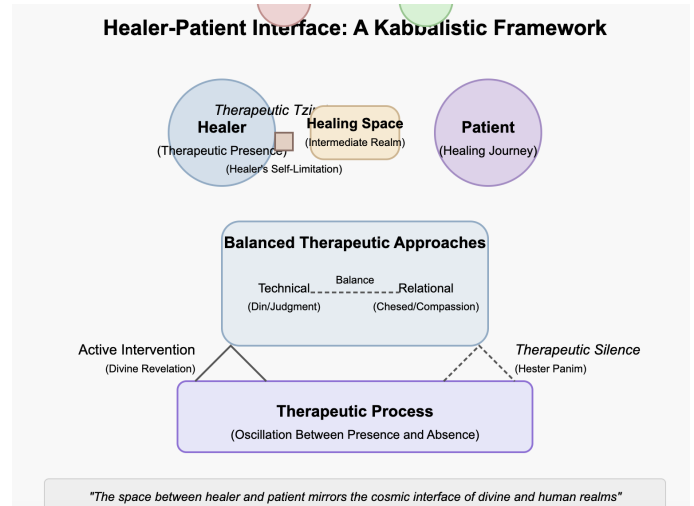
The scholarly contributions of Scholem [6,7], Meroz [8], Matt [1,9], Halperin [10], Wolfson [11,12], Eitan Fishbane [2,13], Idel [14,15], and Etkes [16] to the study of the *Sifra Detzniuta* represent complementary approaches to a complex and multifaceted text. Scholem established the critical-historical foundation, Meroz refined our understanding of the text's composition through detailed manuscript analysis, Matt provided authoritative translation and annotation, Halperin explored the text's cultural afterlives, Wolfson illuminated its philosophical and phenomenological dimensions, Eitan Fishbane revealed its literary and artistic sophistication, Idel situated it within broader mystical traditions, and Etkes examined its reception within specific historical communities.

Collectively, these scholars have transformed our understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta* from a mysterious ancient text to a dynamic tradition that has evolved through centuries of writing, reading, and interpretation. They have demonstrated its significance not merely as a historical artifact but as a living text that continues to generate meaning through engagement with new readers and contexts.

The continuing scholarly fascination with the *Sifra Detzniuta* testifies to its enduring intellectual and spiritual power. Despite its brevity and obscurity perhaps even because of these qualities it has inspired extraordinary interpretive creativity across generations. The diverse methodological approaches represented in this review reveal not competing claims about a single textual meaning but complementary perspectives on an inexhaustibly rich tradition.

Future scholarship on the *Sifra Detzniuta* will likely continue this pattern of methodological pluralism, drawing on both traditional and innovative approaches to illuminate this enigmatic text. Particularly promising are interdisciplinary approaches that combine philological precision with theoretical sophistication, historical contextualization with philosophical depth, and literary analysis with religious studies. As digital humanities techniques continue to develop, new possibilities for analyzing textual relationships and patterns may further enrich our understanding of the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s place within Jewish mystical literature.

Whatever methodological approaches future scholars employ, the *Sifra Detzniuta* will undoubtedly continue to reward careful study with new insights into the nature of mystical language, the structure of reality, and the human capacity to conceptualize and commune with the divine. The scholarly voices explored in this review have not exhausted its meaning but have opened pathways for continuing exploration of this profound mystical text.



Addendum: The Sifra Detzniuta and the Healer-Patient Relationship

Application of Kabbalistic Concepts to Modern Healing Practices

The *Sifra Detzniuta* (Book of Concealment), despite its ancient origins and esoteric nature, offers profound insights that can enrich contemporary understanding of the healing relationship. This addendum explores how key concepts from this foundational kabbalistic text can inform therapeutic practices, particularly focusing on the dialectic of presence and absence that characterizes effective healing encounters.

Divine Contraction (Tzimtzum) and the Creation of Healing Space

The *Sifra Detzniuta*'s cosmological framework centers on the concept of *tzimtzum* (divine contraction), wherein God withdraws or contracts to create space for creation [6]. This voluntary self-limitation does not represent divine abandonment but rather the necessary precondition for authentic relationship. As Scholem notes, this paradoxical withdrawal is "not a negation of divinity but a concentration of divine power" [7].

This concept offers a powerful metaphor for the healing relationship. The effective healer, like the divine in kabbalistic thought, must practice a form of *tzimtzum* – a deliberate self-limitation that creates space for the patient's autonomous healing process. This therapeutic contraction should not be mistaken for detachment or neglect; rather, it constitutes a disciplined form of presence that honors the patient's sovereignty by refraining from overwhelming them [8].

Contemporary healthcare often emphasizes clinical intervention at the expense of attentive presence. The *Sifra*

Detzniuta suggests an alternative model wherein deliberate restraint creates the conditions for healing. The healer's self-limitation – knowing when to speak and when to remain silent, when to act and when to wait – creates a space within which the patient can access their own inner resources [9]. This parallels Ungar-Sargon's exploration of the "spiritual space between nurse and patient" as a zone of transformative potential [1].

Intermediary Realms: The Space Between Healer and Patient

In kabbalistic cosmology, intermediate realms exist between Ein Sof (the infinite divine) and the material world. The *Sifra Detzniuta* elaborates on these intermediary dimensions, particularly through its discussion of the sefirot – emanations or vessels through which divine energy flows without collapsing the essential distinction between creator and created [10].

This cosmological structure provides a framework for understanding the healing encounter. The space between healer and patient constitutes neither the subjective reality of the healer nor that of the patient, but rather a third reality that emerges through their interaction [11]. This intermediary realm, like the sefirot in kabbalistic thought, allows for connection without fusion, influence without domination.

Wolfson's analysis of the *Sifra Detzniuta* emphasizes the text's attention to boundaries and thresholds, noting that divine revelation occurs precisely at these liminal spaces [12]. Similarly, therapeutic transformation often occurs not within either the healer or patient independently, but in what Martin Buber termed the "between" – that intersubjective space that emerges in genuine encounter [13]. This recalls Ungar-Sargon's observation that healing often happens "in the spiritual non-left hemispheric interaction between healer and patient" [2].

Balancing Opposing Forces: Din and Chesed in Healing

The *Sifra Detzniuta* emphasizes the dynamic equilibrium between opposing cosmic forces, particularly *din* (judgment) and *chesed* (compassion). As Idel observes, "The entire kabbalistic system presupposes a constant state of tension between these polarities, their balance being essential for cosmic harmony" [14].

This principle of balanced opposition has direct implications for healing practice. The effective healer must navigate seemingly contradictory approaches: professional distance with empathic engagement, scientific knowledge with intuitive understanding, active intervention with receptive witnessing [15]. This complex balancing act is not merely a practical necessity but reflects a deeper truth about how transformation occurs – through the integration of complementary opposites.

Fishbane's literary analysis of zoharic literature highlights how the text itself embodies this balance through its narrative structure, alternating between revealed and concealed meanings [16]. Similarly, the healing relationship requires rhythmic alternation between different modes of engagement. The clinician must balance evidence-based practice with phenomenological understanding, technical expertise with compassionate presence [17].

The Dialectic of Presence/Absence in Therapeutic Encounter

Perhaps most relevant to contemporary healing practices is the *Sifra Detzniuta*'s profound exploration of divine hiddenness (*hester panim*). In this kabbalistic understanding, divine absence isn't simply lack but paradoxically reveals aspects of divinity that couldn't be manifest in obvious presence [18]. The text suggests that certain divine qualities become knowable precisely in moments of apparent absence.

This dialectic of presence/absence directly informs our understanding of therapeutic relationships. In healing encounters, periods of apparent absence or silence often constitute the most transformative moments – creating space for integration, reflection, and autonomous growth [3]. The skilled healer knows that constant intervention can impede rather than facilitate healing, and that therapeutic "silence speaks as eloquently as words" [19].

Halperin's analysis of the cultural reception of the *Sifra Detzniuta* emphasizes how the text's deliberate obscurity serves not to conceal meaning but to activate the reader's interpretive faculties [20]. Similarly, therapeutic ambiguity can stimulate the patient's own meaning-making capacities, a process that may be more healing than any external interpretation provided by the clinician [21].

Implications for Contemporary Healthcare Practice

Integrating these kabbalistic insights into contemporary healthcare suggests several practical approaches:

Cultivating Presence-in-Absence: Developing the capacity to remain fully present while creating space for the patient's autonomous process – a therapeutic *tzimtzum* that balances engagement with restraint [4].

Attending to Intermediary Space: Recognizing that healing occurs not merely through the clinician's interventions or the patient's self-healing capacity, but in the relational field that emerges between them [5].

Balancing Technical and Relational Dimensions: Integrating evidence-based treatment with phenomenological understanding, recognizing that effective healing requires both technical expertise and empathic connection [22].

Embracing Therapeutic Silence: Understanding periods of silence or non-intervention not as therapeutic failures but as potentially generative spaces where integration and meaning-making can occur [23].

Recognizing Sacred Dimensions: Acknowledging that healing relationships, at their most profound, participate in patterns of connection that transcend purely material or mechanical frameworks [24].

These approaches do not require practitioners to adopt kabbalistic theology. Rather, they suggest that ancient wisdom traditions like the *Sifra Detzniuta* can provide conceptual frameworks that enrich our understanding of healing relationships, particularly in contexts where technical expertise must be balanced with human connection [25].

Toward a Richer Understanding of Healing Presence

The *Sifra Detzniuta*'s exploration of divine presence and absence offers a profound theological framework for understanding the healing relationship. By recognizing the paradoxical nature of presence – how withdrawal can create space for encounter, how absence can manifest as a form of presence, how boundaries enable rather than prevent connection – we develop a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes effective healing [26].

In an era where healthcare increasingly emphasizes technological intervention and standardized protocols, these kabbalistic insights remind us that healing also involves subtle dimensions of human connection. The space between healer and patient, like the intermediary realms in kabbalistic cosmology, constitutes a zone of transformative potential where the ordinary boundaries between self and other become permeable without dissolving entirely [27].

Ultimately, the *Sifra Detzniuta* invites us to view healing not merely as a technical process but as a sacred encounter – one that participates in the cosmic patterns of concealment and revelation, withdrawal and connection, that characterize existence itself. This perspective does not replace scientific understanding but complements it, offering a richer conceptual framework for understanding the mysterious interplay of presence and absence that characterizes all genuine healing relationships [28].

Appendix I

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin's Introduction to the Vilna Gaon's Commentary on Sifra Detzniuta

While a complete English translation of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin's introduction to the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Sifra Detzniuta* is not readily available, scholarly sources provide substantial information about its content, context, and significance. This appendix summarizes the key elements of this important text based on available scholarship.

Historical Context and Manuscript Tradition

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) wrote his introduction to the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Sifra Detzniuta* in 1820, shortly before his death. The introduction was included in the first printed edition of the commentary, published in Vilna and Grodno in 1820. This publication was significant as it represented the first major presentation of the Vilna Gaon's kabbalistic writings to a wider audience.

Manuscripts of Rabbi Chaim's introduction exist from around 1820, featuring elegant calligraphy with decorative elements. Some of these manuscripts include the notation "ריאי ורנ" (nero ya'ir—"may his light shine") after Rabbi Chaim's name, indicating they were copied while he was still alive. One such manuscript begins with the heading: "Introduction to the commentary of our master and teacher, the Gaon, the Hasid, the holy light, our teacher Rabbi Eliyahu, may his memory be for a blessing, for the life of the world to come on the *Sifra Detzniuta*."

Key Themes

Rabbi Chaim's introduction serves several important functions in framing the Vilna Gaon's commentary:

Defense of the Gaon's Kabbalistic Authority: A primary purpose of the introduction was to establish the Vilna Gaon's credentials as a master of Kabbalah, countering claims by Hasidic leaders that the Gaon opposed mystical study. Rabbi Chaim asserts that his teacher possessed extraordinary knowledge of all kabbalistic literature, from the early works attributed to the biblical patriarchs through the writings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari).

Testimony of Direct Transmission: Rabbi Chaim describes himself as having received direct oral teachings from the Vilna Gaon on kabbalistic matters, positioning himself as the authoritative transmitter of his master's esoteric knowledge. He recounts that the Gaon instructed him in the proper understanding of various kabbalistic texts, including the *Sifra Detzniuta*.

Elevation of the Sifra Detzniuta: The introduction characterizes the *Sifra Detzniuta* as an exceptionally ancient and holy text, describing its authors as "the very earliest of our teachers, masters of mysteries in whom the spirit of the Holy God dwelt and before whom all gates were unlocked." This framing establishes the text's supreme authority within kabbalistic literature.

Biographical Anecdotes: Rabbi Chaim includes several stories about the Vilna Gaon's mystical accomplishments, including an account of how the Gaon, before reaching the age of thirteen, had attempted to create a golem through kabbalistic means but was instructed by his father to desist from such dangerous practices at such a young age.

Hermeneutical Framework: The introduction outlines principles for properly understanding kabbalistic literature, emphasizing the importance of grounding mystical interpretation in rigorous textual analysis. Rabbi Chaim presents the Gaon's approach as one that integrates rational understanding with mystical insight, avoiding both uncritical acceptance and rationalistic reduction.

Scholarly Reception

Modern academic scholarship has approached Rabbi Chaim's introduction from various perspectives:

Historical Documentation: Scholars value the introduction as a firsthand account of the Vilna Gaon's kabbalistic interests and activities, providing important biographical information from a close disciple.

Ideological Analysis: Some scholars have examined the introduction as an ideological document in the conflict between Mitnagdim (opponents of Hasidism) and Hasidim, revealing how kabbalistic authority was contested in early 19th-century Jewish communities.

Literary Analysis: The introduction has been studied as an example of the genre of introductions to classical texts, which often serve both explanatory and apologetic functions.

Reception History: Research on the introduction illuminates how the *Sifra Detzniuta* was received and interpreted within the Lithuanian tradition of Jewish learning, revealing patterns of transmission and adaptation of kabbalistic knowledge.

Availability of Original Text

The original Hebrew text of Rabbi Chaim's introduction can be found in several sources:

Rare Book Collections: The first edition (Vilna and Grodno, 1820) is held in major Judaica collections and occasionally appears in rare book auctions.

Modern Reprints: Various reprints of the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Sifra Detzniuta* typically include Rabbi Chaim's introduction, though sometimes with editorial modifications.

Manuscript Collections: Handwritten copies of the introduction exist in several public and private collections, some predating the first printed edition.

Digital Archives: Some digital archives of Hebrew books include scanned versions of early editions containing the introduction.

Appendix II the text

(From *Darchei Sholom Sholom Ulman*)¹



¹ https://seforimcenter.com/Rabbi-Shalom-Ulman/Darchei-Shalom-al-Sifra-deTzniuta-Rabbi-Shalom-Ulman__p-884-13822.aspx

בשבעה סמכין סחריגה
בארבע זינן מתלגלין בארבע סטרין
חזיא דרסה בשיע דלוגין
דליג על טרין מקפין על גבעתא
דכתוב:
מדילג על הקדים
מקפין על הגבועת
וגביה בטומיה
בשנו נקיב בטרין גיסין
כד נטיל-
גסקרא אתעביד לתלת רוחין
כתוב:
ויהיהך ויזך את האלקים
וכתיב:
תנו לער על פי דרסו
לעני הידוע
את האלקים -
ולא את ה'
ואיננו בשם ה'
כי לקחו את האלקים
להקרא בשמו
תלת בתי דינין -
ארבע אנו
ארבע בתי דינין דלעלא -
ארבע דלתמא
דכתוב:
לא תעשו עול במשפט
במדה. במשקל ובמסורה
דינא קשיא
דינא דלא קשיא
דינא בשקולא
דינא דלא בשקולא
דינא רפיא
דינא דאפלו לא האי ולא האי
והי כי תוכל האדם
לרב על פני הארמה
הכול האדם. לרב
הינ דכתוב:
בשום הוא בישר
האדם - דלעלא
וכתיב: על פני הארמה
ומשה לא ידע כי קרו ער פניו
הינ דכתוב: כחות עור
סרו - דכתוב:
ויח שמאיל את קרו השמן
לית משיתא אלא בקרו

תרין אתון תרין ומנין -
מיה רשעים שיה
י בלחודו כד אתגליא בוערא -
אתמשך בשער אלפין שנין
מכאן כתוב:
ומשת עלי כפכה
האלפים היו בארין
הינ דכתוב:
ומש: יפרד
והיה לאר כגלה ראשים
מאנר דאתפרש גתא אקרו הנפלים
דכתוב:
ומש: יפרד
היו בארין בנפים ההם -
אוף לבתר ומנא
עד דאתא יהושע -
ובלי האלקים אטרו
עד דאתא שלמה -
וגתת האדם אתבללא
תדא הוא דכתוב ומשנת
ומשנת - קארי
תענוגים - לא קארי
בני האדם דאתרמיזו בתא
רוחין אחרין
דלא אתבללו בחכמה עלאה
דכתוב: וה' נתן חכמה לשלמה
וכתיב: ויחכם מכל האדם
משום דהני לא אתבללו באדם
וה' נתן חכמה לשלמה -
ה' עלאה
ויחכם מכל האדם -
דמנה אתחכם לתמא
המה הנבונים אשר מעולם
עולם דלעלא
אנשי השם -
דאתנהגו בשמא
מאי שמא?
שמא קדושה
דאתנהגו ביה דלא קדושוין לתמא
ולא אתנהגו אלא בשמא
אנשי השם - קתים
ולא אנשי ירוד
לאו מסתים סחיימא
אלא גרועותא ולא גרועותא
אנשי השם - קתים
מכללא דאדם נפקו

והסוד בעינו תעשה
הואגת למיתו
רשעית כל חזיו
עד כאן
כי אני ה' רפאך
בהאי דיקא
פרקא חמישא
הוי גוי חטא
עם כבד עון
ירע מדעים
בניס משחיתים
שבעה דרין:
יוד היה ריה
ד' אפיקו ה' -
ה' אפיקו
ד' אדם
אתים לבד דבר ונקבא דאנו ד'ו
כתוב: בניס משחיתים
בראשית ברא
בראשית - מאמר
ברא - חזי מאמר
אב וכן
קתים וגללא
עון עלאה דקתים גניו
עון מתאך נפיק למלכו ואתגליא
יוד יה אלקים
את - דאני אריד
ימינא ושמאלא כחדא אשתתפו
השמים והאדמה
דכתוב: והשמים והארץ והימים
אנו כחדא אשתתפו
הארץ - דכתוב:
מה אירד שער בכל הארץ
מלא כל הארץ כבוד
ויהי ריקע בתוך המים
להבדיל בין הקדש ובין קדש הקדשים
עתיקא לועיקא
אתפרש ואתפרש -
לא אתפרש משש
פומא ממלך ברבון
אתיק ואתשפר
בכתרין ועירין בתמשה זינן מים. דכתוב:
ונתן עליו מים חיים אל כל
האדמה ואתקדו עולם
אחשה לפני ה' בארצות החיים
והיה נפש אנו עיריה בעיר החיים
ועין הוויים בתוך הים
יה יוד ה' אהיו
בין מים למים
מים שלמין
ומים דלא שלמין
דחמין שלמין
דחמין דלא שלמין
ויאמר ה'
לא ידון רוחי באדם לעולם
בשום הוא בישר
ויאמר ה' -
כד אתשבו בוערא
מכאן
דבר אשר בשם אמר -
דשתקא סתים קאמר
לא ידון רוחי באדם דלעלא
משום דבהוה ורוא
דאתשבו בתרין נטבין דפרדשקא
משין לתמא
ובין קרן -
והי ימינו ואלו רשעים שיה
יוד שלים ולא שלים
י בלחודו -
מאה

ויאמר אלקים תהא הארץ
נפש חיה למינה
בהמה ורמש וגו'
הינ דכתוב:
אדם ובהמה חושי ה'
חד בכללא דאחרא משתקתא
בהמה בכללא דאדם
אדם כי יקריב משם קרבן לה'
מז הזהמה
משום דאתבלל בכללא דאדם
כד נחת אדם דלתמא ברויקנא עלאה
אשתבו תרין רוחין מתרין סטרין
דימינא ושמאלא כליל אדם
דימינא - נשמתא קדושה
דשמאלא - נפש חיה
קב אדם -
אתפשט שמאלא
ואתפשטו אנו בלא טמא
כד מתדבקין דא ברא -
אתלדן כהאי תיה
דאולידת רוחין סמיאין בקטרא חדא
כב אתון סחיימין
כב אתון אגלון
י סתים י גללא
סתים וגללא במתקלא דקטסין אתקלו
יוד נקמין מניה דבר ונקבא -
רד
בהאי אתר:
ו' - דבר ד' - נקבא
גנין דא
ד' - תרין
ד' - דבר ונקבא
ד' - תרין קפלן
י בלחודו - דבר
ה' - נקבא
ה' - ד' תת בקדמינא
ומדאעבדת ביה בגת -
אפיקתו
הי כי ביה אית ד'ו
וביוד אית ה'
הי יודו
אתו יוד בהויה
כללא דיהו
מדאפיקתו רד דהוא דבר ונקבא -

כל שכן דקנא עלאה דהויה בתמא
דעלא -
רב וסר אפיו
בועי - חסד קתים
כד אעניין -
הויה אנה ואקרי רב וסר
כתוב:
ויאמר אלקים
ישלח המים שרין ויפש חיה
כלומר חיו
אתפשט נהוה ודא ברא
כלא אתר חשון בונמא חדא
מיס טבאן. מיס בישן
גנין דאמר: ישלח
אתבלל דא ברא
חיה עלאה. חיה תמא
חיה טבא. חיה בישא
ויאמר אלקים וישלח אדם
האדם - לא כתוב
אלא אדם. קתים
לאפקא דלעלא
דאתעביד בשמא שלים
כד אשתלים דא -
אשתלים דא
אשתלים דבר ונקבא לאשלמא בלא
חיה סקרא דוכר
אלקים סקרא דנקבא
אתפשט בורא ואמסן בתקויו
באפה. בטומיה דאפה
מלכין דאתעבדו -
דכא אתקמיו
דינין דדוכר -
תקוין ברישא. בסופא ניחון
דנקבא - באפקא
ריה'
קטורין דקטורא בעטפוי שקיעין
י ויערא בגת אשתבח
אי אתפשטו דינין בעא עתיקא
אתא חיה על נקבא
וקנא דוקמא אחרין בגת
לעבר מורא בישא
דכתוב:
ומהר ותלך את קין
קנא דמורא דרוחין בישן ועלעילין וקטורין

ובשמך תרום קרנו
שם אמיתין סרו דוד
הינ עשיראה דמלכא
ואתאי מן בלא דמיה אפא
דכתוב:
במשך בקרו חיבל
קרו חיובלא אתשער
עשיראה באפא
סרו דנטיל סרו
ויהי לאתבא רוחיה ליה
והאי קרו - חיובלא הוא
חיבל - ה'
וה' - נשוא דוחמא לכלא
וכלא תבין לאתויה. דכתוב:
אשה ארדו יהוה
כד אתוהו ה' לה' ואסתלק י -
פרענותא אתו לעלמא
ואם לא בשביל אדם יורד -
לא אתקום עלמא וכלא אתחוב
ועל דא כתוב:
ונשב ה' לבדו ביום ההוא
עד כאן סתים ואתשער צניעותא דמלכא
דהינ סקרא דצניעותא
וצאה מאן דעאל
ידע שבילו וצרו

כתוב: ואדם בישר כל ילון
אדם בישר -
בישר דמלכא
כל ילון -
בלא רוחא
תליסר מלכי קרבא -
משבעת
שבעה מלכין -
בארעא אתחויאו נחתי קרבא
תשעה דסקלון בדרין דדהיטו כרעותהון
זלית דישתי בדיהון
חמשא מלכין קומין בבחיילו
לקפי ארבע לא יכלין למיסיס
ארבע מלכין נפקו לקדמת ארבע
בהון מלון בעבנן באתבללא צירין בהו
שבעה רהיטין קהוין סחודתא
ולא קומין ברוחמיהו
אילנא דמבסח יתיב בגו
בענפיו אחרין וסקנן צפירין
תחוזתו ממלך חיותא
דשליטא בהוה אילנא
בתרי כבשין למיתן

ויאמר אלקים תהא הארץ
נפש חיה למינה
בהמה ורמש וגו'
הינ דכתוב:
אדם ובהמה חושי ה'
חד בכללא דאחרא משתקתא
בהמה בכללא דאדם
אדם כי יקריב משם קרבן לה'
מז הזהמה
משום דאתבלל בכללא דאדם
כד נחת אדם דלתמא ברויקנא עלאה
אשתבו תרין רוחין מתרין סטרין
דימינא ושמאלא כליל אדם
דימינא - נשמתא קדושה
דשמאלא - נפש חיה
קב אדם -
אתפשט שמאלא
ואתפשטו אנו בלא טמא
כד מתדבקין דא ברא -
אתלדן כהאי תיה
דאולידת רוחין סמיאין בקטרא חדא
כב אתון סחיימין
כב אתון אגלון
י סתים י גללא
סתים וגללא במתקלא דקטסין אתקלו
יוד נקמין מניה דבר ונקבא -
רד
בהאי אתר:
ו' - דבר ד' - נקבא
גנין דא
ד' - תרין
ד' - דבר ונקבא
ד' - תרין קפלן
י בלחודו - דבר
ה' - נקבא
ה' - ד' תת בקדמינא
ומדאעבדת ביה בגת -
אפיקתו
הי כי ביה אית ד'ו
וביוד אית ה'
הי יודו
אתו יוד בהויה
כללא דיהו
מדאפיקתו רד דהוא דבר ונקבא -

אתקו ביה בתא אדם בתרין בכלל ופרט
אתבללו בפרט וכלל
שוקמין ורוחין
ימינא ושמאלא
דא אתפליג בסטרין
אתמן דבר בטקבא - יהו
י - דבר
ה' - נקבא
ה' - כתוב:
וקר ונקבה בראם
ויברך אתם
ויקרא את שלים אדם
דיקנא ופרעופא דאדם יתיב על כרסיה
וכתיב
ועל דמות הכסא
דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה
פרקא רביעאה
עתיקא -
טמיו קתים
זעירא דאנפין -
אתגליא ולא אתגליא
דאתגליא -
באתויה כתוב
דאתבסאי -
סתים באחרין דלא מתישבן באתויה
גנין דאיהו לא אתשבו ביה
עלאו ותמא

ויאמר אלקים תהא הארץ
נפש חיה למינה
בהמה ורמש וגו'
הינ דכתוב:
אדם ובהמה חושי ה'
חד בכללא דאחרא משתקתא
בהמה בכללא דאדם
אדם כי יקריב משם קרבן לה'
מז הזהמה
משום דאתבלל בכללא דאדם
כד נחת אדם דלתמא ברויקנא עלאה
אשתבו תרין רוחין מתרין סטרין
דימינא ושמאלא כליל אדם
דימינא - נשמתא קדושה
דשמאלא - נפש חיה
קב אדם -
אתפשט שמאלא
ואתפשטו אנו בלא טמא
כד מתדבקין דא ברא -
אתלדן כהאי תיה
דאולידת רוחין סמיאין בקטרא חדא
כב אתון סחיימין
כב אתון אגלון
י סתים י גללא
סתים וגללא במתקלא דקטסין אתקלו
יוד נקמין מניה דבר ונקבא -
רד
בהאי אתר:
ו' - דבר ד' - נקבא
גנין דא
ד' - תרין
ד' - דבר ונקבא
ד' - תרין קפלן
י בלחודו - דבר
ה' - נקבא
ה' - ד' תת בקדמינא
ומדאעבדת ביה בגת -
אפיקתו
הי כי ביה אית ד'ו
וביוד אית ה'
הי יודו
אתו יוד בהויה
כללא דיהו
מדאפיקתו רד דהוא דבר ונקבא -

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