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VOICE, MOTION, WORLD:

THE LINGIUSITC THEOLOGY OF JOSEPH GIQATILLA'S GINNAT EGOZ

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עיגולא בגו ריבועא רהיט

לזכר אבי, ר׳ ראובן, שלימדני תנועת האותיות

Das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge ist ihre Sprache.
[...] Das, was an einem geistigen Wesen mitteilbar ist, ist seine Sprache.
Auf diesem »ist« (gleich »ist unmittelbar«) beruht alles.

The linguistic being of all things is their language.
[...] That which in a mental entity is communicable is its language.
On this "is" (equivalent to "is immediately") everything depends.

— Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" (1916)

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the early work of the Kabbalist Joseph Giqatilla, active in thirteenth-century Castile. Titled *Ginnat Egoz* (Garden of the Nut), this work offers a theological reflection on Hebrew as divine language and develops a systematic cosmology grounded in its phonetic structure.

Language has played a decisive role throughout Jewish intellectual history, premised on the theological principle that the world was created by divine linguistic act, with Hebrew as its medium. In early Kabbalistic literature, this cosmogenic principle gave rise to sustained yet varied reflection on Hebrew's nature and the generative function of its linguistic structures. A recurring question about language's fundamental nature concerns the locus of linguistic creativity: is the power of speech grounded in semantic meaning, or in a more primary activity that precedes semantic differentiation? This question is central to *Ginnat Egoz*, where Hebrew language structure—especially the vowel system—becomes the basis for conceptualizing cosmic emergence and organization.

The title —*Voice, Motion, World*—reflects a central claim of Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz*: that phonetic motion (*tenuʿah*) is not merely a linguistic feature but the generative principle linking divine speech to cosmic structure—operating as both vocalization's dynamic activity and the ontological ground of cosmological motion. Giqatilla develops a method centered on distinguishing two dimensions of Hebrew: semantic signification and phonetic motion. He privileges phonetic motion as God's proper speech, treating the Hebrew vowel (*tenuʿah*, "motion") as the starting point for constructing a cosmological system. This yields a threefold linguistic model based on distinguishing vowel-points, vowel-letters, and consonants. Through this

framework, Giqatilla develops his concept of the "pre-essential act"—pure movement devoid of essential determining properties—derived from his analysis of the vowels. This principle is conceptualized through a transformation of key themes in medieval Jewish thought, including the principle of cosmic emanation and the relationship between divine Will and Intellect. Within this context, the Tetragrammaton, identified with the principle of existence itself, serves as the constructive ground that enables both linguistic activity and cosmic structure.

Methodologically, this dissertation reconstructs the conceptual frameworks that organize *Ginnat Egoz*'s cosmology by tracing their origins across multiple intellectual traditions. It then examines how Giqatilla's conception of linguistic motion transforms these inherited frameworks into a unified theological account of creation. This approach overcomes the scholarly tendency to separate Kabbalah and philosophy in Giqatilla's work, treating his linguistic theory and cosmology as integrated enterprises. The study shows how Giqatilla's constructive thinking reframes his era's philosophical concepts—including Aristotelianism and Judeo-Arabic Neoplatonism—to ground cosmology in the ontological priority of the Hebrew language.

The Paths of Joseph Giqatilla's Ginnat Egoz: Introduction

The idea that the world was created through a divine linguistic act has long shaped Jewish theological reflection, and grounds the privileged status of Hebrew as the medium through which divine power is expressed. In early Kabbalistic literature, this cosmogenic principle prompted sustained inquiry into the nature of Hebrew and the generative capacities of its linguistic structures. A central question within this tradition concerns the function of language itself: Is its creative power located in the semantic domain —in the signification of words and the production of meaning—or in something more primary that precedes semantic differentiation altogether? This study focuses on a critical but underexplored attempt to answer that question—Joseph Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* (ca. 1274).

Joseph Giqatilla (1248–ca. 1325), active in Medinaceli, Castile during the second half of the thirteenth century,[1] played a formative role in early Kabbalah and in the broader landscape of

[1] Leopel Zunz first identified *Medinat Salah*, mentioned in the preface to *Ginnat Egoz*, with the town of Medinaceli on the boarder of Castile ("Ueber die in den hebraeisch-juedischen Schriften vorkommenden hispanischen Ortsnamen," *Zeitschrift fuer die Wissenschaft des Judenthums,* 1: 1-3 (1822), 152). This geographical identification has since become consensual in scholarship. On the chronological ambiguity in modern scholarship concerning Gikatilla's life, see Shlomo Blickstein, "Between Philosophy and Mysticism: A Study of the Philosophical-Qabbalistic Writings of Joseph Gikatilla" (PhD diss., Jewish Theological Seminary, 1983), 140–50. Blickstein's *terminus ante quem* is 1325, which he further infers from a reconstructive reading of Abraham Zacuto's testimony in his late fifteenth century *Sefer Yuḥasin*. We should also mention Adolph Jellinek's earlier chronology, asserting that "Josef Chiquitilla aus Medina Celi in Alt-Castilien muß in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts geblüht haben und am Ende desselben bereits gestorben gewesen sein […]." (Adolph Jellinek, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kabbala*, vol. 2 [Leipzig: Fritzsche, 1852], 58). Jelinek's early dating has been adopted by later accounts. Compare Max Seligsohn, "Joseph Gikatilla," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, vol. 7 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901-1906), col. 665: "Gikatilla, Joseph b. Abraham: Spanish cabalist; born at Medinaceli, Old Castile, 1248; died at Peñafiel after 1305." (This dating is modified to 1325 in G. Scholem's article in the later *Encyclopedia Judaica*. See "Gikatilla," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 7 [Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007], 593). Jelinek likewise contested the tendency among scholars to postpone Gikatilla's floruit to the 1350s and beyond, ascribing this view to Zacuto as well. Blickstein's conclusions are based on a reconstructive and thus

Jewish intellectual life in the High Middle Ages. His writings reflect sustained engagement with contemporary philosophical and esoteric traditions, particularly the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, Samuel ibn Tibbon, and Naḥmanides. By contrast, Giqatilla's immediate interlocutors are less clearly identified, though figures such as Abraham Abulafia, Barukh Togrami, and Moses de León are often cited.

Giqatilla's thought developed significantly over the course of his career, reflecting a transition from an early, linguistically inflected cosmology to a later theosophical system structured around the doctrine of the *sefirot*. *Ginnat Egoz* stands at the center of this early period and offers the most systematic expression of Giqatilla's initial intellectual project. While previous studies have often emphasized Giqatilla's later theosophical works, *Ginnat Egoz* presents a distinct early system in which language operates not as symbol but as creative force. This study argues that *Ginnat Egoz* should be read as a sustained theological project in which the Hebrew language—specifically its phonetic motion—is reimagined as the creative substrate of the cosmos.

Motion Precedes Meaning: The Contribution of *Ginnat Egoz*

Composed around 1274, *Ginnat Egoz* is Giqatilla's most comprehensive early attempt to examine the relationship between world and language on theological grounds.[2] Like other Jewish esoteric traditions, *Ginnat Egoz* is based on the Jewish theological principle that the world is created through divine speech as specifically expressed in the Hebrew language.

corrective reading of the *Yuḥasin* testimony. For the later chronological assessments of Giqatilla's life, see sources discussed in Blickstein (ibid).

[2] All references are to the 1989 edition, unless specified otherwise. *Ginnat Egoz* (Yeshivat ha-Ḥayim we-ha-Shalom: Jerusalem, 1989), henceforth *GE*.

A formative episode in Jewish linguistic tradition was the proliferation of commentaries on the anonymous and seminal *Sefer Yeṣirah* (Book of Creation), composed before the eighth century CE. This concise and somewhat cryptic text outlines a cosmogony governed by numerical and alphabetic principles, whose combinatorial nature is assumed to hold constitutive power over the world and its cosmic order. *Ginnat Egoz* draws upon this foundational text and its extensive body of commentaries, both philosophical and esoteric.

While many Jewish theological traditions assume linguistic creation, *Ginnat Egoz* stands out in its attempt to construct a cosmology that is rooted in divine language. Giqatilla accordingly develops a theory of Hebrew language that bridges the presumed gap between theology and cosmology. At issue is a shift toward a generative conception of language—one that functions as the primary principle of a created world rather than merely signifying or representing the cosmos. More significantly, *Ginnat Egoz* is distinctive for the method Giqatilla develops to articulate his theological-linguistic model. This method begins with an analysis of Hebrew itself, grounded in a primary distinction between the semiotic function of words and the phonological aspect of speech, the former defined by the procedures of reference and meaning. Conversely, the latter is conceptualized as simple undifferentiated linguistic motion and is prioritized as the divine speech act by which the world is created.

Giqatilla's decision to premise linguistic analysis on the principle of phonetic vitality sets *Ginnat Egoz* apart from several Kabbalistic linguistic models developed in thirteenth-century Jewish theology. These models also aimed to develop cosmologies ontologically grounded in language, rather than merely signified by it. Though they prompted extensive deliberations on the essence of Hebrew, Kabbalistic schools generally based their investigations on the semantic function of language. In their view, Hebrew's ontological priority reverses the relationship

between sign and signified: the word and its meaningful potentiality becomes the source of the designated object. From an emanative-cosmological perspective, the multifaceted meanings of words unfold from, and are realized through, the inner linguistic elements of Hebrew.[3] These inner elements are often conceptualized as indefinite divine potentiality.[4] Despite this linguistic turn, the creative power of speech remains analyzed primarily in semantic terms, with focus on the multifaceted essential meanings derived from Hebrew letters and words.

This general scheme underpins Gershom Scholem's conception of the Kabbalistic symbol, as presented in his 1970 lecture on the subject.[5] Scholem described the Kabbalistic fascination with the elements of Hebrew as rooted in "the symbolic nature of language which defines the [hidden] dimension of language," and in the paradoxical notion that this hidden dimension "goes way beyond the sphere which allows for expression and formation."[6] Scholem's account has since been revised and elaborated upon,[7] leading to more nuanced interpretations of the theosophical

[3] Compare, for example, the motif of engraved undifferentiated letters, common in early theosophical glossaries on Sefer Yeṣirah. This theosophical scheme generally places these undifferentiated letters to divine primordial wisdom (*ḥokhma*) while differentiating it from the intelligible letters associated with the universal forms (*binah*). See: Ezra of Gerona, "Commentary to the Song of Songs," in *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. C. D. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), 482.

[4] Some have taken this position to its extreme, suggesting a deconstructive approach to the Kabbalistic sign. Umberto Eco, for example, considers the Kabbalistic sign as inexhaustibly open for 'differences and displacements' of symbolic meaning (Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984; repr., Midland Book Edition, 1986], 155-56)

[5] Gershom Scholem, "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah." *Diogenes* 79 (1972), 59-80; 80 (1972), 164-194.

[6] Scholem, *The Name of God*, 61. David Biale summarized Scholem's understanding of the symbol as follows: "A symbol for the Kabbalists was an image of a real process, which is itself beyond articulation; it is not merely a human metaphor "imposed" (*übertragen*) on God. If the contradictions within God are only paradoxical from our perspective, then from God's perspective they describe material reality: God actually operates according to a dialectical logic which seems incomprehensible or paradoxical to us. In other words, the 'materialistic' interpretation of Kabbalistic symbolism was justified because the symbols were meant from the outset to reflect a higher reality." (David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979], 139)

[7] Specifically with respect to the assumed unbridgeable gap between sign and signified. Moshe Idel, for example, suggested that Scholem's 'metaphysical symbol' is premised on a form of Neoplatonic negative theology, combined with a sort of Gnosticism, which allotted Hebrew the function of bridging the gap between the affable human experience and the inexpressible divine (Moshe Idel, "The Role of Symbol in Gershom Scholem's Thought," *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 38 [1998], 50 [Hebrew]). See more recently, Haim H. Ben-Sasson, "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah' Revisited," *Journal of Religion* 98, no. 1 (2018): 1-28. Cf. scholarship review, pp. 1-6. On the German-Idealistic influence on Scholem's conception of the Kabbalistic symbol, see Idel, ibid, 47-48. For non-symbolic Kabbalistic conceptions of language, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Heaven, CT: Yale

symbol and its relation to the grid of language and its symbolized ground.[8] These accounts likewise challenged the noetic view of the symbol, introducing a more dynamic model in which performance plays a determining role in constituting symbolic meaning.[9] Nevertheless, Kabbalistic symbolism generally assumes an intimate connection between cosmology and semiotics—namely, that the world is a multifaceted semantic expression of Hebrew's linguistic principles.[10] The correlate of this view is that the signified dimension of this cosmic-semiotic structure is itself linguistic, expressed through the intrinsic potentiality of the Hebrew elements.[11]

The dominance of the symbol in Kabbalistic conception of language was challenged by scholars who highlighted alternative linguistic models emerging during Giqatilla's time. Notably, Abraham Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah (thirteenth century), according to Moshe Idel, better aligned with a philosophical-allegorical approach to language.[12] In brief, Abulafia's ecstatic aims are described as psychological states of mystical unity or mental intuition that ultimately transcend

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University Press, 1988), 200-05, and see his critique of Scholem on pp. 204, 218-19. See also recently Maurizio Mottolese, *Cultic and Further Orders: Semiotic of a Kabbalistic Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 67, n. 31, and passim.

[8] They offered more complex models that consider the varying Kabbalistic views on the so-called inexpressible hidden dimensions of the divine realm. This, in turn, raises the question of whether the linguistic grid of Hebrew—letters and names—is ultimately grounded, through a complex and inexhaustible symbolism, in the simple divine potencies.[8] [See the discussion in Abraham Elqayam, "Between Referentialism and Performance: Two Approaches to Understanding the Kabbalistic Symbol," *Da'at* 24 [1990], 5-40 [Hebrew]. See his threefold model of the Kabbalistic referential symbol [pp. 11-12], and his response [p. 12] to Scholem's rigid symbol. Compared to Idel, *Perspectives*, 220). This question carries further implications for the stability of the word that refers to the incomprehensible realm, but which concomitantly constitutes the tangible and expressible object as flowing from that realm of incomprehensible divine potentiality.

[9] See, for example, Boaz Huss, "R. Joseph Gikatilla's Definition of Symbolism and its Versions in Kabbalistic Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Thought*, 12 (1996): 160-64 [Hebrew].

[10] On the hermeneutical function of the Kabbalistic symbol and its ethical implication for the material world, see Michael Fishbane, *Jewish Hermeneutical Theology*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 69-70. Fishbane (ibid, 76) deliberates the ethical implications of the symbolic process whereby the lower sign, e.g., a worldly event, is symbolically encoded by the higher signified: "There is thus no break between the most transcendental reality and the most immanent: there is but one spiritual truth that takes on innumerable symbolic forms and expressions in the material world. [...] Knowing how to read things and decode the signification that infuse all reality is thus the core wisdom."

[11] See the helpful formulation in Elliot R. Wolfson, Language, *Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 5-6.

[12] Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 73-74. On the difference between the philosophical and psychological modes of allegory and their intersection in Abulafia, see Idem, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), xvi.

language altogether. His linguistic procedures follow textual-allegorical hermeneutics, in which the connection between revealed meaning and decoded word is far less intrinsic than in symbol-based models.[13]

Idel's broader approach helps distinguish Giqatilla from symbolic-linguistic models. Since Giqatilla's concept of a world is shaped by linguistic activity that is primarily non-semantic, the relationship between world and language is anything but symbolic. Yet it is equally important not to conflate Giqatilla with Abulafia, as some have done,[14]—an error that obscures his distinct linguistic approach. Although Giqatilla's theological interest in language was shaped by his engagement with contemporary philosophical doctrines—some also present in Abulafia's works—his conception of Hebrew remains fundamentally non-allegorical.

Ginnat Egoz advances a theory of language that prioritizes simple, undifferentiated vocalization, grounded in the phonetic principles of physical speech. Giqatilla's method subordinates the semantic aspect of language to the inner principle of linguistic activity, construing creation as a theomorphic phonetic act—an expression of primordial vitality. This reframing of divine language as primarily phonetic sharpens the distinctiveness of Giqatilla's model, both in contrast to theosophical doctrines and to Abulafia's account of prophetic language. While Giqatilla acknowledges the constraining role of Hebrew letters and words—as the bearers of meaning—this essential potentiality is not the generative force of language. By emphasizing voice and phonetic motion, *Ginnat Egoz* proposes a conception of language that extends the semiotic frame of speech.

[13] As Michael Fishbane has formulated it, the hermeneutical function of the allegory consists in "the dynamic between a text and an external code which [...] translates it into another context of meaning." (Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992], 116) The external code which prescribes the allegorical translation of scripture derives its interpretive principle from distinct domains of discourse which, according to Fishbane (ibid), may consist of a philosophical issue, but also a mental state of the individual.

[14] More on this below.

This model expands the ontological scope of language, establishing it as the totality of existence *qua* divine expression.

The Challenge of Ginnat Egoz: Theme and Structure

A central challenge that *Ginnat Egoz* presents lies in the implications of Giqatilla's method, both for the complex apparatus of meaningful speech—comprising letters and words—and for his cosmology. The challenge can be framed in two questions. First, what is the relationship between vitality and meaning? Specifically, how does Giqatilla's theological prioritization of phonetic motion shape the emergence of meaningful speech—composed of consonants and words? Second, how does this relationship reshape Giqatilla's cosmology? The issue turns on the interplay between the theological principle of linguistic motion and the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic cosmological traditions that informed Giqatilla's thinking.

Giqatilla was acutely aware of the transformative nature of his first comprehensive project. He also recognized the theological weight of his project within existing philosophical systems. He articulates this in his introduction to *Ginnat Egoz,* where he recounts his spiritual and intellectual motivations**.** Drawing on a motif common in contemporary philosophical literature, Giqatilla frames his project as a rescue of theology from erroneous philosophical doctrines—primarily Aristotelian—that had permeated his generation. This, he declares, compelled him to reveal the secrets of the Torah. Later in *Ginnat Egoz*, in a reflective aside, Giqatilla underscores the urgency of his theological task by invoking a verse frequently used to justify radical philosophical interventions: *'et la'asot la-shem* [*mishum*] *heferu toratekha* ("it is time to act for the Lord [for] your Torah has been violated;" [Ps. 119:126]). He justifies revealing esoteric knowledge by

portraying the spiritual state of his generation—shaped by philosophers who deny divine providence—as "darkness upon the face of the deep."[15]

This allusion situates *Ginnat Egoz* among medieval works that invoked the *'et la'asot* idiom to express the urgency of rescuing the generation from corrupted knowledge and doctrinal error. Many of these works, *Ginnat Egoz* included, express affinity for Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* where the *'et la'asot* idiom is used historiosophically to describe generational decline and justify the radical remedy: revealing divine matters forgotten by Israel.[16]

Notably, in Giqatilla's case, these reflections on spiritual crisis are closely tied to the status of the Hebrew language.[17] The historical decline of the Jewish people, he suggests, is mirrored in their forgetting the essence of Hebrew, supreme among the languages. This link between Hebrew's

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[15] *GE* 335. See also Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York 851 (1891), fol. 81a: "And indeed, these matters were not worthy to be put into writing, but I rely on the saying '(the wicked) will not understand, but the enlightened will understand' (Daniel 12:10), and it is 'a time to act for the Lord (they have made void Your Torah)' (Ps. 119:126)." Compare Isaac of Acre's testimony in *'Otṣar ha-Ḥaim*, Russian National Library, MS Moscow-Ginzburg 775, fol. 95b: "I further contemplated the words of the prophets and the Rabbis concerning the exile of Israel, as the Rabbis proclaimed that 'The Torah is destined to be forgotten from Israel.' This remained the case until the emergence of Maimonides in Egypt, Rabbi Jacob [Hacohen], Rabbi Abraham ben David of Provence, Naḥmanides of Catalonia, Rabbi Joseph Giqatilla of Segovia, and the Sefer ha-Zohar attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai." (Cited in Gottlieb, *Studies*, 96).

[16] For a critical and comparative analysis of the *'et la'asot* principle in Maimonides' works, see Omer Michaelis, *'Et La'asot la-Hashem Heferu Toratekha': Tradition and Crisis in the Thought of R. Moses ben Maimon*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2023). Following Maimonides' *Guide*, the *'et la'asot* principle was used to justify various comprehensive literary projects, at times conflicting. At one end of the spectrum stands Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Ma'amar Yiqawwu ha-Mayim* (c. 1230), whose declared aim was to restore the foundations of cosmology and metaphysics, drawing on Aristotelian and Averroist doctrines. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the Catalonian Kabbalist Jacob ben Sheshet, whose Meshiv Devarim Neḥokhim, written shortly after Ibn Tibbon's *Ma'amar* as a direct critique thereof, opens with a diagnosis: "And the time has arrived about which our rabbis, peace be upon them, warned: 'The Torah is destined to be forgotten from Israel'(b. *Shabbat*, 138b)." In response to this crisis, Ben Sheshet declares that he "has prepared himself and taken courage – *'et la'asot la-shem.*" (Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekoḥim*, ed. Georges Vajda [Jerusalem: The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1968], 68) On the intellectual tension between Ibn Tibbon and Ben Sheshet, see Gad Freudenthal, "The 'Gathering of the Water' as an Issue Differentiating Traditionalist and Naturalist Positions in 13th-Century Jewish Thought: Samuel Ibn Tibbon, Jacob ben Sheshet, and Menahem ha-Me'iri," *Da'at* 74/75 (2013): 267–72 [Hebrew]. Cf. Freudenthal's observation (ibid., 270–71) regarding Ben Sheshet's appreciative stance toward Maimonides. Note also Isaac Ibn Latif's deployment of this same idiom—*'et la'asot la-shem heferu toratekha*—in his early *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*. See discussion in Michaelis, *Tradition and Crisis*, 238, n. 138. The motif of theological forgetfulness was also applied to justify Kabbalistic projects. Compare R. Ezra's *Commentary on Songs*, 479.

[17] The generational forgetfulness of the holy tongue was considered an important impetus for the restorative projects of Maimonides, Abraham Ibn Ezra and others. On Maimonides' restorative project of the Hebrew language, see Menachem Kellner, "Maimonides on the 'Normality' of Hebrew," in *Judaism and Modernity: The Religious Philosophy of David Hartman,* ed. Jonathan Malino (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 416-17, and passim.

essence and the theological imperative to recover divine knowledge is central to Giqatilla's project, which posits Hebrew as the foundational ground of all systems of knowledge.

Giqatilla's stated aim—to disclose divine secrets and correct philosophical misconceptions—is reflected in the ambitious literary character of *Ginnat Egoz,* both in scope and structure**.** The work integrates a wide array of intellectual traditions—from the mysticism of divine names and medieval Hebrew grammar to Maimonidean metaphysics, Ptolemaic astronomy, and Neoplatonic cosmology. Rather than treating theology and philosophy as incompatible, Giqatilla's corrective effort recasts both systems on the theological foundation of Hebrew.[18]

The complexity of Giqatilla's intellectual framework is also reflected in the literary structure of *Ginnat Egoz*. The text is organized into three parts, each focusing on a distinct subject: (1) the theology of divine names and their cosmogenic role, (2) Giqatilla's complex cosmology, and (3) the link between Hebrew vowels and the principle of cosmic endurance and vitality. Though seemingly distinct, these subjects are treated through a shared set of themes, including numerology, Hebrew grammar, and meteorology. Moreover, a close reading of *Ginnat Egoz* reveals that these subjects are interconnected, even if the connections are not immediately evident.

[18] I hereby maintain, *contra* Hartley Lachter, that Giqatilla's project is not an anti-philosophical polemic (See Hartley Lachter, "Kabbalah, Philosophy, and the Jewish-Christian Debate: Reconsidering the Early Works of Joseph Gikatilla," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 16:1 [2008]: 9-15). While Giqatilla clearly repudiates the philosophers (*ha-ḥakhamim*)—for whom the truth and principle of God's unity remain hidden (*GE* 7)—his theology frequently builds on fundamental philosophical principles. For example, in *GE* 449-50 he establishes the principle of divine simple motion (*tenu'ah*)—a central tenet of his theology—as the principle that underlies the ontological constitution of all beings. Giqatilla describes the latter ('ontological constitution') as the intelligible structure of things, viz., their form, employing a straightforward Aristotelian doctrine (Cf. *Metaphysics* 8.7). This and a variety of examples (to be discussed in the following chapters) challenge Lachter's reading (ibid., 12-15) of Giqatilla's philosophical references as part of his presumed strategic agenda to reach those deeply rooted in philosophical discourse. Likewise, it is difficult to square Lachter's general claims with Giqatilla's explicit appreciation of Samuel Ibn Tibbon—'the' philosopher *par excellence*—with whom Giqatilla has "agreed on all matters," excluding the ontological principle of 'possibility' (*GE* 214. See our discussion in Chapter 3). A central claim of the present study is that Giqatilla's theological enterprise cannot be understood without reference to the conceptual framework borrowed from the philosophical discourse of his time.

Ginnat Egoz and the Early Giqatilla: Textual Demarcations

The study of Giqatilla's thought has generally assumed the distinction between his early and later works. This division, between the so-called 'early' and 'later' Giqatilla aimed to account for Giqatilla's apparent shift to a clear theosophical way of thinking, developed in *Sha'arei Ṣedeq* and *Sha'arei 'Orah* (ca. 1286-1291).[19] Giqatilla's pre-theosophical works, the most comprehensive of which is *Ginnat Egoz* (ca. 1274), were composed in the preceding decade, around the third quarter of the third century. While somewhat schematic and perhaps arbitrary, this division was proposed as a device for better assessing Giqatilla's intellectual development while accounting for his early thinking—the nature of which is far less clear than his more systematic sefirotic-theosophical corpus. Consequently, study of the so-called 'early Giqatilla' reveals a more complex terrain of thought, with less rigid borders.[20] To this we should add the adaptive shifts in Giqatilla's works,

[19] On the chronology of both works, see Asi Farber, "'Zoharic Traces in R. Yoseph Gikattila's Writings," *Alei Sefer*, 9 (1981): 70, n. 4., and passim [Hebrew]. See also remarks in Federico Dal Bo, *Emanation and Philosophy of Language: An Introduction to Joseph ben Abraham Giqatilla* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2019), xxiii, xlii.

[20] We should note two scholarly attempts to underplay the break between the presumed early and late phases in Giqatilla's thinking. The first attempt, articulated by Hartley Lachter, undermines the idea of a non-theosophical Giqatilla altogether, arguing instead for a covert theosophical *Ginnat Egoz* that is generally in line with Giqatilla's later theosophical doctrine. To this end, Lachter tips ambivalent assertions made in *Ginnat Egoz* toward their theosophical construal. A central example is Giqatilla's somewhat ambiguous statement on the principle of divine emanation, which is a hallmark of theosophical thinking (Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy,* 24-25, and passim). The second attempt to downplay the proposed division does not disregard the non-theosophical nature of *Ginnat Egoz* but focuses instead on the so-called political-theological implications of Giqatilla's work, deliberated around the question of human agency. This approach, recently articulated by Federico Dal Bo, pushes for an evolutionary construal of the two phases, their idiosyncratic features notwithstanding (Dal Bo, *Emanation*, iii, lxviii). Using the theological-political motif as his frame of reference, Dal Bo renders Giqatilla's corpus in progressive terms, culminating in his theosophical *magnum opus Sha'arei 'Orah*. Dal Bo (ibid) further analyzes the distinction between the early-philosophical and the later-theosophical periods in terms of complementing cosmological vectors of divine descent (Neoplatonic-philosophical model) and anthropological and cosmological ascent (Theosophical model). Cf. Elke Morlok's characterization of Giqatilla's later theosophical phase: "[T]he linguistic journey from common words to the divine name parallels the ontic *reversio* of the Neoplatonic thinkers. [...] Gikatilla [...] deals with dynamic processes, ascending and descending, putting the biblical text at the center of his theology." (Elke Morlok, *Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla's Hermeneutics* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 136). While thought-provoking, I find the respective approaches of Lachter and Dal-Bo inconclusive. In Chapter 3, I show that Giqatilla's notion of divine linguistic activity is incompatible with the common theosophical-emanationist doctrines. Giqatilla's linguistic theology rests on an ontological division between primordial and created types of existence, which leaves no room for a full-fledged emanation model insofar as it concerns the creation of the Intellect. He likewise downplays, in *Ginnat Egoz*, the ontological and symbolic import of Hebrew words, in clear contrast to his later theosophical works. More on this below.

where early non-theosophical principles developed in *Ginnat Egoz* were adopted and redefined by Giqatilla himself to fit his later theosophical doctrines.[21]

With these caveats in mind, the chronological device allows us to better demarcate the place and role of *Ginnat Egoz* in Giqatilla's early thinking. A determining factor is *Ginnat Egoz*'s non-theosophical approach to the Hebrew language, regarding the components of language as ontological principles underlying the cosmic order, rather than symbolic terms referencing the divine pleroma. Beyond this somewhat general factor, the remaining features of *Ginnat Egoz* were disputed among scholars, as we shall see presently. Still, the comparison with Giqatilla's other so-called early works, his *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed* for example,[22] contributes to a better adjustment of the chronological device while shedding further light on the distinct nature of *Ginnat Egoz*.

Arguing for the authenticity of Giqatilla's *Glosses on the Guide*, Ephraim Gottlieb detected themes and phrases reflecting subtle shifts from *Ginnat Egoz*, particularly regarding Giqatilla's position on the issue of universal matter and the characterization of the Universal Intellect as emanating from the One.[23] I accept Gottlieb's assessment that these elements, gesturing at a theosophical-inclined doctrine, indicate a shift from the non-theosophical *Ginnat Egoz*. This observation led Gottlieb to render the chronological device as indicating a more gradual progression in Giqatilla's thought, designating the *Glosses* as an intermediate phase between the

[21] For example, the linguistic principles of *shimmush* ('inflection') and *semikhut* ('construct-state'), drawing on Abraham Ibn Ezra's linguistics and central to *Ginnat Egoz*, are adopted as theosophical principles in *Sha'arei 'Orah*. See *Sha'arei 'Orah*, ed. Yosef Ben-Shlomo (Jerusalem, Mossad Bialik, 1970), vol. 1, 176.

[22] "Be'urim le-Sefer Moreh Nevukhim la-Rambam," in Isaac Abrabanel, *Ketavim 'al-Maḥshevet Yisrael*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1967), ff. 19a-31b (Henceforth *Glosses*).

[23] Ephraim Gottlieb, *Studies on the Kabbalah Literature*, ed. Joseph Hacker (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1976), 114-15 [Hebrew]. For additional speculations as to Giqatilla's so-called 'intermediate phase' see, Blickstein, *Philosophy and Mysticism*, 129. For a rather different division of Giqatilla's 'early', 'middle' and 'later' phases, see Dal Bo, *Emanation*, lxvii-lxx.

early-linguistic and later-theosophical periods, although he generally classifies this work under the early non-theosophical Giqatilla.[24]

The difference between *Ginnat Egoz* and the *Glosses* can be partly explained as Giqatilla's gradual reevaluation of his Maimonidean commitments. This shift is expressed in connection with several core issues, such as scriptural language. Whereas *Ginnat Egoz* reflects, albeit restrictively, Maimonides' allegorical approach to prophetic language,[25] in his *Glosses* Giqatilla significantly reverses his position on this matter, leaning toward a more symbolic and less allegorical approach.[26] In addition, one detects terminological changes that reflect Giqatilla's reevaluation, such as the shift from *ṣurah* to *neshamah*.[27] *Ginnat Egoz* adopts the Maimonidean physio-psychological terminology which distinguishes *ṣurah* and *neshamah* as the intellectual and vital soul, respectively. *Neshamah* is almost always mentioned as inferior to the intelligible form, on both human and cosmic levels.[28] *Glosses* shifts from this distinction by adopting the common Jewish Neoplatonic, as well as theosophical designation of *neshamah*.[29]

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[24] Annet Martini (*Punctuation*, 48) regards this work as "an important testimony of Gikatilla's early thinking," while mitigating its theosophical resonance (Annet Martini, Introduction to *Yosef Giqatilla's Book of Punctuation: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version* [Berlin: Institut für Judaistik, Freie Universität Berlin, 2010], 48). Conversely, Asi Farber-Ginat applied the 'theosophical' label more freely, basing her position on the *Glosses*' characterization of the Intellect as the first emanating being (Asi Farber-Ginat, "Shell Proceeds the Fruit: On the Question of the Origin of Metaphysical Evil in Early Kabalistic Thought." In *Myth and Judaism*, ed. Havivah Pedayah [Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik Publishers, 1996], 123-24 [Hebrew]. See also George Vajda, who reads this work as a straightforward symbolic-theosophical re-interpretation of Maimonides' Guide (George Vajda, "Deux chapitres du 'Guide des égarés' repensés par un kabbaliste," in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson de l'Académie française: Études de philosophie médiévale*, hors série [Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1959], 655-67). Vajda's construal of some of the terms of this work as theosophically oriented is compelling only to a certain extent. His interpretation (p. 656) of some of the principle of this text (e.g., *'Aravot* and *Kise*) in terms of the theosophical *sefiroth* is questionable, to say the least. Compare Farber-Ginat (*Shells*, 123) who advances a more moderate theosophical reading of these sections, considering Giqatilla's Intellect in *Glosses* as 'prefiguring the *sefirotic* characterization of *ḥokhmah* in his theosophical doctrine." (– Translation mine, T.S).

[25] "'And [I] spoke parables through the prophets' (Hosea 12.11) – the [prophetic] parable is not itself the goal of the intended aimed meaning, but its sole aim is to allegorize and parabolize one thing to another." (*GE* 425)

[26] Compare this with Giqatilla's remarks on *hash'alah* ('linguistic borrowing') in *Glosses* (fol. 29b), and see further discussion below.

[27] Giqatilla identified 'existence' of a thing with its formal cause. See *GE* 449-50.

[28] *GE* 208, 447. Compare Maimonides, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah*, 4.9; *Laws of Repentance*, 8:3.

[29] In Jewish Neoplatonic literature, *ṣurah* and *neshamah* are at times interchangeable. See the discussion on Abrahm Ibn Ezra in Chapter 2. Gottlieb (*Studies*, 111) stresses the affinity between the *Glosses* and *Ginnat Egoz* with respect

Another important difference between *Ginnat Egoz* and *Glosses* concerns the ontology of language, specifically the function of Hebrew letters and words. *Ginnat Egoz* prioritizes the vowel, which deconstructs the semantic unity of words while locating language's true unity in the motion of vowel-letters and vowel-points. Hebrew letters and words are qualified to the created and differentiated order, and their semantic potentiality is not grounded in a divine unity, in and of themselves. [30] By contrast, *Glosses* stresses the essential unity of words and of their distinct semantic implications.[31] This approach maintains that words sharing similar letters possess an underlying unity of a shared potentiality of meaning.[32]

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to the origin of the human soul. I nevertheless maintain that the terminological difference between *ṣurah* (*GE*) and *neshamah* (*Glosses*) reflects a substantial shift.

[30] *GE* 50: "[W]e attests that YHWH is One, since His entire existence, blessed be He, is a unity that has no mixture with anything else. This is in contrast to what you find in other words (lit. tongues; *leshonot*) that essentially differ from one another [due to their mixture] – as when you say 'father' (*'av* אב) and its reverse 'came' (*ba* בא). The word 'father' (אב) is not similar to the word 'came' (בא), for the essential meaning of 'father' is 'progenitor of the son', while 'came' has an entirely different essential meaning."

[31] *Glosses*, 29b: "Behold, we have already awakened you [to the understanding] that all words sharing similar letters require investigation. Even though their roots may be somewhat different, or their meanings differ in speech, it is fitting to find a reason why these words are similar in their letters – if there is some relation (*'erekh*) between them."

[32] The difference between *GE* and *Glosses* is expressed also in their respective approaches to linguistic allegory. While *GE* presumes the ontological priority of Hebrew, it also assumes the difference between human spoken language and the intelligible letters that constitute what things are essentially. Thus, addressing prophetic language, Giqatilla reflects a Maimonidean sentiment that qualifies prophetic words as allegorical expressions of the linguistically intelligible realm (see discussion above). In his *Glosses on the Guide*, Giqatilla reverses the allegorical function of words by assuming the ontological continuity between the multiple layers of a word. Compare his construal of the scriptural term *kise* ([divine] 'throne') in response to Maimonides' (and Samuel Ibn Tibbon's) discussion: "Whereas the Master construed the word *kise* as a metaphor borrowed above from bellow (*ḥashav le-hash'il kise mi-le-matta le-ma'ala*), we construe it as though borrowed bellow from above." This citation is revealing with respect to Giqatilla's ontology of language. Working already within a theosophical paradigm, Hebrew names are considered principles of divine emanation that assume the gradual materialization of these linguistic units in an emanative scheme. The physical words, designating material objects, are 'borrowed' from the spiritual words in a way that reframes *hash'alah* (metaphor) as an ontological process. This emanationist view of words and letters is further expressed in their inner unity. On the notion of the 'reversed metaphor' in Giqatilla's later theosophical work, especially *Sha'arei 'Orah*, see Huss, *Gikatilla's Symbolism*, 171-73. While fully developed in *Sha'arei 'Orah*, the idea of a 'reversed metaphor' appears to have taken initial form in *Glosses*. On Giqatilla's *kise*, see also the helpful remarks in Adam Afterman, "The Language of Creation in the Early Writings of R. Joseph Gikatilla," *Da'at* 100: 82 [2016]: 146-47 [Hebrew]). See also Geroge Vajda's comment on Giqatilla's reservations on Maimonides' *kise*, rendering the former a full-fledged theosophical Kabbalist: "«le Maître a pensé expliquer au figuré kissé' de bas en haut, tandis que nous élaborons la métaphore de haut en bas ." Autant dire que la pensée du philosophe part du sensible concret, tandis que la pensée du Kabbaliste, fixée sur les archétypes, va de ceux-ci vers leurs correspondants symboliques d'ici-bas, dont l'existence matérielle n'est, ceci est un postulat, que le reflet de l'invisible" (Vajda, *Deux Chapitres*, 657).

Nevertheless, contrary to the more sefirotic-theosophical tone of *Glosses*, there are points of doctrinal similarities between this work and *Ginnat Egoz*. These include the role of the Universal Intellect as the primary ontological principle—taking on a *demiurge*-like character;[33] the function of the Intellect as an ontological veil (*Pargod*); [34] the relationship between the transcendent God and uppermost heaven (*'Aravot*);[35] and the relationship between the categories of *kelal* ("universal") and *perat* ("species"). [36]

Our conceptual-chronological approach to the *Glosses* can be likewise applied to the other end of the early-Giqatilla spectrum. If the *Glosses* represents Giqatilla's theological reassessment, following *Ginnat Egoz*, *Sefer ha-Niqqud*—existent in both long and short recensions[37]—occupies the countering chronological end. As the title suggests, *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (Book of Punctuation) is a deliberated treatment of the symbolic properties of the Hebrew vowel points, suggesting their construal as an organizing model of cosmic motion. These deliberations appear also in Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, the core of which is an extensive treatment of the vowel-points. Scholarship consensus, albeit not conclusive, holds the *Sefer ha-Niqqud* is an early draft, preceding *Ginnat Egoz*.[38]

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[33] *Glosses*, fol. 28a. Noteworthy is the doctrinal shift with respect to *'Aravot,* as well. Whereas *Ginnat Egoz* maintains the cosmological designation of *'Aravot* as the ninth diurnal sphere, in *Glosses* Giqatilla construes *'Aravot* as a twofold epithet, designating the external *'Aravot*, viz., the ninth orb, and the so-called internal *'Aravot*, described as "the secret pertaining to the substantial constitution of the first emanated being" (*Glosses*, 30b. Cf. Vajda, *Deux chapitres*, 656).
[34] *Glosses*, fol. 29b. Cf. Gottlieb's (*Studies* 114-15) counter-assessment of the *Glosses*' *Pargod* .
[35] *Glosses*, fol. 30b. The relationship between *GE* and *Glosses* with respect to *'Aravot* is, in fact, more complex. More on this below.
[36] *Glosses*, fol. 28a.
[37] The Apostolic Library, MS Vatican, ebr. 603, ff. 172b-195b (henceforth ***SN Long***); *Sefer ha-Niqqud: Flavius Mithridates Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version,* ed. and trans. Annet Martini (Turin: Aragno, 2010), 13*-85* (henceforth ***SN Short***. Pagination of Hebrew edition is with asterisks).
[38] Alexander Altmann, "R. Moses de León's Sefer Or Zaru'a," *Kobez 'al Yad*, 19 (1980), 243 [Hebrew]. For a summary of the different views on the chronology of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, see Federico Dal Bo, "Giqatilla's Philosophical Poems on the Hebrew Vowels: Poetry, Philosophy, and Theology in Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* and *Sefer ha-Niqqud*," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (2021).

The present study assumes the chronological priority of *Sefer ha-Niqqud* to *Ginnat Egoz*, based on the evidence that several themes from *Sefer ha-Niqqud* are reworked in *Ginnat Egoz* in ways that produce a more coherent and systematic text.[39]

A fundamental example is the term *yesod* ('foundation') used throughout Giqatilla's early writings. In *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, specifically the short recension, this term signifies intermediary principle between the simple One and the Universal Intellect. This application strongly alludes to Jewish Neoplatonic doctrines that assume a pre-essential hypostatic principle as the emanative source of the Intellect. Conversely, the intermediary *yesod* is omitted in the parallel section of *Ginnat Egoz*, thereby rendering the section compatible with Giqatilla's broader argument on the role of simple activity of the One, epitomized by the speech-act, as the direct cause of the Intellect. This difference is further reflected in the doctrine of the *levush*, the divine concealing garment. In *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, specifically the short recension, the Garment of Light (*'or levusho*) is associated with *ḥolam*, the latter functioning as the first principle that is continued from God's primordial existence, and which is the source of the Intellect.[40] Conversely, the *ḥolam* of *Ginnat Egoz* is a non-substantive principle of simple motion, whereas *levush* is there associated with the Intellect.[41]

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[39] One example is the prevalent sailor-and-ship analogy in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, adapted from philosophical literature, as illustrating the principle of World Soul and cosmic motion more broadly.

[40] See *Sefer ha-Niqqud,* short recension: The Russian State Library, MS Ginsburg 179, fol. 65b; The National Library of France, MS Paris, hébr. 774, fol. 52a; The National Library of France, Ms. Paris, hébr. 1092, fol. 141b; The Bavarian State Library, MS. Cod. hebr. 11, fol. 304a; The Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York, 839, fol. 124b. Compare this with the long recension in The Apostolic Library, MS. Vatican ebr. 603, ff. 192b-193a and The Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich hebr.54, fol. 279b-280a.

[41] We should also consider editorial processes in *Ginnat Egoz* that reveal the author's compositional strategy for developing themes initially mentioned in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*. The discussion of the vowel-point *ḥolam* in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* includes a parenthetical remark about the 'secret of the proper name (*sod ha-shem ha-meyuḥad*) which all vowels depend on, and which informs all forms (*meṣayer kol ha-ṣurot*)': "We shall explicate in [connection with] the secret of the proper name how all vowels depend on [the name], and how this name moves all movers and informs all forms." (*SN Long*, fol. 179b; *SN Short*, 25-6*) The author assures us that this secret will be further explicated—a promise that remains unfulfilled within *Sefer ha-Niqqud* itself. This thematic development is instead realized in *Ginnat Egoz*. Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, which substantially reworks material from *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, contains the parallel discussion of the *ḥolam* but notably omits the parenthetical remark about the secret of the Name. The remark has been relocated to Part One, where the tetragrammaton is the primary subject: "His Name Blessed be He is the source of all forms, and it forms them according to their essence. His Name Blessed be He is thus the subject of (or: carries; *nose*) various vowels (*kama niqqudim*). This testifies to the contingency of all forms on Him" (*GE* 101). This

The cited examples support the broader claim about *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.[42] Its chronological priority reflects a premature stage in Giqatilla's thought, with traces of Jewish Neoplatonic conceptions of emanation from which *Ginnat Egoz* appears to break off. *Ginnat Egoz* develops a doctrine of language incompatible with Neoplatonic principles of emanation and it accordingly reframes these principles to establish a worldview that is grounded in linguistic motion.

In addition to Giqatilla's *Glosses* and *Sefer ha-Niqqud* we should mention two works that reflect Giqatilla's early thinking, the authorship of which is likely authentic. The first is a long fragment consisting of commentary on the first chapters of Genesis, composed soon after *Ginnat Egoz*.[43] While *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and the *Glosses* mark the two respective ends of Giqatilla's early thought, this fragment is closest to the terminology and conceptual framework of *Ginnat Egoz*. The extant fragment focuses on the relationship between the One and the Universal Intellect, on the one hand, and the designation of the Intellect as the principle of cosmic emanation, on the other. Both works employ the principles of speech act and light as respective designators of these two acts—the generating speech act that produces the Intellect, on the one hand, and the emanating lights of the Intellect, on the other. In a way, the *Commentary on Genesis* is effectively a concise schematic recap of the cardinal themes of *Ginnat Egoz*. These include the construal of the name 'Elohim as the principle of Nature (*teva'*), the metaphysical-generative principle of *shimmush* ('inflection of the divine Name'), the distinction between natural constitution of things and

textual displacement suggests a deliberate compositional process: the author identified a theme in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* that required more comprehensive treatment, then strategically placed its full development in the more appropriate context of *Ginnat Egoz* – specifically in Part One, which provides the proper theological framework for discussing divine names.

[42] Note that the authenticity of the short recension has been doubted. Compare Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 157, n.12; Martini, *Punctuation*,49-50; Avishai Bar-Asher, "The Punctiform Deity: Theological Debates among the Masters of Niqqud in the Works of Joseph Gikatilla's 'Disciples,'" *Kabbalah* 53 (2022), 103, n. 1 [Hebrew].

[43] Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York Acc. 753 (2156), ff. 37b-45a. *Ginnat Egoz* is mentioned on fol. 41a. On this fragment, see Gottlieb, *Studies*, 11, n. 31; Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 40-41.

metaphysical motion,[44] the identity of the vowel-point as the cause of Intellect, and the twofold division of the five articulators and the five vowel-points.[45]

The second work, which is untitled,[46] bears a clear resemblance to deliberations in *Ginnat Egoz*, specifically on the letters *'aleph* and *yod*—the two symbolically refer to the absolute One and the Tenth Intellect—and their constructive notation *AY* (א״י). Considering their affinity, scholarship remained unclear about its contribution to Giqatilla's thought, although a close reading reveals several subtle differences between this text and *Ginnat Egoz*. For example, the term *ha-moṣ'a ha-rishon* ("the primary origin"),[47] which in *Ginnat Egoz* refers to the absolute One, is there used in reference to the Intellect.[48]

Finally, we should mention the "revelation (or *novum*; *ḥiddush*) in the secret of the *niqqud*," attributed in various manuscripts to "Rabbi Joseph Giqatilla."[49] Moshe Idel has repeatedly argued for the authenticity of this attribution, partly in line with his broader claims about the magical orientation of Giqatilla's early linguistic *Kabbalah*.[50] The work, attribution to Giqatilla in several manuscripts, contains terms and phraseology traceable to Giqatilla's early writings, but these terms

[44] More on this distinction in Chapter 2.
[45] The systematic arrangement of these issues in the fragment reflects its revised and integrative form vis-à-vis *Ginnat Egoz*. The latter addresses the mentioned issues distinctly in its three parts, each dedicated respectively to the following general subjects – the divine names, cosmology, and the vowel-points. Conversely, the fragment touches on all three subjects, albeit preliminary, in a way that produces a more integrative and systematic picture of Giqatilla's account of creation. While it has been assumed that this fragment does not add anything substantial to *Ginnat Egoz*, it nevertheless offers a systematic reworking of doctrinal issues in *Ginnat Egoz* (Cf. Blickstein, ibid).
[46] Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York 851(1891), ff. 62a-98a. On this work, see Gottlieb, *Studies*, 100; Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 159. see discussion and cited scholarship in Na'ama Ben Shachar et al., introduction to *Israel and the Archons of the Nations, War, Purity and Impurity: Three Commentaries to the Ten Sefirot Attributed to R. Joseph Gikatilla* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2021), 11, n. 23 [Hebrew].
[47] Giqatilla's *ha-moṣ'a ha-rishon* puns on ha-*moṣuei ha-rishon*, the primary existent. See our discussion on the *ḥolam* vowel-point in Chapter 4.
[48] This affinity is also expressed in connection with the primordial light, largely associated with "the light of Intellect, the primary origin" (Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York 851, fol. 87b, and passim).
[49] Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich cod. hebr. 112, fol. 129a-131a; Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York, 1813, fol. 26b. Mentions of this fragment are available in Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 104, ft. 2; Ben Shachar, *Israel and the Archons of the Nations*, 12, n. 24.
[50] Moshe Idel, "Incantations, Lists, and 'Gates of Sermons' in the Circle of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet and Their Influence." *Tarbiz* 77 (2008): 501, n. 231 [Hebrew]. More on Idel's approach to Giqatilla below.

are significantly reworked through a conceptual paradigm that is alien to Giqatilla's early thinking.[51]

Scholarship has noted significant textual connections between Giqatilla and Moses de León's early writings, particularly regarding the Hebrew alphabet's theological properties. [52] While the exact nature of their relationship remains debated, whether reflecting parallel sources or direct doctrinal adaptation,[53] clear doctrinal differences emerge in de León's shift toward a more

[51] The composition (henceforth *Ḥiddush*) contains elements that allude to Giqatilla's early teachings, albeit in a rather processed form—raising the possibility of a borrowing from one context and assimilation into a fundamentally different conceptual framework. For example, *Ḥiddush* opens with a fourfold modification of the divine Name—WHHY, WHY, HYW, HY—in a way that evokes the structure of the fourfold *shimmushim* ('inflections') of the Name in *Ginnat Egoz* – YHWH, YHW, YH, Y. In both cases, a distinction is drawn between four inflections (or *shimmushim*) and the three names (*milot*, i.e., nouns). The latter maintains the successive series of decreased inflections, but it excludes of the fourth inflection. This exclusion is reflected in the numerical value (*gematria*) that the three names (viz., three inflections) consist of: the names equal 65 – comprised of 62 (WHHY, WHY, HYW), plus three nouns (*shalosh milot*), corresponding together to 'ADoNaY (אדנ"י; 65). Both the differentiation between the four *shimmushim* and the three names, as well as the principle of 65/'ADoNaY, play a central role in Part One of *Ginnat Egoz.* ("Know that the special name [...] the secret of its *shimmush* : YHWH, YHW, YH, Y [...] and we do not mention the fourth *shimmush* [viz. Y], for it [consists of a] single [letter]".) On the principle of 'ADoNaY = HYKHaL = HaS = 65, see *Ginnat Egoz*, pp. 92, 93, 102. The parallel between the Names in the *Ḥiddush* fragment and the *shimmushim* in *Ginnat Egoz* is reaffirmed later, (MS Munich, fol. 129b) where the name WHY appears in its original form: "And the middle Name whose seal is YHW is a permanent knot (*kesher*)." (Note also the characterization of the Name YH as the knot that connects the cosmic parts in Giqatilla's Untitled work, MS New York 851, ff. 67b-68a.) In addition to the above, further terms common to both compositions are noteworthy: the principle of *hakhraḥah*); the formation (*ṣiyyur*) of the *niqqud* in the Name; the division of the name HWYH into two principles, YH and WH; and the dual structure of ABG/ABGD.

Similarly, the discussion regarding the vocalization of the letters of the Name (MS Munich, fols. 129b–130a) alludes to Giqatilla's scheme (*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥireq*, *pataḥ*, *ṣere*, *qameṣ*), albeit with some modification: in *Ḥiddush* the *ṣere* is replaced by *segol*, and *shuruq* is termed *shuruq-qatan*. Still, some of the qualities that the vowels are assumed to reflect occasional allusions to Giqatilla's teachings. *Segol*—which Giqatilla considered a composite vowel, inferior to the prime five—carries the power of "love and brotherhood." In Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* (455) and his theosophical *Sha'ar ha-Niqqud,* the *segol* functions as a connective principle, compromising between the lower *Shewa* and upper *ṣere.* Despite these allusions, the attribution of *Ḥiddush* to Giqatilla is highly questionable. Beyond the notable differences in the shared terms, the magical aims that frame *Ḥiddush* are completely absent from Giqatilla's writings, specifically from *Ginnat Egoz.*

[52] Altmann, *'Or Zaru'a*, 221, 235-243; See review of scholarship in Avishai Bar-Asher, "From the Vaults of Thebes: Moses de León's Pseudepigraphic Writings on the Letters, Vowel Signs, Theonyms, and Magical Practices and the Origin of Zoharic Fiction," *Kabbalah* 51 (2022), 167-69 [Hebrew]; Idem, "From Alphabetical Mysticism to Theosophical Kabbalah: A Rare Witness to an Intermediate Stage of Moses de León's Thought," *Revue des Études Juives* 179, no. 3-4 (2020), 355-56.

[53] These clear connections notwithstanding, scholarship has concomitantly debated whether the two figures share a common doctrine. Asi Farber Ginat conjectured the existence of parallel sources, albeit closely related, of intellectual inspiration, leading to Giqatilla and de León, respectively. See Asi Farber Ginat, "On the Sources of Rabbi Moses de León's Early Kabbalistic System," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3, no. 1-2 (1984): 70 [Hebrew]: "It is reasonable to assume that the young de León received the foundations of his system within the framework of a certain Kabbalistic circle, just as the book Ginat Egoz and Gikatilla's other pre-theosophical compositions have their foundation in another Kabbalistic circle whose traces can be identified" (- translation mine, T.S).. Elsewhere, Farber

panentheistic worldview.[54] My analysis will focus on Giqatilla's distinctive approach, drawing on comparative references to de León where they serve to illuminate Giqatilla's specific doctrinal contributions.

World and Language in Giqatilla's Early Thought: *Status Quaestionis*

The eclecticism of *Ginnat Egoz* has presented scholars with the basic challenge of determining its specific aim and broader spiritual and intellectual orientation**.** Generally classified as a Kabbalistic work, scholars have struggled to maintain this classification while also accounting for the absence of doctrinal tenets of theosophical Kabbalah.[55] While the absence of these tenets reinforced a more divergent approach to the study of Kabbalah, thinking beyond the monolithic stream of

entertains the opposite possibility, that Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* was, in fact, influenced by de León's writings (Asi Farber, "A New Fragment from R. Joseph Gikatilla's Introduction to *Sefer Ginnat Egoz*," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 [1981]: 161, n. 6 [Hebrew]). See also her suggestions (*Traces*) as to the reciprocal relationship between the figures. Others, particularly Avishai Bar-Asher, promoted the hypothesis of doctrinal adaptation. According to this view, de León adopted and further modified the doctrinal terms of Giqatilla. Bar-Asher (*From the Vaults of Thebes*, 171-77) appears sympathetic to the general view that Giqatilla's early writings provided the terminological and conceptual framework for de-León's distinctive letter doctrine, which departs from Giqatilla's own system on key issues. See his response to Farber-Ginat in *From the Vaults of Thebes*, 74, n. 89. See also Martini, *Punctuation*, 96, n. 120. Jellinek (*Geschicte*, 63, n. 10) detected Giqatilla's "strong influence on de León's Sefer ha-Shem," although de-León's connection to this work has long been questioned. See the editor's notes in *Sefer ha-Shem,* attributed to Moshe de León, ed. Michal Oron [Los-Angeles: Cherub, 2010], 16. Cf. cited scholarship.

[54] See also Charles Mopsik's formulation in his Introduction to *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, ed. Charles Mopsik (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996), 3-4 [Hebrew]. The theological difference between Giqatilla and de León is manifested in their theo-cosmogenic paradigms, articulated by the respective notations AY (א״י) and HY (ה״י). As we shall see below, Giqatilla adopted from Abraham Ibn Ezra the letters *'aleph* and *yod* as designations of the transcendent One (א׳) and the Universal Intellect (י׳), the combination of which (א״י) constitutes the cosmogenic process from the One (Cf. *GE* 143). In mystic-alphabetical sources associated with León, the AY (א״י) is replaced with the HY (ה״י) notation. The primacy of the letter *he* (ה׳) reflects other thirteenth-century esoteric sources, which focused on the pneumatic qualities of the aspirated *he,* which similarly reflect the panentheistic activity of God when transposed to the theo-cosmogenic level. *See Sod Ḥeleq ha-Neqqudah*, National Library of France, MS Paris, heb. 817, fol. 82b; MS Petersburg D 21, fol. 29a; The Bavarian State Library, Ms. Munich, cod. heb. 47, fol. 372b.

[55] Nowhere in *Ginnat Egoz* do we find the dynamic structures of divine hypostatic principles that constitute the divine pleroma or the world of *sefirot*. Similarly, there is no explicit mention of theurgic performance or *Glosses* on prayer. More fundamentally, Giqatilla's position on divine emanation, a theme central to theosophical doctrines, is rather ambivalent, to say the least. See our detailed discussion in Chapter 3. Hartely Lachter (*Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 3-4) maintains, contrarily, that Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* assumes both the principle of emanation and the mystical notion of *devequt*. His supporting arguments are inconclusive.

theosophical thought, it also made it necessary to identify the core tenets of Giqatilla's project in a way that can account for its intricate composition**.**

The study of Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* in modern scholarship has focused primarily on its place in the developing tradition of linguistic Kabbalah in the second half of the 13th century. Recent studies have also contributed toward explicating some of the work's thematic and conceptual elements, examining both the phonetic features of Giqatilla's cosmic-linguistic system and theological issues such as his stance on emanation and creation. These important contributions underscore the need for a more comprehensive account of Giqatilla's system of thought—a system whose distinctiveness emerges precisely at the intersection of Hebrew phonology and cosmological-metaphysical doctrines.

Careful consideration of these conceptual intersections is essential for formulating the primary question that the present study aims to answer: How did Giqatilla's theological approach to the Hebrew language inform his conception of the world while simultaneously modifying the cosmological traditions which he was acquainted with? Most scholars recognized this intersection between Giqatilla's fascination with the Hebrew elements and divine Names, on the one hand, and his expressed interest in cosmological doctrines, on the other. However, their respective interpretations took conflicting directions, and recent studies have struggled to explain the constructive role of each dimension—language and cosmology—within Giqatilla's complex system.

The following discussion will consider the various approaches that scholarship has proposed to address this issue. To facilitate a critical-comparative survey, our discussion assumes three interpretive models detectable in existing scholarship, which I designate as the Ecstatic Mystic, the Philosophical Mystic, and the Speculative Grammarian. Each model offers a different

approach to our guiding question and links Giqatilla to a particular tradition of knowledge. The first model reconstructs Giqatilla's presumed mystical character, viewing his Kabbalistic efforts as primarily invested in ecstatic aims achieved through complex contemplative linguistic performance.[56] The second model treats cosmology and the doctrine of divine names as complementary dimensions of a singular system, though approaches within this model tend to subordinate cosmological concerns to linguistic ones, treating cosmology as simply an expression of linguistic principles. The third model, still underdeveloped in scholarship, refrains from conclusive arguments regarding Giqatilla's linguistic-metaphysical aims. Instead, it focuses on his interest in the phonetic qualities of Hebrew and their structural arrangement while noting his parallel engagement with cosmological issues.

The examination of these three models will provide the necessary framework for considering a fourth model—the Linguistic Theologian—which the present study aims to develop. Acknowledging both the contributions and shortcomings of the reviewed models, my proposed fourth model will argue for the constructive role of language, through which Giqatilla simultaneously advances a worldview that responds to and modifies the philosophical traditions with which he was familiar. This fourth model will focus on how the ontological function that Giqatilla assigns to the Hebrew language unfolds thematically into a coherent worldview.

[56] See the account in Eliot Wolfson, "Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery in the Zohar," In *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed. M. Hallamish (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 200-01, and cf. references to Moshe Idel's studies.

Model One: The Ecstatic Mystic

The term Ecstatic or Prophetic Kabbalah was applied already in 1854 by Adolph Jellinek's study on the thirteenth-century Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia.[57] While applying this title specifically to Abulafia, Jellinek also associated him with Giqatilla and Isaac ibn Latif, describing all three as "nourished by the philosophical spirit of the time, [while] pursuing with devotion the number, letter, and vowel mysticism" which purportedly originated from *Sefer ha-Bahir* and R. Eleazar of Worms' teachings, among other sources.[58] The association of Giqatilla's early thinking with Abulafia's prophetic or ecstatic doctrine has since become commonplace in modern scholarship.[59]

Scholars have further expounded on Jellinek's principal claim by reconstructing the thematic-historical links that reportedly formed the so-called prophetic or ecstatic Kabbalah. This reconstruction has resulted in the designation of the somewhat anonymous Barukh Togrami as a direct common direct source of both Abulafia and Giqatilla. Several distinct terms and principles found in Togrami's commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* reappear in *Ginnat Egoz*,[60] and phraseological affinities have supported this textual-thematic reconstruction. An example that is cited in several studies and which will serve us later is the practice of *Hazkarah* ('mentioning [the divine Name]'),

[57] Adolph Jellinek, *Philosophie und Kabbala*, Erstes Heft (Leipzig: H. Hunger Verlag, 1854), vi.
[58] Jellinek, *Philosophie und Kabbala*, v.
[59] See, for example, Moshe H. Weiler, "Studies in the Kabbalistic Terminology of R. Joseph Gikatilla and His Relationship to Maimonides," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 (1966): 14-15 [Hebrew].
[60] Togarmi's Commentary, titled also *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah*, was published by Gershom Scholem in *The Kabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and of Abraham Abulafia*, ed. Yosef Ben-Shlomo (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1967), 229-45, based on MS. Paris 770 (ff. 1a-6b). The text also appears in: Jewish Theological Seminary, MS New York, 1884 (835), ff. 8b-11a. Anteceding this text is a fragment close in doctrine and phraseology to Togarmi's commentary (MS NY, 1884, ff. 7a-8a). Like *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah*, this fragment reflects a phraseological affinity to *Ginnat Egoz*, specifically regarding the cosmological function of the Tetragrammaton. The sememes YH and WH, derived from the Tetragrammaton, function as the principles of the cosmic order, which consists of the ten spheres (ff. 7a-b). The latter are further construed as the principle of *merkabah*, thus reflecting the formula in *GE* (147) and in Giqatilla's untitled work (JTS MS. New York 858, fol. 68a), where the ten spheres are construed as the *merkabah* according to two respective formulas ABGD (1+2+3+4=אבג"ד) and AT BḤ GZ DW. On the latter, see Wolfson, *Letter Symbolism*, 201-02, n. 25. Idel (*Incantations*, 501) argued that the text in MS NY1884 (ff. 6b-8a) should be read in light of the text from MS NY 1838, fol. 26b. But there are clear differences between the two sources. The latter reworks many of these principles within a theurgic/magic framework, while integrating further materials and principles that are not found in the MS New York 1884 (ff. 7a-8a) text.

or *Hakhraḥa* ('coercion'), both signifying esoteric practices relating to the divine names. These terms, among several others, appear in Togrami's concise Commentary and reappear in several places in *Ginnat Egoz*.[61]

Hazkarah and *Hakhraḥah* afforded scholars further indication as to the Ashkenazi-Pietistic origin of Togrami's teachings, while generating discussion about the adaptive shifts that terms of this sort underwent in their transmission to Castile.[62] In a central study on this question, Moshe Idel used the categories 'magic' and 'ecstasy' to describe this adaptive shift.[63] His suggestion is that while in Ashkenazi sources terms like *Hazkarah* or *Hashab'ah* ('incantation') describe magical practices related to the divine and angelic names, Spanish Kabbalists like Abulafia reintegrated these terms into his Kabbalah of ecstatic practice and experience. Idel further extended this claim, albeit in a modified form, to Giqatilla.[64]

While scholars have generally interpreted *Ginnat Egoz* as reflecting the thematic tenets of Togrami's teachings,[65] the relationship between Abulafia and Giqatilla has prompted scholarly

[61] See the brief thematic comparison between Togarmi's Commentary and *Ginnat Egoz* in Farber, *Fragment*, n. 5. (pp. 159-60) Cf. Blickstein, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 78-79; Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 65-66. See also Moshe Idel, "On the Kavanah of *Shemoneh 'Esre* in R. Isaac the Blind" (Hebrew), in *Masu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. Michal Oren et al. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1994) [Hebrew].

[62] For a complementary argument on the transmission of Ashkenazi letterist doctrines to Castile and their traces in *Ginnat Egoz*, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78: 1-2 (1987): 96-98. On specific transmission agents from Ashkenaz to Castile, see Daniel Abrams, "From Germany to Spain: Numerology as a Mystical Technique," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 47 (1996): 85-90. On Ashkenazi esoteric traces in the Kabbalah of Isaac Hacohen of Castile, see Na'ama Ben Shachar, "The Epistle from Worms and other Thirteenth-Century Parallels of Kabbalistic Epistles: Between History and Literature," *Da'at* 89 (2020): 143-44 (Hebrew). Cf. cited scholarship (n. 57).

[63] Moshe Idel, *Incantations*, 505-06.

[64] Moshe Idel, "Between the Magic of the Divine Names and the Kabbalah of Names: The Critique of R. Abraham Abulafia," *Mahanaim*, 14 (2003): 92-93, and passim. Cf. Idem, "Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed and the Kabbalah," *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 215. See also Jonathan Garb who, responding to Idel, suggests a sublimated ('dialectic') construal of Giqatilla's presumed interest in magic (Jonathan Garb, "Mysticism and Magic: Resistance, Ambivalence, Integration," *Maḥanayim* 14 [2003]: 103-04 [Hebrew]). Elsewhere (*Dissertation*, vol. 1, 148) Idel detects further doctrinal differences, between Abulafia and Giqatilla, with respect to the divine nature of Hebrew.

[65] See discussion and cited parallels between Togarmi's commentary and *Ginnat Egoz* in: Farber, *Fragment*, 159, n. 5; Gottlieb, *Studies*, 100, n. 10; Blickstein, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 109-11. See also Afterman, *Creation*, 130-31, n. 27. Morlok (*Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 37) goes as far as to suggest that *Ginnat Egoz* may be seen as "an

discussion, with positions on this matter significantly influencing the overall treatment of *Ginnat Egoz*. Idel and Elke Morlok, among others, have reconstructed the early Giqatilla as an ecstatic-prophetic Kabbalist.[66] Their account interprets Giqatilla's speculation on the divine Names and linguistic elements of Hebrew as reflecting a genuine engagement with esoteric techniques of letter manipulation. This interest, they suggest, was motivated by mystical and ecstatic aims primarily achievable through the power of Hebrew letters.

In line with Jellinek's early observation about Giqatilla's philosophical interests, Idel and Morlok acknowledged that Giqatilla engaged seriously with the philosophical doctrines of Maimonides' *Guide*. Nevertheless, they interpreted this philosophical engagement through the lens of their broader characterization of Giqatilla as an ecstatic mystic. According to this view, Giqatilla's approach to the *Guide of the Perplexed* involved mystical decoding or recasting of Maimonidean teachings, paralleling Abulafia's esoteric interpretation of the same work.[67]

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extended version of Togarmi's treatise [on Sefer Yeṣirah]." On the thematic connections between Giqatilla, Abulafia and Togarmi, see Idel, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 173-74, and passim. Cf. 170-71.

[66] Moshe Weiller (*Maimonidean Terminology*, 14) describes Giqatilla as effectively a disciple of Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah. Similarly, G. Scholem describes Giqatilla as "a kabbalist who began as a disciple of Abraham Abulafia himself, […] who wrote *Ginnat Egoz* in 1274 and later a number of other works under the inspiration of his first master." (Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* [New York: New American Library, 1978], 59). Elke Morlok (*Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 36-38) stresses Giqatilla's shared investment in ecstatic practices associated with the divine names, like Abulafia. See also her understanding of Giqatilla's principle of *sod* ('secret'): "The atomic/chemical structure of each letter is signified by the word *sod*, which has taken the function of *siman* ('sign') in *Ginnat Egoz* and leads to ecstatic exegesis, the divine wisdom in the created world" (ibid, 230-31) Karl Grözinger continues this approach, perhaps more emphatically, designating Abulafia as Giqatilla's teacher (Karl E. Grözinger, *Jüdisches Denken: Theologie - Philosophie - Mystik, Band 2: Von der mittelalterlichen Kabbala zum Hasidismus* [Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2005], 303-05). In a somewhat restricted vein, Afterman (*The Language of Creation*, 130) describes the young Giqatilla as influenced by philosophical discourse and 'linguistic Kabbalah,' although he also assumes the identification of Abulafia as Giqatilla's teacher.

[67] See Federico Dal-Bo, who voices the view that "the conventional nature of the Hebrew language, as expressed in the Guide of the Perplexed, was from the beginning meant to be nothing more than a cover to be removed by those capable of understanding" (Dal Bo, *Emanation*, vii-viii). For a similar account of Giqatilla's and Abulafia's respective approaches to Maimonides, see Weiler (*Maimonidean Terminology*, 18), who practically conflates Giqatilla and Abulafia as a uniform approach to *the Guide*. For yet a different account, see Idel, *Maimonides' Guide*, 208, and cf. his remarks (210-11) on Giqatilla's esoteric approach to *the Guide*. Gershom Scholem expressed conflicting views on this subject. Compare Scholem, *Gikatilla*, col. 593, and Idem, *The Kabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah*, 117-18. Grözinger (*Jüdisches Denken*, vol. 2, 304, 308, 313-14) complemented Idel's claim by describing Giqatilla's system as the integrative intersection of "ancient [divine] onomatology" (viz. the science of [divine] names)—which traces back to the Hekhalot literature—and medieval philosophy, specifically Maimonidean. Ultimately, this leads him to regard Giqatilla's assumed divine onomatology as a one-to-one correspondence to, or, better, replacement of Maimonides'

There exist striking thematic and terminological parallels between Abulafia's works and *Ginnat Egoz* which support the general claim regarding their close acquaintance. The problem emerges when one infers from such thematic affinities a shared doctrine or worldview. For example, the association of the attribute '*Elohim* with the principle of Nature is pivotal to *Ginnat Egoz* and, as has been suggested, to Abulafia as well. [68] Yet the broader implication of this theme is determined by the system of thought, or *Kabbalah*, in which it is integrated. This observation is particularly pertinent in the case of Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz*, which lacks the overt ecstatic character and techniques that would align it definitively with Abulafia's prophetic *Kabbalah* , as we shall see presently.

Model Two: The Philosophical Mystic

Ephraim Gottlieb, Shlomo Blickstein, and others have downplayed Abulafia's influence on Giqatilla, thereby questioning the characterization of *Ginnat Egoz* as a form of ecstatic or magical esotericism.[69] Instead, Blickstein adopted a second designation, Philosophical-Kabbalah or

cosmology: "[…] Da wo Maimonides intelligible Wesenheiten und Substanzen sieht; spricht Gikatilla von Gottesnamen.;[…] Nach Gikatillas Auffassung sind es gleichsam die Philosophen, welche die Gottesnamen als intelligible Substanzen bezeichnen, eben weil die Gottesnamen diese intelligiblen Substanzen wirklich sind" (ibid, 308). See also p. 319 for a one-to-one transition between cosmic-philosophical and letter-Kabbalist forms of emanation.

[68] Idel, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 151; idem, "Deus Sive Natura: The Metamorphosis of a Dictum from Maimonides to Spinoza," in *Maimonides and the Sciences*, ed. Robert Cohen *et al*. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000). See also Warren Z. Harvey, "Idel on Spinoza," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 6: 18 (2007): 89-90. Cf. Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 50, n. 67, and Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 31-40. The connection between Abulafia and Giqatilla on this theme is further articulated in the *gematria* of '*Elohim* and *Ha-Teva*, the numerical value of which is 86 (See our discussion in Chapter Two.

[69] Gottlieb, *Studies*, 104-05; Farber (*Fragment* 159, n. 5). Blickstein (*Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 115) argues for a more reserved view of the affinity between the figures, suggesting that Giqatilla was the younger associate of Abulafia, rather than his student. Federico Dal-Bo appears to share this sentiment when referring to Abulafia as Giqatilla's 'former master' (Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, lxvii, 85, n. 7). See also Ephraim Gottlieb's reservations on the characterization of Giqatilla as Abulafia's student (Gottlieb, *Studies*, 105-117, esp. 105, n. 20). Finally, I should mention Annet Martini, who has focused her efforts on completing Blickstein's presumed attempt to differentiate Giqatilla from Abulafia (Martini, *Punctuation*, 36, 40-41). Martini (ibid, 159) accepts the initial characterization of the young Giqatilla as Abulafia's student, but significantly qualifies it in chronological span and impact. More on Martini below.

Philosophical Mysticism to describe the twofold character of *Ginnat Egoz*. Prior to Blickstein, this label was proposed by Sarah Heller-Wilensky to classify the distinct character of Isaac ibn Latif's thinking (thirteenth century).[70] Blickstein, who counts Ibn Latif among Giqatilla's primary sources of inspiration,[71] appears to have followed Wilensky and Scholem on this matter while transposing her suggested title to Giqatilla.

Blickstein accepts the general assumption of a thirteenth century Castilian Kabbalistic school whose members include Togrami, Abulafia, Giqatilla, and Moses de León. But through the Philosophical-Kabbalist title he also shifts the gravity of Giqatilla's Kabbalah from the presumed ecstatic practices toward his philosophical commitments. This, again, supports Blickstein's inclusion of Ibn Latif among those who contributed to the formation of *Ginnat Egoz*.[72]

The assumption underlying the Philosophical-Kabbalah designation is that Giqatilla seeks to redefine the terms and procedures of cosmic emanation through the dynamic prism of the divine names and attributes. He identifies the Tetragrammaton as the principal ground of this emanative process, presumably reflecting the esoteric-letterist register on the one hand, while further justifying the hyphenated philosophical-Kabbalistic designation on the other. The nomenclature of divine names and attributes epitomizes this process of cosmological emanation from the

[70] Sarah Heller-Wilensky, "An Analysis of the Philosophical and Mystical Sources of Isaac Ibn Latif's Sha'ar ha-Shamayim," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 2 (1965): 326 [Hebrew]. Gershom Scholem, Wilensky's teacher, drew a similar line of classification (Scholem, Kabbalah, 53-55. Cf. the remark in Wilensky, ibid).
[71] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 97-101. He thereby merges what Scholem (ibid) considered as two distinct strands of thirteenth-century non-theosophical Kabbalah. For a preliminary remark on the possible relationship between Ibn Latif and Giqatilla, see Farber, *New Fragment*, 159-60, n. 5. Scholars have subsequently added to Farber's initial suggestion, but these additional remarks are anecdotal and far from a systematic account of the suggested relationship. While I accept that Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* significantly alludes to Ibn Latif, there are some important doctrinal differences overlooked by Blickstein.
[72] Cf. Idel (*Perspectives*, 203), who links Ibn Latif to Abulafia on their shared opposition to the symbolism.

Tetragrammaton, whose dynamics are structured hermeneutically through number and letter symbolism.[73]

Blickstein builds his argument around the Hebrew root *m-sh-kh* and its inflected forms, particularly *hamshakhah* ('continuation'), which is prevalent in *Ginnat Egoz*. In Blickstein's view, this represents a so-called de-theosophized form of Jacob ben Sheshet's principle of emanative *hamshakhah*. He further contends that this presumed act of de-theosophization aligns with Giqatilla's rational orientation, which commits him to "the Maimonidean views regarding the transcendence and unity of the Deity."[74] Here Blickstein differs from the attempts to read Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* as a mystical decoding of Maimonides' *Guide*.[75]

Beyond the questionable assumption that rationalism and Maimonides' *via-negativa* are mutually implied categories, Blickstein's account falls short of providing a constructive view of the relationship between Giqatilla's philosophical tenets, framed by a Maimonidean worldview, and his appeal to the system of divine names and to language more generally.[76] While the Ecstatic

[73] *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 71. For a somewhat different, yet detailed account of Giqatilla's so-called cosmic-onomatological hermeneutics, see Grözinger, *Jüdisches Denken,* 319-24.

[74] *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 126.

[75] See also the remarks by Scholem (*The Kabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah*, 118): "It would be incorrect to view Giqatilla as Maimonides' heir. Nowhere does Giqatilla suggest that his Kabbalah aims to be a true continuation of Maimonides' way of thinking." For a similar approach, see Martini, *Punctuation*, 158: "Giqatilla's approach to Maimonides differs essentially from Abulafia's. He never followed his teacher by revealing any secrets from the Guide Itself." My understanding of Giqatilla's approach to *the Guide* is sympathetic to Martini's claim. Further support to Martini's view can be inferred from Giqatilla's pronounced appreciation of Samuel Ibn Tibbon, whom Giqatilla declares his agreement with "on all matters," except on the metaphysical issue of possible existence. More on this below. A similar less-mystical approach to Giqatilla's engagement with *the Guide* was proposed recently by Avishai Bar Asher (*Punctiform*, 127-28, 130, and passim*).*

[76] Blickstein (*Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 70) asserts that "[Giqatilla] combined a largely Maimonidean metaphysics regarding the transcendent nature of God with a Neoplatonic qabbalistic metaphysics regarding the origins of the phenomenal world." But Blickstein's account portrays Giqatilla as holding the two suggested tents in two different hands, rather than combined. Dal Bo (*Emanation*, ixviii) continues this sentiment when asserting that "[…] Giqatilla's early notion of God is particularly close to a (Jewish) philosophical one. With respect to this, God is the supreme unity that is then unfolded in a series of names and surnames, according to specific combinatory rules." For further instances of the presumed tension in Giqatilla, between rational and mystical, see *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 21-29, 107-09, and passim.

Mystic model subordinates Giqatilla's Maimonidean commitment to his esoteric mysticism, Blickstein's approach effectively treats these dimensions as entirely separate spheres.

Correspondingly, his idea of linguistic emanation fails to explain its contribution to Giqatilla's cosmological system. Specifically, how does the turn to divine names offer a cosmology that is essentially different from philosophical cosmology? This shortcoming is exemplified by his inability to integrate terms like *hakhraḥah*, mentioned above, into his proposed linguistic-emanative framework—leaving him to suggest that Giqatilla might have "privately engaged in the esoteric activity hinted at in *Ginnat Egoz* but which he openly disavowed."[77] This methodological problem extends to the core of his questionable linguistic-emanationist approach: given that his hypothesis centers on the term *hamshakhah*, we must ask whether Giqatilla indeed employs this and other terms in the classic Neoplatonic sense of emanation, as Blickstein maintains, and how such emanation integrates with Giqatilla's broader cosmological doctrine.[78]

Nearly four decades later, Federico Dal-Bo's study further advanced the paradigm of onomatological emanation—the emanative dynamics of divine names, epithets, and elements of Hebrew—effectively building on Blickstein's hyphenated characterization of Giqatilla's works as *Kabbalistic*-philosophical.[79] However, Dal-Bo's approach reproduces the same fundamental

[77] *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 78-79

[78] The principle of 'emanation' is the prism through which several scholars construe the cosmogenic function of the Hebrew language. See, for instance, Annet Martini, "Seven Mystical Poems on the Hebrew Vowels as Interpreted by Yosef Giqaṭilla and Mordekhay Dato," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5: 2 (2011): 213: "The vowel *ḥolam*, due to its quality of being the highest of all single points, symbolizes the primordial point from where the progress of divine emanation proceeds according to the upper will." Compare with the sources discussed below.

[79] There is also an implicit allusion to the account by Karl Grözinger from 2005 and his concept of 'onomatological emanation' (*Jüdisches Denken*, vol. 2, 303-32, esp. 304, 316-24). Grözinger describes Giqatilla's system as the integrative intersection of 'ancient [divine] onomatology' (viz. the study of names)—which traces back to the Hekhalot literature—and medieval philosophy, specifically Maimonidean. While there are natural differences between Blickstein and Dal-Bo with respect to their construal of *Ginnat Egoz*, they appear to share a general conceptual framework governing their analysis. Three tenets of this framework are: (1) the presumed intersection between letterist-mystical and philosophical-Maimonidean vectors; (2) the construal of Giqatilla's system as consisting of an emanative process that occurs primarily in the realm of the divine names; and (3) the idea that this process is consequently articulated in the cosmic order. Conversely, Dal-Bo's main reservation concerning Blickstein addresses

problem: rather than explaining how philosophical principles are reworked by Giqatilla in support of his linguistic metaphysics, these dimensions remain independent in his account. Like Blickstein, Dal-Bo treats the philosophical and linguistic aspects as parallel rather than integrated systems.

The respective paradigms developed by Blickstein and Dal-Bo are illuminating in several respects. Each offers a deliberate account of Gottlieb's initial suggestion to disassociate Giqatilla from Abulafia, despite their shared phraseology and terminology. At the same time, our guiding question remains unanswered by their accounts: How does the appeal to highly speculative linguistic structures reframe our understanding of the world, particularly in so far as this understanding is conditioned by the philosophical discourse of the time? Rather than explaining how philosophical principles are reworked by Giqatilla in support of his linguistic metaphysics, these dimensions appear independent, perhaps parallel, in their proposed accounts.[80]

Model Three: The Speculative Grammarian

Perhaps the most non-Abulafian view of Giqatilla is articulated in Annet Martini's study from 2010. In the introduction to her edition of Giqatilla's *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (Short), Martini aims to complete Blickstein's presumed goal of differentiating Giqatilla from Abulafia.[81] While Martini appeals to the Philosophical-Kabbalistic model,[82] her study introduces an important dimension that has been understudied in connection with Giqatilla's conception of the Hebrew vowel. Specifically, her study addresses the phonetic motions that are elaborated in Sefer ha-Niqqud

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the longstanding question of the presumed divide between the so-called 'early' and 'late' Giqatilla (Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, xlviii-lvii).

[80] Compare Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 47: "The process of emanation necessarily obeys the same principle of the system of names – onomatology and ontology coincide. […] Due to this coincidence, the process of emanation is described as a *linguistic event*." Beyond the suggested principle of coincidence, it is not clear how one aspect informs the other; how onomatology modifies the traditional cosmic systems that Giqatilla was intimately acquainted with.

[81] Martini, *Punctuation*, 27. But compare her assertion (p. 26) that "Abulafia [nevertheless] remained an important teacher for him."

[82] Martini, *Punctuation*, 65-83, and passim

through the Masoretic Hebrew vowel tradition of the *niqqud* (vowel points) while tracing some of its formulations back to the twelfth century polymath Abraham ibn Ezra. Although preliminary, Martini's remarks on this issue point to an important construct, intimated in the writings of Ibn Ezra, which assumes an analogy between cosmic-natural motion and patterns of phonetic motion marked by the *niqqud* system. Building on this connection to Ibn Ezra, Martini's work shows how this basic analogical construct was implemented by Giqatilla, "whose main concern was to show the close connection between vowels and motion."[83]

Turning to Ibn Ezra's linguistic system suggests the model of the Speculative Grammarian which, if applied to Giqatilla, would render his conception of the Hebrew language as reflecting cosmic order, the latter conditioned by the principles of motion. This approach successfully illuminates central sections in *Ginnat Egoz* that theorize principles of cosmic motion—especially non-locative motion (viz., intelligible actuality)—through the vowel systems of Ibn Ezra and, possibly, David Qimḥi. [84]

Nevertheless, the model that emerges from Martini's discussion is fundamentally limited: it treats the Hebrew language as merely reflecting cosmic structure, much in line with Ibn Ezra's semiotic construal of the vowel-system,[85] while minimizing its constructive aspect. That is,

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[83] Martini, *Punctuation*, 61. Cf. Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 83-86, esp. n. 9. See also Morlok's suggestion (*Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 109) that "[a] microscopic reading of scripture in its names, letters and vowels in *Ginnat Egoz* makes possible a telescopic reading of and knowledge about the universe […]." Compare Dal-Bo (*Emanation,* 86): "[Giqatilla's] theory of pronunciation here recalls Stoic philosophy that sternly correlates linguistic facts with the physical word." Martini acknowledges, or rather assumes, Giqatilla's phraseological allusions to Elazar of Worms and related Ashkenazi sources. In this respect, she accepts the arguments of affinity made already by Blickstein and others. Yet, a central argument of hers is that "[Giqatilla's] main inspiration with regard to the vowel as a mover of not only the letters but also the spheres was Avraham Ibn 'Ezra, who under the influence of his Arabic forerunners explained this concept extensively in some of his grammatical treatises" (ibid, 64). Note that Moshe Idel (*Mystical Experience*, 23; *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 146) drew attention to Abulafia's speculative deliberations in *'Or ha-Sekhel* on the esotericism of the five vowels, in the context of which he mentions Ibn Ezra. It has been suggested that rather than assuming that Abulafia was the source of Giqatilla on this matter, we should consider a reverse source-recipient relationship. See Gottlieb, *Studies*, 105, and more recently Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 131-32. My discussion of the vowel-points in Chapter 4 draws on and further supports the latter.

[84] See *GE* 157.

[85] See our discussion in Chapter 1.

Martini's implied model successfully demonstrates the thematic connections of Giqatilla's thinking, but without addressing how Giqatilla reconceptualizes these themes in his system. The elaborated discussions in *Ginnat Egoz* clearly suggest that Giqatilla was a constructive adopter of Ibn Ezra's linguistic system, in the sense that he adjusted the function and meaning of the various vowels while further rearranging them into a system that reflects his broader theological and metaphysical aims. These systematic adjustments follow that Giqatilla was not simply applying Ibn Ezra's grammatical insights but transforming them into a new kind of explanatory framework – one that the Speculative Grammarian model cannot fully capture.

The Linguistic Theologian: Proposed Model and Thesis of Present Study

The three models discussed above—the Ecstatic Mystic, Philosophical Mystic, and Speculative Grammarian—reveal important dimensions in Giqatilla's early thought, particularly in his *Ginnat Egoz*. This work contains clear traces of Togrami's themes while reflecting those present in Abulafia's Kabbalah. It likewise engages in lengthy discussions on traditional issues in ontology and cosmology, with explicit reference to Maimonides and Samuel ibn Tibbon, and with clear allusions to the Neoplatonic doctrines of Solomon ibn Gabirol, Isaac ibn Latif, among others. Finally, *Ginnat Egoz* takes detailed and highly speculative interest in the linguistic structures of the *niqqud*, on the one hand, and the traditions about divine names, on the other.

My main departure from the suggested models is that they are limited in scope. Specifically, they disregard the 'point' of Giqatilla's system, to use Giqatilla's cardinal motif, out of which all three dimensions unfold as intersecting with one another. Considering these limitations, I propose a fourth model: Giqatilla as linguistic theologian, who grounds his

cosmology in the creative principle of Hebrew language itself. My argument is that the construal of the Hebrew language reveals a principle of vitality that renders creation as the simple act of linguistic expression of God's primordial existence. Concomitantly, Giqatilla's notion of simple vitality, principally linguistic, reframed the prevailing cosmological and ontological ideas in a way that draws on the specific qualities that can be inferred from linguistic activity.

Model of Present Study: The Linguistic Theologian

The model that my present study aims to develop is premised on the following four assumptions. First, Giqatilla was a theologian and theorist of language who worked toward a coherent, albeit complex, program with a clear vision of the metaphysical significance of language as a creative principle. Second, this vision is grounded in the longstanding Jewish theological maxim of creation through speech, although channeled through medieval formulations of this theological principle together with clear references to the seminal *Sefer Yeṣirah* and some of his early commentaries. Third, Giqatilla's cosmic-language model was equally informed by the philosophical and cosmological doctrines of the time, together with the linguistic developments of figures such as Ibn Ezra. Finally, Giqatilla's approach to these systems of thought was constructive, in the sense that they were adopted and further adjusted to fit his broader metaphysical aims. All four assumptions will be deliberated and further supported in the following chapters.

The main argument developed in this model draws on the analysis of speech, as manifested in *Ginnat Egoz*, to construct Giqatilla's worldview. Giqatilla prioritizes phonetic motion as a linguistic activity that is simple, and which carries no semantic function. This linguistic activity is what differentiated God's speech as a simple creative act. I further argue that Giqatilla develops a comprehensive method in *Ginnat Egoz*, which rests on the general distinction between the

semantic and referential function of language, on the one hand, and simple phonetic activity, on the other hand. The prioritization of the vowel over the letter suggests not only that the function of language must be analyzed with respect to non-semantic dimensions, but that the vowel represents the primal and core activity that constitutes speech in the first place. Conversely, this activity, in and of itself non-semantic, operates in relationship to the constructs of meaningful language—letters, words and their semantic production.

This distinction facilitates his analysis of Hebrew as a divine language, but it also frames his cosmology more fundamentally. The semantic function of words constitutes the essential and so-called static dimension of the created order, the latter consisting primarily of the essential definition of created things and of the causal laws of Nature. The differentiation of phonetic motion as a determining principle of linguistic activity complements the essentially differentiated cosmic scheme, functioning as the principle of simple vitality. What is achieved through the paradigm of speech is a cosmos that is unified by a principle of existential vitality that is prior to the intelligible and essential determination of things, and which, in Giqatilla's view, the available philosophical and cosmological models struggle to account for. The essential constitution of things, on the one hand, and their existential and vital unity, on the other hand, can be viewed as complementing principles only through the prism of language and, more specifically, the divine creative language, Hebrew. That is, the simple vitality that permeates and unites things, beyond their essential determination, is the vowel.

Five Organizing Themes of the Proposed Model

My proposed model takes Giqatilla's expressed aim—to develop a transformative theology—at face value. I will base my analysis on the organizing themes of *Ginnat Egoz* and examine their interplay with Giqatilla's deliberations on the nature of the Hebrew language. By tracing this

dialectical relationship, I can examine whether and how Giqatilla reconceptualizes philosophical issues to demonstrate language's creative power. This interpretive framework, while requiring certain working assumptions, will be tested against the textual evidence.

This assumed interplay is reflected in various themes, the examination of five of which will serve to develop the linguistic-theological model.

First, I examine how Giqatilla redefines the traditional Jewish-Neoplatonic *yesod* ('foundation', 'principle', 'element') by associating this concept with the Hebrew vowel-point *ḥolam*. This marks the transformation of a hypostatic ontological principle, designated as a pre-essential source of cosmic emanation, into the dynamic principle of phonetic activity.

Second, I analyze Giqatilla's reversal of the matter and form distinction, a conceptual construct prevalent at the time which Maimonides and others used to distinguish the semantic content of speech from its verbal articulation, designating the two form and matter, respectively. Giqatilla adopts this construct while attributing linguistic priority to the phonetic vowel over the semantic plane of letters and words. This reversal offers a conceptual framework for assessing the function of phonetic motion, proposing a model where vowels achieve ontological priority as principles of undifferentiated vitality rather than of semantically differentiated meaning. By considering the reversal of terms, we will also examine the sense in which phonetic motion functions as form of language.

Third, I trace a twofold analogical construal of the natural sublunary elements, whose form Giqatilla identifies as motion. I first show how he conceptualizes these elements, defined by motion, as reflecting universal principles that underlie each of the three cosmic grades—intelligible, spherical, and sublunar. I then examine how Giqatilla completes the analogization of the elements, *qua* principles of motion, through the prism of language. That is, how the universal

elements are analogized as Hebrew vowels, epitomizing thereby the principle of simple vitality. The systematic connection between the two—cosmological elements and specific vowels—is pivotal for constructing a cosmology that is principally linguistic rather than merely reflected in language.

Fourth, I investigate how Giqatilla's somewhat ambiguous position on cosmic emanation, grounded in the priority of language, resolves an apparent tension that he inherits from Maimonides. This tension consists of Giqatilla's utter denial of any form of ontological analogy between primordial existence of God (*hawwayah qadmonit*) and renewed existence (*hawwayah meḥudeshet*) of all beings, while concomitantly designating the former as the latter's existential source. I argue that Giqatilla's conception of linguistic activity facilitates a distinction between two types of emanation, "robust" (essential identity between cause and effect) and "restricted". While robust emanation assumes an essential identity or relationship between cause and effect, the restricted type focuses on the existential dependence of effect on cause without implying essential similarity. I show how the latter is modeled by Giqatilla's notion of linguistic activity and how, further, it allows him to bridge the gap between a God that is utterly transcendent while serving as the ontological foundation of the cosmic order.

Finally, positing linguistic activity as the premise of Giqatilla's cosmos, I examine how he reframes traditional terms like *hazkarah*, *hakhraḥah*, and *shimmush* which were originally connected to esoteric practices relating to the divine names. A careful reading of *Ginnat Egoz* suggests that Giqatilla systematically reinterprets these terms from mystical practices into linguistic-metaphysical principles governing the morphological inflection of the divine Name and its ontological consequences. As such, these principles further reveal how language underlies and further modifies Giqatilla's general cosmology.

Organizing Structure of Proposed Model: Between Giqatilla and Abraham ibn Ezra

Giqatilla's linguistic model builds on Abraham ibn Ezra's cosmic-linguistic speculations while transforming their philosophical foundation. Where Ibn Ezra develops analogical relationships between Hebrew linguistic elements and natural phenomena, Giqatilla converts these analogies into direct metaphysical principles. This transformation operates across two primary structural dimensions that organize his cosmological system.

First, Giqatilla reconceptualizes Ibn Ezra's vowel-motion analogy by grounding cosmic motion itself in the metaphysical activity of Hebrew vowels, rather than treating vowels as merely simulating natural motion. This shift creates a systematic hierarchy where linguistic principles govern rather than reflect cosmic order. Accordingly, the vowel-points, which in Ibn Ezra's account are analogous to natural motion, are systematized by Giqatilla as consisting of two genres of motion—*yesod* ('foundation') and *binyan* ('construct'). The former epitomizes a principle of cosmic vitality that is foundational and is thus beyond the spherical expression of natural movement. This leads to significant changes in both the structure and significance of the vowels with respect to Ibn Ezra's original system.

Second, Giqatilla's cosmological system builds on yet another theme adopted from Ibn Ezra, namely, the arithmetical properties of the Indian-decimal number system which Giqatilla applies to formalize the relationship between the transcendent One and the cosmic order that consists of ten parts. In Sefer ha-Mispar, Ibn Ezra introduces the decimal system to develop an arithmetical construal of the cosmos, both consisting of nine—the numerical digits 1-9 and the nine spheres encompassing the terrestrial realm. Giqatilla adopts and transforms Ibn Ezra's numerical cosmology by shifting from a decimal framework to a base-11 system centered on the number 11 (יא). This mathematical choice reflects a fundamental theological principle: the

Hebrew notation *yod-'aleph* (י״א) embodies the relationship between God as transcendent One (א) and the cosmic order of ten spheres (י). Through this base-11 framework, Giqatilla develops a 'cosmic-radix cycle' where every numerical operation reflects the dynamic between divine unity and cosmic multiplicity, transforming calculation itself into a tool for contemplating the relationship between transcendence and emanation. This radix cycle, originally introduced by Ibn Ezra, is important for Giqatilla's linguistic system, where the letters *'aleph* and *yod* not only function symbolically, designating the One and the created world respectively, but also epitomize a linguistic process that connects the two.

These structural transformations demonstrate how Giqatilla's "constructive approach" operates—adopting conceptual frameworks from his sources while systematically redefining their ontological status and function according to his linguistic metaphysical commitments.

Study Design and Chapter Overview

The aim of this study is to elucidate the conceptual foundations of Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* while advancing a model that best explains Giqatilla's linguistic and metaphysical objectives. In this respect, this study aims to be both reconstructive and corrective. It clarifies how various philosophical and theological principles are reworked by Giqatilla to form a metaphysics that is grounded in the Hebrew language, and it thereby corrects previous misconceptions of these principles.

Ideal and Ideas: Methodological Approach and Scholarly Context

My study of Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* focuses on his theological deliberations on the nature of the Hebrew language, and it is framed two correlative principles. The first is the divine origin of

speech, while the second principle is that the cosmic order, with its natural laws, is the immediate expression of this speech.

The challenges of addressing *Ginnat Egoz* consist in explicating the terms of each principle but, more importantly, the connection between them. In other words, how does a general assumption about the primacy of the Hebrew language translate into a comprehensive account of the world?

The relationship between the two principles concerns the translation of a theological principle (principle 1) into an elaborated cosmic paradigm with differentiating parameters and a logic of its own (principle 2). To analyze this relationship, I draw on Amos Funkenstein's distinction between ideals and ideas as a methodological framework for understanding systematic worldviews. In brief, an ideal marks the grounding principle of a given worldview which, as such, precedes the specific ideas and rational procedures that provide the systematic deliberation of that ideal, turning it into a robust worldview.[86] Aristotle's Final Cause, for example, is an ideal that predisposes a teleological worldview. The specific ideas and procedures developed in the natural sciences constitute the systematic deliberation of such a worldview. This, to be clear, is not a historical account of the chronological primacy of universal concepts.

Applying these structural terms to *Ginnat Egoz*, my study examines how Giqatilla implements linguistic and philosophical ideas to systematically construe his theological ideal of divine speech as cosmic foundation. While the theological assumption of creation through speech (the ideal) is common, Giqatilla's specific construal of this principle through the ontological

[86] On the definition of systems as constructs of ideals, see Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 18-22 and passim. Funkenstein's formal construct appears to respond to a line of thinkers who were occupied with the demarcation of systems and the principles that regulate such systems. Cf. Funkenstein's remarks on Kant's regulative ideas (ibid, 18), and on Foucault's notion of *episteme* (ibid, 21, n. 5). It would be worth to compare this general distinction between the ideas of a system and its ideal to Aristotle's notion of the 'principle,' which epitomizes the fundamental premise of a science, and is thus prior to the scientific procedures that explicate the essential attributes of a subject (*Posterior Analytics* I, 9-10).

primacy of phonetic motion (the ideas) distinguishes his approach and grants *Ginnat Egoz* its innovative character.

A second aspect of my methodological approach is the analysis of concepts according to the systems of thought in which they are developed. This relates to the observation that themes and concepts can carry different functions across varying intellectual systems. An abstract concept like the ontological 'point'—central to Giqatilla but also to early Kabbalistic thought more generally—can maintain its signifying term ('point') and features (e.g., 'ungraspable') across systems of knowledge, while its function and denoted meaning are determined by the particular system in which it is developed. Thus, the 'point' can denote the idea of an infinitesimal metaphysical point, on the one hand, and the idea of simple activity as epitomized in the undifferentiated vowel-point, on the other.[87]

To be clear, I am not purporting straightforward contextualism, i.e., the view that the meaning of concepts is fundamentally context bound.[88] Giqatilla's theological system does not exhaust the potential meanings of the abstract theological 'point' and, further, the textual and terminological affinity between different uses of 'point' should not be disregarded. But there is nevertheless a significant difference in how the point is implemented and reworked within a specific theological system. For Giqatilla, this difference is meaningfully expressed in the idea of simple motion epitomized by the vowel-point. This approach illuminates both Giqatilla's relationship to, and distinction from, neighboring systems of theological thought. It allows me to trace not simply what concepts he inherits, but how his distinctive theoretical commitments

[87] See, for example, Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's paraphrase of Ibn Gabirol's in *Liqqutim*, 230.

[88] At issue is the historical-contextualist response to Arthur Lovejoy's concept of unit-ideas, developed in the 1930s. For a comprehensive assessment of a century-long debate, see Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, "Making Sense of Conceptual Change," *History and Theory*, 47: 3 (2008): 351-72. Peter Gordon, "Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas," in *Modern Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Darrin McMahon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 32-55. In recent years, Kuukkanen (ibid) and others have reclaimed the history of ideas proposed by Lovejoy, albeit in a modified–contextualized form.

systematically rework traditional terms, revealing what makes his approach innovative while maintaining continuity with broader theological traditions.

In some respects, my approach to Giqatilla continues recent scholarly efforts to reevaluate the relationship between philosophy and thirteenth century Kabbalah.[89] These studies expanded the purview of key Kabbalistic ideas and structures, including the role of emanation, the distinction between the divine hypostatic realm and the created world, and the adaptation of Aristotelian cosmological models into the theosophical models of the *sefirot*.

By expanding these attempts to the issue of language, my study tackles a core tenet of Giqatilla's thought that has been understudied in this respect. More importantly, it considers the broader philosophical purview of Giqatilla's early thinking while keeping focus on his main theological contribution—viz., linguistic motion as a metaphysical principle. A working assumption of my work is that the meaning and implications of this theological tenet cannot be fully explained by the contextual terms in which Giqatilla's thinking initially originated.

Philosophical Crossroads in Ginnat Egoz: Constructive Perspectives

My suggested methodological approach proves productive for addressing the conceptual and literary structure of *Ginnat Egoz*. I have already noted various intellectual traditions that intersect in *Ginnat Egoz*, several of which I have briefly discussed when reviewing the suggested scholarly models. Consideration of these traditions is important for explicating not merely the intellectual background of Giqatilla's project, but also and primarily the use that he makes of the different principles and concepts to construct his cosmic-linguistic model. These concepts range from Ibn

[89] The list of sources is extensive. See cited scholarship in Judith Weiss, "Spherical Sefirot in Early Kabbalah," *Harvard Theological Review* 117, no. 4 (2024), 772, n. 5. Cf. Weiss' own contribution on this subject. (ibid, 781-84, and passim). See also Tanja Werthmann, "Prime Matter as Wisdom in Geronese Kabbalah: Philosophical Precedents to the Elevated Ontological Status of the Hypostatic Female," *Journal of Religion* 101 (2021): 223.

Ezra's vowel-point system and the esoteric principle of *shimmush* ('inflection of the Name'), mentioned above, through deliberations on the category of 'possible existence' or the conceptual distinctions between essence and action. My present study considers these concepts as part of Giqatilla's broader linguistic project. As is the case with the aforementioned themes, these concepts are explicated in terms of their relevance to language, while considering the sources that form the intellectual grid of *Ginnat Egoz*.

The works of the thirteenth century thinker Isaac ibn Latif are an important source, particularly *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*,[90] and arguably *Ṣurat 'Olam*.[91] Giqatilla's affinity to Ibn Latif was initially detected by Sarah Ora Wilensky and Asi Farber Ginat,[92] and further by Shlomo Blickstein,[93] although some important aspects were omitted from these discussions. These include the ontological role of speech and the aforementioned principle of *shimmush* ('inflection of the Name'), as well as the analogical construal of the sublunar natural elements (*yesodot*) in terms of universal principles. The latter, developed in *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, *Ṣurat 'Olam,* and *Ginzei ha-Melekh*,[94] offer an important framework for addressing Giqatilla's cosmology. Much of Giqatilla's thinking in this regard finds further articulation upon comparison with Ibn Latif.[95]

Another important point of contact between Giqatilla and Ibn Latif is their respective doctrines of the Tetragrammaton. They both responded to Abraham ibn Ezra's theology of the Name by distinguishing the name 'Eheyeh from WHWH, while construing the former as the active linguistic principle which constitutes renewed existence. The terms and phrasings in Chapter 16

[90] Apostolic Library, MS Vat. ebr. 335 (henceforth *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*)
[91] Raphael Esudri's edition, in: Raphael Esudri "Inquiries in the Philosophy of R. Isaac Ibn Latif," (Dissertation, The Hebrew University, 2008), vol. 2, (henceforth *Ṣurat 'Olam*)
[92] Heller-Wilensky, *Mystical Sources*, 321; Farber, *Fragment*, 159, n. 5.
[93] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 97-101. On Ibn Latif and Giqatilla, see also the sporadic remarks in Shoey Raz, "Isaac Ibn Latif: A Neoplatonic Metaphysician of the 13th Century – An Historical-Intellectual Inquiry," PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2013, 23-24, 130-31.
[94] In *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 28-31 (henceforth *Ginzei ha-Melekh*)
[95] See detailed discussion in Chapter 2 (passim)

of Ibn Latif's *Ṣurat 'Olam* are particularly reminiscent of Giqatilla's treatment of the Name in Part One of *Ginnat Egoz*. Like Ibn Latif, Giqatilla further differentiates the Tetragrammaton as the primordial and hidden Name that transcends both the form of pronunciation and, consequently, the intelligible forms.[96]

Further influences surface through allusions to unnamed philosophers whose opinions Giqatilla selectively contests and affirms.[97] While his engagement with seminal sources such as the *Book of Substances* or the *Theology of Aristotle* can only be conjectured, his acquaintance with their associated traditions is strongly indicated. My methodological approach reconstructs both direct and oblique allusions, assembling them into a coherent picture that reveals the reworking of these sources within his linguistic framework. In this framework, cosmological and linguistic principles are systematically integrated to articulate the theological idea of creation in speech. Among these principles is the *yesod* ('foundation') mentioned above as one of the organizing themes of Giqatilla's linguistic model.

I have already indicated Giqatilla's direct engagement with Maimonidean cosmological doctrines. We have also seen that this connection was acknowledged by most scholars, although they often seem ambivalent as to effect of this engagement on Giqatilla's broader theological claims. While refraining from conclusive claims, my methodological approach views Giqatilla as a constructive interpreter of Maimonides, in the sense that he both accepts core principles of Maimonidean theology while actively modifying them in accordance with his linguistic theology.

[96] "The meanings and intelligible forms that pertain to the Name [of four letters] point to the sublime name that transcends All, like the visible that points to the invisible and the sensible to the intelligible. This hidden [name] is the source of sources and the holy of holies."

[97] See, for example, Giqatilla's reference to the 'philosophers' in his discussion of time and natural motion (*GE* 359). His discussions paraphrases (and further modifies) a central section in Maimonides' *Guide* 2:13. See discussion in Chapter 2.

Structure of Dissertation and Chapter Overview

The present study begins with an overview of twelfth century ideas of speech in Hebrew linguistic thought, focusing on the relationship between articulated speech and meaningful conceptions of the world. I apply the conceptual distinction between matter and form as my methodological framework for addressing this question while designating Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra as alternative positions on the matter. Maimonides disregards physical voice altogether, considering it the matter as opposed to the meaningful and essential aspect of mental concepts, whereas Ibn Ezra includes unarticulated phonetic motion in his analysis of the relationship between language and world. These two positions were influential on Giqatilla, who developed a linguistic model that is effectively original while working against the conceptual framework developed by the mentioned figures. (Chapter 1)

I then map out the cosmology in relationship to which Giqatilla constructed his linguistic theology. This cosmology is essentially an amalgam of Aristotelianism and Judeo-Arabic Neoplatonism, structured around the threefold division of sublunar, spherical, and intelligible worlds. But Giqatilla's linguistic claims equally modify the established cosmological traditions, forming thereby a worldview that best fits his more fundamental claims about the ontological priority of the Hebrew language. Accordingly, I examine the interpretative aspects in Giqatilla's cosmology while keeping sight of its implications for language more broadly. This involves consideration of cosmic principles, primarily the notion of cohesion, dynamism, and vitality. (Chapter 2).

Next, I examine Giqatilla's metaphysical framework in relation to the issue of language. Here my conceptual framework consists of the traditional metaphysical issues dealt with by Maimonideans like Samuel ibn Tibbon, on the one hand, and by Jewish Neoplatonists like Samuel

ibn Gabirol, on the other. Two interrelated issues that frame my discussion of Giqatilla's metaphysics are the relationship between the transcendent One and the Universal Intellect, and the question of cosmic emanation. I set the terms of both issues, as reflected in *Ginnat Egoz*, on which I then base my consideration of Giqatilla's conception of linguistic creation, and of the vowel specifically. This move enables me to examine how Giqatilla isolates a theological principle that modifies the terms of the aforementioned metaphysical issues. I specifically examine whether and how Giqatilla infers from language the notion of the pre-essential act, applying it as a theological principle that informs our understanding of the world as created by God and animated through an act that is not substantially qualified. I argue that Giqatilla employs the model of the Hebrew vowels to construe this act as pure movement, devoid of essential-determining properties (Chapter 3).

Finally, I turn to Giqatilla's elaborative linguistic model, premised primarily on a threefold distinction between vowel-points, vowel-letters, and Hebrew consonants. I show how these three dimensions constituted a multifaceted cosmic-linguistic system in which meaningful conceptions, to return to Maimonides, are only one aspect of the world, the latter further grounded in a vitality that is simple and beyond essential determination. I then examine how this cosmic-linguistic observation factors into Giqatilla's central claim about his project, namely, that the understanding of the Hebrew language is grounded in a theology that transcends the philosophical understanding of the world that is limited in essence. Specifically, I show how Giqatilla uses language to explicate the limited world to which philosophical investigation ultimately leads, and how the inner vitality articulated in the Hebrew language complements true knowledge of the world. This, in a sense, connects to Giqatilla's declared aim in his introduction to *Ginnat Egoz*, namely, to reveal the theological truths in order to secure the true metaphysical and cosmological principles of the world.

I conclude this chapter with an issue pivotal to *Ginnat Egoz*, namely, the role of the Tetragrammaton, God's Proper Name, in relation to Giqatilla's system of language and, consequently, to his conception of the created world.

Chapter One: The Interiority and Exteriority of The Hebrew Language: Conceptual Framing

The distinction between diverse spoken languages and their presumed prototypal origin became a central preoccupation in discussions of language following the twelfth century. This genealogical framework—commonly associating the prototypal language with Hebrew—attracted considerable intellectual attention in subsequent centuries and inspired systematic efforts to contemplate and reconstruct this primordial linguistic ideal.[1]

Within the context of Jewish tradition, the notion of a primordial language was intimately tied to another conception of language, one formulated in archetypal terms. Hebrew was understood not only as the historical origin of human languages but also as a linguistic archetype reflecting the cosmic order itself—the ideal by which the cosmos is created and sustained. This development raised a fundamental question that would occupy medieval Jewish thinkers: What constituted the basis of Hebrew's archetypal status? Did this status derive from the conceptual meaning behind words, or did the physical sounds themselves—their actual pronunciation, rhythm, and phonetic patterns—play a constitutive role in Hebrew's essential linguistic function?

An early framework for approaching this question appears in the work of the Jewish Hellenist Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 45 CE), who addressed the issue by establishing a systematic distinction between what he termed the 'interiority' and 'exteriority' dimensions of speech—

[1] The histories of these attempts were documented and discussed in several works. Two notable examples are Umberto Eco's review of late medieval and early modern attempt to construct the perfect language, which reviews late medieval and early modern attempt to construct the perfect language and Maurice Olander's analysis of Romantic and post-Romantic accounts of language as cultural and racial constructs. Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Cambridge, MA: Balckwell, 1995); Maurice Olander, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

corresponding respectively to intelligible concepts and their physical articulation. This analytical framework, common in ancient thought and subsequently adopted by Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages, served to construct a conception of ideal language by carefully discerning the intelligible and meaningful essence of language from the contingent features of its spoken form— realized phonologically through the act of physical speech. For Philo, divine language operated through intelligible forms, comparable to Plato's ideal Forms, while Adamic spoken language served as the corollary of this divine linguistic archetype, insofar as it renders things tangible according to their essences through the process of naming.

Philo's approach exemplifies a broader tendency to privilege the meaningful content of language over its physical properties—a tendency that would find its most developed expression in the thought of Maimonides, who focused on the linguistic function of essential representation. This framework posited that the essence of language resides in meaning rather than sound, treating physical speech as a necessary but ultimately external vehicle for conveying intelligible content.

Yet this qualification of physical speech as external to the essence of language was challenged by certain medieval Jewish thinkers who drew an innovative analogy between the phonological qualities of Hebrew and the forms of natural and cosmic motion. This cosmic-linguistic analogy—developed by thinkers such as Abraham ibn Ezra (twelfth century), who laid some essential groundwork for this idea—reflects a distinctive attentiveness to the physical elements of the Hebrew language. More significantly, it reveals a constructive attempt to rethink the fundamental relationship between language and world by examining linguistic features not necessarily bound to the essential determination of speech. These thinkers suggest that Hebrew's phonetic properties might themselves carry linguistic significance in relation to cosmological processes.

Such speculative approaches to the phonological properties of Hebrew raise a central question regarding the constructive role of Hebrew's physical features in medieval Jewish thought: How did thinkers like Ibn Ezra and others hypothesize the linguistic value of these phonological properties, and in what ways did such considerations reshape their conception of archetypal language? Were phonetic elements systematically integrated into their analysis of the Hebrew language's function, or were they regarded as merely technical features—external to language's essential meaning?

The present chapter addresses this question by examining two key approaches in medieval Hebrew linguistic thought, developed by Abraham ibn Ezra (d. ca. 1164) and Maimonides (d. 1204) respectively. A comparative discussion of these figures proves instructive for several reasons. Maimonides and Ibn Ezra shared similar philosophical sensibilities concerning the fundamental nature of language—particularly the function of the linguistic sign in relation to intelligible meaning—while developing markedly different approaches to the role of physical speech in Hebrew. Both thinkers played a constructive role in shaping subsequent discussions on the nature of Hebrew, particularly within the intellectual context of thirteenth-century Jewish thought.

The importance of understanding both approaches becomes especially evident when considering the intellectual development of Joseph Giqatilla (d. ca. 1325), the focus of this study. Examining the conceptual tension between these two fundamental approaches to language's essence—whether constituted solely by intelligible meaning or inclusive of phonetic properties—proves especially productive for understanding Giqatilla's early thought. While Giqatilla developed a linguistic theology that may be regarded as *sui generis*, the conceptual terms and

methodological framework of that theology can be partly traced back to the creative tension between these two models of the relationship between language and cosmic order.

Exteriority and Interiority in Jewish Medieval Linguistic Thought

Medieval accounts of the nature of language often alluded to Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* 16a,[2] which posits the threefold distinction of written letters, spoken words, and 'affections of the soul'. The written word is the image of the spoken word, which in turn is the image or likeness of thought. Finally, mental events, in their ideal form, resemble the things-that-are.[3] The distinction between written and spoken symbols, on the one hand, and notions in the soul, on the other, is generally framed in terms of conventional and natural. The latter, consisting of mental representations, is considered universal and identical across specific speaking-communities.[4]

While framed through this tripartite lens, the relationship between 'word' and 'thought' has been also formulated from the respective perspectives of 'exteriority' and 'interiority',[5]

[2] See Jacob Anatoli's translation of Averroes Middle Commentary on *De Interpretatione*, Bavarian State Library, MS. Heb 106, fol. 23a-24b. On the Anatoli's translations of Averroes' Middle Commentary, and on other commentaries, see Yehuda Halper, "All about that Res: From *intentio* to *res* in Mantino's Translation of Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione 16a3-8," *Materia giudaica: Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* 28 (2023): 67-78.

[3] See Geoffrey Lloyd's discussion on Aristotle's realistic ("extensional") theory of language (hence the function of mental events in reference to "things-that-are"). Geoffrey Lloyd, "Grammar and Metaphysics in the Stoa," *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. Antony A. Long (London: Athlone Press, 1971), 65. See also Andreas Graeser, "On Language, Thought, and Reality in Ancient Greek Philosophy," *Dialectica*, 31: 3 (1977), 337-38; Funkenstein, *Theology and Scientific Imagination*, 52-53. This somewhat schematic presentation of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* masks more complex issues, such as the linguistic relationship between tangible and abstract objects, the relationship between substance and its predicates in language, and the function of names. Similarly, it is not clear if 'affections of the soul' include sense data and imagination, or solely intelligible concepts. Other complications are discussed by commentators with respect to the parts of speech (e.g., is the adverb a 'name' in the sense of a symbol?). A review of these issues in Aristotle is available in Graeser, *On Language*, 372-77. For a general discussion on Aristotle's *symbol*, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 16-18; Eco, *Semiotics,* 26.

[4] A more complicated question is the referential function of mental representations concerning the objects themselves, thus pointing to a gap between the conceived notion of a thing and the thing itself, which can either exist or not.

[5] On the relationship between the Aristotelian tripartite model and the interior-exterior division, see Curzio Chiesa, Le problème du langage intérieur chez les stoïcisme. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 45 (1991), 313-14. We should also note that the relationship between the exterior and interior dimensions of speech was construed less schematically in Stoic linguistic thought, which considered the human a 'semiotic animal' whose interior discourse is inferred from and informed by physical signs. On these accounts, the voice and parts of physical speech are integral

recalling a familiar paradigm in Medieval discussions on the sources and kinds of knowledge.[6] Verbal expression, which constitutes the physiological plane of speech, stands in relationship to a linguistic process that is mental in some respect. This process—often marked by adjectival pairs such as 'corporeal' and 'material' on the one hand, and 'mental' or 'intelligible' on the other[7]—constituted the framework through which thinkers like Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Ezra developed their respective accounts of the nature of language. A key factor is the longstanding conceptualization of these aspects, physical and mental, in terms of exteriority and interiority of speech.[8]

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to the process of meaningful speech, the latter identified as semantically significant speech. M. Pohlenz, "Die Begründung der abendländischen Sprachlehre durch die Stoa," *Kleine Schriften,* vol. I (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1965) 79–86. Cf. Chiesa, *Stoïcisme*, 304-308. This, in turn, touches on a question central to Stoic thought, as to whether and how physical expressions correlate with meaningful names and propositions (*lekton*). In medieval Hebrew, the term often used to designate the interiority of language is *ha-dibbur* (or: *ha-mivta*) *ha-penimi* (lit. 'internal speech'). This term is, at times, nominalized and used in the substantive form, designating the rational soul or faculty (*ha-nefesh ha-medabber*). See: Shem-Tov Ibn Falaquera, *Sefer ha-Nefesh* (Warsaw: Traklin Print, 1924) 18-19; Idem, *Reshit Ḥokhmah* (Berlin: 1902), 34; Samuel Ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-Mayim*, critical edition by Rebecca Kneller (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2011), 206/449-50ǂ See also Irene Zweip, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Grammar… Logic and Linguistics in Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *Sefer ha-Mevaqqesh*," *From Narbonne to Regensburg: Studies in Medieval Hebrew Texts,* ed. A. van Uchelen and I. E. Zwiep (Amsterdam: Palache Institute, 1993), 31-35.

[6] Including sense perception, discursive reasoning, and intuitive knowledge. Ultimately, external sensory experience is construed and processed through the intelligible faculties. This picture of knowledge, framed by the anthropological analysis of the human being as a hybrid of corporeality and intangibility, becomes more complex. First, we must consider whether mental representations are inevitably bound to the material conditions of verbal expression. Second, we must ask whether direct knowledge can ever be available without mediation by sense data.)
These questions are central to medieval deliberations on the nature and procedures of speech, physical and cognitive, and the procedures of knowledge. Cf. Alfred Ivry, "The Logical and Scientific Premises of Maimonides' Thought," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism: Alexander Altmann Memorial Volume*, ed. Alfred L. Ivry et al. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 86-88. For an extensive overview of the 'internal'-'external' construct in Judeo-Arabic discussions on sources of knowledge, see Harry Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *Harvard Theological Review*, 28: 2 (1935), 69-133.

[7] Compare the list of terms in Wolfson, *Internal Senses*, 69-70.

[8] Some accounts further deliberated the structure of human language as reflecting the faculties of the human soul, while further intimating the connection between the mental and verbal expression. Ibn Falaquera, for example, distinguishes between *dibbur penimi* ('interior speech'), *dibbur maḥshavi* ('cognitive speech'), and *dibbur ḥiṣoni* (exterior speech). *Dibbur penimi* is the intellection of the universal truths which constitute human perfections, whereas *dibbur maḥshavi* corresponds to ethical discernment. Conversely, *dibbur ḥiṣoni* relates 'what is in the heart,' the latter corresponding to "expressions of the tongue." see *Sefer ha- Ma'a lot* (Jerusalem: Maqor 1970), 35-36. See also discussion in Raphael Jospe, *Torah and Sophia: The Life and Thought of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1988), 117-19. Cf. Ibn Tibbon's *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-Mayim*, ibid.

The conception of speech as involving both interior and exterior dimensions traces back to Platonic doctrines and, within the Jewish tradition, to Philo of Alexandria.[9] Plato's *Sophist* alludes to the interiority and exteriority distinction while identifying the two in complementary terms. The one is "the discourse of the soul with itself", and the other, the "stream that flows from the soul in vocal utterance."[10] Internal dialogue is understood as discursive reasoning, guided by judgment and verification, whereas external dialogue is described as the translation, or 'image' of thought in the form of articulated voice.[11] Philo adopts this line of analysis when addressing the relationship between divine *logos* and human spoken language—the latter bound to verbal expression—suggesting that in its ideal perfected state, interior speech conceives the world of ideal forms. Conversely, Hebrew— the ideal language—accomplishes the translation of these forms to tangible objects through the process of naming and signification. The Adamic act of naming in the story of Genesis models this process in its primordial form.[12]

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[9] On the linguistic exterior-interior distinction in ancient Greek thought, see Chiesa, *Stoïcisme*, 301-321; Idem, Le problème du langage intérieur dans la philosophie antique de Platon à Porphyre, *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 14:2 (1992), 15-30. On the twofold *logos* doctrine in early Christian theology, see the entry by Jean Pépin, *Logos*, in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade, vol. 9 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 12-13.

[10] *Soph.* 263e.

[11] In his *Commentary on Exodus* 4:10. Philo equates Moses, 'the weak-voiced and slow of tongue,' to 'internal *logos*,' further perceived in terms of sight and light rather than the hearing of voice. The eloquence of Aaron, on the other hand, illustrates the causal relationship and transition between internal and 'external *logos*'. (See Adam Kamesar, "The *Logos Endiathetos* and the *Logos Prophorikos* in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the Iliad," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies,* 44 [2004]: 163–66, 168-71). On the connection between Philo's internal language (viz. Moses; *logos*) and the Platonic world of ideal forms, see Maren Niehoff, "What is in a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 2: 3 (1995): 224-25. We should note the theological register in Philo's account, likening the ideal forms to divine *logos*, where beings are inscribed in the ideal essential form (Cf. Niehoff's remark's Ibid.)

[12] This touches on Philo's conception of the perfected language. On the one hand, he describes divine language as the intelligible expression through which things are intelligibly and essentially constituted. Insofar as it actively constitutes the essential forms of all things, divine language is not a composite of physical elements—names, nouns, or other parts of speech. On the other hand, divine language is archetypal in the sense that it serves as the frame of reference in relation to which spoken human language communicates the essence of things in the form of physical names. Indeed, Philo appears to consider human language as fundamentally a twofold affair which, paradigmatically exercised by Adam, renders the essence of a thing in the form of physical speech. On Philo's account of Adamic naming as a physical articulation of divine language, see David Winston, "Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory," *The Studia Philonica Annual*, vol. 3 (1991), 109-25.

Maimonides' Language: Between Matter and Form

In his *Treatise on the Art of Logic*, Maimonides considers speech a homonym which can either mean spoken words or mental representations.[13] Maimonides identifies 'spoken words' with the languages that are instituted by distinct language-communities,[14] and which are regulated by the structure and rules of grammar. By contrast, mental speech concerns the ideas that humans capture by virtue of their mental capacity. These two types of speech are structurally connected, even if categorically distinct—they constitute the respective exterior and interior dimensions of speech.[15] The one ('interior speech') functions as the form of the other (exterior speech).[16]

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[13] Treatise on the Art of Logic, trans. Israel Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938), Ch. XIV, 61-62. On the background of Maimonides' distinction between 'rational faculty,' 'thought' (or: 'internal speech'), and 'verbal expression' (or: 'external speech'), see Angela Jaffray, "At the Threshold of Philosophy: A Study of Al-Farabi's Introductory Works on Logic" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000), 112-15. See also Josef Stern, "Meaning and Language," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity Through the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Steven Nadler et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 236-44. Compare the intriguing discussion in Alfred Ivry, "The Logical and Scientific Premises of Maimonides' Thought," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism: Alexander Altmann Memorial Volume*, ed. Alfred L. Ivry et al. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 79–85.

[14] On the conventional and institutional nature of spoken language, see *Guide* II:30, III:8. For a general review on Maimonides' approach to the Hebrew language, see Bernard Septimus, "Maimonides on Language," in *The Culture of Spanish Jewry: Proceedings of the First International Congress*, ed. Aviva Doron (Tel Aviv: Levinsky College of Education, 1994), 35-54; Kellner, *The 'Normality' of Hebrew*, 413-44; and Aviram Ravitsky, "Maimonides' Theory of Language: Philosophy and Halakhah," *Tarbiẓ*, 76 (2007), 185-231. (in Hebrew)

[15] The parallel between the interior and exterior levels of speech is reflected in their respective syntactic structures, logical and grammatical, which parallel one another (Logic, Ch. I). Ibn Falaquera likewise asserts the organizing role of logic with respect to verbal expressions: "Logic prescribes the correct order for both speeches (viz. cognitive and expressive), and it thus participates in the art of grammar" (*Reshit Ḥokhmah*, 34). The relationship between the two is later (Ch. XIV) described in terms of translation through the art of logic: "This art provides common methods for all languages, guiding their external speech to the appropriate meaning by guarding them from error, such that verbal utterances will fit that which is concealed and equal to it, and to the degree that the utterance will neither add to, nor subtract from the ideas in the soul."
Joseph Stern's reading of Maimonides' *Logic* suggests the separability of 'interior language' from verbal expressions, finding support in Maimonides' comments (*Guide* 2.5) on angelic speech, i.e., the immaterial apprehension of the separated intelligences. See Joseph Stern, "Logical Syntax as a Key to a Secret of the 'Guide of the Perplexed.'" *Iyyun* 38, no. 2 (1989): 145-48 (Hebrew). Stern's reading of Maimonides' Guide is more restrictive. See also idem, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 193-97.

[16] Note that the terms form and matter were used, more generally, to distinguished utterances ('matter') from concepts ('form') or, more broadly, mental representations. See Al-Farabi's Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpret. 16a: "Letters are the material of expressions, just as the units of digits are the material of numbers. […] letters are materials of expressions. Sound is the genus of the material of expression, not the genus of expression itself." See *Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpret*, ed. Zimmermann, 17. Cf. Jaffray, *Threshold of Philosophy*, 190-91. Maimonidean commentators like the thirteenth century Shem-Tov Ibn Falaquera substantiated the linguistic distinction between matter and form, linking the *murgash,* ('sensory,' 'matter') of the word to its extensional function, referring perceptible

Maimonides' Logic regards interior speech as the mental representation of things according to their essential definition, or of universal concepts more broadly. The structure and form of these mental procedures are universal, in that they are not constituted by the conventional and institutional norms of a particular speaking community. These mental procedures operate in relationship to objects of thought, the former taking a denotative function in relationship to the latter. Conversely, the relationship between spoken words and interior speech can be understood in terms of the denotation—words refer to objects through the concepts that interior speech grasps.[17]

The relationship between mental representation and objects of thought is complicated by the fact that interior speech includes not simply concepts of meaning, as such, but the individual's psychological apparatus more broadly, including bodily and empirical experience and their imaginable content.[18] Put somewhat anachronistically, the notion of interior speech includes both the 'sense' that refers to the object of thought, which is indeed universal, and the individual's subjective state of representation. The philosopher's task is to refine their subjective representation,[19] gradually approaching the sense of the denoted object.

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objects, and the *'inyan* ('meaning') of the word to its intentional function. See discussion in Irene E. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation: A Short History of Medieval Jewish Linguistic* (Amsterdam: J.C, Gieben, 1997), 128-29.)

[17] Cf. Ehud Benor, "Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): 348.

[18] See Ivry, *Premises*, 82. Cf. *Guide* 2.12 on the image of divine actions ('overflow') in the limitation of human imaginable representation.

[19] The term *taṣawwur*, used throughout Maimonides' *Guide*, is contrasted with *taṣdīq*. *Taṣawwur* concerns the representation of primary concepts which are "self-evident and true," e.g., 'existence,' or acquired concepts, composed of several primary concepts, both of which do not involve value judgment (viz., 'true'/false'). Conversely, *taṣdīq*, corresponding to the Hebrew *ṣidduq* or *'immut*, signifies the verification or affirmation of propositions which can be either 'true' or 'false'. See Ivry, *Premises*, 79-80; Stern, *Form and Matter*, 193. See also Falaquera, *Sefer ha-Mevaqesh*, 126. The distinction between 'representation' and 'affirmation' is said of mental representations more broadly. See Anatoli's translation of Averroes' Middle Commentary on De Interpretatione [MS heb. 16, 34b-35a]: "A name is in the likeness to simple uncomposed notions which are neither true nor false. When these notions are neither existent nor nonexistent, neither true nor false, when not composed in a proposition."

This process seems satisfactory in the case of essential definition of things in the world, including the more abstract concepts of scientific investigation. Still, it is highly questionable whether this process of refinement can be completed when it comes to metaphysical objects. It is more likely that Maimonides prescribes this process as a normative ideal for such inquiry—that is, as a regulative principle for how one should approach the divine science—rather than as a descriptive account of what mental language can actually achieve in this domain, given the fundamental mismatch between human representative capacity and metaphysical truths.

This limitation becomes explicit in *Guide* 1:57, where Maimonides argues that the subtle notions pertaining to metaphysical and theological inquiry almost elude the mind. They "cannot be considered through the instrumentality of customary words," which implies that "we cannot represent this notion to ourselves except through a certain looseness of expression."[20] The challenge concerns what Maimonides' *Logic* identifies as the "subjects that pertain to God and, according to the philosophers, to the angels which are incorporeal,"[21] that is, the branch of the divine sciences that qualifies as theology.[22]

Understanding this limitation requires examining more closely how Maimonides conceives the relationship between different planes of language. What is curious in the citation from *Guide* I:57 is the presumed connection between the bounds of linguistic expression, on the one hand, and the

[20] *Guide of the Perplexed according to Shmuel Ibn Tibon's Translation*, ed. Yehudah Even Shmuel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2000), 113-14: "These subtle notions that very clearly elude the mind (i.e., metaphysics) cannot be considered through the instrumentality of customary words [...] for the bounds of expression in all languages are very narrow indeed, so that we cannot represent this notion to ourselves except through a certain looseness of expression."
[21] *Logic*, 63.
[22] On Maimonides' distinction between the two branches of 'divine sciences,' theology and metaphysics, see Shlomo Pines, Introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 1, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), cxii-cxiii. On the opinions of Maimonides' 'philosophers,' viz., Alfarabi and Avicenna, and their classifications of the 'divine sciences,' see Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," in idem, *Von Der Mitteltalterlichen Zur Modernen Aufklärung: Studien Zur Judischen Geistewstgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 95-107. See also Altmann's contention (p. 108) that Maimonides' *Guide* is focused primarily on theology, that is, divine science proper.

limitation of mental representation, insofar as it concerns metaphysical truths. We can understand this claim in two ways. Either 'expressions' here refers to the mental representation of interior speech which, even if separated from and independent of exterior speech, is nevertheless bound to the limitations of matter. Or 'expressions' here refers to the exterior speech, with the implication that interior speech is inescapably bound to, or affected by, physical speech.[23]

These two readings touch on the structural relationship between the interior and exterior planes of language. On the first reading, mental language can in principle be distinguished from verbal expressions,[24] while acknowledging fundamental limitations regarding metaphysical truths.[25] The second reading does not refute the principal gap between mental representations and metaphysical truths, but rather traces this gap to the influence of exterior speech. In other words, mental

[23] The latter reading takes us in a somewhat Saussurian direction, where the sign, primarily mental, is molded or affected by physiological sounds. Like Saussure's psychosocial signifier, one can argue that even when the mind operates with concepts independently of actual speech, those concepts are still structured by linguistic/verbal forms because they're composed of psychological signs that are inherently acoustic in nature.

[24] Stern's approach develops this first reading by providing a specific account of why interior speech remains limited: He ascribes this limitation to mental language's inherent syntactic structure, which proves inadequate in the context of metaphysical truths. The latter essentially negate syntactic and compositional forms, such as the structure of subject and predicate that characterizes ordinary thought objects. By locating the limitation of interior speech in its syntactic nature, Stern can retain the principal distinction between mental and verbal expressions while explaining the precise source of mental language's inadequacy. See Stern, *Syntax*, 148-49; *Form and Matter*, 197. And compare Ivry's assessment in *Premises*, 79. See also following note.

[25] This approach touches on Maimonides' presumed skepticism about the capacity of human apprehension, which he attributes to the contingency of matter. His position on this question has generated considerable scholarly debate, largely in response to Shlomo Pines' influential 1979 essay. Pines argued that Maimonides, following a form of skepticism he attributed to the later Alfarabi, imposed severe constraints on human intellectual capacity, restricting it primarily to empirical knowledge. Shlomo Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Alfarabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 82-109. On this basis, Pines (ibid, 94, 100) compared Maimonides to Kant regarding metaphysical knowledge, characterizing him as a metaphysical skeptic. This interpretation rested partly on the question of the human soul's eternity, particularly whether the soul can transcend its status as the form of particular matter. The limits governing human intellectual activity—which operates on objects composed of form and matter—remain contested. Pines (ibid, 95-96) took the radical position that human knowledge extends only to the material aspects of thought objects, thereby permitting only empirical knowledge. This position was adopted by scholars including Sarah Klein-Braslavy and Josef Stern, but challenged by Herbert Davidson and Alexander Altmann. Altmann, responding to Pines, argued that Maimonides' critical epistemology does not preclude some form of metaphysical knowledge. According to this view, humans can abstract forms from sensible objects and convert them into concepts to arrive at propositions concerning general metaphysical problems such as unity and existence, though the precise nature of such knowledge would remain unclear. Altmann observed that Maimonides presents human intellectual activity in two distinct modes: one that achieves pure concepts and ultimate truths, and another that remains tied to the material aspects of objects and thus limited to "speculation and investigation." Stern makes perhaps the strongest philosophical case for a version of the skeptical reading. See Stern, *Form and Matter*, 13-35.

representation's limitations and its dependence on physical speech mutually reinforce each other. This raises the question of whether, despite being superior to verbal expressions, interior speech is nevertheless 'bound' by the physical imprints of exterior speech.

Joseph Giqatilla's early conception of language, including Hebrew, developed in direct response to Maimonides. His remarks on the nature of human speech emphasize the limitations of verbal expression and its effects on human intellection. Like Maimonides, he acknowledges the categorical limitation of language in relation to divine truths. Yet it is precisely here that Giqatilla marks a decisive shift. In his system, the Hebrew letters assume ontological priority over intelligible concepts of meaning: the letters constitute the very principles of intelligible forms. Accordingly, the gap between language and divine truths is not simply an anthropological condition—stemming from the limitations of human speech—but rather an ontological condition intrinsic to language itself, and in particular to intelligible language. As later discussions will show, this emphasis on ontological priority leads to a further radicalization, whereby even letters are subordinated to elemental phonetic forces, understood as the most primal medium of divine articulation. This speculative tendency toward phonetic primacy finds an earlier formulation in the biblical exegesis of Abraham Ibn Ezra.

Abraham Ibn Ezra: Toward a Semiotic Cosmos

Our analysis of Maimonides' conception of language was framed by the relationship between exteriority and interiority aspects of speech, holding the respective positions of linguistic matter and form. This general construct is reflected also in Abrahm Ibn Ezra's biblical exegesis, which evokes the exterior and interior construct when equating meaning (*ta'am*) and spoken words to

soul (*nefesh; neshama*) and bodies (*gufot*), respectively.[26] The assumption that the linguistic sign is essentially determined in relationship to its internal meaning is further established through his intertextual analysis of biblical allegory. Distinct expressions with different denotative meanings are rendered synonymous with respect to their connotative meaning. The similes "like the dust of the earth" (*ke-'afar ha-'areṣ*) and "like the sand of the sea" (*ke-ḥol ha-yam*) mean the same thing.[27] Ibn Ezra further articulates his approach in this regard: "A saying that is repeated by the prophets is identical not by way of the actual expressions but by virtue of their [shared] meaning (*ta'am*)."[28] In his commentary on Exodus 20:1, Ibn Ezra describes the relationship between the word and its *ta'am* through the term *keli*: "The *ta'am* is likened to *neshama* ("soul"), whereas the word is likened to the *keli* of *neshama.*"[29] In medieval Hebrew, *keli* is an equivocal term which can mean 'vessel', 'instrument', 'sensory', and 'articulator'—all of which are pertinent to the characterization of the consonants.[30]

Ibn Ezra thus appears to accept the designation of meaning as the form of vernal expressions. But we should also note that the twofold equation of *ta'am* to *neshama* and of *millot* (lit. words) to *geviyyot* (lit. corpses[31]) alludes to, and arguably alters, a formula that was common in Hebrew linguistic thought, where the relationship between consonants and vowels is likened to

[26] *Safah Berurah*, ed. Mordekhai Goodman (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2020), 15.
[27] Gen. 13:16, 32:13.
[28] Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora ve-Sod Torah*, ed. Uriel Simon and Joseph Cohen (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007), 104. On Ibn Ezra's approach to biblical similes and allegories (*mashal*), see Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 33-35.
[29] *Commentary, Exod*., 20:1. Cf. *Commentary, Deut*., 5:5.
[30] Dunash ben Tamim, for example, distinguishes the consonants ("the firm letters") as *kelim*, insofar as they involve *keli ha-dibbur* (lit. the articulators). See *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, ed. Menashe Grossberg, 48. On the other hand, divine word is described as the *keli,* here in the sense of instrument, by which divine will is exercised. Cf. *Guide* I:64, and cf. the translations by Alharizi and Ibn Tibbon. Cf. also Gen. Rabbah 1.1. Still, *keli* is used, by Giqatilla and others, as an equivalent for *hergesh* (lit. "sensory"). Cf. Ginat Egoz, 22-23. On the term *keli* in medieval philosophical Hebrew, see Jacob Klatzkin, *An Anthology of Hebrew Philosophy Culled from Manuscripts and Printed Works*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Eschkol, 1926), 88-89.
[31] Cf. *Safah Berura*, 15

the relationship between body and soul or, *pneuma*.[32] Considered from a structural perspective, this means that the meaningful pronunciation of the consonants depends on the vowels. This idea leads to a preliminary inference about the function of vowels: Without their motion the letters are *áphona*, to use an Aristotelian term that several Hebrew sources render as *ʾilmot*, that is, "mutes."[33] Although Ibn Ezra focuses on the semantic function of meaningful speech, thus amending the mentioned body-spirit analogy, he also assigns phonetic motion an integral part in his deliberations on the essence of language, irrespective of the vowels' grammatical function in a semantically valid word.

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[32] In the Hebrew tradition, this structural distinction was commonly formulated by ascribing the vowel a role that is pre-semantic, the specific identity of which was formulated through terms such as *neshama* ("soul"), *ṣurah* ("form"), or *ruḥot* (*pneumata*). Cf. Ibn Ezra, *Safahh Berura*, 14; *Sefer Ṣaḥot,* ed. Mordekhai Goodman (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 2016), 51-53. An important source is Yehuda Halevi's proposition in Judah Halevi, *Cuzari*, ed. H. Hirschfeld (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1887), 230-31: "The vowels are the *pneumata* for which the consonants are bodies." This formula later became idiomatic in Jewish linguistic thought and was mediated in Kabbalistic sources from the thirteenth century through the *Bahir*. See *Sefer ha-Bahir* (ed. R. Margolies), 51. It should be stressed that the terms *neshama*, *ṣurah,* and *ruḥot* disclose distinct philosophical sentiments, and the preference for either of the terms is significant for a full appreciation of the various linguistic approaches that were developed following Halevi. Thus, Kabbalistic sources tend to designate the vowels with the term *neshama*, as opposed to the term *ṣurah,* used by the likes of Giqatilla and Ibn Latif. The implications of these terminological choices will be considered in Chapter 3. On the genealogy of Halevi's formula in Arabic and Hebrew linguistic traditions, see Jonathan Howard, "The Points in the Letters: Greek Philosophy in the Service of Medieval Jewish Linguistics," *Hebrew Union College Annual Volume,* 89 (2018): 261-96. It is worth noting that the replacement of *ruaḥ* (*pneuma*) with other terms appears already in early Rabbinic literature, where *ruḥot*, identified as a cosmic principle, is replaced by a term with a less material connotation, namely, *neshama*. Cf. Freudenthal, *The Air Blessed Be He,* 213. For the reception of this formula in thirteenth-century Castilian thought, see: R. Ya'akov ben Ya'akov, *Sefer ha-'Orah* (ed. D. Abrams), 319-20; Todros ben Yosef ha-Levi Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, ed. Mikhal Kushnir Oron (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1989), 73-73; Yitzhak ben Shlomo Ibn Sahula, "Perush Shir ha-Shirim le-R' Yitzhak Ibn Sahula," ed. Abraham Y. Green, *Meḥqerei Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisra'el* 6 (1987): 419; Ezra of Gerona, "Commentary to the Song of Songs," in *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, vol. 2, ed. C. D. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), 487; *Sha'ar Ḥeleq ha-Neqqudah*, National Library of France, MS. Paris.heb, 817, fol. 85a; Moshe de León, *Sefer ha-Mishkal*, ed. Jochanan H. A. Wijnhoven (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1964), 14; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, ed. Yirmiyahu Zwilling (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1975), 277-78.

[33] *Poet*. 1456 b 24-30. Aristotle further distinguishes between the vowel (or: sound), the semi-consonant (or: the continuant, e.g., *s*, *r*), and the full consonant (or: a stop, e.g., *g, d*). This division, especially between vowels and consonants, became a common property in both Arabic and Hebrew linguistic thought. For a linguistic-philosophical analysis of *áphona* in Plato, Gilbert Ryle, "Letters and Syllables in Plato." *The Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): 431-451. On the Hebrew characterization of the consonants as *'ilmot*, see David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der attributenlehre in der jüdischen religionsphilosophie des mittelalters von Saadja bis Maimûni* (Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1877), 173, n. 128. Consideration should also be given to the appearance of a similar formulation in the Karaite tradition which, punning on the Rabbinic hermeneutical principle of *qal wa-ḥomer* (lit. "lenient and strict"), renders *qal* (also "light) as *qol* (lit. "voice"), and *ḥomer* (also "matter") as the consonants. Cf. Aloni, *The Letters as Bodies,* 148-149.

Tenu'ah: Between Linguistic and Natural Motion

A salient feature of medieval linguistic thought, in both Arabic and Hebrew, is the designation of phonetic motion, the vowel, as the primal aspect of linguistic activity.[34] Because of this, a structural distinction is drawn in Semitic languages between the consonants of a word, which carry its semantic load, and the element that moves and activates their pronunciation.[35] This distinction, which draws *inter alia* on Aristotle's description of phonetic motion as the unifying principle of the consonants,[36] took a speculative turn in several linguistic accounts which drew the analogy between the respective principles of linguistic and cosmic-natural motion. What first facilitated this analogy is the connection between these two kinds of motion, linguistic and natural, that has long been explored through the Hebrew *tenu'ah*, which signifies both kinds of motion.[37]

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[34] Another aspect pertaining to the issue of linguistic motion is the primal nature of simple sound. Aristotle differentiates primitive sound as movement in air. (*de Anima*, 420b10-15) Primitive sound is characterized as natural and is common to most animals, in contradistinction to the artificial structures of intelligible speech. This distinction further leads to the characterization of sound as genus in relationship to words. Cf. the distinction that Boethius draws between simple and articulated sound, the latter consisting of elements in the form of letters: Boethius, *On Interpretation*, 16. We should also note that the designation of phonetic motion as the basis of speech has roots in Stoic thought, specifically in their characterization of physical speech as essentially pneumatic.

[35] See C.H.M. Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought*, vol. 3 (Routledge: New York, 1997), 19, 52-63, 82.

[36] See *De Interpret*. 16 a 19-20: "A noun is a conventional meaningful sound without time, no part of which is meaningful when it is separated." Cf. Al-Farabi, *ad loc*.: "Being composed of letters comes under the category of discrete quantity, while sound is a kind of quality. It comes under the category of quality, more precisely affective quality, as sound is essentially an affection." See *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, trans. F. W. Zimmermann, Classical and Medieval Logic Texts 3 (London: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1981), 16. The application of the principles of matter and form for the analysis of spoken language is made explicit by Averroes, who divides sound into two principles: "The one takes the place of matter and is called an unvoiced utter, the second takes the place of form and is called voiced utter. […] The people of our tongue," Averroes continues, "call the latter vowels, as well as prolonged and soft letters." Middle Commentary on Poetics, 1456b 34-37, ed. and trans. C. Butterworth, 118. Cf. also the later (fourteenth century) Hebrew translation by Todros Todrosi, *Be'ur Sefer ha-Shir,* ed. F. Gorgoni, 173b.

[37] To this we may add the Greek *kī́nēsis* which has been argued to be the etymological site where these two genres of motion were first conflated. See C.H.M. Versteegh, *Greek elements in Arabic linguistic thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 21-25. See also the discussion in Nick Posegay, *Points of Contact: The Shared Intellectual History of Vocalisation in Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 55-85. On the motion-vowel relationship in Arabic philosophy of language, see Jaffray, *At the Threshold of Philosophy* 191-92. On the translation of the Arabic background of the Hebrew *tenu'ah*, see Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, "Medieval Hebrew Grammarians on Hebrew Vowels," 362-64. Note that the principle of cosmic-linguistic similitude is focal to Stoic thought, which assumed the identity between linguistic grammar and parts of speech, and the *logos* that was considered the cohesive and permeating force of Nature. See the analysis in Lloyd, *Grammar and Metaphysics*, 63-71.

Sharing a speculative sentiment about the nature of spoken language, several Hebrew linguists further substantiated this connection in reference to Aristotle's natural philosophy. Aristotle's conception of sublunar rectilinear and translunar circular forms of motion,[38] broadly accepted in Jewish philosophy,[39] was incorporated into the analogical construal of the Hebrew vowels, the latter formulated according to the typological classifications of the vowel-points in Hebrew grammar.[40] Ibn Ezra expounded on the semiotic function of the Hebrew vowels by equating them to specific principles of natural motion. He first distinguished three of the seven Masoretic Hebrew vowels,[41] *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq*, and *pattaḥ*, as the three phonetic prototypes—each constituting a phonological sub-group of its own.[42] These prototypes, in turn, were construed as

[38] *Cael*. 268b. Aristotelian meteorology considers the movement of the elements accidental to their natural form, but it also explains the superiority of celestial circular motion by reason of its *terminus*, rather than by its actual shape. (Cf. De Gen. et Corr. II.2, 329b-330a) Inasmuch as the spheres undergo no causal change, their movement consequently manifests no modification in place. The terminus of spherical motion is identical to its present place, thus circular; an identity which, of course, follows the special character of the fifth supralunar element in Aristotelian accounts. Cf. Ibn Tibbon's 'Otot ha-Shamayim, ed. Fontaine, p. 11. Conversely, the respective *termini* of the sublunar elements resides 'outside' their compositional position and their rectilinear movement thus manifests the potential change in place, thus rectilinear. See citations, quotes and discussion in Christian Wildberg, *John Philoponus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Aether* (Berlin: Gruyter 1988), 93-99.

[39] On the reception of Aristotelian and Ptolemaic natural motion in Jewish thought, see Gad Freudenthal, "Cosmology: The Heavenly Bodies," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Steven Nadler and Tamar Rudavsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 304-317; 327-34.

[40] See Jonah Ibn Ǧanāḥ, *Opuscules*, 275-276; Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yesirah*, ed. P.B. Fenton, 216; Yehuda ben Barzilai, *Commentary on Sefer Yetsirah*, ed. S. Halbershtam. Cf. also the discussion in Versteegh, *Greek elements*, 25, and cited references. The priority assigned to three of the seven vowels accords with the classification of the vowels into three groups, each consisting of variations of a prime ('mother') vowel, and each of these mother vowels is considered analogical to one of three cosmic motions. Still, linguists did not unanimously agree regarding the identity of these 'mother' vowels. Accordingly, there exists some variation in terms of the vowels that typify cosmic motion. Later linguistic thinkers, Joseph Giqatilla, for example, amended this analogical construct according to the Ptolemaic model, which considers both circular and retrograde translunar motion. Cf. *GE*, 157. More on this in Chapter 2. On the Jewish reception of the Ptolemaic model, see Freudenthal, *Cosmology*, 311-12.

[41] In the Sephardi pronunciation, the seven vowels are reduced to the five: a,e,i,o,u. Ibn Ezra notably testified that the Hebrew speakers in Spain do not know how to distinguish *qameṣ* from a regular *pattaḥ*. See *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 12. Nevertheless, all seven vowels deliberated are by Sephardi grammarians. While phonetically insignificant, the difference between *qameṣ* and *pattaḥ* carries a grammatical function—the two marking distinct tenses, past and future, in a given homograph. For example: שָׁמְתִּי (*qameṣ* under the letter *shin*; past tense) and וְשַׁמְתִּי (*pattaḥ* under the *shin*; future tense according to the principle of *'avar mehupaḥ*; '*vav consecutive*'). Cf. Eldar 2016, 141.

[42] Luba Charlap, *Rabbi Abraham Ibn-Ezra's Linguistic System: Tradition and Innovation* (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1999), 24; Ilan Eldar *Hebrew Language Study in the Middle Ages: Texts and Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2016),142-44. On the threefold classification of the vowel-points, see Sáenz-Badillos, *Hebrew Vowels*, 366-67. Grammarians did not agree on the identity of the primary three vowels. Halevi's *Cuzari*, for example, places *qameṣ* instead of Ibn Ǧanāḥ's *shureq* or Ibn Ezra's *ḥolam,* while maintaining the respective identities of the other two vowels, *pattaḥ* and *ḥiriq*. See Judah Halevi, *Cuzari,* 131-33.

analogical to the three principal modes of natural motion. The vowels *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq* produce the respective raising and lowering phonetic movements and they accordingly represent rectilinear natural motion, upward and downward. Conversely, translunar spherical motion is epitomized by *pattaḥ*—an open phonological expression which entails no oral or labial contraction and whose movement stands steady.[43]

Although focused primarily on the three modes of natural motion, Ibn Ezra considered additional cosmological principles in his analogical deliberations on the Hebrew vowels. The vowel-point *shewa* (*sh-w-a*; שוא) signifies the ninth sphere (*primum mobile*), "the motion of which is equal (or: neutral)."[44] In his analogical construal Ibn Ezra makes an interpretive choice with respect to this particular vowel-point, the etymological construal of which invoked speculations throughout Hebrew linguistic history.[45] He construes its name—and its analogical function accordingly—as connoting the principle of 'equation': The name *Shewa* (שְׁוָא) derives from the root ש-ו-ה (*sh-w-h*), meaning 'to be equal' or 'to equate', as exemplified in the verb form נִשְׁתַּוֶּה (*nishtaweh*), meaning 'is equated.'[46] On his account, the motion of the ninth sphere, simple and

[43] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 3-4. On the labial features of *pattaḥ* in the Hebrew phonological traditions, see Geoffrey Khan, *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 245-47. For more on the relation between the vowels and the cosmological motions, see the comments by William Chomsky in *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol) Systematically Presented and Critically Annotated*, ed. W. Chomsky (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1952), 32. Other grammarians identified natural motion with their distinguished primary vowels. Ibn Ǧanāḥ, for example, differentiates the vowel-points *shuruq* and the *ḥiriq* as reflecting the primary rectilinear movements of the sublunar elements—upward (fire, air) and downward (water, earth). The *pattaḥ*, on the other hand, represents the rotational movement of the celestial spheres. Just as the pronunciation of the *pattaḥ* does not require the compression of the lips, so too the rotation of the celestial spheres remains unaffected by rectilinear movement, whether downward or upward. See Abū al-Walīd Marwān Ibn Janāḥ, *Opuscules et traités d'Abou 'L-Walid Merwan Ibn Djanah de Cordoue: Texte arabe publié avec une traduction française, ed. and trans. Joseph Derenbourg and Hartwig Derenbourg* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1880), 275-76. A similar account was introduced by Dunash ben Tamim, *Le Commentaire sur le Livre de la Création de Dunash ben Tamim de Kairouan*, ed. Paul Fenton (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 216. See also Yehuda Ben Barzilai, *Commentary on Sefer Yetsirah*, ed. Shlomo Halbershtam (Jerusalem: Brazani, 1971), 262b-63b.

[44] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 16. See Wilhelm Bacher, *Abraham Ibn Esra als Grammatiker; ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hebräischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1882), 64, n. 17.

[45] Aharon Dotan, "The Names of the Sheva in Early Hebrew Grammar," *Leshonenu* 19 (1954): 13-30; William Chomsky, "The Pronunciation of the Shewa: The Meaning of the Term," *The Jewish Quarterly Review 62*, no. 2 [1971]: 88. More on the identity of the *shewa* and its etymological construal in Chapter 4.

[46] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 16; *shawe*; שָׁוֶוה.

neutral, is reflected in the phonological quality of the *shwa* which is neutral and not predetermined.[47]

In addition to these general and particular forms of natural motion, the vowel-points are equated to the specific cosmic planets. Thus, *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq* symbolize "the great luminaries," viz. the sun and the moon,[48] whereas *pattaḥ* symbolizes Saturn—the highest of the planets situated under the fixed stars.[49]

Our brief remarks add an important dimension to the schematic opposition between the interiority of concepts and the exteriority of physical speech. While the form of linguistic activity is determined by the meaningful interiority of speech, the phonological aspects of exterior speech, viz., vowels, play a constructive role as well. They function as the principle of motion which makes possible the intelligible pronunciation of consonants. The fact that the vowels carry a constructive linguistic function further establishes their semiotic relationship to the world, independent of semantically valid words. They are analogical to the principles of natural motion which underlie and organize cosmic order.

The Vowel-Letters and the Intelligible World

Ibn Ezra's speculative treatment of the vowel-points is complemented by his account of the Hebrew vowel-letters (*'otiyyot ha-tenu'ah*): *'aleph*, *he*, *waw*, and *yod*. Also termed *'imot or 'amot ha-qeri'ah* (*matres lectionis*), these letters serve three primary grammatical functions. First, they

[47] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 10. *Shewa* stands out in its quiescent nature. Hebrew linguistic literature classifies it as a distinct third category of phonetic markers, distinguished from the long and short vowels previously discussed. Rather than possessing intrinsic phonetic value, *shewa* functions as an auxiliary element, the value of which is shaped by adjacent phonological features and its broader lexical context. This contextual dependency is further attested by its traditional designation within the category of *meshartim* ('servants') or *'avadim* ('subordinates').
[48] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 10.
[49] *Sefer Moznaim*, 40.

substitute for vowels in particular words, thereby prescribing pronunciation.[50] Second, they function as morphological principles of inflection. Finally, they serve as 'prolonging' or 'drawing' principles (*'otiyyot ha-meshekh*),[51] extending the vowel sound of a preceding consonant within a given root.[52]

Following his method with the vowel-points, Ibn Ezra moves beyond strictly grammatical analysis to explore the cosmic significance of the vowel-letters. For Ibn Ezra, the grammatical functions of these letters reveal their deeper role within the semiotic structure of Hebrew and, ultimately, their relationship to the cosmic order itself. Ibn Ezra maintains a typological distinction between the vowel-letters and the vowel-points with respect to their cosmological construal.[53] The semiotic function of the vowel-points concerns the natural motion of the spheres. Conversely, the construal of the vowel-letters reflects quintessential aspects of primary theological and metaphysical principles—the transcendent One, primarily, and the Universal Intellect.[54] Among

[50] Examples introduced by Ibn Ezra (*Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 3-4): The *ḥolam* can be indicated by the vowel-letter *waw* (e.g., *waw* in הסכלת עשו), or *'aleph* (e.g.,*'aleph* in מחטא); the *ḥiriq*, by either *yod* (e.g., *yod* in ריב ומדון) or *'aleph* (e.g., *'aleph* in ראשון הוא לכם).

[51] At times, these vowel-letters are not inscribed but only pronounced. For example, the implicit *aleph* following the consonant *bet* in the verb BRA (ברא). Implicitly prolonging the vowel-point *qameṣ* underlying the letter *bet*, this verb is pronounced BaRA. Cf. *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 15; Abrahm Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Diqduq*, ed. Nehemia Allony (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1984), 112. The classification of the vowel-letters as 'prolonged' or 'drawn' alludes to similar accounts in Arabic grammar and philosophy. Cf. Averroes' commentary on Aristotle Poetics: "These letters–I mean, the voiced ones–are the ones called vowels as well as prolonged and soft letters among us." *Middle Commentary, Poetics,* trans. C. Butterworth, 118. Cf. also Versteegh *Greek Elements*, 19-21.

[52] The exclusion of the letter *he* from the class of *nimshakhim*, and its inclusion under the category of *ne'elamim* (lit. concealed), is noteworthy: "The prolonged letters are *'aleph, waw* and *yod* (או"י), and the concealed [vowel-letters] are *'aleph, he, waw* and *yod* (אהו"י)." See Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznayim*, 14. Cf. *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 15. But cf. Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on Exodus* (ed. A. Weiser), 30-31, where the letter *he* is included among the prolonged letters. Cf. Yonah Ibn Janāḥ, *Sefer ha-Rikmah*, Hebrew trans. Yehudah Ibn Tibbon, ed. Michael Wilensky (Jerusalem: Ha-Akademyah la-Lashon ha-Ivrit, 1964), 42, 45; Charlap, *Ibn-Ezra's Linguistic System*, 59-60.

[53] Given the phonological relationship between the vowel-letters and the vowel-points, some linguists formalized the phonological identity of the vowel-letters—*'aleph*, *waw*, *yod*—by linking them to specific vowel-points that epitomize the three principles of motion. Judah Halevi, for example, distinguished the vowel-points *pattaḥ*, *qameṣ*, and *ḥiriq* as the primary principles of phonetic motion, and identified each of these points with the vowel-letters *'aleph*, *waw*, and *yod*, respectively. (*Cuzari* 4.3, 230-31) Differences in opinion on the identity of three principal primary vowel-points were consequential for the identity of the vowel-letters, as well. Thus, Dunash ben Tamim associates the letters *'aleph*, *waw*, and *yod* with the vowel-points *pattaḥ*, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, in contradistinction to Halevi's respective *pattaḥ*, *qameṣ*, and *ḥiriq*. See Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣira*, 216.

[54] Ibn Ezra himself is not explicit about the nature of this motion that correlates with the vowel-letters, but he provides the grounds for later accounts that are more explicit in this regard. Thus, in his *Ginat Egoz*, Giqatilla maintains the

the vowel-letters, *'aleph* holds a position of primacy as the fundamental linguistic principle, a status Ibn Ezra justifies through several key properties.[55]

Beginning with its phonetic properties, he asserts that "the *'aleph* is lightest (or: simplest) of the guttural letters […] which is why it is concealed and not pronounced (*naḥ ne'elam*) when following a vowel. This distinguishes the *'aleph* among the letters."[56] Phonologically, *'aleph* functions as a simple voice that can potentially carry more determined modes of vocalic motion—those formalized by the vowel system (*tenu'ot*). This capacity is evidenced by its presence as a silent letter within each vowel.[57] Beyond its phonetic properties, *'aleph*'s primacy manifests in both numerical and grammatical domains.

The distinctiveness of *'aleph*, particularly in relation to *yod*, is also expressed through the structure of the decimal number system. *'Aleph* bears the numerical value of 1 and thus serves as the basis for the subsequent numbers 2–10, whose sequence entails the successive addition of the unit 1. This process culminates in the number 10, which marks the completion of the first cycle of singular additions. Once completed, the number 10 becomes the building block for the next numerical series, 11–100. This process is repeated again in the third series, 101–1000. Ibn Ezra

explicit distinction between locative-natural motion, on the one hand, and non-locative metaphysical motion, further identifying the vowel-letters with the latter, on the other.

[55] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 40: "The *'aleph* is the lightest (or: simplest) of the guttural letters [...] which is why it is concealed and not pronounced (*naḥ ne'elam*) if it appears following a [consonant with a] vowel. It is for this reason that the *aleph* is considered chief among the letters."

[56] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 40. See also Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen's (thirteenth century) assertion, likely a paraphrase of the above citation: "The *'aleph* is chief among the letters, for its pronunciation requires minimal labor. […] This is further indicated in the concealment of the *'aleph* when it appears at the end of a word." *Perush ha-Otiyyot*, in "*Qabbalot R. Yiṣḥaq ve-R. Yaʿaqov Benei R. Yaʿaqov ha-Kohen: Meqorot le-Toledot ha-Qabbalah lifne Hitgallut ha-Zohar*," ed. Gershom Scholem, Maddaʿei ha-Yahadut 2 (1927), 39.

[57] This is illustrated in specific biblical words where the aleph implies the following vowel movements: *ḥolam* in the word *rosh* (ראש; 'head'), *qameṣ* in the world *rashim* (ראשים; 'heads'), *ḥiriq* in the word *rishon* (ראשון; 'first'), *ṣere* (*qameṣ-qatan*) in the word *reshit* (ראשית; 'beginning'), *shuruq* in the word *pe'era* (פארה; 'boughs'), *pattaḥ* in the word *ḥattat* (חתת; 'purification'), and *segol* (*pattaḥ-qatan*) in the word *pel'e* (פלא; 'wonders'). See *Commentary on Exodus* 3:15.

further elaborates on the numerical primacy of the *'aleph* when deliberating the connection between the simple One and the cosmic order.[58]

The primacy of *'aleph* extends to its grammatical function as the prefix for first-person future tense, as in *'elekh* ('I will go'). This establishes the *'aleph* as the primary substance. This contrasts with *yod*, which marks third-person future tense, as in *yelekh* ('he will go'). The difference between these two grammatical functions becomes particularly significant when considered against their respective referents. In modifying the verb reflexively, *'aleph* presupposes a self-subsisting subject that is self-referential and, ontologically speaking, does not imply a relation to an 'other': "The *'aleph* refers to a subject with respect to its substance, prepared to receive form."[59]

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[58] *Sefer ha-Shem*. In *Yalqut Ibn Ezra*, ed Y. Levin (New York: Qeren Yisrael, 1985), 422; *Yesod Mora*,186-67. Cf. Dunash ben Tamim's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣira* (ed. M. Grosberg), 23-24.
Yehuda Ben Barzilai, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, ff. 190a-193b. See also Isaac Israeli, *Das Buch über die Elemente*, ed. Salomon Fried (Drohobycz: Župnik, 1900), 76. Similar numerical accounts appear in *the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, and in al-*Baṭalyawsī's Kitab al-Dawa'ir al-Wahmiyya*. Both sources consider the number 1 the cause for calculation, wherefore it transcends multiplicity, on the one hand, and is the premise thereof, on the other. Cf. Ayala Eliyahu, ed. and trans., Kitab al-Dawa'ir al-Wahmiyya, §§ 71-85, 81-86, in: Idem, "Ibn al-Sid al-Batalyawsi and his place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish thought" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University, 2010). Ibn Ezra's relation to Dunash ben Tamim was established in scholarship, and his affinity to al-Baṭalyawsī is attested in their shared ideas, which were formulated through the analysis of 1 and 10. See Ayala Eliyahu, *Ibn al-Sid al-Batalyawsi*, 213-214. The special relation between the numbers 1 and 10 thus marks the 'continuation' of the One into multiplicity and the contingency of multiplicity on the singularity of the One; a notion that recalls Neoplatonic distinction between the transcendent One and the substantial one, the latter "continually giving existence."

[59] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 68. In his short commentary on Exod. 3:13, Ibn Ezra characterizes the One (*ha-eḥad*) as *'omed be 'atsmo*. This alludes to the general distinction between simple substance and intelligible form, the two commonly described as '*omed be-'atsmo* ('that which subsists in itself'; *ens per essentiam*), and *'omed be-zulato* ('subsisting by participation'; *ens per participationem*). In addition to being self-subsistent, the simple substratum is distinguished as a principle that establishes the existential and indetermined identity of a thing, which manifests ontologically in the thing's particularity. On the terminological significance of *'omed be-'atsmo*, see: Joseph Ibn Ṣadiq, *'Olam ha-Qatan*, ed. A. Jelinek (Leipzig: J. Dischl, 1854), 10; Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera, *Liqqutim mi-Sefer Meqor Ḥayyim*, in *Meqor Ḥayyim*, trans. Jacob Bluwstein. (Jerusalem: n.p., 1926) 1:6, p. 226. It is important to note, however, that despite the referential implications of the self-subsisting *'aleph*, the question whether this letter indeed refers to God's primordial being is not entirely clear in the case of Ibn Ezra. Certain Judeo-Arabic Neoplatonic accounts—particularly those associated with the *Theology of Aristotle* (long recension)—distinguish a simple and unqualified substance as the first hypostasis emanated from the One, prior to the Intellect. Cf. Arthur Hyman, "'From What Is One and Simple Only What Is One and Simple Can Come to Be," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 118. This unqualified matter is described, in broad terms, as "the first substance which subsists in itself and is the substratum of definition and differentiation." Against this general background, we are presented with two alternatives concerning the specific identity of Ibn Ezra's self-subsisting *'aleph*: either it refers to God's primordial being, or—by analogy to the doctrine of primal matter—it designates a kind of hypostatic principle that causally relates to the Intellect and is accordingly distinguished from God. See the discussion in Chapter 2. Constituting a system of motion, the *'aleph* and *yod* are analyzed in their respective individual traits. Yet, structurally speaking, they are interdependent. The movement from *'aleph* to *yod* corresponds to what Neoplatonic literature

Whereas the vowel-letter *'aleph* stands for the transcendent One, the principle of all, the vowel-letters *yod* and *he* are construed semiotically in reference to the intelligible world which governs the cosmic order. Starting with the grammatical function of the *yod*, this vowel-letter is contrasted with *'aleph* with respect to their conjugative function in a verb. The letter *yod* denotes a differentiated subject in the third person (cf. *yelekh*), which—relative to the speaker—introduces a sense of duality or distinction. Ibn Ezra articulates the difference between these two linguistic-referential forms in basic ontological terms. Whereas *'aleph* epitomizes a simple, undetermined substance—ontologically prior to and distinct from the state of essential differentiation, *yod* signifies the condition of essential determination, ontologically associated with the intelligible form of the Intellect.

The fact that the letter *yod* functions as the principle of form and of essential determination also reflects its broader role, *qua* Intellect, in constituting the cosmic order. This broader role is reflected in the numerical properties of *yod*, as it equals ten, designating the uppermost intelligible sphere.[60]

The vowel-letter *yod* is thus construed semiotically as referring the principle of intelligibility. To this Ibn Ezra adds the vowel-letter *he*, establishing it as a demonstrative pronoun "here" when pronounced as a noun (ה״א; *he*) in reference to a direct object.[61] Both the deictic gesture ("here") and the pronunciation of the *he* involves the pronunciation of the letters *'aleph* and *he*. Thus, using Gen. 47:23 as prooftext, the demonstrative 'here' (הא) in the statement "here

describes as the procession from the simple One to the Universal Intellect. This structural relationship is further developed by some of Ibn Ezra's interpreters, including Josef Giqatilla, through the notion AY (א״י), or inversely as YA (י״א), as we shall see in Chapter 2.

[60] Compare Ibn Ezra's cosmic-radix cycle, which demonstrates the perfection of the decimal system and, by extention, the completeness of the tenfold cosmic structure. *Sefer ha-Mispar*, ed. M. Zilberberg (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1970), 1-2. See also the discussion in Chapter 2.

[61] See Ryle (*Letters and Syllables*, 432-34) on the identity of letter *qua* nouns.

(*he*) is seed for you"[62] is construed by Ibn Ezra as the referential function of the letter *he* (ה״א) when considered independently of its potential morphological function in a random word.[63]

Ibn Ezra is not explicit about the metaphysical significance of the letter *he*, but it is possible that its demonstrative function is akin to the true demonstratives which refer to the particularity of a thing, independent of its descriptive qualities.[64]

The Vowel-Letters and the Tetragrammaton: Theological Aspects

The difference between Maimonides and Ibn Ezra regarding the nature of language is further reflected in their respective understandings of the function of the Tetragrammaton in relation to the created world. Maimonides' theology notably distinguishes between two aspects of linguistic activity. On the one hand, human language refers to objects in the world through meaningful representation, whether as essential definitions or universal concepts. On the other hand, when theological discourse turns to the primary and necessary existent, the conditions of speech undergo a fundamental shift: the meaningful terms by which language ordinarily references objects are rendered null. In the case of God, no essential qualities can be predicated of His existence; as a result, meaningful representation is disqualified in any hypothetical referential setting.[65] It is in this context that the Tetragrammaton is reserved exclusively for God. As the

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[62] הא לכם זרע

[63] Ibn Ezra, *Sefer ha-Shem*, 421-22; *Commentary on Exodus* (ed. A. Weiser), 30. Cf. Jona Ibn Ǧanāḥ, *Sefer ha-Shorashim,* ed. W. Bacher (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1896), 116. Like other linguistic and grammatical principles, the association of the letter *he* with the demonstrative adjective "here" (הא) made its way to Kabbalistic literature, theosophical and non-theosophical alike. Alluding to Ibn Ezra, Kabbalistic sources relate the referential function of the *he* (when operating as a demonstrative) to its distinct position as a vowel-letter. See Elazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Shem* (ed. A. Eisenbach), 105; Avraham of Cologne, *Keter Shem Tov*, in *Ginze Ḥokhmat ha-Kabbalah*, ed Adolph Jelinek (Leipzig: n.p., 1853), 34; *Sod Darkie ha-Otiyyot,* The Apostolic Library, MS Vat.ebr.441, fol. 188a; Rabbenu Baḥya, Be'ur al ha-Torah, Vol. 1, ed. Ḥayyim Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1966), 361. Cf. also Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera, *Sefer ha-Mevaqqesh* (Warsaw: Teraklin, 1924), 72.

[64] Cf. Lloyd, *Grammar and Metaphysics*, 68: "[T]he Stoics had a sub-class of definite articles which we may call true demonstratives, and they correspond to their category of subject. They are like Russell's logically proper names."

[65] See *Guide* I:59. Literature on the apophatic function of the negative attributes in Maimonides' *Guide* is vast. The following studies are pertinent to our discussion: Harry Wolfson, "Maimonides on Negative Attribute," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Alexander Marx (New York: American

proper name *par excellence*, it does not signify an essence or attribute but rather denotes *simple existence*—necessary being itself—which cannot be predicated of anything other than God.

The philosophical motivations underlying Maimonides' position—significant for Joseph Giqatilla's later deliberations on the Tetragrammaton—will be discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4 of the present study. Here, I briefly note that Maimonides categorically denied the possibility of any ontological analogy between God's existence, which is necessary and *a se*, and the existence of all beings other than God, which he regarded as contingent and lacking necessity—whether *a se* or *ab alio*. In this view, Maimonides advanced a radical formulation of a fundamental metaphysical assumption: that the existence of all created beings is not implied by their essence. Since the Tetragrammaton denotes *existence*, and created beings do not possess existence inherently, Maimonides concluded that this divine Name could refer exclusively to God, who alone possesses true existence.

Ibn Ezra was familiar with the categorical distinction between necessary and possible existence, yet his construal of the Tetragrammaton diverged markedly from Maimonides' approach. While accepting the basic premise of this distinction, Ibn Ezra maintained that the Name referring to God's necessary existence simultaneously encompasses created existence by way of derivation. This position rests on a fundamental assumption in his theology of the Name: that both *YHWH* and *'Ehyeh* derive etymologically from the Hebrew root *hāyāh* ("to be").[66] This

Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 180–215; Benor, *Meaning and Reference in* Maimonides, 339–60; Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides on Divine Attributes as Equivocal Terms," in *Tribute to Michael: Studies in Jewish and Muslim Thought Presented to Professor Michael Schwarz*, ed. S. Klien-Braslavi, B. Abrahamov, and J. Sadan, (Tel Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 2009), 37–51; Menachem Lorberbaum, *Dazzled by Beauty: Theology as Poetics in Hispanic Jewish Culture* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2011), 94–6, 107–13. My general reading of Maimonides' negative attributes follows Harry Wolfson's (*Negative Attribute*, 180) tautological formulation, which demonstrates the apophatic rendition of essential propositions about God: God is (x), which is to say He is not (-x), consequently amounting to the proposition "God—in the affirmative sense—simply is." For an affirmative reading of Maimonides' doctrine of essential attributes, see Leo Strauss, introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed*, xlix-l.

[66] *Sefer ha-Shem*, 427; *Commentary (Short) Exod*. 3.14. On Ibn Ezra's etymology of the Tetragrammaton, see discussions in by Harvey (*Tetragrammaton*, 129-39) and Diane Lobel, "Ehyeh asher Ehyeh and the Tetragrammaton:

etymological construal underlies Ibn Ezra's broader claim about the referential scope of the divine Name, namely that it includes created existence, albeit in a derived and dependent sense.

Where Maimonides concluded that contingent beings must be excluded from the divine Name, Ibn Ezra reached the opposite conclusion. Since the existence of all beings is contingent upon God's existence, the Name that signifies necessary existence must also encompass created existence—though only in a derivative sense. This gives rise to an ontological analogy structured by priority and posteriority: God possesses existence *by priority*, as He exists necessarily and *a se*, whereas created beings possess existence *ab alio*, precisely because their being is contingent upon and caused by God's. Both participate in "being," derived from the same verbal root (*hāyāh*), though at categorically distinct ontological levels. This logic of contingency enables the Tetragrammaton to operate in two complementary modes: with respect to God, who exists *a se*, it functions as His proper Name (*shem 'eṣem*); with respect to created beings, it functions adjectivally (*shem middah*), describing and affirming their derivative existence as created by God. Created beings are signified by the Tetragrammaton only insofar as God's existence is the ground for theirs.

This ontological framework is further elaborated in Ibn Ezra's doctrine of divine names, which grammatically expresses the relationship between priority and posteriority. The same Name can function at different ontological levels precisely because it derives from the verbal principle "to be,"[67] which applies analogically across the hierarchy of existence. Derived from

Between Eternity and Necessary Existence in Saadya, Maimonides, and Abraham Maimonides," *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 23 (2020): 89-93.

[67] According to Goshen-Gottstein, Biblical Hebrew differs from Arabic with respect to adverbial nouns. Apart from the word *yirah* (lit. "fear") of Isa. 7:25, Biblical nouns do not function as adverbial descriptions. (Though one may argue that the verb *moshe* of Isa 63:11 is another exception. Cf. Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on Exodus* 3:15.) This is not the case in Arabicized Hebrew which, modified by Arabic grammar, allows for the morphological rendition of nouns as adverbial descriptions. See Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, *Taḥbirah u-Milonah shel ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit she-ba-Teḥum Hashpa'atah shel ha-Aravit*, ed. Shraga Assif *et al.* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Zvi, 2006), 117. That said, the examples

the verb *hāyāh*, the three forms YHWH (יהו״ה), YHW (יה״ו), and YH (י״ה) all relate to God's necessary existence and function as proper names,[68] while their inflected forms concomitantly indicate the act of creation itself—the communication of derivative being to the created order.

Since God's simple existence, referenced by the Tetragrammaton, constitutes the creative source of all derivative existence, the Name inherently encompasses divine creative activity. Thus, God's proper name (*shem 'eṣem*) simultaneously functions as an attribute (*shem middah*), not referring to necessary existence itself but to the active communication of existence to the created order.[69] This dual function transforms the Tetragrammaton from a purely referential principle into a dynamic expression of divine creative power.[70] Ibn Ezra resolves this apparent grammatical anomaly by grounding both functions in the same ontological principle: the Tetragrammaton serves as both proper Name and adjective because all derivative existence depends upon simple existence.[71]

Ibn Ezra applies this grammatical distinction to explain anomalous construct forms of the Tetragrammaton. Contrary to the usual rule that proper names do not take construct state (*semikhut*), the Tetragrammaton occasionally appears attached to an attribute, as in *YHWH*

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cited by Goshen-Gottstein do not consider proper names, but only general nouns. Here, Ibn Ezra seems to go one step further by applying the morphological change to the proper name of God, as well.

[68] *Sefer ha-Shem*, 420-21. On the numerical equivalence of the name 'Eheyeh and YHW (יה״ו=21=אהיה) see Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, 191-2; *Sefer ha-Shem*, 419.

[69] *Commentary on Exodus* 3.14-15. Ibn Ezra employs the principles of *'omed be'aṣmo* (*status absolutus*) and *ma'amid* (*status constructus*) as distinguishing features of each of the two functions of YHWH.

[70] And, consequently, functioning linguistically as an adjective. This concerns the general identification of the verb with the accidents (*miqrim*) of the substance (*'eṣem*) that 'subsists in itself' (*'omed be'aṣmo*), the latter referred to by the proper name (*shem 'eṣem*). On the role of the verb, in relationship to the proper name, and its identification as an adjective, see Leo Prijs, *Die grammatikalische Terminologie des Abraham Ibn Esra* (Zurich: G. Olms Verlag, 1987), 104-05. We should note that the distinction between '*omed be'atsmo* and *ma'amid* is also applied to verbs. The '*omed be'atsmo* applies to the intransitive reflexive verb (the *niph'al* form), whereas the *ma'amid* marks transitive verbs. The former is illustrated by Ibn Ǧanāḥ's *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, by the phrase "when the hay is mown, and the tender grass is shown." (Prov. 27:25) In the Hebrew original, "shown" is conjugated as *heph'il* (גלה), while the verb "mown" is conjugated in the *niph'al* form (נראה). Here Ibn Ǧanāḥ (that is, the translator Ibn Tibbon) uses the term *po'al 'omed be-'aṣmo* to indicate the intransitive character of the *niph'al*. (*Sefer Ha-Shorashim* [ed. W. Bacher] 93-9. Cf. Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Yesod Diqduq*, 115.

[71] See the helpful discussion in Kreisel, *Kol*, 39-42. See also Harvey's remarks (*Tetragrammaton*, 129) as to principle of derivation which, for Ibn Ezra, applies to both names YHWH and 'eHYeH.

Ṣeba'ot (The God of Hosts), These components "inform one another, thereby forming one name," highlighting the intrinsic connection between the divine Name and its attributes. In his commentary on Exodus 34:6, Ibn Ezra explicitly states: "the exalted Name is at times adjacent to *Ṣeba'ot*, for the Tetragrammaton is sometimes a proper name (*shem 'eṣem*), at times an attribute (*shem middah*)."[72]

Building on these theological deliberations, Ibn Ezra's semiotic construal extends to the vowel-letters and their cosmic applications. The vowel-letters reflect distinguishing features of the intelligible realm—identified by Ibn Ezra with the upper angelic world within the Neoplatonic tripartite cosmos—but their cosmic significance ultimately derives from their theological origin in the Tetragrammaton.[73] Derived from the divine Name, the vowel-letters signify the existential contingency of the intelligible realm upon God, while simultaneously functioning as cosmic principles. In his commentary on Exodus 3:15, Ibn Ezra affirms the symbolic quality of the vowel-letters, naming them "*'otiyyot ha-meshekh*," by virtue of which they are most fitting for the exalted names.[74]

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[72] *Short Commentary on Exodus*, 22. Cf. *Commentary on Exodus* 6:3; Ibn Ezra, *Sefer ha-Shem*, 421-22. Compare *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 113-14: "The exalted and awesome name [of God] shares a deep secret, by virtue of which it is counted among the Thirteen Attributes." In his *Commentary on Exodus* 34:6, Ibn Ezra introduces Sa'adia Gaon's position, which excludes YHWH from the thirteen attributes. The crux of their disagreement concerns the proper syntactic analysis of the repeated divine name YHWH in Exod. 34:6. Sa'adia maintains that a dividing cantillation note (*ta'am mafsiq*) separates the first and second occurrence of YHWH, creating a grammatical distinction between them. According to this reading, the first name refers to the speaking subject (*ha-mesaper*), while the second YHWH should be understood according to its vocalization as 'Adonai (the inflected form of *'adon*) rather than its written form. This interpretation effectively severs the connection between God's proper name and the divine attributes. Ibn Ezra rejects this position, maintaining instead that the second YHWH bears direct relation to God's proper name and should therefore be counted as the first among the Thirteen Attributes. This exegetical dispute assumed considerable importance in later Kabbalistic literature. The Zohar appropriates this discussion under the formula "a cantillation note dividing between them" (*ta'amei pasiq b'gawweihu*), where the notion of a dividing note comes to signify the distinction between the hidden and the revealed aspects of the divine name YHWH. (Cf. Asher ben David, *Sefer Ha-Yiḥud*, 104, 121.)

[73] "The separate intelligence does not subsist in itself, but rather in [or: by] the name of God." *Commentary on Exodus,* ed. A. Weiser, 34.)

[74] *Commentary on Exodus* 3:15 (ed. A. Weiser). Used by both Saadia Gaon and Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, *meshekh* denotes second matter, that is, extension, underlying which lies the prime, non-extended matter. Thus, Ibn Gabirol's phrase "*le-meshekh ha-yesh min ha-ayin*" can be rendered as either the "being" (*yesh*) that is drawn (*meshekh*) from the 'nothingness' (*min ha-'ayin*), or as the extension (*meshekh*) of the created being (*yesh*) in face of 'nothingness'. See

From Meaning to Motion in Language

The aim of this chapter has been to establish the conceptual and methodological foundations for addressing Giqatilla's conception of language, particularly his distinctive understanding of the linguistic vowel. We have identified two crucial linguistic frameworks to which Giqatilla's thinking both responded and which it transformed: Maimonides' notion of interior speech and Ibn Ezra's semiotic deliberations on the Hebrew vowels.

Although Ibn Ezra appears sympathetic to Maimonides' general claim that language is essentially determined by the meaning of words, he also focuses on the physiological features of the Hebrew language, specifically the vowels, while exploring their archetypal role in reflecting the nature and essence of the cosmic order. He likewise reframes the phonological features of the Hebrew vowels from a theological perspective, grounding their cosmic function in their derivation from the Tetragrammaton itself.

Ibn Ezra's deliberations play a constructive role in integrating the principle of phonetic motion into his analysis of the Hebrew language, thereby challenging the schematic distinction between the interior and exterior dimensions of speech. More importantly, they introduce motion as a linguistic principle, providing the framework within which thinkers like Giqatilla would develop their own theories of language. While Ibn Ezra's analysis of Hebrew elements remains

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Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, *Keter Malkhut*, ed. Israel Levin (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 2005) 260. In the first rendition, *meshekh* is used as an adverb, whereas in the second rendition it is used as an adjective. Ibn Ezra's theological designation of the vowel-letters as *meshekh* is open to both renditions. It is noteworthy that thirteenth-century Kabbalistic sources reflect this ambiguity in an attempt to establish the respective identities of the second and third *sefirot—ḥokhma* ('wisdom') and *binah* ('knowledge')—in relation to the first *sefirah, Keter*. These elaborations often assumed the symbolic distinction between two models of the point (*neqqudah*), ideal-primordial (*neqqudah maḥshavit*), and formal-extensive (*neqqudah ṣiyyurit*), the latter designating the beginning of the created order. More specific ideas about the identity and implications of these points drew on various Neoplatonic and Aristotelian sources, also in connection with the characterization of wisdom as second matter, i.e., extension. Cf. R. Asher ben David, *Sefer ha-Yihud.* 105-06; 246-47. For a general discussion of *meshekh* as extension, See Harry Wolfson *Crescas' critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933) 579-90.

within the realm of semiotics—framed by the analogical function of the vowel-letters in relation to principles of intelligible and natural motion—it nevertheless opened new avenues for understanding language's relationship to cosmic order.

The shift from Ibn Ezra to Giqatilla sharpens the question regarding the primary function of linguistic motion while raising fundamental questions about the terms of analogy between language and world. In what sense is the basic structure of the world reflected in the Hebrew language? A statement by the Castilian Isaac ibn Latif, an interpreter of Ibn Ezra and an important intellectual link to Giqatilla, highlights the significance of this question: "Should immaterial speech (*dibbur ruḥani*) cease, voice (*qol*) will cease too, which will follow the silencing of the speech act (*qeriah*). Matter and form will consequently vanish, and the universe will be reduced to nothing."[75] This statement, likely a paraphrase of an earlier Arabic source,[76]challenges the semiotic framework by which Ibn Ezra developed his linguistic account of the vowel. While Ibn Latif remains unclear about whether voice has causal priority over the ontological principles of matter and form, Giqatilla provides a more systematic, albeit complex, account of this relationship. Giqatilla's response to these fundamental questions about language and cosmic order begins with his critique of Ibn Ezra's theology of the divine Name In concluding this chapter, I shall briefly examine Giqatilla's response to Ibn Ezra's theology of the Name—an issue further explored in Chapter 4. In *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla challenges Maimonides' construal of the Tetragrammaton as exclusive to God's necessary being. Giqatilla is specifically "puzzled by his choice to qualify this Name ['Eheyeh] as exclusive to God, thereby rendering it identical with His being." In doing so, Maimonides "disregards the distinction between the Name YHWH, the reference of which is

[75] *Sha'ar ha-Shamaim,* MS Vat.ebr.335, fol. 55b.
[76] See a similar statement in Ikhwân al-Safâ, al-jâmi'a I, 472-73, cited in Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*: *Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 48.

God's primordial existence, and the Name ’Eheyeh. The latter refers to the existence of all finite beings which are contingent on the true existence of God.”[77]

Giqatilla’s critique reveals his attempt to navigate between two theological hazards: Maimonides’ approach, which maintains divine transcendence at the cost of any genuine ontological grounding of creation, and Ibn Ezra’s approach, which establishes that grounding relationship but threatens to collapse the ontological distinction between Creator and creation. Earlier in that same discussion, Giqatilla expresses reservations about Ibn Ezra’s approach, which considers YHWH and ’Eheyeh as equally identical derivations from the verb “to be”:

> And I have seen some sages determining that the Name ’Ehyeh is derived from *hayah*, like the Name YHWH which indicates existence. However, I have not found them explaining the secret of the difference between them, and perhaps they will come to regard them as one. But it is not so, for great is the distance between them.[78]

Central to Giqatilla's system is the fundamental distinction between God’s primordial existence (*hawwayah qadmonit*) and renewed existence (*hawwayah meḥudeshet*), the latter designating primarily the Intellect and the cosmic order. This distinction presupposes the radical incomparability of these two modes of existence. More critically, it implies that the Name referencing God's primordial existence cannot be construed as etymologically derived from the verb “to be” (*heyot*), for such derivation would establish an ontological analogy—both divine and created existence would become species of “being,” differing only in priority and posteriority. Giqatilla's solution to this theological dilemma is to relocate rather than reject the etymological connection to “being” that Ibn Ezra identifies. Contrary to Ibn Ezra, who considers both the Tetragrammaton and ’Eheyeh as derived from the verb “to be,” Giqatilla differentiates them by

[77] *GE* 59
[78] *GE* 53

construing ’Eheyeh not as referring to divine primordial existence but as referring to divine creative activity:

> contemplate that the secret of [primordial] *hawyah* is precluded from YHW [viz. ’Eheyeh],[79] for *hawyah* signifies simple existence, unchangeable and everlasting, whereas YHW (יה״ו) assumes a linguistic imperative form—the enjoined through the enjoining (*meṣuweh maḥmat meṣaweh*).”

Here Giqatilla appears to follow Isaac ibn Latif, who similarly differentiated the name ’Eheyeh from the primordial Name, construing the former as an active process that implies the relationship between *meṣaweh* (God qua creator) and *meṣuweh* (Intellect).[80] The *gematria* equivalence אהיה=21=יה״ו indicates that these are equivalent Names of the creative sphere. Giqatilla thereby preserves the linguistic connection to the verb “to be” while differentiating it from divine primordial existence. Created beings do not participate analogously in divine primordial existence; rather, they exist precisely *as* commanded-into-being through divine creative activity. This preserves both ontological dependence and categorical ontological distinction—created beings are neither independent of God nor analogous to God, but constituted by divine activity.

[79] אהיה=21=יה״ו

[80] Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat ‘Olam* 140b (p.44). Cf. *Sha’ar ha-Shamayim* (Vat.ebr.335), fol. 56a.

Chapter Two: Elements of the World
Cosmology and Analogical Thinking in *Ginnat Egoz*

The Cosmos of *Ginnat Egoz*: Structure and Principles

A focal theme in Castilian-Kabbalistic cosmologies is the relationship assumed between the linguistic structure of Hebrew and the cosmic order. In Chapter 1 we saw how, sharing this speculative spirit, linguists and philosophers like Abraham Ibn Ezra (twelfth century) advanced a semiotic construal of the Hebrew language that draws on the correspondence between phonological and cosmic-natural motion. This correspondence was conceptualized through the Masoretic system of the Hebrew vowels as specifically formalized by Ibn Ezra.

Joseph Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* (ca. 1274) develops a linguistic paradigm that responds to and modifies these speculative strands, reflecting both his indebtedness to and departure from Ibn Ezra and Maimonides.[1]

It has been argued that the creative flourishing of Hebrew linguistic study came to an end at the turn of the thirteenth century, after the celebrated efforts of the Qimḥi family in Narbonne.[2] But we can also say that the 13th century marks the flourishing of esoteric speculations based on the forgoing developments. Some of these speculative accounts—including Giqatilla's—drew on and further transformed the linguistic developments of preceding generations. In the case of Giqatilla, the linguistic qualities of Hebrew are construed as the underpinning principle (*sod*) of cosmological terms like motion (*tenu'ah*) and action (*pe'ulah*). This conceptual-linguistic shift

[1] Giqatilla's indebtedness to Ibn Ezra's linguistic system has been noted and discussed by several scholars. See Annet Martini (*Punctuation*, 64-65, 112-17, and passim). More on this connection in Chapter 4.
[2] Zweip, *Sefer ha-Mevaqqesh*, 24.

from Ibn Ezra to Giqatilla results in two paradigms which, although intimately connected, operate by different theological ideals. An important question to bear in mind concerns the nature of relationship between language and cosmos: Which of the two takes ontological priority in each paradigm?

The aim of the present chapter is to reconstruct the cosmological model that serves Giqatilla's conception of divine and cosmogenic language. Language and cosmology are both central to Ginnat Egoz, and while the two subjects are often treated distinctly, they intersect at many points throughout Giqatilla's work. A close examination of these points of contact suggests that the two subjects are not only related, but they mutually inform and complete one another. Thus, while the subject of the present chapter is Giqatilla's cosmology, we will reference his linguistic accounts throughout.

The working hypothesis of the present chapter is that Giqatilla's theory of language fundamentally shapes his conception of the world, and that this constructive role is reflected in his adaptive reception of available cosmologies. While his notion of a cosmic language developed in response to available cosmological traditions, it equally reinterpreted them in accordance with his theological framework. An examination of this relationship reveals the creative interplay between two complementary dimensions in Giqatilla's cosmological thinking.

The first dimension encompasses traditional Aristotelian cosmology with its Neoplatonic modifications. This includes his reception of the common threefold Neoplatonic scheme of intelligible, spherical, and sublunar realms, together with Aristotelian and Ptolemaic principles of motion. Giqatilla likewise draws on Maimonides in this regard, though somewhat selectively. This dimension establishes the structural order of the cosmos and the general terms of essential causality between cosmic grades. More fundamentally, Giqatilla reestablishes these cosmic

structures, and the principle of Nature more generally, through his treatment of the divine names. He conjectures a cosmic model in which these cosmic principles are reconceptualized as linguistic ones derived from the Tetragrammaton.

The second dimension concerns the principle of existential vitality and cohesiveness that sustains the cosmos *in toto*. This dimension differs from essential causality insofar as it accounts for the vitality and unity of created beings, whereas the former accounts for their essential differentiating constitution. Alluding to the seminal Sefer Yeṣirah (Book of Creation) and its commentary tradition, Giqatilla turns to the sublunar natural elements to establish an analogical paradigm for this second dimension. His construal of the elements reveals their distinguishing features in a way that aligns with the notion of simple existence.

Two premises underlie the speculative appeal to the elements. First, the elements are simple and uncomposed. Giqatilla adopts the cosmological view that distinguishes elemental qualities (e.g., heat and moisture) from substantial form, the latter being simple and uncomposed. Second, their simple nature indicates their universal character. On this view, the sublunar natural elements represent a materialized mode of what is principally immaterial. Following the maxim that 'that which is above is like to that which is below,' Giqatilla construes the sublunar elements not merely as material principles but as ontological manifestations of universal forces operating throughout the cosmic order.

Building on this twofold premise, Giqatilla develops the notion of existential vitality as a principle that explains both the vitality of created beings and, consequently, the monistic character of the cosmic order with its three worlds. To this end, he develops a distinctive form of analogical reasoning that operates in two primary ways. First, he infers from the relationships and hierarchy of sublunar elements the primary features of universal principles—the contrasting

gravitational tendencies of fire and water, for example, are indicative in this respect. Second, he infers from this elemental structure the relationships between worlds more generally, examining how the principle of existential vitality manifests in each of the three worlds while maintaining both unity and difference between them. This analogical method allows him to develop a cosmology that is both structurally differentiated (through essential causality) and existentially unified (through permeating vitality).

The present chapter examines Giqatilla's twofold cosmology, focusing on the relationship between essential causality and the principle of existential unity. These two aspects are ultimately explicated through the prism of language. The first part lays out the theological thinking which frames Giqatilla's cosmology more broadly. Consideration is given to the terms *pe'ulah* and *tenu'ah*—signifying the principles of essential composition and motion—and their connection to the Tetragrammaton. These deliberations are premised on the Tetragrammatic principle of YHW/'Eheyeh, which, we have seen in Chapter1, Giqatilla develops in response to Ibn Ezra's theology of the Name. The second part addresses essential causality within the cosmic order, establishing the traditional framework that Giqatilla inherits and modifies.

The third part develops the principle of cosmic vitality through three complementary approaches: first, the nature of elements in *Ginnat Egoz*, examining the relationship between elemental form and elemental qualities; second, the forms of analogical reasoning pertinent to Giqatilla's cosmology, with methodological considerations; and third, the implications of analogical thinking for his general cosmological framework, particularly the relationships between fire and the intelligible world, and between air and the spherical world.

The chapter concludes with a short deliberation on Giqatilla's conception of vowel and letter, both in anticipation of the following chapter, but also in conclusion of the forgoing

cosmological deliberations. The purpose of this discussion is to conceptualize Giqatilla's twofold cosmic paradigm—consisting of essential causality and existential vitality—through the prism of language. More fundamentally, this concluding section raises the question of this model's implications for the ontological primacy of the Hebrew language, the latter described as the underpinning structure (*sod*) of *tenu'ah* and *pe'ulah* .

Nature, Motion, and the Two Parts of the Tetragrammaton

An early indication of Giqatilla's systematic approach to cosmological causality appears in his terminological distinction between the natural constitution of the cosmic order and the principle that imparts motion to Nature itself. This distinction is articulated through complementary terms, two of which are *Galgal* ('sphere') and *Sovev* ('moving').[3] While this distinction operates primarily within the domain of essential causality, it also reveals Giqatilla's methodological concern with different dimensions of cosmic governance.

> Know that Nature endures in its character (or seal; *ḥotam*) through the rotation of the sphere. Through the Name that motivates the sphere (*mani'a ha-galgal*), the sphere endures, and its properties (or science; *tekhunato*) are established according to Nature.[4]

The construal of Nature as a principle of cosmic motion draws on themes central to the philosophical discourse of the time. Jewish Neoplatonic accounts distinguished between descending cosmic grades, in which Nature hypostatically emanates as the lower part of Soul, the latter emanating from Intellect. In the pseudo-Empedoclean *Book of Five Substances* (*ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*), Universal Nature describes heaven.[5]

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[3] We should also note that, in addition to the *gematric* equivalence of Ha-TeVA (Nature) and 'eLoHIM (both of which equal 86), Giqatilla constructs the *gematric* relationship between the principles YH and *galgal*, on the one hand, and WH and *sovev*, on the other. Both relate Nature (TeVA ;טב״ע = 81): GaLGaL YaH (81=גלג״ל י״ה) and SOVeV WaH (81=סוב״ב ו״ה). See *GE* 348.

[4] *GE* 348.

[5] David Kaufmann, ed., *Sefer ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*, printed in idem, *Studien über Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Budapest 1899), 32. 8. It also describes the causal chain of cosmic substances more broadly, through the principle of desire –

The principle of Nature is likewise central to Aristotelian natural philosophy, where it is defined as the first principle of motion and rest innate in all substances, insofar as their motion or rest is not accidental thereto.[6] This includes qualitative motion and change. Avicenna further expanded the principle of motion as pertaining to all entities, defining Nature as "the power that gives rise to its producing motion and change, which are from [the body] itself, as well as its being at rest and stable."[7] Later we shall see how the principles of 'motion' and 'form' coincide in the case of simple bodies like the primary elements.

The identity of Nature as the primary principle of cosmic motion and change carries theological implications as well, given that God is assigned the role of the first principle from which all motion proceeds. Paraphrasing Avicenna on this subject, Shem Tov ibn Falaquera (thirteenth century) further construes the Psalmist's assertion 'Forever, O Lord, Thy word stands fast in the heavens' (Ps. 119.89) as relating the primary principle of motion as instantiated by God in Nature.[8]

Giqatilla reconceptualizes the connection between Nature and the divine Word through his constructive linguistic paradigm. Giqatilla generally identifies 'Elohim with the principle of

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the corporeal universe desires Soul through Nature, Nature desires Intellect through Soul, and the Soul desires the primary principle through Intellect. (*ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*, 39) Presumably, in the Neoplatonic scheme shared by the likes of Isaac Israeli, Nature is the part of the hypostatic Soul that is embodied in the motion and changes of heaven and its bodily spheres. See discussion in S. M. Stern and Alexander Altmann, *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2009), 165-70.

[6] Aristotle, *Physics*, 184b.

[7] *The Physics of the Healing (Kitāb al-Shifā'): A Parallel English-Arabic Text in Two Volumes*, trans. and ed. Jon McGinnis (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), I:6.5 (p. 45). Compare I:6.1 (p. 40): "Everybody has a nature, form, matter, and accidents. It's The nature [of everybody] is the power that gives rise to its producing motion and change, which are from [the body] itself, as well as its being at rest and stable."

[8] Shem Tov ben Joseph Ibn Falaquera, *Moreh ha-Moreh*, ed. Yair Shiffman (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2001), 2.4 , 239. Isaac Ibn Latif construes this verse in a similar fashion in *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, and, in his *Ṣurat 'Olam*, he interprets what "the philosopher maintained about Nature that it is wise (*ha-tevah ḥakahm*)" as implying a "divine secret which is the hidden force (*koaḥ ruḥani ne'elam*), first cojoined through the motion of the uppermost sphere." *Ṣurah'Olam*, Ch. 13 (fol. 139a).

Nature and, more specifically, with the Universal Intellect.[9] In this respect, he might be alluding to the qualification suggested in Judah Halevi's *Cuzari* 4.1 where 'Elohim refers to the totality of natural and intelligible forces, in contradistinction to the Tetragrammaton which transcends this cosmic totality.[10]

In Giqatilla's analysis, the constitutive principles of Nature itself are inferred through etymological construal of the Name 'Elohim, the latter functioning as a lexical composite of 'eLeM (lit. 'mute') and YaH. 'ELeM signifies passive matter, whereas YaH is the active principle that informs matter.[11] Together, the two morphemes form the divine Name 'Elohim which renders Nature as the unity of matter pervaded by motion or form.[12]

Underlying this hermeneutical construal is a more fundamental claim about the metaphysical primacy of language itself which, accordingly, reconstructs the linguistic elements of 'Elohim as a cosmic-constructive principle that is grounded in the Tetragrammaton, which functions as the originary principle of language. The syntactic analysis of 'Elohim as consisting of 'eLeM and YaH, the latter constituting the first half of the Tetragrammaton YHWH, gestures in this direction.[13]

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[9] On 'Elohim and the Intellect, see also *GE* 294. *GE* 36-37, 81, 87, 294; Glosses, fol. 24a. Cf. the *gematric* connection of Nature and 'Elohim; הטב"ע=86=אלה"ם. (*GE* 32-33, 133, 162, 348).

[10] *Cuzari*, 226-29. Cf. Zev Harvey, "Judah Halevi's Interpretation of the Tetragrammaton," in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an: Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, eds. Moshe Bar-Asher, et al. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007), 125-26 [Hebrew].

[11] *GE* 71, 75, 86. A similar formula ('eLeM YaH) appears in Moses de León's *Sefer ha-Ne'elam* (ed. A. Bar Asher), 116: "And know that it is through the secret of YH [which resides] in the secret 'Elohim that motion (*ha-tenu'ah*) and existence are completed. Were you to exclude the name YH, it [Elohim] would reduce to muteness (*'elem*) and thus without motion."

[12] Giqatilla makes a similar hermeneutical claim about *galagl,* which cannot exist without the motion of the Name. (*GE* 163)

[13] *Moses de*-León, Giqatilla's close contemporary, is more explicit on this issue., YaH and El[eM], as two principles of force or motion, the one ('eL; א"ל) receiving force from the other [YaH; י"ה]. He accordingly construes the relationship between the two names in terms of form and body (or matter; *guf*), "not body literally, but in the sense of a passive force receiving effluence from the active force" – 'eL receiving effluence by YaH. (Sefer ha-Mishqal, fol. 5a-b, 43). Although he makes no explicit reference, de-León's distinction between the two reciprocal parts of divine force, 'form' and 'body,' recalls the Platonian distinction between the two phases of the Soul, higher and lower. The former is described as the transcendent principle of form and order, whereas the lower phase functions as 'an immanent principle of growth'. See remarks and references in Altman and Stern, *Israeli*, 169.

Pe ʻula, *Tenuʻah* and the Inflected Tetragrammaton

To better understand Giqatilla's broader claim, we may recall his notion of derivation, which distinguishes the Name YHW—and its etymological equivalent 'Eheyeh—from the Tetragrammaton, with the former referring to primordial existence (*hawwayah qadmonit*[14]) and the latter to renewed existence (*hawwayah meḥudeshet*). In so doing Giqatilla takes issue with both Maimonides and Ibn Ezra, each on his terms, while alluding to Isaac ibn Latif's theology of the Name.[15]

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Giqatilla expresses reservations about Maimonides' treatment of the Tetragrammaton, specifically with respect to his position on its referential capacity. To recapitulate, Giqatilla objects to Maimonides' construal of the name 'Eheyeh [*'asher 'eheyeh*] as implying the tautological identity of subject and predicate ('I shall be that I shall be'). For Maimonides, this tautological construal served his more fundamental claim about the exclusive referentiality of the Tetragrammaton to God alone. God's simple and necessary existence is incompatible with any essential definition, such that any attempt to render the Tetragrammaton etymologically necessarily leads to a tautology which nullifies essential predication altogether. On this view, 'Eheyeh, construed tautologically, is simply a linguistic factor of God's proper Name.

Taking issue with this specific tautological point, Giqatilla constructs the name 'Eheyeh as implying the referential function of the Tetragrammaton with respect to all beings. To the extent that all creatures are ontologically contingent on God's existence, the Tetragrammaton

[14] In Hebrew logical and philosophical literature, *qedimah* is often contrasted with *'iḥur*, signifying the analogical character of priority and posteriority. Addressing the relationship between the primordial One and the created Intellect in *Shaʻar ha-Shamayim*, Ibn Latif works toward differentiating the *qadmoniyut* of the One from the analogical relationship that this term appears to take.
[15] See *Ṣurat ʻOlam*, Ch. 21.

refers to their existence by way of derivation. This position, which conversely responds to Ibn Ezra's theology of the Name, is further developed as a constructive principle. The root 'to-be', which Ibn Ezra identified as the shared etymological source of both YHWH and 'Eheyeh,[16] is restricted to the latter, 'Eheyeh, thereby ontologically distinguishing the two.[17] By this account, 'Eheyeh— etymologically connected to the Name YHW—is established as a constructive principle initiating a linguistic process and effecting the differentiation vis-à-vis the Name whose reference is primordial existence. The referentiality of the Name and its metaphysical function are mutually implied.[18]

The term that Giqatilla uses to describe this theological-linguistic process is *shimush.* Carrying both linguistic-theurgic and linguistic-grammatical meanings,[19] this term is construed by Giqatilla to imply the grammatical inflections (pl. *shimmushim*) of the Tetragrammaton,[20] each of which marks a specific derivation from the name of Being. These derivations function as linguistic processes which constitute, in their turn, the ontological principles of renewed existence. In other words, the *shimmushim* of the Name function as transformational derivations—continued from the Tetragrammaton while carrying an ontologically constructive role through their inflected form.

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[16] Ibn Ezra, *Sefer ha-Shem,* 427; (Short) *Commentary on Exod*. 3.14. See Lobel, *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, 89-93.

[17] "And I have seen some sages determining that the name 'Ehyeh is derived from *hayah*, like the name YHWH which indicates existence. […] perhaps they have come to regard them as one. But it is not so, for great is the distance between them" (*GE* 53).

[18] "The secret of [primordial] *hawyah* is precluded from YHW [viz. 'Eheyeh], for *hawyah* is simple existence, unchangeable and everlasting, whereas YHW (יה״ו) assumes a linguistic imperative form—the enjoined through the enjoining (*meṣuweh maḥmat meṣaweh*)" (*GE,* ibid). On the *meṣuweh*/*meṣaweh* distinction in connection with the creative Name, see Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam* 140b, 44. Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 56a.

[19] See detailed discussion in Chapter 4. For an initial reference on the grammatical significance of *simmush,* see: Yehudah Ibn Tibbon's translations of Sefer ha-Riqmah (ed. M. Wilensky), 12, 14; *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, 235; *Cuzari* (ed. H. Hirschfeld), 214-15. On the theurgic function of *simmush*—in the sense of name-manipulation or exploitation—in Castilian-Kabbalistic sources, see remarks in Scholem, *Qabbalot*, 27-28. See also Cuzari, 214-15.

[20] Giqatilla mentions the term *simmush* in both its theurgic and grammatical senses. See *GE* 67 and Glosses 19b, respectively.

Among the various *shimmushim* is YHW (יה״ו), which constitutes a derivative form of the full Tetragrammaton (YHWH), and which following Ibn Ezra Giqatilla further links to the principle of 'Eheyeh, the differentiating factor between Giqatilla and Maimonides.[21] YHW, or ’Eheyeh, operates as the linguistic *shimush*, i.e., as a transformational derivation which constructs and thus refers renewed existence (*havayah meḥudeshet*).[22]

The convertibility of ’Eheyeh and YHW is significant, for it not only underscores the linguistic process of *shimmush* and of Name derivation, but it enables Giqatilla to further explicate the ontological function of this specific *shimush* with respect to the philosophical principle of Nature and its implications to the cosmic structure. The YHW *shimush* is revealed as a derivational mediator which unfolds through a systematic generation of two constitutive sememes—YH (י״ה) and WH (ו״ה). This generative process operates through the structural position of the letter *he* (ה׳) within the YHW (יה״ו) inflection itself. The *he* is positioned between the *yod* (י׳) and the *waw* (ו׳) and it thus operates constructively and separately in relation to both letters: “*he* is positioned in the middle—at times inclining toward *yod*, at times inclining toward *waw*.”[23] This, in turn, generates the constitutive sememes YH (י״ה) and WH (ו״ה) as “two halves” that continue from the originary Tetragrammaton, although inferior thereto.

The ontological import of this linguistic process, led by the derivation of YH (י״ה) and WH (ו״ה), is deliberated through the respective principles *pe‘ulah* (lit. action) and *tenu‘ah* (‘motion’) *“*which the universe in its entirety consists of.”[24] On a symbolic level, this claim is

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[21] *GE* 42, 60, 62; Giqatilla, *Commentary on Genesis*, fols. 44a-b. The numerical equivalence of ’Eheyeh and YHW (יה״ו=21=אהיה) appears in the works of Ibn Ezra and Elazar of Worms. See Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, 191-2; *Sefer ha-Shem*, 419; Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Shem* (ed. Y. Eisenbakh), 113. Cf. Avraham Abulafia, *Mafte’aḥ ha-Shemot*, 36; Jacob ben Jacon Hacohen, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah* (ed. D. Abrams), 327.
[22] *GE* 42, 62-63
[23] *Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 44b.
[24] *GE* 155. Compare *Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 44b: “[...] י״ה [in] *pe‘ulah*–*pe‘ulah* , ו״ה [in] *tenu‘ah*. These [however] are not the true Name, but continuations from Him in the manner of י״ה, יה״ו, יהו״ה.”

fleshed out by the numerical value of the letters that constitute the sememes—10 (י) and 5 (ה), and 6 (ו) and 5 (ה). In both cases, the letter he (ה) designates the five patterns of motion, formulated by the five primary vowel patterns—*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥireq*, *qameṣ* and *ṣere*. In addition, the neighboring letters in each case symbolize constitutive cosmic feature—ten spheres (י) and six (ו) directions or cosmic 'edges.'

But Giqatilla's theological claims go beyond the symbolic import of these letter constituents. More fundamentally, the application of YH and WH as metaphysical principles aims to re-establish the ontological ground of *pe'ulah* and *tenu'ah*. Put somewhat schematically, the designation of these name-units as *pe'ulah* and *tenu'ah* renders them as the linguistic premise of two complementing ontological principles. *pe'ulah* —that is, the principle of natural and essential actuality "according to the opinion of the philosophers" [25]—is the expression of YH (י״ה). [26] Hence the connection between YH and the abovementioned principle of Nature, viz., 'Elohim. *ten'uah*, on the other hand, is the principle of motion that is not defined by the essential actuality of Nature and whose function requires further deliberation.

The twofold constitutive function of YH (י״ה) and WH (ו״ה) reflects Giqatilla's linguistic recasting of the principles of nature and motion. The mechanism of this recasting, formulated

[25] *GE* 340

[26] See *GE* 27, 155. The *pe'ulah* of YaH is intimately connected to the doctrine of the affirmative divine attributes which, following Maimonides, Giqatilla connects to God's actions (*pe'ulot*) in the world. Again, following Maimonides, Giqatilla identifies these attributes of action as the essential constitution of things in the world. Cf. *Guide*, I:54: "God's attributes are the apprehension of His actions." On the connection between *pe'ulot 'elohiyyot* ('divine actions') and *pe'ulot tiv'iyyot* ('natural actions') in Maimonides and in Ibn Tibbon's translation, see remarks and citations in Harvey, *Idel on Spinoza*, 88-89. See also Judah ben Barzilai's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, fol. 168b-169a: "[T]he exalted names are all in accordance with meaning ('*inyan*) and praise […] [a]nd [these] names of the Creator are all in accordance with His awesome actions, may He be exalted." In *GE* 421, the connection between action and the intelligible-essential order is further supported through the association of *pe'ula* with the *tekhunot* ('essences') of things in the world. There Giqatilla states, in a classic Maimonidean fashion, that it is "only through *pe'ulot* and *tekhunot* that one can enquire into the true existence of God." See also *GE* 80, where Giqatilla draws the threefold connection between *kinuie* ('[divine-] attribute'), '*inyan* ('essential-meaning'), and *pe'ula* ('actuality'). All three present the essential actuality of the universe as resulting from God's action, and thus are formulated as divine attributes of action.

through the two sememes, is connected directly to the Tetragrammaton which in Giqatilla's system serves as an originary principle:

> Through intellectual inquiry, we come to understand the true foundation, which is the principle of the divine name YHWH, upon which the entire world depends. Through these methods that we derive from its truth, we comprehend how the permanence of the celestial spheres and the continuity of motion are grounded in the Unique Name. One half [of this Name] bears witness to the world's renewal (*ḥeṣyo me'id 'al ḥiddush ha-'olam*), while the other half attests to the renewal of motion and its existence within the Creator (*we-ḥeṣyo me'id 'al ḥiddush ha-Tenu'ah we-qiyyumah ba-mamṣie*).[27]

The key factor is that YHW (יה״ו) functions simultaneously as a derivation of YHWH (יהו״ה) and as a generative principle that structurally unfolds into the two sememes of YH and WH. These, in turn, operate as the direct linguistic cause of what is expressed as the primary principle of Nature. Bringing this back to our initial remarks, the connection between 'Elohim and Nature, assumed by Maimonides and others as well, is accepted by Giqatilla, but it is concomitantly radically revised. The signifying function of 'Elohim, as the primary attribute that signifies Nature, is analyzed linguistically through its lexical composition of 'ELeM and YH.

Cosmic-Radix Cycle I: 11, the Basis of 10 (Undecimal)

While YH (י״ה) is associated with the principle of Nature that underlies the endurance of the spheres (*Galgal)*, WH (ו״ה) is identified with *Tenu'ah* and *Sovev*.[28] The linguistic function of WH is hermeneutically configured through several of its numerical and linguistic features. Among these configurations is the *gematric* construal of WH (6+5), which equals the combined values of the letters *yod* (10) and *'aleph* (1). This inter-convertibility of WH and YA (א״י) picks up on a principle developed by Abraham ibn Ezra while further modifying its sense and function

[27] *GE* 343

[28] *GE* 155. In assessing Giqatilla's construal of the terms *galgal* ('sphere') and *sovev* ('encompassing') as indicating complementary principles of cosmic and metaphysical motion, I briefly reference how thirteenth-century theosophical doctrines constructed similar spherical imagery. Several of these doctrines distinguished *sovev* as a principle that transcends the tenfold spherical cosmic structure.

through the lens of *Tenu'ah* and *Sovev*. Ibn Ezra, we have seen in Chapter 1, construes the semiotic function of the letters *yod* and *'aleph*, referring to the Intellect and the One, respectively. The AY (א״י) notation in Giqatilla's system draws on this paradigm, designating the two as 'universal' (*kelal*)—the nine spheres and the Universal Intellect—and the transcendent One (*Perat*) which imparts motion, primarily in the sense of existence, to all beings.[29]

But there is still another function that AY plays in Giqatilla's cosmology which connects it to the principle of *Sovev*, and which explains the format convertibility of AY and WH. This is the principle of cosmic motion as contingent on the transcendent One and actualized through the Universal Intellect. Here again, Giqatilla appears to draw on Ibn Ezra, specifically his numerical framework presented in *Sefer ha-Mispar* (*The Book of Number*).

Ibn Ezra's treatise introduces the Indian decimal system, comprising nine fundamental digits (1–9), within a broader exegetical framework. In his interpretative engagement with *Sefer Yeṣirah*, he provides a hermeneutical reading of the threefold repetition of the triliteral root *s-f-r* (ס״פ״ר).[30] The second occurrence is construed as *sfar* (or: *sfor*[31]), signifying numerical calculation founded upon these nine digits:

> *Sfar* is nine numbers since nine is the end of any reckoning. You should know that the nine are the true numbers which stand against the nine spheres and all the ensuing numbers are assimilated to them. [32]

This numerical schema is subsequently mapped onto a cosmological structure whereby Ibn Ezra correlates the nine digits with the nine celestial spheres that encompass the terrestrial realm. The arithmetical nature of this system is demonstrated through Ibn Ezra's proposed radix-cycle,

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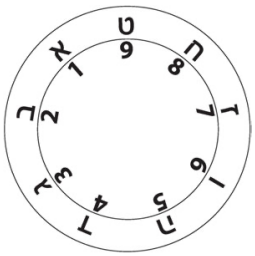
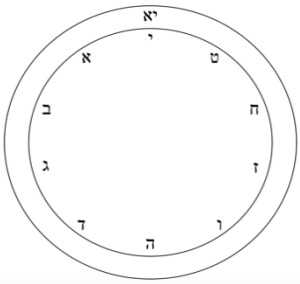
[29] *GE* 338-40. Cf. *GE* 144-45, 149.
[30] *Sefer Yeṣirah* (ed. Hyman) § 1 (59-60). See editor's commentary *ad loc*. (pp. 63-64).
[31] In Shlomo Sela's transliteration. see *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 363.
[32] *Sefer ha-Mispar*, ed. M. Zilberberg (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1970), 1-2. See also Ibn Ezra, *Sefer ha-'Eḥad*, ed. S. Pinsker (Odessa 1887), 64-69.

revealing inherent patterns that underscore the perceived perfection of this numerological-cosmological synthesis.

Ibn Ezra employs a spherical arrangement with the number 9 positioned at the apex to demonstrate the mathematical properties inherent in the multiplication of 9—the terminal digit of the decimal system—by any descending integer. This geometric model reveals systematic patterns: when 9 is multiplied by itself, yielding 81, the resulting digits are positioned as diametrically opposed pairs on the sphere. The digit positioned to the right of 9, viz., 8, represents the tens' place (80), while its left counterpart signifies the units place (1). This spatial configuration illustrates the mathematical perfection of 9, as demonstrated by the sum of these opposing digits (8 + 1 = 9). This principle extends systematically throughout the series: the product of 9 and 8 (72) is similarly represented by the symmetrically subsequent positioned digits 7 and 2, maintaining the same additive relationship to 9 (7+2).[33] Ibn Ezra further employs the first nine Hebrew letters which function as numerical designators. Thus, 9 multiplied by itself equals AḤ (א״ח), the product of 9 and 8 is BZ (ב״ז), and so on.



Giqatilla transforms this cosmic-radix cycle by substituting the undecimal (base-11) system for the decimal (base-10) structure. Under this modified paradigm, positional values that traditionally represent decimal groupings in the Indian numeral system now correspond to undecimal units based on 11. Consequently, the decimal value 30 (3 × 10) is recalculated as 28 in the undecimal system (2 × 11 + 8). Translated to his cosmological model, Giqatilla's *Galgal* thereby comprises ten constituent elements—corresponding to ten cosmic parts—each representing a perfect



[33] I thank Mr. Isaac H. Ashkenazi for bringing this to my attention.

number within an undecimal framework. Conversely, YA designates the principle by which these cosmic parts are moved and preserved.

This cosmic structure, organized according to the undecimal framework, elucidates a formula that appears repeatedly, in various iterations, throughout Part Two of *Ginnat Egoz*. One such variation comprises the following four letter-pairs: AT (א״ט), BḤ (ב״ח), GZ (ג״ז), DW (ד״ו).[34] This sequence corresponds to the numerical values 91, 82, 73, and 64, respectively, which aligns with Ibn Ezra's adopted cycle, when accounting for both the constituent cosmic parts (ten in total; י׳) and Giqatilla's undecimal base of calculation (11; י״א).

The systematic application of this principle demonstrates that 10 squared (100 in decimal notation) becomes 91 in the undecimal system—with 9 representing the undecimal grouping (9 × 11) and 1 constituting the unit digit that completes the centenary value. In the Hebrew alphabetic numerical system, this relationship is encoded through the positioning of the letters *tet* (ט׳) to the right of *yod* (י׳) and *'aleph* (א) to its left. Following the same logical structure, the product of 10 and 9 (90 in decimal) manifests through the diametrically opposed letters that follow the multiplicand, *ḥet* (ח׳) on the right and *bet* (ב׳) on left, where the former designates the undecimal coefficient (8 × 11) and the latter represents the two units required to complete the value of ninety.

[34] The first letter, *yod*, designates the nine parts of the spherical world together with the Universal Intellect (totaling ten), whereas the *he* represents five structural forms (*binyanim*) that govern the effects and causal relations between these ten parts, each bringing about transformations in the subsequent elements. These five structural forms are encoded through Giqatilla's adaptation of the cosmic radix-cycle discussed above. The familiar letter-combinatorial formula groups the letters *'aleph* through *yod* in four successive pairs—TA (א״ט), ḤB (ב״ח), ZG (ג״ז), WD (ד״ו)—followed by the fifth pair, YH (ה״י), which marks a reversal in the positional sequence (*GE* 145). This corresponds to Giqatilla's undecimal calculations of 10 multiplied by itself and the descending sequence (10×10=91, 10×9=82, 10×8=73, 10×7=64), where each result reflects the base-11 system (e.g., 10×10 = 9×11+1). In the Hebrew letter representation, the undecimal coefficient appears on the right and the unit digit on the left (91 = ט״א), maintaining this diametrical order until the sequence reaches 10×5=50 in decimal or 46 in undecimal (4×11+6, thus ו״ד). At this point, the positional sequence reverses, with subsequent multiplications continuing this inverted pattern. This sequence reversal is basically adopted from Ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Mispar,* ibid.

The undecimal cosmic framework reveals two central principles of Giqatilla's cosmology concerning to *Tenu'ah* and *Sovev*. First, the divine name YA serves as the basis of cosmic motion, which is expressed in the natural form of spherical movement. Giqatilla draws this connection between divine and natural motion by engaging Maimonides' treatment of the accidents of motion and time in the context of creation *ex nihilo*.[35] In *Guide* 2.13, Maimonides describes time as an accident that follows from motion, which is itself an accident. Despite this dependency, Maimonides qualifies the relationship between motion and the substance of the spheres. He uses the example of blackness to illustrate stable, directly inhering accidents, contrasting this with time's problematic ontological status as an accident dependent on motion—an inherently unstable accident that never persists in a fixed state.

Giqatilla responds to the philosophers by modifying this distinction, maintaining that although motion is an accident, its relationship to the spheres is proper and stable, "like the blackness of tar."[36] While he affirms the created nature of both time and natural motion, Giqatilla presents motion as properly connected to the substance of the spheres, insofar as it is "indicative of the secret of the true motion." This true motion is associated with the principle of YA, which is further described as constituting the essence of the sphere.[37] Giqatilla's modification thus reflects how his theological conception of linguistic motion reconfigures Maimonides' account of natural motion within a broader theological framework.

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[35] Maimonides confronts the fundamental logical paradox of temporal creation: if divine creation occurs 'in time,' this presupposes time's prior existence, generating either infinite regress or the contradiction of something existing before its own creation. His resolution is based on an ontological analysis derived from Aristotelian physics: Time is an accident necessarily dependent upon motion, which in turn requires material substrata. Since divine creation *ex nihilo* establishes both motion and its physical foundations simultaneously, time emerges as a consequence rather than a precondition of creation.

[36] *GE* 359. In *GE* 379, Giqatilla applies the 'blackness of the tar' to illustrate the category of proper (or *per se*) accidents. The other example is the quality of heat, flowing naturally from the fire.

[37] Ibid.

The second principle, YH, concerns the implications of this cycle-numerical procedure for the principles of Intellect and Soul in relation to the cosmic parts, the so-called *Merkavah*, arranged by our formula in four consecutive pairs.[38] (AT, BḤ, GZ, DW) These letters YH designate the respective roles of the Intellect (*yod*) and the Soul (*he*). In his untitled work, Giqatilla designates the Intellect as the governing principle of the cosmic order, further describing the relationship between the two in terms of substance (Intellect, י) and accidents (nine spheres, ט). On this view, the Intellect functions as the substance that carries the nine subsidiary spheres as its accidents, which explains why the number 10 functions as the fundamental operating factor in Giqatilla's undecimal cosmic-radix cycle. Conversely, the letter *he* functions as the 'internal point' of the spheres while further described as the principle that connects the parts of the cosmic spheres.[39]

Underlying *pe'ulah* and *tenu'ah*, the names YH and WH thus function as the operating principles of the cosmic order. This relationship is reflected in the modification of natural motion as an expression of divine motion, derived from the Tetragrammaton and formulated as a linguistic-numerical procedure. The metaphysical role of these principles, YH and WH, is further expressed in their ambiguous relationship to the cosmic parts, described as connected, yet extending beyond the cosmic Chariot (*ḥuṣah la-Merkavah*).[40]

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[38] *GE* 147: "Indeed you will observe that the *Merkavah* consists of (lit. is found in) the ten spheres (lit. ten parts of the *galgal*). Merkavah includes [the letter] *yod* (viz., 10) in the secret of ABGD (viz., 1+2+3+4), while HW (viz., 5+6 = 10+1) extends the *Merkavah* ; it is the name that moves the *Merkavah* ." See also Wolfson's remark in *Letter Symbolism*, 201-02, n. 25 on the connection between AT BH GZ DW and the cosmic *Merkavah* (Chariot) in Giqatilla's untitled work. MS NY JTS 851, ff. 67b-68a).

[39] MS New York 851, ff. 67b-68a: The image of the Soul as a connecting force appears in Maimonides' *Guide* 1.72, where it 'ties' the cosmic parts together, is analogized to the function of the soul with respect to the corporeal organs.

[40] MS New York 851, ibid.

Cosmic-Radix Cycle II: 12, the Basis of 11 (Duodecimal)

Analysis of Giqatilla's cosmological frameworks reveals that alongside the undecimal (base-11) system, he developed a duodecimal (base-12) system that generates a parallel cosmic-radix cycle, based on the same underlying logic. In addressing the cosmic structure and its principle of motion, Giqatilla presents the following formulation:

> Contemplate that all motion proceeds on [the base of] YA (י״א) through the parts which the secret of the second half of the Tetragrammaton [viz., ו״ה] is their seal: AY (א״י), BT (ב״ט), GḤ (ג״ח), DZ (ד״ז), HW (ה״ו). Contemplate and you will see that this order [begins with] YA (י״א), until it culminates by the [second] half of the Name whose secret is HW (ה״ו).

This formula presents a distinct sequence—AY, BT, GḤ, DZ, HW—that differs systematically from the earlier AT, BH, GZ pattern, suggesting that Giqatilla is employing a different radix.

This somewhat enigmatic formula, which structurally resembles to the AT, BH, GZ sequence discussed above, becomes fully intelligible by considering that Giqatilla has substituted his original base-11 (י״א) system with a base-12 (י״ב) framework. The key factor lies in understanding how the same Hebrew letter-pairs function differently under each numerical base. In the letter-pair AT (א״ט), for instance, the T (ט׳; 9) and ’A (א׳; 1) represent the number 100, when read positionally through the undecimal system (9×11+1). However, when this same pattern operates within the duodecimal system, the T (ט׳) represents nine twelves (rather than 9×10, or 9×11), fundamentally altering the cosmic values encoded in these letter combinations. The mathematical grounding of 12 changes the interpretive framework of the letter-pairs.

The second cosmic-radix cycle consists of 11 parts—the 10 cosmic spheres, represented by the letter *yod* (Y) and the principle of YA itself. The latter represents the second half of the Tetragrammaton (י״א=11=ו״ה) which is the principle of universal motion in the undecimal system, as discussed above. Using the same logic applied in the undecimal system, this principle

demonstrates that 11 squared (121 in decimal notation, or 110 in the undecimal system) converts to 101 in the duodecimal system, where 10 represents the duodecimal grouping (10 × 12) and 1 constitutes the unit digit completing the value. Within the Hebrew alphabetic numerical system, this relationship is encoded through the positioning of *yod* (י) to the right of *yod-'aleph* (י״א) and *'aleph* (א) to its left. Following this same structural logic, the product of 11 and 10 (110 in decimal, 100 in undecimal) manifests through the diametrically positioned letters following the multiplicand: T (ט) on the right and B (ב) on the left. The former designates the duodecimal coefficient (9 × 12) and the latter represents the two units required to complete the value of 110. This process is concluded in HW (ה״ו), where the diametrical positions of the duodecimal coefficient and the units are reversed; again, following the logic of the undecimal system.

The use of the duodecimal system finds additional confirmation elsewhere in *Ginnat Egoz***,** where Giqatilla states:

> Know that God is the cause of the sphere (*messavev ha-galgal*), as we have explained through the secret of YA, for Blessed be He transcends the sphere in the secret of YB (י״ב), in the following manner: AB (א״ב), GD (ג״ד), HW (ה״ו), ZḤ (ז״ח), TY (ט״י), YA (י״א), [and] YB (י״ב) is the secret of *howeh, we-hayah, we-yihyeh*. (הוה והיה ויהיה).[41]

The section includes the first four letters which constitute the ten cosmic parts (ABGD =1+2+3+4), according to the principle of cosmic *Merkavah*, and, following these four letters, the successive letter-pairs—HW, ZḤ, TY, YA—the latter sharing the distinct numerical value of motion, viz., 11. The ultimate referent of all letter-pairs is the secret of YB (י״ב) which, in my reading, should be distinguished from the letter-pair YA and understood as the subject of the following predicate nominative: "[…] YB is the secret of *howeh, we-hayah, we-yihyeh.*" Thus, the secret of YB refers

[41] *GE* 163.

to the 12 letters that constitute the inflected forms of the name of existence in present, past, and future tenses (HoWeH, We-HaYaH, We-YiHYeH).[42]

The principle of *howeh, hayah, we-yiheh* provides a framework for further construing the AY, BT, GḤ, DZ, HW formula. This principle appears in other sources with which Giqatilla was familiar, particularly in Barukh Togrami's *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah* and Isaac ibn Latif's *Ṣurat 'Olam*.[43] There *howeh hayah we-yiheh* is described as the "universal wisdom which includes All" (*ha-ḥokhma ha-kelalit ha-kolelet ha-kol*).[44] By connecting this formula with the number 12, Giqatilla draws on a specific tradition regarding the identity of the Name of Twelve Letters.[45] Thus, several lines later he asserts that "if you contemplate the secret of HoWeH, We-HaYaH We-YiHYeH it will be revealed to you as three [repetitions of the name] YHWH."[46]

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[42] Generally, Giqatilla follows Ibn Ezra's theology of the Name, developed also by Judah Halevi, which identifies the verb *heyot* ('to be') as the root of the Tetragrammaton. This is also the derivational logic of the name 'Ehyeh, which constructs the renewed existence. See our discussion in Chapter 1.

[43] *Ṣurat 'Olam* fol. 140b (p.44): "The Name that is written but not pronounced, termed 'the Explicit Name'. It includes (*hu ha-kolel*) *howeh*, *hayah*, *we-yiheh,* and it also includes the three names and according to the sequence […]." Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 56a.

[44] Barukh Togarmi, *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah*, 233. See also Jewish Theological Seminary, MS New York, 1884, fol. 34 (Cited in Idel, *Incantations*, 502). On Barukh Togarmi's impact and Ginnat Egoz, see Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 109-11, and see Martini's reservations (*Punctuation*, 96, n. 119) on Blickstein's view. In SN Long (fol. 179b) this formula is associated with the principle of *holam* by way of *gematria*. (HoLaM=78= HoWeH, We-HaYaH We-YiHYeH.). See also the synoptic edition of Giqatilla's 'poem' in Dal-Bo, *Philosophical Poems*, 9, line 18b.

[45] See b. *Qiddushin* 71a, *Guide* 1.62.

[46] *GE* 163. Giqatilla explicates the threefold inflection of *howeh, we-hayah, we-yiheh* according to the liturgical formula – YHWH *melekh,* YHWH *malakh,* YHWH *yimlokh le-'olam wa-'ed* ("The Lord reigns, the Lord reigned, the Lord shall reign forever and ever"). Here, each verbal form modifies the temporal dimension of the Tetragrammaton, producing a dynamic interplay between grammatical tense and theological meaning. See *GE* 26-27: "YHWH *melekh,* YHWH *malakh,* YHWH *yimlokh*, these [three verbs] imply *melekh howe*, *melekh we-hayah, melekh,* we-*yiheh*. The secret of the threefold repetition of YHWH in this [liturgical] verse is HoWeH, We-HaYaH, We-YiHYeH." For further explication, see *GE* 221-24.) We should note also the threefold inflection of the liturgical verse (*melekh*, *malakh*, *yimlokh*) in *Sefer ha-Bahir* (§80, 167), which follows the grammatical pattern of *yafa'al* (יַפָּעַל) *yafo'el* (יַפֹּעֵל), *yif'ol* (יִפְעֹל). This template is also applied in Moses Narboni's commentary on *Guide* 1.62, explicating on Maimonides' remarks on the Name of Twelve. Narboni construes this Name in a fashion similar to Giqatilla, connecting the four-letter name YHWH to the Name of Twelve – the latter is the actualization of the former in present, past and future tenses. Cf. remarks in Hillel Ben-Sasson, *Understanding YHWH: The Name of God in Biblical, Rabbinic, and Medieval Jewish Thought, trans. Michelle Bubis* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 187-88. A similar motif appears in Abraham of Cologne's *Keter Shem Tov* (p. 39), where the threefold repetition of the Tetragrammaton is construed in three temporal states: "The final *heh* of the Tetragrammaton serves to constitute the three *hawwayot* ['existences'], and this constitutes the secret of the triple name: YHWH, YHWH, YHWH. Alternatively, in a single recitation, one can intend all three *hawwayot* when pronouncing YHWH, as the *heh* brings them forth." Several lines later (ibid, 40), this same text construes the Name of Twelve as the threefold repetition of

Interpreted in light of our preceding analysis, this passage provides the textual foundation for understanding why Giqatilla employs two distinct numerical sequences. The transition from the AT, BH, GZ formula (operating on base-11) to the AY, BT, GH sequence (requiring base-12 calculations) reflects a cosmological hierarchy. The passage suggests a bifurcated model in which the motion imparted to the cosmic spheres operates according to the YA (11 = י״א) base principle, which operates linguistically in connection with HW, the second half of the Tetragrammaton as generated by the YHW (יה״ו) name. The transcendent source, by contrast, is formulated through the YB (12 = י״ב) base principle. According to this schema, YA emerges as the consequence of the divine act emanating from YB—specifically, as the result of its squared calculation according to the duodecimal system (11 × 11 = 10 × 12 + 1). This mathematical relationship explains why Giqatilla explicitly invokes the number 12 as representing the divine source that transcends—yet generates—the cosmic order represented by 11.

The relationship between the transcendent One and the Intellect will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The aforementioned twofold numerical model provides theological and conceptual grounds for addressing Giqatilla's conception of the cosmos and Nature—its structure, causal relationships, and principle of motion. We shall begin with his general reception of cosmological doctrines which also include an account of sublunar elements, translunary spheres, and the Active Intellect. Following this deliberation, we will return to Giqatilla's scheme of sublunary natural elements and examine how he further infers from it a conceptual framework for

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the Tetragrammaton according to three temporal modes, as articulated in the liturgical formula *YHWH melekh, YHWH malakh, YHWH yimlokh*. I thank Dr. Idan Pinto for bringing this to my attention. We should also note the twelve combinatorial forms (*ḥokhmat ha-ṣeruf*) of the Tetragrammaton: *GE*: 135: YHWH, YWHH, YHHW HWHY, HHYW, HYWH, WHYH, WYHH, WHHY, HYHW, HHWY, HWYH. See also Abraham Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-ʻOlam ha-Ba,* 11, where these combinatorial forms constitute the Name of Twelve.

deliberating the principle of cosmic vitality and existential unity. Ultimately, these deliberations construct the cosmological framework that best fits Giqatilla's linguistic metaphysics.

The Spheres and the Active Intellect: Giqatilla's Traditional Cosmology

The Elements of the Sublunar World

Giqatilla's cosmological structure is conventional. It follows the classic threefold scheme, consisting of the intelligible, spherical, and sublunar worlds—upper, middle, and lower.[47] Starting from bottom to top, the lower sublunar realm is ontologically defined in classic Aristotelian lines. Also termed *'Olam ha-Harkavah* ('world of composition'), it consists of the four material elements, fire, air, water and earth, and it ontologically endures through the cycles of generation and corruption (*havayah ve-hefsed*). Put somewhat schematically, each of the elements consists of a shared material substrate, also known as 'second matter'. This common substrate, in turn, consists of two principles: prime simple matter (*hyle*) and the first categorical and quantitative form—namely, extension—thus constituting the prerequisite for any dimensional material body. It is in relation to these underlying material circumstances that the foundational principles materialize in the form of distinguished elements—fire, air, water, and earth. Each of the elements embodies a compound of two qualities—e.g., heat and dryness in fire or moisture and coldness in

[47]*GE* 215, 363-64. For an introductory overview of Medieval Arabic and Jewish cosmology, see Gad Freudenthal, "Cosmology: The Heavenly Bodies," in Steven Nadler and Tamar Rudavsky, eds., *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 302-61.

water—though these qualities do not necessarily constitute the natural form of their respective element.[48]

Meteorological accounts distinguish the qualitative nature of the elemental spheres from their effect in sublunar material objects. The consuming nature of fire is a property of its materialized effect in sublunar substance, whereas the qualities of elemental fire, *per se*, lack the destructive function.[49] Still, several prevailing accounts identify natural form with the binary states of activity versus passivity, or cohesion versus disintegration. Accordingly, these accounts treat the associated qualities as accidents or secondary forms of the elements.[50] Other accounts identify the form of the elements with their movement—upward or downward. These latter accounts distinguish primary form, *qua* movement, from secondary form *qua* qualities.[51]

Giqatilla, for his part, is not explicit about the essential constitution of the elements, though in several places he alludes to motion as the differentiating factor among the elements. He accordingly considers the compound qualities of the elements secondary to their natural identity.

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[48] See summary in Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *De'ot ha-Pilosophim*, The Palatina Library Parma Italy, Ms. Parma, Cod. 3156, fol. 69a: "We maintain that the first principle of all bodies is a matter that is not incorporeal and which substrates all contraries […] We must assume a substratum that receives all contraries […] the second principle (*ha-hatḥalah ha-shenit*) is the first opposites [i.e., extension] premised on the first principle. The third [principle] is water, fire, and their likes, each consisting of the first opposites (viz., extension) and prime matter. These [composite elements] are ranked third, for they are interchangeable."

[49] See summary in Ibn Falaquera's *De'ot ha-Pilosophim*, fol. 65b.

[50] *'Otot ha-Shamayim: Shmuel Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew Version of Aristotle's Meteorology*, ed. Resianne Fontaine, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 187: "The philosopher (viz. Aristotle) says: the primary principles that are manifest in the four elements are four, in accordance with the elements that are made up of them: two of them are active and two of them passive. The active elementary forces are heat and cold and the passive ones are moisture and dryness. This is proven by the fact that the hot and the cold break up, combine and change things that are of the same kind, hardening and softening them. The moist and the dry are passive by themselves and through them all the bodies that are made up of them are affected." See Aristotle's *Meteor*. IV.1 (378b-379a); *De Gen. Et Corr*. II.2 (329b-330a).

[51] *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On the Natural Science* (Carmela Baffoni, ed.), 174. Philosophers like Avicenna attributed the qualities of elemental fire, expressed materially in the qualities of heat and dryness to the form of the element, describing the latter in terms of force. See discussions and sources in: Harry Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1933), 668-75, esp. 673; Seyyed Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), 215-18. The nature of the elements is conjectured also through the relationship between Nature and motion. To return to our earlier remarks on Nature, Avicenna maintains that, in the case of simple substances, 'form' and 'nature' coincide, such that the natural form of that substance is identical with its natural motion: "In the case of the simples [viz., the elements], the nature is the very form itself, for water's nature is [for example] the very essence by which it is water." See *Physics of the Healing*, I:6.2, 45.

That is, the qualities, essentially interchangeable, pertain to the elements as materialized in absolute body.

The idea that the natural elements are essentially simple is complicated by a curious comparison that Giqatilla draws between these elements and the translunar realm. Giqatilla rejected the Aristotelian hypothesis of a translunar fifth matter,[52] maintaining instead the presence of three translunar elements analogous to the sublunar ones:

> The [sublunar] elements are coarse and they alter by virtue of their composite nature […] All particulars in the sublunar world are composite. You will find there no element that subsists in its form […] This marks the difference between *'olam ha-harkava* ('sublunar world') and *'olam ha-ḥomer* ('supralunar spheres'), for the elements of *'olam ha-ḥomer* subsists in their form and in their existence. […] By contrast, the elements of *'olam ha-harkava* alter their form. They are projected to be stripped of their composite form [or qualities] and to return to their natural form. (*ṣurattam ha-tiv'it*)[53]

The composite nature here mentioned refers to the particulars which are composed of the elements and their interchangeable qualities. But it also refers to the elements themselves, the composite potentiality (*koaḥ harkavatam*) which implies their constant metamorphosis into neighboring elements—fire becoming air, air becoming water, and so forth.[54] This is in contrast to the translunar world where the supposed elements are said to persist in their form such that "fire remains fire, air remains air, and water remains water."[55] Still, the words concluding the quotation

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[52] The fifth element doctrine is reflected, for example, in Ibn Ṣadiq's '*Olam ha-Qatan* (Jelinek, ed.), 10: "The body of the celestial sphere is different from other bodies with respect to matter, form and other qualities, it is a spherical body, as are all the stars that are in it. It consists of a fifth element." On Ibn Ṣaddiq's fifth element in connection with the contemporary philosophical discourses, see Georges Vajda, "La Philosophie et la Théologie de Joseph Ibn Çaddiq," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 17 (1949): 9-12. On Ibn Latif's objection to the fifth element doctrine, see *Sha'ar ha-Shmayim* (Zimran ed.), 15-16; *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 3, fol. 131a (p. 8). See also discussions and comments in Esudri, *Ṣurat 'Olam*, 107-08; Zimran, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, 70.

[53] *GE* 282-83.

[54] On the general scheme of elemental metamorphosis, see: Aristotle, *Gen. and Corr.* 2.4-6; Amira Eran, ed., *Abraham Ibn Da'ud's The Exalted Faith: ha-Emunah ha-Ramah – translated by Solomon Ibn Lavi* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2019), 1:2 (pp. 148-60); Ibn Gabirol, *Meqor Ḥayyim,* 1:14-16 (pp. 13-17); Ibn Ṣadiq, '*Olam ha-Qatan*, 13; Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, 102, n. 2. See also discussion in Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique*, 578-81.

[55] *GE* 282-83.

assert the 'return of the sublunar elements to their natural form', thus suggesting the distinction between the qualitative transformation of these elements and their distinct respective form.[56]

To this ambiguity regarding the return of the elements to their supposed natural form, we may add another ambiguity arising from Giqatilla's account of the elements. Giqatilla also maintains that the sublunar elements possess some degree of self-subsistence,[57] thus contradicting his earlier distinction between sublunar and supralunar elements. On this view, Giqatilla's position on the elements appears to differ from that of contemporaries like Ibn Tibbon,[58] in assuming their self-identity—despite his assertion of their interchangeability.

Later in this chapter, I will address Giqatilla's analogical construal of the elements as universal principles, which may help clarify these ambiguities. To anticipate that discussion briefly: the elements—including those in the sublunar realm—function as universal principles that operate across all cosmic levels, transcending their particular material manifestations. His idea that the elements, in their final analysis, are simple and uncomposed, alludes to Isaac Israeli's *Sefer*

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[56] On *ṣurah tiv'it*, see also Maimonides, *Guide* 1.1; 1.69; II, Intro. It seems that for the elements, 'natural form' simply means their natural place under the moon (viz., the elemental spheres) where they are distinguished from one another according to their constitutive essential properties. See: *'Otot ha-Shmayim*, 20-22; *Ruaḥ Ḥen* [Warsaw: 1865], 21-28. Cf. remarks in Resianne Fontaine, "The Reception of Aristotle's 'Meteorology' in Hebrew Scientific Writings of the Thirteenth Century," *Aleph* [2001]: 107-08. The standard meteorological view of the time assumed that there, too, adjacent spheres qualitatively affect one another, and thus the lower part of the air is moist in comparison to its upper part, affected by water. See *'Otot ha-Shmayim*, 20-22. This conforms to the accepted Aristotelian premise that the elemental spheres are not, in themselves, simple, but composed; a premise that was necessary for explaining the process of generation and corruption in the sublunar world by viewing the mixture of elemental spheres as the effect of the motion of the spherical bodies. See, for example, *Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's De'ot ha-Pilosophim* (ff. 65b-66a): "We accept [the view] that elemental fire, like the other elements, is not simple, as the spherical bodies mix (or blend; *me'arvin*) it moderately. Generation and corruption [of sublunar world] is contingent on this [process of] mixture. This confirms Alexander (Aphrodisias) the Interpreter's opinion that fire is the cause of generation (*sibbah le-havayahh*), for [fire] is composite (*me'urevet*), not completely simple." Again, this, for Giqatilla, is in contradistinction to translunar elements where "countering elements coexist while preserving their distinctive forms." (*GE* 282) On the stratification of the spheres into upper and lower layers, and of air into three (upper, middle, and lower), see *Ruaḥ Ḥen* (Warsaw: 1865), 24. On the sources of this encyclopedic work, see James T. Robinson, "Gershom ben Solomon's Sha'ar ha-Shamayim: Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Steven Harvey (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 248-74.

[57] See *GE* 369.

[58] See *'Otot ha-Shmayim*, 14-15 ("[e]ach element resides potentially in the other […].")

ha-Yesodot where they are said to be uncomposed, originating by the mere power of God.[59] This further relates to the intelligibility of the elements which Israeli distinguishes from their bodily materialization with its associated qualities.[60]

By characterizing the material elements as reflecting the intelligible universal principles, Giqatilla appears to voice a similar position, perhaps going even beyond Israeli himself. Surely, the form of the elements cannot consist of absolute body *per se*—that is, quantitative form—for this would exclude their analogy to immaterial intelligible elements, which lack such form. What exactly constitutes the self-subsisting identity of the elements remains to be considered. Similarly, it remains to be clarified in what sense the celestial elements may be deemed superior to the sublunar elements by virtue of their substantive identity. I will elaborate on this later in my discussion of Giqatilla's analogical framework. For now, it is worth noting that Giqatilla's conception of sublunar elemental change, grounded in natural motion, will later serve as the paradigm for understanding intelligible principles in non-kinetic terms.

'Aravot and the Order of Spheres

Ascending from the sublunary elements, Giqatilla's translunary realm comprises nine orbs, also associated with the *'Ofanim* of Ezekiel 1.13.[61] Giqatilla accepts the common threefold analysis of

[59] *Sefer ha-Yesodot* (ed. S. Fried), 7, 10. On the reception of Israeli's Elements in Giqatilla's intellectual environment, specifically by Ibn Ezra and Ibn Latif, see Fried's remarks in the supplementary volume: Salomon Fried, *Das Buch über die Elemente* (Drohobycz: Župnik, 1900), 43-47. On Israeli's twofold characterization of the elements as simple and created by God on the one hand and, on the other hand, as caused by the motion of the spheres, see suggestions in Stern and Altmann, *Isaac Israeli*, 182.

[60] *Sefer ha-Yesodot* (ed. Fried), 38: "The deliberation of the elements *qua* elements differs from their deliberation *qua* [material] agents (*miṣad 'al she-hem po'alim*). Their deliberation *qua* elements is simple insofar as they are also simple, unsensible and uncomposed. *Qua* agents, on the other hands, they are analyzed as composite and sensible."

[61] *GE* 229. Although Giqatilla also maintains (*GE* 422, 454) the Angelic list where *'Ofanim* is the second intellect, situated under *Ḥayyot ha-Qodesh*, which acts upon the sphere of the fixed stars. On the *'Ofanim*-orbs construal in Giqatilla's later theosophical thought, see Avigail Harel, "All Things Are to be Understood according to Their Constellation': The Spherical Shapes of the Sefirot in R. Josef Gikatilla's Kabbalistic Thought," (MA thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2022), 25-28.

the orbs as consisting of body, soul, and intelligence. Within this framework, he attributes the motion of each sphere to the sphere's desire for its corresponding intelligence.[62] The desiring soul itself functions as the immediate form of the sphere,[63] while the respective intelligence that the soul desires is ontologically distinct from the spheres.[64] The heavens consist of nine spheres—the seven planetary spheres and the sphere of fixed stars, all eight moving west to east, and the ninth transparent diurnal sphere.

Giqatilla's planets are listed in standard order: Moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.[65] The eighth sphere of the fixed stars is the host of the twelve zodiacal constellations, situated under the ninth diurnal sphere.[66] Above the eight spheres, and somewhat distinguished therefrom,[67] Giqatilla posits the ninth sphere—also identified with the heavenly

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[62] *SN Short*, 63*. See references and discussion in Herbert Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the Cuzari and Hallevi's Theory of Causality," *Revue des études juives*, 131 (1972): 354-59.

[63] "The 'soul of the sphere' is itself the principle of the spheres; the two are identical. […] [T]he soul does not reside in the body of the sphere as it does with respect to the human being" (*GE* 261). The latter remark is crucial for Giqatilla's anthropology, an essential tenet of which is the superiority of human mental capacities over the spheres and even over the separate intellects. More on this below. Cf. *GE* 262-64.

[64] See *GE* 249-50. Giqatilla (*GE* 190; 249-50) emphasizes this point as he further pushes against Judah Halevi, who allegedly underplayed the role of the intellects *qua* ontological mediators between God and the spheres. This, Giqatilla purports, led Halevi to confuse the Cherubim with the *'Ofanim*, the Intellects with the Orbs. Giqatilla thus appears to follow the general reasoning that Halevi ascribes to the philosopher in the *Cuzari.* See at length Davidson, *Cuzari*, 359-81. Cf. Judah Halevi's Yom *Kippur Qedushah*, in Dov Yarden, ed. *Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's Liturgical Poems*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1986), 107-08. Giqatilla alludes to Maimonides while maintaining the distinction between Ḥayyot (or Cherubim) and *'Ofanim*, presumably referring to the Separated Intellects and the spheres, respectively. (Cf. *GE* 229) But Maimonides plays with the identity of these terms, taken from Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 1.13). Thus, in *Guide* 3.2 he draws a naturalistic scheme, construing Ḥayyot as the spheres (divided on this account into four globs) and *'Ofanim* as the sublunar elemental spheres. See: Daniel Davis, *Method and Metaphysics in Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed* (New-York: Oxford UP, 2011); 113-28; Stern, *Matter and Form*, 295-96; cf. cited scholarship. On the *'Ofanim*-orbs construal in Giqatilla's later theosophical thought, see Harel, *Spherical Shapes*, 25-28. Elsewhere (*GE* 422, 454) Giqatilla mentions *'Ofanim* in line with Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Madd'a* (*Yesodei ha-Torah* 2.7), where *'Ofanim* is listed second in the angelic list, situated under *Ḥayyot ha-Qodesh*, the latter acting upon the sphere of the fixed stars.

[65] *GE* 138. Compare Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*, §§ 11-21, 262-269. While this division represents the Ptolemaic scheme, later accounts rearranged the order of the orbs, placing Mercury and Venus above the sun. See Ibn Ezra, *Commentary* (Long), Exod. 20.14.

[66] *GE* 230. Cf. Shlomo Sela, "Maimonides and Māshā'allāh on the Ninth Orb of the Signs and Astrology," *Aleph* 12.1 (2012): 106-110.

[67] The distinguished role of *'Aravot* assumes a second spherical division, concomitant with the common ninefold division. Alluding to Maimonides' *Guide* 2:9, Giqatilla introduces a second division of the supralunar domain, into two general globes – the ninth sphere *'Aravot* and the remaining spherical bodies, including the sphere of fixed stars. (*GE* 242. See *Guide* 2:9, and cf. Sela, *Ninth Orb*, 128-29.)

grade *'Aravot* of *b*.Ḥagigah 12b and Psalms 68.5[68]— which is responsible for the daily motion of the spheres from east to west, according to the Ptolemaic scheme.[69] In *Ginnat Egoz*, this sphere seems to lack the twelvefold division of the zodiacal signs which other accounts assumed.[70]

Giqatilla's spherical scheme has implications for several of the themes developed in *Ginnat Egoz*. One of these concerns the governing principle of *'Aravot*, formerly identified by the philosophers with the Universal Intellect; the tenth sphere listed bottom to top. Maimonides continued this general line by construing the phrase *rokhev ba-'Aravot* ('rider of heavens'; Ps. 68.5) as referring to the Prime Mover.[71] Responding to Maimonides on this issue,[72] Giqatilla distinguishes between the ninth sphere (*'Aravot*) and its primal cause (*rokhev*) as 'not of the same

[68] See *GE* 287.

[69] Giqatilla accordingly distinguishes the diurnal motion, moving westwards on the *deferent*, from the motion of each of the orbs around the *epicycle*, moving conversely eastwards. (*GE* 388: […] *yesh kokhavim ḥogegim mi-mizraḥ le-ma'arav u-mi-ma'arav le-mizraḥ*.) The addition of the second motion of the planets around the *epicycle* is intended to explain what, from the perspective of Earth, appears as alternately swift and retrograde motions of the spheres. Giqatilla mentions the two motions in passing, *tenu'a mehirit* (swift) and *meuḥeret* (slow), although they are integral to his cosmic-linguistic system. It is not clear which specific motions Giqatilla is referring to when using the terms *mehirit* and *meuḥeret*, although there is reason to assume that he has in mind something similar to the astronomical distinction between higher-light and lower-heavy spherical distinction, which causes the spheres to move either swiftly or slowly. In contradistinction to earlier opinions that attributed swift and slow motion to the heaviness and lightness of the bodies, respectively. See Ibn Falaquera's *De'ot ha-Pilosophim*, fol. 65b. On the two motions—*deferent* and *epicycle*—in Ptolemaic cosmology, see Freudenthal, *Cosmology*, 310-11; Luba C. Taub, *Ptolemy's Universe* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 100-03. On the addition of a ninth diurnal sphere in Ptolemaic and Medieval cosmology, see Sela, *Ninth Orb*, 101-04.

[70] The latter corresponding to the zodiacal constellations of the eighth sphere. On this, see Sela, *Ninth Orb*. Giqatilla makes no mention of divisions or signs in the ninth sphere. See *GE* 230. Abraham bar Ḥiyya, in one of the three models mentioned in *Ṣurat ha-'Areṣ*, identifies the ninth orb as the Orb of the Signs, to which he adds a tenth sphere, the latter imparting diurnal motion to all orbs beneath. See *Ṣurat ha-'Areṣ*, (Offenbach 1720), fol. 11a. Conversely, Abraham Ibn Ezra attributes diurnal motion to the ninth sphere, including also the zodiacal signs, beneath which he situates the eighth sphere with its zodiacal constellations. To these, Ibn Ezra adds a tenth sphere, the Universal Intellect, identified also as the Throne of Glory. Cf. Com. Ps. 8.4; Com. Long, Ex. 23.20.

[71] *Guide* I:70. Whether the Intellect of the ninth orb, *qua* primary intellect and Prime Mover, is identical with God, is an interacted issue in Maimonides. *Guide* I:68, and particularly I:70, appear to confirm this assumption, whereas the preceding so-called apophatic chapters famously suggest otherwise. For an anti-Aristotelian reading of Guide I:68, and of I:70 by consequence, see Zev Harvey, "Maimonides on God as Intellect," in: Sabine Schmidtke and Omer Michaelis, ed., *Religious and Intellectual Diversity in the Islamicate World and Beyond*, Volume I (Leiden: Brill, 2024) 323-36.

[72] *Guide* I:70.

nature or essence'.[73] Maimonides draws the limit of the cosmic order with the diurnal orb, above which he posits God as the Prime Mover—the *rokhev*. Giqatilla presumably follows this line:

> Know that '*Aravot* is the ninth orb which encompasses the [lower] eight orbs, and Blessed be He dominates (lit. rides; *rokhev*) it. […] [T]he ninth orb and its parts (viz. the lower eight) are all subjugated under the [Name] *yod he waw he* (יו״ד ה״א וא״ו ה״א) which includes nine (lit. *tet*; ט), itself being *yod* (i.e., ten).[74]

The phrasing suggests that 'Blessed be He' refers to the Intellect riding the ninth sphere. This is attested through the special formula AT (א״ט) which Giqatilla often employs to distinguish the Intellect as the ontological principle of the lower nine spheres. The letter *yod* (10), which functions as an indicator of the inclusion of the nine spheres in the Intellect, is here parsed as consisting of the letters *'aleph* (1) and *tet* (9) as respective indicators of the universal (*kelal*) whence the nine grades emanate.[75] Giqatilla specifically distinguishes this notation (AT; א״ט) from the one mentioned above (AY; א״י), the latter indicating the primary act of motion as continued to the ontological order *in toto*.

But this Maimonidean doctrine is complicated by different accounts in which Giqatilla distinguishes the Intellect from its own cause. While this cause is intimately related to the Intellect, it is not identical. Further, it is described as a non-essential act that issues from the One, characterized by the principle of primal will, and which further dominates the intelligible forms of the Intellect. The cardinal features of this principle, in relation to both the Intellect and the One,

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[73] SN Long (fol. 177a) and see the version in *SN Short* (48*-49*) that appears to be closer to Maimonides' phraseology. Cf. also *GE* 332. The Latin edition of *SN Short* by Flavius Mithridates adds "and it is not from its essence" (Lat. nec est de essencia eius), bringing Giqatilla's rider analogy even closer to Maimonides' assertion that "the rider does not belong to the same species as that which is ridden by him." See comment in Martini's English translation in *SN Short*, 382, n. 12. See also *GE* 468: "Indeed, the One is the supreme [grade] that sustains all, superior to all and carries all [...] There is no true foundation but one, and that is the foundation (*yesod*) that is above. It is not of the species (*min*) of the structure (*binyan*) that is bellow [it]."

[74] *GE* 331.

[75] Cf. the substance-accidents distinction, mentioned above in connection with the Universal Intellect ('substance') and the nine sphere ('accidents').

will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3, but it is worth keeping these considerations in mind as we reconstruct Giqatilla's overall cosmology and his concept of *'Aravot* specifically.[76]

I shall conclude this section by noting that in his later *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide*, Giqatilla reconceptualizes the identity of *'Aravot* as a twofold epithet, consisting of external *'Aravot* (viz., the ninth orb) and internal *'Aravot.* The latter he describes as "the secret pertaining to the substantial constitution of the first emanated being (viz., the Intellect)."[77] The *'Aravot* of *Glosses* comes close to other theosophical accounts, in which it designates the Universal Intellect.[78]

The Active Intellect

Another theme that Giqatilla develops concerns the identity and role of the Active Intellect within the broader scheme of the separated intelligences.[79] Giqatilla reflects the traditional view which assigns the Active Intellect both a cosmological role—emanating and bestowing natural forms upon the sublunar world, and an epistemological one—being the cause or source of human intellection.[80] Giqatilla associates the Active Intellect with the supreme Intellect, tenth when listed bottom to top, thus aligning with doctrines found in Neoplatonic accounts like the *Theology of*

[76] In sources associated with Moses de-León we find the phrase *rokhev 'al rokhev* ('dominating that which dominates'), to be distinguish from the lower *rokhev*, i.e., the Intellect. See *Sod Darkhie ha-Otiyyot*, MS. Vat.ebr.441, fol. 188b-189a. See also *GE* 452. More on this in Chapter 3.

[77] *Sod ḥibbur ha-devarim ba-ne'eṣal ha-rishon* (*Glosses*, fol. 30b). Cf. Vajda, *Deux chapitres*, 656.

[78] It is worth while to note the identification of air with '*Arovot*, the supreme sphere, in Barukh Togarmi's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, 238: "In cognizing that the secret of 'air is between fire and water' you will find the secret of *'Aravot*." (Viz., Ha-RUaḤ BeIN 'ASh We-MaYiM [הרו"ח בי"ן א"ש ומי"ם]=678='ARaVOT [ערבו"ת].) (ibid, 110, n. 8) On the connection between *'Aravot* and the hypostatic *Binah* in the Kabbalah of Isaac Hacohen and Todros, see remarks in Scholem, *Inquiry* 2, 426. See also *Sod Darkhie ha-Otiyyot* (Bar-Asher ed.), 223.

[79] For preliminary remarks on Giqatilla's Active Intellect, see Grözinger, *Jüdisches Denken*, vol. 2, 305-07.

[80] Herbert A. Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," *Viator*, 3 (1972), 154-59. On the difference between Alfarabi and Avicenna with respect to its cosmological role, see p. 136. But cf. references and remarks in Eliot Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word *Kol* in Abraham Ibn Ezra," *Revue des études juives* 149 (1990), 91 n. 58.

Aristotle (Long Recension) and Isaac Israeli's, among others.[81] Nevertheless, in a discussion on the matter, he paraphrases sections from Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Madda'* which places the Active Intellect at the bottom of the intelligences, in accordance with either Alfarabi or Avicenna.[82] He likewise reiterates the terms and characterizations that we find in Maimonides, identifying the Active Intellect as the "bestower of forms to all matter (*golem*)" and as the cause of human intellection. Giqatilla further associates the Active Intellect with the angelic 'Ishim which, according to Samuel ibn Tibbon's construal, etymologically indicates the role of the Active Intellect as the cause of human intellection (viz., *'ish*), or the cause of sublunar individuals (*'ishim*).[83] Moreover, Giqatilla identifies the Active Intellect with the Archangel Gabriel, who is commonly associated with the lower Active Intellect.[84]

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[81] On the identity and role of the Active Intellect in these Neoplatonic accounts, see S.M. Stern, ed., "Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist: A Neoplatonic Treatise and its Influence on Isaac Israeli and the Longer Version of the Theology of Aristotle," *Oriens* 13-14 (1960-61): 92; Herbert A. Davidson, *The Active Intellect*, 113-14; Peter Adamson, "The Arabic Plotinus: A study of the 'Theology of Aristotle' and related texts," (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2000), 279-81. On the identification of the First and Active Intellect with God, the Prime Mover, in early Aristotelian accounts by the likes of Alexander of Aphrodisias, see Davidson, *Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect*, 109-16. On the identity between the Active Intellect, the archangel Metatron, and the Universal Intellect in Ibn Ezra, see Howard Kreisel, "On the Term *Kol* in Abraham Ibn Ezra: A Reappraisal," *Revue des études juives* 153:1-2 (1994): 57-61. Kreisel suggests that Ibn Ezra is not consistent with his cosmological scheme, at times reflecting a more Avicennian approach to the Active Intellect, placing it at the bottom of the ineligibles' scheme, while, at others, linking it to the Universal Intellect. See also his comments on the connection between Ibn Ezra and Ibn Gabirol's hylomorphic Intellect, ibid.

[82] *GE* 315, cf. his reference there to Maimonides' *Laws of the foundation of the Torah*, 2.9. On the cosmological and epistemological roles of the Active Intellect in Maimonides, in relationship to the sublunar world, see Stern, *Matter and Form*, 264-71. Stern discusses respective accounts of the Active Intellect, which he distinguishes as weak (Alfarabi) and strong (Avicenna). In the strong model, the Active Intellect is the source whence the cosmic and epistemological forms emanate. Cf. his discussion (266-70) as to which of these models best reflects Maimonides' account. For a more detailed account, see Davidson, *The Active Intellect*, 134-71.

[83] Maimonides identifies the lowest and active intelligence with the angelic entity *'Ishim*—in contradistinction to the supreme *Ḥayyot ha-Qodesh*—insofar as it is responsible for the form of particulars in the sublunar realm. On the epistemic and cosmic roles of *'Ishim*, see *Laws of the Foundation of the Torah* 3.7 and 4.6, respectively. On the etymological meaning of *'Ishim* in Maimonides, see Shmuel Ibn Tibbon*, Perush ha-Millot ha-Zarot*, in: *Guide of the Perplexed* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 2000), 71(Henceforth: *Glossary*).

[84] On Gabriel and the Active Intellect in Castilian Kabbalah, see Moshe of Burgus' Glosses on Ezekiel's Chariot, in: Gershom Scholem, "An Inquiry in the Kabbala of R. Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen: III. R. Moses of Burgos, the disciple of R. Isaac (continued)," *Tarbiz* 5 (1934): 186. See also remarks in Idel, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 169. For the cosmic identity of Gabriel in the Arabic traditions, see Seyyed Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 268. See also *GE,* 394-95, on the hierarchical symbolism of the letters of the Tetragrammaton: "*Yod* refers to Michael, *he* to Raphael, *waw* is Nuri'el, and *he* Gabriel."

However, this passage is not without ambiguities. Alongside these clear Maimonidean allusions, he connects the Active Intellect to the tenth intellect, here listed from bottom to top, while describing it in terms more appropriate to the Universal Intellect, the Prime Mover. It is described as the Minister of the World (*Saro shel 'Olam*[85]) which "moves the sphere with the power bestowed upon it from God."[86] Further, the Active Intellect is construed there by the notation AT (א״ט) which, we have seen earlier, distinguishes the Universal Intellect in relation to the descending grades. As for *'Ishim*, Giqatilla later identifies this epithet with the Archangel Metatron and with the name Shaddai (ש״ד״י), both referring to the Universal Intellect, tenth when listed from the bottom.[87] Elsewhere in *Ginat Egoz*, Giqatilla further links the Active Intellect to Metatron which, again, he associates with the Universal Intellect.[88]

Finally, a characterization of the Active Intellect in the Maimonides passage is repeated verbatim in the so-called *Shaddai* passage where—as we have just seen—Giqatilla is clearly referring to the Universal Intellect. The line in question reads: "Blessed be He who bestows form to all matter (*golem*) by way of the tenth intellect named *'Ishim*."[89] Whereas in the Maimonidean passage this line can be construed as referring to the lowest intelligence, in the *Shaddai* passage it clearly refers to the Universal Intellect.

These considerations leave us with two options: either Giqatilla, at this early stage, struggles with Maimonides' authority and therefore voices conflicting views on the Active Intellect; or—what seems more plausible—he appropriates the assertions in *Sefer ha-Madda'*, such that everything Maimonides maintains about the tenth and lowest intelligence (listed top to bottom)

[85] Cf. *Guide*, 2.6.
[86] *GE* 315.
[87] *GE* 370-71. On the connection of Shaddai to the Universal Intellect, see *GE* 106-09. But cf. *GE* 450, where Shaddai refers to the Prime Mover.
[88] *GE* 367.
[89] *GE* 315, 370.

Giqatilla attributes to the tenth and highest intelligence (listed bottom to top). On the reading suggested here, Maimonides' *'Ishim* is construed as the highest Intellect, to which human intellectual perfection would be attributed.[90]

The question of whether Active Intellect occupies the highest or lowest rank in the order of intelligences is not merely a matter of doctrinal terminology. Rather, it bears directly on the identity of the Intellect as an all-inclusive principle, on the one hand, and the psychological dimensions of the human soul, on the other.

Psychological Aspects of the Active Intellect

In concluding our remarks on Giqatilla's Active Intellect, a note on his psychology is in order. Giqatilla's general position on the human soul follows the common threefold division into vegetative, vital, and rational soul.[91] In discussing the rational soul, effectively an immortal substance,[92] Giqatilla appears to stand on familiar ground, alluding to Shem Tov ibn Falaquera's account of the Soul which draws, in turn, on Avicenna's psychology. Thus, he distinguishes practical intellect from theoretical intellect, the former governing the body and the vital soul by discerning 'holy from mundane and good from evil'.[93] He further alludes to the process whereby abstract intelligible principles imprint the soul through the emanating intellect (or: form; *ha-ṣurah*

[90] Giqatilla construes 'Ishim as an epithet for the universal intellect as well, thus alluding to Ibn Latif. Cf. Adiel Zimran, "Philosophy, Tradition, and Esoterica in Isaac Ibn Latif's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* With critical edition of the first section of the work *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*" (Dissertation, The Hebrew University, 2016), 121. However, unlike Giqatilla, Ibn Latif places the Active Intellect at the bottom of the series of intellects. Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, 1.1. On the Active Intellect and Metatron in Abulafia, see Idel, *Language Torah and Heremenutics*, 106. See also Idel's discussion of Abulafia's association of Ishim with the lowest Active Intellect, in accordance with Maimonidean doctrine, in *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 87-88.

[91] See the psychological section in *GE* 207-11, and cf. the remarks in Avishai Bar Asher, *Journeys of the Soul: Concepts and Imageries of Paradise in Medieval Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2019), 202.

[92] *GE* 220: "*Sekhel* is the substance of light and of understanding that flows onto he who intellectualizes."

[93] *GE* 208. Cf. *GE* 220.

ha-nishpa'at), and relates this process to the perfection of the vital soul through the practical intellect.[94]

Later in *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla distinguishes the apprehensive intellect, which cognizes the abstract intelligibles, from the prophetic intellect. The prophetic intellect is the highest degree of intellection, and it is described as in constant conjunction with the Inner Intellect (*Sekhel Penimi*). Giqatilla likely associates prophetic intellection with intuitive knowledge, in contrast to the more mediated discursive reasoning the actual intellect.[95] This raises the question of the identity of the Inner Intellect and whether the conjunction of the prophetic intellect is with the Active Intellect or with a higher rank within the intelligible realm.[96]

In discussing the place of the human soul vis-à-vis the soul of spheres, Giqatilla takes issue with Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, both of whom presumably positioned the human soul as inferior to that of the sphere.[97] This seems at odds with Ibn Ezra's repeated identification of the intelligible *neshamah*—the highest part of the tripartite human soul, anatomically linked to the brain—as emanating from *Ṣurot 'Emet*, the pure forms of the angelic world,[98] also identified with *Nishmat*

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[94] *GE* 208: "When this [emanating] form is bestowed upon the human, then form will beget the vital soul (*neshama*)."
[95] Cf. *GE* 280-81. See further bellow. This division is more explicit in Ibn Latif. As noted by Adiel Zimran, Ibn Latif identifies the philosophical and prophetic souls in terms of discursive and intuitive knowledge, respectively. See *Ibn Latif*, 218-20. While the former designates the cognitive faculty of apprehension through abstraction (viz. discursive knowledge), the prophetic soul represents non-discursive knowledge through immediate intuition. These two souls complete the fivefold division of the soul, consisting of nutritive, vital, rational (*medaberet*), philosophical (or: actual; *be-po'al*) and prophetic (or 'acquired'), *qanuie*. *Qanuie* is the term used by Ibn Latif, whereas Ibn Falaquera uses 'emanated,' *ne'eṣal*. On the difference in terminology and its source in Avicenna, see Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, 247. On prophecy and intuition in Avicenna, see the section in *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitab al-Najat, Book II, Chapter VI*, trans., Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 35-38. Cf. the parallel citation in Ibn Falaquera's *Sefer ha-Shem* (ed. R. Jospe), 297 (English translation on p. 335. See editor's note *ad loc*). On the division of the actual and acquired soul in Ibn Falaquera's *Sefer ha-Nefesh*, see Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, 207-10. On the general distinction between passive, actual and active intellects, see Al-Farabi, *On the Perfected State*, trans. and ed. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 197-211 (Ch. 13).
[96] On the relationship between the Active Intellect and emanated or acquired Intellect in Ibn Falaquera and Maimonides, see the summary in Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, 246-61.
[97] *GE* 262. Giqatilla is likely referring to Ibn Ezra's Comm. on Gen. (Long), 1.1, although Ibn Ezra's position regarding the human soul and the intellect is clearly more complex, suggesting, on some accounts, the contrary. See following note.
[98] *Yesod Mora* 10:2. See the phraseology in his poem "Heaḥzi be-sulam ha-ḥokhma": *reshit heyot yesodekh ṣurekh [...] hen keḥi lakh derekh* / *bah ta'ali 'elei ṣurot 'emet beli gew hema*. In: Israel Levin, "Hold the Ladder of Wisdom,"

'Olam, (Universal Soul).[99] Similarly, Maimonides is clear about the emanating function of the Active Intellect with respect to human intellection, even if he situates the Active Intellect as the lowest of the intelligences.[100] Considering that Giqatilla was clearly informed about Ibn Ezra's position, it is more likely that by the superiority of the human soul he is relating the lower parts of human soul as well to the Active Intellect, and not simply the highest intelligible part. This concurs with his assertion that the Active Intellect, the uppermost separated intelligence by Giqatilla's account, is the emanative source of the human rational soul and of *neshama* by consequence. While

Te'udah 8 (1992): 42-43 [Hebrew]. Cf. discussion in 51-53, 63-66. In his commentary on Exod. 26.1 (Long), Ibn Ezra illustrates the permanence of substantial from, as opposed to accidental, by refencing the holy angels and the "wisdom (*ḥokhma*) that resides in the *neshamah*." See also Ibn Ezra, Comm. Ex. 3:15: "And the Upper World is the world of the holy angels which are not bodies or *in* bodies […] human's soul is of their kind." Finally, in his commentary on Daniel 2.11, Ibn Ezra mentions "the souls that are in the bodies and which are derived from the true forms the supernal angels, like the light emitting from the sun." See Kreisel, *Kol*, 59, n. 90. Overall, Ibn Ezra adopts the tripartite Neoplatonic scheme of the soul, distinguishing the three parts as *nefesh ruaḥ* and *neshama*, bottom to top (i.e., vegetative, vital, and rational). This anthropological division corresponds to the cosmic division of Intellect and the World Soul. Located in the brain, *neshamah* corresponds to the Universal Intellect, and is said to be continued therefrom. In addition to *neshamah*, Ibn Ezra posits *ṣurot emet* as the ultimate source, but see reservations on this point in the following note. For Ibn Ezra's general psychology, see Aaron Hughes, "The Soul in Jewish Neoplatonism: A Case Study of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi," in: *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions*, eds. M. Elkaisy-Friemuth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 148-54. On the connection between human intellect and Cherubim (viz., the separate Intellects) in Ibn Ezra, see Alexander Altmann, "Moses Narboni's 'Epistle on *Shiur Qoma'*: A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with an Introduction and an Annotated English Translation," in Alexander Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967): 268-69, 282. On the human intellect and Cherubim, see also *GE* 190-91.

[99] The terminology here is indeed confusing, for the identification of 'pure forms' with *nishmat 'olam* could imply their identification with the hypostatic World Soul, rather than with the hypostatic Intellect. This touches on a broader ambiguity which scholars took note of – between Ibn Ezra's association of the immaterial angelic forms with the highest intelligible world, as reflected in the sources cited here, on the one hand, and the association of these forms with the middle of the three worlds, that of the soul, on the other. The latter position, reflected in his commentary on Daniel 10.21, conflates all bodily spheres into the lower world, while distinguishing the intelligible forms as situated in the middle world. The upper world is the realm of the Glory and Divine Name. See Kreisel, *Kol*, 59, n. 90; Wolfson, *Demiurge*, 86, n. 37; Hughes, *Soul in Jewish Neoplatonism*, 149, n. 19. On the influence of Ibn Ezra's Daniel 10.21 on the theosophical scheme of Isaac the Blind (12-13 c.), see Mark B. Sendor, "The Emergence of Provencal Kabbalah: Rabbi Isaac the Blind's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*," vol. 1 (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1994),137-40. Noteworthy is the adaption of this scheme in other Kabbalistic sources. Abraham of Cologne's *Keter Shem Tov* (p. 33) draws the following scheme: The supernal world, termed Gan 'Eden, is the "form of life and the place of the pure Righteous man." The middle world, 'the Garden,' is the place of the middle Souls. Finally, the lower world includes the bodies, as well as the "separate intellects and the simple bodies like the celestial spheres which receive effluence from the Active Intellect."

[100] On whether Maimonides assumed Avicenna's strong emanative model or Alfarabi's week model, see Stern, *Matter and Form*, 264-71. And see discussion above.

Ibn Ezra often identifies *neshama* with the intelligible part, as we have just seen, Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* follows Maimonides in associating the term *neshama* with the middle vital soul.[101]

Humans epitomize the psychological equilibrium between angelic and material animalistic souls and are thus capable of tipping the scale in favor of the latter, thereby losing contact with their source. But in principle, their vital soul—not only their intellect—is the recipient of the efflux continued from the Active Intellect.[102]

There is yet another way of interpreting Giqatilla's reservation about Ibn Ezra and Maimonides on the issue of the soul, and this relates to the identity of the prophetic soul, mentioned above, and to the soul of the Nation of Israel, more generally. In his response to Maimonides and Ibn Ezra, Giqatilla distinguishes between *ma'arekhet ha-toleddot*, that is, the natural order and the laws of causality,[103] and the wisdom and order that is in accordance with 'our Torah'. Elsewhere in Ginnat Egoz Giqatilla terms this order *ma'arekhet ha-qedusha* ('the holy order').[104] Their opinion on the soul, Giqatilla continues, "is confirmed from the perspective of physics and the natural order (*miṣad ha-toleddot u-ma'arekhet ha-devarim*), but knowledge of God by way of the Torah overrides their position." There are two ways to interpret this assertion with respect to the

[101] *GE* 208. In Ginat Egoz *neshama* is interchangeable with *ruaḥ* (*pneuma*). Punning on *neshamah* and *neshimah* ('breath'), Giqatilla identifies it with the vital soul that is shared by all animals, and which is the immediate form of all living creatures. The term *ṣura*, by contrast, is reserved for the intellectual soul. See *GE* 208, 447. See also Maimonides, *Laws of Foundations of the Torah*, 4.9; *Laws of Repentance*, 8:3.

[102] For a similar Neoplatonic account of the unity of human vital souls, which are essentially one in number and everlasting, see Hillel ben Shmuel of Verona's *Sefer Tagmulei ha-Nefesh*, ed. Joseph Sermoneta, (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1981), I.4-5, 53-72; passim)

[103] On the term *ḥokhmat ha-toleddot* in the sense of physics, see Ibn Ezra's Yesod Mora, 89: "Only he who has knowledge of physics (*ḥokhmat ha-toleddot*), with all its demonstrations, and logic can gain knowledge of the unchangeable universals." On the prominence of this term (*ḥokhmat ha-teladdot*) in Ibn Ezra's writings, instead of the medieval Tev'a (Nature), see Shlomo Sela, *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 130-36.

[104] *GE* 121

soul and its source. One is to assume that the soul emanates from the grade that is beyond the eighth sphere of zodiacal signs (*mazalot*), and, more directly, from the Active Intellect.[105]

But elsewhere Giqatilla asserts the continuation of the soul from the source "whence the beings of the tenth Intellect are continued,"[106] while going as far as to suggest that through the Torah, Israel are elevated beyond the Separate Intellects and are assumed closest to God.[107] The latter position appears to elevate the soul beyond the tenth Intellect, perhaps to the place of the angelic Cherubim.[108]

Thinking Analogically: Below and Above

The threefold scheme of intelligible, spherical, and terrestrial realms forms the skeleton of *Ginnat Egoz's* cosmology. The essential constitution of things is modeled on the emanative processes

[105] *GE* 235, 250-51. See in further detail in *GE* 262-64. Noteworthy is the fourfold connection between Shaddai, Metatron, the Active Intellect, and the Nation of Israel. (*GE* 366: *ki Yisrael sodo sekhel ha-po'el*.). On the motif Guardian of Israel, see references and remarks in Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 4, (Philadelphia: JPS, 1938), 205. Cf. Kreisel, *Kol*, 58.

[106] *GE* 262

[107] *GE* 264. This assertion challenges the common and supported view that in his early writings, Giqatilla perceives the Supreme Intellect as the limit of the Soul, thus presumably countering the doctrine by Naḥmanides. Cf. discussion in Gottlieb, *Studies*, 110-11. See also remarks further below.

[108] On the distinction between the Tenth Intellect and the angelic realm prior thereto, see *GE* 121-25. See also Moshe Idel's remarks on later adaptations (including Zoharic) of the pertinent section in Ginnat Egoz, wherein the souls of Israel are described as emanating from the fourth grade, beyond that of the intelligible host (*ṣeva ha-sekhalim*). Moshe Idel, "The Sefirot above the Sefirot," *Tarbitz* 51 (1982): 252. Another point that we can infer from Giqatilla's psychology concerns the type of knowledge that prophetic intellection assumes. In reflecting on Giqatilla's reservations on the so-called philosopher's position, I think it is fair to assume that Giqatilla follows a model closer in spirit to Judah Halevi's. In a central passage in his *Cuzari*, Halevi distinguishes prophetic intellection as a direct vision of the divine host in a way that is categorically different from the philosopher's speculative intellection. *Cuzari*, 4.3, 228/229, 238/239. The prophetic vision is performed with the so-called invisible internal eye which, contrary to the philosopher, sees God's existence non-syllogistically. Alluding to issues in the philosophy of language and meaning, Halevi further identifies philosophical knowledge as grounded in 'the accidental manifestation of God's exitance' through His actions in the world, what in philosophy is termed 'descriptive knowledge'. This form of knowledge is in contradistinction to the form of deictic and unmediated knowledge, typically identified with proper names rather than descriptions. Indeed, Halevi associates prophetic knowledge with the latter, that is, 'non-descriptive knowledge of the essence,' while further linking it to the God's proper name, the Tetragrammaton. (*Cuzari*, 4.3, 236/237. On the connection between the Tetragrammaton and intuitive and non-discursive knowledge of the First Cause in Halevi, see Harvey, *Judah Halevi's Tetragrammaton*, 125-26. The characterization of prophetic knowledge as intuitive and essentially non-discursive resonates with Giqatilla's overall skepticism about the philosophers who "swirl round the point without grasping the truth." See *GE* 343.

between the descending strata of this threefold paradigm. In addition to this common paradigm, Giqatilla frequently refers to sublunar natural elements as principles of cosmic motion, which reflect a distinct dimension of his cosmology. This has been briefly indicated in our foregoing discussion on the essential constitution of the elements. The natural elements fire, air, and water are assumed in *Ginnat Egoz* as epitomizing immaterial principles which underlie the cohesiveness and vitality of each of the three worlds.[109] While the relationship between this elemental structure and the cosmic descending order is not entirely clear, I argue that Giqatilla constructs the two as complementary dimensions of a twofold cosmic system. Concomitant with the model of essential causality framed by the paradigm of cosmic emanation, Giqatilla conjectures a cosmos that is grounded in the principle of vitality that underlies the existential cohesiveness and particularity of all beings. This second dimension was conjectured by earlier thinkers whose thinking Giqatilla was acquainted with.[110] Giqatilla connects this paradigm to his theory of cosmic language, and a requisite step toward this aim is the construal of the cosmos as manifesting this principle of vitality. This latter step is developed through the natural elements, specifically—through their analogical construal as universal principles of simple dynamism.

The Equivocal Terms of the Natural Elements

To construct his model of elemental causality, Giqatilla employs analogical reasoning which assumes the inferential relationship across cosmic domains. The aim of such analogical thinking

[109] On the prioritization of fire over air, see the remark in Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 85-86.
[110] Judah Halevi attributes the existential unity that constitutes a particular thing—to be distinguished from its compositional constitution governed essential causality—to the volitive action of God. See *Cuzari* I.77–79 and III.23. I shall return to this distinction in Chapter 3, in connection with Giqatilla's position on divine Will. See discussions in: Harry A. Wolfson, "Judah Halevi on Causality and Miracles," in idem, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 421-24; Davidson, *Cuzari*, 375-76; Diana Lobel, "Ittiṣal and the Amr Ilahi: Divine Immanence and the World to Come in the Kuzari," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 112-14.

is not so much to scientifically demonstrate the causal relationship that underlies the cosmos, but to offer a speculative framework for establishing a universal concept of the element in the first place. This approach follows the maxim prevalent in the cosmologies of the time, particularly in the so-called occult sciences,[111] that "that which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above."[112] Or, to bring it closer to the issue of elements, 'that which is apparent to the eyes is an indication for the invisible':

> Fire, being nearer to the sphere, is purer, more refined, and clearer than air; air, in its turn, being still near to it, is more refined to and purer than the substance of water; water in its turn more than earth. We must judge in the same way about the substances of the separate intellects.[113]

Before exploring the application of this analogical principle to the elements, we should first consider the analogical devices that Giqatilla deploys in this regard.

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[111] For the history of this term and its scholarly debates, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Notion of 'Occult Sciences' in the Wake of the Enlightenment," in: Monika Neugebauer-Wölk et al., eds., *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 73-95. Cf. cited scholarship. (p. 93, n. 61) See further below.

[112] The Emerald Tablet attributed to Hermes: "What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing." Translated and annotated in *Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns* (Los-Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 179. See analysis in Brian Vickers, "On the Function of Analogy in the Occult," in I. Merkel and A. G. Debus, eds., *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1988), 266-68.

[113] *Ibn Ḥasday's Neoplatonist*, 102. Cf. *GE* 243: "Know that all lower sensible forms are situated against the upper intelligible forms. This is without doubt. Similarly, all [that is described in] the Act of Creation [is to be taken] literally, although the literal level contains and reflects hidden glorious mysteries." Compare *Glosses*, fol. 20a: "All that is created first and proximate to the First Cause is more refined and excellent. Behold, the intellect was created first, followed by matter, and thereafter the composite; therefore, physics comes last after metaphysics in the order from above to below. However, we who find ourselves below must begin our studies with physics in order to ascend by way of the ladder toward metaphysics, which is supreme. Hence, we must first commence with the study of physics, since physics is, relative to us, prior (to metaphysics) in the way of ascent 'from below to above.' This is the secret of 'Would you discover the mystery of God? Can you find out the deep things of God?' (Job 11:7) – that is, through your investigation from above; 'Would you discover the limit of the Almighty (*shaddai*)?' – through investigation from below." Note that *shaddai* refers to the Active Intellect, tenth from bottom to top, as we discussed above. See *GE* 106-09, and also *GE* 450, where Shaddai refers to the Prime Mover. See also the concise formulation in Shem-Tov Ibn Falaquera's *Liqqutim* (3.34, 241): "Render the visible an indication for the hidden and infer (*haqesh*) the simple from the complex, the cause [*'illah*] from the effect [*'alul*]." See also *Meqor Ḥayyim* 3.3 (p. 56): "The simple substance are forms of the more complex substance […] It follows that the simple contains the complex." Cf. ibid, 2:1 (p. 18); 4:1 (p. 140). On Ibn Gabirol's analogical methods, see Schlanger, *Ibn Gabirol*, 121-32. The issue of analogical reasoning in medieval cosmology is complex and its implications for early Kabbalah warrant a separated study.

One such device is *shituf ha-shem,* which we may provisionally render as 'equivocal terms.' Here we may recall the ambiguity in Giqatilla's general account of the sublunar elements. While placing them under the general class of generation and corruption (*harkavah*), he also distinguishes them as 'self-subsistent,' raising them to the category of universals (*'ein ba-hem hefsed*). This ambiguity, I suggest, should be considered against his attempt to construe the material elements as instantiations of the universal principles. This suggestion is further supported by the description of the elements as *mishtatfim ba-shem*—Giqatilla applies this term when claiming that the three natural elements, fire, air, and water, are a materialized instance of three universal principles which operate at each cosmic grade, beginning with the intelligible world.[114]

Shituf ha-shem carries complex meanings and functions in medieval linguistic and philosophical literature. Traditionally and primarily, it marks pure equivocity, where the same word applies to things that differ from one another in both definition and reality—namely, homonyms. The paradigmatic example is the Arabic and Hebrew *'ayn,* meaning 'spring' and 'coin' or 'eye', homonymously.[115] Yet, some philosophers further expanded 'equivocity' to include terms that signify different things that do have something in common. Similarly, in his *Glosses* on Maimonides' *Guide*, Giqatilla follows the sixfold classification of equivocal terms found in Maimonides'[116] This includes terms that are proportionally similar in relationship to their respective correlates—for example, the term 'principle' (*hatḥala*) when applied in relationship to both the line (viz., point) and a river (viz., spring). Also included under 'equivocity' is the analogy of attribution—that is, terms applied to different things in a primary (by priority) and a secondary

[114] See *GE* 280.
[115] *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione: Classical and Medieval Logic Texts, Vol. III*, trans. and ed. F. W. Zimmermann (London, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1981), 49[2], 229.
[116] *Glosses* 19b: absolute homonym (*shem meshutaf gamur*), univocal (*ha-ne'emar be-haskamah*), amphibolous (*ha-mesapqin*), used in general and in particular (*ha-ne'emar bi-khlal u-vi-perat*), metaphorical (*ha-mush'al*), and extended *terms* (*ha-mu'ataq*).

(by posteriority) sense. The paradigmatic example, which carried metaphysical and theological implications in the Middle Ages, is the term 'existence'—applied to substance priorly and to its accidents (e.g., color) posteriorly.[117]

Color is a good example for another subclass of the homonym, where a name (e.g., "white") is said in a wider and a narrower sense. This is the distinction between color *qua* genus, in the wider sense of universal said *in* substance ("white is color"), and the species-color said *of* a particular in the narrower sense of species ("the white shirt").[118] In his *Treatise on Logic* Maimonides cites the example of color in connection with the 'wider' and 'narrower' applications of a name, there classified as a subtype of homonyms.[119]

I mention these examples since it is unlikely that by *shituf ha-shem* Giqatilla meant pure equivocity, that is, that he attributed the elements to different realms without implying some relationship between them. While Giqatilla applies this term to underscore and further differentiate the immateriality of fire, air, and water when attributed to the intelligible realm—"these elements apply to [the angels] strictly by way of *shituf ha-shem*"[120]—he proceeds with a complementary argument that illustrates how these elements are subsequently actualized in the subsequent worlds, the spherical and terrestrial, albeit in a modified and less spiritual form.[121]

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[117] That said, 'priority' and 'posteriority' was also used as a linguistic distinction between terms that have a primary referent (e.g., 'head') and a secondary referent, the latter 'borrowed' (*mush'al*) metaphorically due to similarity with the primary referent (e.g., 'head of the bed'). As Shalom Rosenberg noted, this is a reversal of the classic priority-posteriority distinction, originally applied as a distinction designating ontological cause and effect. Shalom Rosenberg, "Signification of Names in Medieval Jewish Logic," *Iyyun* 27 (1977): 120.

[118] See table in F. W. Zimmermann's introduction in *Al-Fārābī's Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, xxv. See also Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 17a38-17b16, and compare *Al-Fārābī's Commentary*, 51 (p. 230): "A term is used in a wider and a narrower sense if it is the name of a genus and at the same time serves as label for a species of this genus *qua* the species it is." See also the anonymous Hebrew translation *Al-Fārābī's Commentary*, published in Rosenberg, *Signification of Names*, 127.

[119] Maimonides, *Logic*, 60.

[120] *GE* 280.

[121] What further supports our suggestion is the application of the term *shituf* in Part Three (*GE* 432) to indicate the relationship between three distinguished vowel-points—*ḥolam*, *shureq*, and *ḥiriq*—which are the linguistic counterparts of the respective cosmic elements – fire, air, and water. (Cf. *GE* 468) If anything, *shituf* is applied in this context to underscore the ontological continuity between the three principles.

Explicit indication of the ontological relationship between the earthly and intelligible elements appears soon after, where Giqatilla distinguishes between active and passive modes of the three elements, each described in scripture as male (active) and female (passive) interchangeably.[122] Giqatilla construes these gender distinctions in causal terms of *rokhev* and *nirkav*—the one (male element) rules and activates the other (female element). Alluding to Ibn Latif's cosmic construal of upper and lower waters,[123] Giqatilla asserts that "if you contemplate [the nature of] water you will observe [that] upper waters are [situated] in relationship to lower waters, in the secret of *rokhev* and *nirkav*."[124]

This relationship becomes explicit in his *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide*, where Giqatilla alludes to the cited section from Maimonides' *Logic* in connection with the element fire. There he renders the name 'fire' a homonym, said of different levels of being in *kelal* ('genus') and *perat* ('species').[125]

Our last observation touches on another point that is noteworthy. Whereas the analogical categories cited above were often discussed on linguistic or logical levels, explicating whether and how a term signifies different concepts or things without necessarily implying an ontological relationship, Giqatilla is interested primarily in metaphysical and ontological analogies. His

[122] E.g., *we-ruaḥ ʿavrah vo ve-einennu* (Psalms 103.16), and: *we-ruaḥ nakhon ḥadesh be-qirbi* (Psalms 51.12).
[123] *Shaʿar ha-Shamayim* 2.7, fol. 43b. More on this below.
[124] *GE* 285. See also *GE* 447, where the terms *rokhev-nirkav* are applied to the vowel-points *ḥolam* and *shuruq* (or *ḥirieq*). They articulate the causal and ontological hierarchy between the three worlds as epitomized thought the respective points of motion. A version of this ontological analogy, between upper (active) and lower (passive), appears in Ibn Latif's *Rav Peʿalim* § 10, 10: "The lower beings receive power from the upper [world] according to their order, like the lower candle that draws light from the upper [light]."
[125] Glosses, fol. 28a. More on this below. We should note that Isaac Ibn Latif, too, applies the principle of homonymity in attributing the three elements to the intelligible world 'in a borrowed sense': "The three borrowed names (*shemot mush'alim*) fire, air, and water, include all grades of the separate intellects." *Shaʿar ha-Shamayim* 2.7, ff. 43b-44a. Maimonides (*Logic*, XIII, 59) and Ibn Tibbon (*Glossary*, 87) classify *shemot mush'alim* ('metaphorical terms') as a subclass of *shemot mesutafim* ('homonyms'). Cf. Al-Fārābī's *Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, 48 (p. 227): "A term is used metaphorically if at the time it was first introduced it was allotted to a certain thing as its proper signifier but as time went by another thing came to be labelled by it owing to some affinity between it and the original referent." Note also that Ibn Tibbon (ibid) identifies metaphorical terms with the principle of priority ('first referent') and posteriority ('second referent').

interest is not whether the analysis of the term 'fire', for instance, reveals different concepts or referents that are logically related by way of analogy, but how 'fire' epitomizes a universal principle which operates on—and is thus attributed to—the varying levels of reality. In other words, the analogical import of fire, for example, reflects an ontological principle shared by these different levels.[126]

Exploring the implications of Giqatilla's analogical thinking entails detecting and mapping the adaptation of the three elements and their application across various domains— principally cosmological, but not solely. This is the aim of the following sections. Before proceeding, I shall make several preliminary remarks on Giqatilla's analogy more broadly.

Analogy across Domains: Methodological Considerations

My first remark concerns the aims of analogical thinking. Giqatilla expresses little if any interest in experimental analogical models for scientific predication. Such analogies consist of a relationship between a model, often constructed from observable data, and a hypothetical description of the world through a specific scientific prism. The inference from the developed model aims to hypothesize and further predict something about the nature of the world as studied in a particular field.[127] A different example, somewhat more speculative and closer to our subject, is the use of analogical reasoning in astrology where signs detected from, say, the movement of the planets are interpreted to infer knowledge about the properties, powers, and relationship of the stars and their predicted outcome for the sublunar realm.[128] This sentiment is voiced on various

[126] Cf. *GE* 369.
[127] See overview and analysis in Mary Hesse, "Models and Analogies," in: W.H. Newton-Smith, *A Companion to The Philosophy of Science* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 299-301.
[128] See, for example Charles Burnett, "Obvious, Clear, and in Front of Our Eyes': Defending the Science of Astrology by Means of Experience," in *Revisiting Premodern Islamic Science and Experience*, ed. H. Erlwein et al. (Springer, 2024), 24-25. Astrology is integrated into Giqatilla's general cosmological discussions, and he regards it as part of the astronomical sciences. To return to our earlier remark on the place of the human soul, he classifies astrology under

occasions, as, for example, when Giqatilla describes the elemental qualities of the planets.[129] Thus, Saturn is described as cold, Mars as hot, and Jupiter, situated between them, as temperately warm.[130] Giqatilla is less concerned with scientific procedures and predication as such. Rather, his reference to the elemental qualities, in addition to their implication for astrological doctrines, is part of a general aim toward deliberating a cosmology that is premised on a set of shared universal principles.

My second remark concerns the various domains to which Giqatilla analogically attributes the three elements—fire, air, and water. There are grounds to assume that Giqatilla construes these elements to construct a multifaceted cosmic system consisting of exoteric and esoteric dimensions. In addition to describing the tripartite Neoplatonic universe, the elements fire, air, and water are speculated from the perspective of anthropology,[131] angelology,[132] numerology, and alchemy.[133] While these cross-domain symbolic attributions will resurface in our discussion of Giqatilla's

ma'arekeht ha-toleddot, i.e., physics or the natural order more broadly. On the place of astrology in the natural sciences following Ptolemy's cosmology, see: Freudenthal, *Cosmology*, 312-15, 317-18; Burnett, *Astrology.*

[129] See remark in Freudenthal, *Cosmology* (314) on the elemental qualities of the planets in astrology.

[130] *GE* 232. Here, the qualitative hierarchy between fire, air, and water is reversed; an anomaly in Giqatilla's general cosmic-analogical construal. This will be discussed further below. Giqatilla's description of the planets presents a distorted account of what we find in Ptolemy's *Tetabiblos* 1:5: "Because two of the four humors are fertile and active, the hot and the moist, for all things are brought together and increased by them, and two are destructive and passive, the dry and the cold, through which all things, again, are separated and destroyed, the ancients accepted two of the planets, Jupiter and Venus, together with moon, as beneficent because of their tempered nature and because they abound in the hot and the moist, and Saturn and Mars as producing effects of the opposite nature, one because of his excessive cold and the other for his excessive dryness." In: Shlomo Sela, ed., *Abraham Ibn Ezra's The Book of the World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 212.

[131] The elements are deployed as tokens for the human-biological division of brain, heart, liver, and to their corresponding psychic faculties, according to the Neoplatonic division – *ṣurah* ('intelligible form'), *ruaḥ* ('vital soul'), *neshamah* ('vegetative soul') (*GE* 208, 436; *SN Short* 40*).

[132] "[The letters of the tetragrammaton are as follows] *yod* - fire, *he* - air, *waw* - water, *he* - earth; together they form *ḥay* [YHWH] (ח״י [יהו״ה]; viz. יו״ד (20), ה״א (6), ו״ו (12), ה״א (6) = 44 = 18 + 26 = (ח״י [יהו״ה]). This is repeated through the Archangels: *yod* Michael, *he* Raphael, *waw* Nuriel, *he* Gabriel." (*GE* 392-93).

[133] *GE* 237, 269. On the debate whether in the Middle Ages alchemy belonged to area of human crafts or to the so-called occult science, see Hanegraaff, *Occult Sciences*, 83-3. As we shall see below, Giqatilla makes symbolic use of the alchemic metals, linking them to the cosmogenic principles of fire, air, and water. In what appears an anomaly in theosophical Kabbalah, Moshe de-León will further link them to the *sefirot Ḥesed* (silver) *Gevura* (gold), and *Tif'eret*. See Charles Mopsik, ed., *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh of R. Moses de Leon* (Los-Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996), 91-97.

elements,[134] our general analysis will focus on the analogical attribution of the elements to the three cosmic worlds.

My third remark concerns the vectors of analogical thinking. The inference from the sublunar world and its signs in *Ginnat Egoz* proceeds in two apparent directions which, borrowing again from the field of scientific analogical reasoning, we may heuristically formulate as horizontal and vertical.[135] In brief, horizontal reasoning assumes the inference between two domains, 'source' (S) and 'target' (T). It is premised on the similarities ('positive analogy') and differences ('negative analogy') between objects of the respective domains, and it aims to conjecture whether domain (T) includes an unknown object ('neutral analogy') that we know to exist in (S). In a sense, (S) is construed as a model for studying (T). A simple example is the relationship between Earth (S) and

[134] The meaning and implications of such attributions is not easy to evaluate. On the one hand, they allude to the form of symbolic attribution that has been studied under the presumed field of the occult sciences. Among the distinguishing features of these sciences, it has been suggested, is the manipulation of different domains—e.g., angelological, astrological, numerical, and anthropological—through symbolic attribution of features from one domain to another. This general attitude continues the line of thought during the Renaissance and its afterlife, which used 'the occult' as an umbrella for a cluster of presumably superrational areas of knowledge that are connected and mirror each other. This is a special kind of analogy that is not scientifically or experimentally driven. We might be compelled to view Giqatilla's with similar lens. On the other hand, the premises and presumptions associated with 'occultism' have been heavily criticized, raising reasonable allegations as to their anachronistic and reductionist sentiments, specifically as it concerns the Middle Ages. We should thus temper any temptation to draw a conclusive account as to what exactly Giqatilla had in mind by construing the elements as multifaceted and multidimensional. Among the notable promoters of the occult doctrine of symbolic attribution is Brian Vickers. See his systematic account in *Analogy in the Occult*, 265-292. For a critique of Vickers and likeminded occult scholars, see William Newman and Anthony Grafton, "Introduction: The Problematic Status of Astrology and Alchemy in Premodern Europe." In: W. R. Newman and A. Grafton, ed. *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), 17-18. See Hanegraaff, *Occult Sciences* (87-95), who discusses the debates between Vickers and Newman and Grafton. See also responses to and by Vickers in: Edna Ullman-Margalit, ed., *The Scientific Enterprise: The Bar-Hillel Colloquium – Studies in History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science*, Vol. 4 (Boston-London: Springer, 1992), 43-91, 93-99. Hanegraaff discusses also the appearance of the occult science (*occulta philosophia*) as a deliberate term already in the fourteenth century, claiming that "it was much more than just a pragmatic umbrella category for covering a range of otherwise diverse and relatively autonomous sciences. […] referring to them (viz., magic, astrology, kabbalah, and alchemy) as 'occult sciences' carried the deliberate suggestion that they were unified at a deeper level, because they reflected one and the same, comprehensive, hidden, but universal knowledge about the true nature of reality." (p. 82). Hanegraaff's comment is not intended to refute the positions by Newman and Grafton, with whom he generally sides, but to moderate their tendency to 'overshoot the mark' by neglecting the application of this category, occultism, in the Renaissance. Ibid, 92.

[135] As formulated in Mary Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame UP, 1966), 60-61. And in more detail: Paul Bartha, "Analogy and Analogical Reasoning," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2024 ed., edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, accessed July 2, 2025, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/reasoning-analogy/.

Mars (T). They both orbit the sun, have moons, and are subject to gravity ('positive analogy'), whereas the unknown variable is whether Mars, like Earth, supports life ('neutral analogy'). From an empirical-scientific perspective, the horizontal model aims to confirm or refute the hypothetical object in domain (T), although it is not concerned with a causal relationship between the two domains as such. That is, it examines not if (S) is a cause of (T), but if we can infer from (S) something about (T). By contrast, causality is the aim of the second model, where the vertical relationships between properties in a particular domain are considered causally related.[136]

Although the horizontal and vertical models have been generally developed in service of the experimental sciences, they nevertheless offer a preliminary framework for orienting ourselves when dealing with Giqatilla's cosmology. Specifically, it proves useful in formulating the different perspectives from which the elements are construed to draw a broader cosmological picture. The horizontal perspective can be deployed heuristically for framing the correspondence between the three worlds, through the construal of the elements, while the vertical vector would formulate the causal structure that the relationship of these elements assumes. Our discussion of the elements will proceed by the vertical vector and will return to the so-called horizontal analogy toward the end of this chapter. I should also note that analogical reasoning does not imply a symmetric or

[136] In our example, the possibility of life on Earth is causally related to other properties of Earth itself – the fact that it has a moon, orbits the sun, is subject to gravity, and so forth.

reciprocal relationship between the lower and upper correspondents. By some speculative-analogical accounts, the empirical world is distorted,[137] or even reversed.[138]

Simple and Dynamic: The Analogical Terms of the Elements

A structuring factor in the analogical construal of the cosmic order—the lower mirroring the upper—is the attribution of three of the four sublunar elements (fire, air, and water) to the upper two worlds of the Neoplatonic threefold cosmic scheme. Three elements and not four—in line with the doctrine of *Sefer Yeṣirah* which designates fire, air, and water as cosmogenic principles.[139] The

[137] Medieval discussions on prophecy illustrate this point. The Catalan scholar Judah ben Barzillai (twelfth century) links prophetic cognition to the cosmology of emanating lights. In his account, the prophet renders intelligible truths through phenomenal imagery, using the material world to express the immaterial realms. Crucially, the prophet's cognitive capacity determines which level of the emanative structure they can access: higher prophetic apprehension enables access to higher degrees of emanated light, which the prophet can then reflect through their material representations. This demonstrates how the correspondence between lower and upper realms varies according to the cognitive capacity of the one establishing the relationship. Cf. Judah ben Barzillai's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, 35-39. A similar account of this process appears in Giqatilla and Ibn Latif's construal of prophetic language. The discrepancy between the intelligible realm and its material manifestation is expressed in the relationship between the immaterial essence of Hebrew and the material plane of letters, which can carry imaginative and potentially misleading associations, depending on the interpreter's cognitive capacity. See: *GE* 422; SN Long 175a-b; *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 21. Compare the discussion in Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 30-31. This hermeneutical approach appears in several key Kabbalistic sources, where worldly events narrated in Scripture are construed as symbolic manifestations of their spiritual causes. For example, in Moshe de-León's *Responsa in Matters of Kabbalah*: "Know that Jacob [the Patriarch], the pious and perfect, whole in all respects, saw that this world endures in the likeness of [the world] above, and that all essences and actions all come into being in this world by the supreme paradigm in [the world] above. Since Jacob saw Abraham and Isaac his father, with his [their?] true essence (*we-'inyano mamash*), he knew all things according to [their] essence and truth, for they consist of the secret principle in the world, according to paradigm above." In: *Studies in Kabbalah and its Branches*, vol. 1, ed. Isaiah Tishbey (Jerusalem: Magness, 1982), 56. See also Moshe de-León's *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 107. The construal of the lower empirical world, as a reflection of intelligible realms, is a notion entertained in various medieval theological discussions, particularly in relationship to prophecy. Compare Narboni's *Shi'ur Qomah*, 284.

[138] In other Kabbalistic works we also find a diametric paradigm where the lower opposing the upper, "like the forms engraved in a seal which are inverted to the eyes of the observer." These accounts use the notion of reversed alphabetic and elemental orders – the concealed divine pleroma and the created world, respectively. The lower *alphabetic* order (ABGD; אבג״ד) is a reversed image of the divine order (TShRQ; תשר״ק), and the lower elemental-sefirotic order (water-*ḥokhmah*, fire-*gevurah*, air-*tife'eret*) is a reversed image of the upper ideational order (air-*keter*, fire-*ḥokhma*, water-*binah*). See: *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elo'ut* (Jerusalem: Y. Becker, 2013), 235; *Minḥat Yehuda* by Yehuda Ḥayat, in *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elo'ut* , 23. Cf. R. Menahem Ẓioni*, Sefer Ẓiyyuni* (Lviv, 1882), fol. 1b. See also in Boaz Huss, "The Doctrine of the Sefirot in R. Shimon Lavie's Ketem Paz," *Pe'amim*, 43 (1990), 75-76.

[139] See Peter Hyman, *Sefer Yeṣira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), §§25-28, 112-18. See also the commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣira* 3.2: *Sefer Yeṣira 'im Perush ha-Ga'on Rabenu Sa'adya Ben Rav Yosef Fayyumi*, trans. and ed., Yosef Qapeh, (Jerusalem: Deror Print, 1972), 93-95; Shabbatai Donnolo, *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. and trans., Piergabriele Mancuso (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 301.

discrepancy between the hypothesis of three cosmogenic *arkhai* or 'mothers' (*'imot*), on the one hand, and the four elements of the natural science, on the other, did not go unnoticed by earlier commentators on *Sefer Yeṣira*, and Giqatilla accordingly suggest that we "do not question by those who assert the existence of four elements, for I accept their opinion. Nevertheless, the [elemental] divisions (*maḥloqot*) are three only."[140]

Giqatilla is likely drawing on the contemporary meteorological accounts which blurred the difference between water and earth by reason of their shared gravitational properties, both tending toward rest.[141] This resonates with early commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣira*, as with Yehuda ben Barzilai's assertion that "the author of the Book [of Creation] mentions three elements, for water is divided into two, viz., into water and earth which is dust."[142] Giqatilla posits in a similar fashion that:

> [t]he higher world is the secret of the intelligences, the second world is the secret of the celestial spheres, and the third world is the secret of earth. Thus, earth consists of the third division (*maḥloqet shelishit*) which is water.[143]

[140] *GE* 225. This picture differs from other contemporary accounts, which maintain the distinction between active and passive elements, fire and air, on the one hand, and water and earth, on the other, distinguishing the former two as intelligible cosmogenic principles. Thus, Naḥmanides distinguishes the four sublunar elements from the twofold elemental constitutions of the translunar realm, thereby accentuating the ontological gap between upper and lower realms. See *Commentary*, Lev. 17.7 on the division of the elements into active and passive principles.

[141] See *'Otot Ha*-Shamayim (Ed. R. Fontaine), Book I, lines 110-112: "Water is something fluid that falls apart; by itself and by the essence of its being it does not gather, nor can it be separated from the earth because of its similarity with it." The tendency of water and earth toward rest is described in the Ikhwan's Epistles as constituting their essential form. See Carmela Baffoni, ed. and trans., *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On the Natural Sciences - an Arabic Critical and English Translation of Epistles 15-21* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 175

[142] *Commentary Sefer Yeṣirah*, 288. Dunash ben Tamim discusses the cosmogenic principles fire, air and water in *Commentary* on *Sefer Yeṣirah*, 235. Earth, on the other hand, is described as the final product of the transformative process, qualified by the quality of coldness. Cf. also Moshe Cordovero, who cites 'in the name of the philosophers' that "although dust is mentioned as a fourth element, it is really composed from the three primary elements, water, fire, air, whence the fourth is generated." See *Pardes Rimonim* 9:3. Compare *Zohar* II: 24b, and Yehuda Ḥayat's *Minḥat Yehuda,* printed in*: Ma'arekhet ha-'Elo'ut*, 51.

[143] *GE* 225. However, we should note that Giqatilla himself includes all four elements in his symbolic deliberation of the letter *yod*, the latter typically signifying the totality of the tenfold cosmos. In *GE* 158, he construes *yod* as the numerical sum of the first four letters, *'a+b+g+d* (10 = אבג"ד). These letters, in turn, stand for fire, air, water, and earth. In MS. NY JTS 851, fol. 64a, the letter *yod* consists of six directions (or edges) and four elements.

Later in *Ginant Egoz* he makes another remark on the principle of earth, establishing its function in broader cosmic-analogical terms. Following Maimonides' Guide 2:30, Giqatilla contrasts *'Ereṣ* ('earth') with *shamayim* ('heaven'), the two rendered as distinguished genera (*kelalim*) of sublunar and translunar realms. Each accordingly includes the three elements, fire, air, and water as its respective species.[144] Thus, while earth is excluded from the analogical correspondence—only the three elements function as corresponding species—it plays a constructive role in the analogical framework. It constitutes the lower genus and thereby contributes to the analogical paradigm.

This analogical paradigm plays out in Giqatilla's cosmology through the inference of translunar principles from their empirically observable sublunar counterparts. The basis for this analogical inference lies in Giqatilla's understanding that sublunar elements are fundamentally defined by their substantial forms rather than their changeable qualities. He distinguishes between the material qualities of the elements, which undergo change in composition,[145] and their respective substantial forms, which retain some degree of identity and uniformity despite their inferiority to the celestial-elemental manifestation.[146] It is these substantial forms—shared by both

[144] *GE* 334.
[145] *GE* 282-83.
"You will find that in the world of composition these three elements are coarse and rough *vis-à-vis* the heavenly elements. […] These [earthily] elements alter in virtue of their composition; in this world, the composition of the elements is the cause of their change, in contradistinction to the world of the spheres." "[…] This world is thus named the world of generation and corruption, for the compound nature of its qualities is the cause of their dissolution and corruption, for none of the elements persists in its form *per-se*."
[146] See *GE* 282: "Fire for fire, air for air, water for water. Each of the upper elements subsists in its form (*'omed be-havayato*). While two [of the upper] elements might conjoin, they are nevertheless distinguishable from one another, each unaltered in essence." We should note that Giqatilla accepts Aristotelian meteorology only to a certain extent. That is, they assume the image of sublunar spherical layers consisting of the four elements, with the lower two, i.e., water and earth, sharing much in common. He likewise imagines a sublunar world of generation and corruption that consists of the dynamic movement between the shared elemental qualities. As for the heavenly-spherical elements, Giqatilla appears to reason the existence of the translunar elements that are substantially distinguished from one another. Based on this reasoning, he also assumes a degree of substantial independence regarding the sublunar elements.

sublunar and translunar elements—that provide the ontological foundation for analogical reasoning between the realms.

Despite this factor of difference, Giqatilla infers the construal of the translunar principles from what has been empirically established in the sublunar realm. To reiterate the elemental scheme sketched above, Giqatilla generally distinguishes the material qualities of the elements, which undergo change in composition, from their respective substantial forms which retain some degree of identity and uniformity, their inferiority to the celestial-elemental manifestation notwithstanding.[147]

By affirming a relationship between the substantial character of sublunar and translunar elements—where both exist as substantial forms rather than mere 'natures' or 'qualities'—Giqatilla's approach enables the elements to function as universal principles manifested across both realms. This clearly distinguishes his position from the theory of four translunar 'natures' or 'qualities,'[148] on the one hand, and from the prevailing Aristotelian doctrine which distinguished

[147] See *GE* 282: "Fire for fire, air for air, water for water. Each of the upper elements subsists in its form (*'omed be-havayahto*). While two [of the upper] elements might conjoin, they are nevertheless distinguishable from one another, each unaltered in essence."

[148] That is, the theory that the translunar simple elements consist of the four qualities or natures of heat, coldness, dryness and moisture. Compare this with Paul Kraus on Jābir's qualities: "Les Natures sont plus que des accidents subsistant dans les corps élémentaires: les éléments sont effectivement composés d'elles et se décomposent en elles. Selon la cosmologie des Livres des Balances, la Substance s'unit d'abord à une des Natures et la rend corporelle. Ensuite, deux de ces Natures corporelles et isolées (*mufrad*) s'unissent à nouveau pour former un corps élémentaire composé (*murakkab*). De même, d'après les LXX Livres, chaque élément se compose de deux Natures et de la Substance ou Matière qui leur sert de substrat." P. Kraus, Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam, Vol. II: Jabir et la science grecque, (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1942), 166. Cf. Syed N. Haq, *Names, Natures and Things, The Alchemist Jăbir Ibn ljayyăn and his Kitab al-Ahjar* (Dordrechent, Netherlands: Springer, 1994), 59: "The four qualities were the first simple elements of all bodies. These were uncompounded entities out of which the first compound elements, Air, Water, Earth and Fire were formed, which later he [viz., Jābir] sometimes calls second elements. Specifically, two of the qualities unite with substance to form one of the four Empedoclean elements. Thus, Fire = hot + dry + substance; Earth =cold + dry + substance; etc." See also Sa'adia's critique on the theory of the four Natures in *ha-'Emunot we-ha-De'ot*, trans. and ed. Yoseph Kapeh (Jerusalem: Sura Pub., 1970), 58. And cf. translator's note *ad loc*. On Dunash ben Tamim's connection to the Jābirian corpus, on the one hand, and to the Ikhwān's encyclopedia, on the other, see: Godefroid de Callatay, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the earliest commentaries on the Ṣefer Yeẓīra," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 75: 2 (2024), 253. Cf. his discussion on G. Vajda's remarks, ibid.

the translunar sphere as consisting of a separated fifth element, on the other. It is precisely because elements are defined by their substantial forms that they can serve as the ontological bridge that makes analogical reasoning between realms possible.

The key to understanding how sublunar elements function as intelligible principles lies in distinguishing their essential forms from their manifestations. Giqatilla separates primary-essential qualities from secondary-accidental qualities. For example, elemental fire is a subtle luminous body, its essential form being its tendency to rise upward. By contrast, qualities like heat and dryness are 'proper accidents' of fire, its byproducts, insofar as it manifests in sublunar matter.[149]

The rendition of the cosmic elements in terms of their kinetic dispositions resurfaces throughout *Ginnat Egoz*.[150] This is also the case with respect to their rendition as principles of the intelligible world, although their 'upward movement' must, of course, be understood analogically.[151]

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[149] In *GE* (376-79) Giqatilla introduces the essential taxonomy of 'genus,' 'species,' and 'subspecies' (*'eṣem kelali*, *'eṣem prati*, and *'eṣem pirdie*), distinguishing the three from the 'proper accident' (*'eṣem miqri*; *proprium*) which naturally flows from a substance, while not constituting its essence. Giqatilla cites several examples to illustrate the latter (*GE* 379), including the blackness of tar, the whiteness of butter, and the heat of fire. See *Epistle on the Natural Science* (Carmela Baffoni, ed.), 174. Isaac Israeli's cosmology maintains a similar distinction, while considering the materialized qualities as accidents rather than secondary form. See Stern and Altmann, *Israeli*,182-83: "Israeli […] describes the elements as 'simple'. This need not, however, be taken as a rejection of the view that they are composed of matter and form. For the spiritual substances, too, are described as 'simple' and, at the same time, composed of matter and form."

[150] *GE* 166, 225.

[151] Aristotelian meteorology considers elemental movement accidental to natural form, but explains the superiority of celestial circular motion by its terminus rather than shape (Cf. De Gen. et Corr. II.2, 329b-330a). Spherical motion has a *terminus* identical with its present place, reflecting the special character of the fifth supralunar element, while sublunar elements have *termini* 'outside' their compositional form, hence rectilinear movement (Cf. Ibn Tibbon's *'Otot ha-Shamayim* [ed. Fontaine], 11; Wildberg, *John Philoponus' Criticism*, 93-99). This framework offers a helpful lens for understanding Giqatilla's analogical paradigm: Within his Neoplatonic cosmology, all elements ultimately tend toward the Prime Mover, with proximity to this source determining their characteristic motion. While circular motion represents perfection for the spheres, the intelligible immaterial world is distinguished by ascension and conjunction. Ibn Latif similarly explains spherical air's circular motion by its proximity to spherical fire. See *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 30, 7-8; cf. *Ikhwan's Epistles* (ed. Baffoni), 192. In Giqatilla's later theosophical works, circular motion reflects the celestial soul's dual movement: drawing effluence from 'the fountains of salvation' while imparting it to lower realms. See *Commentary on Ezekiel's Chariot* (ed. Farber-Ginat), 64; cf. *GE* 419.

The impetus for Giqatilla's analogical account of the elements, I contend, is his attempt to construct a cosmos that posits ontological unity between the sublunar world and the upper worlds, despite the former being characterized as the world of generation and corruption. Accordingly, he excludes the sublunar elements from the process of generation and corruption, elevating them to the rank of universal principles: "I conjecture that the lower elements subsist like the upper elements. No change (lit. corruption; *hefsed*) pertains to these elements but with respect to their compositions only."[152]

Isaac ibn Latif's cosmic doctrines, frequently reflected in *Ginnat Egoz*, illustrate the metaphysical logic underlying such analogical thinking. The idea that primary matter which underlies second matter (i.e., extension) is inapprehensible *per se* was common in the natural philosophy of the time.[153] What is interesting, however, is Ibn Latif's extension of this framework beyond its typical sublunar application. By reconceiving primary matter and form as universal principles operating across all cosmic levels, [154] this creates a new foundation for analogical reasoning. Specifically, Ibn Latif assigns matter the principle of existence, in contrast to the essential constitution of things, which he attributes to form.[155] He then intimates the connection between this principle of universal matter and the natural elements: "[T]here is another principle in addition to Nature which the philosophers name intelligible (*hatḥalah sikhklit*). And the primary *hylic* matter is apprehended in its [manifested] forms only, viz., the four elements, not by way of itself."[156]

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[152] *GE* 369.
[153] See, for example, Ibn Falaquera, *Sefer ha-Nefesh*, Ch. 18, 307-09, and *De'ot ha-Pilosophim*, fol. 69a.
[154] *Ṣurat 'Olam,* Chaps. 2 and 15 (ff. 130b-131a; 139a); Cf. Zimran, *Ibn Latif*, 140-41. Whether Ibn Latif considers these principles, matter and form, as prior to the constitution of the Intellect, will be discussed below and further in Chapter 3.
[155] "The existence of each of the cosmic grades is its matter, whereas the essential form of each grade consists in the apprehension of its respective proximate causes." *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 10.
[156] *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 13 (fol. 139a).

There are several difficulties with the idea of a universal matter that is inapprehensible, and which is nevertheless apprehensible through its manifested forms. The first issue concerns the very notion of forms. Either 'forms' here refers to the intelligible forms through which universal matter is ontologically completed, or 'forms' refers to the manifested function of matter, in and of itself apprehensible, irrespective of the intelligible forms. The former also raises the question as to the ontological function of universal matter—does it designate mere potentiality, ready to receive form, or does it take on a more constructive ontological role? The latter, likewise, raises issues of its own—in what sense universal matter is 'active', and how the elements function as the apprehensible form of this principle? I will pick up on these issues in the conclusion of this chapter, but the initial matter/elements distinction that emerges from Ibn Latif proves constructive for understanding Giqatilla.

Giqatilla, for his part, rejects the idea of primary universal matter, replacing it with the principle of unarticulated phonetic motion.[157] In a fashion parallel to Ibn Latif's paradigm, Giqatilla regards the elements as cosmological modes of this universal principle of phonetic motion, the latter in and of itself inapprehensible.[158]

The idea that the elements operate as modes of a simple unarticulated principle leads to the assumption that the simple foundation, or act in the case of Giqatilla, is realized in each of the three worlds,[159] albeit in increasingly modified forms. Water, for example, epitomizes the principle

[157] See the detailed discussion in Chapter 3.

[158] "[Y]ou shall enter the investigations through [the vowel-points] *ḥolam*, *shureq* and *ḥiriq*, for they refer to the foundation (*yesod*) of the world. By contemplating the nature of these three vowel-points you will understand the nature of the three elements (*yesodot*) – fire, air, and water. The upper element is fire – it is essentially drawn upward, and its secret is *ḥolam*. The middle element is air, constantly – 'round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns' (Esc. 1.6). It is situated against *shuruq*. The lower element is water, forever drawn downward. This is the secret of *ḥiriq*." See discussion in further detail in Chapter 4.

[159] *GE* 280: "The three elements apply to the angels analogically (*be-shituf ha-shem*). […] "Air (or: spirit) is the air of the intellect, the hidden air, without direct participation to (material) air, but by way of equivocation (*behituf ha-shem*). And it is (by means of this air) that things are revealed to the prophets when they strip away from their material body [lit. garment; *levush gashmi*] and their intellect becomes gradually sublime." […] "Water is internal and intelligible

of tangibility in each of the three worlds. In the case of the intelligible world, water embodies the principle of existence as it manifests in the level of Universal Intellect as *quiddity*, a 'whatness'.[160] This represents the existential substrate of already-differentiated intelligible content, making it the most tangible—that is, the most existentially graspable—aspect of the intelligible realm. This, by Ibn Latif's account and arguably for Giqatilla too, is the lowest of the three ranks which constitute the intelligible world. [161]

water, without direct participation in (material) water, but by way of equivocation. It is with regard to these waters that Rabbi Akiva instructed his students 'when you reach pure marble stones do not say water, water,' for they should not be subject to the sensorial forms and consequently replace the proper for the improper. […] Indeed, these waters are all intelligible internal light, and they all pertain to the *yesod* of light solely." Compare *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 20, 51: "Know that the ten *sefirot* are the totality of the ten grades which constitute the cosmic structure (*binyan ha-'olam*) with its form and measure. And the totality of the mentioned grades consists of the three supreme forms that are described by fire, air, and water."

[160] On the water-*quiddity* connection, see Abraham bar Ḥiyya's *Heggyon ha-Nefesh ha-'Aṣuvah*, ed., G. Wigoder (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1971), 39-46. Bar Ḥiyya considers *mayim* an equivocal term (*shem meshutaf*) said of intelligible and material waters. The former he identifies with the tangible state of pure intelligible form, which assumes already a determined essential identity – a *mah* ('what'). He accordingly construes *mayim* ('water') as the plural of *mah* ('what'), which suggests the connection between the upper water (*mah*) and the lower tangible waters. The water-Intellect link appears also in Azriel of Geona's *Commentary to the Aggadot* in a way that alludes to the *mah*-'essence' connection. See Azriel of Gerona's *Commentary to the Talmudic Aggadot*, ed. Isaiah Tishbi (Jerusalem: Meqize Nirdamim, 1945), 88. See also discussion in Alexander Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 173. And see also the description of the Intellect in Ibn Latif's *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 20, fol. 142a, as *ha-mah ha-takhliti* – "the telic 'what'."

[161] *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 2.7, fols. 43b-44a: "The term water is attributed to a supreme incorporeal grade spiritual and simple [...] This grade is the lowest among the separate incorporeal intellects. [...] It is ranked below the grade described by air (*ruaḥ*) which, in turn, is below the grade described as fire. The three equivocal names (*shemot mush'alim*), viz., fire, air, and water, include all grades of the separate intellects." Ibn Latif further offers a glimpse into the sort of analogy he has in mind regarding the elemental water. He distinguishes the upper waters from the lower by identifying the former with matter (*hyle*) that is simple and uncomposed. By contrast, the lower water is referred to as the 'snow under the throne of glory' (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 3.8) and it is further associated with the lowest of the three worlds, that of generation and corruption. This is due to the coarse nature of snow "which is composed of air, water and dust." See *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 2.7, fol. 43b. To these two waters Ibn Latif adds, by way of analogy, a third referent – "the waters that are above the heavens" (Ps. 148) which extends any bodily form whatsoever, but which is nevertheless inferior to the other two intelligible principles within the upper world itself, viz., air and fire: "It appears to me that [this third sense of water] refers to the lowest grade in the realm of the separate intellects, which are potentially and affectively incorporeal." *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 2.7, fol. 44a . For Giqatilla's account of intelligible waters, see *GE* 280-81.

The Elements and the Principle of Cosmic Concatenation: Vertical Analogy

In my preliminary remarks on Giqatilla's analogical thinking, I suggested that we distinguish between vertical and horizontal modes of analogy. 'Vertical', I suggested, may serve as a label for the causal relationship between principles formalized in the image of the elements. Thus, while Giqatilla constructs each of the three worlds as consisting of three principles, mirroring the respective principles of the other two worlds, he also construes these principles as a model of causality between the worlds themselves.

The Descending Order of the Elemental Worlds

In Giqatilla's *Glosses* on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* we read: "The *yesod* of fire is proximate to the creator and superior to all existents. It is therefore likened to the creator (*mamshil bo ha-bore'*)."[162] *Yesod* here refers to the primary substance of the created order, the Intellect, which is the source from which the lower cosmic grades emanate. That the Intellect is likened to the creator is also expressed earlier in *Ginnat Egoz*, [163] where the reversed analogy is maintained, likening God to fire:

> We want to enlighten you about the identification of God with fire. What is meant by this is not corporeal fire, heaven forbid, as though participating in any way with the created existents. Rather, insofar as the primal light ('or rishon) endures by His true existence, God is described as light, for which reason this light is nearest of all gradations to God.[164]

[162] *Glosses*, fol. 28a. Cf. Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Chas. 9 (pp. 25-26) and 20 (p. 50). The characterization of the Intellect as the principle of the created order, through the symbol of fire, is deliberated extensively in Ibn Latif's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 1:3-5 (fol. 40b-41-b). *Mamshil* is an ambiguous verb which can mean either "likeness" or "governess." Accordingly, the adjacent pronoun *bo* can be rendered by either the accusative or dative cases; "likening the *yesod* to the creator," or "governing through the *yesod*." Support for the former is suggested by a passage in *GE* 180.
[163] We should keep in mind the difference between *Glosses* and *Ginnat Egoz* regarding the respective characterization of the Intellect as the first emanation (*Glosses*) and created being (*Ginnat Egoz*).
[164] *GE* 180. And see *SN Short*, 80*. Note the convergence of fire and light. Giqatilla considers the terms synonyms. Cf. *GE* 280.

The prioritization of fire over air and water draws of course on *Sefer Yeṣira* 6:3.[165] Giqatilla construes the elements as situated in causal relationship to one another—fire preceded by air, and air preceded by water. This vertical image, couched also in the chain image mentioned earlier,[166] is easily constructed in the case of the sublunar world, where the elemental spheres indeed manifest a causal relationship. But Giqatilla employs the vertical model for his broader cosmic deliberations, such that the principles which operate in the sublunar world in the form of elemental causality—fire, air, and water—are transposed to the cosmic order as it unfolds in descending grades.

While each of the three worlds consists of the three elements, they are also distinguished from one another by a specific element that predominates each world, thus distinguishing its state of unity in relationship to the other cosmic grades. By this schema, fire, air, and water are archetypically associated with the upper, middle and lower worlds, respectively.[167] But there are two points to bear in mind.

First, the causal relationship here assumed differs from the kind of causality where the essential form of each being is constituted through comprehension of its immediate cause. This distinction is reflected by the principle of existence which Giqatilla and Ibn Latif associate with phonetic motion and universal matter, respectively. We may posit that the difference between the elements, with respect to the cosmic totality, reflects the gradual modification of a principle that is essentially unified and simple.

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[165] See S. M. Wasserstrom, "Sefer Yeṣira and Early Islam: A Reappraisal," *Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993): 12, n. 38: "At least one precise parallel concerning Sefer Yeṣira's science of the balance is to be found in the alchemical Turba Philosophorum which [Martin] Plessner dated to ca. 900. In the *Turba*, Empedocles states that Air mediates between Water and Fire [...] Similarly, in Sefer Yesirah 6.3, we read, 'Three *immot*, Alef, Mem, Shin, are Air Water and Fire. The Fire is Above, the Water is below, and the Spirit of Air sets them in balance."
[166] *GE* 63.
[167] *GE* 196-67.

The second point that I wish to stress concerns the identity of the elements as modifications of a singular principle. In our previous discussion, the three elements were analyzed as distinct principles, each epitomizing a particular aspect or grade in the intelligible world, for example. By contrast, the vertical model situates the elements in a descending modified order, thereby construing them in terms closer to the transmutative model of the elemental spheres. Thus, the unifying principle of the celestial spheres, represented by air, participates ontologically in the unifying principle of the intelligible world, the latter archetypically representedwith fire.[168]

The elements which are attributed to the spherical and sublunar cosmic grades, air and water, are effectively modifications of this primary principle.[169] Air and water thus epitomize the transmutation of the primary force associated with fire, the implication of this transmutation being a gradual form of difference and divisibility in relationship to the primary substance.[170]

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[168] It is possible that Giqatilla is reasoning from the meteorological model of elemental transmutation, Cf. Aristotle, *Met*. 381b; Ibn Tibbon, *'Otot ha-Shamayim*, 108-12.

[169] This picture further aligns with the principle of concatenation (*hishtalshelut*) that Giqatilla employs in connection with the three elements. *GE* 172. Cf. *GE* 196, 280-282; SN 73-4; *Glosses* fol. 21b; See also Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam*, fol. 130a [p. 5]; *Ginze ha-Melekh*, in: *Kokbe Yiẓḥak* (Vienna 1862), vol. 28, 14, and vol. 29, 6, 8. And see also the discussion in chapter 11 of *Ṣurat 'Olam*, ff. 137a-138b [pp. 31-37]. On the diverging grades of elemental unity, see Ibn Falaquera, *Liqqutim*, 234.

[170] The transmutability of the elements is further attested by the alchemical taxonomy of metals onto which Giqatilla maps the threefold elemental scheme: gold (fire), silver (air), and brass (water). *GE* 237, 269. Cf. *GE* 267. Somewhat uncommon in Kabbalistic sources, this twofold scheme is prevalent in mystical-alchemic accounts, and, in some cases, it was also adopted for cosmological speculation. The archetypal principles are immaterial fire, air and water, which are typified as gold, silver, and brass. This corresponsive model, essentially immaterial, has its counterpart in the sublunar material world, which in the art of alchemy indeed correspond to the sublunar elements, as an imperfect materialization of the archetypal principles. Giqatilla's remarks on this correspondence are not as elaborative, but he nevertheless incorporates this elemental-alchemic register when dealing with the elemental constitution of each of the cosmic grades. The inclusion of alchemy in Giqatilla's cosmic elaborations, and specifically his prioritization of gold, should not be taken for granted. Gershom Scholem argued for the discrepancy between the theosophical-Kabbalist and the cosmic-alchemist models, focusing, *inter alia*, on the symbolism of the metal gold in the respective models. Gold represents the supreme and purest metal for the alchemists, whereas the Kabbalists generally regarded it as inferior to silver, the former symbolizing limitation and judgement. Silver, for many Kabbalists, is situated on the right side of the cosmic structure, representing Grace. See G. Scholem, *Alchemy and Kabbalah*, trans. Lina Barukh (Jerusalem: Belimah, 2023), 24-46; Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994), 160-170. As Scholem and Patai noted, de-León's *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* (pp. 91-97) and *Zohar* 2: 23b-24b are the exception. To this we may add Giqatilla's oblique remark in *Ginnat Egoz* (269) concerning the elements. Later in *GE* (265) Giqatilla is more explicit about the priority of gold over silver and brass: "The principle of [divine] will is gold [followed by] silver and brass, corresponding to the three *yesodot*. Still, the beginning of All is gold (*reshit ha-kol zahav*)." We should also note the connection between Gold and God's primordial wisdom that is assumed in the *'Iyyun's Contemplation* Short (ed. Verman), 42: "[Therefore,] the Holy One, blessed be He, is called

The idea that fire epitomizes the simpler state of existential cohesiveness and vitality has conceptual implications for Giqatilla's general worldview, as we should see presently. In this respect he differs from several contemporary Kabbalistic accounts which prioritized air as the element most fitting for the simple unity of the principle of vitality that permeates the cosmos in its totality.[171]

The transmutative relationship between the cosmic elements is expressed by the fact that they partake in the name 'fire' by way of analogy: "Insofar as the principle of fire is the totality (or *genus*) of all elements (or 'principles'; *kelal kol ha-yesodot*), the things constituted by these elements often participate in its name [viz. fire]."[172] The context of this quotation is the status of the Intellect, distinguished here as *yesod ha-'esh*. And, in this context, the *kelal* of fire should be

"God of faith" (Deut. 32:4). The quality of His truth, may He be blessed, that we are able to perceive, entails the pure light of life. It is pure gold, written and sealed, in the radiance of His beauteous canopy." Another noteworthy element is the contra-symmetric relationship between the lower and upper realms, which some Kabbalists assume to be reflected in the order of metals. The value-order in the world of generation and corruption is diametrically opposed to the higher order. By this logic, the primacy of gold over silver in our world indicates the preeminence of silver in the upper realms. See Abraham of Cologne's *Keter Shem Tov* (pp. 45-56) where the material silver is prior to gold, thereby reflecting the ideal order in the above realm. On the relationship between these silver and gold from the historiosophical perspective of *torat ha-shmittot*, see Scholem, *Origins*, 468. On whether and when alchemy, *qua* craft, was adopted for speculative-mystical aims, see Hanegraaff, *Occult Sciences*, 83-93; Newman and Grafton, *Astrology and Alchemy.*

[171] Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen, for example, reflects a tradition that distinguishes air, or spirit, as the primary constituent of the supernal realm, thereby rendering fire and water as generated manifestations, or species of primordial air. See A. Farber, ed., "The Commentary on Ezekiel's Chariot by R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen of Castile" (Master's thesis, Hebrew University, 1978), 50-51: "You will find that the grade of the pure primordial air is called *Keter 'Elyon* [...] The three superior [sub-]grades are identified with [the *sefirot*] *ḥokhma* (viz. *Keter*), *Tevunah* (viz. *Binah*), and *Da'at*. Through them the world was created. [...] Together the [three] are named *Keter*, for when God revealed the power of the primordial air which divides into three grades—air, moisture (*liḥlu'aḥ*; viz. water), and fire—in that moment 420 (תר״כ) grades were revealed, the equivalent of which is *Keter* (כת״ר)." See also 46, 68, and cf. Farber-Ginat's notes in *Hakohen's Commentary to Ezekiel*, vol. 2, 145, n. 14, 172, n. 13. Cf. Jacob ben Sheseht, *Meshiv Devarim Nekoḥim*, 120-25. We should also mention Moses de León, Giqatilla's close contemporary, who centers his metaphysics on the principle of the primordial air. See *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 6, 21-22; *Shushan 'Edut*, 331. By contrast, Giqatilla distinguishes fire as the arch-principle of the intelligible world, its quintessential quality, rendering intelligible air and water species thereof. See *GE* 280. The notion of a primordial air that is the source of all is rich and has significantly developed in sources associated with the *'Iyyun* circle. See discussion and sources in Porat, *Founding the Circle*, 309-20, and passim. Cf. remark and reference in Weiss, *Spherical Sefiort*, 788.

[172] Glosses, fol. 28a.

construed as the genus of that which the lower *yesodot* are species of, thus in the spirit of Giqatilla's allusion to Maimonides' *Treatise on Logic*.[173]

As we shall see soon, the terms *kelal* and *perat* play an important role in Giqatilla's metaphysics. *Perat* generally marks the 'separable and non-participative' One that transcends the *kelal,* that is, the totality of the created order. Following Ibn Ezra's general cosmic scheme of ten intellects, Giqatilla identifies the *kelal* with the number ten, the equivalent of the letter *yod*. The relationship between the two principles is accordingly construed by the AY (א״י) notation which we discussed earlier. Here, however, *perat* designates the lower *yesodot* within a system that is determined by the *kelal* of 'fire'.[174]

The priority of fire is complicated by the fact that both fire and air qualify as holy forms.[175] Giqatilla resolves this as an exegetical issue, suggesting that the characterization of form (*ṣura*) as supernal fire is compatible with the opinion that the first created principle is air, "for the *ruaḥ* which they refer to is the 'devouring fire' (Deut. 4.24)."[176] He might have had in mind something similar to the Stoic *pneuma* which is often described in terms of both fire and air, or a combination of the two.[177] Still, the constant characterization of the intelligible forms as subtle fire is noteworthy. It suggests a function that is principally distinguished from the pneumatic air. I shall elaborate on this in the following section. This distinction aligns with the inference from the sublunar elements, implying a hierarchy among these forms themselves; that is, between

[173] "Substance (*'eṣem*) is said in a manner of *kelal* and *perat*, viz., a species that is named after its genus. For example, the small planet in heaven is called *kokhav* [in the sense of species] whereas the totality of planets is called *kokhav* in the sense of genus." *Glosses*, fol. 19b. 7. On genus (*sug*) and species (*minim*), see also *GE* 376.
[174] *GE* 315-317. On *kelal* and *perat* in the sense of genus and species, see also Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Megillat ha-Megalleh*, 7.
[175] Cf. *GE* 200.
[176] *GE* 187.
[177] The identification of *ruaḥ* with 'devouring fire' appears also in cosmological accounts influenced by Stoic thought, which identify *pneuma*, construed as subtle air, as the primary cosmic-force. Freudenthal, *The Air Blessed Be He*, 222. See discussion above.

immaterial fire and air. In a similar vein, Ibn Latif assumes the subjugation of sublime air, qualifying it as motion caused by the effluence of the sublime fire (*'esh ruḥani 'elyon*) in which perpetual heat is active; a process reminiscent of the available meteorological accounts with respect to the circular motion of elemental air: "Speech is equated to fire, as Scripture says: 'Behold My word is like fire'. Fire is thus the cause of the circular motion of sublime air, and air is the cause of motion of the sphere."[178]

The Spheres and the Permeating Air: *Requt* and *Mela'ut* Reappraised

Extending the element-scheme analogy, Giqatilla turns to the element of air in his treatment of the middle spherical world, which succeeds the world of intelligible fire.

The inferiority of air to fire is expressed through the respective terms *neshamah* ('soul') and *ṣurah* ('form'). Giqatilla often contrasts *ṣurah* ('form') with *murgash* ('matter'), marking the respective poles of the intelligible and sensible. Concomitantly, Giqatilla follows Maimonides' psychological classification when identifying *neshamah* as the vital faculty of soul, inferior to the intelligible faculty, while further associating the former with air: "The soul endures in air (*qiyum ha-neshama ba-'aawir*). If air be removed from the soul, breath (*neshimah*) will cease and the form of the soul (*ṣurat ha-neshamah*) together with it."[179] The distinction between the intelligible form and the aspirated soul is reflected in the linguistic treatment of the Hebrew vowel-letter *he* which functions as an aspirated element in comparison with the vowel-letters *'aleph* or *yod*, and

[178] *Rav Pe'alim* (ed. Hanna Kasher), 48-49. Cf. *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 30, 7-8. And see *GE* 167: "The heavens endure in motion, just as the wind that is constantly in motion endures by the true existence of fire. […] The resemblance of air to fire is determined by their degree of proximity […] This also applies by way of analogy to the sublime fire. […] [a]s the upper part of air will enter circular motion by approximating the principle of fire, as explained in Aristotle's Meteorology (*'Otot ha-Shamayim*)." For a similar meteorological picture, see Ikhwan's Epistle *On the Natural Sciences* (ed. Baffoni), 192.
[179] *GE* 200; Cf. *GE* 208; *SN Short* 40*.

which accordingly epitomizes the connection between air and the middle spherical world.[180] While *yod* epitomizes the universal form, the aspirated qualities of *he* are said to typify the animated motion of the spheres at large. Giqatilla supports this connection with the term *meruṣahh* which in medieval cosmology denotes, *inter alia*, the revolution of the celestial spheres.[181] In *Ginnat Egoz*, *meruṣah* connotes also, by way of derivation, the motion of the lungs' lobes (*meruṣat kanfei ha-re'ah*), which cools the heart and renews the vital spirits.[182] Phonetically, this activity is epitomized by the vowel-letter *he*, whose aspirated qualities are elaborated in comparison with the *'aleph*.[183] Elsewhere, Giqatilla's deliberation of the *he* alludes to *Guide* I.72, where Maimonides describes the Soul of the spheres as the 'force that subsists in the world and connects its portions one with the other."[184] Giqatilla distinguishes the letter *he* from the letter *yod* by designating the latter as the 'inner point': the knot that connects the cosmic parts.[185]

This general cosmic-psychological deliberation is further developed in connection with the terms *requt* ('vacuum') and *mela'ut* ('plentitude', 'fulness') which Giqatilla likely borrowed from the available philosophical literature.[186] These terms were employed in connection with the conflicting opinions as to the existence of a vacuum in the spherical realm. This possible existence was affirmed by atomistic views on the constitution of the cosmos and emphatically denied by

[180] See also Keter Shem Tov, 38: "As I already explicated, *he* is a spiritual letter (or: pneumatic; *'ot ruḥanit*). It alludes to the soul (*nefesh*), which is second to the Active Intellect (viz. the Universal Intellect, cf. ibid, 33). The Active Intellect is a source to the Wise Soul, and, like the root of the tree, it is the source of the body and its perfecting cause."
[181] E.g., *Cuzari* 4:15, 215. Cf. also *meruṣah* in the liturgical hymn "*ve-'eretṣ 'ikaf le-'elohei marom*," in: Yonah David, ed., *The Poems of Rabbi Isaac Ibn Ghiyyat* (Jerusalem: Akhshaw, 1988), 66, and in the cosmological poem "*be-shem 'el 'asher 'amar*," in: *Moses Ibn Ezra: Secular Poems*, vol. 1, ed. H. Brody (Berlin: Schoken, 1935), 239.
[182] See *GE* 419 where the two usages of *meruṣah*, cosmological and anatomical, are conflated. In *GE* 436 the function of *meruṣah* is also deliberated through the scheme of the vowel-points. The supreme vowel-point *ḥolam* is termed the foundation (or principle; *yesod*) of the *meruṣah*, whereas *meruṣah* itself is associated with *qameṣ-ḥatef*. Giqatilla constructs *qameṣ-ḥatef* as figuring spherical motion, originating from the ultimate *ḥolam*.
[183] SN Long fol. 174a (paralleled in *SN Short* *20. And cf. *SN Short* 63*-64*.) On the physio-psychological function of *kanfei ha-re'a* (lobes/laps) in Kabbalistic sources see also *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 28a, 70a.
[184] *Guide* 1:72.
[185] MS New York 851, ff. 67b-68a.
[186] See, for example, Sasson Ḥoresh, "Averroes' Epitome of Aristotle's De Caelo: Moshe Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew Translation" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University, 2006), 27, 73.

Aristotelians and others.[187] The latter pictured a cosmos in which the spheres are conjoined in such a way that no vacuum exists within or between them.

Giqatilla accepts the 'opinion of the philosophers' as to the impossibility of a vacuum. But what is suggested by the philosophers as an argument for the nature of the cosmos is adopted by him as a theological argument for the immanence of divine action, concomitant with the causal process of essential emanation. To appreciate this adaptive turn, we shall note that in Giqatilla's cosmology the idea of plentitude takes a Stoic-like turn, identifying *mela'ut* with a kind of *pneuma*, and not simply as a function of spherical conjunction, or as indicating their material constitution.[188] Stoic-like, since while Stoics refuted the idea of an interspersed vacuum between cosmic parts they arguably postulated an absolute void encompassing the universe *in toto*.[189] By contrast, there is no

[187] Counter the Kalam-Atomist doctrine, which postulated a vacuum to explain the movement of atoms and their change in structure. Cf. Guide I:72, and cf. Moses Narboni *ad loc*. See also Aristotle, Physics 4.8, 214b-215b. Scholars of the Middle Ages offered two interpretations of the vacuum principle, as either (1) interspersed, existing in between parts of the cosmic spheres, or (2) in separation of and above the heavens and the natural bodies. For a concise review of the two accounts, see Ruth Glasner, "Yeda'aya ha-Penini's Unusual Conception of Void," *Science in Context* 10:3 (1997): 453-55, and cf. cited sources. The vacuum-plentitude distinction also aimed to explain the movement of bodies, upward or downward, in contradistinction to the Aristotelian analysis of motion in terms of the *telos* of the moving thing. See, for example, Averroes' Epitome of Aristotle's De Caelo (Ibn Tibbon's translation), 73: "Some of the ancient [philosophers] attributed the causes of lightness and heaviness [of things] to *requt* (vacuum) and *mela'ut* (plentitude). They postulated vacuum as the cause of lightness and plentitude as the cause of heaviness." Averroes, of course, rejects this opinion. See also the refutation of this causal hypothesis, i.e., that vacuum is the cause of upward motion, in Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *De'ot ha-Philosophim*, fol. 34a: "Motion and its perfection is explained by the difference (or: change) in the nature of place (viz., *telos* of motion; *maqom*) [...] Were we to assume the existence of vacuum, we could not explain thereby the nature of perfected rectilinear motion, for it is [after all] vacuum. Thus vacuum cannot be the cause [*qua telos*] of motion." The idea of *plenism*, that is, that there can exist no vacuum, is premised, *inter alia*, on Aristotle's cosmology and his conception of motion. Among his arguments is the assumption that the motion of a body and its direction are defined in relation to space, specifically as a change in space, and this, in turn, rules out the possibility of a vacuum, for the spheres are essentially in motion. Atomists like Epicures posited a diametrically opposite argument for the existence of space, insofar as the speed of atoms, *per se*, is equal. See Samuel Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1987), 85-86.

[188] *GE* 198. On the reception of the Stoic doctrine of *pneuma* in medieval Jewish accounts, see Gad Freudenthal, "'The Air Blessed Be He and Blessed Be His Name' in 'Sefer ha-Maskil' by R. Shlomo Simḥa of Troyes (Part One)," *Da'at*, 34 (1995).

[189] See Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1987), 1-2, 39. See full citation in 128-29. But compare Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," in John Rist, ed., *The Stoics* (Los-Angels: University of California Press, 1978), 177: "The Stoics…admitted only four types of incorporeal things, which had no real existence but were only 'things said' (*lekta*). One of these four incorporeals was 'nothing' (*kenon*). Presumably the *kenon* or void beyond the universe was conceived by the Stoics as this sort of incorporeal; the conception is tantamount to saying 'there is nothing outside the universe.' However this may be interpreted, it is clearly far different in conception from the Atomists' void. I suspect that the Stoics strictly posited a finite spherical universe and nothing else. When asked by detractors what surrounded this universe they replied, '*kenon*'; whereupon the detractors interpreted this

indication of a trans-cosmic void in Giqatilla's early works. The general picture that arises from Ginnat Egoz is a universe sustained by a singular principle that pervades and unites the varying cosmic gradations. Of the four elements, air is distinguished as a subtle force that suffuses the descending grades of cosmic order.

The latter remark leads to a second point of difference with respect to the Stoic *pneuma*. While air and fire are often described as constituting the pneumatic force,[190] Giqatilla schematically differentiates the two as distinct modes of cohesion in the broader cosmic scheme. This scheme follows the suggested distinction between the Intellect *qua* pure form, associated by Giqatilla with immaterial fire, and the Soul of the world *qua* spirit or air.[191] Giqatilla construes air as a principle or element (*yesod*) that is continued from the principle of fire, in line with our vertical-elemental scheme presented above. While air consists of matter, albeit subtle, which "can be captured in waterskins" (*nodot nefuḥim*), fire or light transcends matter altogether.[192] The Stoic *pneuma*, on the other hand, consists of the two principles, insofar as they carry complementing functions with respect to material tension and cohesion.[193] Still, the designation of air as a permeating divine force draws allusions to the reception of Stoic doctrines in Jewish sources.[194]

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kenon in Atomist, not Stoic, terms. Such a misunderstanding of Stoic terminology would explain the confusion in Plutarch's account of the extra-cosmic void."

[190] Cf. Gad Freudenthal, "Stoic Physics in the Writings of R. Saadia Ga'on al-Fayyumi and its Aftermath in Medieval Jewish Mysticism," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 6 (1996): 117.

[191] This will be discussed further below. For a similar restriction in Saadia Ga'on's *pneuma*-Kavod theology, see Freudenthal, *Stoic Physics*, 121-22.

[192] *GE* 200.

[193] See Lapidge, *Stoic Cosmology*, 174-75.

[194] The qualification of the permeating air, as pertaining to a specific level in his cosmic order, is found also in Saadia's *pneuma*-Kavod theology. See Freudenthal, *Stoic Physics*, 121-122: "[F]or the Stoics, the godhead was forthrightly *identical* with the material, cosmic *pneuma*. As against this, Saadia [...] construes God as transcendent: *qua* 'Intellect of the world,' the godhead is an entity totally separate from all matter, including the created 'second air'." On the Stoic background of Saadia's cosmology, see ibid, 113-36, esp. 125-32. Indeed, the challenge of explaining Giqatilla's cosmology consists of showing how all three worlds endure by a single force, which is capable of differentiation yet without implying its complexity *per-se*. Such a model should provide a broader and more complex approach for situating air as a cosmic principle and deliberating its causal-existential function vis-à-vis the model of causal emanation. For an analogical challenge regarding the Stoic principle of all-pervading *pneuma*, see Sambursky, *Stoic Physics*, 39.

We should note that by identifying air as a qualified mode of cohesion, fitting the spherical realm, Giqatilla differs from some of his contemporary Kabbalists who attributed the principle of air to the primary source of the supreme grade, the deity.[195] This includes one of Giqatilla's closest intellectual contemporaries, Moses de-León,[196] who either drew on sources parallel to Giqatilla's or adopted his doctrine to support a more panentheistic theology.[197] Thus, Giqatilla generally mentions the permeating qualities of air in connection with the orbs and their spherical motion, whereas the principle sustaining the intelligible world, the Universal Intellect in particular, is described in terms more closely associated with fire and light.[198] This point is important, for the Stoic *pneuma*, which assumed materialistic qualities, is qualified by Giqatilla to the Middle World and, correspondingly, to the human middle soul.

Elsewhere in *Ginnat Egoz* Giqatlla repeats his objection to the possibility of a universal vacuum, assuming instead the fulness of being, the *plenum* (*mele'ut*). This time he makes explicit the connection between the physical and theological dimensions of *mele'ut*. Again, the theological import of air is qualified to the middle world. Whereas the Stoic identification between *pneuma* and the deity is exhaustive, Giqatilla's air is only one mode of divine force, albeit central. Nevertheless, the theological function of air is noteworthy. Rejecting *requt*, Giqatilla affirms the infusion of being, *mele'ut*, on all levels of existence, and he further identifies this fullness as divine immanence:

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[195] See above.
[196] See, for example, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* (ed. C. Mopsik), 6, 21-22; *Shushan 'Edut* (ed. G. Scholem), 331.
[197] Compare Asi Farber-Ginat (*Sources*, 70; Fragment 161, n. 6) with Avishai Bar-Asher (*Vaults of Thebes*, 171-74) and Charels Mopsik (*Introduction Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 3-4). See also Altmann, *Or Zaru'a*, 221, 235-243.
[198] We should also note that several of the analogies used by de-León to describe the supremacy of air as a primordial force are reserved by Giqatilla for the principle relating to the middle grade of the spherical worlds. For example, de-León's *Shushan 'Edut* (ed. G. Scholem, 337) alludes to the Aristotelian physio-psychological model that distinguishes the heart as the permeating source (*neshamah*) of the human soul. As we shall see below, Giqatilla alludes to the Galenic model, which identifies the brain as the principal function of the soul, identifying it with *ṣurah* ('form'). The vital *neshamah*, situated in the heart, is identified as inferior.

> You have learned that His glory (or: presence; kevodo) is the secret of His Name, 'Blessed is His glorious Name forever; His glory fills the whole world' (Ps. 72.19). For Being (havayah), which is the truth of His glorious name (shem kevodo) infuses all reality by the truth of His existence.199

The connection between *mela'ut* and the permeating *Kavod* is noteworthy. In several Hebrew Neoplatonic works the *Kavod* is construed as an epithet for the World Soul,[200] while others link it to the Intellect or to the act of creation more broadly.[201] Giqatilla's *Kavod* maintains allusions to various accounts. Its permeating air-like function qualifies it to the spheres and, more specifically to the World Soul. In its broader sense, however, Giqatilla's *Kavod* designates the cosmos more inclusively and, specifically, the Intellect. Giqatilla further connects this *Kavod* to the Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom of *Sefer Yeṣirah* through *gematria* (כבו"ד=32),[202] thereby distinguishing *Kavod* as the foundational Act of Creation.[203]

Later, in his *Glosses* on Maimonides' *Guide*, we find the twofold designator *Kavod Nivr'a* and *Kavod Ne'elam* (or *nistar,* 'hidden glory'), the latter term found also in the speculative accounts by the *'Iyyun* circles (thirteenth century).[204] In *Glosses*, *Kavod Ne'elam* refers to the

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[199] *GE* 375. And further: "You have learned that there is no vacuum (*requt*) in the universe. […] Rather, *havayah* (being) permeates and sustains all [existents]. Insofar as each existent receives its fulness of being (*melo'o*) through *havayah*, blessed be He infuses all infused [beings]."

[200] See *Torot ha-Nefesh*, trans. S. Weisberg (Paris: 1986), 71-72. See also *GE* 375.

[201] On Kavod in Ibn Ezra's cosmology and its identification with the Separate Intellects, rather than the with the spheres' soul, see Wolfson, *Kol*, 85-86; Levin, *Ladder of Wisdom*, 65. See also Judah ben Barzilai's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*, 16-17.

[202] On the Kavod -LeV equivalence (32) see Sefer ha-Bahir, 134; Ibn Latif's *Ṣurat Olam*, Ch. 21, 53.

[203] *GE* 81-82. The *gematric* connection between *Kavod* and cosmos is elsewhere extended to Nature in its totality through the attributive referential of 'ELoHIM (אלהי"ם) and Ha-TeV'a (הטב"ע), alluded above (אלהי"ם=86=הטב"ע). Similarly, Giqatilla restricts the principle of air to the World Soul, associated primarily with the spheres. By contrast, *Kavod* takes the image of light in terms akin to other contemporary accounts. See references and quotations in Wolfson, *Kol*, 86, n. 36. And so, according to Giqatlla, *Kavod* refers to the cosmos at large, grounded in the Intellect, although its permeating function *qua* air is qualified. The connection between *Kavod* and the Thirty-Two Paths is found in *Sefer ha-Yiḥud*, associated with the 'Iyyun circle, where the Intellect is described as 'infused with might': "And there, coming from the east with a roar like the roar of mighty waters, was the Glory (or: Presence; *kevod*) of the God of Israel, and the earth was lit up by that Glory (or: Presence; *Kavod*)." (Ezek 43.2). In this verse, the Intellect is infused in its might (*ha-sekhel nitmale be-'iṣumo*) and knowledge (*da'at*) in the totality of the sublime works (*ha-mif'alot ha-'elyonot*) which are the Thirty-Two paths of Wisdom." Laurentian Library, Florence, Italy, Ms. Plut.II.53, fol. 31a. Cited in Oded Porat, *Founding of the Circle*, 170-71.

[204] See Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 38, n. 9. See there his comments on the construal of the Iyyun's *Kavod Kavod* by Gershom Scholem and Joseph Dan. Pertinent to our discussion is Verman's remark on the assumption of a singular *Kavod*, the Hidden Glory, in Contemplation (Iyyun) Standard, thus debunking the hypothesis postulated by

hypostatic Intellect, and not to the divine hidden source, and it appears closely related to the *Kavod Nivr'a*, indicated several lines later.[205] I have mentioned that there appear some doctrinal discrepancies between *Ginnat Egoz* and *Glosses*, one of which concerns the double construal of *'Aravot*. *Ginnat Egoz* construes *'Aravot* in traditional-philosophical terms, designating the ninth diurnal sphere (*primum mobile*), whereas *Glosses* adds a second, inner referent of this term—it is also "the mystery of the conjunction of things in the first emanation."[206] This twofold characterization of '*Aravot*, consisting of 'outer' and 'inner' dimensions,[207] appears to apply, perhaps primarily, to the Intellect as well, through the twofold designation of *Kavod Nivra* and *ne'elam*. Both refer to the same hypostatic Intellect, differing only in emphasis. Unlike *nivra*, *ne'elam* relates the conjunction of the 'first emanated being', the Intellect, with its hidden source.[208]

Dan and Scholem that the Contemplation assumed an additional, hypostatic glory (*Kavod Nivra*). On the division of the visible and inner glories (*Kavod nir'e, Kavod penimi*) in Eleazar of Worms' Ashkenazi Theology, see Altmann, *Narboni's Shi'ur Qoma*, 233.

[205] The Intellect is described in *Glosses*, fol. 29a, as *Kavod Ne'elam* and, several lines later, on 29b, as *Kavod nivra*.

[206] *Glosses*, fol. 30b. See our remarks in the Introduction. See also Vajda *Deux Chapitres*, 656-67.

[207] See *Glosses*, fol. 20b. And see discussion in Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 121-25.

[208] The twofold characterization of the Universal Intellect, as cosseting the interior (*panim*) and exterior (*'aḥor*) aspects, was deliberated in connection with the 'man of the throne' in Ezekiel's vision. ("And upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." [Ezek. 1.26]) The vision further distinguishes the 'likeness of man' into two parts – 'from the appearance of his loins downward' and 'from the appearance of his loins upward.' This ambiguous characterization facilitated various philosophical doctrines, which construed 'man' as signifying the Universal Intellect, differing in speculation as to the identity of and relationship between the two parts. Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon, for example, took conflicting positions on whether 'man' refers strictly to the created realm of *Merkavah*, essentially the separated intellects, or to God, as well. Maimonides (*Guide* 3.7) argued for the former, thereby construing the two constituents of Man, upper and lower, as two aspects of noble intellects. An interoperative but nevertheless persuasive reading of this duality distinguishes the upper and the lower parts based on the twofold constitution of the Intellect. According to this perspective—taken also by Maimonides' early commentators like Moses Narboni (*ad loc*.)—the lower part, attainable to human cognition, relates the function of the Intellect in relation to the cosmic grades. It takes on the role of a primary ontological principle, functioning as a universal form. What is not attainable is the 'vision' of the Intellect and its conjunction with its ultimate source. Or, put differently, 'lower' and 'upper' signify the Intellect's knowledge of itself and of its cause, respectively. See also Kneller-Rowe, *Ibn Tibbon*, 256-257. For a comprehensive review of the twofold act of the Intellect in Neoplatonic doctrines, see: Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23-30, 69-78, and passim. Maimonides further articulates his account of Ezekiel's vision by etymologically construing the word *ḥashmal*, supposedly referring to the upper part, as a lexical blend of two morphemes, *ḥash* ('rapidity') and *mal* ('cutting'), reflecting the two mentioned moments in the Intellect. *Guide* III:7: "Among the things to which your attention should be drawn belongs his dividing the likeness of the Man that was on the throne; the upper part of the likeness being *ke-'ein* ['as the color of'; *sic*. S. Pines] *ḥashmal* and the lower as the appearance of fire. They have

The twofold characterization in *Glosses*, of both *'Aravot* and *Kavod,* appears consistent with the theosophical orientation of *Glosses* which assumes divine emanation as its operating model. Accordingly, the idea that the emanated substance is ontologically completed upon either its conjunction with its source or its gaze upon it was commonplace in the Neoplatonic teachings of the time.[209]

The complex-emanative doctrine of *Kavod*, developed in *Glosses*, does not appear in *Ginnat Egoz*. *Kavod* is generally associated with God's actions, i.e., the principle of Nature, or the epithet 'Elohim.[210] Unlike *Glosses*, where *nistar* is used as an attributive adjective ('hidden' [Glory]), here it functions as a predicate adjective—God is hidden in relationship to His actions; the latter constituting His glory.[211]

Who is the Sailor? Psycho-Cosmological Elements

The distinction between intelligible fire and pneumatic air, and the attribution of the latter to the middle spherical world, alludes to psycho-physiological deliberations on the human soul, the scheme of which supported speculations about cosmic Soul.[212] This macro-micro analogy, between the three worlds and the three parts of the human soul, was commonplace at the time,[213]

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explained that the word *ḥashmal* is composed of two notions, *ḥash* and *mal*; that is, 'rapidity,' indicated by *ḥash*, and 'cutting,' indicated by *mal*, the intention being to combine through a simile two separate notions regarding two sides, above and below." Adopted from: Shlomo Pines' translation of *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), vol. 2, 429. Isaac Ibn Latif follows this general scheme while accentuating the ontological role of the Intellect, the so-called 'lower part,' as the principle of the created order. He employs the respective terms *meqif* ('encompassing') and *muqaf* ('encompassed') to describe the twofold nature of the Universal Intellect in connection with Ezekiel's 'man of the throne.' See *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 41a-b. Giqatilla's account of the Intellect in Glosses is not far from Ibn Latif's account.

[209] More on this is in Chapter 3. For a general overview of the principle of ontological conversion in Plotinus, see Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect*, 69-78.

[210] See *GE* 222, 133

[211] Ibid.

[212] See also Moshe de-León's *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, fol. 3a (p. 38): "*Nefesh*, *ruaḥ* and *neshamah* are the supernal forces, and the human is constituted by these three."

[213] See for example Moses Ibn Tibbon, *Olam Qatan*, in Zvi Almog, "Critical Edition of Moses Ibn Tibbon's 'Olam Qatan" (PhD diss., Dropsie College, Philadelphia, 1966), 98 (9), and cf. Almog's discussion and references (17-36).

and it is reflected in Giqatilla's discussions as well. Put somewhat schematically, the Galenic physiological model situates the primary part of the soul in the brain, while designating the heart as the seat of the vital soul. The vital soul operates pneumatically, motivating the parts of the organism, although it receives its pneumatic force from the brain's meninges, where that force exists in subtle form.

This picture counters the Aristotelian physiological model which sees in the heart, with its pneumatic vitality, the primary seat and principle of human vitality, while identifying the other two organs, brain and liver, as responsible for receiving and giving specific faculties. The brain governs sensation and movement, while the liver is responsible for the nutritive faculties: attraction, retention, and union with nutriment.[214]

Thirteenth century Castilian thinkers strategically adopted the physiological model that best reinforced their broader cosmological and metaphysical systems. While these thinkers shared many doctrinal principles with their contemporaries, their choice between Galenic and Aristotelian models of the soul reveals fundamental philosophical differences that would shape their respective worldviews.[215]

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[214] See Avicenna's Canon of Medicine (trans. O. Gruner), articles 114-22 (pp. 93-98). For a history of the Galenic ('physician') and Aristotelian ('philosopher') models and their interconnections in 13 c. scientific discourse, see the discussion in Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 78-114, and cf. her discussion on the soul, 107-09.

[215] As we shall see below, the difference between Giqatilla and Moses de León in this respect appears instructive. An earlier instantiation of the Galenic model is Shabbatai Donnolo's commentary on Sefer Yeṣira, which distinguishes the brain from its membrane, designating the former the center of the human soul and the latter the origin of its pneumatic function. Here we see the transposition of the psycho-physiological division onto the psycho-cosmological: "Just as God placed His holy *Shekhinah* in the upper heavens, which He stretched as a ceiling over the waters, as it is written: 'He sets the rafters of His lofts in the waters' (Ps. 104.3), so He placed the breath of the spirit of life (*ruaḥ nishmat ḥayyim*), knowledge and understanding, in the membrane which is crusted over the brain and its fluid within the head." *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. P. Mancuso, 154. An example of the Aristotelian physio-psychological model can be found in *Sefer ha-Nimṣa*, in: *Sinai* vol. 36 (1955), 202-12; *Sefer ha-Nefesh* (Leipzig: Verlag. J. G. Fritzsche, 1852). A revised edition of the relevant sections is available in Freudenthal, *The Air Blessed*, 227-28. See also *Toledot ha-Nefesh*, 34-35.

The model that prioritizes air was adopted by several of Giqatilla's Kabbalistic contemporaries, as noted above.[216] By contrast, Giqatilla and Ibn Latif both assume the priority of fire by distinguishing it from subtle air, the latter being the direct cause of the vital soul.[217] This further reflects a Neoplatonic tradition which formalizes the three immaterial substances as states of proximity in relation to the perfect light—fire above air, and air above water.[218] The subjugation of air is also inferred from the corporeality of sublunar-material air, attested empirically by experiments such as the inflation of waterskins (*nodot nefuḥim*), which testifies to the divisibility and weight of air as compared to fire.[219] For Giqatilla, the inferiority of air to fire is further reflected in the physio-psychological *neshamah* which, associated with the permeating function identified with breath (*neshimah*),[220] is contingent on the intelligible form (*ṣura*) of the brain).

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[216] See, for example, Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen, *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot* (ed. A. Farber-Giant), vol. 1, 11, 50-51.

[217] *Rav Pe'alim*, 48-49. Cf. *GE* 436. Noteworthy is the structural analysis of air in terms reminiscent of the anatomical schematization of the human soul. The widely adopted Galenic model situates the primary soul in the brain, while designating the heart as the seat of the vital soul, the latter operating pneumatically by motivating the parts of the organism. Still, the vital soul receives its pneumatic quality from the brain's meninges, where it exists in subtle form. We should note, however, that both Giqatilla and Ibn Latif reflect also on the fivefold division of the soul, consisting of the nutritive, vital, and intellectual soul. The intellectual soul is further divided into rational, apprehensive and prophetic souls, the latter two corresponding to the so-called actual and acquired intellects. Whereas the lower part of the rational soul is associated with potentiality (and with reception of sense-perception), the apprehensive and prophetic souls are responsible for knowledge of universals through abstraction and through intuition, respectively. Cf. *GE* 280-81. This division is more explicit in Ibn Latif. In *Ginze ha-Melekh*, Ibn Latif correlates the three grades with three levels of human intellection: Fire is the knowledge of the first created being, the arch-principle of the ontological order. This knowledge is concealed and is also described as knowledge of 'the two divine names.' Air and water refer to knowledge of metaphysical matters and knowledge of astronomy and the broader science of nature, respectively. *Ginze ha-Melekh*, in *Kokbe Yiẓḥak* (Vienna 1862), vol. 31, 7. This aligns with the fivefold division of the soul in *Rav Pe'alim* (§ 5, 5), where the five parts of the soul map onto the cosmic order as follows: (1) the diurnal (?) sphere (nutritive soul); (2) the intelligible sphere (vital soul); (3) 'the upper waters' (the rational speaking soul); (4) the separated intellects (the philosophical soul); (5) the Great prince, the First Created Being (the prophetic soul). For an overview of Ibn Latif's psychology, see Zimran, *Ibn Latif*, 218-20.

[218] Cf. *Ibn Ḥasdai's Neoplatonist*, 102.

[219] *GE* 200. Cf. *Rav Pe'alim* §6 (p. 6), where Ibn Latif likens the materialization of the intellect in the speaking-soul to air present in the waterskin. Cf. Raz, *Ibn Latif*, 231. The *nodot nefuḥim* experiment is suggested in several of Giqatilla's contemporary accounts. Cf. Sefer ha-Nefesh, in: Freudenthal, *The Air Blessed be He*, 228. See also Averroes' Epitome of Aristotle's De Caelo (Ḥoresh ed.), 76. *Nodot nefuḥim* is there cited to indicate the weight of air, in comparison to fire, by which reason a bladder is heavier when inflated. Cf. Aristotle, *De Cael*., 311b. See also Ibn Ṣadiq, *'Olam ha-Qatan*, 11. On the division between the spiritual and material air, and the identification of the latter as divisible (*nodot nefuhim*), see also *Perush Shem Ben 'Arba*, Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich, Cod. hebr. 24, fol. 204a.

[220] On *neshamah-nesihmah,* see *GE* 200, 208.

The cosmic-psychological model alludes to another analogy that clarifies the function of air in relation to the middle world. That is, the common sailor-ship analogy, which typically illustrates the function of the governing soul in relation to either the organic body or the cosmos at large.[221] Various adaptations of this analogy render the sailor, that is, the soul, as the actuality of the body, although whether such an actuality is separable from the organic body seems disputable. An account presented by Avicenna and rephrased in Ibn Falalquera's *Sefer ha-Nefesh* distinguishes between first perfection and second perfection—the former he identifies with the separable soul and the latter with the form impressed upon the living organism. Rather than implying the immediate form impressed in the organic body, the image of the sailor there refers to the first perfection which, in Avicenna's paradigm, is prior to and separable from the body.[222] By this account, the sailor represents not the immediate form of the body, but its entelechy (*shlemut*), thus accentuating the separability of the intellect.[223] Other accounts use the sailor-ship analogy to accentuate the function of the soul as an immediate and thus inseparable cause of the organic body. This latter approach squares with Giqatilla's own position in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, where the sailor in the sailor-ship analogy describes the permeating *he* as the one 'governing the ship' (*manhig 'et*

[221] Compare the discussion in *Cuzari* 5:12. It is worthwhile to note the inconclusive phrasing in *de anima* 413b: "[…] we do not know if the soul may not be the actuality of the body in the sense in which the sailor is the actuality of the ship," which some commentators construed as though Aristotle considers the analogy incompatible with his notion of form. See citations in: Richard Sorabji, ed, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook*, Vol. 1 (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell UP, 2004), 263. Compare Alexander Aphrodisiacs, *in de anima*, 15,1- 16,10. See also Hillel of Verona's Tagmulei ha-Nefesh, 21, 119, which identifies the sailor-ship analogy as exclusively Platonic.

[222] Avicenna uses this analogy in a way that modifies the Aristotelian distinction between first and second perfections. For Aristotle, 'first perfection' is the *capacity* of a given activity (e.g., 'thinking'), whereas the activity itself, designated as 'second perfection,' is teleologically and thus ontologically prior to the 'first perfection'. (Cf. *de anima* 413b) By contrast, Avicenna establishes first perfection as ontologically prior to and the cause of second perfection. See citations and discussion in Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) 113-41, esp. 118-20. Avicenna's modified sailor-ship analogy is paraphrased in Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's *Sefer ha-Nefesh* (ed. R. Jospe), 279, 301, English translation on 324, 338. Compare the discussion in *Cuzari* 5:12.

[223] See discussion in Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, 197-98. In a similar vein, Maimonides distinguishes God as the efficient and final cause of all beings, as the sailor is of his ship, although he is aware of the theological complications that this analogy follows when applied to God. (*Guide* 1:58)

ha-sefinah).[224] The *he* for Giqatilla is intentionally positioned under the letter *yod*, the former functioning as the linguistic-pneumatic principle of the World Soul.

Presumably, *he*, that is, air is likened to the sailor in the sense that it functions as the actuality of the cosmic body or of its vital soul, aligning with Giqatilla's general assertion that "[t]he soul of the sphere is itself [the principle of] the spheres."[225] In similar vein, Ibn Latif makes use of the ship analogy to illustrate the movement of the spheres by the 'hidden sublime air', which he identifies with the lower part of the cosmic Intellect, and it is thus conjoined with the movement of the spheres:

> Just as the visible air is captured (*mitlaqed*)[226] in the mast and consequently drives the ship, so does the supernal hidden air (*ha-awir ha-'elyon ha-ne'elam*) conjoin with the upper sphere which consequently moves in a natural spherical manner.[227]

Elsewhere, Ibn Latif considers this analogical inference from material to immaterial air through the circular motion that is specific to air, using Aristotelian Meteorology as his frame of

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[224] SN Long fol. 174a (paralleled in *SN Short* *20). On the implications of this term for de-León, see Wolfson, *Letter Symbolism*, 202, n. 26; cf. cited sources. We should note that the verb *manhig* is used by Giqatilla (*GE* 208) to describe the relationship of the practical intellect, which is responsible for governing the vital soul and inclinations. Thus, epitomizing the pneumatic force, the permeating letter *he* is equated with the vital Soul of the cosmic order, or to its immediate cause, and is accordingly distinguished from the supreme part of the luminous Intellect.

[225] *GE* 261.

[226] On the ontological significance of *mitlaqed* in Ibn Latif, see Zimran, *Ibn Latif*, 117.

[227] *Rav Pe'alim §*65 (p. 45). The analogy's focus on visible wind also appears later in Moses de-León's theosophical deliberations on the letter *he*, specifically in MS. Munich, Bavarian State Library cod. hebr.47, ff. 372b-373a: "The masters of the secret of the letters thus assert that *he* drives the ship, for the ship cannot be driven but by wind." Avishai Bar-Asher identifies "the masters of the secret of the letters" with de-León himself, a self-referral to his earlier works. Bar-Asher, *From Alphabetical Mysticism*, 373. See also idem, "Sefer ha-Ne'elam: New Parts of *Sefer 'Or 'Zaru'a* and Clarifications Regarding the Early Writings of R. Moses de León," *Tarbiz* 83 (2015), 237, n. 210. The specific modification of the analogy through the principle of wind is unique and is made explicit by Ibn Latif in *Rav Pe'alim*, and (arguably) by de-León, in the cited section. The textual connection between these two sources is inconclusive, but the allusion is interesting. On this note, we should also mention the allusion of the causative and passive verbs *meni'a* and *mitno'e'a,* which both Ibn Latif and de León use to describe the relationship between simple voice and articulated speech: "The vowel-letters move (*meni'ot*) and [cause] speech while the remaining [letters] are motivated (*mitno'a'ot*)." Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam*, 143b-144a, 55-56. And in de León's Shushan 'Edut (ed. G. Scholem), 343: "Voice […] moves (*meni'a*) speech, and speech is moved (*mitno'e'a*) by voice."

reference.[228] Similarly in *Ginat Egoz*: "The heavens endure in motion. This is reflected in the nature of wind, which is constantly in motion and perpetuated by the true nature of fire."[229]

Overall, Giqatilla acknowledges air as a central cosmogenic principle, but qualifies it as emanating from the intelligible forms and thus inferior.[230] These elemental elaborations reflect a

[228] *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 30, 7-8: "The resemblance of air to fire is determined by their degree of proximity […] This also applies, by way of analogy, to the sublime fire. […] As the upper part of air will set into circular motion as it approximates the principle of fire, as explained in Aristotle's Meteorology (*'Otot ha-Shamayim*)." This picture, of air motivated by its proximity to fire, is common in the scientific literature of the time. See, for example, Ikwhan's Epistle on the Natural Sciences (ed. Baffoni), 192: "[T]he part of the sphere of air that touches the sphere of the moon, as far as it rotates with it with a thick movement, becomes fiercely hot. Until it becomes hot fire, then, the closer it approaches the bottom, the slower is its motion, and the lesser is its heat; and whenever heat diminishes cold prevails."

[229] *GE* 167. The likening of the pneumatic *he* to the navigating sailor is problematized by the fact that while air is causally and essentially motivated by the intelligible forms, the image of the sailor presumably implies an agent that is principally independent of its effect. Giqatilla might have taken notice of this, and in Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz* (419), effectively a revision of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, the paralleled section on the permeating *he* lacks the specific sailor-ship trope, although this trope appears in a text intimately connected to *Sefer ha-Niqqud*. See The National Library of France, MS Paris, hebr.770, 225b-226a (p. 172 in Bar-Asher's ed. cf. remarks on 111-16), and more pronouncedly in Moses de-León's works, where it clearly designates primal air. *'Or-Zaru'a* (ed. Bar Asher), fol. 24b, 309; *Sefer Ha-Mishqal*, 42-43; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 91. This is in line with de-León's association of the supreme grade and primal air, rather than Giqatilla's fire. See also Wolfson, *Letter Symbolism*, 202, n. 26, and cf. cited literature. Conversely, it is possible that the sailor-ship analogy in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* aims to emphasize the 'art of navigation' rather than the sailor agent *per se*. That the idiom *manhig 'et ha-sefina* in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* is not a scribal addition is supported upon examination of the available manuscripts (Long recension: Bavarian State Library, Cod.hebr.215, fol. 183a; Short recension: Ms. Paris, Heb. 774, fol. 40a) The distinction between agent ('sailor') and action ('navigating') was taken by early commentators to reconcile the ship analogy with Aristotle's ambivalence about the separability of the soul *qua* actuality of the body. *De Anima* 413a6-9, and see references in Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators*, 263. A distinction is maintained between the art of navigation, which is indeed implied by and is inseparable from the ship itself, and the agent that performs this act. Commentators who did not accept this distinction struggled with applying the sailor image to Aristotle's form. See also Shmuel of Verona's *Tagmulei ha-Nefesh*, 119.

[230] The contrast between light (or fire) and air is commonly used in Ibn Gabirol's *Meqor Ḥayim* to describe the causal relationship between the descending cosmic principles. See *Meqor Ḥayim*, 3.16 (77), 3.54 (133), 3.57 (137). For Ibn Latif, the function of air is established on both ontological and epistemological levels. Ontologically, the ninth sphere "begets essence from the upper air that pertains to the intelligible sphere, the latter moving circularly by the efflux of the supreme immaterial fire." This observation leads to the conclusion that "fire is the cause of the spherical supreme air, and air is the cause of the motion of the sphere that rotates circularly." (*Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, ff. 55b-56a) The association of the upper air with the intelligible world is noteworthy, as it appears to coincide with my suggestion to identify the moving 'air' with the lower part of the Intellect which, in turn, is the immediate cause of cosmic Soul. Epistemologically, air represents discursive knowledge of metaphysical matters, whereas fire is equated to the uppermost form of intellection, presumably knowledge by intuition. This division is alluded also by Giqatilla in connection with prophetic knowledge. *GE* 280: "[But the divine word] was like a raging fire in my heart. Not a raging fire [literally], but *like* a raging fire. This [refers to] the refinement of the Intellect (*Sekhel*) and its conjunction (*hitdabequt*) with the supernal grades, which are also called Holy Intellects (*Sikhlei Qedoshim*). All of this occurs through the conjunction of its [intellectual] form with the Inner Intellect (*ha-Sekhel ha-Penimi*). The prophetic path thereby proceeds from the fire element." The prophetic path thus continues from the element of fire. Soon after (on p. 281), Giqatilla equates 'intelligible water' with the intellectual arousal (*hit'orerut ha-sekhel*) of the prophet in preparation for the internal Intellect. Divine or intellectual arousal is a common theme in the contemporary philosophical deliberations on intuitive knowledge. Also noteworthy is the term 'holy Intellects' in connection with

cosmos that is unified in principle but diverse through the modification of this principle in the process of emanation. The notion of analogical proportionality communicates this dual point. That is, the sublunar world exists in relationship and proportionality (*be-ʿerekh*) to the spherical world, and the latter to the separate intelligences.[231] The analogical construal of the different cosmic grades is expressed in the applicability of the principle of fire, which is identical in principle yet different in manifestation in each successive grade.

Tenuʿah and Peʿulah Again: In Lieu of Conclusion

Our aim in examining Giqatilla's conception of cosmic air was to illustrate and further specify the notion of *mela'ut* in connection with the middle spherical world. I also suggested that we regard air as a modified form of the simple element, the primary and most subtle mode of which is epitomized by fire. The difference between the two concerns two modes of a singular cohesive principle, in and of itself unified and simple. This difference is further formalized by the vertical analogical model, on account of which the descending elements—fire, air, and water—manifest a difference in unity. Both are complex (*binyanim*) in relation to the primary principle, yet ontologically participate in that simple principle.

prophetic knowledge. 'Holy Intellect' is used to describe the most sublime form of intellection (intuition). Cf. Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, 257-59 and cited sources.

[231] '*Erekh* denotes a proportional and relational status. Accordingly, the noun *maʿarekhet* (lit. 'order,' derivative of *ʿerekh*) designates an order causally structured through its various levels: "You will find that all things [mentioned] in the Act of Creation [are created] by wisdom, fittingly enduring in the order in which they are arranged (*be-mʿarekhet zu she-ba neʿerakhim*). For they are all continued by the supreme wisdom." *Commentary on Genesis*, MS New York 2156, fol. 42a. See also: *GE* 65, 121, 380, 442-443, 446; *Glosses* 29b. In *GE* (118) the principle of *ʿerekh* carries a normative-constrictive function ("we have constructed the [cosmic] order in the sequence of AB GD [*he-ʿerakhnu hamaʿarekhet be-seder* א״ב ג״ד].) the On the term '*erekh* in the sense of proportion and *relatio*, see Ibn Tibbon's *Glossary*, 35. See also the discussion in Rosenberg, *Signification of Names*, 116-118.

The characterization of the element, fire and air, as a simple principle raises the question as to its specific ontological role. Is it responsible for informing enmattered, passive substance—giving it form and shape?[232] Unless we suppose conflicting and incoherent accounts in *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla's deliberation on the Universal Intellect intimates otherwise. We may recall Giqatilla's position on the essential constitution of the spheres as governed by the Intellect, the 'Prince of the Universe'. The name 'Elohim, which Giqatilla associates with the Intellect, is the primary cause of the spheres and their essential constitution, [233] under which the sublunar world with its composite forms is further subsumed. [234]

In an attempt to reconcile Giqatilla's analogical account of the elements with his standard cosmology, we are faced with two options. One option is to disregard any independent cosmology the element-model might suggest, regarding it instead as a complementary description of a standard Neoplatonic scheme of cosmic emanation. This reading is not without grounds. *Ginnat Egoz* applies the image of a chain (*shalshelet*) to describe the relationship between the three cosmic worlds. Asi Farber-Ginat drew attention to the importance and complexity of this image in Giqatilla's corpus and in related Castilian sources more generally. In these sources, the chain illustrates the relationship between the modes of the Hebrew vowels which epitomize, in their turn, the ontological grades in a descending order.[235] Giqatilla also employs the *shalshelet* analogy to

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[232] On the role of the *pneuma* in relationship to the sublunar world, see the remarks in Lapidge, *Stoic Cosmology*, 174; Freudenthal, *Stoic Physics*, 117.

[233] *GE* 315: "[T]he acts of the lower world are [executed] by the angel named Prince of the Universe (*sar ha-'olam*). [...] Blessed be He gives form to all matter (*golem*) through the tenth intellect that is called 'Ishim, that is, the Prince of the Universe."; *GE* 318-19: "Indeed, Blessed be He executes [His] acts in the world through a mediator, for He allocates force of motion to the administrator (*memune*) by which it motivates [the Universe], and this [administrator] is referred to as Prince of the Universe. Through it, Blessed be He actualizes the individual forms (*ṣurot ha-'ishim*) and bestows form to all matter."; *GE* 370 "[B]lessed be He bestows form to all matter through the tenth intellect called 'Ishim [...] This [process] is all while the sphere rotates, for the forms are then informed (*ha-ṣurot miṣttayerot*) in the natural composites (or: mixture of elements; *harkavot ha-tiv'im*)."

[234] *GE* 338: "[T]he [sublunar] individuals (*'ishie ha-min ha-ḥomri'im*) endure by the motion of the spheres."

[235] Asi Farber-Ginat, *Sources*, 89-90, n. 52. For a straightforward Neoplatonic construal of Giqatilla's *shalshelet*, in the sense of 'the chain of Being,' see Idel, *Maimonides' Guide and the Kabbalah*, 201.

describe the chain of causal emanation, in which one grade causally follows the one above (*davar mishtalshel mi-davar*).[236] Here he introduces the image of air—positioned between fire above and water below—as symbolizing its hierarchical position in the chain-like causal order. By this account, fire, air, and water represent increasing degrees of cosmic differentiation or opacity, and they are accordingly applied as symbols of the three worlds—each progressively more remote from the ultimate source, "in accordance with their concatenation one from another."[237]

The elemental-concatenation image notwithstanding, it does not explain the permeating and divine-like function of air which appears to extend features of the general emanative structure. Another way of approaching the parallel accounts of causality is by distinguishing the essential constitution of the created order from its vital-existential principle. That Giqatilla distinguished between these ontological aspects—attributing to the elements a causal role distinct from the essential order—is further explicated through the prism of language. This, I maintain, is not incidental, given that the Hebrew language is Gikatilla's ultimate paradigm for deliberating the nature and constitution of the world.

Titled *Ḥeleq ha-Niqqud*, Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz* focuses on the construal of the linguistic constituents of Hebrew and their metaphysical implications, while cosmology proper is generally marginalized in this part. These linguistic deliberations nevertheless allude to earlier cosmological principles in *Ginnat Egoz*, thereby recasting the terms of Giqatilla's linguistic cosmos. One such modification relates to the distinction that Giqatilla draws between the meaningfulness of letters, on the one hand, and the simple phonetic nature of the vowels, on the other. These two dimensions are also designated as the respective secrets of *pe'ulah* and *tenu'ah*,

[236] *GE* 63. On the chain (*shalshelet*) analogy in connection with *ḥolam*, see Sefer ha-Niqqud Long, fol. 190b. Cf. the rich remarks in Farber-Giant, *Sources*, 89, fn. 52.
[237] *Kefi histalshel ha-ma'alot zu 'aḥar zu* (*GE* 197).

the complementing principles with which I opened the present discussion.[238] Giqatilla, we have seen, reframes the so-called traditional cosmology through the term *pe'ula*. This term marks the essential constitution and causality of things in the world, but Giqatilla also connects to the sememe YH (י״ה). By contrast, *tenu'ah* marks the contingency of the cosmic order on the principle of motion as continued by the principle that transcends this order. This contingency is designated by WH (ו״ה).

More fundamentally, the connection between *pe'ula* and the letters is explained by the fact that the essential determination of things—viz., God's *pe'ulah* —is attributed to the semantic meaning that the letters potentially carry, the latter taking infinite combinatorial forms. The letters are described as instruments in the sense that their activation, through combinatorial arrangements, forms the essences (*tekhunot*) of all things. These essences are thereby carried as concepts in specific words.[239]

By contrast, the function of the vowels, designated as *tenu'ah*, is effectively non-semantic and their ontological function is modeled by the three elements—fire, air, and water:

> [Y]ou shall enter these [metaphysical] investigations through *ḥolam*, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, for they allude to the foundation of the world. By contemplating the nature of these three [vowel-] points you will understand the nature of the three elements, fire, air, and water. The upper element is fire—it is essentially drawn upward, and its secret is *ḥolam*. The middle element is air—'round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns' (Esc. 1.6). It is situated against *shuruq.* The lower element is water, forever drawn downward. This is the secret of *ḥiriq*.

The special role of these three vowels will concern us in Chapter 4. For now, I simply note that Giqatilla's paradigm distinguishes the three simple vowels from the mechanism of the Hebrew letters and other linguistic properties. The latter corresponds to the essential causality implied by the emanative mechanism, guided by the Intellect, whereas the former epitomizes an act of

[238] *GE* 415.
[239] *GE*, 377. See also *GE*, 22, 133.

existence grounded in a phonetic simplicity that extends the essential constitution of the Intellect. Noteworthy is the term *sod* (lit. 'secret') that Giqatilla applies to both vowels and letters. Giqatilla uses this term also in the sense of 'meaning', that is, the essential meaning of a term or a concept,[240] or, as in our discussion, as designating the underlying principles of the natural and cosmic constitution.

Viewed now through the prism of language, the difference between the two cosmic models, essential causality and simple elements, or between letters and vowels, elucidates Giqatilla's cosmos and its causal terms. At issue is not simply *what* we should identify the causal agent with, the Intellect's form or divine permeating force, but also and primarily *the kind* of relationship that the alternative options imply with respect to their effects. Giqatilla's theological construal of *mela'ut* intimates a direct cause in relationship to all existents, especially when compared with the more mediated and gradual causality suggested by the emanative chain.[241]

In concluding our present discussion and in anticipation of our discussion in Chapter 3, I suggest that the distinction between the two ontological dimensions of cosmic causality is effectively Giqatilla's constructive response to the metaphysical paradigm that was developed in teachings with which Giqatilla was intimately acquainted, specifically Salomon ibn Gabirol's *Meqor Ḥayyim* and Isaac ibn Latif's *Ṣurat 'Olam*.

[240] Cf. *GE* 50: "[…] the is no similarity between the words *'av* ('father'; אב) and *ba* ('[he] came'), for the *sod* of *'av* is "the father of the son," whereas *ba* is a [categorically] different word."

[241] Herbert Davidson (*Cuzari*, 376) detected a similar ambiguity in Halevi's cosmology, proposing a distinction between the designation of God as the ultimate cause of objects and events, and the designation of God as a direct cause. One of the factors that pertain to this difference is the contrast between the commotional order and natural constitution of beings in the world, on the one hand, and the cohesive and existential particularity of each of these beings, on the other. I contend that a similar logic runs through Giqatilla's cosmology. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Giqatilla's system is twofold, in the sense that it assumes the interplay between two ontological principles of causality. The one assumes mediation through of essential forms, and the other operates as a direct activity that complements the ontological constitution of the first principle.

The premise of the paradigm in question is the analysis of the cosmic order as constituted by two principles: universal matter and universal form. The relationship between these two universal principles, largely presented by traditions associated with *Theology of Aristotle* (short version), is complex and need not detain us here.[242] Pertinent to our discussion is the role that universal matter plays in the ontological constitution of all existents, across the various rungs of being, starting with the Intellect.

Aristotelian doctrines famously establish matter as a principle of potentiality that plays a teleological role in the process of a thing becoming *what* it essentially is. Aristotelian ontology also assumes that the existence of a thing, its 'thatness', follows its 'whatness'; that is, a thing exists to the extent that its form is actualized. Ibn Gabirol and others reversed the relation between matter and form by elevating matter to the status of a metaphysical principle. On this account, the analysis of universal matter assumes several distinguishing properties, including its identification as unified, capable of sustaining change, and 'subsisting in itself' (*'omed be-'aṣmo*).

Most importantly, this universalization also entailed a reconsideration of the ontological function of matter; it is no longer subservient to form. The function of matter is no longer explained in purely teleological terms of pre-essential potentiality, but rather as more fundamentally constitutive. What, then, is the principle of matter? This question invites various interpretations.

Arthur Hymann used the common Aristotelian statue analogy to suggest a reversal of the ontological priority between form and matter, namely, that "it is bronze that happens to be a statue, not a statue that happens to be bronze."[243] This, of course, raises intricate issues. First and foremost, whether and how the priority of matter implies its ontological independence from form: What does it mean for something that is definitively not in actuality, viz., matter, to constitute a self-subsisting

[242] See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion.
[243] Hymann, *From What is One*, 119. Cf. Aristotle, *Phys*. 195a; *Met*. 1045a.

substance? Similarly, the ontological distinction of matter from form seems contradictory. Presumably, the differentiation of matter from form assumes a defining factor by which it is distinguished.

Wary of these issues, which come up in *Meqor Ḥayyim* as well, Jacques Schlanger offered a more cautious account of Ibn Gabirol's matter, acknowledging the ontological impossibility of distinguishing it from form. Instead, he suggested that we view the metaphysical priority of matter in the sense that it marks the possibility of existence. This means that the ontological constitution of things entails the unification and actualization of this possibility in form, even if his concept of matter differs from the general principle of change.[244]

Applying the form and matter distinction to all levels of existence, Ibn Gabirol maintains that universal matter "gives all beings their name and substance."[245] The metaphysical role of universal matter is articulated on each level of the ontological order insofar as matter marks the particular existence of each being. This view is repeated more distinctively by Ibn Latif who asserts that "[t]he existence of each of the cosmic grades is its matter, whereas the essential form of each grade consists in the apprehension of its respective proximate causes."[246]

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[244] Jacques Schlanger, *Ibn Gabirol*, 201. For alternative interpretations, see Sarah Pessin, *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire: Matter and Method in Jewish Medieval Neoplatonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 102, n. 40.

[245] *Meqor Ḥayyim* 1:11 (p. 10-11). The phrasing here is a bit peculiar: "universal matter gives all [beings] their name (*shem*) and *mahut*." *Mahut* is presumably the equivalent of 'essence' (*essentie*) or quiddity, to be distinguished from 'being' (*esse*). Cf. Eliezer Davidovich, "Meqôr Ḫayyîm and the Jewish Philosophical Tradition: The Philosophy of Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol in Light of the Thought of Rabbi Saadia Gaon and Rabbi Isaac Israeli" (PhD diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2019), 79, n. 278. But given that *mahut* in *Meqor Ḥayyim* is a rendition of the Latin *essentie*, itself related to or derived from *esse* (existence or substance), it is not clear that the original word in Arabic indeed implied 'essence' rather than 'existence.' The phrasing in Falaquera's Liqqutim (1.6, 226) is more concise and definitive, using *eṣem* (*'aṣmo*) rather than *mahut*, *Eṣem* (or *'aṣmo*) is simply 'substance' and has been construed as both *quiddity* ('whatness') and *haecceity* ('thatness'). It is worthwhile to note Giqatilla's *Glosses* 23a, where the terms *ṣurah* and *mahut* are contrasted. *Mahut* is there further equated to 'e*ṣem*, although the term 'e*ṣem* itself can be construed as either material or essential substance.

[246] *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 10: *[W]e-ḥomer kol eḥad me-hem* [i.e., of created beings] *hu meṣi'uto*, *ve-ṣurato she-be-hit'aṣem* [viz. their substantial form] *he hasagat 'ilato ha-qerova 'elaw*. Here Ibn Latif clearly qualifies emanative causality as accounting for the essential constitution of things, through the cognition of proximate causes, but not for the *fact* that they exist.

Giqatilla, as we have indicated, rejects the notion of universal matter altogether in his *Ginnat Egoz*. Instead, he assumes a linguistic act that is the cause of the Intellect and of its intelligible forms, reflecting thereby a doctrine closer in spirit to the Theology of Aristotle (long version).[247] But the quotation from Ibn Latif offers a compelling framework for analyzing Giqatilla's cosmos. Specifically, the analysis of the consonants and the vowels as the respective principles ('secrets') of essence and motion might indicate an adaptive interpretation of the paradigm found in Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Latif.

This suggested distinction will serve my hypothetical paradigm as I turn to Chapter 3, the focus of which is the metaphysical premise of Giqatilla's linguistic theology. Accordingly, the key issues that will occupy our following discussion revolve around Giqatilla's shift to simple motion, such as the distinction between essence and action, his view on cosmic emanation, and the relationship between pre-essential motion and the intelligible forms. The latter will shed further light on the thematic distinction with which I opened this chapter, namely, between *pe'ula* and *tenu'ah*.

[247] On the absence of universal matter in Theology Long, in contradistinction to Theology Short, see Davidovich, *Meqor Ḥayyim*, 53-59. See also his remarks (60-68) on the role of primal matter in Theology Short and its adaptation by later Neoplatonists (e.g., Israeli and Ibn Gabirol).

Chapter Three: The One, the Intellect, and the Yesodot
The Metaphysical Foundations of Ginnat Egoz

A central theme of Chapter 2 was cosmic motion and the idea that the general structure of Nature is grounded in the principle of divine activity. Giqatilla undertakes a deliberate effort to reconstruct traditional cosmology as both grounded in and expressive of this primary principle of motion. His vision of a cosmos activated by divine motion calls for further investigation of the metaphysical framework underlying his conception of divine speech—specifically, how his theory of divine language exemplifies a model of activity that is non-essential.

In this chapter, we shift from Giqatilla's cosmological scheme to its metaphysical foundations. Metaphysical motion, for Giqatilla, is not merely an extension of natural processes but a theological and ontological principle in its own right. It serves as the prism through which he examines the existential and unifying forces that transcend the bounds of natural causality. While natural causality may account for the structure, properties, and interrelations of things within the cosmos, it does not explain their unified and vital existence. This distinction between natural and metaphysical explanation is familiar from works with which Giqatilla was likely acquainted, such as Judah Halevi's *Cuzari* (5:20) and Ibn Gabirol's *Meqor Ḥayyim*. Giqatilla, however, goes further by integrating such theological and metaphysical concerns into a systematic account of the Hebrew language. That is, he employs language as a non-essential activity that both animates and underlies the created order.

The present chapter addresses the following question: What are the principal features of metaphysical motion, or divine activity, and how does this activity shape Giqatilla's broader theological worldview? Answering this question entails addressing three specific themes that were

central to the philosophical discourse of the time and in relation to which Giqatilla articulates his theological position: creation through emanation, the role of the Universal Intellect as a primary ontological principle, and the relationship between Divine Will and Intellect. These themes converge in Giqatilla's account of the relationship between the transcendent One and the hypostatic Intellect—a core concern of Neoplatonic thought and its Jewish expressions.

In exploring the tension between these two principles, Giqatilla develops several key ideas about the nature of divine activity and its reflection in the structure of the world. While Giqatilla's metaphysics is principally linguistic, this chapter addresses several conceptual issues pertaining to divine activity.

One such issue is the modalities by which divine activity bridges the gap between God's simple, primordial existence and the emergence of the Intellect. I use "gap" advisedly, for while Giqatilla may be read as suggesting that the Intellect emanates from the One, he also gestures toward a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*—thereby underscoring the metaphysical and conceptual distance between them. Although this chapter does not directly address the linguistic components of Giqatilla's metaphysics, we will see how their underlying principle—phonetic motion—frames his response to this longstanding problem. In this way, the chapter prepares the conceptual ground for Chapter 4, which turns to the Hebrew linguistic elements in Giqatilla's system.

A second, closely related theme is the distinction between the Universal Intellect and what Giqatilla calls the "inner" or "holy" Intellect. While the Universal Intellect is characterized along familiar Neoplatonic lines—as lacking self-sufficiency, comprising the duality of subject and object of thought, and containing both identity and difference—the inner Intellect is described as unified and simple. Yet the two are intimately related, as the inner Intellect is deemed the cause of the Universal Intellect. By examining the identity and function of the inner (or holy) Intellect, we

can explore several key aspects of metaphysical motion in Giqatilla's thought: the role of Divine Will in relation to intelligible forms, the principle of emanation, and the conjunction of the Intellect with the One. Together, these themes frame the analysis of this chapter.

To address these issues—all of which revolve around the principle of motion—the chapter proceeds as follows. I begin by outlining the general structure of Giqatilla's metaphysics, articulated through the symbolic relationship between the numbers 1 and 10 and notated by the combined Hebrew letters א״י (*aleph–yod*). We encountered this notation in Chapter 2 in connection with Giqatilla's cosmology. Here we consider its metaphysical implications. This notation establishes a conceptual distinction between the created ontological order—comprising the ten spheres governed by the Intellect—and the undivided simplicity of the One. We will examine how Giqatilla expresses this distinction in terms of *kelal* (*genus generalissimum*) and *perat* ("particular" or "distinguished").

The implications of this structural distinction will then be explored through the principle of "possible existence," a concept drawn from contemporary philosophical discourse, that reflects on the ontological status of all beings in relation to God, whose existence alone is necessary. I will allude to our earlier discussion in Chapter 1 regarding Maimonides, and further develop Giqatilla's distinction between primordial and renewed existence.

Building on this foundational distinction, the chapter then turns to the question of whether Giqatilla's metaphysics operates within a model of emanation. This question is especially significant for understanding his early writings and has been the subject of scholarly debate. By weighing the considerations for and against a doctrine of emanation in Giqatilla's thought, we will draw closer to his views on motion, action, and will. These principles, I argue, open the way for a

more nuanced conception of emanation—one that aligns with the metaphysical commitments of his broader linguistic system.

Pressing further on the theme of activity and motion, I consider the identity of the inner Intellect, supposedly the cause of the Universal Intellect. This discussion raises the possibility that the model of emanation Giqatilla proposes entails the priority of non-essential, spontaneous activity—an act not determined by form—which may be understood as giving rise to the essential form of the Universal Intellect. Exploring this possibility will allow us to reassess the relationship between divine simplicity, motion, and the metaphysical structure of creation.

I conclude this introduction with a methodological note. Scholarship has tended to group Giqatilla's early writings as a singular unit, distinguished from his later theosophical thought. This unit encompasses *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (both its long and, arguably, short recensions), *Ginnat Egoz*, and several additional texts, including the fragmented *Commentary on Genesis*, and—with certain reservations—Giqatilla's *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed*. While closely related, there are nuanced doctrinal differences even between *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*—the third part of which reworks the former. These differences will inform my discussion of Giqatilla's position on emanation. Specifically, I will consider how the principle of pre-essential activity is fully articulated in *Ginnat Egoz*, reflecting a doctrinal transition from *Sefer ha-Niqqud*. These considerations are also pertinent for the *Glosses on the Guide*, where Giqatilla appears to take yet another turn in his doctrine.

Aleph, *Yod*: Conceptual Frameworks

Joseph Giqatilla's theology of language is premised on the ontological distinction between the transcendent One and the Universal Intellect, the latter functioning as the primary principle of the

ontological order. Following Abrahm ibn Ezra, Giqatilla deploys the vowel-letters *'aleph* and *yod*, as respective tokens for the transcendent One and the Universal Intellect,[1] but also construes these letters as principles of cosmic motion, according to the formula AY (א״י), or its inverse YA (י״א). This formula relates to the principle of motion, established by the sememe WH (ו״ה), which is derived from the creative principle YHW (יה״ו).[2]

In addition to the YA notation, the identity of the letter *yod* itself, originally identified with the Universal Intellect, was modified through Giqatilla's linguistic theology. Central to Giqatilla's contribution is his integration of the vowel point *ḥolam* as a cosmogenic principle, one which

[1] See our discussion in Chapter 1. To recapitulate, Ibn Ezra typologizes the *'aleph* as the hidden source of linguistic motion that potentially includes the more determined modes of phonetic motion, the latter formalized by the vowel system (*tenu'ot*). Another central feature is the referential quality of the *'aleph* which relates a self-subsisting substance, irrespective of its relationship to a presumed 'other.' This is articulated in the grammatical function of the *'aleph* when serving as a prefix that indicates the first-person future tense. (e.g.,*'elekh*; 'I will go.') This linguistic observation is further conceptualized in terms of the ontological condition of the referenced subject: "the *'aleph* refers to a subject with respect to its substance, prepared to receive form." (*Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 68) This remark also alludes to Ibn Ezra's short commentary on Exod. 3:13, where he draws the connection between the *'aleph* and ontological category of the formless substance that 'persists in itself' (*'omed be'atsmo*; *ens per essentiam*). *'Aleph* thus epitomizes a simple, undetermined substance—ontologically prior to and distinct from the state of essential differentiation. Conversely, the vowel-letter *yod* is positioned diametrically to *'aleph.* In addition to its numerical value (10), indicating its relationship to the tenfold cosmic order, the grammatical function of the letter *yod* functions grammatically in relation to an assumed 'other', as articulated in a verb of the third-person future tense (e.g., *yelekh*; '*he* will go'). It is important to note, however, that despite the referential implications of the self-subsisting *'aleph*, the question of whether this letter indeed refers to God's primordial being is not entirely clear in the case of Ibn Ezra. Certain Judeo-Arabic Neoplatonic accounts—particularly those associated with the Theology of Aristotle (long recension)—distinguish a simple and unqualified substance as the first hypostasis emanated from the One, prior to the Intellect. Cf. Hyman, *From What is One*, 118. See our discussion in Chapter 2. This unqualified matter is described, in broad terms, as "the first substance which subsists in itself and is the substratum of definition and differentiation." Against this general background, we are presented with two alternatives concerning the specific identity of Ibn Ezra's self-subsisting *'aleph*: either it refers to God's primordial being, or, by analogy to the doctrine of primal matter, it designates a kind of hypostatic principle that causally relates to the Intellect and is accordingly distinguished from God. The difference between these two alternatives is symbolically formalized through the numerical concepts of One and Zero. That is, we may speak of God affirmatively, as the ultimate unified Being, the source of the Intellect—or we may refer to God apophatically and in primarily negative terms, as the nullified Zero (*'efes*), in which case *'aleph* is associated with hypostatic matter. In a recent study, Haviva Pedaya argues that Ibn Ezra deliberately maintains this ambiguity, wavering between identifying God with the unified substance (the One) or with the principle of Nothingness (the Zero), the latter categorically distinct from the former. See Haviva Pedaya, "The Zero, the One, and the Einsof: Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Beginning of Kabbalah," in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Renaissance Man*, ed. Dov Schwartz (Ramat Gan: Idra Press, 2023), 176-85. As Pedaya suggests, this ambiguity was later resolved by interpretive traditions—Kabbalistic ones included—although the identification of God with the unified One finds strong support in Ibn Ezra's own theological framework. Thus, while the phrase "subsisting in itself" (*'omed be-'aṣmo*) might at times allude to unqualified matter, as it does in certain Geronese Kabbalistic texts, it is difficult to construe the simple *'aleph*, which 'self-subsists,' as anything other than a symbol for divine existence.

[2] See discussion in Chapter 2.

complicates the *'aleph–yod* schema by introducing the diagram [ִי], a *ḥolam* positioned above the *yod*. This addition modifies the relationship between the One and the Intellect, as both a linguistic and, consequently, a metaphysical process. We will see how this modification plays out as we proceed.

Aleph, Yod – Perat and *Kelal*

In the generations following Ibn Ezra, these principles were further developed by analogical systems, resulting in the notation AY (אי). In both theosophical and non-theosophical Kabbalistic traditions, this notation was employed to construe the function and identity of the Universal Intellect in relation to its primary source.[3] By contrast, Giqatilla applies this notation as denoting the motion of the Intellect by the Unmoved Mover while preserving the latter's transcendence. Here we have an initial indication as to the non-theosophical nature of Giqatilla's early thought. Divine hypostases are not latent potentialities that emanate from the transcendent God. Instead,

[3] Consider, for example, the theosophist R. Asher ben David, a precursor of Giqatilla, who constructs *'aleph* and *yod* as symbolizing the supreme *sefirot keter* and the hypostatic *ḥokhma,* respectively. The priority of *'aleph* is there supported by its distinguished phonetic and grammatical features, discussed above. By virtue of its subtle qualities, *'aleph* is likewise assumed to symbolize the hidden Name that references God's primordial Being. Furthermore, the *'aleph* of *keter* is also the emanating source of *ḥokhmah*, the Intellect. Literature on Neoplatonic terminology in early Kabbalah is plentiful. A critical assessment is available in Tanja Werthmann, "Prime Matter as Wisdom in Geronese Kabbalah: Philosophical Precedents to the Elevated Ontological Status of the Hypostatic Female," *The Journal of Religion*, 101: 2 (2021), 243-51. Cf. cited literature. The transaction between *'aleph* and *yod*, symbolizing the relationship between *Keter* and *Ḥokhma*, is common in early Kabbalistic sources. For a comprehensive review see Porat, *Founding of the Circle*, 209-18. This relational construct is formalized by the notation AY (*'aleph-yod*) where *'aleph* stands for the *kelal*, in relation to which the *yod* functions as *perat*. Technically, *kelal* here resonates with the *genus generalissimum* which Neoplatonists like Isaac Israeli associate with hypostatic matter. (Compare Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist (ed. S.M. Stern), 104, lines 9-12: "(T)he first *hylic* matter which is the substratum for all forms and is called by the philosophers the genus of genera." See also remarks in Stern and Altmann, *Isaac Israeli*, 96-97. On the categorical fusion of 'primal matter' with *genus generalissimum* (Heb. *sug ha-suggim* or *shoresh ha-shorasim*), see Davidovich, *Meqôr Ḥayyîm*, 79-84. See also Pessin, *Theology of Desire*, 49-50; 98-99. Pessin maintains the hierarchical priority of Universal Matter over the Intellect, designating the former as the supreme cause, apart from God, which all lower grades ultimately desire. Pessin (102, n. 40) accordingly identifies Ibn Gabirol's All (*kol*) with Matter, in contradistinction to Elliot Wolfson (*Kol*, 80) who linked All to the Intellect.) On the identification of supreme genus with *'eṣem kelali* in Giqatilla, see *GE* 376. See also the discussion of the mereological issue of whole (*kelal*) and its parts (*perat*) in Abraham bar Ḥiyya's *Megillat ha-Megalleh* (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1924), 6-8. See further the remarks (p. 8) on the relationship of all created individuals (*perat*) to their potential existence in God's primordial mind.

what emerges are distinct ontological realities. This difference factors in Giqatilla's stance on the question of divine emanation, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Giqatilla's *yod* takes the position of the Universal Intellect, which is the unifying principle of the cosmic order and the *supreme genus* of all things. In his view, the theosophical *kelal* and *perat* are reversed: the two are now designated by the respective letters *yod* and *'aleph*. While *perat* commonly designates a member of a set, or a particular within a whole, it is also used to differentiate a subject as distinguished and separable, in which case it is synonymous with *nifrad* ('separated').[4] The latter construal is used by Giqatilla to indicate the transcendent One, the *'aleph*.[5] By this logic, the totality of the ontological order is construed as *kelal*—here *yod*.[6] And so, rather than implying the inclusion of all forms and beings in God, AY indicates the contingency of all beings on the One which remains completely transcendent in and of itself:

> Consider how the movement of [the letters] AY (אי) originates from Him, blessed be He. The *'aleph* stands singular and exalted, signifying God alone. In counterpoint, the ten cosmic dimensions achieve unity through the tenth element (namely, the Intellect) which sustains the [preceding] nine [celestial spheres]. This constitutes the secret of YA (יא). Remove the *'aleph*, the secret of He Who moves the ten parts of the cosmos, and there

[4] Cf. Klatzkin, *Anthology,* Vol 3. 211. Insofar as *perat* is a relative principle, it also distinguishes the unified Intellect (*perat*) vis-à-vis the nine celestial spheres (*kelal*), in which case the applied notation is AT (אט). The AT notation recapitulates the general designation of the Intellect as the primary principle of the cosmic order, a designation that is captured in the substance (Universal Intellect) and accidents (nine spheres) scheme that was discussed in Chapter 2. See MS New York 851, fols. 67b-68a; *Sefer ha-Niqqud* Long, fol. 180a; *GE* 315-17. Nevertheless, the Intellect (א) that moves the nine spheres (ט) is considered among the moved existents in relationship to God, which is the reason it is included in the ten (י) against which God stands as the unparticipated *aleph* (יא). See the discussion in MS New York 851, fols. 81a-87a, esp. 86b.

[5] MS New York 851, fol. 72b: "*'Aleph* is the foundation for that which has no foundation, and which is not one(ness) that includes the multiple. It is not in definition nor in finitude, not in form nor in renewal." On the history of this manuscript and its attribution to Giqatilla see the remarks in Ben Shachar, *Israel and the Archons*, 11, n. 23. See references to relevant scholarship. Considering the strong affinity of this work to *Ginnat Egoz*, as well as the absence of any inconsistency between the two, I see no reason not to include this work in the analysis of Giqatilla's work.

[6] The notational construction of *yod* and *aleph* in terms of *kelal* and *perat* (יא) is intimated by Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Jonah 1:6. In contradistinction to the discussions in *Sefer ha-Shem* and *Yesod Mora*, in Jonah 1:6 *aleph* is the first member, *perat,* of the second group of the decimal system, namely, the number 11 that follows 10. The notation YA (*yod* + *'aelph*) computes these principles as *kelal* (10) and *perat* (10+1). Cf. Commentary on Num. 7:72; Sefer *Yesod Mispar*, printed in: Simḥah Pinsker, *Mavo el ha-Niqqud ha-Ashuri 'o ha-Bavli* (Wien: Druck von Bendiner, 1863), 168.

> will remain [the letter] *yod*—the total of the cosmic parts moving and moved—yet excluding the transcendent Mover who is beyond all movers.[7]

Giqatilla is not committed to a determined construal of this structural notation. Rather, the terms *kelal* and *perat*, and likewise the letters *'aleph* and *yod*, take different structural functions according to their specific context and to the desired instructional end. We saw an example of this in Chapter 2 in connection with the AT (א״ט) notation (*'aleph* + *tet*). The nine spheres, represented by the letter *tet* (9), are classified as the *peratim* of the *kelal*, the latter signifying the Universal Intellect, the tenth sphere. Insofar as the Intellect rules the nine spheres, it is symbolized by the letter *'aleph*. Hence *'aleph* + *tet*. And because the essential causality of all spheres is included in them, it is their *kelal*.

The difference between the One and the Intellect can be explained by the fact that while simple and unified, the 'oneness' is nevertheless an accident predicated of the Intellect, "for it contains the multiplicity of form and renewal,"[8] unlike the oneness of the separated One, which is its essence — not something predicated of it.[9]

In the broader metaphysical scheme *'aleph* thus qualifies as *perat*, in the sense of separable and non-participated, thus ontologically distinguished from the Universal Intellect.[10] Still, insofar as the One is the origin from which all motion proceeds, *yod* can be construed as contingent on *aleph*:

> The total of the motivating and moved parts is ten. It is this totality, termed *binyan* ('construct'), which the secret of *yod* consists of. But you will find that the initiating motion of all movers is continued (*nimshakh*) in the secret YA (י״א). That is, motion is continued from the true existence of the One to the ten.[11]

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[7] *GE* 149. A similar account is available in Ibn Latif's *Ginze ha-Melekh* which identifies the taxonomical kelal with the first created being, the Intellect. *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 29 (Vienna 1862), 5

[8] *SN Short*, 78*. *GE* 118: "And the primary form would count as simple oneness, were it not contingent on Being."

[9] On this categorical difference, see Moshe of Salerno's *Commentary on the Guide* I:57, fol. 75a.

[10] *GE* 324

[11] *GE* Ibid. And in *GE* 137: "*'Aleph* is the origin of action and the origin of motion in the mystery of *yod-'aleph*. […] Motion is principally continued from primordial Being (*hawwayah qadmonit*) as we intimated in the mystery of AY

We should note that Giqatilla's twofold construal of *'aleph*—signifying God, on the one hand, and the *supreme genus* of the cosmic order, on the other—alludes to Ibn Latif's discussion in *Ṣurat 'Olam*. There he differentiates between two modes of *'aleph* – effable and ineffable. The effable *'aleph* denotes the first created being, the *genus superior* (*sug 'elyon*) of the created order, whereas the ineffable *'aleph* is distinguished as "the eternal letter that is above the *kelal*.[12]

Necessary God and Possible Creation

Regarding the existence of the Intellect, Giqatilla subscribes to the general doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, or, as he puts it, 'not from a thing.' In his early thought, this position entails the rejection of the notion of a primordial undetermined substance from which the Intellect might have emanated,[13] although these terms are revised in his theosophical works.[14] While Giqatilla's views on primordial substance will evolve over time, his initial conception posits a phonetic-like activity as the cause of the Intellect, in lieu of pre-essential primal matter. As we will explore, Giqatilla incorporates several characteristics traditionally attributed to primal matter by Jewish thinkers like Solomon Ibn Gabirol to describe this simple act. These include the role of Divine Will and the function of an intermediary between the Intellect and the Creator. Furthermore, the idea that the

(א״י), BT (ב״ט), GH (ג״ח), DZ (ד״ז) HW (ה״יו)." Cf. JTS MS NY, 851, fol. 64a, and the discussion in Wolfson, *Letter Symbolism,* 208, ft. 49. Elsewhere in *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla employs the letters *aleph* and *bet* in a Neoplatonic fashion, as aleph indicates the unity of the true existent, and *bet* the duality of the Intellect that consists of form and *ḥiddush*, a term that broadly signifies contingency, as I shall discuss later.

[12] *Ha-'ot ha-rishon ha-nitsḥi ha-na'ale min ha-kelal* (*Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 25, fol. 147a).

[13] On his early rejection of universal matter, see: *SN Short* 46*, 53*; *GE* 179-180; *Commentary on Genesis*, fols. 40b-41a. Giqatilla's position on this issue will change as his thought develops, as illustrated in his Glosses on Maimonides' *Guide* (fol. 22b-23a), a work that can be safely identified as a middle point in Giqatilla's intellectual trajectory. Cf. Gershom Scholem, "Traces of Ibn Gabirolian Kabbalah," in *Meḥkere Kabalah* (1998), ed. Yosef Ben-Shlomo (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1998), 63-64. On the chronological place of the *Glosses*, see Gottlieb, *Studies*, 105-17. This work contains clear theosophical tenets, including the discerption of the Intellect as the first emanation, and the transition toward a more semantic conception of language, where the interiority of speech is identified with the spiritual potentiality of the letters, rather than with the simple vowel. (Compare *GE* 50 with Glosses 29b.)

[14] Most striking in this respect is the passage in *Sha'arei Ṣedeq* (printed in Gottlieb, *Studies*, 141, lines 60-64) where Giqatilla construes *yesh me-'ayin* as referring to the emanation form the primordial *keter*, and in contradistinction to "those who interpret *yesh me-'ayin* as implying that God issued a thing not from a thing (*hoṣie davar me-lo davar*)." See also remarks in Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 133-34.

Intellect does not emanate from hypostatic matter but is instead created 'not from a thing' is reinforced by Giqatilla's use of the verb *himṣie* (root: YaṢA), which appears in connection with the Universal Intellect. While *himṣie* can signify the 'actualization' of preexisting potentiality, it also implies the invention of something, or its coming-into-being after nonexistence. Giqatilla adopts this latter interpretation when referring to the first created light:

> Consider the phrasing (*lashon*) *yehi*, to wit., 'a definite thing will be created and will come into existence' (*yithawweh davar kakh we-yeṣe le-hawwayah*). Were it to have prior existence, this phrasing would have been unfitting.[15]

Giqatilla renders *yeṣi'ah* according to the first of three cosmogenic opinions listed in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed,* 2.23, that is, the orthodox position of creation *after* absolute nonexistence: "He created a first principle not from a thing (*himṣie yesod rishon lo mi-davar*)."[16] More pointedly, Giqatilla reflects Maimonides' presumed position on *yeṣi'ah*, the ontological implications of which are put concisely in Guide 1.23:

> Every mention of 'going out' (*al-yeṣi'ah*) in Scripture with reference to God, may He be exalted, conforms to this figurative use. Thus: *For, behold, the Lord goeth out of His place*, (Job 30:26) that is, His decree, which at present is hidden from us, will become manifest. By this I refer to the coming of something into existence after nonexistence, for everything that comes into existence from God, may He be exalted, refers to His decree.[17]

In our previous citation Giqatilla couples *yeṣi'ah* with *hawwayah* (*yithawweh davar kakh we-yeṣe le-hawwayah*), a pair of terms that contrasts with *'asiyah* ('making') or *hamshakhah* ('continuation').[18] The second pair of terms, particularly *'asiyah*, signifies the actualization of a

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[15] *GE* 72 (– emphasis mine). For a somewhat different reading of this passage, see Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 24. Lachter's reading is in support of his emanationist reading of Giqatilla's early Kabbalah which, in fact, he construes as a sort of covert theosophy. Later in this chapter I will argue further against the variant emanationist readings of Giqatilla.

[16] *GE* 72-73. And in Ibn Latif's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 1:6 (ed. A. Zirman, 25-27): "*bara yesh lo mi-yesh*." Cf. *GE* 195.

[17] The etymological significance of *yeṣi'ah* is further evaluated against *Cat*. 7a5, where Aristotle discusses the invention of a name for a thing that is not yet defined with respect to a particular relative: "It may sometimes be necessary even to invent names, if no name exists in relation to which a thing would be given properly." In his Hebrew translation of Averroes' commentary *ad loc*., Jacob Anatoli renders 'invention' as *le-hamṣie*.

[18] More on *hamshakah* below. See Blickstein's comments on this term. (*Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 64-78, esp. 67.)

pre-existing potentiality,[19] a process described also in terms of concatenation (*hishtalshelut*), and in contradistinction to *hawwayah*: "Following primary creation, one essence concatenates from another."[20] By contrast, the description of primal light as *nimṣa' me-*[*'amitat qadmuto yitbarakh*] can be rendered as "came into being *by* or *after* [God's primordial existence], but not as 'emanated from [God's primordial existence]."[21]

To clarify my position, I will examine Giqatilla's treatment of 'possible existence,' a term frequently employed by Giqatilla's contemporaries, albeit in diverse ways.[22] In its original Avicennian context, 'possible existence' refers to the analysis of created beings in terms of their ontological contingency on a primary external cause.[23] The distinction drawn is between, on the

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[19] Thus in line with traditional renditions of the verb *va-ya'as* (ויעש) in Gen 1.7. See, for example, the commentaries by Naḥmanides and David Qimḥi *ad loc*.

[20] *GE* 63. Cf. *GE* 452: "All worlds concatenate from this intelligible world." On the chain (*shalshelet*) analogy in connection with *ḥolam*, see *Sefer ha-Niqqud* Long, fol. 190b. Cf. the rich remarks in Farber-Giant, *Sources*, 89, fn. 52.

[21] *GE* 53. For the possible renditions of the preposition *me* (*'amitat qadmuto*), as either "from" or "after," see Harry Wolfson, "Aṣilut we-Yesh me-Ayin," in *Sefer Asaf*, ed. M.D. Cassuto *et. al* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1953), 230. We should note the connection between *yeṣi'ah*, here construed as creation, and *nimṣa.'* Similar to Moshe of Salerno, Giqatilla's contemporary, the act of creation renders *nimṣa'* as the contingent existent that is categorically distinguished from God's primordial existence. See *GE* 192-93: "All creatures and existents came into being (*nitthawwu*) by a single decree (*be-ma'amar eḥad*), even the Intelligences. Existence in its totality is contingent, for all creatures *nimṣa' 'im* through one decree." […] "(T)he forms were differentiated on the second, third, fourth, and fifth (days of Creation), but the Intelligences *nimṣe'u* on Day One (of Creation)." Compare also Ravitzki, *Possible and Contingent Existence*, 88. Giqatilla (Ibid) further cites Naḥmanides' *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* on the creation of the superfine immaterial fire (*daqah min ha-daqah*) on the second day of creation, during which the angels were created according to some Midrashic opinions. (See *Torat ha-'Adam* (*Sha'ar ha-Gemul*), printed in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Hayim Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1964), vol. 2, 285. Cf. Gottlieb, *Studies*, 20-21.) Giqatilla compares Naḥmanides' account with Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer 3.6 which lists eight things that were created on the first day of creation, including heaven and earth. For Giqatilla, this ironically implies that earth was created before, and is thus ontologically prior, to fire, viz., the angels. Giqatilla reconciles this apparent irony, presumably in the name of Naḥmanides himself, by distinguishing the act of creation which "includes all beings" from the differential actualization of these beings according to their respective essences. What according to Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer occurred on Day One refers to the primary principle (*yesod*) of light in which the angels are included. Still, the angels were actualized on the second day of creation.

[22] Asi Ginat-Farber (*Shells*, 124) has remarked on the allusions in Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* to Avicenna's doctrine of possible existence. As I shall argue in our following discussion, in *Ginnat Egoz* Giqatilla reformulates a modified version of that doctrine in a manner that resonates with one of the three interpretations suggested in Moses of Salerno's *Commentary on the Guide* 1.57.

[23] The term 'possibility' proves quite perplexing in this context, primarily in two ways. The first issue concerns the sense in which universals are 'possible' if they effectively exist, albeit necessarily and extrinsically. The second issue concerns the very distinction between essence and existence: in what sense is 'essence' an ontologically valid category independent of existential actuality? The implications of both questions depend on the conceptual framework into which they are inserted. According to an Aristotelian account, essence and existence are mutually implied, while

one hand, the factual and arguably necessary existence of things, and, on the other, the principle that their existence is not implied by their essential constitution but rather derives from an external cause—namely, God. For Avicenna, while things are defined by their essential constitution, this essence does not imply actual existence (unlike God, whose essence and existence are completely united). Thus, created things exist, in actuality, due to an external cause (*ab-alio*) rather than by virtue of their own constitution (*a se*). In Avicenna's system, this external causality is itself necessary relative to the originating cause—a premise that Giqatilla, like many other theologians,

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'possibility' would be rendered primarily in terms of potentiality. This paradigm likely discounts the notion of objective universals independent of the particulars ('first substance') in which they are actualized. Conversely, the Neoplatonic paradigm leads to a more ambiguous notion of 'possibility', given that it affirms the objective existence of universal substances (or 'essences') prior to and independent of their actualization in particulars.

These interpretive differences become evident in scholarly debates over the precise meaning of Avicennian concepts. On the conceptual difficulty of the 'possible' in Avicenna, see Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 289-93. Metaphysically, 'possible' might qualify any being whose hypothetical nonexistence implies no impossibility with respect to either itself or anything external. (But as Davidson noted [ibid., 291], these are not strict definitions, considering the circularity of terms [e.g., 'possible is that whose nonexistence is not impossible'].)

This interpretive complexity is exemplified in the scholarly debate between Altmann and Ivry over Maimonides' understanding of essence and existence. Following Fazlur Rahman's account of Avicenna, Alexander Altmann argued that Maimonides' notion of accidental existence (*Guide* I:57) is not to be understood in the sense of predication, as though existence were a predicate 'superadded' to a pre-existing essence, but rather the actualization (or instantiation) of essence in a particular being, whereby this essence 'happens' to exist in a manner that is not implied by the essence itself. The instantiation of secondary substance (*whatness*) in primary substance (*thatness*) is what constitutes existence. Given that this instantiation is not implied by the constitutive terms of that essence, its existence as a particular being is accidental to that essence. (Cf. Fazlur Rahman, "Essence and existence in Avicenna," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1958): 7-9; Altmann, *Essence and Existence in Maimonides*, 304-05.)

Responding to Altmann, Alfred Ivry has drawn attention to the perplexity that emerges from his reading of Maimonides (via Avicenna), insofar as he assigns priority to the existence of particulars over the notion of universal essences. This priority, however, is problematic, for Maimonides, according to Altmann, considers essences to exist in particulars while at the same time transcending these individuals. Moreover, as universals, essences are superior in degree to concrete individuals. And yet, according to Altmann's interpretation of Maimonides, existence is said only of individuals and not of universals.

The broader scholarly discussion of these interpretive questions can be found in the following studies. For the two respective readings of Avicenna's existence-essence distinction (viz. Aristotelian and Neoplatonist), see Alexander Altmann, "Essence and Existence in Maimonides," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 108-27; Alfred Ivry, "Maimonides and Neoplatonism: Challenge and Response," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 143-54. For Maimonides' reception of the essence-existence distinction more broadly, see Shlomo Pines, Introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed*, xciv-xcvi; Emil Fackenheim, "The possibility of the universe in Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Maimonides," in *Essays in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977), 294-97, 322-34; Aviezer Ravitzky, "Necessary and Possible Existence: Maimonides' Ontology according to his Interpreters," in *Maimonidean Essays* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 2006), 205-38 (Hebrew); Warren Harvey, "Maimonides' Avicennianism," in *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 5, ed. Arthur Hyman et al. (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2008), 111-13; Lorberbaum, *Dazzled by His Beauty*, 107-113; Stern, *Form and Matter*, 143.

rejects. Nevertheless, the conceptual (if not ontological) distinction between essence and existence, whereby beings do not imply existence *a se*, provided fertile ground for more creative and, at times, radical theological constructions.

Other appropriations of the notion of 'possible existence' took a more radical turn—toward the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. As Aviezer Ravitzky has noted, once the question of the eternity of the world becomes a matter of orthodoxy rather than philosophical inquiry, the concept of 'possibility' is no longer constrained by the premise of eternal existence or causal necessity. It can now serve as the basis for a more radical principle of contingency: that the cosmos as a whole is both ontologically and factually possible in relation to God's necessary existence. This development arguably exceeds Avicenna's original framework. The implications of this position are significant, and commentators like Giqatilla wove them into their broader theological systems. Giqatilla's notion of 'possible existence' is formulated somewhat cryptically in his response to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, who, in turn, adopted Averroes' critique of the Avicennian doctrine altogether.[24] In responding to Ibn Tibbon—and to Averroes by extension—Giqatilla formulates his own concept of possible existence, which again deviates from the original meaning of this term.[25]

Averroes notably questioned Avicenna's doctrine of 'possible existence' on Aristotelian grounds, arguing that insofar as it concerns that which exists eternally, i.e., the supralunar realms, its existence is factual and necessary. Any mention of possibility, even in terms of ontological contingency, should therefore be excluded as nonsensical. In the Maimonidean context, this line

[24] See discussion in Davidson, Proofs.

[25] I should stress that Giqatilla, in my view, rejects the Avicennian essence-existence distinction while promoting a more radical doctrine of creation – one in which things possess neither potential nor actual existence independent of the creative act itself (Contra Asi Farber-Ginat's remarks on the allusions in *Ginnat Egoz* to Avicenna's doctrine of possible existence. See in *Shells*, 124.)

of argument was maintained by Ibn Tibbon, whom Giqatilla takes as his interlocutor on the matter. Thus, in response to *Guide* I:70, Ibn Tibbon formulates the Averroist critique of 'possibility' by presenting a binary picture: ontologically speaking, things either exist necessarily or necessarily do not exist, while 'contingency' is applicable only to things that at some times exist and at other times do not – that is, to particulars subject to generation and corruption.

In other words, contingency differs from ontological possibility in that it does not imply a middle term between existence and nonexistence, but it assumes the absence of a particular only at a specific time. Ibn Tibbon's premise is presumably the principle of eternity—that the world has no beginning or end—coupled with the principle of plenitude, the latter implying that no genuine possibility will remain unrealized in infinite time, and that every such possibility will be actualized at some point. On these grounds, Ibn Tibbon similarly rejects the construal of contingency as a middle ground between two contraries, i.e., necessity and impossibility: "for these two are not qualities like warmth and coldness."[26] Metaphysically speaking, necessity and impossibility are mutually exclusive, and between them there is no room for a mediating term.

Giqatilla responds to Ibn Tibbon by reshaping the theological framework used to analyze possible existence. Rather than applying 'possibility' for the analysis of beings in terms of their essential constitution and logical conditions—as Ibn Tibbon does—Giqatilla reconceives 'possibility' in terms of the relationship between created beings and God as their ultimate cause. This theological reframing allows him to push the notion of 'possible existence' to its

[26] Ibn Tibbon, *Glossary*, 35. Ibn Tibbon's remarks are a fierce critique against Yehuda al-Harizi, who confused ontological possibility (an invalid category) with propositional possibility. See Al-Harizi, Glossary, in: L. Schlosberg (ed.), *Liber More Nebuchim* (London: Samuel Bagster Print, 1851), p. iv.) For an Avarroist adaptation of Guide I:69, see Ibn Falaquera's *Moreh ha-Moreh*, 166. See (Ibid) the analysis of the terms *howweh* ('being') and *hawwayah* ('becoming') with respect to translunar unchanged entities (*howe*) vs. sublunar individuals subject to generation and corruption (*hawwayah*). For a comprehensive account of the Averroist adaptations of *Guide* I:69 by Maimonides' early commentators, see Ravitzki, *Possible Existence*, 67-97. Cf. his discussion of the two renditions of the ontological *'efshari* as either 'possible' or 'potential.'

extreme: 'possibility' becomes ontologically valid precisely because, contrary to Ibn Tibbon's metaphysical premise, the existence of anything other than God is neither evident *a se* nor *ab alio*, let alone eternal. As Giqatilla puts it elsewhere, "the endurance of form is through God, for He is *hawwayah*, and without *hawwayah* form has no possibility of existence. (*'Ein la-ṣurah 'efsharut le-himaṣe.*)"[27] From this theological perspective, all created beings are ontologically non-necessary from any available perspective, not because of their essential properties, but because of their absolute dependence on divine causation. 'Possibility' is a theological principle that describes the condition of created beings both prior to and following their coming into existence in relation to their divine source.

It is worth noting that, in principle, Giqatilla's position is compatible with Ibn Tibbon's while bypassing the Avicennian essence-existence distinction. The concept of form, according to Giqatilla, implies existence by definition.[28] Were one to assume that the essential forms exist in some way prior to creation, their existence would indeed imply necessity, collapsing the distinction between possible and actual existence. But Giqatilla's critique is directed precisely against that assumption. Instead, he maintains that the forms have no existence—neither potential nor actual—prior to the act of creation, because their very existence depends entirely on divine spontaneous creation rather than on any inherent essential properties.

Giqatilla adopts a theological framework according to which God alone exists necessarily *a se*, while all other beings are ontologically impossible in and of themselves – that is, unless their existence is bestowed upon them externally by God. 'Possible existence', then, denotes a theological condition that lies between nonexistence (as it pertains to created beings considered

[27] *GE* 449
[28] See *GE*, Ibid: "The forms of things are their very existence. The Intellect is the form whereby the human exists, the vital soul is the form through which the animal exists […]."

independently of God) and existence (as conferred upon them through Divine Will).[29] Specifically, creation, for Giqatilla, is not the actualization of potential forms by a principle of existence external to the essential constitution of things—a model more aligned with Avicennian thinking. Rather, within his theological framework, he attributes creation to the very constitution of these forms themselves as acts of divine bestowal. The theological import of this move is twofold. On the one hand, it denies the pre-existence of universal forms while safeguarding God's unity—these forms have no existence, external or to or included in God. On the other hand, insofar as creation *ex-nihilo* implies the emergence of the forms themselves, the designation of God's as the ultimate cause includes the existence of things, and of their forms *ipso facto.*[30]

Another important consequence of Giqatilla's position on possible existence concerns the analogical relationship between God's existence and the existence of all other beings. [31] If existence belongs to God primarily and essentially, then the existence of all other beings cannot be said to follow from God by causal necessity, even in a posterior manner. Similarly, if we *were* to assume that forms 'exist' in some capacity prior to their actualization, this would imply a type

[29] Giqatilla further clarifies his understanding of 'ontological possibility' by appropriating Ibn Tibbon's own negative analogy between qualitative contrasts—such as hot and cold—and ontological categories, namely necessity and impossibility. Contrary to Ibn Tibbon, Giqatilla argues that the notion of a qualitative middle *is* in fact a constructive analogy for 'ontological possibility.' That is, 'possible existence' occupies a middle ground between necessity and impossibility, just as there exists "a middle effect between two contraries, hot and cold." (*GE* 214. Weiler (*Maimonidean Terminology,* 18) includes this citation in his classification of Maimonidean traces in *Ginnat Egoz*, but without detecting the adaptative modification of 'possibility' in Giqatilla's response to Ibn Tibbon.)

[30] It is worth noting that Giqatilla's position on possible existence bears a philosophical allusion to the third opinion presented in Moshe of Salerno's commentary on Guide I:57 regarding the essence-existence distinction in all created beings. Specifically, this opinion suggests that existence is superadded to the *mahut* (commonly translated as essence) of created beings. According to this view, "it is the existent's form that comes into being (*ṣurto shel nimṣa' ha-mitthawwah bo*), and which is superadded to that existent's *mahut*." (Laurentian Library, Ms. Plut.II.11, fol. 74b. See comments in Ravizky, *Maimonides' Ontology*, 226-27.) In this formulation, *ṣurah* represents not only form but, more importantly, existence itself. *Mahut*, by contrast, represents matter. This connection between *ṣurah* and *meṣi'ut* (existence) contrasts with the Avicennian doctrine, which identifies essential form as a preexisting potentiality, with 'existence'—that is, creation—being understood as the actualization of that essential potentiality.)

[31] See discussion and citations in Ravitzky, *Possible and Contingent Existence*, 79-81.

of existence that stands in causal analogy to God's primary existence. From this perspective, what would differentiate God from all other beings, particularly the universal forms, would merely be the ontologically prior and posterior modes in which the term *existence* applies – existence being predicated of God as the primary cause, and of the forms in a derivative, secondary sense.

In sum, Giqatilla construes the principle of possible existence in such a way as to deny any analogical relationship between the Intellect—and, more broadly, the cosmos—and God's necessary existence.[32] Giqatilla formulates this ontological difference through the contrasting terms *qadmonit* ('primordial') and *meḥudeshet* ('renewed') – designating two states of existence (*hawwayah*).[33] This distinction is both ontological and logical: the one (*meḥudeshet*) does not follow from the other (*qadmonit*) by any essential causal relation, but only through a voluntary creative act. In the following section, we will examine the precise sense in which these two *hawwayot* differ—that is, how *hawwayah* functions equivocally when applied to primordial and renewed beings.

Speech and Creation: Emanation Reappraised

In accordance with Neoplatonic doctrines, Giqatilla uses the One designate God's primordial existence.[34] The Intellect, by contrast, manifests a fundamental duality that Giqatilla characterizes as comprising 'form' (*ṣurah*) and 'renewal' (*ḥiddush*).[35] *Ḥiddush* signifies that the Intellect is not

[32] SN 46-7*; *GE* 20, 120, 449. For an analysis of Maimonides position on 'existence' as an equivocal term, see Joseph Buijs, "The Negative Theology of Maimonides and Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 41: 4 (1988), 736- 37. See also Herbert Davidson, *Divine Attributes*, 37-51.
[33] On Salerno's use of *qadmonit* in this context, see *Commentary on Guide* 1:57. In Zeraḥiyah ben Shealtiel Ḥen's Arabic to Hebrew translation of *Liber de Causis* (*Sefer ha-Bi'ur ba-Tob ha-Gamur*), we encounter the distinction between *hawwayah* and *hawwayah qeduma*, the latter referring to the transcendent One.
[34] *GE* 118: "Insofar as Blessed be He is the ultimate subject which consist not in any other subject (*nose she-'ein lo nose*) we name Him One."
[35] *GE* 117; MS NY 851, fol. 69b-70a.

self-sufficient. This relationship between subject and object is formulated in several ways. The Intellect is described as consisting of two elements: *Sekhel*, that is, 'form' or simply Intellect, and the fact that it is *nasuy*, contingent on a subject *(nose)* other than itself. Elsewhere, this duality expresses the idea that God's primordial Being is the *nose* in, or by which, the Intellect exists.

Noteworthy is the respective designation of the One and the Intellect as *nose* and *nasuy*, subject and object. This likely refers to the Intellect's subjectivity as constituted through its contemplation of the One as the intentional object of its thought and desire, while, from the perspective of the One, it remains the ultimate subject.[36] Significantly, in this same section Giqatilla attributes the Intellect's duality to the fact that the intellects or forms, plural, cannot endure unless contingent on (*nismakhim*), or existing by (*nesu'im*) Being.[37] This raises the question whether Giqatilla's account in *Ginnat Egoz* presupposes the standard Neoplatonic two-moment process—where the essential constitution of the Intellect, initially inchoate, is completed by its turning back to and contemplating its source—or whether the emphasis on divine linguistic creation suggests a different understanding of how the forms come to be.[38] As we shall see later in this chapter, the answer to this question lays in whether *ḥiddush* and *ṣurah* should be construed as constituting two distinct principles.

The metaphysical implications of *ḥiddush* extend to the concept of ontological separation: "[The principle of] *ḥiddush* is the veil (*Pargod*) that separates the knower (*masig*) from its subject of knowledge (*musag*)."[39] Through this metaphor, *Pargod* serves primarily a metaphysical

[36] See Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect*, 73-7.
[37] *GE* 117, 119.
[38] On the *Neoplatonic* inchoate Intellect, see Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect*, 65-79 and passim. Farber-Ginat assumes this twofold process regarding Giqatilla's Intellect in *Ginnat Egoz*. See *Shells*, 123. However, this interpretation raises certain difficulties regarding Giqatilla's overall hypothesis of creation, particularly as articulated in *Ginnat Egoz*. More on this below.
[39] *GE* 203. Cf. Giqatilla, Fragment (ed. Farber), 172. More on the veil below. See also the following footnote. In *'Iyyun* sources and associated theosophical doctrines, *Pargod* is positioned anterior to the Archangel Metatron and serves, more schematically, as the gate that either connects (when open) or separates (when closed) the ontological order from

function, indicating the duality of the Intellect in relation to the One.[40] Beyond this external relational function—which establishes the boundary between identity and otherness—there exists also the internal activity of the Intellect which, contrary to the One, occurs between subject and object of thought, viz., the intelligible objects of thought.[41] This dual characteristic of the Intellect relates to the distinction between kinds of unity which Giqatilla identifies with the *'aleph*, as discussed above.

The precise nature of the relationship between the One and the Intellect constitutes a nuanced aspect of Giqatilla's early philosophical system, one that has generated scholarly debate regarding whether his metaphysics incorporates some form of emanationist doctrine, a question we have touched on in connection with the Intellect's twofold constitution.[42]

Terminological shifts: Between *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*

Before addressing Giqatilla's stance on this question, a note on the conceptual and terminological development in Giqatilla's early writings is warranted. Since our focus is the doctrine of

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the divine pleroma (*Hikhal ha-Shem*). See *Contemplation Short* (ed. M. Verman), 36 (trans. on p. 48). In associated *sefirotic*-theosophical teachings, *Pargod* corresponds to the tenth *sefirah malkhut*. See, for example, Moshe of Burgos, Glosses on Ezekiel's Chariot, in Scholem, *Inquiry III*, 186: "Indeed, the *Pargod* that faces the Kingly Crown, whose Name (viz. Metatron's) is like the Name of his Master, emanates the great bounty from the Master to all grades of the separation (*ma'alot ha-nivdalim*), top to bottom." See *Kiryat Sefer* 6 (1930), 418-19. For a somewhat different rendition of Giqatilla's *ḥiddush*, see Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 24: "The employment of the verb *le-ḥadesh*—literally 'to renew', 'to create by its beginning'—is remarkable. According to it, God's Creation is not simply an act that occurred in the far past; it rather is a process of constat renewing of the world (*renovatio mundi*) an uninterrupted process of sustaining the world ontologically from the heights of the divine name."

[40] In discussing the differences between Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* and his Glosses on Maimonides' Guide, Ephraim Gottlieb (*Studies* 114-15) argued that the *Pargod* of *Ginnat Egoz*, unlike that of the Glosses, stresses the conjunction of and intimate relationship between the Intellect and the One. On his reading the *Pargod* designates the Intellect itself as the dividing veil between God and the lower cosmic grades. However, the designation, in *Ginnat Egoz*, of *ḥiddush* as *Pargod,* suggests that the principle of separation applies to the Intellect itself and that, together with the conjunctive construal of *levush*, it constitutes the dialectical relationship between God and the Intellect – separation through creation, which leads to conjunction.

[41] See the reflection of this idea of duality in *SN Long*, fol. 192a-b. Cf. *SN Short* 77-78. More on this below.

[42] Gottlieb, *Studies*, 18-28; Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 64-78, esp. 67; Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 121-24; Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 23-28; Afterman, *The Language of Creation*, 125-49; Federico Dal Bo, *Giqatilla's Philosophical Poems*, 4.

emanation, I will concentrate on the principle of light. Giqatilla's early works, specifically *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*, are generally regarded as representing a distinct stage in his thought—his early non-theosophical Kabbalah.[43] This phase is distinguished from his semi-theosophical works, specifically his *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed*, rightly considered an intermediary phase between Giqatilla's early non-theosophical and later theosophical thinking. Substantial grounds support coupling *Sefer ha-Niqqud* with *Ginnat Egoz*, especially as Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz* is essentially a revision of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.[44] Nevertheless, several doctrinal differences exist between these works, particularly with respect to the short version of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.[45] This difference touches on the traces of theosophical doctrines in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*—in and of itself not a theosophical work—which are omitted from *Ginnat Egoz*.

Ronald Goetschel identified terminological and conceptual affinities between Jacob Hacohen's doctrine of the *Ḥashmal* in Ezekiel's Vision and Giqatilla's later theosophical commentary on Ezekiel's Chariot.[46] But traces of such conceptual affinity are detected also in Giqatilla's early thought. In *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, Giqatilla echoes Jacob Hacohen's conception that the first primordial light is metaphysically prior to the Universal Intellect, which Hacohen distinguishes as the third light, *'Or ha-Sekhel*. Both Hacohen and Giqatilla's *Sefer ha-Niqqud*

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[43] Altmann, *Or Zaru'a*, 243. For a summary of the different views on the chronology of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, see Dal Bo, *Giqatilla's Philosophical Poems*.

[44] On the relationship between *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and Part Three of *GE*, see: Gottlieb, *Studies*, 101-03; Blickstein. *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 36-40; Martini, *Punctuation*, 49-57. Martini (Ibid) has argued for the independent nature of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.

[45] For example, the connection between the terms *ḥolam* and *'or levush* does not appear in the long recension of SN or in its adaptive version in Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*. But it does appear in all transmission branches of *SN Short*. (As classified in Martini's list; *SN Short*, 2*-4*) Compare: Russian State Library, MS. Moscow-Guenzburg 179, fol. 65b; Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich, Cod.hebr.11, fol. 304a; The Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York 1887, fol. 124b; The National Library of France, MS. Paris, hebr. 774, fol. 52a. We should note that the authenticity of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*'s short recension has been doubted. Compare Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 157, n.12; Martini, *Punctuation*, 49-50; Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 103, n. 1.

[46] Roland Goetschel, "The Conception of Prophecy in the Works of R. Moses de Leon and R. Joseph Gikatilla," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 1989, 228.

further identify this first primordial light with *ḥolam*, though Giqatilla does not subscribe to Hacohen's theosophical doctrine, and he accordingly does not identify this primordial light with the *sefirotic Keter*. Instead, he associates the primordial light of *ḥolam* with the One or with its expressive act. This terminological and conceptual register is absent in the parallel discussion of *ḥolam* in *Ginnat Egoz*.

What is particularly significant is that *Sefer ha-Niqqud* retains doctrinal traces of Hacohen's theosophical emanation doctrine, thus assuming a primordial light that is prior to the Intellect, whereas *Ginnat Egoz* departs further from this influence. Terms that in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* appear in connection with the primordial light identified as *ḥolam*—e.g., *meqor ḥayim*[47]— persist in *Ginnat Egoz* in relation to *ḥolam*, but without the associated light terminology. Furthermore, *Ginnat Egoz* explicitly portrays *ḥolam* as the cause of light, rather than identifying it with light itself.[48] Instead, the primary light is identified with the Intellect, with the clear implication that this light is the source and cause of the lower grades of the cosmic order, primarily the spheres.[49] This conceptual shift, reflected also in Giqatilla's *Commentary on Genesis*,[50] is significant for establishing Giqatilla's account of emanation. Specifically, the qualification of the model of light to the Intellect suggests a shift from *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*.[51]

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[47] Compare *SN Short* 80* with *GE* 393.

[48] *GE* 421: "Contemplate the existence that was brought forth on the first day of creation, and you shall discover three perfected things whose foundation is *ḥolam*. The first of these perfected things is the existence of light, for *ḥolam* is the cause of (*meni'a*) light." (– emphasis mine.) *Compare Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 40a: "[…] Realize the secret of *'or*, and the secret of the vowel-point (*niqqud*) *ḥolam* that is positioned above it (viz. above the *waw* of the word אור), and the name of (Sandalphon?), the Prince of Wisdom, will become clear to you."

[49] We should mention that the theosophical adaptation of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, written presumably by Giqatilla's so-called students and clearly after *Ginnat Egoz*, maintains the identity of *ḥolam* as the primary light whence the Intellect emanates. Published in bar Asher, *Punctiform*, 183-84. Similarly, the adopted version distinguishes between the garment and the light. The intellect is the exterior garment of the internal light, viz. *ḥolam.* In *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla clearly identifies the two with the Intellect.

[50] See *Commentary on Genesis*, fols. 38b-40a.

[51] I should also note that the doctrinal difference concerning the principle of light is revealing also in relation to an extended untitled fragment that has been commonly assumed to belong to Giqatilla, considering its clear conceptual and terminological affinity to *Ginnat Egoz*. This affinity is expressed also in connection with the primordial light, largely associated with "the Intellect of light, the primary origin." See MS. New York, JTS 851, fol. 87b, and passim.

Pertaining to the doctrinal difference between *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz* is also the issue of the *yesodot* ('principles', 'foundations') which constitute the ontological scheme originating in God. The scheme is virtually identical in both works, with the only difference that *Sefer ha-Niqqud* posits the ambiguous *ḥiddush* (lit. 'renewal') as an intermediary *yesod* between the One and the Intellect.[52] This *yesod*, which arguably functions as a hypostatic principle, is omitted in *Ginnat Egoz*, where God is assumed as the direct *yesod* of the Intellect.[53] We shall discuss these doctrinal differences later in this chapter.

Given these conceptual differences, the position I will be taking, for or against an emanationist reading of Giqatilla, will be considered with respect to *Ginnat Egoz*. On this note, I should mention that the characterization of Giqatilla's *Glosses on Maimonides' Guide* as semi-theosophical is pertinent to our discussion, considering the emanationist terminology used to describe the Intellect.[54]

Giqatilla's Emanation in Modern Scholarship

The question whether Giqatilla's early Kabbalah assumes the doctrine of emanation has led scholars in conflicting directions.[55] Several emanationist interpreters dismissed strict terms of *creation ex nihilo* as essentially rhetorical, formulated in accordance with the philosophical

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On this work, see Gottlieb, *Studies*, 100; Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 159; Ben-Shachar, *Israel and the Archons*, 11.

[52] *SN Short* 49-50*; *SN Long*, fol. 186b.

[53] *GE* 453.

[54] "Elohim is the name of the first emanated existent (*shem la-ne'eṣal ba-rishona*)." Glosses, fol. 24a. Cf. Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 123-24. While in *Studies*, 114-15, Gottlieb acknowledges the term *ne'eṣal ba-rishona* in Giqatilla's Glosses, he—unlike Farber-Ginat—downplays its emanationist implications. See also Afterman's discussion in *Language of Creation*, 140-41. Afterman minimizes the distinctions between *Ginnat Egoz* and Glosses, viewing both as expressing the same emanationist doctrine. I am inclined toward Farber-Ginat's interpretation, which positions the Glosses, with their semi-emanationist terminology, as representing a transitional phase in Giqatilla's intellectual development.

[55] Gottlieb, *Studies*, 101-04, Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 64-78, esp. 67, Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 23-28; Adam Afterman, *The Language of Creation.*

background of his intended audience.[56] In my view, these explanatory attempts are inconclusive, insofar as the *ex-nihilo* principle is essential to what Giqatilla is trying to do in establishing language as the premise of his general metaphysics. At the same time, outright denial of emanation stumbles against several textual obstacles. For example, the assertion that "all [created beings] come to be by the emanation (*'aṣilut*) of the power that is emanated upon them from the truth of the unique Name."[57] Or, elsewhere, in the clear identification of the primordial Name as "the source whence all powers emanate."[58] These seemingly conflicting accounts require more careful analysis of what is meant by emanation in the context of Giqatilla.

The emanationist approach was summarized by Hartley Lachter as follows: "Giqatilla presents a more complex model of reality in which a primary substance, light, is said to come to be from nothing but also in some sense from the divine essence."[59] This line radicalizes Shlomo Blickstein's more implicit approach which focused on the prevalence of the root *m-sh-kh* and its morphological inflections (specifically *hamshakhah*) in *Ginnat Egoz*, arguing thereby for the centrality of emanation in Giqatilla's cosmology.[60] Blickstein maintains the theosophical significance of the term *hamshakhah*, by which logic he considers Giqatilla's emanation a process that runs through all rungs of being – from God's primordial essence down to the sublunar world. Indeed, this resonates with Blickstein's construal of primordial *hawwayah* as 'essence',[61] a linkage

[56] Lachter (Ibid) presents the early Giqatilla as a covert theosophist, who employes non-emanative principles to gradually prepare his audience for a more theosophical-emanative view. Afterman (ibid) also explains Giqatilla's *ex-nihio* doctrine on grounds. Giqatilla, according to Afterman, strives to distinguished himself from other emanationist doctrines, particularly those which assume a pre-existing eternal substance, for which reason he coats his own emanationist view with terminology that underscores a *creatio ex-nihilo* sentiment.
[57] *GE* 83-84, cited in Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 24.
[58] *GE* 41. See remark in Afterman, *Creation*, 134.
[59] Lachter, *Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 25.
[60] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 64-78, esp. 67.
[61] Generally, scholars have used the term 'essence' in connection with *Ginnat Egoz* without much consideration of the metaphysical implications of this term. See, for example, Idel, *Deus Sive Natura*, 95: "The source of the natures, or the essences […] is the Tetragrammaton, which is understood by Giqatilla as the generator of essences [...]."

of terms that calls for revision. Still, contrary to Lachter, he acknowledges Giqatilla's deviation from the classic theosophical doctrines, asserting that the *sefirot*—the ten intelligences [*sic*., Giqatilla]—"are not emanated divine potencies."[62] This he infers from Giqatilla's construal of the ten sefirot as "*blima*, *beli-ma*—that is, not containing God's *mahut*."[63] Yet again, on several occasions he draws a direct identity between "the *hawwayah* of the Gerona mystics," viz., the theosophical godhead, and Giqatilla's *hawwayah qadmonit*. He construes both as "the hidden primordial essence of God" while describing *hawwayah*, more generally, as "the formless ground of the Intelligences."[64]

Blickstein further supports his claim by bringing Giqatilla's metaphysical 'point', typically identified with *ḥolam*, close to Jacob ben Sheshet's figure-like Kabbalistic diagram, where the point represents the deity, and the line, continued from the point, the process of divine emanation.[65] In so doing, Blickstein conflates Giqatilla's idiosyncratic linguistic point with the ideational point (*neqqudah maḥshavit*), present in theosophical doctrines. He thereby commits himself to a theosophical emanationist reading while losing focus of the linguistic character of the point and of the challenges that this characterization poses for an emanationist-essentialist view. This is indicated by the absence of line and surface figures which, in the case of Ben Sheshet and other Kabbalists, completes the intelligible-extensive model of emanation—from point to line to plane.[66]

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[62] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 85. See Afterman, *Language of Creation*, 133-37.
[63] *GE* 330: *'Eser sefirot blimah, beli mahuto Yitbarakh, she-hu lo nimna bikhlal ha-sefirot; 'amnam ḥuṣ la-kol hu*. For a similar construal of *blima – beli mahut* in Catalonian Kabbalah, see Farber, *Fragment*, 160, n. 5.
[64] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 103. Cf. Ibid, 68, 85. See the construal by Lacter (*Kabbalah and Philosophy*, 38-39) of this assertion. See also the discussion in Blickstein (ibid) and Lachter (ibid) on the parallel quotation in Barukh Togarmi's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah*.
[65] Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 67-68. See Dal Bo (*Giqatilla's Philosophical Poems*, 4) who builds on Blickstein's argument.
[66] This model figures also the transition from the unity of the point to the multiplicity of the line, according to the Neoplatonic conceptualization of the line as composed of indivisible magnitude, or points. Gershom Scholem used this model to describe the Kabbalistic theory of the point. *Major Trends*, 218. Cf. Zohar, *The Point*, 12-13, and passim, who cites this general model for his analysis of the Kabbalistic point.

Some have suggested that this model figures the transition from the unity of the point to the multiplicity of the line—following the Neoplatonic conceptualization of the line as composed of indivisible magnitudes—although the applicability of measurable quantity to immaterial entities like the intelligible line is problematic.[67] Be that as it may, Giqatilla's point is clearly disconnected from the 'unfigured figures' of line and surface, and its emanative function should thus be reconsidered.

Essential Emanation and Activity: Two Approaches in Ginnat Egoz

To present a more accurate account of Giqatilla's position on emanation we should first remove several conceptual obstacles. First, Giqatilla's distinction between primordial and renewed existence (*hawwayah qadmonit* and *hawwayah meḥudeshet*) leaves little room for an essentialist emanative view. By 'essentialist' I mean the view closer to theosophical doctrines which conceive the divine pleroma of forces and hypostases as included in or derived God's simplicity. My reservation is based on the clear implications that Giqatilla himself draws from terms like *yeṣi'ah*, considered above, with respect to *creatio ex-nihilo*.[68] As we shall presently see, these implications are compatible with the designation of the One as Form of the World (*Ṣurat ha-'Olam*), a construal that, I will further argue, obviates the need to assume an emanationist doctrine. At the same time,

[67] See discussion and references to Kabbalistic sources on this issue in Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 426-27. Scholem speaks of the transition from unity ('point') to multiplicity ('line'), and cites Ibn Gabirol (*Meqor Ḥayyim* 2.22) on this point. *Origins*, 427, n. 145. Presumably, he is referring to the Neoplatonic conceptualization of the line as composed of indivisible magnitude, or points. Contra Aristotle, Cat. 6; Physics iv.1-5. But as Svetla Slaveva-Griffin notes, the idea that the line belongs to the category of discrete quantity does not apply to the so-called intelligible line identified with the intelligible realm, standing against the point of the One. See Slaveva-Griffin, *Plotinus on Number* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009),120. Similarly, in his discussion on the line, Ibn Gabirol is clear about the applicability of quantity to physical matter essentially, but surely not to intelligible matter which is itself simple and unified. *Meqor Ḥayyim* 2.20-21. One can argue that just as the divisibility of the line is effectively the multiplicity of unified principles, so the intelligible line of the intellect effectively consists of multiple 'unities' in compression to the One. Ibid, 2.22. This seems farfetched, considering that Ibn Gabirol explicitly qualified 'quantity' as a category that belongs to physical matter.

[68] And as further supported in connection with the first ontological principle (*yesod rishon*), where the conjugate *himṣie* is used to indicate its creation not from a thing (*lo mi-davar*). See *GE* 72-3. Cf. Ibn Latif's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 1:6 (ed. A. Zimran, 25-27): "*bara yesh lo mi-yesh*."

I think that it is safe to assume that by introducing linguistic motion into this creative process, from the One to the Intellect, Giqatilla goes beyond what he views as Maimonides' position regarding creation. Specifically, language offers Giqatilla a theological model with which he can construe the transition from the One to the Intellect as a process of continuation without implying an essential connection, and therefore an analogical relationship, between the two. I will discuss the full implications of this linguistic model further below and in Chapter 4. I mention it here in passing to focus our lens and to clarify some of the obscurities when dealing with Giqatilla's account of emanation.

I shall clarify my motivation to further underscore the point about the linguistic dimension of Giqatilla's metaphysics. I maintain that Giqatilla's metaphysics consists in establishing the primary principle of speech—epitomized by the phonetic qualities of the *ḥolam* vowel point—as the intermediary act that is the cause of the Intellect. Important in this regard is the fact that as pure activity, *ḥolam* bears no essential qualities. The idea that the Intellect is the effect of simple activity might allude to Neoplatonic doctrines which distinguish between "the activity which is the thing itself," in the case of the One an activity of utter simplicity, and an external activity "that comes from a thing."[69] The latter, we shall soon see, is often construed in terms of an expression or image whose relationship to the archetype, viz., the internal activity, raises interesting philosophical questions. One such question is whether the external act, the so-called image of the One, is identical with or different from the Intellect. We will see how this question touches an ambiguity that is constructive for Giqatilla's *ḥolam* and his broader linguistic theology. What we can say, however, is that Giqatilla is careful not to conflate the simple phonetic act with the essential

[69] See discussion in Lloyd Gerson, *Plotinus* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 19, and passim.

constitution which he associates with full-fledged Intellect; a constitution, we saw earlier, that already involves a duality in the sense of a relation to essential forms.

The first obstacle that we can safely remove is the presumption that 'emanation' operates as a monolithic principle in the case of Giqatilla. If anything, the kind of relationship that bonds all cosmic grades together is incompatible with the relationships between the Intellect and the One.

For clarity, I designate essential activity as 'robust emanation', in the sense that it entails the causal unfolding of the essential forms—and consequently, of all beings—from a primary principle in which they are included potentially. This type of emanation marks the relationship between the Intellect and the descending ontological grades, on account of which the Intellect assumes a *demiurge* identity.[70] Giqatilla further deliberates the sense in which all levels of being are continued from the Intellect through the principle of *'asiyah*.[71] That is, the lower grades are potentially included in the upper, and continued from it by essential actualization: "[A]nd this is the grade of the separated Intellects. All beings exist through the true existence [of the Intellect] by way of emanation."[72] The Intellect is the *kelal*, the *genus generalissimum,* of the subsequent grades.[73] One implication of this distinction is that while the Intellect is the ground of the lower grades and thus transcends them, the analysis of their relationship entails the principle of identity and resemblance between cause and effect. This causal analysis cannot be used in reference to the One.

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[70] Compare *GE* 180 and Glosses, fol. 28a.
[71] *GE* 63.
[72] *GE* 166. The philosophical setting of Giqatilla's account of the Intellect, as principle of emanation, will be further considered in my discussion of Giqatilla's doctrine of light.
[73] *GE* 315-16: "The philosophers agree with us concerning the tenth intellect, which they term the Active Intellect and the Minister of the Universe. They hold that the number of celestial spheres is nine […] and that the Tenth Intellect is responsible for the actualization of the potential for intellection. Know, then, and contemplate: the Tenth Intellect is separate from the spheres which it moves, and for this reason it is called holy." In MS New York 851 (fol. 67a) the relationship between the Intellect and the nine spheres is described in terms of substance (*'eṣem*) and predicates (*miqrim*), the one carrying the nine.

By contrast, the emanation of the Intellect assumes a more restricted form, considering the inevitable gap between the essential constituent of the Intellect and the One. Without assuming this gap, one is led to include the essential forms in their supposed emanative origin, in some mysterious capacity, thereby risking the utter simplicity of the One. This leaves us with the alternative, according to which what emanates from the One is closer to a principle of existence, or better, a non-essential activity of becoming.

With this in mind, we will also need to consider how this principle, *qua* existential act, accounts for the description of creation as the bestowal of forms. To reiterate my argument on 'possible existence', Giqatilla couples *ṣurah* and *meṣ'ut* in his account of creation, identifying this process as the bringing of the Intellect and its forms into existence. This idea sharpens the question as to how an act devoid of essential qualities brings about the existence of something constituted by essential forms.[74]

The foregoing consideration, and the proposed distinction between 'aspects' of emanation, allows us to better construe Giqatilla's *'ayin* ('nothingness'), as in *yesh me-'ayin*, implying *creatio ex-nihilo*. That is, we can construe Giqatilla's *'ayin* in terms closer to the non-substantial nature of the speech act. By this account, the speech act is not situated hypostatically, as though a substantial 'thing', between the One and the Intellect, even if this speech act, and not the One, is the direct cause of the Intellect.[75] Here I also come close to Adam Afterman's suggestion that Giqatilla's

[74] It is possible that such a quandary led Asi Farber-Ginat to identify the abovementioned twofold emanation process in *Ginnat Egoz* as well, thus assuming that creation of the Intellect is followed by its conversion to its source whereby it receives its essential forms and is thus completed. In Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 123. One issue that follows Farber-Ginat's position is that it minimizes the active role which Giqatilla attributes to God as the bestower of forms.[74] More fundamentally, a central tenet of Giqatilla's theology of the Name is the active role the inflected Tetragrammaton, specifically YHW, takes in constituting the essential form of all that exists, further described as the seal of Nature. Cf. MS NY 851, 67a.

[75] My reading of *'ayin* alludes to a similar Ismā'īlī doctrine which posits speech as the Intellect's cause, in and of itself not a 'thing' (*laysa*) to which essential properties can be attributed. See discussions in Daniel De Smet, "Le Verbe-impératif dans le système cosmologique de l'ismaélisme," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 73: 3

[*yesh mi-*]*ʿayin*, that is, [*creatio ex-*] *nihilo*, should be construed as the negation of a preexisting 'thing' in the sense of a hylomorphic substance. He likewise maintains that replacing such a hypothetical substance with God's Name sheds new light on what Giqatilla means by *ʿayin*.[76] This would follow that the Name is somehow a source of something that is essentially constituted, while it, the Name, is not an essence *per se*.

I go a step further in proposing that Giqatilla's idea of an act that is the cause of the Intellect reflects an attempt to ontologically distinguish the Intellect from the One, in the sense that the essential forms are not 'included' in the One. It is easy to overlook the full implications of the shift from substance to Name. The idea that the Name is not an essential substance—it is the origin of a simple act—equally implies that what emanates from the Name is not an essential substance. As we shall see in our discussion of the *ḥolam* vowel point, this idea underscores the direct activity that functions as the expression of the 'primary origin', the primordial Name.[77]

The *Yesod* of the Intellect: Action beyond Essence

After establishing the basic relationship between the Intellect and its source, we are now better positioned to address several of the philosophical terms used in *Ginnat Egoz* to describe the identity of the One as the ultimate origin. There are instances where Giqatilla attributes to the One a more robust role with respect to the constitution of the Intellect:

> Blessed be He continues all continuations and is the place of (lit. receives, meqabel) all forms, for He is Form of all forms (*Ṣurah le-khol ha-ṣurot*). This is true. For Being (hawwayah) malbeshet form to all subjects of form. Without it (viz., hawwayah) the

(1989): 405-08; Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī Tradition* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 38-39, 44-45.

[76] Afterman, *Language of Creation*, 135.

[77] *SN Long*, fol. 180a; *SN Short*, 27* *GE* 434: "Indeed, 'man doth not live by bread (*leḥem*) only' for speech (or: the word) depends on the primary utterance (*ha-moṣa ha-rishon*), the origin of all origins." *Leḥem* is construed there as *ḥolam* (LeḤeM = ḤoLaM). More on this in Chapter 4.

> forms cannot exist, for Blessed be He governs all forms and bestows strength to the world."[78]

I kept *malbeshet* untranslated since, we shall see soon, it can be construed as an ontological technical term which can further help us construe Giqatilla's notion of emanation, though I shall tentatively translate *malbeshet* as 'clothing', in the sense of 'enclothing form to all existents'. We should also keep in mind the connection existence (*meṣi'ut*) and the bestowal of forms in Moshe of Salerno's commentary on *Guide* I:57, mentioned above. Giqatilla appears to allude to the *ṣurah-meṣi'ut* connection, reflected by the third interpretation, in that he explains creation not as a process of actualization, but as the bestowal or 'clothing' of forms which *are* what constitutes the existence of created beings. The only difference is that Giqatilla, unlike the reported interpretation, does not assume a *mahut* that is somehow connected to undifferentiated matter.[79]

In a following discussion, Giqatilla reiterates the above quotation when describing *hawwayah* as "including all forms of the world."[80] We should also note the designation

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[78] *GE* 98. I mentioned the connection between *yeṣi'ah* and *hawwayah* and how this coupling implies renewed existence as manifested in the universal intellect. Here I should indicate that the identification of *hawwayah* with the Intellect alludes to the Arabic *huwiyya*, an abstracted noun that implies 'identity', or the deictic 'it', but which in several Arabic-Neoplatonic sources was also rendered as 'being.' See discussion in Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*,187-90. Similarly, in Zeraḥiyah ben Shealtiel Ḥen's Arabic into Hebrew translation of Liber de Causis (*Sefer ha-Bi'ur ba-Tob ha-Gamur*), the term *hawwayah* is used repeatedly as an epithet for the Intellect.

[78] Concomitantly, 'being' also designates a creative principle that issues forth from God and which underlies the constitution of the intellect. In Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* this principle is termed *hawwayah*. I shall return to this shortly but, in the meantime, we should keep in mind this ambiguity of *hawwayah*, that is, its association with the created Intellect and with the act of creation, the cause of the intellect. See also Geoffrey Lewis, trans., Theology of Aristotle, in: Henry, P. and Schwyzer, H. R., eds., Plotini Opera, Tomus II: Enneades IV-V, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959), 291. See the remarks by Alferd Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1974), 16. For a critical assessment of Lewis' edition of the Theology, see Paul B. Fenton, "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the Theology of Aristotle," in Jill Kraye, William Francis Ryan and Charles B. Schmitt, eds., *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages* (London: Warburg Institute, 1985), 244.

[79] Noteworthy is the following assertion in Giqatilla's *Glosses* (fol. 23a), which bears already clear allusions to the idea of universal matter: "*we-'af 'al-pi she-hu (*viz., the Intellect*) nifrad, yesh lo 'eṣem we-ṣurah sikhleem daqim ruḥanyyim ka-'asher ḥievah ḥokhmat hama'aṣil,* ***u-mahutam hu 'aṣmam we-ṣuratam he sod qiyyuman ba-shem***." (–emphasis mine, t.s.) Positioned as complementing *ṣurah* , *mahut* appears to refer to the principle of existence (*eṣem*, distinguished from *ṣurah*). The formulation also alludes a similar distinction by Ibn Latif, who mentions *ḥomer* ('matter'), explicitly, when referring to the principle of existence: "*We-ḥomer kol eḥad me-hem* (i.e., of created beings) *hu meṣi'uto*, *we-ṣurato she-be-hit'aṣem* (viz. their substantial form) *he hasagat 'ilato ha-qerova 'elaw*." In *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 10.

[80] *GE* 101.

of God as the *Form of Forms*,[81] alluding to *Guide* I:69 and arguably anticipating the theosophical notion of the *Soul of Souls* (*Neshamah le-Neshamot*).[82] Similarly, the Tetragrammaton is presented as the "true witness (*ʿed neʾeman*) that He is the efficient, formal, and final cause (*poʿel, ṣurah, we-takhlit*)."[83] Like the idiom *Ṣurah le-khol ha-ṣurot*, the description of God as the formal cause of all beings—not merely their efficient and final cause—implies that the One is somehow the form that makes the intelligible essences what they are.

At this point, the question how, for Giqatilla, the One is the cause of the essential forms remains open. As I suggested above, the idea that the Intellect begets its forms by contemplating its source appears inadequate, considering the descriptions of the One as active in this regard. For now, we can posit that the relationship between the One and all beings is premised primarily on the fact that the One is the cause of their existence, and of their essential forms by consequence. To the extent that the One is said to be the formal cause, it is implied by the fact that it is the origin of existence, although, as we have seen, the essential forms constitute the existence of all beings. This line of thought is also expressed in qualified terms that draw directly from *Guide* I:69. Thus, the designation of God as the threefold efficient, formal, and final cause is immediately followed by the reservation that "the term *ṣurah* does not apply to God, heaven forbid. Rather, He is the

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[81] Ibid.

[82] In Chapter 4 I discuss the history of *Ṣurah le-khol Ṣurot* and its adaptation as *Neshama le-khol Neshamot* in later theosophical texts. But see *GE* 441-42: "Although the (*shuruq* and *ḥiriq*) vowel-points consist (graphically) of a single point, *ḥolam* is a simple singular point in comparison to them. **The *ḥolam* is thus *neshamah* to these *neshamot***." (-emphasis mine, t.s.) On the Soul of Souls in the Zoharic corpus and in the writings of Moses de León, see Jeremy Brown, "Glimmers of the World Soul in Kabbala," in *World Soul: A History*, ed. James Wilberding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 136 and passim. See also Moses de León, *Shushan ʻEdut*: "Two Treatises by R. Moses de Leon: Sefer Shushan Edut and Sod Eser Sefirot Blimah," ed. Gershom Scholem, in *Kovetz Al Yad*, Book 8 (18), 334. See also (p. 337) the term Neshamah ʻElyona (Supreme Soul) as an epithet for the Cause of Causes.

[83] *GE* 120. Cf. *GE* 20. For an onomatological reading of this passage, that is, that the Name itself is the threefold cause of all beings, see Grözinger, *Jüdisches Denken*, vol. 2, 312: "Kurz da- vor erklärt Maimonides, dass das Prinzip dieser natürlichen Dinge nach Auffassung der Philosophen das »Vernunftprinzip« oder »das göttliche Prinzip« sei, welches die Dinge so gewollt hat. Diese drei Ursachen, die Wirk-, die Form- und Zweckursache, der existierenden Dinge lässt Gikatilla wieder das Tetragrammaton sein." While not disputing K. Grözinger's perspective, I contend that such concise yet profound statements merit more extensive examination.

existential foundation (*qiyyum*) of form (*ṣurah*), just as *hawwayah* is the existential foundation of the Intellect."[84] Giqatilla repeats this point when clarifying the sense in which God is the Form of the World (*Ṣurat ha-ʿOlam*), stating: "He is the existential cause of the form (*sibat qiyyum ha-ṣurah*), through which the world endures (*we-ha-ṣurah qiyyum ha-ʿolam*). He is the existential cause (*qiyyum*) of form, and the endurance of the world is through form."[85]

In concluding our discussion on Giqatilla's account of emanation and the issuing of forms, I propose a complementary line of thought that might enrich our understanding of Giqatilla's notion of active creation. While the preceding remarks emphasized Giqatilla's cautious approach to divine causality, it is also worth exploring the possibility that in describing God as Form of Forms Giqatilla may be echoing Judah Halevi's hypothesis regarding God as the giver of forms. In sections such as *Cuzari* 1:77–79 and 3:23, Halevi attributes the unifying forms of the created order—the existential unity that constitutes a particular thing—to the volitive action of God. Halevi distinguishes this volitive action from the compositional order of the cosmos governed by natural causality.[86]

As we shall see in our discussion on Divine Will , Giqatilla distinguishes between two orders of causality, natural and divine, the analysis of which comes very close to Halevi's doctrine

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[84] *GE* 101.

[85] Ibid. Related to this framework is Giqatilla's use of the term *shefa'* ("bounty"), which, as for Maimonides, describes the emanation of the forms from the One. It has been argued that for Maimonides, the instance on this term is to qualify the relational aspect between God and all beings – they flow from God like water from a spring, but does not assume direct contact. See, for example, the discussion in Arthur Hyman, "Maimonides on Causality," in *Maimonides and Philosophy*, ed. Shlomo Pines *et al*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1986), 166-67. On Maimonides' *shefa'* see Guide 1:69 and 2:12. See also Faluqera *ad loc*., *Moreh ha-Moreh*, 166, on *Ṣurat ha-'Olam* vs. *meṣi'ut ha-ṣurah*. A similar construal of *shefa'* fits Giqatilla's presumably narrow conception of emanation. Moreover, we should note the absence of metaphors associated with classic emanationist doctrines, such as the continuation of fire from candle to candle or the diffusion of the scent.[85] See, for example, '*Iyyun*, *Contemplation Short*, 34 (trans. p. 41). In *Ṣurat 'Olam* (Ch. 10, fol. 137a) Ibn Latif rejects the candle-from-candle emanation analogy when describing the descending lights, insofar as this analogy assumes the contact between the two candles. He does, however, accepts the scent-from-scent analogy.

[86] See discussions in: Harry A. Wolfson, "Judah Halevi on Causality and Miracles," in idem, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 421-24; Davidson, *Cuzari*, 375-76; Diana Lobel, "Ittiṣal and the Amr Ilahi: Divine Immanence and the World to Come in the Kuzari," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary et. al (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 112-14

on this issue.[87] We should note that the adaptation of Halevi's twofold doctrine—of an exterior structure, or shell, and an interior kernel of vitality—has been considered in scholarship in relation to other contemporary Kabbalistic themes, like the relationship between Israel and the Nations.[88]

In the meantime, it is worth considering the possibility that for Giqatilla, the term *sibbat qiyyum ha-ṣurah* extends beyond the designation of God as the remote, ultimate cause of all things, implying, instead, a more active and robust role in the ontological constitution of beings.[89] If textually supported, the implications of this model would explain the sense in which God serves as the active source of forms without necessitating an essentialist emanative relationship between God and the Intellect. It would accordingly provide a possible answer to the question with which I opened the discussion on emanation—namely, whether the bestowal of forms is completed by the Intellect's turn to its source.

Before proceeding to Giqatilla's conception of Divine Will, some additional observations concerning the cause of the Intellect are necessary.

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[87] Cf. *SN Short* 58*: "Know that the vowel-point called *pataḥ* is the opening of movement by which the hosts of heaven are sustained. And you already know, if you have read the books of astronomy, how the movements are divided among the stars, the zodiac signs, and the hosts of heaven. And from their movement is born below a great matter (*'inyan gaddol*) according to the proportion of the zodiac signs in their standstill (lit. their lying down) and in their movement (lit. their rising up) (Cf. Gen. 19.33). In the movement of a certain zodiac sign, such and such is born, and in its lying down, such and such is born. **And everything is according to the Supreme Will and the movement for which there is no mover except for the Blessed One. Let it not enter your mind that things are arbitrary (*hefqer*) according to the movements."** (- emphasis mine, t.s.)

[88] See remarks in Azriel of Gerona's *Commentary to the Talmudic Aggadot*, ed. Isaiah Tishbi (Jerusalem: Meqize Nirdamim, 1945), 105 (editor's notes ad loc.); Alexander Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 177-78.

[89] See, for example, *GE* 393: (God's) Proper Name is the Book of Life on which all existents are contingent. [...] Thus, Blessed be He is the sole source (or fountain) of life (*meqor ha-ḥayyim*) and from Him all beings of a living spirit receive life."

The Noetic Foundation: Initial Observations

Central to the function of the simple act as cause and foundation of the Intellect is its association with vowel point *ḥolam*.[90] This association suggests that while the foundation is related to the Intellect, it also takes on a linguistic identity in the form of a phonetic principle. This raises the question whether speech is simply a token for a particular function or aspect of the Intellect, as is the case, for example, in the 'simple voice' and 'universal matter' analogy in *Meqor Ḥayyim*. There Ibn Gabirol analogizes universal matter to simple voice which is "a simple substance wherein all particular sounds are carried," suggesting that like unarticulated voice, matter is the undifferentiated substratum of the particular form.[91]

There is substantial textual evidence supporting the idea that not only does Giqatilla reject the principle of universal matter, but he positions the principle of motion—epitomized by the phonetic point—in its place.[92] In this respect, Giqatilla moves beyond what in *Meqor Ḥayyim* appears as a form of proportional analogy across distinct domains. We observed this sort of

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[90] *GE*. See also *SN Long* (fol. 179b) where the formula HoWeH, We-HaYaH We-YiHYeH is attributed to *ḥolam* (חל״ם=78= הוה (ו)היה ויהיה). This formula is construed by Giqatilla in connection with the Name of Twelve Letters. See discussion in Chapter 2.

[91] *Meqor Ḥayyim* 5:43 (p. 230): "Voice is likened to universal matter, for voice is a simple substance in which all particular sounds are carried." Letters, in both phonetic and graphic forms, are used by Ibn Gabbrolto illustrate the cosmogenic process of forming determined forms. See Davidovich, *Meqôr Ḥayyîm*, 153, n. 568.

[92] Here are several citations: "The letters are (the principle of) composition (*binyan*) and the secret of the vowel-points is the foundation of motion (*sod ha-niqqud hu yesod he-tenu'ah*). For the niqqud is motion itself. (*Ki ha-niqqud hu 'eṣem ha-tenu'ah*)" (*SN Long* 173a); "The vowel-points are the foundation of letters (*yesod ha-'otyyiot*), just as *tenu'ah* is the foundation of *pe'ulah* and its sustaining cause (*sibbat ha-pe'ulah we-qiyumah*). The existence of all spheres, and of all that they include, is motion (*tenu'ah*). Similarly, the existence of all letters is the *niqqud* which is the foundation of motion. One cannot pronounce a single letter without motion;" "[…] The sphere cannot exist without the point with which (the sphere) can move, and through which its voice is expressed. The point is thus the everlasting foundation (*yesod*) of the letters, and the principle of all foundations (*reshit kol ha-yesodot*) is the *ḥolam* – it is supreme of all (vowels) and the cause of all vowel-points (*sibbat kol ha-niqqud*) (*SN Long*, fol. 175b); "The (vowel-) point (*ḥolam*) is superior to all letters and vowels, which are the totality of existence – *pe'ulah* (viz. letters) and *tenu'ah* (viz. vowels)" (*SN Long*, fol. 177a); "*ki ha-neqqudah she-he 'elyonah sh-be-khol ha-neqqudot we-khol ha-'otiyot sh-hem kelal ha-meṣiyut pe'ulah we-tenu'ah* […]." Corrected according to Bavarian State Library MS Munich, cod.hebr 54, fols. 262b-263a; "If you proceed regressively through all these things one after another, and you conjecture that the existence of the lower world (depends on) the world of the spheres, and the world of the spheres (depends on) the world of the intelligences, and the world of the intelligences (depends on) motion, and the existence of motion (depends on) a prime mover - at the end of the investigation you will find that God is the one who moves everything." *GE* 450.

analogy in Chapter 2, where terms are proportionally similar in relationship to their respective correlates–for example, the term 'principle' (*hatḥalah*) when applied in relation to both the line (viz., point) and a river (viz., spring). The assertion that both simple voice and universal matter function as a substratum for particular forms follows similar lines. Giqatilla, I contend, has something more fundamental than this analogical reasoning in mind when speaking of the primary foundation as simple phonetic motion.

Giqatilla, to further develop my argument, subtly distinguishes between Universal Intellect and speech act. This is a fine distinction, since speech is regarded as the act of renewal and cause of the Intellect. However, it remains difficult to articulate the identity of such an act independent of the Intellect itself. This complexity is repeatedly reflected in the characterization of divine speech act as Intellect—albeit qualified with superlative terms such as 'complete,' 'internal,' or 'holy' Intellect.[93] Such superlatives allude to a distinction common in theosophical doctrines, but also in Giqatilla's pre-theosophical writings, between unqualified Intellect and 'supreme' or 'internal wisdom',[94] that is, between rational science and so-called esoteric wisdom.

Giqatilla further illustrates this fundamental difference through the model of a circle encompassing an invisible point. This concentric model illustrates the relationship between the essential constitution of the Intellect and the non-essential phonetic point of *ḥolam*, while also serving to caricature philosophers who "swirl round the point without grasping the truth."[95] Here, he employs a familiar Neoplatonic trope, used for example in the *Theology of Aristotle*, which

[93] *SN Long*, fol. 175a: "(The *ḥolam* vowel-point) is complete Intellect and the essence of wisdom, for which reason it is the foundation of the upper spiritual and intelligible world." And in *GE* 423: *"(Ḥ)olam* is supreme, complete Intellect and the essence of wisdom." Cf. MS. New York 851, fol. 89a.
[94] See, for example, Jacob ben Sheshet's *Meshiv Devarim Nekoḥim*, 129 (fol. 92a).
[95] *GE* 343. Compare Abraham Ibn Ezra's introductions to his biblical commentaries (short and long). There, Ibn Ezra applies the point and circle diagram to classify different degrees of proximity to the truth of wisdom. For further citations and discussion of Giqatilla's so-called concentric model, see Harel, *Spherical Shapes*, 5-30, esp. 28. See also English Introduction, I-II. We should note that the circular-point model is modified with respect to the *ḥolam*. Unlike the point of the sphere that is situated is in the center, "*ḥolam* is above." (*GE* 434).

positions divine splendor as lying behind the veil of rational reasoning. [96] As we shall soon see, Giqatilla reworks this trope to establish speech—in the sense of simple phonetic motion—as that which sustains the essential forms of the Intellect, operating thereby as the Intellect's innermost foundational point.

For Giqatilla, the mentioned trope operates on both epistemological and metaphysical levels. In a manner reminiscent of Maimonides, he emphasizes the impossibility of grasping the simple point independent of meaningful and semantic representational modes. This idea appears in his assertion that "one cannot enter the *muskalot*, which is the secret of the vowel point, but through the *murgashot*, [that is,] the letters."[97] The terminology here requires clarification. While *muskalot* is commonly translated as 'intelligible', in *Ginnat Egoz* this term specifically refers to metaphysical principles and to the ultimate object of intellection.[98] Thus, Giqatilla stresses the transcendent nature of the *muskal*, in the sense of the ultimate intelligible object which is "external to human intellect (*sekhel*) and to the intellecting subject (*maskil*)."[99]

Giqatilla's treatment of the *murgashot* and *muskalot* distinction illustrates the constructive role that his linguistic theology plays *vis-à-vis* the established systems of thought. As we shall see in Chapter 4, by *murgashot* ('sensible') Giqatilla designates the letters with their intelligible-

[96] Theology of Aristotle (trans. G. Lewis), 225: "[…] I lift my intellect up from that world into the divine world, […] (a)nd there I see such light and splendor as tongues cannot describe nor ears comprehend. When that light and splendor overwhelm me and I have not strength to endure it, I descend from mind to thought and reflection. When I enter the world of thought, thought veils that light and splendor from me, and I am left wondering how I have fallen from that lofty and divine place and am come to the place of thought, when my soul once had the power to leave her body behind and return to herself and rise to the world of mind and then to the divine world until she entered the place of splendor and light, which is the cause of all light and splendor." Cited in: Raphael Jospe, "Early Philosophical Commentaries on the Sefer Yeẓira: Some Comments," *Revue des études juives* 149:4 (1990), 401.
[97] *GE*, 422. Cf. *GE*, 425, 432; Giqatilla, Fragment (ed. Farber), 169-70.
[98] *GE* 422, 425.
[99] *GE* 220. Here Giqatilla appears to allude to Guide 3:51, where Maimonides establishes the ultimate end of 'worship of the heart' (*'avodah she-balev*) as the contemplation of the first *muskal*, namely God. Maimonides' famous Palace simile, used in this context, depicts the innermost chamber as representing those who attain the highest level of knowledge – an image that parallels Giqatilla's discussion of the innermost point of *ḥolam*. On the place of Maimonides' palace simile in *Ginnat Egoz*, see Moshe H. Weiler, *Kabbalistic Terminology,* 26.

semantic function, whereas *muskalot* designates, in this context, the simple principle of motion that makes speech—and therefore intelligible meaning—possible in the first place. The *muskalot* are thus construed by Giqatilla as referring to metaphysical principles of motion, epitomized by the vowel points, with the ultimate *muskal* designating the *ḥolam*.[100]

The point is that apprehension of the simple principle independent of the modes of meaningful speech, which Giqatilla broadly classified as sensible,[101] is epistemologically impossible. With that said, Giqatilla does not rule out the possibility of 'seeing' the point through the lens of meaningful speech. On the contrary, the thrust of his theological project is that 'seeing the point through the letters' is possible. His project is invested in this very possibility, taking prophetic knowledge as its paradigmatic example. More fundamentally, Giqatilla considers Torah as a language grounded in this simple point, to be distinguished from philosophical language, which is confined to the semantics of speech, without being grounded in the 'point'.[102] Here, too, the so-called Torah language is articulated, essentially and necessarily, through the meaningful plane of combined letters, but these letters reveal their principle of simple motion.[103]

The image of the internal point is also and primarily of metaphysical significance, implying its ambiguous identity as both the cause of the Intellect and distinguished therefrom. I shall address

[100] See also Giqatilla, *Fragment*, 166.
[101] See discussion in *GE* 426-27.
[102] More on this in Chapter 4. See the similar account in Abraham Abulafia, *Sitrei Torah*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem: 2002), 37: "When inquiring into the secrets of the Torah by way of *Kabbalah* and reason (*sekhel*), one attains an understanding not reached by the philosophers. […] This knowledge is contingent upon knowledge of the Divine Proper Name, interpreted through the combinations of letters, wherein the seventy languages are contained. And this is a sublime and wondrous secret. In like manner, you will discern that this very secret is the root of all the sciences and of all intelligible contemplation."
[103] "The sages of the Nations, the Natural philosophers, cannot attain the truth […] for they lack the internal wisdom which is the wisdom of the Torah. This (internal) wisdom is the internal point (situated) in proportion to (*ne'erekhet*) to the order of twenty-two elemental letters (*ma'arekhet kaf bet 'otiyyot yesod*), the secret of which is (the vowel-letters) AHWY (22=אהו״י). The latter is referred by *neqqudah* (in the following manner): *aleph* (111=אל״ף), *he* (= ה״י 15), *waw* (13=וא״ו), *yod* (20=יו״ד) consist of the secret *neqqudah* (159=נקד״ה). (The vowel-letters) AHWY are thus the secret of the twenty-two letters, and the foundation of our Torah is a singular point." In *GE* 34. I will return to this citation in Chapter 4.

this ambiguity by taking a further look into the scheme of *yesodot* ('foundations', 'principles', 'elements'), mentioned in various places in connection with Giqatilla's broader ontological scheme.

The *Yesod* of All: The Intellect, the Point, and the One

Alluding to a recurring motif in Neoplatonic doctrines, Giqatilla describes the relationship between the Intellect and its cause in terms of conversion and sight: "Consider how the Intellect, essentially superior to all, turns to the *yesod* ('foundation', 'principle') whence it was created."[104] This contingency is further described in terms of desire (*teshuqah*) toward the governing principle and the Intellect's *devequt* therewith, a term that in the present context can mean ontological continuity and noetic conjunction.[105] Giqatilla's language of desire and conversion prompts several important questions. First, does the Intellect 'turn' to the One itself or to an image thereof? Second, does the constitution of the Intellect and its desire for its principle constitute one and the same act, or are we dealing with two so-called distinguished moments? I have already alluded to Farber-Ginat's interpretation of Giqatilla's Intellect as constituted in two metaphysical moments—the emanation of the so-called inchoate Intellect followed by its reversal toward its source, through which it acquires its constitutive form.[106] I have also pointed to the difficulties that such an interpretation would follow if applied to the Intellect in *Ginnat Egoz*, considering the active role that the Tetragrammaton plays in bestowing form upon all existents.[107]

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[104] *GE* 205.
[105] See Yehuda Halper, "The Convergence of Religious and Metaphysical Concepts: *Mofet* and *Devequt* in the Hebrew Translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics," *Studia Neoaristotelica*: 2 (2011): 70-74. For additional renditions of *devequt* (e.g. 'cohesion') see quotations and discussion in Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique*, 572-580.
[106] Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 123.
[107] Farber-Ginat herself might have acknowledged this difficulty, as she applies the twofold process, of creation and reflection, in her remarks on Giqatilla's Glosses, in which she correctly detects a subtle theosophical shift.

On a more general note, conversion reflects a cosmos that ontologically consists of contemplation and desire on the part of each descending grade in relationship to its respective principle or cause. The endurance of all emanating substances, as well as their power to produce, depends on their contemplation of their source; an act that is fully exercised by the Intellect in its turning to the ultimate source: the One that is above completeness.[108] Similar accounts appear in sources that were influential in Jewish circles,[109] as in the pseudo-Empedoclean *Book of Five Substances*, titled in Hebrew *ha-ʿAṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*: "[T]he unity of the forms is obtained by their turning to the Foundation of Foundation Blessed be He (*yesod ha-yesod barukh hu*). Upon their act of contemplation, God instantly effluences onto them by His light.[110]

Additional sources on which Giqatilla draws in connection with the Intellect and the One include Isaac Israeli's *Sefer ha-Yesodot*, Ibn Gabirol's cosmological hymn *Keter Malkhut*, and Ibn Ezra's deliberations on the Divine Names.[111] Central to these teachings is the term *Kol* ('All')

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[108] On the Intellect's conversion in Neoplatonism, see Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect*, 69-78. The motif of conversion and vision, where each grade turns to gaze at its source for its ontological constitution, runs through all levels of existence. See, for example, The Chaldean Oracles, fr. 1 (p. 49). See also *Theology of Aristotle* in: *Plotini Opera*, Tomus II, 291-93: "For when the true One which is above completeness originates the complete thing, that complete thing turns to its originator and casts its gaze on it and is filled with light and splendor from it and becomes mind. The true One originates the identity of the mind because of the intensity of its repose. When that identity looks at the true One it gives form to the mind, for when the first identity is originated from the true One it stands and cats gaze on the One so as to see it and becomes mind."

[109] Although not in Isaac Israeli's own works, apparently. See Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 180.

[110] *Sefer ha-ʿAṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*, ed. David Kaufman, printed in idem, *Studien über Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Budapest 1899), 20-21. The term *yesod ha-yesod* appears in later Kabbalistic works. In Abraham of Cologne's *Keter Shem Tov* (p. 47), for example, it is associated with 'Glorious Name.'

[111] On Giqatilla and Ibn Gabirol (and his *Keter Malkhut*), see Martini, *Punctuation*, 44-45. See also the phraseology in Giqatilla's *Two Poems*, 77 (line 10), 82 (line 50). *Sefer ha-Yesodot* was translated into Hebrew in the first half of the thirteenth century by Abraham Ibn Ḥasdai and won notable popularity in Spain and Southern France. On the reception of Israeli's Elements in Giqatilla's intellectual environment, specifically by Ibn Ezra and Ibn Latif, see the introduction in Salomon Fried's edition: *Das Buch über die Elemente* (Drohobycz: Župnik, 1900), 43-47. On the history of the Hebrew translations of this work, see also Michael Engel, "A Reexamination of the Textual Tradition of the Hebrew Translation of Isaac Israeli's Book of Elements (*Sefer Ha-Yesodot*)," *Henoch* (2022). Elaborations on the transcendent *yesod* also allude to the distinction between the participated and non-participated causes that is considered in *Liber de Causis*, abbreviated from Proclus' Elements of Theology and translated into Hebrew in the second half of the thirteenth century. The terminology that appears in the Hebrew renditions of *Sefer ha-Yesodot* to describe the One, specifically *ʿila* '*elyona* (Supreme Sause), is absent from Giqatilla's early works, written either before or soon after the publication of the first known translations attributed to Hillel of Verona and Zeraḥiyah Ḥen. That said, Giqatilla (*GE* 189) does identify the primordial source as *sibat ha-sibbot* (Cause of Causes). We should also note that the phraseology of *Sefer ha-Sibbot* filtered through later adaptations of Giqatilla's early linguistic works,

which has been commonly understood to designate the totality of the ontological order, although the identity of this totality, whether it is the Universal Intellect *per se* or identical with the One, invoked philosophical speculation. Jacques Schlanger surveyed the various applications of *Kol* in Solomon ibn Gabirol's cosmological accounts, drawing attention to its clear distinction from the One.[112] Abraham ibn Ezra, on the other hand, applies *Kol* more ambiguously, construing it as an epithet for God's immanence in the world, to wit, "God is One. All comes from Him and He is in All."[113] This formula is paraphrased by Isaac ibn Latif, although in his case the pronoun 'he' takes a gnostic bent by referring to the First Created being: "[The Intellect] is in All and All is in him (*hu ba-kol we-ha-kol bo*)."[114] Finally, Giqatilla, too, reflects an ambiguous take on *Kol*, echoing a subtle form of panentheism: "Blessed be He pervades All and He is the source of All." (*hu yitbarakh male ha-kol we-hu meqom ha-kol*.)[115]

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transcribed by Giqatilla's presumed adherents. The terms *'ila rishona* or *ilat ha-'ilot* may be considered among the terms that these anonymous adherents adopted from theosophical teachings, integrating them into Giqatilla's linguistic elaborations. It has been recently suggested that excerpts and terms from *Liber de Causis,* specifically from proposition XI, were integrated in R. 'Azri'el of Gerona's theosophical writings. See Saverio Campanini, "Receptum est in recipiente per modum recipientis: Traces of the *Liber de causis* in Early Kabbalah," in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes,* Vol. 2, ed. Dragos Calma (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 470-73, and cf. cited references. See also the remarks (ibid, 460-61) on the Hebrew translations of *Liber de Causis.* It is likely that these adaptations made their way to the Castilian environment via thinkers like Isaac Hacohen. See Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 134, and cf. cited refences.

[112] Jacques Schlanger, "Sur le rôle du «Tout» dans la création selon Ibn Gabirol" *Revue des études juives* 124:1-2 (1965): 128.

[113] *Commentary*, Gen. 1.26. Cf. *GE* 19-20. See also Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Anthropological Theory of Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University, 1985), 231-72.

[114] Ibn Latif, *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 28 (Vienna 1862), 13, and vol. 29, 5. Cf. the remarks in Wilensky-Heller, *Philosopher or Kabbalist* (202) where *ha-kol* is construed as referring to the primordial will. Wilensky references *Ginzei ha-Melekh* (p. 5), where Ibn Laif explicitly speaks of the Intellect in terms of All. See also *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 20: "Know that the inclusion of all beings in the First Created Being (i.e., the Intellect) is attested in scripture through the word *'olam*. (The first being) is the form of the world and its endurance (*hu ṣurat ha'olam we-qiyumo*)." It is worthwhile to note the application of *yesod* and *kol* as synonyms for God in Judah ben Barzillai's *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah* (p. 71) in the name of Ḥefeṣ ben Yaẓliaḥ. (*Hu yesod we-hu ha-kol*). But cf. Kreisel, *On the Term Kol* (55, n. 78), who detects here a scribal error. The correct version *sic*. Kreisel should read: *hu yesod ha-kol*, 'He is the foundation of All.'

[115] *GE* 338. Cf. *SN Short* 79*-80*. For Giqatilla's application of *kol,* see also: SN 74*-75*; *GE* 118; *Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 41a. On the history of the term in pre-Kabbalistic thought, see Kreisel, *On the Term Kol*, 34. Cf. cited references. For the reception of *kol* in Catalonian Kabbalah, see the preliminary remarks in Haviva Pedaya, *The Zero*, 172.

With these remarks in mind, we should note that *kol* is also described as contingent on a *yesod*, a primary principle that is transcendent to the cosmic order at large, as articulated in the citation opening the present section. In the case of Giqatilla, this is articulated in the idiom *yesod ha-kol*, arguably borrowed from Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*.[116] Such idioms qualify the panentheistic bent in Giqatilla's metaphysics, as they press the question whether the transcendent *yesod*, the principle of All, is indeed tantamount to God.

Several Neoplatonic accounts, like the mentioned *ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*, construed this *yesod* as the unqualified substance that underlies the primary form, the indeterminate nature of which is also signaled by *hyle* ('prime matter') or, more nebulously, *'afisa* ('indeterminacy').[117] Similarly, the Intellect's conversion to the One is modified by such Neoplatonic accounts through the doctrine of hypostatic matter posited between the simple God and the Intellect. Describing, in standard emanative fashion, the process of ontological desire, this work draws the following picture:

> […] The Intellect likewise desires the light and grace of the Creator with the mediation of *yesod*. However, *yesod* itself desires the light of the Supreme Creator by the wisdom, truth, good, and traces (*rishumim*) that are within [the *yesod* itself]. The *yesod* is thus mightiest of all grades. It receives power and light from absolute Being (*hawwayah gemurah*) and it thereby includes all things. Among the grades there are those which desire [the Creator] with mediation, such as the Intellect, and those which desire with no mediation, like the *yesod*.[118]

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[116] More clearly in Giqatilla, *Two Poems*: *Yesod kol sod – we-hu howweh be-'eḥad.* (p. 77, line 10); *Bereshit kol yesod – haven yesodkha.* (p. 85, line 1). Note the usage of the term *yesod ha-kol* in *Sefer ha-Yesodot* (ed. S. Fried), 76.

[117] While the terms tend to get conflated, some scholars distinguish between the two. Ezra of Gerona clearly identifies *hyle* with *'afisa* or 'darkness.' In *Commentary on Songs*, 482-83. By contrast, Ephraim Gottlieb argued that Naḥmanides' *'afisa* should be clearly distinguished from the notion of primal matter or *hyle*, designating instead the *'ein-sof*. For example, Gottlieb, *The Kabbalah in the Writings of Rabbi Bahya ben Asher* (Jerusalem: *Qiryat Sefer*, 1970), 153.

[118] *Ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha* (ed. David Kaufman) 39-40. Cf. 21, 25. See also Stern and Altman, *Isaac Israeli*, 162-63; Davidovich, *Meqôr Ḫayyîm*, 32-34. Compare this with *GE* 466-67: "And therefore you will find that the entire upper world, which is the Intellect, is continued by the foundation that is above it, which is our Creator, blessed be He. For all the forms of the world of the Intellect and the middle world, you will find them all turning toward the foundation of the upper world and all of them yearning for supreme comprehension. And this is the meaning of 'And

At times, the primal substance is also established as the principle of all forms (*shoresh ha-shorasim*; to be distinguished from *sug ha-sugim,* i.e., *genus generalissimum*).[119]

The connection between hypostatic matter and *yesod*, on the one hand, and the distinction between *yesod* and *kol*, on the other, is maintained also by Naḥmanides who distinguishes the Universal Intellect, designated by the *sefirah Binah*, from hypostatic matter:

> Their intention is that the word *bereshit* is to indicate that the world has been created by ten *sefirot*. *Bereshit* refers to the *sefirah* that is called *ḥokhma*, which is foundation of All (*yesod kol*). As it is written: 'The Lord founded (*yesad*) the earth by wisdom'.[120]

Compare this with Giqatilla's assertion that "God is *Yesod ha-Kol* but is not included in that which He is *yesod* to, for Blessed be He is in All and beyond All" (*hu yitbarakh ba-kol we-ḥuṣa la-kol*).[121] The contrast with Naḥmanides is sharpened by the fact that, for Giqatilla, the principle that underlies this *kol* is not unqualified substance. This aligns with Giqatilla's general rejection of hypostatic universal matter, as we saw earlier, by which logic the *yesod* of the Intellect would presumably refer to the One. But this presumed reference of *yesod* is complicated by assertions found in *Sefer ha-Niqqud,* which stress the transcendence of the *yesod* in relation to the *Kol*, much

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the wheels and the holy creatures rise', meaning they elevate themselves and yearn after the foundation in which they all are sustained."

[119] Cf. Ibn Falaquera, *Liqqutim*, 1:8, 227. The general distinction between the two principles was formulated in terms of '*omed be-'atsmo* ('that which subsists in itself', *ens per essentiam*); and *'omed be-zulato* ('subsisting through participation', *ens per participationem*). In addition to subsisting in-itself, the substratum is distinguished as a principle that establishes the indetermined identity of a thing, which has to do with its particularity. On the terminological significance of *'omed be-'atsmo*, see Yosef Ibn Ṣaddiq's *'Olam ha-Qatan*, 10; Ibn Falaquera, *Liqqutim* 1:6, 226. Cf. Hyman, *From What is One*, 119; Wolfson, *Crescas*, 264.

[120] *Commentary on Genesis* 1.1. On *Ḥokhma* and prime matter in early Catalonian Kabbala, see Werthmann, *Prime Matter* (passim), and see her discussion (252-56) in connection with Naḥmanides. The identification of *Ḥokhma*, the first emanated principle, as *yesod ha-kol*, that is, the foundation of *Binah*, is repeated in de León's early theosophical work (Untitled Composition): *(K)i ha-Ḥokhma reshit ha-kol vi-yesod ha-kol, u-binyan ha-kol we-'iqar ha-kol.* (Bavarian State Library, MS Munich, Cod. Hebr. 47, fol. 372a; cited in Farber-Ginat, *Shells*, 133.) On this work and manuscript, see Bar Asher, *From Alphabetical Mysticism*, 351-384.

[121] *GE* 118; cf. *GE* 19-20, 330. On the duality of the Plotinian One, as both immanent in the Whole and transcendent thereto, see Dominic O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46.

in line with the above quotation, while identifying that *yesod* with the phonetic point: "Thus, you shall find that the primary *yesod* is above All (*kol*) and that [*yesod*] is *ḥolam.*"[122]

We should be cautious about the implications of this assertion, considering the doctrinal differences between *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz* regarding the principle of *ḥolam*, with the former retaining some theosophical traces. Nevertheless, Giqatilla's designation of *ḥolam* as *yesod* of the Intellect reveals an important conceptual move that holds significant meaning for *Ginnat Egoz* as well. In fact, Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz* is clear about the priority of *ḥolam* as the supreme *yesod* "that is above All,"[123] as well as the "*yesod* of the intelligible world."[124]

Our remarks on the distinguished position of the *ḥolam* are supported by the comparison that Giqatilla makes between the primordial foundation and the Intellect: "Truly, this foundation (*yesod*) transcends (lit. does not fall to; *'eino nofel le-*) composition (lit. the edifice; *binyan*). It is the supreme principle of the separate intellects." After asserting the unity and simplicity of this primary *yesod*, Giqatilla continues with an analysis of the Intellect:

> [However,] this principle (viz., the Intellect) and its unity (lit. 'oneness') are not absolute, for it is composed of two things, [namely] renewal and form, even though its unity, *qua* simple intellect, is not comparable to all other [kinds of] contingent unities. Indeed, since it is renewed it consists of two things, viz., renewal and form. And while there is nothing [in this *yesod*] but form – because it is renewed, two things are included in it.[125]

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[122] *SN Short*, 68*.
[123] *GE* 427.
[124] *GE* 423.
[125] *SN Long*, fol. 192a-b. Cf. *SN Short* 77-78. The Martini edition of *SN Short* reads as follows: אמנם אותו יסוד אינו נופל לבניין והוא יסוד העליון שהוא יסוד שכלים הנפרדים. אמנם יסוד זה נופל לבנין והוא יסוד העליון ואחדות זה אינה בתכלית היחוד כי יסוד זה מורכב משני דברים מחדוש וצורה. As Martini notes in her apparatus, manuscripts Paris hébr. 774 and Rome Or 46 omit the words נופל לבנין והוא יסוד העליון, reading instead: אמנם יסוד זה ~~נופל לבנין והוא יסוד העליון~~ ואחדות זה אינה בתכלית היחוד, thus fully in line with the *SN Long*. If we amend Martini's edition by integrating the version in her apparatus we will get a more plausible reading, where the *yesod,* which is not completely simple and unified, is the second *yesod*, the Intellect, and is distinguished from the supreme *yesod*. The characterization of the first Intellect as composed of two things, form and cause, is commonplace in Arabic Neoplatonic thought. Cf. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 281-83.

Let us unpack this convoluted paragraph. It opens with the upper *yesod* which unlike the lower *yesodot* is distinguished from the ontological order, *'eino nofel le-binyan*.[126] The allusion to Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*—"Thou art One […] and *yesod kol binyan"*—is clear.[127] Indeed, Giqatilla later repeats the idiom *'eino nofel le-binyan*, this time in connection with the One itself: "He is principle of all principles (*yesod kol ha-yesodot*). And this principle *'eino nofel le-shum binyan.*"[128] Conversely, in what appears like a variation on Neoplatonic doctrine, the second *yesod*, i.e., the Intellect, is here described as containing multiplicity, renewal (*ḥiddush*) and form (*ṣurah*).[129]

The distinction between the simplicity of the primary *yesod* and the compositional nature of the Intellect is repeated in both *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*. But there are nevertheless doctrinal differences between the respective accounts of the identity of the Intellect's *yesod*, as we shall see in the following section.

The Yesodot of the Ontological Order

The question regarding the identity of the primary *yesod* directs us to two nearly identical schemes—one in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and the other in *Ginnat Egoz*—distinguished only by subtle differences. *Sefer ha-Niqqud* presents us with a fourfold scheme of *yesodot*, listed in descending ontological order: God is [I] foundation or principle of renewal (*yesod ḥiddush*), which is [II] the

[126] On the designation of *binyan*, see *GE* (324) "The number of the moving and moved parts is ten. These parts are termed *binyan* and they constitute the secret of *yod*."
[127] *Keter Malkhut* §2: *'attah eḥad - rosh kol minyan we-sod kol 'inyan vi-yesod kol binyan.*
[128] *GE* 452-53.
[129] *SN Short* 50*: "God is *yesod kol ha-yesodot*." Cf. *GE* 118: "*'Aleph* is *yesod* to that which otherwise has no *yesod* […] and this (*yesod*) is called the true One, beyond renewal (*ḥiddush*) and form, definition and finitude, unlike the oneness that contains multiple individuals." 'Renewal' here replaces the cause of the First Intellect in the Neoplatonism of the likes of Avicenna, whereby the Intellect emanates from the One as multiple, having its form and its cause. (Cf. Davidson, *Cuzari*, 356).

principle of the Intellect (*ḥiddush yesod ha-ṣurah*).[130] Intellect, in its turn, is [III] the principle of the World Soul or the translunar spheres (*yesod ha-ḥomer*[131]), and the latter is [IV] the principle of the sublunar sphere (*yesod le-harkava*).[132] This scheme is summarized as follows: "Blessed be He alone is *yesod* to: (I) *ḥiddush*, (II) *ṣurah*, (III) *ḥomer*, and (IV) *harkavah*."[133] Such schemes are familiar to us from related Neoplatonic sources, such as *ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*.[134] What is particularly noteworthy, however, is the variation on this scheme that appears in *Ginnat Egoz*, specifically in the section that parallels the discussions found in both recensions of *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (short and long): "Blessed be He is *yesod* of *ṣurah*, *ṣurah* is *yesod* of *ḥomer*, and *ḥomer yesod* of *harkavah*."[135] The *yesod* that is identified with *ḥiddush*, intermediary between God and *ṣurah*, is here omitted. In the discussion preceding this threefold *yesod* assertion Giqatilla does mention *ḥiddush*, but it is there mentioned as part, or a trait of *ṣurah*: "Although the separated forms are completely simple, they are nevertheless complex *vis-à-vis* God, *ḥiddush* with *ṣurah* is (*hu*) their *yesod*."[136]

I mention these two variations to focus our terms of analysis when discussing the identity of the primary *yesod* in *Ginnat Egoz* and, more importantly, the role that *ḥolam* plays, *qua* simple

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[130] *SN Short*, 49*.
[131] *'Olam ha-ḥomer* typically refers to the celestial spheres, to be distinguished from the sublunar world of generation and corruption, or composition, *'olam ha-Harkavah.*
[132] *SN Short*, 49-50.
[133] *SN Short* 50*. This scheme, which posits *ḥiddush* as *yesod* to *ṣurah*, is repeated in *SN Long*, fol. 186b.
[134] *Ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha*, 19-20: Primal matter is (I) the principle (*yesod*) whence the forms emanate. The intellect, with the force of the primary source, is (II) the principle of the World Soul. The soul, in its turn, becomes (III) the principle of the spheres, and the latter (IV) the principle of the sublunar world. See also *Meqor Ḥayyim* (sec. 3.54-55), where Ibn Gabirol establishes the emanating grades, e.g., intellect and soul, as substances for their subsequent gradation. Cf. Schlanger, *Ibn Gabirol*, 171.
[135] *GE* 453.
[136] *GE* 452. And see *GE* 180: "The intellects, which are the light of His garment, came into existence from His true primordial existence, Blessed be He." See also *GE* 118: "[The letter] *bet* is the secret of the first ontological gradation (*ha-ma'alah ha-rishona*), that is, the separate intellects. They are sublime and simple forms, enduring by Being (*hawwayah*), the latter constituting the primordial secret (*sod ha-qadmon*) […] Inasmuch as this gradation is first to all created beings it is called *binyan*, for it consists of two things, form and renewal (*ḥiddush*), as continued by the true Being."

act, in this regard. Earlier in this chapter we saw how Giqatilla construes the dual nature of the Universal Intellect in terms of *ṣurah* ("form") and *ḥiddush* ("renewal"). I suggested that, in that specific context, *ḥiddush* implies the principle of otherness—the Intellect's contingency upon an external principle. In the case of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, *ḥiddush* assumes a more substantial role, given its place in the hierarchy of *yesodot*. While Giqatilla remains cryptic about the specific meaning of *ḥiddush* in this context, he likely has in mind the distinction between existence and essence, suggesting that *ḥiddush* represents the pre-essential principle of existence from which being, in the sense of essential forms, proceeds or emanates.[137] If this reading of *ḥiddush* is correct, it should not be surprising that *ḥiddush*, constituting as a distinct *yesod*, is omitted in the more developed and systematic *Ginnat Egoz*.[138] For such a principle might resonate with the notion of pre-essential

[137] The suggested reading of *ḥiddush* in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, *qua* hypostatic principle, might also throw light on a cryptic verse in the liturgical poem (*Baqqashah*) attributed to Giqatilla and published by Itamar Greenwald. The *Baqqashah*, which prefaces *Ginnat Egoz* in several of the extant manuscripts, is a theological reflection on the process of creation, following the thematic and stylistic lines of Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*. On the affinity of the *Baqqashah* to *Ginnat Egoz*, see Blickstien, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 35. Following the general description of continuation by primordial will and of the renewal of All (*Kol*), the verse captures two moments in this cosmogenic process: *Pnei hiddush be-khaf 'ayin shaqlam* / *we-hittah kaf kelapei yesh we-niglah*. In: Two Poems (ed. Greenwald), 80, line 29. 5. The verse arguably describes a twofold process – the weighing of *pnei ḥiddush*, followed by the tilting of the scale (*hittah kaf*) for the emergence of 'being' (*kelapei yesh, we-niglah*). This twofold account further supports the assumed affinity between Giqatilla's *Baqqashahh* and Keter Malkhut, with the specific allusion to Gabirol's famous verse: *Limshokh meshekh ha-yesh min ha-'ayin / ke-himmashekh ha-or ha-yotse min ha-'ayin* ("To draw (the principle of) extension from primal matter /as the light as drawn that comes from the eye"), which scholars convincingly construed as the condonation of essence from primordial matter. In Medieval philosophical Hebrew, *meshekh* is often used to related to second matter, that is, the principle of extension (viz. Aristotle's quantitative form). For a detailed survey of the relation between matter and extension (*meshekh*), see Wolfson, *Crescas Critique*, 579-90. See also Yehuda Liebes, "Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Use of the "Sefer Yeṣira" and a Commentary on the Poem 'I Love Thee'" *in Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 6:3-4 (1987), 81 (Hebrew). On the conceptual and cosmogenic significance of the cited verse, specifically the terms *meshekh* hand *'ayin*, see Liebes, *I Love* Thee, 80-85. Cf. his response (p. 84-85) to Shlomo Pines' essay on this subject.

[138] That the removal of *ḥiddush*, as *yesod*, from *Ginnat Egoz* is intentional. Giqatilla finds further support in assertions that establish the Intellect as "coming into existence from His true primordial existence" (*GE* 180), and as conjoined with (or: continued from) Being alone (*daveq ba-hawwayah bilvad*) (*GE* 73). On *devequt* as a metaphysical principle, see Halper, *Mofet and Devequt*, 70-74. I should also indicate the doctrine proposed in Theology of Aristotle (Long), mentioned earlier, which attributes the process of becoming to the creative principle that issues forth from the One. *Plotini Opera* II (trans., Lewis), 291. See Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics*, 16: "(I)n the equivalent of the Theology passage, which treats of the relation between 'the first cause and the things which originate from it', *huwiyah* is considered as the first emanation which 'gushes forth' from The One; and from it the universal intellect and subsequent entities are formed. In other words, *huwiyah* is treated in the Theology as a creative principle emanating from the One, though the One is, as such, above it." Note the replacement of 'identity,' found in Lewis' translation, with 'being', according to Ivry's rendition. It is not clear which of the two schemes, that of *Sefer ha-Niqqud* or of *Ginnat Egoz*, is closer to the doctrine in the Theology.

universal matter which, in Gabirolian and other Jewish-Neoplatonic accounts, is indeed responsible for existence.[139]

Building on our analysis of God's act as the *yesod* of the Intellect, we can distinguish Giqatilla's doctrine of phonetic movement from the general doctrine of universal primordial matter or substance, and perhaps between *Ginnat Egoz* and *Sefer ha-Niqqud* more specifically. This movement, epitomized by the vowel point *ḥolam*, is described as 'supreme Intellect' or 'internal Wisdom'—an epithet marking it as the cause of intelligible forms without being identical to them. Still, it is important to stress that *ḥolam* neither functions as a mere synonym for the One nor as a hypostasis interposed between the One and the Intellect.[140]

Our last remark brings to light an important development in Giqatilla's theory of the point, insofar as this point is modeled by the phonetic principle of the vowel point *ḥolam*. The symbol of the point was conjectured in various philosophical contexts to deliberate the metaphysical principle of absolute unity,[141] or, conversely, as an epistemological device for representing the simple source of all.[142] I suggest that the complex relationship in Ginnat Egoz between the vowel-point *ḥolam* and the One can be explained by the modification of the point, functioning not as a symbol of the One, *per se*, but epitomizing the simple activity, *qua* vowel, that issues from the One. By this

[139] We should also consider the possibility that in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, *ḥiddush* does not necessarily presuppose universal matter, but rather signifies the first of two moments—that of inchoate existence—to which Farber-Ginat referred when analyzing Giqatilla's conception of the Intellect. Whatever the case may be, the omission of *ḥiddush* in *Ginnat Egoz* aligns with the broader and more coherent project of this work: establishing a doctrine of creation that involves a spontaneous, non-substantial act through which forms are bestowed and existence is constituted *ipso facto*.

[140] This conception resonates with the later adaptation of the *Theology of Aristotle* (Long Recension), which posits the divine Word as the cause of the Intellect. The speech-act thus stands as the constitutive cause of the Intellect – neither wholly identical to it nor entirely distinct from it.

[141] See: Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Mispar*, "It is known that the One is like a point in the center of the circle, by which image the One cannot be divided […]." (Cf. Zohar, *The Point*, 32). See also Falaquera, *Liqqutim*, 230.

[142] Ibn Latif, *Rav Pe'alim* (ed. Kasher), 17. In *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 99, Blickstein drew the connection between the respective points of Giqatilla and Ibn Latif. I contend that while these points share some similarities, they fundamentally differ in their meaning and metaphysical functions.

reading, the point is not synonymous with the One, though not separable from it. Conversely, it is not simply an epistemological construct reflecting the unity of the One.

By centering his metaphysics on motion, rather than on substantial or essential emanation, Giqatilla advances simple non-essential activity as a principle that both issues from the One, *qua* expression, and thereby constitutes the existence, or becoming, of the Intellect. Here *ḥolam* does not include within itself the Intellect's essential forms in the sense of potentiality, distinguishing it from the substantial *yesod* of *ha-'Aṣamim ha-Ḥamisha.*

To further elucidate the identity of the primary *yesod*, alternating between the One and the speech act, we may refer to the doctrine of the double act as found in various Neoplatonic systems. According to this doctrine, all levels of being, beginning with the One, are construed in terms of internal and external acts. The internal act—speaking schematically—is that actuality by which a thing is what it is. The external act, by contrast, is the effect or expression of the internal act, and serves to produce something other than the primary substance and its intrinsic activity. In the case of the One, its external act would typically be considered to produce the hypostatic Intellect.

The relationship between internal and external acts is complex, and Neoplatonic teachings offer various analogies to clarify whether these acts are ontologically identical. These analogies include the relation between an archetype and its image,[143] a mirror and its reflection, and the native heat of fire and its ambient warmth.[144] One shared point that these analogies convey is that

[143] On this, see Gerson, *Plotinus*, 19, and the cited passage form *Enneads* V.4.2.28–39.
[144] Early adaptations of Giqatilla's linguistic theology clearly adopt this ambiguous framework in their treatment of *ḥolam*, presenting the pure expressive act as a revealing image of the ultimate origin. See Bar Asher, *Punctiform*, 175-76: "*Ḥolam* is in an indicative image (or form) (*ke-demut megalleh*), standing against the Cause of Causes, which is Soul to all Soul (*Neshama le-khol Neshama*) and Mover of all Movers."

the external act is ambiguously distinct from its source: its hypothetical removal would not compromise the ontological integrity of its source, and yet it lacks any independent identity.[145]

We shall return to this issue in the following chapter, but it is worth considering whether Giqatilla had something similar in mind when he developed his linguistic metaphysics through the point. That he was familiar with the archetype-image model—and indeed deployed it in a metaphysical register—will become evident in our following discussion on Divine Will. We shall see that Giqatilla describes the intelligible forms as a *demut* ('likening'; 'image') of God's simple volitional activity.[146] Granted, for Giqatilla, the expression of the One would differ from the Neoplatonic model by its volitive and active nature. Turning to Giqatilla's position on Divine Will helps us to better clarify the identity of the primary *yesod* and the kind of activity that the simple act, epitomized by the vowel point *ḥolam*, plays in this respect.

In transitioning to the discussion on Divine Will , it is noteworthy that Giqatilla reiterates the transcendence of the primary *yesod—'eino nofel im davar*—through the image of the Divine Throne (*Kisse*).[147] Unlike earlier interpreters such as Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Jacob ben Sheshet, who read the throne in terms of either inferential reasoning or mystical conjunction, Giqatilla employs the *Kisse* to symbolize the act of bestowing existence itself. He further integrates a gematrical analysis of *Kisse* to underscore the relationship between the primary *yesod*, the Intellect, and the principle of contingency.[148]

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[145] See discussion and references in Emilsson, *Plotinus on the Intellect*, 22-68, esp. 26-28. The double act doctrine is reflected in Hebrew sources, like *Sefer ha-Yesodot*, which describes 'the true primordial substance' (*ha-eṣem ha-'amiti ha-rishon*) as reflecting upon itself in a way that maintains absolute identity and simplicity. See *Sefer ha-Yesodot* (ed. Kaufmann), 21.

[146] See *GE* 81. It is also worth noting that the metaphysical principle of the image is preserved in contemporary theosophical writings. In the *'Iyyun's Contemplation Standard* (ed. Verman, 44), for example, the *Ḥashmal* of Ezekiel's vision is said to contain ten powers, the foremost of which is *temunah* ('image').

[147] MS. New York 851, fol. 88b.

[148] Giqatilla critiques Ben Sheshet's interpretation of *Kisse* as denoting conjunction (*dvequt*) between created beings – chiefly the highest angels and the divine. See *Meshiv Devarim Neḥokhim*, 76-77. He likewise rejects Ibn Tibbon's construal of *Kisse* as inferential reasoning for the existence of God: Just as the motion of the celestial spheres implies

The Point of the Intellect: Supreme Will and Internal Wisdom

The foregoing discussion sharpens our understanding of the Intellect's cause. In *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla consistently maintains the linguistic identity of this cause, specifically the vowel point *ḥolam*. The full implications of this cause as a linguistic act will be explored in Chapter 4, which examines Giqatilla's linguistic system. In preparation for that discussion, we can illuminate additional operative features of this cause, while reserving its definitive characterization for later.

A particularly significant feature deserving our attention is the connection between Divine Will and the speech act. This connection manifests in Giqatilla's threefold association between creation *ex nihilo*, the simple speech act epitomized in the vowel point *ḥolam*, and Divine Will, the latter also termed Supreme Will (*Ḥefeṣ 'Elyon*).

The issue of 'will' leads to two interconnected questions. First, how does 'will' modify the metaphysical premise in relationship to the Intellect? Giqatilla's Divine Will is in line with his theological beliefs, whereby he deviates from common Neoplatonic accounts of necessary emanation,[149] but the question is whether these theological considerations bear direct implications

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the existence of a Prime Mover, so too does the throne indicate the presence of one worthy to be enthroned. See Rebecca Kneller Rowe, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-Mayim*: A Philosophical and Exegetical Treatise" (PhD diss., Tel-Aviv University, 2011), 420-22. Giqatilla rejects both interpretations. Instead, he construes the principle of *Kisse* to articulate the insubstantial nature of the primary *yesod* in relationship to the Intellect, for which he invokes a gematrial construction: the word *Kisse* (כסא) is understood as the fusion of *KeS* (כ״ס) and *'aleph* (א). By this account, the morpheme KeS denotes the foundation and the "secret of true existence." The added *'aleph* represents the simple Intellect, the supreme ontological grade, yielding *yesod 'aleph* (יסוד א׳). Hence, *yesod* together with *'aleph* equals *Kisse*, or, put otherwise, KeS + A = KiS'e. (MS NY 851, fol. 89a) This gematrial configuration articulates Giqatilla's understanding of *yesod* as a metaphysical principle, while clarifying his reservations regarding the earlier interpretations. Unlike Ibn Tibbon, who locates the *Kisse* within the order of effects, Giqatilla construes it both in terms of the ultimate cause, the *yesod* as originating from *'aleph*, and as its ontological manifestation in the created world. We should note that his *Glosses on the Guide* (fol. 24a), Giqatilla develops a different interpretation of *Kisse*, one that aligns with the early stages of theosophical thinking that took form in the *Glosses*. (Compare Afterman, *Creation*, 146–47; Vajda, *Deux chapitres*, 657.)

[149] For example, in the Neoplatonic Letter on Divine Science: "It is not that He (viz. the One) wished to originate mind and then mind came into being, after the volition. […] Were His acts preceded by volition, He would be defective, if volition came between Him and His act." In P. Henry & H. R. Schwyzer, eds., *Plotini Opera*, Tomus II: *Enneades* IV-V: Plotiniana Arabica ad codicum fidem anglice vertit G. Lewis (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959), 321. Giqatilla, on the other hand, uses epithets like the Supreme Will (*Ḥefeṣ 'Elyon*) to describe the process of creation from the One. See *SN Short* 61*; *GE* 40,195, 292, 392, 438. Cf. Blickstein, *Giqatilla*, 98-99.

for his idea of linguistic creation. This touches on an issue pivotal to the theological discourse of the time—namely, the relationship between Divine Will and wisdom. How do, *qua* ontological principles, volition and Intellect, or 'will' and 'wisdom' to use the language of divine attributes, intersect? Specifically, what is the metaphysical status of the intelligible forms *vis-à-vis* the principle of Divine Will?

This issue—of how will relates to intelligible forms—returns us to a foundational concern: does creation presuppose pre-existing forms, or are these forms themselves the product of volitional activity? Earlier in this chapter, I argued that Giqatilla's phrasing in *Ginnat Egoz* suggests the intelligible forms do not preexist in a latent state awaiting actualization: rather, creation—framed as a volitional act—is the origination of these forms, making them contingent products of Divine Will, grounded in the creative act itself, rather than in pre-existent necessities. The ontological divide between simple Will and essential forms introduces a conceptual gap that is not easily bridged. Yet it is possible that the connection between Divine Will and the bestowal of forms presupposes a more unified conception of form—one that departs from the standard notion of essential forms constituting the Intellect.

Support for this interpretation emerges from a subtle yet critical distinction between two types of Intellect that recurs throughout *Ginnat Egoz*. While 'Intellect' generally refers to the Universal Intellect—the first created being—Giqatilla also speaks of a distinct, qualified Intellect, variously termed 'inner Intellect,' 'complete Intellect,' and 'essence of Intellect.' This qualified Intellect is closely linked to Divine Will, the simple speech act, and the cause of the Universal Intellect itself. This distinction will be examined in greater detail later. For now, it provides the conceptual framework through which the foregoing questions can be approached. This approach

underscores Giqatilla's broader conviction that language is not merely expressive but ontologically active—binding will and being in a single metaphysical system.

The Throne of Glory, the Intellect, and the Primordial Will

Volition or 'supreme will' is key for Giqatilla, as it is for the doctrines of Ibn Latif and Ibn Gabirol with which he was familiar.[150] It characterizes the act that issues from the One, on the one hand, and constitutes the Intellect as the effect of that act, on the other. Accordingly, the Intellect is described as the 'beginning of Will' (*reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ*), in the sense of being its primary manifestation or the object of primal Will.[151] Thus, after positing the creation of the angels by volition, Giqatilla asserts the creation of heaven and earth, translunar and sublunar realms, "from the beginning of the will (*reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ*), that is, from the intellects."[152]

The description of the Intellect as *reshit ha-ḥefets* touches on the twofold characterization of Divine Will as both pervading the world and completely separated and independent thereof. In Giqatilla's presumed untitled work,[153] this twofold function is formulated by the *kes* (כ״ס) and *Kisse* (כס״א) difference, alluded to above, the latter further explicated in connection to *Kisse ha-Kavod* ('throne of glory') which *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* (3.3-4) lists among the seven things that preceded the creation of the world.[154] Generally, Giqatilla associates *Kisse ha-Kavod* with the created intelligible world, in agreement with the basic Intellect-*Kavod* connection alluded to in

[150] For Ibn Latif, see discussions in *Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim*, fols. 34b, 55a; *Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim* (ed. A. Zimran), 7.
[151] Cf. *GE* 77: "Know that the secret of כ״ן ויה״י is the secret of the first existent among the intellects. This is the grade of the Cohen ('priest') named Michael (viz. Metatron). (Michael) is thus called Cohen, for he is *Reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ*." Cf. the idiom *teḥilat hamshakhat ha-ḥefes* in connection with the Intellect (ibid). Cf. also the following phrases: "The light of the Intellect is *reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ*" (*GE* 187); "The existence of the angels is *reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ*." (*GE* 195) See also the term *Ḥefeṣ Rish'on* in reference to the Intellect in MS. New York, 851, fol. 88b. There he also contrasts *reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ* (the Intellect) with *ha- Ḥefeṣ ha-'Amiti* ('true will', viz., God).
[152] *GE* 195. Cf. *GE* 292: "By this way, know that the fire is in God's hidden sanctuary, for it is the beginning of will."
[153] MS. New York, 1891 (851).
[154] And see the following verse: "Whence was the earth created? He took of the snow (or ice) beneath His Throne of Glory. He threw it upon the waters, and the waters became congealed so that the dust of the earth was formed, as it is said, *He saith to the snow, Be thou earth*."

Chapter 2,[155] and further establishes this association through the threefold *gematria* of Nature (הטב״ע), ’Elohim (אלהי״ם), and *Kisse ha-Kavod* (כסא הכבו״ד).[156] By this account Giqatilla differs from Ibn Gabirol who associates *Kisse ha-Kavod* with the *yesod* of the intelligible realm, namely the simple universal substratum, as we shall presently see.[157] He thus denounces the philosopher’s position which assumes a fourfold division of the ontological order: (1) *Kisse*, (2) the separated intellects, (3) celestial spheres, and (4) sublunar world.[158] Instead, he identifies *Kisse ha-Kavod* with the simple Intellect, which he also describes as *ha- Ḥefeṣ ha-Rishon* (‘the first will’), alluding to *reshit ha-Ḥefeṣ* discussed above.[159]

The *Kisse* is the first manifestation of God’s will as a creative act, and it is thus distinguished from the principle of will itself which the untitled work attributed to Giqatilla identifies with the abovementioned *kes* (כ״ס).[160] It is the spontaneous constitutive act of all beings

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[155] On the connection between the *Kavod* (‘divine glory’) and the Intellect, see *Glosses*, fol. 29a: “Know that the (secret of) Blessed be the glory of God from His place” (Ezek. 3.12) is that the first emanated being (viz. the Intellect), which is the hidden glory (*ha-Kavod ha-Ne‘elam*) receives effluence from the Creator Blessed be He, Who is the (Intellect’s) place.” Ibn Latif, too, associates the *Kavod* with the First Created Being, and with the intelligible world more generally. See *Ṣurat ‘Olam*, Ch. 19, fol. 142a. Cf. *Sha‘ar ha-Shamayim* (ed. Zimran). See also our discussion on Giqatilla’s *Kavod* doctrine in Chapter 2. There I suggested that Giqatilla does not distinguish ‘hidden glory’ from a ‘created glory,’ as has been assumed to be the case in other related Castilian sources.

[156] *GE* 81: Ha-KiS’e (הכס״א), Ha-TeV‘a (הטב״ע), ’ELoHIM (אלהי״ם) all equal 86. Further, KiS’e Ha-Kavod (כס״א הכבו״ד) KeVOD ’ELoHIM both equals 118. (כבו״ד אלהי״ם) Likewise, *Kavod* (כבו״ד) alone equals 32 (Paths of Wisdom), which is both heart (ל״ב) and the number of times the name Elohim is mentioned in the Act of Creation. We should note that the threefold connection, between 32 Paths of Wisdom, *Kavod*, and Elohim, marks Giqatilla’s diversion from related accounts, such as Barukh Togarmi’s commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah*. There, Togarmi draws the connection between *Kavod*, 32, and the Tetragrammaton. The Tetragrammaton is construed as consisting of 32 – the numerical value of the vowel-letters YHWH (26), the number of its constituting letters (4), and “its two words” (2). The identity of the “two words” is not explicit, and he might be referring to the two morphemes, YH and WA, which the Tetragrammaton consists of. See *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah*, 230.

[157] *Keter Malkhut* §26. See also the more ambiguous rendition of *Kisse ha-Kavod* in Barukh Togarmi (ibid, 238), who identifies it as the foundation of the Torah and origin of all beings, presumably the Name of God.

[158] MS. New York 851, fol. 87b.

[159] MS. New York 1891 851, fol. 89a. The terminology in this untitled work is confusing. *Kisse ha-Kavod* is associated with the following set of terms: ‘origin of light’, ‘secret of will’, ‘primary origin’ on the one hand and, on the other hand, ‘Intellect of light’, ‘holy Intellect’, and ‘supreme grade.’ But a closer reading reveals that, in this context, ‘primary origin’ (*ha-Moṣa ha-Rishon*) denotes the function of the simple Intellect as the foundation of the lower cosmic grades. It should accordingly be distinguished from the primary origin mentioned in *GE* (434), where it denotes the ultimate origin of all, the One. This qualified sense of ‘origin’, as of the cosmic grades from the Intellect, is contemplable with the term ‘origin of light’, considering that, in *Ginnat Egoz*, the model of lights applies to the created order, and not to the emanation of the Intellect itself, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

[160] Ibid.

and, as such, it pervades and sustains all cosmic grades.[161] This redefinition of *Kisse* as the first creative manifestation enables Giqatilla to move beyond traditional ontological hierarchies – making *Kisse* not merely symbolic, but operative within his cosmology.

This discussion invites a comparison with Ibn Gabirol, who in *Meqor Ḥayyim* describes Will as a simple, all-pervading power. While Giqatilla draws on similar imagery, particularly in his treatment of *Kisse* and the simple Will, closer analysis reveals crucial differences.[162] Thus, contrary to Ibn Gabirol's alleged position on the hypostatic identity of will,[163] Giqatilla maintains its ambiguous characterization.[164] It does not intermediate between God and the created Intellect, but neither is it identical with the primordial One. This philosophical sentiment is summarized by the following assertion: "Do not concern yourself with either those who maintain that the *Kisse* is created, or those who posit, to the contrary, that it is primordial. These and those are [standing] outside."[165] This understanding, I further contend, touches on the ambiguous nature of the act that issues from the One and which, identified with will, is the cause of the intelligible forms. This act

[161] Cf. also the phrasing in *Meqor Ḥayyim* V: I.2. Giqatilla stresses the insubstantial nature of Divine Will by construing *Kisse* primarily in terms of an activity. "The primary *Kisse* implies setting, not in the sense of *yeshivah*, but in the sense of *hityashvut*." In: MS. New York, JTS 1891 (851), fol. 89a. The distinction here is between 'setting' as a noun (*yeshivah*) and 'setting' as a verbal noun (*hityashvut*). Giqatilla's active *yeshivah* construal is sharpened against other interpretations, which understand *yeshivah* as indicating God's eternal and unchanged existence, especially when compared to the movement and changes in the sublunar and translunar realms: "*Yeshivah* implies endurance and eternity without change. This is the meaning of the word whenever attributed to God." See Moshe of Salerno, *Commentary on Guide* 1:11, Laurentian Library, Ms. Plut.II.11, fol. 20a.

[162] Here I differ from Federico Dal-Bo's assertion that, for Giqatilla, "Divine Will or Superior Will mediate(s) between a transcendent God and the world." Federico Dal Bo, "Ibn Gabirol Between Philosophy and Kabbalah: A Comprehensive Insight into the Jewish Reception of Ibn Gabirol," in *Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron): Latin and Hebrew Philosophical Traditions*, ed., Nicola Polloni, *et al*. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2023), 369.

[163] For a hypostatic reading of Ibn Gabirol's Divine Will, presumably situated between God and the Intellect: "The Will occupies a unique position whereby it is distinguished from the first essence. It should be seen as a divine hypostasis, not as a quality of God." In: Schalnger, *Ibn Gabirol*, 243 and passim (translation mine – T.S.). See the supporting sections in *Meqor Ḥayyim* V:17. For a completely different approach, which renders Divine Will in terms of 'desire' rather than hypostatic 'volition', see Pessin, *Theology of Desire*, 60-65. For an overview of the various opinions on Ibn Gabirol's hypostatic will, see Davidovich, *Meqôr Ḫayyîm*, 160-64.

[164] Contrary to Blickstein's assertion (*Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 99) that Giqatilla "posits the existence of a divine, supernal Will which mediates between God and the world […]."

[165] Ibid, 88b. The term *ḥuṣ*, or *mibbaḥuṣ*, is key for Giqatilla and appears throughout both his early and later works. In his early works, it is often used to describe the philosophers who stand outside and are excluded from the 'internal room', or 'swirl around the point.'

is not simply identical with the One, but neither is it hypostatically distinguished therefrom. Again, I maintain that this ambiguity, with respect to both the act and the place of will, is intrinsic to Giqatilla's metaphysics of language.

Drawing on this reasoning, the lower grades which further manifestation of Divine Will are described in Ginnat Egoz as the image of (*demut ha-*) *Kisse*,[166] reflecting the analogical terms by which the primary will pervades Nature.[167] This reframes the Intellect not as a mere emanation from the One, but as the first articulation of Divine Will within the created order.

Between Two *Teloi*: The Laws of Nature and the Will of the Tetragrammaton

The priority of Divine Will over Intellect reflects Giqatilla's position on an issue that was central to his contemporaries, and to Maimonides in particular.[168] Maimonides' position on this matter is notoriously ambiguous, and multiple of his interpreters sought to reconcile the presumed tension between 'will' and 'wisdom', two of the so-called essential attributes of God. Without entering the details of these deliberations, I shall mention several key approaches to this issue. The simple way out of this predicament is to prioritize one principle at the expense of the other. For example, the rationalist rendition of will as a principle of freedom in full conformity with the universal forms and their laws of necessity, thus differentiating will from spontaneity or mere arbitrariness. By this

[166] *GE* 81

[167] *Demut* is among the analogical terms that Giqatilla develops in his early thinking. In *Glosses* (29b), for example, Giqatilla employs *demut* as a principle of ontological symbolism, where Hebrew nouns denote essential meanings (e.g., *maqom*; 'place') by way of *dimayon* ('likeness') to the primary spiritual and immaterial meaning of the term (i.e., God's designation as the source of 'all'). Giqatilla further qualifies this process of ontological resemblance through the equivocal principle of *hash'alah* ('metaphor'). See also: *SN Short* 83*: Bread (***leḥem***) is the foundation of the world […] understand that (***leḥem***)** is in the likeness of (*domeh le-*) ***ḥolam,*** which is the foundation of the upper world and which is the essence of true life. (*'Eṣem ha-ḥayim ha-ʾamittiyyim*.) Compare the principle of *dimayon* between the respective forms of the vowel-point *pattaḥ* and the vowel-letter *he* (*– ṣurat ha-'ot domah le ṣurat ha-tenu'ah*; *SN Short*, 60*). On the distinction between the interiority and exteriority of Hebrew nouns, the latter designated as *dimayon*, see Gloses 20a. For a similar connection between *'erekh* (*relatio*) and *demut,* see Moses Salerno's *Commentary on the Guide* 1:55, Laurentian Library, Ms. Plut.II.11, fol. 73a.

[168] See, for example, *Guide* 3.2.

account, the intelligible forms assume a universe essentially good and necessarily determined by the principles of essential causality. The principle of will concerns not whether this world can be replaced by another imaginable world, but how these intelligible forms, with their laws of causality, are actualized in the form of a cosmos. Jewish Averroists such as Samuel ibn Tibbon continued this line of thought while suggesting that Divine Will is the bringing of the essential and thus necessary forms into existence, and several commentators have construed Maimonides' position in similar terms.[169]

As we have just seen, Giqatilla distinguishes himself from this reductionist view. Surely, he posits the endurance of the cosmos as governed by the intelligible forms—that is, Nature. But he is equally clear that Nature is subordinated to the principle of Divine Will. This metaphysical hierarchy is deliberated early in *Ginnat Egoz*, where he identifies the two principles, Nature and Will, with the respective attributes 'Elohim and the Tetragrammaton. Whereas 'Elohim is the principle of essential causality,[170] the Tetragrammaton epitomizes Divine Will, which is described as empowering Nature.[171] In principle, Divine Will overrides the natural nexus of which the Intellect is the locus, although the universe endures in the particular constitution as originally

[169] See, for example, *Guide* 3:25. These two options reflect distinct metaphysical models regarding the relationship between God and finite beings: One that posits Wisdom as the principle, according to which the act of creation assumes causal necessity, and another that makes Divine Will the governing principle of creation. Attempts to reconcile the supposed tension between these two accounts led scholars in various directions, some of which implied logical (and perhaps metaphysical) binaries like 'matter' and 'form', and 'existence' and 'essence', identifying the principles constituting each of these pairs with the respective attributes of Will and Wisdom. See: Altmann, Essence and Existence, 303-04; Fackenheim, *Possibility*, 313-17, and see his reading (ibid, 328-34) of Maimonides' theological claims. See also Ravitzky, *Hypostasis*, 14-17. Another approach to the priority of will over though was advanced by Strauss, who posited that the will of God marks the absolute perfection of God, and whose actions in (creating) the world are not governed by any form of rational (and thus necessary) causality, and for whom the condition of finite beings, their qualitative attributes, bears no implication regarding the perfection of God's attributes. See Strauss, *Introduction to the Guide*, xlix. Cf. Ravitzky, *Hypostasis*, 14-17; Ivry, *Maimonides and Neoplatonism*, 142.

[170] See Chapter 2. In a way, Giqatilla's treatment of 'Elohim alludes to *Cuzari* 4.1 (226-29). See remarks in Harvey, *Tetragrammaton*, 125-26. On the identity between the name 'Elohim and the Intellect in Ibn Ezra, see Wolfson, *Kol*, 99.

[171] This causally ontological hierarchy between the Tetragrammaton and 'Elohim is commonplace in early Kabbalah. See, for example, *Keter Shem Tov* (ed. A. Jellinek), 45.

founded by Divine Will. Here Giqatilla comes close to Ibn Gabirol's view that "insofar as Divine Will is the power that imparts existence to all, nothing can be done without it,"[172] assuming both the intelligibility of the cosmos and its contingency on will. This process, where the actualization of Divine Will takes a definitive and thus intelligible form, calls for further deliberation.

This prioritization of Will finds linguistic expression in Giqatilla's theology of the Name, where the dynamics of volition are conceptualized through *hazkarah* ('mention') and *hakhraḥah* ('coercion')—terms that translate metaphysical hierarchy into the act of language itself.[173] While *hazkarah* and *hakhraḥah* often signify in Kabbalistic literature practices of theurgic manipulation, whereby divine powers are realized, Giqatilla renders them as principles that epitomize the metaphysical order. The vocalization of the Name, not in the sense of a human theurgic act,[174] 'forces' the principle 'Elohim to order and activate a cosmos in the form of Nature:

> We have informed you that the Name YHWH is the secret of KW (כ״ו=26 = יהו״ה), and the name 'ELoHIM is PW (פ״ו=86=אלה״ים), and PW (פ״ו) was created by the truth of KW (כ״ו). I thus maintain that the *hazkarah* of KW forces (*makhriaḥ*) PW to act, as you see in the Act of Creation that the work (*melakhah*) is completed through the secret of PW [viz. 'ELoHIM]. This [work], however, is completed by the power that [PW] receives from the truth of KW, which indeed causes PW the act. Thus know: KW forces, PW acts.[175]

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[172] *Meqor Ḥayyim* 1:2, 2.

[173] See also Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 78-79. More on *hazkarah* in Chapter 4.

[174] I generally accept Anet Martini's assertion, found in *Punctuation*, 36, that Giqatilla's early writing "do not feature any evidence of a meditative or recitative element, […] not even a hint of an ecstatic or visionary intention." Instead, terms that are traditionally associated with mystical practices, like *hazkarah* or *shimmush*, are rendered theologically as principles of the linguistic-creative process. For a similar restricted approach to the magic of Names in the case of Abraham Abulafia, see Moshe Idel, *Magic of the Divine Names*, 79-96. Cf. the comparison (p. 91-93) of Giqatilla and Abulafia. Idel contends that unlike Abulafia, Giqatilla was comfortable with the mystical connotation of the term *hakhraḥah*, and ambivalent or perhaps open to its magical dimensions, which he received from the teachings of Barukh Togarmi. In my reading, however, he completely revises the meaning of this term, divesting it of its mystical connotation. See also Jonathan Garb's response to Idel in *Mysticism and Magic*, 103-04, which promotes a sublimated ('dialectic') construal of Giqatilla's presumed interest in magic.

[175] *GE* 294. The idea that KW is the ground of PW is elaborated in *GE* 28 in two steps. First, KW (כ״ו) is the name YHWH by way of *gematria* (כ״ו=26=יהו״ה), whereas PW is the name ELoHIM which is the principle of Nature (86=פ״ו=הטבע=אלה״ים). Next, the letters KW, that is כ״ו, are written, in full in the form of כ״ף ו״ו – the middle two letters (פ״ו; PW) enclosed in and carried by the external two letters (כ״ו; KW). Cf. *Glosses* fol. 24b. See also Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 22.

This passage exemplifies Giqatilla's onomatological method—that is, the interrelationship between the divine names and their ontological implications—but more critically, it situates the discussion within a broader metaphysical tension—between Will (KW) and Intellect (PW)—that organizes his entire conception of cosmic order. The verb *makhriaḥ* ('forces') appears again in Part Two of *Ginnat Egoz*, where the relationship between KW and PW is replaced by straightforward metaphysical terms: "Know that God's Proper Name (*ha-shem ha-meyuḥad*) brings [the sphere] into existence and forces (*makhriaḥ*) its circular motion. The Name establishes [the sphere] (*masimo*) as Nature, as we have indicated."[176] The simple Name is the power by which the motion of the sphere, presumably the tenth intelligible, endures. The Name is the power that forces Nature, not antithetical thereto.

Giqatilla's stance is somewhat balanced: he resists philosophical accounts that absolutize Nature but acknowledges their partial truth. Nature, as the philosophers argue, does endure through stable causal laws, but for Giqatilla, this endurance is itself a product of prior divine volition.[177] While disapproving of the philosophers for assuming that "Nature governs the world,"[178] he also states that the philosophers are 'partial admitters' (*modim be-miqṣat*), for they are correct in assuming the endurance of Nature and its unchangeable laws of causality.[179] Still, the philosophers are also 'partial deniers' (*kofrim be-miqṣat*), in that they deny the metaphysical priority of a principle other than Nature.[180] In acknowledging that the philosophers are partly correct, we should also recall that for Giqatilla, the forms associated with the Intellect are not a given, in the sense

[176] *GE* 339.
[177] See the remark in Moshe H. Weiler, "R. Yosef Gikatilla's Kabbalah Doctrine," in *Temirin: Sources and Studies in Kabbalah and Hasidism*, ed. Yisrael Weinstock (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1972), 162.
[178] *GE* 293. The expression *ha-Teva manhig 'et ha-'Olam* is noteworthy. Cf. Idel, *Deus Sive Natura*.
[179] Cf. Giqatilla, Two Poems, 86 (line 14): "And the order of Nature ceaselessly endures – For His Kingdom to be perfected / And the paths of Torah depend on– Pure miracle, and Nature on wisdom."
[180] *GE* 86.

that they do not preexist potentially. The grounding of forms through Will is instantiated in the very linguistic structure of divine names, as we now examine.

Giqatilla does not explicitly address whether his hypothesis of possible alternative worlds implies that such worlds would obey their own causal necessity or negate causal necessity altogether. His writings, however, suggest a middle ground, structured by the distinction between cosmology and theology. Cosmologically, the world manifests essential causality and coherence: it is not governed by arbitrary Divine Will but by stable natural laws. Giqatilla's use of Aristotelian categories—efficient, final, and formal causes—implies that "world" by definition denotes an intelligible, ordered reality. Accordingly, he describes 'Elohim, the name associated with Nature, as the *telos* (*takhlit*) of all beings except God: "The true being of all existents consists of the name Elohim, by which reason it is their true *telos* (*'amitat takhlitam*)."[181]

This pertains to the cosmological order. Metaphysically, however, the existence of the world and its forms depends on a deeper level of causality, rooted in Divine Will.[182] Giqatilla signals this through the same term, *takhlit*, now applied to the letter *'aleph*—the One—described as "the *telos* of all letters and numbers." Since letters and numbers constitute the world's intelligible framework,[183] Giqatilla proposes two levels of *telos*: the cosmological, represented by *'Elohim*, and the metaphysical, represented by *'aleph*. The latter grounds the former. This dual structure recalls, in a qualified way, Ibn Gabirol's distinction between the intelligible cosmos and its ultimate metaphysical source.

> Question: "Does human existence have an end (viz. *telos*)?" [...] Answer: "Since motion, whereby all beings are created, is contingent on Will, the motion of those beings is contingent on the motion of that Will by necessity."[184]

[181] *GE* 36-37.
[182] For a somewhat different, albeit related reading of the two *teloi*, see Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 32-38.
[183] Cf. *SN Long*, fols. 175b, 177a.
[184] *Meqor Ḥayyim* 1:2, 2.

To clarify how these two levels of *telos*—cosmological (Nature) and metaphysical (Will)—relate, Giqatilla distinguishes two dynamics. First, there is the active Will that grants unity to the causal order of Nature. Here Giqatilla shows that what gives unity to the intelligible forms themselves is the act of Divine Will.

Giqatilla's linguistic theory stresses this point. It is through the anatomy of divine Names themselves, that the supremacy of Will is articulated. This is epitomized through the parsing of *'Elohim* into *'ELeM* (אל״ם) and *YaH* (י״ה). In Chapter 2 we saw how, reflecting a long tradition about the function of sound in letters, 'ELeM relates the state of muteness (*'ilmot*; אלמות) of the consonants.[185] In addition, Giqatilla construes 'ELeM as indicating the compositional order of the cosmos under the natural laws of causality. On this reading, 'ELeM is the verbal root of *me'almim* (מאלמים), as in 'binding sheaves' (Gen. 37.7), which further connotes the compositional nature of cosmic order governed by the Universal Intellect.[186] The power that makes this process possible is the sememe YaH, a derived form of the Tetragrammaton which phonologically expresses the direct action by God's will and which Giqatilla considers the linguistic cause (*sod*) of essential constitution (*pe'ulah*).[187] Hence 'ELeM-YaH (אל״ם י״ה), or 'ELoHIM (אלהי״ם).

Having clarified the priority of Will, we can now return to a central question deferred earlier: how does Giqatilla understand the relationship between Will and Wisdom, particularly in relation to the identity of the Intellect? The idea that the principle of Will is not only compatible with Nature, but indeed grants its ultimate form reveals a more nuanced approach which also concerns the superlative Intellect mentioned earlier. We have seen in our discussion on *Kisse* the construal of 'the supreme grade' as consisting of primary Will and the holy Intellect (*Sekhel Qadosh*),

[185] *GE* 71, 75, 86. A similar formula appears in de León's *Sefer ha-Ne'elam* (ed. A. Bar Asher), 116.
[186] *GE* 87.
[187] See *Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 44b, *GE* 155. See our discussion in Chapter 2 on YHW.

interchangeably.[188] This presumably discloses an ambiguity regarding the identity of the Divine Will, designated both as cause of the Intellect and identified therewith. Placing this ambiguity in its correct context reveals a basic tenet of Giqatilla's thought.

When identified with the simple volitive act, specifically as its primary manifestation, Intellect is typically qualified in superlative terms, e.g., 'complete-', 'internal-', 'holy-', or 'true-' Intellect. Conversely, when speaking of the intelligible essential forms (*Ṣurot Nifradot*) that govern the natural order, as the effect of the primary act, Intellect is mentioned unqualified. This distinction, I suggest, aligns with the basic connection of terms—between language and Divine Will—that is used to describe the constitutive act of the Intellect, the act itself simple, spontaneous, and not defined by essential terms.

The nature of this internal Intellect will become clearer as we proceed, but we can already make some hypothetical points on this issue. First, Giqatilla redefines the terms by which 'will' and 'wisdom', *qua* metaphysical principles or divine attributes, are to be understood. Thus, while Intellect in the sense of Nature, or 'Elohim, is clearly subjugated to the principle of Will, it is also distinguished from what 'wisdom' truly is. On this level, 'wisdom' and 'will' presumably coexist as complementary aspects of the same principles. A further indication as to the nature of this wisdom is the identity drawn between *Maḥshavah* and *Ḥeshbon* ('calculation'). Giqatilla warns us not to interpret *Maḥshavah* in its common sense, viz., thinking intellect, for God has no such thought "which would otherwise imply the renewal of His own will," in the sense that Divine Will would be dependent on the objects it is directed toward. *Ḥeshbon* is key for Giqatilla. It is largely

[188] See discussion in MS. New York, JTS 851, fol. 89a: "Thus, 'in appearance like sapphire' (viz.,) in the likeness of Intellect 'the semblance of a throne', the likeness of *yesod* ('foundation') *aleph* (יסו"ד +א' =כס"א), which is the secret of the primordial will. You will thus find that the secret of the will and of the holy Intellect (*ha-Sekhel ha-Qaddosh*) are named *Kisse*, for Intellect is the secret of the Throne itself […] and that Throne is the will and the source and the origin. It is pure light."

associated with *gematria*, one of the three pillars of *Ginnat Egoz* and 'paths of Torah',[189] likewise implied by the work's title (GiNaT; ***g****ematria*, ***n****otariqon*, ***t****emurah*). *Ḥeshbon* includes all numerical patterns. Primarily through the secret numerical value of letters and words, which likewise extend and indeed control their semantic value. But *Ḥeshbon* also includes the category of quantity, primarily cosmic time and measure.

To summarize this section, I maintain that the intelligible forms, by Giqatilla's account, are subjugated to a spontaneity that is linguistic in principle. Spontaneity is a primary feature of a metaphysics grounded in speech, even if, philosophically speaking, this idea appears to be a simplistic evasion of the burden to explain the emergence of these forms. Giqatilla deliberates the connection between speech and spontaneity through the issue of divine volition, which he identifies as 'supreme will' (*Ḥefeṣ 'Elyon*).

The Intelligible World and the Garment of Light

In Chapter 2 we considered the analogical model that Giqatilla and Isaac ibn Latif infer from the sublunar elements: fire, air, and water. I suggested that this analogy operates horizontally and vertically, that is, both as inference by similarity of principles in parallel domains (horizontal), and as principles connected within a causal scheme (vertical). We should recall that for Giqatilla, the causal relationship between the elements is formed by the principle of simplicity and motion, such that water, which is the lowest and least simple element, is causally analogous to the element of air and, further, to fire. From this perspective, the attribution of the three elements to the macrocosm expresses the causal relationship between the three worlds—intelligible, spherical and sublunar—each epitomized by one of the elements and causally related to the others.

[189] *GE* 12.

Concomitantly, the causal relationship between the three principles is also applied to each of the three worlds.[190] While each world is epitomized by a particular principle that designates its place in the broader cosmos (e.g., 'fire' for the intelligible world) it also consists of an inner dynamic epitomized by the three principles. This twofold vertical relationship is paradigmatically manifested in immaterial fire. Fire represents the ontological priority of the intelligible world in relation to the spherical ('air') and sublunar ('water') worlds.[191] But it also marks, within the intelligible world itself, the highest of the three intelligible grades.

The priority of fire follows the designation of the intellect as the primary principle from which all existents are generated. This sentiment is explicit in Ibn Latif:

> Know that the inclusion of all beings in the first created being is attested in scripture through the word *'olam*. [The first being] is the form of the world and its endurance (*ṣurat ha-'olam we-qiyyumo*).[192]

In *Ginnat Egoz* Giqatilla equates fire to light, considering them synonyms describing the intelligible world.[193] He further distinguishes three species (*minim*) of light, as we shall see presently. First, however, we shall consider the specific role of fire in relation to the ontological order, on the one hand, and to the simple act that constitutes the Intellect, on the other. This twofold relationship is explored in his oblique remarks on Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot in Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*.

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[190] See *GE* 449.

[191] Cf. the rendition of fire and air in terms of form and matter in Ibn Gabirol's *Meqor Ḥayyim* (5:6; 176), and in Ibn Falaquera's *Liqqutim* (234).

[192] *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 20. Cf. Ibn Latif, *Ginzei ha-Melekh*, in *Kokhvei Yizhak*, vol. 28 (Vienna 1862), 13: "The first created being is in all, and all is in him" (*Hu ba-kol we-ha-kol bo*).

[193] On the equation of fire and light, see *GE* 169, 186. Ibn Latif maintains the distinction between the two, considering fire inferior to simple primordial light, identifying light with the primordial being and as the cause of fire, viz., separate intellects. See *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 9.

The Light of the Intellect and the *Ḥashmal*

The vision of the Chariot assumes a central place in Giqatilla's later theosophical writings,[194] though its thematic traces are already discernible in his early reflections on the various lights associated with the Intellect, with specific regard to the place of fire in relation to *Ḥashmal*.[195] In Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, and further in the commentary on Genesis attributed to him,[196] Giqatilla construes the principle of *Ḥashmal* as signifying two ontologically distinct principles:

> Consider how *'Ein ha-Ḥashmal* is the secret of *ḥolam* which moves the upper world, that is, the intelligible world (*'Olam ha-Sekhel*). *Ḥashmal* [by contrast] is the secret of splendor (*Sod ha-Zohar*) that is continued by the blessed Supreme Will. [Scripture also] says 'in the likeness of *ha-Ḥashmal* out of the midst of fire' (*ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal mitokh ha-'esh*), which is virtually the secret of *shewa-qameṣ* (i.e., *ḥatef-qameṣ*;[197] 'reduced *qameṣ*') as continued from the secret of *ḥolam*. [*Shewa-qamaṣ*] resembles *ḥolam* in vocalization. It is not identical to *ḥolam* but it is in the likeness of (*ke-'ein*) *ḥolam*. That is, it is in the likeness of (*ke-'ein ha-*) *Ḥashmal*, not the source of (*lo 'ein ha-*) *ḥashmal*.[198]

The meaning and function of the vowels are not the subject of the present chapter,[199] but they offer structural cues for unfolding the dense citation and its implied ontological distinctions. First, there are the two poles of *ḥolam* and *shewa-qameṣ,* designating *'ein ha-Ḥashmal* and *ke-'ein ha-*

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[194] Primarily in his Commentary on Ezekiel's Chariot. See also Giqatilla's later theosophical *Sha'ar ha-Niqqud*, written in part as a commentary on the secret of Ḥashmal. See *Sha'ar ha-Niqqud*, ed., Orna R. Weiner (Tel-Aviv: Idra, 2016), 104-19.

[195] His few remarks on Ezekiel's vision appear to anticipate his more systematic-theosophical account of it. Ronald Goethchel argued for the reception of Jacob Hacohen's *Commentary on Ezekiel* in Giqatilla's theosophical Secret of the *Ḥashmal*, pointing out textual parallels. Among these parallels is the etymological construal of the variations on the word *Ḥashmal* in Ezekiel – the definite and the feminine, i.e., *ha-Ḥashmal* and *Ḥashmalah*. Jacob Hacohen construes these three, *Ḥashmal, ha-Ḥashmal* and *Ḥashmalah*, as referring to the *sefirot*: *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret* (*Ḥashmal*), *Neṣaḥ*, *Hod*, *Yesod* (*ha-Ḥashmal*), and *Malkhut* (*Ḥashmalah*). This account is paraphrased in Giqatilla's theosophical commentary, but allusions to it appear in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and *Ginnat Egoz*, where *ḥashmalah* is distinguished from the source of *Ḥashmal* (*'ein ha-Ḥashmal*). See *SN Short* 28*, SH Long, fol. 180b; *GE* 442. For the adaptations of Jacob Hacohen's in Giqatilla's theosophical Secret of the *Ḥashmal*, see citations and discussion in Goetschel, *Prophecy*, 228. That said, there are distinct differences between Hacohen's theosophical teachings and Giqatilla's **early** non-theosophical works regarding the *Ḥashmal* doctrine. See footnotes below.

[196] *GE* 434-53; *Commentary on Genesis*, fols. 40a-b.

[197] On *shewa-qameṣ* and *ḥatef-qameṣ,* see Geoffrey Khan, trans. and ed., *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020), 313. *SN Long* (fol. 181a) mentions *qameṣ-ḥatef* instead of *shewa-qameṣ*. See further below and in Chapter 4.

[198] *GE* 435. Cf. *SN Long*, fol. 180b. On the interaction between *ḥolam* and *qameṣ-ḥatef,* see also *SN Long*, fol. 181a.

[199] See Chapter 4.

ḥashmal, respectively. *Ḥolam* is the principle (*'ein*) of the *ḥashmal*, in and of itself prior to the Intellect.[200]

Elsewhere Giqatilla uses the image of the sphere and its inner point (*'ein ha-galgal*), construing the inner point, the *'ein*, as "foundation, power, and soul of that sphere."[201] His treatment of *ḥolam* employs this same motif, with the only caveat that "while the point of the sphere is situated in the center, (*'ein ha-galgal ba-'emṣa*) the *'ein* of *ḥolam* is above. Whereas *ḥolam* represents the principle itself, positioned above rather than at the center, *shewa-qameṣ* functions as the image or likeness of this principle.[202] This modifying function draws on the grammatical literature of the time, which noted the phonological resemblance between *ḥatef-* (or *shewa-*) *qameṣ* and *ḥolam*.[203]

Adapting this to the linguistic-metaphysical plane, Giqatilla expresses the difference between the two by suggesting that *ḥolam* represents the initiating act of motion, intangible and invisible in itself, whereas *ḥatef-qameṣ* reflects (*ke-'ein*) the simple principle, its source (*ha-ḥashmal*). Giqatilla construes the relationship between the two—the image and its source—through the etymological meaning of *ḥatef-qameṣ*, the vowel point associated with the image:

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[200] The differentiation of *'ein Ḥashmal* as the supreme metaphysical principle is commonplace in Castilian Kabbalah. See, for example, the remarks by Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen in *Ezekiel's Chariot Commentaries to Ezekiel's Chariot of R. Eleazar of Worms and R. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen*, ed. Asi-Farber-Ginat et al. (Angeles: Cherub Press, 2004), 89.

[201] *GE* 439.

[202] Again, the categorical role of *ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal* is assumed and follows a similar typology found in the available Kabbalistic commentaries. In Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen's *Commentary* (ibid, 91), the mimetic function of *ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal* is attributed to the Chariot. Still, contrary to Giqatilla, he does not distinguish *Ḥashmal* from *ke-'ein ha-ḥashmal*. Rather, in Hacohen's account (ibid, 100) *ke-'ein* ('like'/'as') refers to the Supreme *Kavod*, in the sense that *ḥashmal*, placed below the *Kavod* and associated with the Chariot, is in the likening of that *Kavod* (or *vice versa*), yet ontologically distinguished therefrom.

[203] The connection between *ḥatef*-qameṣ and *ḥolam* has been assumed by many of the medieval grammarians, on the premise that their pronunciation is similar. See David Kimhi's *Sefer Mikhlol*, ed. Y. Rittenberg (Lyck, 1862), fol. 136a. See also Richard C. Steiner, "Vowel Length in Hebrew: Descriptions and Theories from Jerome to Judah Halevy in the Light of Religious Polemics," *Meḥqarim Belašon*, vol. 8 (2001): 211-12. For Ibn Ezra, on the other hand, *ḥatef-qameṣ* is interchangeable with *ḥolam* but also with *shuruq*, in the case of a word in a construct state (e.g., קֹדֶשׁ with *ḥolam* becomes הַקָּדָשִׁים with *ḥatef-qameṣ*). See Ibn Ezra, *Moznaim*, 42; *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 122. Cf. *GE* 435: "Know that the vowel-point *shewa-qameṣ* is also called *qameṣ-ḥatef*."

> *Shewa-qameṣ* is also called *ḥatef-qameṣ*,[204] for this vowel attests to the persistence of motion from the true *yesod*. The end of all motion is marked by *qameṣ*, for *qameṣ* signifies clenching (*qemiṣa*), that is, conclusion or closure (*ne'ila*). Thus, *qameṣ* testifies to the conclusion of all motion. And when motion reaches termination, it is instantly resumed with swiftness and begins to move once more,[205] as at first.[206]

In *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, Giqatilla further equates *shewa-qameṣ*—that is, *ke-'ein ha-ḥashmal*—with the principle of Nature, namely, the motion proceeding from the intelligible sphere down to the sublunar world.[207] The linguistic explanation for this equation is that the vowel pattern presented by *shewa* is 'materially' enough to be pronounced independently,[208] without the aid of a consonant. By contrast, the pronunciation of the intangible *ḥolam* requires attachment to a material consonant.[209] The twofold analogy—to bodily motion and metaphysical motion—is clear.

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[204] On the prevalence of *ḥatef-qameṣ* in Ashkenazi grammar, instead of *qameṣ-ḥatef*, see editor's comment in Ilan Eldar, "Shimshon ha-Naqdan's Ḥibbur ha-Qonim," *Leshonenu*, 43:2 (1979), 203, n. 22.

[205] Cf. David Qimḥi's *Mikhlol*: "When not followed by a *dagesh* or *shwa* a quiescent, the *qames-ḥatuf* is sometimes compounded with *shewa* to indicate its short or hurried sound." See William Chomsky, *David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol) Systematically Presented and Critically Annotated* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1952), 13

[206] *GE* 436. Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah, a text closely associated with de-Leon, adopts and modifies this threefold connection of *ḥolam*, *shewa*, and *qameṣ*. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the doctrine developed in sources like Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah prioritizes the *qameṣ* over *ḥolam*, establishing the former as epitomizing the deity. Accordingly, the *Shewa-qameṣ*, which Giqatilla here employs as a discrete vowel symbol, is there divided into two, *qameṣ* – referring to the deity, and *shewa* – symbolizing the activity of the Intellect which ceaselessly imparts motion in the cosmic order ("like a servant running before the lord.") *Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah* also gives us a clue as to the specific connection between *shewa* and motion, which Giqatilla, too, appears to assume in our cited quotation. The Hebrew consonantal unit *sh-w-a* can be construed as either *shewa*, or *she-ba* ('that which comes'). See *Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah*, fols. 191a-b (217-18 in Bar-Asher's edition). The characterization of *shewa* as "a servant running before the lord" appears also in *Ginnat Egoz* (458), but it is used there to locate the *shewa* as the immobile sign which, in principle, designates the lowest of the cosmic grades. See also Martini, *Punctuation*, 110-11. Giqatilla (*GE* 456), too, construes *sh-w-a* as *she-ba*, and the sense of "receiving that which appears," and this touches on an important feature of *shewa* – this marker has no phonetic value *a se*, but rather functions as a so-called valence-dependent variable. Its value is determined by the specific vowel-point attached to it, for example, *shewa +qameṣ*. More on this in Chapter 4. We should note that the difference between the two etymological interpretations of *sh-w-a*, as either *shewa* or *she-ba*, reflects the two transcriptions used by the Hebrew grammarians when referring to *shewa* – שווא or שבא. Ibn Ezra uses the former while further supporting his phonological treatment of *shewa*, by which account it lacks vocalic value *per se*. Thus, the Hebrew שווא (*shaw*) can also be read as conveying nullity or nothingness. See Bacher, *Ibn Ezra the Grammarian*, 54, n. 5. On the different names of *shewa* and their etymological meanings, in Hebrew linguistic tradition, see Dotan, *The Names of the Sheva*, 13-30.

[207] The connection between *shewa* and natural motion is speculated by Ibn Ezra as follows: "*Shewa* is derived from *nishtaweh* ('equated', form the root *sh-w-a*), for it symbolizes the upper (nine) sphere, the motion of which is equal." (*Sefer Ṣaḥot*,10) And later (p.16) "It is likely that (the *shewa*) has two (graphic points) considering that the uppermost sphere has two major motions." That is, the daily twenty-four hour cycle of motion, and the slower cycle of the celestial spheres (precession of the equinoxes, west to east), completing one cycle in approximately 36,000 years.

[208] Cf. Chomsky, *Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar*, ibid.

[209] *SN Short*, 29*.

Implicit in the quoted citation there is still a third mode, positioned between *'ein ha-Ḥashmal* and *ke-'ein ha-ḥashmal*, namely, *Ḥashmal* itself. In the above citation, Giqatilla does not allot this middle principle a phonetic identity, but he does so in the following discussion. There, *Ḥashmal* is marked by the combined vowel points *ḥolam* and *ṣere*. Whereas *ḥolam* is the origin, in and of itself beyond determinacy and apprehension, the vowel point *ṣere* marks the Intellect which, though simple, implies the duality of *ḥiddush* and *ṣurah*—renewal and form. This duality, also termed *binyan*, is figured by the graphic shape of *ṣere*, consisting of two horizontally adjacent points beneath the letter. The combination of *ḥolam* with *ṣere* thus signifies *ḥashmal*, that is, the continuation of motion from the hidden source (*'ein*) into the Intellect.

These distinctions notwithstanding, there is reason to assume that *Ḥashmal* and *ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal* signify two aspects of the same principle, namely, the Intellect. Thus, the combination of *ḥolam* and sere notate the continuation of the Intellect through the simple unified act, whereas *shewa-qameṣ* simply epitomizes the actuality of the Intellect as governing the cosmic order. On this reading, the adverb *ke-* ('as') of *ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal* refers to *Ḥashmal* itself. *Ḥashmal*, that is, the Intellect, is in the likening of (*ke-*) the source (*'ein ha-ḥashmal*).

If my reading of Giqatilla's *ke-'ein ha-Ḥashmal* is correct, it affords us a linguistic alternative to the twofold characterization of the Intellect as the Universal Form that simultaneously turns inward towards its source. To recapitulate our remarks in Chapter 2, this twofold characterization of the Intellect can be detected in Giqatilla's more theosophically oriented *Glosses* in connection with the principle *Kavod* which, like the *'Aravot* of the diurnal sphere, consists of two aspects—outwardness and inwardness, 'the mystery of conjunction'. [210] By

[210] Glosses, fol. 30b in connection with *'Aravot*. See our remarks in the Introduction. See also Vajda *Deux Chapitres*, 656-67. See the discussion in Chapter 2 about the general twofold scheme of the Intellect in Maimonides and commentators.

contrast, the image that emerges from *Ginnat Egoz* renders this outer and inner distinction in terms of a process of linguistic activity which leaves little room for the twofold emanationist scheme.

The Intellect and the Emanation of Light

Our remarks on Giqatilla's *Ḥashmal* allow us to better establish the role of light. In his early *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, specifically in the short recension,[211] Giqatilla portrays the primordial origin—the source of the Intellect—in terms of simple and primordial light, echoing similar accounts in theosophical traditions.[212] In *Ginnat Egoz*, however, he reconfigures this framework: the first light is associated with the Intellect, marking the beginning of the created ontological order, while the simple source, denoted by ḥolam, functions as the cause of that light,[213] itself 'standing' prior to the emanative scheme of lights.

The shift with respect to the doctrine of light is reflected also in the *Commentary on Genesis* which bears close doctrinal and terminological affinity to *Ginnat Egoz*. There Giqatilla asserts that "[the word] *'or* (Gen. 1.3) denotes the light of the beginning of creation (*'Or Reshit ha-Ḥiddush*). All succeeding levels, heaven and earth, were generated from its true existence."[214] This assertion is followed by a short exposé which aligns with the designation of light in *Ginnat Egoz* as essentially a function of the created order.[215] This primary light, termed *'Or ha-Sekhel*, is

[211] Specifically in the short recension. See The Russian State Library, MS Ginsburg 179, fol. 65b; The National Library of France, MS Paris, hébr. 774, fol. 52a; The National Library of France, Ms. Paris, hébr. 1092, fol. 141b; The Bavarian State Library, MS. Cod.hebr. 11, fol. 304a; The Jewish Theological Seminary, MS. New York, 839, fol. 124b. Compare this with the Long recension in The Apostolic Library, MS. Vatican ebr.603, fol. 192b-193a and The Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich hebr.54, fol. 279b-280a. The difference between the two recensions concerns also the identification of *levush* with either *ḥolam* (Short Recension) or the Intellect, the latter governed by *ḥolam*. More on this below.
[212] *SN Short* 79*-80*.
[213] *GE* 421.
[214] Comm. on Gen, fol. 39b.
[215] On the possible traces, in this regard, of Barukh Togarmi's notion of the Intellect in *Ginnat Egoz*, see the remarks by Asi Farber in *Fragment*, 160, n. 5.

associated with the Universal Intellect, "the principle of created existence."[216] In both *Ginnat Egoz* and the *Commentary on Genesis*, the connection between light and the intelligible realm is further inferred from the repeated decree *yehi 'or* ("there shall be light"), where *yehi* stands for renewed existence—as we discussed earlier in connection with *hawyah*—and *'or* is the light of the intelligible forms constituted by that creative principle.[217]

Following this intelligible light are two lesser lights, described as 'light of splendor' (*'or ha-zohar*), and 'celestial light' (*'or ha-shimmush*).[218] They are further described as species, differentiated from one another by their respective qualities, while partaking in the primary light as their common genus.[219] This threefold scheme of light is familiar from earlier Neoplatonic sources, particularly in the *Theology of Aristotle* (long recension) and in the so-called *Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist*. Like the *Theology*, Giqatilla describes the primary light as attached to *hawwayah* alone which, recalling his remarks on *yehi 'or*, is the simple act of speech by which existence is imparted.[220] Similarly, the lesser lights, *zohar* and *shimmush*, are said to emanate from the primary

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[216] *GE* 77. Cf. *GE* 74. The designation of the Intellect as *'Or ha-Sekhel* maintains the schematic allusion to theosophical doctrines, like Jacob Hacohen's, which identify *'Or ha-Sekhel* with the *sefirah* of *Binah*, the equivalent of the Universal Intellect. See source in Scholem, *Qabbalot*, 69. In his commentary on the vowel-points (*Qabbalot*, 103) Hacohen distinguishes *'Or ha-Sekhel* as the third light, the primary two being *ḥokhma*, described also as the power of intellection (*haskel*), and the hidden *Keter*. This, of course, marks Giqatilla's shift, as he designates the Intellect primary among the lights (*'Or ha-Sekhel*), not emanating from a primordial Pleromic light.

[217] *GE* 72.

[218] *GE* 74: "The third light, *'or ha-sShimmush*, is continued after the (second light) *'Or ha-Zohar*, as is it written: "And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth." (Gen 1.17) Cf. The terminology in *Ṣurat Olam* (Ch. 9, fol. 137a): "*'Or ha-Shemesh* emanates from the light of the Throne for the endurance of the natural world and its perfection." See also *GE* 68-69; 72-73.

[219] *GE* 68, 74, 79.

[220] *GE* 74: "Contemplate the emanation of these three lights from one another. The primary light, named *'Or ha-Sekhel*, is conjoined with Being only. The second light, *'Or ha-Zohar*, continues from *'Or ha-Sekhel*. […] The third light, *'or ha-Shimmush*, is continued by *'Or ha-Zohar*." Note that in this context, *hawwayah* is attributed to the act of speech, the decree *yehi* by which *'or* is then continued (*yehi 'or*), as indicated above (See *GE* 72). Compare this with the *Theology of Aristotle* (Book X), in *Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist* (ed. S.M. Stern), 90: "The beginning of every light which emanates from a source of light is more powerful than its end, and the middle partakes of both extremities. On account of this, the light which emanates from the intellect has three degrees: a higher, joined to the Word, which is the pure light and the unmixed brilliance, and a lower and a middle degree." See Stren's synoptic format (p. 95) with the variations between the *Theology* and *Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist* with regard to the source of primary light.

light, of which they are species.[221] The qualification of light as the principle of the created order underscores Giqatilla's doctrine of creation. This squares with the designation of fire as 'the beginning of the Will' (*Reshit ha- Ḥefeṣ*),[222] meaning the first actualization of Divine Will, an idiom used in reference to the simple Intellect as well.[223]

Giqatilla's doctrine of light contrasts with his contemporary Kabbalistic accounts. Jacob ben Sheshet, for example, identifies the light of the Intellect as generated by the coupling of primordial matter with the radiance of primordial form,[224] with each successive intelligible level serving as a modified manifestation of this simple expression. Ibn Latif, too, postulates a "primordial intelligible light" (*'Or Sikhli Qadmon*) that is the source of the Universal Intellect, the latter identified as the "first created being, the Great Prince (*ha-Nivrah ha-Rishon, ha-Sar ha-Gadol*)."[225] In *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, he further connects created beings to fire, thereby distinguishing both from primordial light: "[T]he primary angelic grade is referred to by fire [...] It includes and carries all three cosmic realms."[226] The notion of primordial light, presumably superior to fire, relates Ibn Latif's principle of primordial matter—the pure splendor (*ha-Zohar ha-Zakh*) and sublime light—which unites with supreme form and generates the Intellect, the so-called fire.[227]

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[221] *GE* 68, 74, 79.
[222] *GE* 170. Cf. *GE* 292: "You should know in this manner that fire exists in His hidden sanctuary blessed be He, for it (viz. fire) is the beginning of will."
[223] *GE* 77.
[224] See, for example, *Meshiv Devarim Nekoḥim*, 117-18, 121-22. Ben Sheshet distinguishes also between the form of the spheres (*galaglim*) and the form the planets (*kokḥavim*), thereby arriving at five forms altogether.
[225] Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 45a: "[T]he primary amongst the angelic grades is termed fire [...] It carries and includes all three cosmic grades."
[226] *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 45a. See *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 22.
[227] *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 6. See Sarah Heller-Wilensky, "Isaac Ibn Latif: Philosopher or Kabbalist?" in: A. Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and. Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 204: "Whereas in his *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* Latif follows Maimonides' view that the angels are 'pure forms,' he seems later to have changed his mind. Thus we find that in his later works he accepts the well-known principle (of Gabirol) that the spiritual substances are composed of both matter and form." Elsewhere, Heller-Wilensky explicitly equates Ibn Latif's shift to Giqatilla's reconsideration of primal matter. Idem, *Isaac Ibn Latif's Sources*, 21. We should qualify Wilensky's statement by the reference to primordial matter in *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* 2.2 (fol. 55b): "Were God's governance of

The issue of light and fire is further elaborated through the notion of *'or levush*, 'the light of God's garment', presented in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer as the source whence heavens were created.[19] The image of light and garment is central to Kabbalistic cosmogenic discussions.[228] Naḥmanides, to whom Giqatilla refers on this subject,[229] construes *'or levush* to indicate creation from pre-existing *hyle*, although the exact connection between *levush* and this *hyle* is dubious.[230] Giqatilla, for his part, disregards primordial matter altogether and accordingly connects *'or levush* to the pure forms.[231] He also considers the twofold function that the garment carries in relationship to the dressed subject, presumably the One—representing and concealing at once: "The separate intellects are called the light of His garment, implying that God is enclothed therewith, for they are nearest to Him blessed be He from all grades of being."[232] Concomitantly, the creation of the Intellect entails a gap with respect to its source—its object of thought and desire.[233]

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lower and upper beings to be removed, their existence would instantly cease; (this is) through to the elimination of the substance that is described by the created speech (i.e., the Intellect), emitted from the primordial matter by which they exist and endure (*ha-mushpa' me-ha-ḥomer ha-rishon she-bo hatmadatam we-qiyyumam*)."

[228] For a comprehensive discussion, see the recent paper by Yinon Kahn, "The Spiritual Garment in Medieval Islamic Mysticism and Kabbalah: A Comprehensive Study of Zoharic Literature and the Writings of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (1165–1240)," *Medieval Encounters* 30 (2024): 432–64.

[229] *GE* 191-94.

[230] See Gottlieb's remarks on the parallel section from *GE* in R. Bahey's Commentary, in *Writings of R. Baheye*, 153. Gottlieb mitigates the identity of the first created being, the *levush*, in terms of primordial matter. Compare this with Werthmann (*Prime Matter*, 253-55), who maintains the Jewish Neoplatonic identity of primal mater. It is worth considering Jacob ben Sheshet's account of *levush*, which Giqatilla was familiar with. Cf. JTS, MS. New York 851, fol. 88b. Ben Sheshet links *'or levush* to the clothing of primal matter with primal form, without implying the enclothing of God, per se. Rather, *levush* describes the process where simple matter begets its primary universal form, also termed the light of God's garment: "I say that the matter that begets the heavenly form alters in its parts in relationship to various forms, transforming (*mitgalgel*) from one form to another, five forms in total. The first of these begotten forms is what they refer to as the light of the garment of God. […]." See *Meshiv Devarim Neḥokhim*, 117.

[231] As noted earlier, *Sefer ha-Niqqud* Short (79*-80*) identifies *levush* with the primordial *ḥolam*. This identification reflects Giqatilla's premature thought, prior to its more systematic nature in *Ginnat Egoz*. We should note, however, the *levush-ḥolam* connection is absent in the long recension of *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.

[232] *GE* 167. See also Gottlieb, *Studie*, 20; Asi-Farber Ginat, *Fragment*, 160 n. 5. The analogy of the *levush* appears also in *Glosses* (fol. 29b), although there Giqatilla further qualifies this analogy: "When the light is proximate to God, blessed be He, it is designated as 'the light of His garment.' This designation, however, pertains solely to the relationship between the light and all existents external to God, not to God Himself. Otherwise, the expression 'light of His garment' would imply that the light encompasses God an impossibility (according to logical necessity), since that which encompasses must be greater than that which it contains (and nothing can be greater than God.)"

[233] *GE* 168, 191; Com., Gen. fol. 40b. See *SN Short*, 80*: "'[*L*]*evusho*', that is, something that is external to Him Blessed be He, for the garment is distinguished from the (clothed) substance itself. Indeed, the garment conceals the substance. […] Hence it is said 'from the light of His garment' for the existent is canceled in the garment, and the

Giqatilla's construal of levush is further explicated against Ibn Latif's doctrine.[234] In *Ṣurat 'Olam*, *'or levush* designates primordial matter and form, the substantial unity of which is the first created being.[235] Ibn Latif associates levush with the supreme grade which, if we accept Adiel Zimran's suggestion, describes a dynamic process within the deity itself; an internal process that aligns with the description of primordial matter and form as two eternal principles or aspects that are prior to the creation of the Intellect.[236] Their dual characterization notwithstanding, primordial form and matter, identified also with primary light, constitute a simple principle that is unified with God: "[T]he primordial light and the supreme primordial form [...] are synonyms (*shemot nirdafim*) signifying one thing, absolutely simple (*pasut be-takhlit ha-pshitut*)."[237] Similarly, for Ibn Latif, the first created being is said to emanate from the levush of God.

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light is revealed in the garment." And in *GE* 203, in connection with the *Pargod* ('veil'): "[T]he act of renewal (*ha-ḥiddush*) is the veil (*ha-Pargod we-ha-masakh*) that separates the conceived subject from the knower (*mavdil bein ha-masig u-vein ha-musag*)." Here Giqatilla reflects the spirit of Ibn Latif's Sha'ar ha- Shamayim Short (attributed to Ibn Latif): "The meaning of *levush* is a secret, for a garment is both separated from and most proximate to the clothed subject. (*Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim Short*, published in *Kerem Ḥemed* 4, 9) See also *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 15; *Sha'ar ha-Shamaim* (Standard) I:14 (ed. Zimran), 63-64. Cf. 66: "*levush* is an epithet for the angles […] for the garment is the place (*ha-'ana*) most proximate to the subject." On the authorship of SH Short and its attribution to Ibn Latif, see Sarah Heller-Wilensky, "The Problem of Authorship of the Treatise Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim ascribed to Abraham Ibn Ezra," (Hebrew) *Tarbitz*, 32:3 (1963), 277-95. On the possible influence of Ibn Latif's *levush* on Giqatilla, see idem, "The Dialectical Influence of Maimonides on Isaac Ibn Latif and Early Spanish *Kabbalah*," (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 1988, 303, n. 504. See also the remarks in Idem, *Philosopher or Kabbalist*, 217-18.

[234] See our following two notes.

[235] See *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 15, and cf. Ch. 6.

[236] Zimran, *Ibn Latif*, 140-41. Esudri takes a different approach, identifying primal matter and form as constituting two aspects of the first created being itself. See Esudri's glosses on *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 6, 15. *Prima facie*, Esudri's reading is more convenient and less complex, especially if we consider that in SH Short the *levush* analogy assumes the contact between the One and something external thereto. But Esudri's reading leads him to bend the sense of the text later in chapter 15 (p. 42), where the epithets *Hod* ('glory') and *Hadar* ('majesty') signify primordial 'form' and 'matter', respectively: "[…] 'O Lord my God you are great, you are clothed in glory and majesty.' (Ps. 104.1) The assertion 'you are great' refers to the first existent (*maṣuie rishon*) blessed be He […] whereas 'glory' and 'majesty' refer to the two simple existents, supreme and primordial. […] 'Glory' is likened to simple form and 'majesty' to simple matter." Esudry (glosses *ad loc*.) identifies *maṣuie rishon* with the first created being (*ha-Nivr'a ha-Rish'on*), and 'glory' (form) 'majesty' (matter) as its two constituents. While this reading seems more elegant, it is clear from the context that *Maṣuie Rishon* refers to God's primordial existence, and *Hod* ('form') and *Hadar* ('matter') refer to the two principles with which He is so-called clothed. furthermore, later in the chapter Ibn Latif explicitly situates the first created being under the *levush* with which primordial matter and form are associated: "Following this (i.e., the Psalmist's description of *levush*), David, blessed be his memory, continues (with the description) 'wrapped in a robe of light […].' By this he means the simple intelligible light, the first created being that emanates from the supreme *levush*."

[237] Ṣurat 'Olam, Ch 9 (fol. 135b).

In contradistinction to Ibn Latif, Giqatilla identifies levush with the primary created existent, symbolized also as light.[238] To this we should add the act of bestowal that the term levush denotes if construed as a verbal noun (*le-halbish*). It renders emanation a causal process in the form of ravelment and concealment. Each level is the cause of its proximate recipient, thus revealed therein, while the essence of the cause is concomitantly concealed through this process, i*pso facto*.[239] Hence the duality of the clothing analogy—'revealed therein' and 'concealed thereby'. But there is more to be inferred from *levush*. Insofar as it concerns the Intellect, the act of clothing, that is, bestowal, implies the renewal of an essential form not presupposed in its cause. This alludes to the terminological connection between *levush* and *howweh* ('becoming'), as presented, for example, in Samuel Ibn Tibbon's philosophical glossary. Ibn Tibbon connects the two terms as designating the renewal of particulars with respect to a formal cause that had no prior existence before the instantiation of the form in that particular. For example, the shape of the bronze, which comes into being simultaneously with the bronze sphere: the bronze sphere is renewed through the form it receives.[240]

For Ibn Tibbon, this process of becoming applies only to sublunar particulars, since translunar intelligible entities are eternal and unchangeable. Giqatilla, by contrast, assumes the

[238] We should also note that Giqatilla's account of *'or levush*, as referring to the Intellect whence the effluence is continued to the spheres, was held by several contemporary philosophers with whom Giqatilla was possibly acquainted. Heller-Wilensky cites Moses Salerno on this issue. He, in turn, cites Jacob Anatoli's *Malmad ha-Talmidim*. There, the lights are said to be created from the effluence of the angels, and the spheres from the effluence of these lights. See Heller-Wilensky, *Problem of Authorship*, 280, and *Malmad ha-Talmidim* (Lyck, 1866), fol. 53a., cited in Heller-Wilensky, ibid.

[239] For an eloquent account of Zoharic adaptation of this process, see Kahn, *Spiritual Garment*, 440-43. See also the remark on Giqatilla on p. 450.

[240] See Ibn Tibbon, *Glossary*, 44: "*Hawe* is an adjective denoting a thing's becoming through the form that it begets (*be-lovsho ṣurah*). *Hawwayah* denotes the motion of prime matter toward begetting form." See also Ibn Falaquera's commentary on the Opening to Part Two of *the Guide*: "Change pertains to four categories: substance, quantity, quality, and place. [...] Change implies renewal, as for example in the coming of a substance from non-existence to existence (*me-ha-'eder 'el-ha-meṣiyut*)—a process termed *hawwayah* (viz. generation)—or from existence to non-existence, a process termed *hefsed* (viz. corruption). This type of change relates to the category of substance." In *Morheh ha-Moreh*, 212. Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* XII, 1070a.

principle of renewal in connection with the Universal Intellect and the cosmos as a whole, as we saw in our discussion of ontological possibility. He likewise applies the terms *levush* and hawwayah to describe the renewal of the Intellect and the world at large, specifically in terms of the bestowal of universal forms with no prior existence.[241] Clearly, the analogy with Ibn Tibbon's account of renewed forms is only partial: unlike sublunar entities, the Intellect does not involve the movement of matter toward the begetting of an essential form. Nonetheless, the verb *le-halbish* remains revealing in this context.[242]

Giqatilla thus construes the gap between the Intellect and God's primordial existence by designating the former as the levush of the latter. This aligns with Giqatilla's position that the Intellect was created 'not from a thing' (*lo mi-davar*) – in contradistinction to other interpretations of *yesh me-'ayin* as creation from a not-thing, viz., from or through pre-essential *hylic* substance.[243]

This analysis of *levush* thus illuminates Giqatilla's distinctive position: the separated intellects serve as God's garment precisely because they are created through a divine expression

[241] *GE* 73. It is worth comparing the respective accounts by Giqatilla and Abraham bar Ḥiyya on *levush* of light and creation. Like Giqatilla, Bar Ḥiyya links creation with the bestowal of the primary light, which he also identifies as the pure, simple, and concealed form. From this grade, lesser lights were continued, the latter identified as essential determined form, referred to as *mah* ('what'), implying the principle of quiddity, the essences included in the Intellect. See *Hegyon ha-Nefesh ha-'Aṣuvah*, 39-46. The water-Intellect link also appears in Azriel of Gerona's *Commentary on Aggadot* (88) in a way that alludes to the *mah*-'essence' connection. See citation and discussion in Altmann, *Studies*, 173. See also the description of the Intellect in Ibn Latif's Ṣurat 'Olam (Ch. 20, fol. 142a) as *ha-mah ha-takhlii*, "the telic what."

[242] Giqatilla is alluding to a similar interoperative move by Moshe of Salerno regarding the principle of existence. If we accept Aviezer Ravitzky's reading in *Necessary and Possible Existence*, 227-28, Salerno integrates two positions on the principle of ontological possibility. The first is Ibn Tibbon's position regarding the principle of 'becoming,' which, we just saw, he qualifies to finite individuals while excluding all that is not finite, i.e., translunar and universal being. This is integrated with the metaphysical position, regarding the possibility of the universe at large, universal beings included. Giqatilla makes no mention of Salerno in this regard, but my understanding of Giqatilla's *levush* and *hithavut* is not far from Salerno (*sic*. Ravitzky).

[243] See also *GE* 73. Although in other places in *Ginnat Egoz*, the intellect is said to exist *mi-lo davar*. *Lo-davar* can be construed as unqualified primal matter, thus rendering *mi-lo-davar* as 'from not a thing.' Other modifier phrases, e.g., 'not from a thing' (*lo mi-davar*), render such a construal less attractive in the case of Giqatilla. On the terminological implications of these two modifier phrases (*mi-lo-davar* vs. *lo mi-davar*), see Wolfson, *Aṣilut*, 230-236. Note the recurrence of this principle, creation 'not from a thing,' in the long recension of the *Theology of Aristotle*. See the remarks in Fenton, *Arabic and Hebrew Versions*, 244. The importance of Aristotle's Theology (Long) to Giqatilla will become further evident later on.

that simultaneously brings them into existence and establishes their ontological distinctness. The creative act of "clothing" (*le-halbish*) thereby encompasses both the bestowal of existence and the maintenance of the fundamental gap between Creator and created, supporting his doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

Intellect Completed by Speech: Concluding Remarks

My purpose in this chapter was to outline the general metaphysical contours of Giqatilla's early writings which, as has become apparent, share much with the doctrines of Isaac ibn Latif. This chapter elucidated the metaphysical principles of Giqatilla's cosmology, focusing on the identity of the Intellect as the principle of the cosmic order on the one hand, and its relationship to the transcendent One on the other.

To recapitulate: Giqatilla constructs the Intellect as issuing forth from God without the mediation of a hypostatic principle, although traces of such an intermediary doctrine can be detected in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*. He likewise construes *levush* as the act of bestowal through which the Intellect comes into existence. This metaphysical act is symbolically expressed by the enclothing of God with the Intellect, a picture that implies a dialectic relationship of ontological revealment and concealment.

Pertinent to this metaphysical process is the distinction between primordial and renewed existences, and the objection to any form of essential or analogical relationship between the two states. This distinction is formalized through the terms of necessary and possible existence, and Giqatilla's construal of this distinction, I suggested, leaves little room for a doctrine of emanation between the One and the Intellect. By this account, God is transcended to the order of concatenation which follows essentially emanative lines. Concomitantly, Giqatilla posits motion,

characterized also as divine volitive action, as the cause of the Intellect. This direct act of renewal, construed also as the bestowal of form, renders the Intellect both completely separate from the One and yet likened to the Creator."[244] The Intellect is *levush* in this twofold sense. It assumes both separation (cf. *Pargod*) by the fact that it is renewed (cf. *ḥiddush*), and, by virtue of this action, it is "most proximate to the creator."

The likening of the Intellect to the creator was further examined through the principle of emanation, modeled by the scheme of fire and lights, which describes the cosmic order from the Intellect downward. Thus, the Intellect emerges as the true essential origin of the cosmic order, which follows therefrom causal necessity. By this logic, all beings emanate from one another by essential causality, the Intellect being the principle of this chain. However, Intellect itself comes into being on the premise of renewal.[245]

Having established these considerations, we can now better articulate the central question that has emerged progressively throughout this chapter: What is the nature of the creative act that is at once identified with Divine Will and with the internal Intellect? How does it explain the existential unity and vitality of the Intellect and of the cosmic order more broadly?

The full implications of this question will be further considered in the following chapter which focuses on the linguistic counterpart of Giqatilla's metaphysics and cosmology. As a segue to the next chapter—and building on the preceding section—I want to conclude with an allusion to Arabic-Ismā'īlī sources, as well as the account recorded in the *Theology of Aristotle* (Long), which present us with a conceptual framework for situating the aforementioned ambiguities. In

[244] Glosses, fol. 28a. Cf. *GE*180.
[245] Cf. *GE* 172. On the chain (*shalshelet*) analogy in connection with *ḥolam*, see *Sefer ha-Niqqud* Long, fol. 190b. See the rich remarks in Farber-Giant, *Sources*, 89, fn. 52. In Ibn Latif's chain of Being (*ha-seder ha-nimshakh be-meṣi'ut ha-'olam*), the universal intellect is causally contingent on the primitive motion of voice, which precedes articulated sound.

these accounts we find a presumably inconsistent characterization of the divine speech-act, or Word (*al-amr*). It is described as the creative cause of the Intellect, interposed between the latter and the Creator on the one hand and, on the other hand, as a non-substantive principle that is negatively described as 'nothingness' or 'not'. Similarly, the creative act is described as resembling the One, but also as united with the Intellect.[246]

Several accounts address these ambiguities by construing divine speech in terms reminiscent of the external-act doctrine mentioned above. As cause of the Intellect, speech resembles the creator like "the imprint of the seal left on the wax," a metaphor that counters the characterization of the creative speech-act in hypostatic terms, thereby complicating its qualification as interposed between the Creator and the Intellect.[247] While not explaining how the different characterizations of speech-act complement each other, the construal of this principle in non-substantive terms bears implications on whether we should regard its attributed features as definitive. Some interpretations indeed push in this direction, going as far as to suggest that the description of speech-act in transmutative terms, as 'becoming' Intellect, is effectively a figure of

[246] Some of these characteristics are listed and discussed in Shlomo Pines, "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 224-226. For the identity of the creative speech-act in relationship to the Intellect in Theology Long, see Pines, *La longue récension*, 9-10: « La premiere des choses créées (*al-mubda'di*) est la Premiere Intelligence, qui est unie au Verbe au Createur, exalté soit-il. […] car l'intelligence est noble et par sa notion c'est l'élément divin et il n'y a en aucune matière de voile entre elle et le Verbe. » See also the annotated section entitled *Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist*, where the bestowal of being unto the Intellect is repeatedly described as the conjunction of the Intellect with the Word. In: *Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist*, 87-91. For a similar doctrine of the Word in the Ikhwan's Epistles, see Wilferd Madelung et al., eds. and trans., *On God and the World: An Arabic Critical and English Translation of Epistles 49-51* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019), 75-90. This doctrine is articulated also in the Comprehensive Epistle (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*), a source of significant interest in Giqatilla's Jewish intellectual milieu. See Ehud Krinis, "Al-Risāla al-jāmi'a and its Judeo-Arabic Manuscript," in: M. Amir-Moezzi, ed., *Islam: identité et altérité – Hommage à Guy Monnot, O.P.* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 311-29, particularly 319-24. It has been argued that the Ikhwan's account of the divine speech-act lacks the subtlety and complexity that we find in Theology Long and in related Ismā'īlī accounts. Cf. the discussion in Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 47.

[247] See citation and discussion in Daniel De Smet, *Le Verbe-impératif*, 399: "La Parole est plutôt une des influences du Créateur (*alar min ātār al-bāri'*), ressemblant à la lumière qui sort de sa source ou à l'empreinte que le sceau laisse sur la cire." See the analysis of this citation, 400-01.

speech, for this principle, in and of itself, is not a 'thing' to which we can attribute particular properties.[248] From this perspective, the seemingly inconsistent features of the creative act should not be taken as definitive attributes of an essential nature, but rather as expressions of its dialectical movement as a generative principle mediating between the primordial One and the created Intellect.

[248] See discussions De Smet, *Le Verbe-impératif*, 405-408; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 38-39, 44-45, and cf. cited sources. De Smet undertakes the challenging task of deliberating the philosophical and metaphysical implications of the non-hypostatic status of divine speech, whereby it is ambiguously described as: (1) an imprint of the Creator, (2) the primary cause of the Intellect, (3) united therewith, (3) and, finally, (4) 'not' or 'nothingness.'

Chapter Four: ‘Like a Splendid Object Grasped by Reflection’
The Linguistic Theology of *Ginnat Egoz*

A guiding theme in Joseph Giqatilla’s early writings is an approach to language that distinguishes between the semantic plane of meaningful speech and the non-semantic dimension of simple phonetic activity. This structure, examined in Chapter 1, was articulated in terms of the relationship between intelligible concepts and physical speech, which medieval philosophy typically construed as the interior and exterior dimensions of language, respectively. This framework was often used to prioritize meaningful content as the form of the physiological matter of speech.

At the same time, reflections on the vowel as a principle of phonetic motion gave rise to speculation about its possible constructive role within the broader structure of language. Drawing on earlier linguistic traditions, Abraham Ibn Ezra developed a semiotic account of Hebrew phonology that addressed vowels independently of their grammatical function. As discussed in Chapter 1, his approach framed language through the concept of motion—both natural and phonetic—thus reframing the role of vowels within Hebrew as markers of activity rather than of static structure.

In *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla builds on Ibn Ezra’s account, but reorients it more radically around the principle of motion. His project centers on the question of what constitutes language itself. Should language be determined by its meaningful form—constructed from articulated content such as letters and words—or should it be understood as simple phonetic activity that grounds both the material and formal dimensions of speech? Giqatilla’s answer favors the latter.

Revising the earlier philosophical model, he gives priority to phonetic motion over the semantics of articulated language.

Giqatilla's linguistic theory has clear ontological implications. It questions the common view that language represents the world through its correspondence with intelligible form. Instead, by grounding language in simple phonetic activity, Giqatilla articulates a conception in which language is not defined solely by its function of signification, but by its role as an operative principle. At the same time, this activity remains inseparable from the semantic dimension: Giqatilla's system is comprehensive in that the non-semantic aspect of vowels always functions in connection with the production of words and meaning.

These implications come into sharper focus when examined in relation to the question of what sustains existence—a theme explored in Chapter 3. There, we began to consider the connection between vitality and phonetic motion through our analysis of the vowel point *ḥolam*. While *ḥolam* provided the starting point for Giqatilla's conception of *yesod*, the shift to language reveals a more complex view of linguistic motion and its ontological function—developed along two primary lines.

First, Giqatilla adopts earlier reflections on Hebrew phonology as formalized in the *niqqud* (vowel point) systems. Language, in its fuller structure, articulates the actualization of the simple principle of motion through the meaningful constructs of letters and words. This allows him to formulate a broader claim about the linguistic character of the cosmos. While *ḥolam* is the foundation of all motion, more specific types of ontological and natural motion are expressed through the differentiated system of vowel points.

Second, a closer reading of *Ginnat Egoz* reveals an additional internal distinction within the vowel system—between the vowel letters (*'otiyyot ha-tenu'ah*) and the vowel points

(*neqqudot*).[1] Giqatilla grants the vowel letters *heh*, *waw*, and *yod* a metaphysical role distinct from that of the *neqqudot*; their function is at times associated with the notion of *ṣurah* (form), though this link is not made explicit. As noted in Chapter 1, Ibn Ezra had already intimated the basic distinction between these two types of vowels; Giqatilla now systematizes and further develops it.

Our analysis of Giqatilla's linguistic framework will proceed along three structural principles: the vowel point, the vowel letter, and the consonant. Their relationship may be modeled in two distinct ways. The first model is vertically hierarchical, mapping descending ontological grades onto linguistic structures: the simple vowel point corresponds to the pre-essential principle of divine activity (the expression of the One), while the vowel letters and consonants correspond to the intelligible world of the angels and to the world of essential differentiation, respectively.[2]

More pertinent is the second model, which is concentric in form. Scholars have noted the prominence of this model in early theosophical discussions of the *sefirot*, and, more recently, it has been applied to Giqatilla's concept of the point.[3] Extending the geometrical paradigm of the cosmic sphere, the point—primarily associated with the vowel point *ḥolam*—is construed as the inner principle of the sphere, while still retaining its role as that which is above all. In this way,

[1] Contrary to Shlomo Blickstein's assumption (*Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 125) that Giqatilla "refers to these [vowel-]letters which occupy an intermediate place between the transcendent Deity and the Separate Intelligences, as the Primordial Essence (*havayah qadmonit*), the Primordial Point (*Nequddah 'Aḥat*), the Supernal Source (*Meqor 'Elyon*), Intelligible Light (*'Or Sekhel*), and the Supernal Will (*ha-hefeṣ ha-'elyon*)." Describing these letters as "created in time," Blickstein appears to conflate two distinct registers in Giqatilla's account of the Tetragrammaton – the primordial Name which is beyond articulation and the form of letters on the one hand and, on the other, the articulated name, which is the constitutive form of the intelligible world. The latter, qualified indeed as 'created', can be further associated with 'intelligent light' but should be distinguished from the 'supernal will' and the point. We have elaborated on the justification for this distinction in Chapter 3.

[2] For a classic emanative-vertical reding of *Ginnat Egoz*, albeit in terms somewhat different than here suggested, see Dal Bo, *Emanation*, lxix. Cf. Ibid, 6: "The Hebrew letters are subordinated basic elements that flow down from the very first reality; the names [of God] constitute the 'fundamental ontology', whereas the Hebrew letters are lower ranked beings."

[3] Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 84-85, 86-87; Harel, *Spherical Shapes*, 5-30, esp. 28. Cf. Weiss, *Spherical Sefirot*, 786. Cf. remarks in Dal-Bo, *Emanation*, 88. See also the discussion in Zohar, *The Point*, 34-38, and passim.

the twofold model of inner and above offers a productive framework for understanding Giqatilla's use of the interior and exterior dimensions of language.

While such paradigmatic structures are helpful, they require closer attention to the constructive role of the point as an inner principle in relation to the nature of language—and to its broader implications for Giqatilla's ontology. This is also crucial for assessing how the Kabbalistic concept of the point is modified in Giqatilla's system.

In line with this model, the working premise of the present chapter is that Giqatilla's linguistic framework serves as a constructive tool for analyzing language in its totality. The dynamic between consonants and vowels does not imply mutual exclusion. The goal is not to move from meaningful speech toward unarticulated phonetic motion, but to understand complex linguistic structures as grounded in the vitality of phonetic activity.

This chapter, consisting of three parts, seeks to demonstrate how Giqatilla's understanding of Hebrew language serves as a framework for unifying various dimensions of the cosmic order. First, I outline the basic linguistic framework of his early thought, focusing on the priority of the vowel point *ḥolam* as a primary principle of motion, and clarifying the distinction between vowels and letters. Second, I examine how these linguistic structures inform his broader cosmological framework, complementing the discussion of Chapter 2. Finally, I analyze the respective functions of vowel letters and consonants—particularly in relation to the Tetragrammaton—and explore the twofold conception of *ṣurat ha-'otiyyot* as a key link between language and intelligible form.

The Point Being: Toward a Typology of the Vowel points

The Kabbalistic developments in the latter half of the thirteenth century prompted a highly speculative account of the relationship between the action of speech and the metaphysical principles of actuality, cosmic unity, and vitality. The basic claim advanced in Joseph Giqatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* is that although language operates through semantic procedures, forming and representing meaningful content, its form is ultimately grounded in an activity that is simple and prior to meaningful differentiation. Using Hebrew as his ideal model, this principle is phonetically epitomized by the Hebrew vowel. Regarding language as a comprehensive system, Giqatilla assumes the impossibility of construing the vowel without reference to the meaningful content of letters and words. Rather, his analysis of the vowels considers these simple principles in terms of their function in relation to the totality of language. Similarly, Giqatilla's interest in linguistic principles is not with respect to their referential value, as if symbolically referring to independent principles or substances, but in terms of their active function in the structure of language more generally. While the Hebrew letter *yod*, for example, epitomizes the Universal Intellect, this reference is contextualized by the broader system of language.

Giqatilla constructs a model that systematically articulates the basic claim about the ontological significance of linguistic motion, for which purpose he turns to the *niqqud* ('vowel point') system. As is the case with speech, the *niqqud* system is construed as epitomizing the metaphysical and patterns of cosmic motion. These cosmic-linguistic deliberations took their initial form in his early *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and were systematically developed in *Ginnat Egoz*.

The attempt to construct a cosmos through the analysis of the vowel leads Giqatilla to construe the vowels as consisting of two central genres—*yesod* ('principle') and *binyan* ('construct')—which correspond to two modes of metaphysical and cosmic motion. The *yesod*

vowel points constitute the inner dynamics and vitality of the cosmos at large, by reason of which the phonological qualities and graphic transcription of these vowels are simple, compared to the modified vowel points. The latter, by contrast, are termed *binyan* and they relate to the patterns and structure of cosmic-natural motion, that is, the actuality of the intelligible sphere and the natural motion of the nine spheres.

The three vowel points that qualify as *yesodot* are the *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *ḥiriq*, representing, somewhat schematically, the phonetic values [ō], [u], [i]. While these constitute three of the five common phonetic values,[4] or three of the seven Masoretic vowels,[5] their qualification as *yesod* draws on Ibn Ezra's designation of *shuruq* [u] as a compound vowel, standing "halfway between *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq*."[6] Giqatilla adopts this basic designation of the *shuruq* while further developing his notion of a singular point with modified states. In Giqatilla's system, the middle *shuruq* and lower *ḥiriq* operate as modified states of the archetypal *ḥolam*. What further facilitates Giqatilla's formalization of the threefold noble point is the orthographic position of *ḥolam*, *shuruq, ḥiriq*. The three are graphically represented by a single point and orthographically positioned in relationship to the letter in question in a threefold descending order – [וֹ], [וּ], and [ֹ], respectively.

The designation of these three vowel points as *yesodot* complements Giqatilla's notion of dynamic vitalism which, as we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, he discusses through the term

[4] To which we should add the vocalizations: [a] [ē]. More on this later.
[5] The which we should add the vocalizations: [a], [ā], [ē], [ŏ]. Giqatilla's adaptation of the Hebrew vowels appears to alternate between two linguistic standardizations of the Hebrew vowel-points: the Tiberian system, as adopted and deliberated by Ibn Ezra (12 c.), and the tenfold-vowel system developed by the Qimḥi family (twelfth-thirteenth century). More on this later.
[6] Ibn Ezra, it has been noted, assumed the analogy between the vowels and cosmic natural motion, for which he distinguished the three vowels *ḥolam* and *shuruq* – for rectilinear motion, and *pattaḥ* - for spherical. In addition, *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq* symbolize the "the great luminaries," the sun and the moon. See Sefer Ṣaḥot, 10. Cf. Bacher, Ibn *Ezra the Grammarian*, 54, n.5. His reasoning for distinguishing *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *pattaḥ*, aside of being non-compound vowels, is that their pronunciation does not involve labial effort, in contradistinction to the *shuruq,* whose pronunciation involves the compression of the lips as in the act of whistling." See *Moznayim*, 27. Cf. *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 14, 77. See also Sáenz-Badillos, *Basic Concepts*, 134*. We should note that Giqatilla makes use of Ibn Ezra's cosmological *pattaḥ*. More on this later.

yesodot, there considered as a term of cosmic-elemental structure—fire, air, and water. The allusion between the two renditions of *yesodot*, indicating both linguistic motion and cosmic vitality, is not incidental. We may recall that our analysis of Giqatilla's cosmology concluded that these natural elements epitomize the principle of simple motion and cosmic cohesion. The transition from this elemental scheme to the structure of phonetic *yesodot* completes Giqatilla's cosmic-linguistic system.

The aim of our following discussion is to establish this transition, from the cosmic elemental scheme to the vowel points, and to examine the main contribution of this transition to Giqatilla's broader cosmology. Following this examination, we will turn to the remaining vowel points, classified under *binyan*, which constitute natural-cosmic motion. In transitioning from the primary vowels (*yesod*) to secondary vowels (*binyan*), we will consider two distinct principles that fall under neither of these rubrics, but function as general cosmic principles of motion.

Ḥolam, the King of Kings

While intimately connected, the three vowel points are differentiated as distinct modes of the supreme principle, or rather, the lower two points, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, are considered modified forms of the supreme *ḥolam*. The ambiguity as to the relationship between these three points—whether distinguished in order or unified under a singular principle—resurfaces throughout Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*,[7] and we shall consider it more closely later in our discussion. First, however, we should establish the identity and function of the paradigmatic vowel point, the *ḥolam*.

Pertinent to our discussion is the attempt to constitute *ḥolam* as a phonetic principle that is prior in structure to the semantic force of letters, even if its phonetic function can be only exercised

[7] *GE* 420-50. Cf. *GE* 427.

within the broader context of meaningful speech, in the form of morphemes and words.[8] The *ḥolam* represents the primal phonetic motion which, in the structural analysis of speech, takes the position of a motivating principle. The special qualities of *ḥolam* are conjectured already in pre-Kabbalistic works from the eleventh and twelfth centuries which acknowledge both its vocal elevation ([o]), and its graphic position above the written letter (וֹ). Most pertinent is the coronation of *ḥolam* in works related to the tenth century *Guide for the Reader* (*Hidāyat al-Qāri*), like the Karaite *'Eshkol ha-Kopher* by Yehuda Hadassi (twelfth century), which describe *ḥolam* as "king of kings, sitting high like the king on his throne."[9] This sentiment is recounted in related linguistic works by the likes of Yoseph Qostandini and Ibn Ezra.[10] We should note that these works analyze speech primarily in terms of signification, and in this respect they differ from the line adopted by Giqatilla who views speech by its principles of motion. Still, the speculation on the vowel points in works like Hadassi's is instrumental for Giqatilla's own.

The phonetic priority of the *ḥolam* point is depicted by the notation [וֹ] which marks in Castilian sources the relationship between the cosmic order governed by the intellect (*yod*), on the one hand, and its supreme cause (*ḥolam*), on the other. The relationship between *yod* and *ḥolam* is not incidental, as it differs from Masoretic accounts which associate *ḥolam* with the vowel letter

[8] *SN Short* 23*: "*ḥolam* is only applied in the company of letters […] Awake and understand that every motion [or: mover] is continued with a moved subject." Cf. *SN Short* 29*. See also Guide for the Reader §II.L.2.1.2, in: Geoffrey Khan, trans. and ed., *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew, vol. 2: Edition and English Translation of the Sections on Consonants and Vowels in the Masoretic Treatise Hidāyat al-Qāri' 'Guide for the Reader'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 116: "Speech cannot begin with a 'melody' (vowel), i.e. a 'king' (vowel). Rather it must begin with a letter. This is because when somebody begins speaking, the first component of his speech that is heard is one of the letters. He cannot begin with one of the vowels without putting a letter before it." Cf. *GE* 155: "One cannot [lit. has no permission to] pronounce any of the twenty-two letters without one of the five vowels."

[9] *'Eshkol ha-Kopher* (Kezlev, 1836), fol. 60c.

[10] Yosef Qostandini's 'Adat Devorim, in: Rephael Perez, "'Adat Devorīm de Rabbi Yoséph Qostandini: edition et etude critique d'un manuscript hébreu du Moyen-Age" (PhD diss., The Jean Moulin University, Lyon 1984), vol. 2., fol. 42a. Ibn Ezra, *Moznayim*, 11. See also the remarks in Ḥanokh Yelon, *Pirkei Lashon* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bilaik, 1971), 243-44.

waw, considering their shared vocalization pattern ([o]).[11] Castilians like Giqatilla sought to modify their linguistic speculations in accordance with their assumed cosmology, and on this basis they accepted and further elaborated the connection between the vowel letter *yod* and the Universal Intellect.[12] Extending this line of reasoning, the letter *yod* itself presupposes a linguistic principle epitomizing a pre-essential act, viz., the point of *ḥolam*.[13] The *ḥolam* is a simple phonetic principle which, in and of itself, carries no semantic potentiality. This twofold structure, the *yod* and its pre-essential principle, is commonly marked by the notation [ִי], where *ḥolam* resides over the *yod*, serving as the cause of the Intellect. Similarly, against the standard Masoretic association of *ḥolam* with *waw*, this notation draws on the phonological observation that "*yod* and *qoph* are the only letters pronounced (lit. 'moved') with *ḥolam*."[14]

The connection between *yod* and *ḥolam* is integrated into Giqatilla's cosmic-linguistic model, construed as underlying the Intellect and as its linguistic cause: "The *ḥolam*, by account of its superiority, moves the letter [*yod*], the latter testifying to the supreme world, the Intellect."[15] This categorical distinction, between the simple *ḥolam* and the intelligible *yod*, is fundamental to Giqatilla's linguistic metaphysics, as it marks the prioritization of phonetic motion. To better understand the typological qualities of the *ḥolam* we must take a closer look at the Kabbalistic metaphysical point. This will allow us to better elucidate the thematic shifts in Giqatilla's works.

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[11] On the derivation of *ḥolam* from *waw*, and not *yod*, see: Guide for the Reader (ed. G. Khan), 218-9 (§II.S.4.0); Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 162-23; *Moznayim*, 52. Ibn Janāḥ, too, explains *ḥolam* (and *shuruq*) as a derivative of the vowel-letter *waw,* in: *Sefer ha-Riqmah*, 132:14.
[12] See discussion in Chapter 3.
[13] On the allusion of the *yod* to an inner principle, see also the account in the Iyyun sources, discussed in *Contemplation* (ed. Verman), 58. See also discussions in Porat, *Founding of the Circle*, 130-35; Weiss, *Spherical Sefirot*, 789-90.
[14] See *SN Short* 26*; *SN Long*, fol. 179b. Cf. Yehuda Albotini, *Sulam ha 'Aliya*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem: n.p., 2008), 87-88; Avraham Abulafia, *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem: n.p., 2001), 70.
[15] *GE* 473. Cf. *GE* 478; SN (Short), 47*-48*.

From Point to *Ḥolam*: Toward a Thematic Shift

The image of the point (*neqqudah*) took shape in early Kabbalistic teachings, both theosophical and linguistic, in an attempt to isolate the principle that is metaphysically prior to the Intellect, to ontological order more broadly, and to its origin.[16] Gershom Scholem and others labeled it, somewhat allusively, as the 'primordial point',[17] although a more technical term would be the "ideational point" (*neqqudah maḥshavit*) which indicates its noetic yet undetermined nature. The latter term further connotes the principle of *maḥshavah* which some theosophical accounts distinguish as prior to the fully constituted Intellect with its essential forms.[18] Similarly, this point is ambiguous, designating a principle that is still prior to ontological determination, and thus extends representation. The image of the point fits the point-line-surface analogy that was common in speculative literature of the time, where the point epitomizes the principle of simplicity that is prior to the determined nature that the intelligible line, i.e., determination, assumes.[19]

The *neqqudah* appears also in *Ginnat Egoz* under idiomatic adjectives like *Neqqudah Penimit* ('internal point'), *Neqqudah Nisteret* ('hidden point'), and *Neqqudah Sikhlit* ('intelligible point').[20] The *neqqudah maḥshavit* ('ideational point') is, however, excluded without further specification.[21] The exclusion of *neqqudah maḥshavit*, a term that was already in use, suggests that we should not treat all Kabbalistic references to the point as monolithic, especially regarding

[16] For a comparative review of the point in Kabbalistic sources, see Zohar, *The Point*.
[17] See for instance, Scholem, *Major Trends,* 218-20; Idem, *Origins*, 427.
[18] The identification of the ideational point with *maḥshavah* (vs. *Ḥokhma*), on the one hand, and of *Maḥshavah* with *Keter*, on the other, has a complicated history. More on this below.
[19] For the point-line surface geometric model, see discussion in Chapter 3. For a detailed account of the relation between matter and the principle of extension, see Wolfson, *Crescas*, 579-90; *Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim*, 113. Cf. Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen, *Commentary on Ezekiel's Merkabah* (ed. G. Scholem), 195.
[20] *SN Short* 26*
[21] See *GE* 435, 229, 341, 424.

Giqatilla's early thinking. This difference, I contend, reflects the phonological identity of Giqatilla's *neqqudah*, particularly as considered through the vowel point *ḥolam*.

Scholars have assumed a doctrinal connection between the two points, the theosophical-ideational and the linguistic *ḥolam*, considering their formalistic allusions.[22] What presumably supported this assumption is the appearance, though infrequent, of *ḥolam* in several theosophical works with which Giqatilla was likely familiar, and to which I will turn presently. The concomitance of the point in Giqatilla's early thought, on the one hand, and the use of *ḥolam* as a symbol in theosophical sources, on the other, supported the assumption as to a shared doctrine of the point. But we must carefully consider the systems of thought in which the respective points were hypothesized and ask whether, beyond textual and formalistic allusions, the two points in fact share a common function or identity? In asking this question we should keep in mind the abovementioned point-line-surface analogy, reportedly adopted by theosophists such as Jacob ben Sheshet. The difference between this extensive model and the motion of *ḥolam*, will guide our approach when dealing with the metaphysical function and identity of the point.

The unique character of *ḥolam* was conjectured in pre-Kabbalistic linguistic sources. These deliberations filtered through esoteric speculations on the Hebrew language in the early thirteenth century, although they were infrequent and conceptually underdeveloped prior to Giqatilla. Eleazar of Worms' *Sodei Razaya* presents the standard Tiberian vocalization system of seven vowels ([ō], [u], [i]. [a], [ā], [ē], [ŏ]), of which he distinguishes *ḥolam* as supreme: "The six vowel points are [graphically] located below [the letters], and the seventh is situated above. It is vocalized אוֹ ([ō]) to inform you that God is one and above the seven heavens and dominates all."[23]

[22] Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 87.
[23] Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei Razaya*, ed. Aharon Eisenbach (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2018), 11. Blickstein and Dal Bo took for granted the influence of this Ashkenazi account on Giqatilla's *ḥolam*. See Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 93-96; Dal Bo, *Emanation*, 82, n. 2. For a more reserved approach on this question of influence, see

A more familiar recounting of the *ḥalom* appears in the homily in *Sefer ha-Bahir* on the *niqqud*.[24] *Ḥolam* is there likened to soul (*neshamah*) and pearl (*margalit*), and to the mental and physical states of dream (*ḥalom*) and cure (*aḥlama*).[25] While its equation to *keter* or *'atara* ('crown'; 'coronet') is not explicit, scholars have inferred such a connection based on etymological connotation.[26] Still, whether the Bahir's *ḥolam* indeed denotes simple phonetic activity, rather than the hypostatic source of the Intellect, is disputable.[27]

The symbolic construal of *ḥolam* also appears in theosophical accounts from the first half of the thirteenth century, but to a rather limited extent. One example is Azriel of Gerona's speculations on the Unity of the Name. In Chapter 3, I suggested that Kabbalists such as Asher ben David identified the letter *'aleph* as a *signum* for the simple and undifferentiated source whence wisdom emanates. Azriel expands this referential token to include *ḥolam* as well, albeit

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Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 108, and cf. cited scholarship. See also the section on the vowels from Shimshon ha-Naqdan's *Ḥibbur ha-Qonim* (ed. I. Eldar), 211. The phraseology (e.g., '*ḥolam* is king of kings') is very close to what we find in its parallels. It should be stressed that *Ḥibbur ha-Qonim* was likely composed in the later part of the thirteenth century, after R. Eleazar of Worms. See: Ilan Eldar, "The Grammatical Literature of Medieval Ashkenazi Jewry," in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile*, ed. Lewis Glinert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 36-37. On the difference between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi classification of vowels (seven and five, respectively), see Ilan, Ibid, 28 and passim.

[24] *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Daniel Abrams (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1994), 131-133 (§27).

[25] On the identity of the point in Sefer ha-Bahir and its connection to Judah Halevi's notable formula ("the letters are bodies for which the vowels are *pneumata*"; *Cuzari,* 230-31), see Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir: Ein Schriftdenkmal aus der Frühzeit der Kabbala auf Grund der kritischen Neuausgabe* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970), 85-87. There, Scholem counters other interpretive positions that associate the *Bahir*'s point (*neqqudh*) with Abrahm Ibn Ezra's recurring identification of the linguistic soul (*neshama*) with the meaning (*ta'am*) of the physical word. (Cf. our discussion in Chapter 1 on the twofold etymology of the word *ta'am*, in connection with both meaning and vocalization, see Carlos del Valle Rodriguez *Die grammatikalische Terminologie der fruehen hebraeischen Grammatikern* (Madrid: Francisco Suárez, 1982), 100-02. While Scholem's argument against this position appears plausible, we should also qualify the association of the *Bahir*'s point with Halevi's vowels, considering that the other vowel-points are not explicitly included in the *Bahir*'s passage on the point. We should also note that Martini assumed the influence of the *Bahir* on Giqatilla's *ḥolam*, although Bar-Asher casted doubt on this supposed influence, thereby advocating for the likelihood that these points, the Bahir's and Giqatilla's, are indeed typologically different. See Martini, *Punctuation*, 62; Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 150.

[26] See the remark in Scholem, *Origins*, 63. Ronit Meroz expanded on the linguistic layer of the homily in the *Bahir*, drawing on etymological points of contact with the construal of *ḥolam* in the Guide for the Reader. See Meroz, "On the Time and Place of Some of 'Sefer Ha-Bahir'," *Da'at*, 49 (2002): 160-62. (Hebrew)

[27] We should note the various applications of the point in the different sermons of Sefer ha-Bahir. In addition to the allusion to *ḥalom* and its conative meanings, the point is contrasted also with the geometrical square, the two taking the respective positions of the 'point of life', arguably connoting the vowel, and the written letter. See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, 169, 70 [§27], and see remarks in Zohar, *The Point*, 26.

somewhat obliquely.[28] More openly, the Castilian Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen construes *ḥolam* as a token for the supreme world which consists, by his account, of the three *sefirot—Keter* ('crown'; 'primordial thought'), *Ḥokhma* ('wisdom') and *Binah* ('Intellect').[29] Rather than signifying the primordial origin alone, Hacohen's *ḥolam* represents both the source and the intelligible principles that emanate from it.[30]

Another account of the point, more explicit, is a section included in Jacob Hacohen's *Sefer ha-'Orah*,[31] which thematizes the vowels *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *ḥiriq*—all three represented by the simple graphic point—as corresponding to three descending cosmic grades. This account is very similar to Giqatilla's thematization of the point. But we shall note that scholars have debated the authorship of this section, considering that some of its concepts and terminology closely resemble those of Giqatilla—and in particular, de-León.[32] All in all, the construal of the *ḥolam* as a

[28] In the following manner: The *yod* of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) is punctuated with *ḥolam*, which, in its turn, functions as one of the vocal patterns that *'aleph*, *qua* vowel-letter, carries potentially. In this manner, what is essentially notated with *'aleph*, viz., the source of the Intellect, is also referred to by *ḥolam*. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush Yiḥud ha-Shem*, in Gershom Scholem, "New Fragments from the Writings of R. Azriel of Gerona," in *Sefer Zikaron le-Asher Gulak we-li-Shmu'el Klein* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1942), 218. The suggested connection between *ḥolam* and *'aleph* likely draws on Ibn Ezra's general description of *'aleph* as a versatile vocal-principle that can potentially actualize all vowel-pattens (*tenu'ot*). See Sefer Ṣaḥot, 3-4. We should note that the connection between *ḥolam* and the Tetragrammaton's *yod* can be explained in terms of the pronunciation of *yod* and *qoph* that are vocalized by *ḥolam*, as noted above.

[29] See "Qabbalot R. Yiṣḥaq ve-R. Yaʿaqov Benei R. Yaʿaqov ha-Kohen: Meqorot le-Toledot ha-Qabbalah lifne Hitgallut ha-Zohar," *Maddaʿei ha-Yahadut* Vol. 2 (1927),103.

[30] Hacohen offers several exegetical takes on the function of *ḥolam*. He first established *ḥolam* as indicating the "the true supreme existent, the Cause of Causes, the primordial cause which has no beginning or end." This assertion is followed by an exegetical construal of *ḥolam* through the idiom ***ḥ**okhma **l**evush **m**aḥshavah* (anachronym HoLaM). Here, *ḥolam* is connected to the function of the prime intelligible principle (*ḥokhma*) in relationship to supreme concealed *Maḥshavah*, thus qualifying the identity of *ḥolam* as the Intellect's contemplation of the supreme grade. Hacohen employs two additional idioms for construing *ḥolam* – ***ḥ**ezyon **l**e-'ish **m**askil* ("a vision to the enlightened") and ***ḥ**ezyon **l**evush **m**ar'e*. The latter, specifically, discloses the extension of *ḥolam* as disclosing the structural relationship between the three sefirot: "The masters of Kabbalah received by tradition that *ḥezyon* and *mar'e* are respective epithets for *Binah* and *Ḥokhma*, and that *ḥezyon* is garment (*levush*) to *mar'e*. Hence [the symbol] *ḥo**l**a**m***." *Qabbalot*, 104. More on this below. The association between Hacohen and Giqatilla on this matter has been taken for granted, for example in Asi Farber-Ginat, "Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot," (MA thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978), vol. 2, 104, n. 18.

[31] The section titled *Sod ha-'Etsba'ot*, incorporated in Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen's *Sefer ha-'Orah*, in Daniel Abrams, "The Book of Illumination of R. Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen: A Synoptic Edition from Various Manuscripts", (Dissertation, New York University, 1993), 312-25.

[32] Parallels of this section in writings associated with Moses de-León cast doubt as to its authorship. Scholem attributed this section to de-León, a position adopted by Asi Farber-Ginat, *Sources*, 69, ft. 4, and more empathetically by Bar-

metaphysical principle is a rather limited phenomenon in early theosophical doctrines, and it is only later developments in Castilian linguistic Kabbalah that would later lay the conceptual groundwork for such a construal.

Neqqudot in Service of Letters

The limited treatment of the vowels by Giqatilla's older contemporaries should be considered in light of a general sentiment in early theosophical discourse which diminishes the role of the vowel points altogether, prioritizing instead the letters and their assumed potential meanings. This is articulated, for example, in discussions on the performative aspects of theurgic and liturgical speech. In sources affiliated with the *'Iyyun* circles or with Geronese Kabbalah,[33] the vowels function as channels for drawing powers latent in the divine names and in the Hebrew letters more generally. The vowel continues in a differentiated is essentially simple and undifferentiated. In some accounts, the vowel points are instrumental for the practice of *hazkarat ha-shem* ('mentioning the Name'),[34] where the desired intentions (*kavanot*) and their esoteric meanings are determined and actualized.[35] This process results theurgically in the continuation of divine force in differentiated forms, the actualized expression of which is the cosmic edifice (*binyan*) and its

Asher. *From the Vaults of Thebes*, 172, n. 82. See Gershom Scholem, "Review of Codices Hebraici Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, by C. Bernheimer," *Kiryat Sefer* 11, no. 2 (1934), 188. For a contrary argument, see Abrams, *Sefer ha-'Orah* ('introduction'), 53-55. The terminological connections to de-León include the identity of *ḥolam* as the lofty point, qualified by the positioning of *qameṣ* above it. As a caveat to this argument, which I generally accept, I will mention that the *Sod ha-'Etsba'ot* text clearly prioritized aleph over all letters and vowels, further describing it as Soul of Souls (*Neshamah le-Neshamot*). As I shall show later in this chapter, the terminological replacement of *ṣurah* with *neshamah* is characteristic of de-León's adopted terminology, which departs from Giqatilla's insistence on 'form' (*ṣurah*). What is not, however, characteristic of de-León is the prioritization of *'aleph* and its likening to the primordial source of all. A hallmark of his early linguistic cosmology is the replacement of *'aleph* with the letter *he*, the pneumatic qualities of foster a more panentheistic theology. More on this below.

[33] R. Jacob ben Sheshet's *'Emunah u-Vitaḥon*, for example, in: *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, Vol 2., 370. See also Nehora Gabbai, "Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim by R. Ya'akov ben Sheshet's: Critical Edition with Introduction" (MA thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1989), 108-09.

[34] See our discussion in Chapter 3.

[35] See citations and comments in Idel, *Kavanah*, 33; Idem, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 84–85. See further references and remarks in Amos Goldreich, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2010), 106–08, 130-31.

differentiated constitution.[36] By this general image, the *neqqudot* take a functional position in service of the spiritual letters which carry the potency of all forms.

The connection between the Name and the essential-ontological forms that are continued from it is also intimated in the double construal of the root *z-k-r*, construed as *zekher* ('remembrance') and *zakhar* ('masculine'). This connection is made in a *Iyuun* text published by Menachem Kallus, where the delamination of the semantic potentiality of the Name is actualized by remembrance (*zekher*)—a process attributed to the masculine aspect (*zakhar*) of the powers that are continued from the Name.[37] All in all, these practices assume the priority of essential potentiality, originating in the divine Name and continued through pronunciation, which is actualized by the phonetic vowels.[38]

On a more hypothetical and less performative level, the prioritization of the spiritual letters over the *neqqudot*, the vowel points, is expressed in several accounts affiliated with the so-called *Epistle of Worms*. In short, this epistle comprises a series of Kabbalistic doctrines that were allegedly transmitted through related esoteric circles in Apulia (Italy), Ashkenaz, and France, in a chain that allegedly leads back to *Mata Meḥasya* in southern Babylonia.[39] The epistle, which arguably took shape in Jacob Hacohen's thirteenth century theosophical milieu,[40] is preserved in

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[36] Cf. Idel, *Kavanah*, 31-42

[37] *Sefer ha-Yiḥud ha-'Amiti,* in: Menachem Kallus, "Two mid-13th Century Kabbalistic Texts from the 'Iyun Circle," (M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989), 5, 7. See comments and discussion on pp. 60 (n. 110), 78-79 (ns. 173-74).

[38] On the body-soul distinction in the Hebrew letters, and the identification of the letter-soul with the primordial thought, see citations and discussion in Adam Afterman, *The Intention of the Prayer in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Los-Angeles: Cherub Press, 2004), 64-67.

[39] The identity and history of this epistle, and of the figures mentioned in it, were discussed extensively in scholarship. See Ben-Shachar, *Epistle*, 133-192, and cf. cited scholarship in pp. 148-9 and passim. See also Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Rabbinic Figures in Castilian Kabbalistic Pseudepigraphy: R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid and R. Elḥanan of Corbeil," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3:1 (1993), 77-109.

[40] Elliot Wolfson follows Scholem's assessment that the adaptation of the Hebrew components (letters, vowels, cantillation) into a comprehensive linguistic mysticism owes primarily to Castilian developments associated with Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen. Wolfson further argues for Ibn Ga'on's shift, in Baddei ha-Aron, from a reliance on the Catalonian Kabbalistic tradition and an integration of Castilian teachings by the likes of Hacohen and Todros Halevi. See Elliot Wolfson, "Biblical Accentuation in a Mystical Key: Kabbalistic Interpretations of the *Te'amim*," *Journal of Jewish*

fuller extent in two later works, *Baddei Ha-'Aron* (1325) and *Poqeaḥ 'Ivrim* (1439).[41] Still, its principles are sketched already in a segment in *Sha'ar ha-Razim* by Todros Halevi Abulafia (thirteenth century), Hacohen's student.[42] This particular segment from *Sha'ar ha-Razim* is also incorporated in *Baddei Ha-'Aron* in the name of Todros Halevi, independent of the epistle itself, which follows.[43]

The segment sketches the threefold composition of the Hebrew Masoretic inscription, consisting of letters (*otiyyot*), vowel points (*neqqudot*), and crownlets (*tagin*).[44] Like the later full *Epistle*, it construes these orthographic components in theosophical terms. In the *Epistle* we encounter several contrasting accounts as to the meaning and symbolic relationship of *'otiyyot*, *neqqudot* and *tagin*, one of which identifies these components with three worlds. We are not informed as to the identity of these worlds,[45] although their hierarchal scheme is intimated by the graphical arrangement of the components. The *tagin* are situated above and external to the letters (*ḥiṣoniyot mima'al ha-'otiyyot*), and the *neqqudot* under the letters and internal thereto (*penimiyot mitaḥat ha-otiyyot*).[46] This construal is contrasted with another tradition reported in the *Epistle*, in the name of a fictitious R. Shishna, which prioritizes the letters over both *neqqudot* ('vowel

Music and Liturgy 11 (1988), 5-6. For a more complex account of the sources of *Baddei ha-'Aron*, alongside both Catalonian and Castilian *Kabbalot*, see Joseph Dan, "The Kabbalistic Book 'Baddei Ha-Aron' and Kabbalistic Pseudepigraphy in the Thirteenth Century," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 3:1-2 (1984): 118-32 (Hebrew); Ben-Shachar, *Epistle*, 139. See also Scholem's attribution of this epistle to Isaac Hacohen (*Origins*, 355-57).

[41] On the authenticity of, and relationship between the various versions, see Ben-Shachar, *Epistle*, 135-38. Ben-Shachar prepared a critical edition of the epistle based on its three versions in *Baddei Ha-'Aron*, *Sefer ha-'Emunot*, and *Poqeaḥ 'Ivrim*. (Ibid, 176-192) References will be made to *Baddei Ha-'Aron* (MS Paris, héb. 840) and to Ben-Shachar's critical edition. The version *in Poqeaḥ 'Ivrim* is longer than the one in *Baddei Ha-'Aron* and, according to Ben Shachar (*Epistle*, 136) who follows Scholem (*Origins*, 355, n. 309) it represents the original version of the epistle.

[42] On the relationship between the two figures, see: Scholem, *Qabbalot*, 23-27; Michal Qushnir-Oron, *Sefer ha-Razim*, 34 (introduction), and cf. cited scholarship.

[43] *Baddei ha-'Aron*, fol. 58a-b.

[44] The fourth dimension, the cantillation (*ta'amim*), is mentioned in this segment as consisting of mysteries that will be only actualized in the end of the days, as they pertain to the struggle between the holy and unholy cosmic forces. See Wolfson, *Biblical Accentuation,* 8, and cf. cited sources.

[45] The statement is rather cryptic and the identity of the three worlds is not revealed. If we accept Scholem's construal, the *tagin* ('ornamental crownlets') designate the *sefirot* that constitute the world of separation ('*Olam ha-Mittboded*) which is above the Universal Intellect (*'Olam ha-Madda*). Scholem, *Inquiry* (2), 430.

[46] *Baddei ha-'Aron*, fol. 62a-b; *Epistle* (ed. Ben-Shachar), 181.

points') and *tagin* ('crownlets'), reasoning that "*tagin* and *neqqudot* are explication (*bi'ur*) to *'otiyyot* ('letters'). The form of the letters is pneuma (*ruaḥ)*, and they (i.e., *tagin* and *neqqudot*) are bodies."

Apart from the obvious reversal of the widespread *pneuma*-vowel analogy dictum ("the letters are bodies for which the vowels are *pneumata*"[47]), the way *neqqudot* are *bi'ur* to the *otiyyot* is unclear. A plausible explanation can be inferred by juxtaposing the quoted assertion with the segment in *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, cited also in *Baddei Ha-'Aron*. Here the link between *pneuma* (*ruaḥ*) and vowel is in line with the original dictum, but the thrust of the assertion is similar to the tradition attributed to the pseudonym R. Shishna:

> The power of the letters is only exercised with the [aid of] *neqqudot*, for the letters are internal and concealed, set in their plentitude, quiescent and mute. (*Penimiyot ne'elamot* [*נעלמות*]*, yoshevot 'al mele'ot,*[48] *shoqetot ne'elamot* [*נאלמות*].) The letters are moved by the *pneuma* of the *neqqudot* which are therefore the former's chariot. The power of the letters is thus revealed by the *neqqudot*, and they [viz. the vowels] are the letters' tools.[49]

The characterization of the letters as *shoqetot ne'elamot* ('quiescent and mute') appears also in Ibn Latif's *Ṣurat 'Olam*,[50] but with the opposite intention, indicating the dependency of the consonants on sound. Whereas for Ibn Latif *shoqetot ne'elamot* implies the linguistic stillness and thus inferiority of the consonants, in a manner reminiscent of Dunash ben Tamim's *'ilmot* ('mute'),[51]

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[47] Judah Halevi, *Cuzari*, 230-31. This formula later became idiomatic in speculative accounts of Hebrew and was further mediated to thirteenth-century Kabbalistic sources through the Bahir. In the reception of this formula, the characterization of the vowels as pneumata was occasionally replaced by *ṣurah* ('form'), as is the case in Giqatilla, or, more pronouncedly, *neshamah* ('soul'). See *Sefer ha-Bahir* (ed. R. Margolies), 51. On the genealogy of Halevi's formula in Arabic and Hebrew linguistic thought, see Jonathan Howard, "The Points in the Letters: Greek Philosophy in the Service of Medieval Jewish Linguistics," *Hebrew Union College Annual Volume*, 89 (2018), 261-96. For the reception of this formula in thirteenth-century Castilian thought, see: Jacob Hacohen, *Sefer ha-'Orah*, 319-20; Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 72-73; Isaac Ibn Sahula, *Commentary on Songs*, 419; *Sha'ar Ḥeleq ha-Neqqudah*, MS. Paris.heb, 817, fol. 85a; Moshe de León, *Sefer ha-Mishkal* (ed. J. Wijnhoven), 14; Joseph Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq* (ed. J. Zwelling), 277-78. See also Ezra of Gerona, *Commentary on Songs*, 487.

[48] Songs 5:12. The translation of this phrase is obscure.

[49] *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 74 (fol. 56b).

[50] *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 21.

[51] Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah* (ed. G. Vajda), 216, 227. Cf. the discussion in David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters von Saadja bis Maimûni* (Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1877), 173. See also the characterization of the consonants as *áphona* in Aristotle's *Poet*. 1456 b 24-30,

Todros Halevi construes 'muteness' (*'ilmot*) as denoting the concealed superiority of the power of the letters.[52]

The function of the vowel points is further elucidated by the *Sha'ar ha-Razim* segment which alludes to the tradition of the alleged R. Elḥanan of Corbeil which in the full *Epistle* represents an authoritative position on the letters.[53] *Sha'ar ha-Razim* construes its opening lines as supporting the priority of the muted letters:

> We received a tradition from early sages that the *neqqudot* are the world of motion (*'olam ha-tenu'a*) which awakens the world of letters (*me'orer 'olam ha-'otiyyot*) like the king awakened with his regiments and soldiers. The crownlets are tokens as the crowns are for the kings.[54]

Whereas in our previous citation Todros Halevi is cryptic about the characterization of the letters as *penimiyot ne'elamot* ('internal and concealed'), here he is clear about the role of vowel points,

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and in Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 117–18. Cf. C. H. M. Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 20-21.

[52] Note that this picture seems in agreement with the theosophical doctrines of Azriel of Gerona, among others, which distinguish between the concrete letters, of which the emanated tangible order consists, and the ideal spiritual letters that are prior to physical articulation. The latter are included in the eternal '*aleph* and are considered the soul (*neshamah*) of the concrete and articulated letters. By contrast, the revealed letters that constitute the Tetragrammaton, viz., *yod, he, waw*, are analyzed as principles of *sefrotic* structure, and consequently of the cosmic order. Unlike the ideal letters, they are construed in terms of motion. See the discussions in: Martel Gavrin, "R. Azriel Gerona's Commentary on Prayer: Critical Edition" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University, 1984), 11-17; Haviva Pedaya, "Flaw and Correction in the Concept of the Godhead in the Teachings of Rabbi Isaac the Blind," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thoug*ht 6:3-4 (1986). (Hebrew). Further, in these theosophical accounts, the vowel-points form the paths and links within the *sefirotic* system, alluding to our remarks about the performative function of the niqqud. For example, R. Azriel considers the versatile punctuation of *yod*, either with *ḥolam* (יֹ; pronounced *yod*) or *shuruq* (יּ; pronounced *yud*), as modifiers of the dynamic potentiality of the *sefirah Tif'eret*. Thus, the punctuation of *yod* with *ḥolam* marks the effluence from *Keter* to *Tif'eret*, whereas its punctuation with *shuruq* indicates the immanence of *tif'eret* in creation. See Gavrin, *Commentary on Prayer*, 14.

[53] On the authenticity of this figure and its role in Castilian circles, see the detailed study in Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Castilian Pseudepigraphy*.

[54] On the term *me'orer* ('awakener') in connection with the *neqqudot*, see Scholem, *Inquiry II*, 430; *Das Buch Bahir*, 88. There, Scholem points to countering positions, and thus functions, of the assumed *me'orer* in the convoluted source discussed here. On the one hand, the *neqqudot* are described as *me'orer*, the function of which is likened to the king awakening the lower letters. On the other hand, the adopted image of the 'awakener' also implies the priority of the letters, in relationship to which the vowel-points are attributed an instrumental function. Scholem's attempt to reconcile these conflicting accounts does not resolve the ambiguity completely. We should also note Scholem's suggestion that, by the first account, the vowel-points precede the letters in rank, further identified with the World Soul, but nevertheless are inferior to the Intellect (*'Olam ha-Madd'a*) and the Divine Pleroma ('*Olam ha-Mitbodded*). Scholem, *Inquiry II*, 430.

the *neqqudot.* He situates the *neqqudot* against the emanating separated principles (*nivdalim*), arguably designating the intelligible realm.[55]

Presumably, this connection draws on the idea that motion is principally a quality of the created order, starting with the actuality of the Intellect, through the World Soul,[56] and, consequently, bodily motion of the spheres.[57] By this logic, the concealed letters are 'rested' (*shoqetot*) insofar as they are ontologically prior to the motion of the separated world.[58] Also by this logic, the *neqqudot*, *qua* tokens of phonetic motion, are inferior to the concealed letters, as confirmed by their graphical position in the Masoretic vowel-system: "Go out and see that the *neqqudot* are always below the letters."[59]

R. Todros is aware of the seeming inconsistency with respect to the vowel and soul (*neshama*) analogy which he himself cites just several lines earlier.[60] Granted, he could have resolved this inconsistency easily if by 'letters' he simply meant the Tetragrammaton, viz., the vowel letters, which several Kabbalistic accounts indeed consider the root of the particular vowel points. But the term 'letters' is here applied inclusively and without qualification, suggesting the categorical priority of letters as such. Thus, his answer to the seeming inconsistency is revealing, for it reframes the function of *neshama* in the context of linguistic activity, construing it in terms

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[55] On *'Olam ha-Nivdalim* in Castilian theosophy, see: Ibid, 427, 436-37, and passim.
[56] On the connection between the vowel-points and the World Soul in the discussed source, see the remark in ibid, 430
[57] See our discussion in Chapter 2 on the function of motion as the primary principle of Nature.
[58] We should note the association of the letters with the *sefirah ḥokhmah* in the commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* attributed to Naḥmanides, published by Gershom Scholem in *Qiriyat Sefer* 6 (1930), 409. There, *Keter* is associated with the immaterial inner and sublime threefold linguistic-cosmogenic principle of *qol ruaḥ* and *dibbur*. However, the letters are engraved in *Ḥokhma*. See remarks in Elliot Wolfson, "Anthropomorphic Imagery and Letter Symbolism in the Zohar," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), 176-77, and see 177 n. 128 for references to Zoharic literature. Wolfson notes that the priority of vowel-points (*neqqudot*) and cantillation marks (*te'amim*) in de-León's corpus.
[59] *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 74 (fol. 56b). On the various traditions as to the location of the vowel-points, and on their transposition in the Tiebrian system to the bottom of the letter, see Aron Dotan, "Masorah," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum et al., 2nd ed., vol. 13 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 625-26 (Sec. 5.1.1.1), 630-32 (Sec. 5.2.1.1.1-2.1), 633-34 (Sec. 5.3.1.1).
[60] *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 73 (fol. 56a).

closer to motion. The *neqqudot* are *neshamah*, we are told, insofar as their motion is the actualization of the power which otherwise remains rested and concealed in the letters.[61]

This assertion confirms my suggestion that implicit in Todros' account is the designation of motion as the differentiating factor which distinguishes the cosmic order from the divine Pleroma. The *neqqudot* are graphically below the concealed letters since they epitomize a quality that belongs essentially to the cosmic order, or Nature more broadly—intelligible actuality and, subsequently, the vital motion of the spheres. As for the *tagin*, presumably epitomizing the emanating *sefirot*, they are graphically positioned above the letters, unlike the inferior *neqqudot.* But here, too, Todros Halevi is clear about their hierarchical significance:

> Although the [*tagin*] verge above [the letters], they do not rank high with the letters, for they are like the crown that pertains to the arrangements of kingship, functional to the king himself. Still, the *tagin* are sublime external essences, denoting the realm of superior spirituals.[62]

Overall, Todros Halevi's position prioritizes the essential potentialities that are carried in the letters over the act of speech that is actualized in the motion of the vowels.

In a similar vein, a text attributed to the anonymous R. Meshulam Zadokite, arguably influential to the *'Iyyun* sources, maintains a distinction between the letters that constitute the Tetragrammaton and the *neqqudot*; the two corresponding to the supernal and lower powers (*koḥot shel-ma'alah* and *koḥot shel mattah*), respectively.[63]

Finally, the superiority of the letters is indicated in Moses de León's early theosophical writing, where the letter *yod* stands for the primordial ideational point (*neqqudah maḥshavit*),[64]

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[61] Ibid, 74 (fol. 56a).
[62] Ibid, 75 (fol. 56b).
[63] Published in *Books of Contemplation* (ed. M. Verman), 207-08. On the relationship of this figure to the *Iyyun* sources, see Mark Verman's comments, ibid, 204-206; Porat, *Founding the Circle*, 335. Eliot Wolfson drew attention to the resemblance of this text to a later citation in *Sefer Razi'el*, where the designation *koḥot shel-ma'ala* is extended to the complete Hebrew alphabet. Wolfson, *Letter Symbolism*.
[64] See also citation and remarks by Weiss on the graphical bent of the letter *yod* (י) in the *Iyyun* sources and the allusion of this form to the principle of inner foundation. Weiss, *Spherical Sefirot*, 789.

following which is 'absolute nothingness' (*'ayin gamur*). This point is described as the source of all emanation, as the *yod* is the "sole point whence all letters and essential meanings (*'inyanim*) are continued."[65]

The Metaphysical Priority of the Vowel: Toward a Conceptual Shift

Our brief detour through Todros Halevi and the *Epistle of Worms* helps us better contextualize the developments and contributions of Castilian speculations on the Hebrew language with a focus on the distinctive properties of the *ḥolam* as linguistic point. Marginalizing these distinctive properties, Gershom Scholem was compelled to identify Giqatilla's *ḥolam* with the theosophical speculations on the point by the likes of Isaac Hacohen, to the extent of conflating the two points,[66]

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[65]Bavarian State Library, MS. Munich, Cod. Hebr.47, fol. 371b. Compare R. Isaac's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot, in: G. Scholem, ed., "An Inquiry in the Kabbala of R. Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen," *Tarbitz* 2:2 (1931), 195 (Henceforth *Inquiry I*): "The first principle is the formless ideational point, completely incomprehensible. […] It is the foundation of the formal intelligible point, as well as to the subsequent emanation in the name of *ḥokhma*. [The ideational point is] **sealed, hidden, [and] primordial. For this reason, the Blessed Name begins with *yod***, and it [- the *yod*] is in the image of foundation [that testifies] to [the] internal foundation. The philosophers accordingly establish these two relations, ideational tenths, and intelligible tenths." (- emphasis mine, t.s.) No mention is made there of the *ḥolam*.

[66] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 401, n. 43., cited in Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 108, n. 22. For a similar assessment, see Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 96: "[T]he notion of the symbolic pre-eminence of *ḥolam* is also found, among others, in the writings of Isaac Hacohen of Castile who describes *ḥolam*, exactly as Giqatilla does in *GE*, as a 'primordial point […] which symbolizes the one unity'." I contend that Blickstein follows Scholem in confusing two points with distinct functions and identities, as I shall argue below. See also Morlok, who associates Giqatilla's middle point with *Sefer ha-Bahir* "where the tenth sphere is the inner point of the ten sefirot," although Morlok qualifies this attribution when stating that "the vocalization points […] take the place of *maḥshavah* of Sefer ha-Bahir." Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 87. Still, Morlok appears reluctant to fully distinguish the theosophical point from Giqatilla's *ḥolam*, and she thus describes the latter as signifying "the center of the tenth sphere, the Intellect." Ibid, 91. Dal Bo (*Emanation*, 88-89) continues this point of association, assimilating Giqatilla's *ḥolam* with Jacob ben Sheshet's 'internal point,' while concluding that Giqatilla's *ḥolam* "[d]esignates in a very symbolical way the supernal position of the divine effluence […]." We should also note the connection between Giqatilla and Ibn Latif, which Blickstein argues for in *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 99. It is far from clear that Ibn Latif's point, let alone Giqatilla's *ḥolam*, is indeed the primordial point of the theosophical Kabbalists. I should note that Blickstein's assumption is in line with his broader claim (ibid, 64-78, esp. 67) that the term *hamshakhah* ('emanation' sic. Blickstein) is focal to Giqatilla's early system which, according to Blickstein, virtually adopts the scheme of emanation developed by theosophists like Jacob ben Sheshet. I should also indicate that the connection between Giqatilla and Ibn Latif regarding the identity of the point is also far from clear. Among Ibn Latif's assertions cited by Blickstein is section 18 in *Rav Pe'alim* (ed. Kasher, p. 17), which lists the point among the five things that are nominal and function as epistemological constructs (the remaining four being the geometrical center, the number, species, and time.) This assertion does not resemble Giqatilla's metaphysical *neqqudah*. Sara Willensky, whom Blickstein cites in support, mentions the point-line-surface analogy in Ibn Latif, asserting that "Latif is quite fond of this analogy, and quotes it a number of times as a 'deep mystery'." Heller-Willensky, *Philosopher or Kabbalist*, 207. Here, too, the connection between the point-line analogy and Giqatilla's *ḥolam* is far-fetched, if not entirely inconceivable.

although scholars like Avishai Bar-Asher have questioned the textual premise of the presumed lineage.[67] Bar-Asher's textual clarifications are important, but we should also note the hypothetical grounds that differentiate Giqatilla's *ḥolam* from the theosophical point, the latter identified as the 'ideal point' (*nequddah maḥshavit*). To restate my methodological claim, similar principles are construed differently according to the hypothetical system in which they are deliberated.

The difference between the points, to further lay my argument, derives from two contrasting views of what language primarily is, and how, based on the respective conception, the Hebrew language is rendered as a metaphysical system. Unlike his theosophical contemporaries, Giqatilla thinks of language primarily in terms of simple non-semantic motion, the metaphysical function of which is prior to any form of essential potentiality. More fundamentally, the question that frames the difference between the two approaches is what constitutes the ultimate form of language, and the answer to this question leads to the prioritization of either the letter, albeit spiritual and concealed, or the vowel. To establish this difference, I suggest that we look a little further into the linguistic models that each of these approaches reflects.

Theosophical accounts, as we have seen, assumed that the vowels are secondary to the letters. This idea reflects a philosophical sentiment articulated in several linguistic works from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The influential *Guide for the Reader* asserts the essential dependence of vowels on consonants,[68] and Yehuda Hadassi's *'Eshkol ha-Kopher*, mentioned earlier, explicates this assertion on philosophical grounds: "Know that the kings (i.e., the vowels) are sounds (*qolot*) and the sound is an accident (*'efa*). The accidental is contingent, by its nature, on a principle [or: the

[67] Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 106-10, 150, and cf. cited literature.
[68] "[S]peech cannot begin with a 'melody' (viz. vowel), i.e. a 'king' (viz. vowel), rather it must begin with a letter. This is because when somebody begins speaking, the first component of their speech that is heard is one of the letters. They cannot begin with one of the vowels without putting a letter before it." *Treatise Hidāyat al-Qāri'*,116.

substance].”[69] This assertion, recounted in Yoseph Qostandini’s *‘Adat Devorim*,[70] alludes to the common distinction between formless natural voice and meaningful artificial articulation. The latter, constituting the semantics of speech, is the formal cause of speech.[71] By contrast, vowels or natural voice constitute the matter of speech which is linguistically insignificant if not articulated in the form of consonants and intelligible syllables.[72]

This model differs from the one reflected in Giqatilla’s works in that it identifies the form of speech not with motion, but with the meaningful potentiality of speech, the immaterial source of semantically valid words. While the *neqqudot* play a constructive role in the theurgic performance of intentional vocalization (*kavanah*), as indicated above, they are ontologically subject to the letters.[73] The vowel patterns relate the specific forms of motion which determine, in turn, the pattern of continued and actualized potentiality.[74]

Conversely, in his early *Sefer ha-Niqqud* and in his more theosophical *Ma’amar ‘al Penimiyut ha-Torah*, Giqatilla designates the vowel as the formal cause of articulation and,

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[69] *ʾEshkol ha-Kopher*, fol. 61b.
[70] *ʿAdat Devorim*, 41b. Cf. the remark in Dal Bo, *Emanation*, 84.
[71] See, for example, de Anima, 420b 10-15. Primitive sound is also characterized as natural, and is thus common to most animals, in contradistinction to the artificial structures of names and verbs which give from to sound. The distinction that Boethius draws is between mere sounds and spoken sounds, the latter consisting of elements in the form of letters. See Boethius, *On Interpretation*, 16. We should note that in Aristotle there appears a distinction between two levels of form, the vowel that unites the discrete consonants (‘material form’), and the sense of the word (‘intelligible form’). On the former, see Poet. 1456 b 24–30.
[72] As Ilan Eldar suggested, the position recounted in *‘Adat Devorim* considers the consonant a segmental unit that exists independently of the motivating vowel, which is not the case *vice versa.* See Eldar, *Torat ha-Qeria'a ba-Miqra* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language. 1994), 55-56. On the production of speech in Hadassi’s ’Eshkol and on the relationship between consonants and vowels, see the discussion in. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation*, 22-29, esp. 26.
[73] But cf. the citation from Baḥya ben Asher on the vocalization of the Tetragrammaton in Idel, *Ashkenazi Esotericism*, 77-78: “The quintessence of the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is the vocalization [...].”
[74] The application of the matter and form to the analysis of spoken language is made explicit by Averroes, who divides sound into two principles: “The one takes the place of matter and is called an unvoiced utter, the second takes the place of form and is called voiced utter.” […] “The people of our tongue,” Averroes continues, “call the latter vowels, as well as prolonged and soft letters.” *Middle Commentary on Poetics*, 1456b 34-37 (ed. and trans. C. Butterworth), 118. Cf. also the later (14 c.) Hebrew translation by Todros Todrosi, *Be’ur Sefer ha-Shir*, fol. 173b. On the quality of the vowel, vis-à-vis the consonant, see De Interpret. 16a 19-20, and Alfarabi’s short commentary *ad loc*. (ed. F. W. Zimmermann, 16).

presumably, of their meaningful intelligible source. This model does not necessarily draw on different linguistic sources, but it does reconsider the function of the vowel. Thus, a combination of letters can result in two homographs (e.g., *'ADaM* and *'ADoM*), and the phoneme that determines their distinctive intelligible meanings is the motion of the *niqqud*. Implied in Giqatilla's cited example is that the reason why the vowel can determine specific meanings is because it is ontologically prior to the content of words. That is, the principle of motion takes priority over the content of letters, thereby suggesting a conception of speech whose function is not limited to the sole production of meaning.

The key comparison between the two linguistic models explains why Todros Halevi speaks of an "exalted and sublime point that exceeds the letters and which points to the Cause of Causes" without naming this point *ḥolam*.[75] He appears to differentiate this exalted point from the vowel system, and from language altogether, when discussing it in terms closer to *neqqudah maḥshavit*. The term—which was adopted in Giqatilla's later theosophical works—marks in Isaac Hacohen's teachings the doctrine of the 'ideal point' which Scholem had in mind. This point is metaphysically

[75] Elsewhere, Scholem also argued that Todros Halevi follows Isaac Hacohen in identifying this lofty point with *ḥolam*. Scholem, *Qabbalot,* 24. His argument draws on the idiom ***ḥ**ezyon **l**e-'ish **m**askil* ("a vision to the enlightened") used in *Sha'ar ha-Razim* in connection with the point, the implicit acronym of which is ***ḥolam***. Considering that the same idiom is employed in Isaac Hacohen's explication on the *ḥolam,* Scholem concluded that its appearance in *Sha'ar ha-Razim* must be construed accordingly, as referring to *ḥolam*. Ibid, 10. The phraseological allusion notwithstanding, one would expect Todros Halevi to be as explicit as Hacohen is if by ***ḥ**ezyon **l**e-'ish **m**askil* he indeed had *ḥolam* in mind. In contrast, if we *do* accept their doctrinal affinity, the exegetical connection between *ḥolam* and the ideal point would be challenged based on Hacohen's own grounds, for it is unclear if, in Hacohen's own doctrine, *ḥolam* is identical with the ideal point *per se*. Thus, the idiom ***ḥ**ezyon **l**e-'ish **m**askil* is mentioned incidentally together with ***ḥ**okhma **l**evush **m**aḥshavah*, another exegetical idiom for the acronym ***ḥolam***. Here, *ḥokhma and maḥshavah* designate the Intellect and the concealed *keter*, respectively. *Levush* refers to *'or levush*, the 'light of God's garment' which, by this account, would denote the emanation of *ḥokhma* from *maḥshavah*, or the clothing of the latter in the former. Alternatively, the *levush* can be referring to the third emanating light, *binah*. The latter option is formalized by yet another idiom, ***ḥ**ezyon **l**evush **m**ar'e*: "The masters of Kabbalah received by tradition that *ḥezyon* and *mar'e* are respective epithets for *binah* and *ḥokhma*, and that *ḥezyon* is garment (*levush*) to *mar'e*. Hence [the symbol] ***ḥolam***."(*Qabbalot*, 104) We are thus presented with two options. Either Todros Halevi's lofty point is not identical to Hacohen's *ḥolam*, or, if we do accept Scholem's suggestion, Halevi's *ḥolam* would extend to the lower grades of light, that is, *ḥokhma* and *binah* (*'or ha-sekhel*). This is in contrast to Giqatilla's identification of *ḥolam* as principally prior to the Intellect with its emanating lights and essential forms and, as we saw in Chapter 3, prior to the *'or levush* which in *Ginnat Egoz* denotes the Intellect.

prior to and the source of the formal point of the Intellect and its essential forms—the latter termed *neqqudah ḥokhmit ṣiyurit* ('formal intelligible point')—and it refers to *keter* or the primordial *hyle*.[76]

All in all, Hacohen's point, and of Todros Halevi for this matter, differs from the *ḥolam* in that it grounds a system that is not primarily linguistic.[77] This, I suggest, reflects a conception of language as essentially semantic; that is, connected primarily to essential potentialities, in which the vowels are secondary to the meaningfulness of letters. They exercise the potential meaning in tangible forms. The differentiation of the ideal point as non-linguistic, employing mathematical or geometrical analogies instead, is essential to this model, as the activity of language begins with the essential constitution of the ontological order.

[76] Cf. Gershom Scholem, "Inquiry in the Kabbala of R. Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen," *Tarbiz* 3 (1891): 195. Cf. his remarks (p. 189) on the adaptation of this text in Shem Tov Ibn Shem Tov's *Sefer ha-'Emunot* (Ferrara, 1556), fol. 33a. Shem Tov (14 c.) further substantiates the function of the formless ideal point as indicating an order that is distinguished from the cosmic order and is termed somewhat ambiguously as *ha-ma'arekhet ha-'aḥeret*. Against this point, identified with supreme *keter*, the lower and tangible point refers to *ḥokhma*, the beginning of the cosmic order, and is accordingly manifested in the letter *yod*. We should also note the reception of the two points in Giqatilla's later theosophical thought, specifically in his *Sha'arei 'Orah*. Contrary to some Kabbalistic tendencies to associate *Maḥshavah* with *Keter*, in the writings of Giqatilia and de Leon, *Maḥshavah* typically marks the second *sefirah*, *Ḥokhma*. See *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 5. Cf. Gottlieb, *Studies*, 135, n. 5. Accordingly, in Giqatilia's *Sha'arei 'Orah*, *ḥokhma* is termed *neqqudah maḥshavit*—here in reference to the formal point—and he likewise conflates, earlier in Sha'arie Orah, the terms *makhshavit* and *tsiyurit* into one point– *neqqudah makhshavit tsiyurit*. Cf. S*ha'arie 'Orah*, vol. 1, 187.

[77] Owing to the advancements of Giqatilla's early system, later adaptations will indeed conflate the two points. Shem Tov Ibn Gaon, for example, relates the *ḥolam* to the ideal point of *Keter,* the *'awir ha-mezima* ('pneuma of thought'), and he cites the segment by Todros Halevi in support: "His [Todros Haelvi's – T.S.] tradition (lit. *kabbalah*) on the *ḥolam* concurs with ours." *Qabbalato ba-ḥolam*' *ke-qabbalatenu*; *Baddei ha-'Aron*, fol. 59a. On *'awir ha-mezima* as an epithet for *Keter*, see Dan, *Baddei ha-Aron*, 133, n. 55. This assertion is not necessarily an indication as to Todros Haelvi's own thoughts on this matter, and it likely involves an interpretive move that integrates the linguistic sentiments that we find already in Giqatilla and in the writings associated with de-León, construing the point in *Sha'ar ha-Razim* accordingly. This point did not seem to escape Asi Farber's attention: "Shem-Tov Ibn Ga'on […] presents his kabbalah on the *ḥolam* which is identical, **in his view**, to Todors Abulafia's kabbalah […]." See Farber-Ginat, *Sources*, 91, n. 52; emphasis mine. We should also mention that Moses De-León, himself, makes an interesting move in Masqiyyot Keseph, where he connects the threefold point, manifested in *ḥolam* primarily and in *shuruq* and *ḥiriq* by consequence*,* with *neqquda maḥshavit* on analogical grounds: "*ḥolam* is the secret of motion of the supernal world, **in the likening of** the ideational point (***ke-ṣurat*** *ha-neqqudah ha-maḥshavit)*" (– emphasis mine). Cf. the remark in Scholem, *Origins*, 360: "Moses de Leon used *neqqudah mahshabith* as a symbol for the *sefirah hokhmah*." *Sefer ha-Mishkal* (ed. J. Wijnhoven), 15. Cf. his *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, Ms. British Museum 759, fol. 26a.

‘Like a Bright Object Grasped by Reflection’: Motion revealed in Meaning

In the introduction to the present chapter, I indicated the threefold structure of Giqatilla’s linguistic system—consisting of vowel points, vowel letters, and consonants—and the two available models for construing this structure. Unlike the first vertically hierarchical model, the second model assumes the concomitance of the three principles which, to use a concentric-geometric figure, engulf each other.[78] This model, I further suggested, is most fitting for explaining Giqatilla’s system, considering that Giqatilla’s point is analyzed by its unifying function in relationship to the totally of language, extending to the differentiated dimensions of speech. In a way, this approach discloses Giqatilla’s qualified Aristotelian sentiment, which analyzes linguistic-ontological principles, viz., letters and vowels, as linguistically codependent, even if the *ḥolam* point, in and of itself, epitomizes a theologically transcendent principle of utter simplicity. While the analysis of this structure will be the focus of the following sections, it is worth pausing to adjust our general orientation by making a preliminary remark on the function of the vowel point as molded through the spherical image.

The analysis of Giqatilla’s *ḥolam* leads to the realization that the contingency of the letters on the vowels is compatible with the general description of the vowel as the form of the letter, and with the specific designation of *ḥolam* as the ground of that form, the form of the form.[79] This might seem philosophically counterintuitive, considering that the meaning of speech, constituted by the semantic potentiality of the letters, is typically considered the form of speech. But in Giqatilla’s early thinking, the essential constitution of things, denoted by the meaning of words, is

[78]On Giqatilla’s spherical-concentric model, see Harel, *Spherical Shapes*, 5-30, esp. 28. On Kabbalistic concentric models more generally, see Weiss, *Spherical Sefirot*.

[79] *Ma’amar ‘al Penimiyut ha-Torah*, 414. See also *GE* 98-99. The idea that the vowels carry a determining factor is central to the Masoretic tradition of reading and pronunciation. See Carlos del Valle Rodriguez *Grammatikalische Terminologie*, 180. Further, this factor touches on the twofold etymology of the word *ta‘am* as denoting both meaning and vocalization. See Rodriguez, Ibid, 100-02.

ontologically posterior to the ultimate form, that is, to the existential and vital unity of words and, consequently, of things. This subtle observation has been noticed already in our remarks in Chapter 3 on Giqatilla's attribution of from to divine volitive action, as activated in God's Proper Name, as opposed to the essential forms associated with Nature, or the name 'Elohim.

Adopting the conceptual framework of form and matter,[80] Giqatilla repeatedly stresses the interconnectedness of the consonants, associated by him with matter, and the motion of the vowels. This describes how language operates ontologically to construct a world that is meaningfully coherent. This further reflects the association of the Torah with the separated intellects, a view shared also by Isaac ibn Latif and Abraham Abulafia.[81] But Giqatilla further grounds the language of Torah in a principle of pure activity which takes both linguistic and ontological priority over the semantic constructs of letters and intelligible forms. The thrust of this argument is that along with its semantic function, language can be structurally analyzed as an activity that extends semantic determination. As an activity, it is simpler and thus prior to the determined forms of meaning which are constructed through the combination of letters.

Giqatilla further suggests that it is the principle of simple motion that makes possible the more specified form of meaningful speech. This claim takes a structural form in his discussion on the linguistic nature of the Torah:

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[80] Scholem (*Bahir*, 88) indicated that in Ms. Or. Qu. 833 (fols. 95a-b)—following the so-called Epistle of Worms, discussed above—a teaching attributed to Naḥmanides identifies matter (*ḥomer*) and form (*ṣurah*) with the respective consonants and vowels. The full text is, in fact, *Ma'amar 'al Penimiyut ha-Torah,* which Scholem indeed attributed to Naḥmanides. See State Library of Berlin Germany Ms. Or. Qu. 833, fols. 94a-95b. Ephraim Gottlieb has cast doubt on Scholem's attribution of *Ma'amar*, associating it instead with Giqatilla's early (or middle) thinking and in spirit with *Ginnat Egoz*. See Gottlieb, *Studies*, 128-31. Although not conclusive, Gottlieb's suggestion is persuasive. For Scholem's position on this matter, see Scholem, *Chapters*, 397.

[81] See discussion and citations in Idel, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 168. Note also the thematic distinction between Torah and Sefer Torah in Barukh Togarmi's *Mafteḥot ha-Kabbalah*, 238. Cf. 234. Togarmi associates Sefer Torah with the Tetragrammaton. It is likely that Giqatilla is alluding to this distinction by his threefold consonants, vowel-letters, and point scheme, the latter taking the place of the Name. We should also note that in Togarmi's text, the distinction between Torah and Sefer Torah is described by the term *mar'eh* ('plain sight'; Num. 12.8), to be distinguished from the hidden source of the Name (ibid, 232). This characterization appears also in *Ginnat Egoz* (116).

> The [internal] wisdom is the internal point [that operates] in relationship to the order of twenty-two letters (*ne'erekhet be-ma'arekhet kaf-bet 'otiyyot*). The secret of these letters is [the vowel letters] *'a,h,w,y* (*22=*אהו"י), and the latter are grounded in the *neqquda* [in the following *gematric* manner]: *'aleph* (*111=*אל"ף), *he* (*15 =* ה"י), *waw* (*13=*וא"ו), *yod* (*20=*יו"ד) consist in the secret *neqquda* (*159=*נקוד"ה). [The vowel letters] *'a,h,w,y* are thus the secret of the twenty-two letters, and the foundation of our Torah is a singular point.[82]

This concise account assumes the threefold structure of language—consonants, vowel letters, and the vowel point. The suggested image of a 'secret within secret'—point within vowel letter within consonant—is followed by the assertion that "the philosophers cannot attain the truth […] for they lack the internal wisdom which is the wisdom of the Torah."

This distinction, between *Torah language* and *philosophical language*, is a recurring theme in Giqatilla's early and later works, and it appears to touch on the fundamental question: What is the unifying form of language? From a philosophical perspective, the answer consists of the meaningful and logical definition of things, while linguistic procedures are philosophically justified by their functions of signification, denotation, communication, and so forth. By contrast, the unifying form of *Torah language* consists of a principle that extends the meaningful constructs of signification and abstraction. This allows Giqatilla to rework a familiar typology in Jewish tradition which designates Hebrew as the protolanguage from which all other languages branched out.[83]

Alluding to a trope common in *Ginnat Egoz*, and introduced by Maimonides and others as well,[84] Giqatilla formulates this distinction, between the philosophical-essential language and the language of Torah, in the respective terms of 'exteriority' and 'interiority'. Philosophical language

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[82] *GE* 343. See *Ṣurat 'Olam* (Ch. 21, fol. 143b) for a similar description of the אהו"י as the source of the 22 consonants.
[83] See Zweip, *Mother of Reason* 162–92; Menachem Kellner, *The Normality of* Hebrew, 425. For Giqatilla's account, see *Glosses*, fol. 20c. See his discussion on Babel and the multiplicity of languages in *Sha'arei Ṣedeq* (Krakow: Fischer, 1881), fol. 1a. Cf. the discussion in Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, 174–75. For an instance of this typology in Giqatilla's contemporaries, see Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 9–28.
[84] See discussion in Chapter 1.

is limited in its ability to relate the world in a way that extends the descriptive qualities of things, essential or accidental, whereas the language of Torah aims precisely at this—it remains on the level of essential meaning, but concomitantly relates the simple principle that transcends, yet unifies the differentiated level of descriptive speech.[85]

Here I should also mention that the linguistic paradigm of essential content and simple motion, that is, of letters and vowels, is not limited to the sublunary world of generation and corruption. In *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla mentions the immaterial letters which he presumably associates with the intelligible realm.[86] This suggests that the relationship between letters and motion concerns essence versus simple activity, and that this interplay runs through all grades of the ontological order. Drawing on this logic, Giqatilla asserts that existence "belongs principally to the letters,"[87] in the sense that letters form names, and names constitute the essence of things. But he is equally clear about the priority of the *niqqud*: "Know that the letters have indeed no existence without the *niqqud*, for the niqqud is the foundation (*yesod*) of the letter. There is no letter if there is no *niqqud*."[88]

Our last remarks disclose the ontological implication of Giqatilla's presumed distinction between *Torah language* and *philosophical language*. The determining factor of *philosophical language* touches on the ontological status of the letters in relationship to the vowel. Inasmuch as

[85] This twofold function of the simple principle, transcending spoken language yet operating through and in relation thereto, is a recurring theme in Giqatilla's thought. Thus, the connection that Maimonides draws between the limitation of matter and spoken language resurfaces in Giqatilla's discussion on prophecy, where linguistic constraints reflect the limitation of human apprehension, which is bound to matter (*GE* 423-25). We should note that in *Glosses* (fol. 29b), Giqatilla speaks of the simple divine potentiality which can be conceived through the form of the letters, "in the same manner that a bright object can be seen through reflection" (*Ke-mi she-ro'e guf bahir derekh hitnosesut* [lit. display]).

[86] On tangible and intelligible letters, see *GE* 422; *SN Long* 175a-b. Ibn Latif (*Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 21) appears more judgmental about the sensorial delusions which he ultimately associates with physical consonants.

[87] *GE* 377: "[..] The letters carry the world in its totality with the power that they receive from God in the secret of the Name of Being, for existence belongs principally to the letters."

[88] *GE* 422.

the intelligible letters constitute a world that is essentially meaningful, they are associated with Nature and, more specifically, with the intelligible forms. This view applies also, perhaps primarily, to philosophical views that affirm the natural relationship between words and things in the world. By contrast, the divine characterization of the *Torah language* is grounded in the metaphysical priority of the vowel point which is not reductive to the meaningfully essential function of the letters.[89]

Man Doth Not Live by Bread Only: Theological Implications of the Point

Unlike the theosophical conception of the point as hidden, primordial, and primarily ideational, Giqatilla's *ḥolam* takes on a distinctly phonetic identity: "All beings depend on this point, which is the mystery of the beginning of motion from Him, Blessed be He." [90] The theological significance of this linguistic point should be considered in light of an antinomy between two

[89] We may recall the principle of *hazkarat ha-Shem* ('mentioning of the Name'), considered above in connection with the principle of delineation (*zakhar*) and, in Chapter 3, in connection with the act attributed to divine will. There, the principle of *hazkarah* had to do with the metaphysical priority that divine will, associated with the Tetragrammaton, takes over the intelligible essences of the Intellect. Our analysis suggested that what differentiates divine will from the Intellect touches on the distinction between the simple activity of existence versus the determined essence of the intellects. That is, *hazkarat ha-Shem* marks the so-called process by which the essential forms receive their power of existential unity and vitality from the Proper Name. On *hazkarah* see also *GE* 293-95. Cf. Blickstein's remarks (*Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 78) on the related term *hakhraḥah* (coercion). Moshe Idel argued for the adaptation, in *Ginnat Egoz*, of the theurgic doctrine of *hazkarat ha-shem*, mentioned above, albeit without its theosophical import. See Idel, *Kavanah*, 39-40. Giqatilla indeed connects the vowels with the specific forms that are subsequent to God's Name, and he accordingly admits that the vowels draw the patterns of vocalization as specific constitutions of being from God's Name (*GE* 98-99). He further remarks on the practice of *hazkarat ha-shem*, the mentioning of the Tetragrammaton in a theurgical setting: "All existents come into being from His true existence which endures all and is hidden from all. His effluence is in all, and with several secrets. And these things are linked to the secret of the *niqqud* of the Name and its mention (*Be-sod niqqudo u'be-sod hazkarato*). This practice involves various intentions (*kavanot*), with respective morphological forms, from which corresponding forms of emanation are continued" (*GE* 293). However, the inferiority of *niqqud* is discussed specifically in relationship to the Name that "is not informed by any particular form" of speech, i.e., the ineffable Name. Cf. the citation in *GE* 101: "His Name Blessed be He is the source of all forms, and it forms them according to their essence. In this respect, His Name Blessed be He receives (or: carries) several vowels (*kama niqqudim*), thus testifying to the contingency of all forms on Him." I will discuss this citation, in more detail, in the following sections. We should also note that Giqatilla mentions *hazkarat ha-shem* as a theurgic secret (*GE* 458), but immediately masks this secret as unfitting the broader discussion of *GE*. Finally, we should mention Giqatilla's discussion on the Tetragrammaton in Part Two of *Ginnat Egoz* (*GE* 375), where *hazkarah* is mentioned in connection with the various intentions (*kavanot*) of the Name.

[90] *GE* 434.

central claims: on the one hand, the identification of God as the primary cause of the cosmic order; on the other, the apophatic insistence on God's radical transcendence of that order.[2] Giqatilla inherits this tension from Maimonidean doctrine, and his treatment of *ḥolam* constitutes one of his central responses to it.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Giqatilla critiques Samuel Ibn Tibbon's account of ontological analogy, while engaging—if indirectly—Maimonides' doctrine of absolute equivocality between God and created beings.[3] At the same time, we saw that his notion of existential activity functions to mitigate the radical consequences of such apophaticism.[4] Building on those discussions, I suggest that *ḥolam* serves in Giqatilla's thought as a theological alternative to the Maimonidean God—or more precisely, that he redefines the premise of divine transcendence through the linguistic properties of the vowel point.[5] This revision allows him to maintain the ontological distinction between primordial and renewed existence, while softening the theological distance that distinction implies.

The primacy of *ḥolam* has rightly been examined in light of Maimonides' conception of God, described—somewhat ambiguously—both as the formal cause of the universe and as ontologically and causally transcendent to it.[91] This comparison was developed in Chapter 2 through the figure of the *rokhev* ("rider") of the ninth sphere (*'Aravot*)[92] and again in Chapter 3

[91] See the helpful discussion in Bar Asher, *Punctiform*, 105-06 and cf. cited scholarship (nn. 8-9). This approach is more compatible with the idea that *ḥolam* operates in relationship to the mechanism of letters, even if this relationship captures only the effect of the vowel and not the vowel *per-se.* See *SN Long*, fols. 179a, 183a.

[92] The verb *rokhev* ('rides'; 'dominates'), which Maimonides exegetically attributes to God (*Guide* I:70), is virtually transposed to *ḥolam*: "The havens are subjugated to God, just as the horse is for the use of the rider who dominates it. In the same manner you will find that *ḥolam* dominates All, and it is exalted above All." See *SN Long*, fol. 177a. Also see the revised version in *SN Short*, 48*-49*, and the remark in the English section, 382, n. 12. Later, particularly in sources associated with Moses de-León, *ḥolam* is characterized as the "minister of the Intellect (*sar ha-sekhel*)" and it is further distinguished as *rokhev 'al rokhev*, dominating that which dominates, viz., the Intellect. *Sod Darkhie ha-Otiyyot*, fol. 188b-189a. With that said, the sources associated with de-León express ambivalence as to the categorical distinction between the *yod*, which refers the Intellect, and *ḥolam*, considering that they share graphic dimensions, both figured as the point. The graphic identity of the two points reflects the perplexity as to whether *ḥolam* is not simply a token for the Intellect, and, if not, by which account are they effectively two? The author answers this hypothetical question somewhat reluctantly, implying that the difference between the two is indeed less obvious than

in connection with *ḥolam*.[93] We saw that Giqatilla presents *ḥolam* as a threefold Aristotelian cause, though our analysis indicated that its function as a formal cause departs from the classical Aristotelian model of essential causality.[94] Much of this divergence became evident in our discussion of the relationship between *ḥolam* and the Intellect.[10]

These deliberations underscore Giqatilla's distinction between the essential constitution of the Intellect—conceived as form—and a prior principle of activity that precedes all essential determination. It is in this mediating position that *ḥolam* operates: as the expression of the primordial source and, at the same time, the immediate cause of the Intellect.[11] In this respect, we may distinguish between the formal structure of the ontological order, which Giqatilla attributes to the Universal Intellect, and the principle of existential motion, which precedes form and is identified with the simple act of phonetic articulation. This latter principle, represented by *ḥolam*, draws from earlier, pre-Kabbalistic reflections on the *niqqud* system.

More broadly, *ḥolam* offers a theological alternative to Maimonides' metaphysics. While Giqatilla accepts the rejection of ontological analogy with respect to divine essence, he introduces a principle of permeating motion that does not require essential likeness. This allows him to distinguish divine activity from divine substance without collapsing the distinction between them.

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what seems to be the case for Giqatilla. *Sod Darkei Ha-'Otiyyot* fol. 188b (Bar Asher ed., p. 213) This ambivalence, as I will later demonstrate, reflects de-León's more pantheistic metaphysics, compared to Giqatilla's system. Cf. Charles Mopsik, Introduction to *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh of R. Moses de Leon* (Los-Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996), 4-5. Indeed, we will also see how de-León's pantheistic approach leads him to substitute the *ḥolam* principle with *qameṣ*, the latter epitomizing the subjugation of the point to the all-encompassing line.

[93] Cf. *GE* 435.

[94] It is worth considering the option of differentiating the two, the essential casual forms, on the one hand, and the phonetic point of speech, on the other, through the essence-existence prism that was rather common at the time. Ibn Latif, for example, adopts this distinction in a somewhat Gabirolean fashion, to distinguish the essential constitution of things, which he attributes to the principle of universal form, and the existential principle of all beings attributed to universal matter: "What you should know and be awaken about is that by the effluence of the first created being and its splendor God has continued separated intellects, emitting from His mighty fire, consisting of many grades one above the other in a cause and effect relationship (*'illa we-'alul*). The matter of each constitutes its existence, whereas the substantial form of the intellect consists of the perception of its proximate cause" (*Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 10).

That *ḥolam* serves this function is reinforced by its ambiguous relationship to both the One and the created order. Giqatilla puns on Deut. 8:3, replacing ***leḥem*** (bread, לחם) with ***ḥolam*** (חלם), and concludes: "Indeed, 'man doth not live by bread (leḥem) only,' for speech depends on the primary source (*ha-moṣa ha-rishon*), the origin of all origins."[95] Yet, even as *ḥolam* is subordinated to this source, Giqatilla insists on its priority as the first principle of motion. Its subordination merely signals its insubstantiality: *ḥolam* is not an independent essence but the active expression of the primordial origin.[96]

Giqatilla's *ḥolam* likewise extends the divine act as a permeating cosmic force. In Ginnat Egoz and in Sefer ha-Niqqud Giqatilla relates a critique that was leveled against his conception of the point. The thrust of the purported critique is that Giqatilla's point presumes a threefold scheme, consisting of the supreme *ḥolam*, the middle *shuruq* and lower *ḥiriq*. Each of the points represents a distinguished mode of ontological unity, implying—thus infers the anonymous critique—a form of hypostatic division between these principles. If this is the case, then the association of *ḥolam*

[95] *SN Long*, fol. 180a; *SN Short,* 27*; *GE* 434. Giqatilla is punning here on the Maimonidean *ha-mmoṣuy ha-rishon* (*Laws of the Foundation of the Torah*, 1.1), turning the primary existent into the primary source of speech. Note that in MS. New York 851 (fols. 88b-89a) the term *ha-moṣa' ha-rishon* is used in a qualified sense to describe the primary Intellect whence all ontological grades emanate. See our discussion in Chapter 3.

[96] Moses de-León notably used the ***leḥem-ḥolam*** anagram to call into question the primacy of *ḥolam* as the transcendent origin of speech. The difference between the Intellect (viz., *yod*) and *ḥolam* is reformulated as the distinction between the essential properties of the Intellect, on the one hand, and its animating condition, on the other. The *ḥolam*, we are told, indicates the vitality of the Intellect as continued from the all-encompassing source: "You will find that *ḥolam* and *yod* share the image of the singular point, sharing an identical form. And although you will find the *ḥolam* affixed (lit. rides) on the *yod*, know that [this is because that] *yod* lacks motion when standing independent, gained only through the secret of YH (יה). It begets [its own] motion through the motion of YH, and it consequently motivates all [successive grades]." In: *Sod Darkei Ha-'Otiyyot*, fol. 188b, (p. 213 in Bar-Asher ed.) Nevertheless, the linguistic and ontological import of the point *ḥolam* is qualified by de-León to God's all-encompassing plentitude. The *ḥolam* is rendered as the primary mode of this plentitude. This relationship, between the point and the source of All, is virtually depicted in the vowel-mark *qameṣ* [ָ] – an all-encompassing line beneath which the point is situated. See *Sha'ar Ḥeleq ha-Neqqudah,* MS. Paris.hebr.817, fol. 82a; *Sod Darkie ha-'Otyyiot*, MS. Bar-Ilan 1038, fol. 18b. Beyond the diagrammatic maneuver that this exegetical exercise involves, the subjugation of *ḥolam* aims to resolve the ambivalence considered above by positing God's existence as the active origin of creative speech.

with God, on the one hand, and with the modified points, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, on the other, would force Giqatilla's monistic theology into a form of a polytheistic system.[97]

Giqatilla's response to the alleged critique is revealing. The three points, we are informed, indeed represent distinct modes of the singular point. But the critique erroneously confuses activity with substance, leading to the conclusion that the three modes are essentially hypostatic. Against this misconception, Giqatilla emphasizes the inapplicability of a hypostatic framework to the threefold point*, ḥolam*, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, considering that the latter two are the modes of the simple point of action, insofar as it operates in a descending cosmic order.[98]

While the threefold scheme of the point serves to illustrate the modes of the primary simple activity, the priority of the *ḥolam* remains undisputed.

A Linguistic Cosmos: Phonetic Structures in *Ginnat Egoz*

The primary linguistic principle in Giqatilla's system is the vowel point *ḥolam*, which, we have seen, epitomizes an insubstantial principle of divine activity. In his early works, and to some extent in his later works as well, Giqatilla expands on divine linguistic activity through the Hebrew vowel system and its symbolic representation. Giqatilla's adaptive approach to these systems aims to establish *ḥolam* as a primary principle while construing other specific vowel points as modified

[97] *GE* 427. In *SN Long* (fol. 176a), this critique is attributed to an unnamed Rabbi Avraham – a figure that scholars have identified with Abraham Abulafia. See Gottlieb, *Studies*, 104. Cf. Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 37-38; Martini, *Punctuation*, 52-53. For a comprehensive assessment of this attribution and a substantive critique thereof, see Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 129-30.

[98] Theosophical adaptations of Giqatilla's *niqqud* will draw the connection between *ḥolam* and *Neshama le-Neshama*. Cf. the anonymous treatise in Bar Asher, *Punctiform*, 175-6. But there, too, the phrasing is somewhat cryptic: "*Ḥolam* is in the form that indicates (*ke-demut megallah*), standing against the Cause of Causes, which is Soul to all Soul (*Neshama le-khol Neshama*) and Mover of all Movers." The relative pronoun which is (*she-he*) relates the epithet 'soul of souls' to Cause of Causes ('*Illat ha-'Illot*), while it is unclear if this epithet applies also to *ḥolam* which functions as indicator (*ke-demut megallah*). On *Sibbat ha-Sibbot* and *'Illat ha-'Illot* , see *GE* 98, 101,149

forms of the *ḥolam* or as principles structurally contingent thereon. This adaptive system is the infrastructure of Giqatilla's language-based cosmos.

By the early thirteenth century, these systems were fully developed and, building on these systems, the era of linguistic-theological speculation has moved to the forefront. Giqatilla marks an important moment in this shifting process, as he integrates these various linguistic systems into his original cosmic-linguistic structure centered on the principle of non-semantic linguistic activity. 'Linguistic systems', in the plural, since there is indication that while the linguistic writings of Abraham ibn Ezra (twelfth century) were pivotal for Giqatilla's intellectual endeavors,[99] he likely also benefited from the linguistic system developed several decades later by the Kimḥi family, specifically the father Joseph and his son David (twelfth and thirteenth centuries).

Back to the Elements: The Threefold Point as a Unifying Cosmic Principle

In the introduction to the present chapter, I indicated the distinction between two genres of vowel points: *yesod* and *binyan*. I further suggested that the former complements Giqatilla's treatment of the cosmic elements (*yesodot*), as discussed in Chapter 2. The working hypothesis of that chapter was that Giqatilla's cosmology rests on a twofold model of causality. Constructing the terms *hishtalshelut* ("concatenation") and *mele'ut* ("infusion") as contrasting yet complementary, we examined this model as comprising, on the one hand, an emanative Neoplatonic scheme of essential causality and, on the other, a principle of direct action responsible for the existential unity and cohesion of all things. I further proposed that this latter principle is modeled by analogical

[99] See discussion in Martini, *Punctuation*, 61-62, 64-65, and passim.

inference from the sublunar elements, which retain a degree of identical simplicity across descending realms, in contrast to the essential differentiation entailed by the emanative scheme.

This twofold causal model was analyzed through the principle of air, which Giqatilla construes in terms that allude to the Stoic concept of *pneuma*. At the same time, I qualified this allusion by arguing that the permeating qualities of air accord with Giqatilla's ideas about the vital motion of the spheres. This connection was further articulated through the term *meruṣah*, as well as the analogy of the ship steered by a sailor—both of which suggest the permeating function of the vital soul in relation to the spheres. This interpretation is reinforced by Giqatilla's *neshamah–neshimah* ("soul"–"breath") analogy. By contrast, the intelligible realm is characterized in terms of fire, explicitly distinguished from air—a distinction consistent with Giqatilla's Maimonidean philosophical orientation. Here, the intelligible—referred to as *ṣurah* ("form")—is distinguished from *neshamah*, insofar as it functions as the form of the vital soul and is thus separable from the spherical body.

Giqatilla's restriction of permeating air to the middle, spherical world does not negate his broader account of the existential roles of fire and water: fire pertains to the intellects, while water pertains to sublunar individuals. Rather, all three elements represent simple principles of cohesion, whose modes differ according to the specific ontological grade.

The full ontological implications of this elemental scheme emerge most clearly when rendered in linguistic terms. What is described in cosmological language as natural, universal elements is reinterpreted as features of linguistic activity, formalized through the system of vowel points. Giqatilla accepts the essential characterization of the elements in terms of motion—the direction and simplicity of which constitute the form and hierarchical status of each of the three elements. This framework further completes Giqatilla's analogical model, whereby the three

elements—fire, air, and water—represent the relationship between the three worlds: intelligible, celestial, and sublunar, in a causally descending yet unified order.

In Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, Giqatilla transitions from elemental to linguistic motion by identifying each of the three elements with a corresponding vowel point: *ḥolam* represents the upper fire, *ḥiriq* the middle air, and *shuruq* the lower water.[100] This transition—from natural elements to linguistic principles—completes the core of Giqatilla's cosmic-linguistic structure. Each element is now understood as a specific mode of linguistic vitality that animates the cosmic order. Yet this shift entails more than a structural mapping; it signifies the unification of descending principles under a single *yesod*, a primary principle of activity modulated in accordance with the ontological level at which it operates. This, I contend, touches on the ambiguity in Giqatilla's assertions about the identity of the three distinguished vowel points and their relationship with each other:

> Know my brother that […] the three points *ḥolam, shuruq,* and *ḥiriq* are founded on a singular principle and in one order (*meyusadot hen 'al yesod eḥad we-seder eḥad*). […] [T]heir order necessarily [follows:] *ḥolam* above, *shuruq* in the middle, and *ḥiriq* below the latter two. The three (!) principles participate in one *yesod* ('principle'), and that is *ḥolam*. […] The *ḥolam* alone is thus *yesod*, whilst *shuruq* and *ḥiriq* are *binyan* ('compound')."[101]

The effort to uphold both the unity of the three vowel points as expressions of a single underlying principle, and their differentiated ontological modes draws on analogical concepts such as *shituf* and *erekh*. We examined the application of these analogical terms in Chapter 2, where they were used to describe the relationship among the cosmological elements: fire, air, and water. There, the elements were shown to stand in an analogical relation distinct from the essential causality characteristic of the standard emanative model. In Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, these same

[100] *GE* 468.
[101] *GE* 427. Cf. *SN Short* 36*: "Indeed, the three points are not comprehended by their essential constitution (*mi-derekh tekunat 'aṣman*), for they consist of an internal intelligible secret […]."

analogical principles are employed to articulate the relationship among the three descending vowel points.[102] Although they occupy distinct ontological positions, they remain causally and essentially unified by a single supreme principle:

> [A]lthough the [three points] are differentiated with respect to the principle (*ḥaluqot ke-neged ha-yesod*), they are identical with respect to their [shared] essence. (*'einan ḥaluqot ke-neged ha-tekhunah*).[103] Still, they differ considerably in ranking.[104]

The image of the simple point undergoes a linguistic adaptation, both in the sense of functioning as a vowel, and, consequently, in the sense of a pre-semantic act. But the active principle of existence runs through the rungs of the cosmic order, such that while its various levels are said to causally follow from the Intellect by way of essential emanation, the existential ground of this order, presented by the archetypal *ḥolam*, takes modified modes in accordance with the proximity of each of the lower worlds in relationship to the source. These modified forms of the archetypal point are the middle *shuruq* and lower *ḥiriq*.

In our discussion on the *ḥolam* we considered the formalization of the three vowels—*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *ḥiriq*—as modes of a simple phonetic principle, corresponding to the three descending oral positions and symbolized accordingly in relationship to the graphic letter. Abraham ibn Ezra attributes cosmic analogical significance to two of the three points, namely, *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq*, as representing primary principles of motion. They both move rectilinearly, signifying the respective rectilinear motions of the sublunar elements—from and toward the center.

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[102] In *GE* 432, Giqatilla continues his response (*GE* 427) to the assumed critique leveled against his theory of the three points that presumably implies a polytheistic doctrine: "Were the points completely differentiated from one another without being analogically related (*le-lo shituf*), the claims [leveled against Giqatilla's notion of the threefold point] would have had grounds […]." And in *GE* 439 he applies the analogical principle of *relatio*: "Inasmuch as the three points are situated in relationship to each other (*ne'erakhot zu eṣel zu*), you will find that *ḥolam* alone is *yesod*, while *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*, situated beneath it, are both *binyan*."

[103] That *tekhunah* here refers the essence of the points themselves, and not the essential constitution of the cosmos, is suggested by a similar phrase in *SN Short* 36*: "Indeed, the three points are not comprehended by **their** essential constitution (*mi-derekh **tekunat 'aṣman***), for they consist of an intelligible secret." (- emphasis mine.)

[104] *GE* 428.

Spherical motion is epitomized by *pattaḥ*—an open phonological expression which entails no oral or labial contraction. In addition, *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq* symbolize "the great luminaries," viz. the sun and the moon.[105] The remaining vowels take similar positions with respect to the stars, thus *pattaḥ* symbolizes Saturn.

Giqatilla modifies Ibn Ezra's analogical model in a twofold manner. First, he attributes significance to the middle point as well, *shuruq*, which corresponds to the circular motion of the spheres. Second, his treatment of the three points distinguishes the three simple vowel points as principles of existential unity, not natural motion, each corresponding to one of the three worlds: "The existence of being *in toto* depends on these points."[106] A critical aspect of this vowel adaptation is that as a metaphysical principle, the point, with its modified forms, does not manifest in the natural movement of the spheres *per se*.[107] In this respect, Giqatilla establishes a preliminary yet essential framework for his theology of language that is premised on principles of motion and activity. Among the tasks that this claim implies is the construal of the other vowel points, representing natural motion, as structurally relating the three linguistic principles.

Phonetic Diacritics and Cosmic Structures: *Qameṣ*, *pattaḥ*, and *Ṣere*:

While drawing heavily on Ibn Ezra's linguistic system, Giqatilla's treatment of the vowels reflects linguistic and conceptual affinity to the system developed by Joseph Qimḥi and his son David (twelfth and thirteenth centuries).[108] For reasons having to do with shifts in the conceptual value

[105] *Sefer Ṣaḥot,* 10. Cf. Bacher, *Ibn Ezra the Grammarian*, 54, n.5.
[106] *GE* 414.
[107] *SN Short* 36*: "Indeed, the three points cannot be comprehended through their essential constitution, for they consist of an internal and intelligible secret (*sod penimi sikhli*) […]."
[108] For a similar observation regarding Abulafia's niqqud patterns, see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, 23: "Abulafia adopted an Ashkenazic system of combination to the Sephardic system of vocalization, based upon five major vowels." Cf. his remark on p. 45, n. 39, and Idel, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, 146. Abulafia's *'Or ha-Sekhel*, to which Idel (ibid) refers, contains a striking allusion to Giqatilla's vowel theory. This detailed reference includes several key elements: the identification of *ḥolam* with *ḥashmal*, the metaphysical distinction between *ḥolam* and *qameṣ*, their conjunctive relationship through the *ḥatef-qameṣ* symbol, and the interpretation of the vowel-point *pattaḥ* as

of the Hebrew vowel, the Qimḥis developed a system consisting of ten vowels, five of which are considered 'long' ('mothers'). These consist of *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥiriq*, *qameṣ,* and *ṣere*, referring to the respective phonetic values [o], [u], [i], [ā], and [ē]. Giqatilla indeed adds the latter two, *qameṣ* and *ṣere*, to his five principal vowels, thus completing the scheme of 'mothers'.[109] In Qimḥi's system, the other five are the modified forms ('daughters') of each of the long vowels, pending the syllabic context of the vowel. For example, *pattaḥ* is situated in this system as a subtype of *qameṣ*, while the difference between the two concerns whether the vowel, in its syllabic context, prolongs an implicit vowel letter *'aleph*.[110] The tenfold system, divided into 'long' and 'short', reflects the 'five against five' structure of *Sefer Yeṣirah* 1:3. In Giqatilla's system, this structural equilibrium is thematized by the archetypal difference between *tenu'ah* and *pe'ulah*, which can be roughly rendered as motion and essential action.[111]

There are several additional vowel points in Giqatilla's system, but first we should clarify how Giqatilla is building the respective vowel systems of Ibn Ezra and Qimḥi. I shall address this question by considering the role, phonological and cosmological, of the other two primary vowels,

'opening'. All these cosmic-phonetic designations appear in *Ginnat Egoz* (see our discussion in Chapter 3 and further below). Given these similarities, recent scholarship suggests that Abulafia's *'Or ha-Sekhel* reflects Giqatilla's doctrine in *Ginnat Egoz*, not vice versa. See Bar-Asher, *Punctiform*, 131-32. Cf. Gottlieb, *Studies*, 105. This interpretation finds support in Abulafia's opening declaration that "wise people enlightened in the secrets of the *Kabbalah* of the Name have just recently composed treatises on these secrets." In: *'Or ha-Sekhel*, 96. Naturally, there are noticeable differences between the two accounts. Abulafia describes *qameṣ* as a combination of *pattaḥ* and *ḥiriq*, representing the circle and the point (*'Or ha-Sekhel*, 97), whereas Giqatilla, following Ibn Ezra, understands *qameṣ* as composed of *pattaḥ* and *ḥolam* (see below). Additionally, Abulafia states that the secret of *ḥolam* "includes three *sefirot* which are [the] three unique Names, according to the three *yesodot*." This cryptic formulation is absent from *Ginnat Egoz* and possibly alludes to Isaac Hacohen's account—though without its theosophical resonance—where *ḥolam* symbolizes the three hypostatic principles – *Maḥshavah*, *Binah*, and *Ḥokhma*. See discussion above.

[109] *GE* 414.

[110] For a general review of the Qimḥi's contribution, see translator's introduction in *David Qimhi's Hebrew Grammar*, xx-xxxii. See also Ilan Eldar, "Qimḥi's Classification of the Hebrew Vowels," *Leshonenu*, 73:1 (2011): 69-76.

[111] Cf. Sefer Yeṣirah 1:3 (ed. Hyman), 67. We may recall that Giqatilla implements these archetypal terms to distinguish between the essential activity associated with the natural order, and with the spheres more specifically, on the one hand, and the act of divine motion that is ontologically prior to these *pe'ulot* of Nature, on the other. This archetypal distinction is further implemented to thematically differentiate between the two sets of five, thus suggesting that the analysis of the vowel-points follow similar lines.

namely, *qameṣ* and *ṣere*, which Giqatilla mentions together with the threefold point, *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥiriq*.

We should begin with the observation that Ibn Ezra's system, consisting of the seven Masoretic primary vowels, designates the phonetic value [ē] *qameṣ-qatan* ('reduced *qameṣ'*), rather than *ṣere*. Given that Giqatilla's *qameṣ* is the common long vowel,[112] we may assume that he is indeed reflecting Qimḥi system. In a way, Giqatilla's *ṣere* represents Ibn Ezra's reduced *qameṣ*, both of which are graphically represented by two adjacent simple points [ֵ].[113] Assuming that Giqatilla is indeed following Qimḥi's system, he accordingly distinguishes *qameṣ* from *pattaḥ*; a distinction which common Sephardic pronunciation struggled with. Thus, Ibn Ezra counts standard *qameṣ* among the primary vowels, phonetically positioned and specified as "halfway between the *ḥolam* and the *pattaḥ*"—hence its graphic symbol (ָ)—while attesting that Hebrew speakers in Spain do not know how to distinguish it from regular *pattaḥ*.[114] As we shall see presently, the etymological reasoning for including *qameṣ* in Giqatilla's system specifically builds on its specific properties whereby it is differentiated from *pattaḥ*.

Things become a bit more interesting when Giqatilla addresses the metaphysical and cosmological significance of these vowels, to which he turns after addressing the three simple vowel points—*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *ḥiriq*. In a subsection dealing with the general principles of cosmic motion, two in number, Giqatilla distinguishes *qameṣ*—fourth of the primary vowels—as epitomizing the contraction or conclusion of cosmic motion. This resonates with Giqatilla's initial characterization of the five vowel points—*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥiriq*, *qameṣ*, and *ṣere*—as comprising

[112] The short or reduced *qameṣ* is termed by Giqatilla *ḥatef-* (or: *shewa-*) *qameṣ* and it occupies a special role in Giqatilla's cosmology, distinguished from, albeit related to the long *qameṣ*. More on this below.
[113] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 15.
[114] Ibid, 12.

"the principles of all motion."[115] Continuing this line of reasoning, one might expect *qameṣ* to be coupled, in this subsection, with the fifth vowel *ṣere*, but *qameṣ* is contrasted instead with *pattaḥ*, the latter reflecting the opening (*petaḥ*) of spherical motion.[116]

Conversely, *ṣere* is treated in a neighboring discussion, rendered there as equivalent to the realm of pure intelligibility. The rationale underlying this allusion has been discussed in Chapter 3 in connection with the *ḥashmal*-fire distinction. Giqatilla considers the graphic and phonetic qualities of *ṣere* as signifying a nearly perfect vowel pattern. The ambiguity about the *ṣere* vowel, listed as a primary vowel but treated as the movement of a specific ontological grade, is likewise expressed in *Sefer ha-Niqqud*, where *ṣere* is contrasted with *ḥolam*, the former symbolizing composition (*binyan*). Considering such inconsistencies, I suggest that we consider the possibility that Giqatilla's attempt to construe the Hebrew vowels as epitomizing a complex system of cosmic motion leads to an eclectic fusion of two systems: one by Qimḥi and one by Ibn Ezra. To get a better sense of this integrative approach, we shall further consider the specific construal of *pattaḥ* and *qameṣ*.

We have seen that Ibn Ezra links *pattaḥ* with Saturn, the highest of the planets situated under the fixed stars,[117] although he also identifies *pattaḥ* with the general principle of spherical motion.[118] Giqatilla, for his part, adopts the latter rendition by elevating *pattaḥ* to the ninth diurnal spheres, describing it as the "open speech (or open lip; *davar paṭuaḥ*) which consists of a straight line."[119] Giqatilla equates this line of *pattaḥ* to "the opening (*petaḥ*) of spherical motion and the

[115] *GE* 414, 416-18.
[116] We should note, however, that elsewhere (*GE* 157) Giqatilla associates *ṣere* and *qameṣ* with the two general modes of motion, swift and slow.
[117] *Sefer Moznayim*, 40.
[118] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 6.
[119] Anatomically, the quality *pattaḥ* has been typically studies in connection with labial activity, where pronunciations of *pattaḥ* assumes open lips. See Khan, *Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition*, vol. 1, 245-47 (Sec. I.2.12).

host of heavens," while specifically associating this opening line to the "all-encompassing sphere, *'Aravot* (viz., the ninth diurnal sphere)."[120]

Qameṣ, by contrast, signifies 'clenching' (*qemiṣah*), that is, the conclusion or closure (*ne'ila*) of motion in the hand of God: "The conclusion [of motion] is [graphically represented by] a straight line and a point. (viz., *qameṣ* [̣]) The point is a witness that the sphere concludes its motion upon returning to the point which is the cause of [the sphere's] existence."[121] The point referred to here is *shuruq*, which Giqatilla distinguishes as the existential inner point of the celestial spheres.[122] But we should note that the construal of the graphic symbol of *qameṣ* alludes directly to Ibn Ezra, who considers *qameṣ* a compound vowel, further describing it as "halfway between the point of *ḥolam* and the line of *pattaḥ*," thus forming a line with a dot.

Accordingly, Giqatilla's account of the *qameṣ* aligns with the distinction proposed by Ibn Ezra between the principal vowels ("kings"), namely, foundational and compound vowels.[1] Unlike *ḥolam*, which is a simple point, *qameṣ* is a compound sign, consisting of a horizontal line and a point.[2] Giqatilla appears to accept this general classification, as well as the etymological association of *qameṣ* with *qemiṣa* ("clenching").[123] However, whereas in Ibn Ezra's system *ḥolam* serves as the referential point for *qameṣ*, Giqatilla substitutes *shuruq* as the point toward which the line of *qameṣ* inclines.[4] This adaptation is not unexpected, given that in Giqatilla's system *shuruq* is itself a differentiated form of the primordial point *ḥolam*: it represents both the existential core of the spherical world and a specific manifestation of the primary *yesod*, *ḥolam*.

[120] *GE* 260-61.
[121] *GE* 461. See discussion in Martini, *Punctuation*, 112-14.
[122] Ibid.
[123] *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 12

[124] From this perspective, *qameṣ* completes *pattaḥ*, virtually signifying the *telos* (*takhlit*) upon which cosmic motion (i.e., *pattaḥ*) is ultimately contingent. [125]

A Servant Running Before the Lord: The Case of the *Shewa*

In our opening remarks on Giqatilla's vowel system, I indicated that this system is threefold in structure. The first aspect of this system relates to the core of phonetic activity—represented by the three simple points of *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, and *ḥiriq*, and complemented by the governing principles that initiate (*pattaḥ*) and conclude (*qameṣ*) cosmic motion. The third dimension of Giqatilla's vowel system concerns the natural condition, termed *binyan* ('construct'), of each of the three cosmic grades. This dimension consists of the vowel points *ṣere*, *segol*, and *shewa*—corresponding to the upper, middle, and lower worlds.

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[124] Giqatilla insists on this inter-referential movement across the three points – *ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *hiriq* (Cf. SN 47*-48*).

[125] In addressing the identity and role *qameṣ* we should also note the implicit debate between two schools of Castilian linguistic *Kabbalah*, associated with Giqatilla's early writings, on the one hand, and the Hebrew corpus associated with his contemporary Moses de León, on the other.[125] Giqatilla, as we have seen, prioritizes the *ḥolam*, thanks to both its graphic and phonological qualities. Drawing on the linguistic system of the time, he notes the intimate phonological relationship between *ḥolam* and *qameṣ*, ascribing the latter a referential function. That is, *qameṣ* testifies the conclusion of motion in the point. Moses de León's linguistic metaphysics, we shall soon see, promotes a more panentheistic conception of the deity, and he modifies his vowel system accordingly. Against Giqatilla's *ḥolam*, he prioritizes the *qameṣ* as the premise of his linguistic system, while employing the same etymological and graphical reasoning which Giqatilla borrowed from Ibn Ezra, specifically the *qameṣ–qemiṣa* ('clenching') allusion. Only here, this image connotes not the identity of the point as the *telos* of all cosmic motion, but the control of all motion in the hand of God. See *Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah*, fol. 193a (ed. Bar-Asher, 221). The subordination of the point of *ḥolam* (and with it the *shuruq* and the *ḥiriq*) to the line of *qameṣ* is intimated already by Jacob Hacohen, who might have been the source for the later Castilian accounts mentioned here. Cf. *Sefer ha-'Orah* (ed. D. Abrams), 313-31. De León likewise preserves the phonological connection between *qameṣ* and *ḥolam,* while 'downgrading' the latter to the status of the uppermost Active Intellect, the principle which, in Giqatilla's system, is notated by the two adjacent points of *ṣere*. We may compare the two adaptations of the *qameṣ* as symmetrically opposed. Giqatilla's line is the cosmic motion that turns inwardly to the point, whereas de León's line is the source of divine effluence that originates the simple motion of the point. On the shared linguistic cosmology of Giqatilla and De León, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 195; Altman, *'Or Zaru'a*, 220-21, 235-40; Blickstein, *Between Philosophy and Mysticism*, 115-23. In 1984, Asi Farber-Ginat published her work on the relationship between the two thinkers, drawing a preliminary yet rich delineation between the two, arguing for their distinct philosophical and theological sensitivities. As we shall see in this chapter, an important feature differentiating the two schools is the respective roles of *qameṣ* and the vowel-letter *he*. Farber, *Sources*, 89-91, n. 52. In recent works, Avishai Bar-Asher has significantly developed this delineation, expounding on thematic and textual developments in each of these schools. Bar-Asher, *Alphabetical Mysticism*, *Punctiform*, *Vaults of Thebes*.

Shewa stands out in its quiescent nature. Hebrew linguistic literature classifies it as a distinct third category of phonetic markers, separate from the long and short vowels previously discussed. Rather than possessing intrinsic phonetic value, *shewa* functions as an auxiliary element, the value of which is shaped by adjacent phonological features and its broader lexical context. This contextual dependency is further attested by its traditional designation within the category of *mesharetim* ('servants') or *'avadim* ('subordinates').

The enigmatic identity of the *shewa* is further expressed in its name, which prompted speculation as to both its pronunciation and etymological meaning. Two interpretations suggested the respective names *shawe* (שָׁוֶוה), meaning 'equality', and *shaw* (שָׁוְא), that is, 'immobility' or 'nothingness'.[126]

Alluding to such ambiguities, Giqatilla's *shewa* represents an interesting case where the analogy between its phonological qualities and cosmic motion is construed in a twofold manner. Giqatilla generally draws on the meaning of *shaw* (שָׁוְא) as denoting nothingness, by stressing its lack of phonetic value. Connecting it further to the principle of cosmic motion, he likewise establishes *shewa* as a token for the lower world which "has not existence if not by the motion of

[126] Both the pronunciation and etymology of the term *sh-w-a* were a subject of speculation in Hebrew linguistic thought. While its standardized pronunciation is *shewa* (שְׁוָא), this principle has also been pronounced *shaw* (שָׁוְא), and *she-ba* (שֶׁבָּא). The etymological construal of this principle follows these variants. The term *shewa* (שְׁוָא) has been also conjectured as connoting the principle of equation (*shawe*; שָׁוֶוה), in the sense that it is equal in value in relationship to other phonetic principle. Cf. sources cited in Dotan, *Shewa*, 15. Ibn Ezra further infers from this etymological meaning the connection between *shewa* and diurnal motion: "*Shewa* is derived from *nishtaweh* ('equated', form the root *sh-w-a*), for it symbolizes the upper [nine] sphere, the motion of which is equal." *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 16. *Shaw* (שָׁוְא), by contrast, literally indicates the null value of this point (*shaw*; 'nothingness'). Cf. Bacher, *Ibn Ezra the Grammarian*, 54, n. 5; Dotan, *Shewa*, 16; William Chomsky, "The Pronunciation of the *Shewa*: The Meaning of the Term," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 62, no. 2 (1971): 88. We should also note the inscription of *sh-v-a*, with the letter *bet* (שבא) which aligned with the interpretation of this principle as indicating the state of rest. By this reading, שְׁבָא is construed as derived from the root *y-sh-v* (or יָשַׁב), meaning 'satedness'. (See remark in Chomsky, *Mikhlol*, 37, n. 25).

the other [worlds]."[127] Giqatilla further deliberates on this connection drawing on the graphic symbol of the *shewa*—consisting of two vertically aligned points.[128]

While specified as a sign of the lower world, the cosmic function of *shewa* consists also of its auxiliary nature. This second function derives from the inherent phonological property of immobility of the *shewa* which distinguishes the *shewa* as a contextually determined vowel. That is, its phonetic realization is determined by the surrounding phonological environment in which it appears[129] Alluding to its general grammatical characterization, the *shewa* is described as "a servant running before the lord,"[130] and, drawing further on yet another etymological construal, as a principle that is moved by "he who appears" (*she-ba*; שֶׁבָּא).[131]

Pertinent to the latter function is the attachment of *shewa* to the other vowels, in the context of which it also modifies the attached vowel. When attached to *qameṣ*, for example, the *shewa* takes the role of 'hastening' (*ḥataf*) the otherwise standard pronunciation of *qameṣ*. By this account, the modified vowel *shewa-qameṣ* is designated also as *ḥataf-qameṣ*.[132]

Earlier in this chapter I indicated that for Giqatilla, *qameṣ* is phonologically and conceptually akin to *ḥolam*. This connection, between *qameṣ* and *ḥolam*, is elaborated through yet another angle, namely, the *ḥataf-qameṣ*.[133] The *ḥataf-qameṣ* constitutes an independent vowel

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[127] *GE* 456-67.

[128] ְ Linguists like Abraham Ibn Ezra construed the two points of the *shewa* as indicating two principles of diurnal motion: "It is likely that [the *shewa*] consists of two [graphic points] considering that the uppermost sphere has comprises two major motions." That is, the daily 24-hour cycle of motion, and the slower cycle of the celestial spheres (precession of the equinoxes, west to east), completing one cycle in approximately 36,000 years. Giqatilla, by contrast, renders this superposed typographical sign as indicating the contingency of the lower world on the one above it. Accordingly, this superposed typography visualizes the compound nature (*harkavah*) of the world of generation and corruption, consisting of "the affixation of things one top the other" (*GE*, ibid).

[129] *GE* 456.

[130] *GE* 458. See *Sod Darkei ha-Neqqudah*, fol. 191a-b (ed. Bar-Asher, 217-18), and cf. Martini, *Punctuation*, 110-11.

[131] *GE* 456. See also Sod *Darkei ha-Neqqudah*, fol. 191a-b (ed. Bar-Asher, 217-18).

[132] On the connection between the *ḥataf* ('haste') and *shewa* in Hebrew linguistic thought, see Dotan, *Shewa*. Cf. *Mikhlol* (ed. Chomsky), 13: "When not followed by a *dagesh* or *shwa* a quiescent (*shwa-naḥ*), the *qames-ḥatuf* is sometimes compounded with *shewa* to indicate its short or hurried sound."

[133] Also termed *qameṣ-qatan* (reduced *qameṣ*); to be distinguished from Ibn Ezra's *qameṣ-qatan*. See the following footnote.

point in the Qimḥi system, albeit a 'daughter' of and thus closely related to *ḥolam*. Its pronunciation is close mid-rounded [ŏ].[134] Giqatilla appears to adopt this principle when differentiating *ḥataf-qameṣ* as a distinguished principle which nevertheless alludes to the *ḥolam*.[135]

Ḥatef-qameṣ expands on the cosmic function of *qameṣ*. Whereas *qameṣ* indicates the conclusion of all motion in the inner point, the *yesod*, the *ḥatef* [-*qameṣ*] marks the hastening' of cosmic motion upon its conclusion: "And when motion reaches the moment of clenching [viz. *qameṣ*], it is instantly resumed with swiftness [viz. *ḥatef*] and begins to move once more, as at first."[136] More generally, the *ḥatef-qameṣ*, which in Kimḥi's system constitutes an independent vowel, is attributed by Giqatilla to the Intellect, presumably together with the *ṣere*. Thus, it marks the principle of motion in the form of Nature, as imparted to the cosmic order at large.[137] Giqatilla further stresses the identity when drawing on the phonetic allusion of *ḥatef-qameṣ* to *ḥolam*. As a principle of motion, the *ḥatef-qameṣ* signifies the Intellect "as it is continued from the point of *ḥ*olam."[138]

The analysis of Giqatilla's vowel point thus far reveals the use of various vowel systems. This eclecticism is specifically expressed in the difference between *qameṣ* and *qameṣ-qatan*, that is, *ḥataf-qameṣ*. The construal of *qameṣ* echoes the basic ideas and terminology used by Ibn Ezra who construes this vowel as a compound of *pattaḥ* and *ḥolam*. Giqatilla adopts this framework

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[134] Unlike Qimḥi, Ibn Ezra associates *ḥataf-qameṣ* with standard *qameṣ*, placing the main distinction between the two in the phonological nature of the letter proceeding the specific vowel. For example, a *qameṣ* followed by a *dagesh* will take the form of *ḥataf-qameṣ*. Concomitantly, Ibn Ezra distinguishes *qameṣ-qatan* form *qameṣ* (and for that matter, from *ḥataf-qameṣ*) as designating what we here identify as Giqatilla *ṣere. Moznayim*, 40-43.

[135] On the relationship between *ḥolam* and *qameṣ-ḥatef,* see also *SN Long*, fol. 181a. We should also note that unlike his treatment of *qameṣ*, Giqatilla does not describe *qameṣ-qatan* as a compound vowel, but simply as subclass of *ḥolam*. On the attempt to explain Qimḥi's *ḥataf-qameṣ* (*qameṣ-qatan*) by employing Ibn Ezra's logic of compound vowels, see Shimshon ha-Naqdan's *Ḥibbur ha-Qonim* (ed. I. Eldar), 209, and cf. editor's comment *ad loc.* (ft. 88). The author there describes *ḥataf-qameṣ* as a "compound of *shuruq* and *ḥolam*" for which reason it tilts toward *ḥolam*. Giqatilla makes no allusions to such a compound structure, but simply reflects Qimḥi's classification of *ḥataf-qameṣ* as an independent vowel which phonologically draws on *ḥolam*.

[136] *GE* 436.

[137] *GE* 434.

[138] *GE* 435. Cf. *SN Long*, fol. 180b.

when deliberating the cosmic function of *qameṣ* as indicating the role of the point, presumably *shuruq*, as the *telos* of spherical motion. By contrast, his construal of *ḥataf-qameṣ*, indicating a modality of the *ḥolam*, appears to draw on Qimḥi's tenfold system of five vowels and five subclasses. The role and identity of *ṣere*, however, remains an anomaly. While four of the five primary vowels—*ḥolam*, *shuruq*, *ḥiriq*, and *qameṣ*—are considered primary principles of motion, *ṣere* is identified as a designator of the intelligible world.[139]

Form against Form: The Letters of the Intelligible Forms

Throughout this chapter, I have indicated that the concept of the vowel is formalized in *Ginnat Egoz* as consisting of two general kinds—the vowel points (*neqqudot*) and the vowel letters (*'otiyyot ha-tenu'ah*). While treated in seemingly separate discussions, the two types intersect at various points in Giqatilla's deliberations. Furthermore, at least on one occasion Giqatilla describes the vowel letters in terms akin to the *ḥolam* vowel point, applying the epithet 'form to every form' (*ṣurah le-khol ṣura*).[140] Nevertheless, the principal distinction between the two is essential for Giqatilla's broader cosmic-linguistic system, and their respective treatments reveal distinct functions of the vowel points and the vowel letters. What further adds to the importance of this distinction is, of course, the relationship between the vowel letters and the Tetragrammaton which is foundational for Giqatilla's system.

[139] What is also surprising is the disjunction between this association and the identity that *ṣere* takes in Ibn Ezra's system. There *ṣere* is described as a vowel compound of *ḥolam* and *ḥiriq*, tilting toward *ḥiriq* and pronounced accordingly. This, of course, is counterintuitive to Giqatilla's system, where *ḥiriq* is the principle of the lower of the three worlds, albeit its inner vital principle.

[140] *GE* 398-99: "The three [vowel-] letters *y-h-w* bring all existents into being, and they are form to every form and soul to every soul. None of the created beings can exist without these letters, which are the letters of His mighty Name, blessed be He."

From Vowel points to Vowel letters

Typically functioning as *matres lectionis*, the vowel letters *'aleph*, *waw*, *yod*, and *he*,[141] are also assigned a function that qualifies them as *'otiyyot ha-meshekh* or *'otiyyot ha-himashekh* – "the drawn letters." They occasionally prolong or "draw" a specific vowel quality underlying a preceding consonant in a particular root. At times, these vowel letters are not inscribed but are only pronounced, as for example the implicit *'aleph* following the consonant *bet* in the verb *b-r-a* (בָּרָא; *bara*). Functioning in relation to the vowel point *qameṣ* of the letter *bet*, the implicit *'aleph* prolongs the *qameṣ*.[142]

Considering the phonological relationship between the vowel letters and the vowel points, some medieval linguists formalized the identity of three of the vowel letters—*'aleph*, *waw*, *yod*—by drawing on specific vowel points which epitomize the three principles of motion.[143] Judah Halevi, for example, distinguished the vowel points *pattaḥ*, *qameṣ*, and *ḥiriq* as the primary principles of phonetic motion, and he accordingly identifies each of these points with the vowel letters *'aleph*, *waw*, and *yod*, respectively.[144]

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[141] In some accounts, the letter *he* is omitted from this list. Ibn Ezra himself seems conflicted in this regard, giving expression to both opinions. See Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 15; *Sefer Yesod Diqduq*, 112; Judah Haelvi, *Cuzari* 4.3, 230-31. See also Abrahm Ibn Ezra's translation of Yehudah Hayyug's *Sefer Otiyyot ha-Noah ve'ha-Meshekh* (ed. L. Dukes), 21.

[142] Cf. Ibn Ǧanāḥ, *Sefer Ha-Riqmah*, 42, 45; Charlap, *Ibn Ezra*, 60. Note the application of the term *'otiyyot ha-meshekh*, instead of *'otiyyot tenu'ah*, in Ibn Ezra's discussion of the Tetragrammaton in his *Commentary on Exod*. 3:15 (ed. A. Weiser, 30): "These [vowel] letters are called *'otiyyot ha-meshekh*, for they are most fitting for the glorious names. […] The four letters [*'aleph, he, waw,* and *yod*] are worthy of being the drawing [or: prolonged] letters (*'otiyyot ha-meshekh*), particularly the *'aleph* which, identical with the One, is [potentially] implicit with each of the vowels (*ne'elam 'im kol teu'ah*)."

[143] An important distinction in Hebrew *niqqud* is between the classification of three primary vowels-points, and the secondary classification of the remaining four Masoretic vowels, in accordance with this prime classification. Cf. Charlap, *Ibn Ezra*, 24; Eldar, *Hebrew Language*, 142-44; Sáenz-Badillos, *Hebrew Vowels*, 366-67.

[144] *Cuzari* 4.3, 230-31. Differences in opinion on the identity of three principal vowel-points were consequential for the identity of the vowel-letters as well. Thus, Dunash ben Tamim associates the letters *'aleph*, *waw*, and *yod* with the vowel-points *pattaḥ*, ***shuruq*** and *ḥiriq*, in contradistinction to Halevi's respective *pattaḥ*, ***qameṣ***, and *ḥiriq*. Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣira* (ed. Y. Yinon), 216.

Against such formalizations, Giqatilla distinguishes the vowel letters from the vowel points by assigning them distinct functions within his cosmic-linguistic system. While intimately related, the points (*neqqudot*) and the letters (*'otiyyot*) are not interchangeable. A central example of this thematic distinction is the construal of the vowel letter *yod* in relationship to the *ḥolam* which, we may recall, produces the notation [ֹי]—the Universal Intellect and its supreme cause. Giqatilla produces various conceptualizations of the vowel letters which constitute the Tetragrammaton,[145] one of which draws a clear topographical distinction between the *yod*, designating the tenth Intellect, and its active source, the vowel point *ḥolam*.[146]

The principal distinction between the two types of vowels, *niqqud* and *'otiyyot*, is encapsulated in the term *ṣurah* ('form'). *Ṣurah*, or *ṣurat ha-'otiyyot* ('form of the letters'), and figures throughout *Ginnat Egoz* as a twofold principle. On the one hand, this term specifies the phonetic motion of the vowel letters,[147] distinct from other Kabbalistic accounts, which interpret *ṣurat ha-'otiyyot* as including graphic and symbolic features of the Hebrew alphabet.[148] On the other hand, Giqatilla construes this term, *ṣurat ha-'otiyyot*, as linking the form of vowel letters to the intelligible form (*ṣurah)*—the principle of intelligible actuality.[149]

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[145] See our discussion, in Chapter 2, on the Name YHW and its connection to the names YH and WH.

[146] In some Kabbalistic-theosophical doctrines, the graphical features of the *yod* are further construed as implying a referential function in relationship to the source of the Intellect. This twofold referential function of the *yod* draws on the distinction between the graphic body of the letter *yod* and its tip, the latter pointing to the Intellect's hidden source. This will become an important doctrine in Giqatilla's later theosophical teachings, which conflate the intelligible point and the ideational point through the figure of the *yod*. See *Sha'arei Orah* (ed. Y. Ben-Shlomo), vol. 1, 187.

[147] Specifically, the letters *y*, *h*, and *w* (*GE* 55). Cf. *GE* 57: "[T]he Name YHWH is primordial and concealed (*qadmon we-ne'elam*), whereas the Name YHW refers to the principal continuation of renewal."

[148] See also Yehuda ben Barzilai, *Commentary on Sefer Yetsirah* (ed. Halberstam), 184: "In the twilight [of Friday] God endowed Adam and his offspring with the ability to form distinct forms (*ṣurot*) which correspond to each of the phonetic articulations [of the letters]."

[149] On the general function of the vowel as a principle of form, see also Aristotle, *Poet*. 1456 b 24–30. See Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, 117–28; Versrteegh, *Greek Elements*, 20–21. See also my discussion in Tzvi Schoenberg, "Pronouncing Words, Creating Worlds: Matter and Form in Joseph Giqatilla's Hermeneutics," in *Jewish Culture and Creativity: Essays in Honor of Professor Michael Fishbane on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Eitan P. Fishbane et al. (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023), 190-91. On intelligible motion, see *GE* 157: "The attribution of motion to the separate Intelligences must not concern you, for this motion is not kinetic (*tenu'ah meqomit*), but their form (*qiyyum ṣurat hasekhalim*)." On the general difference between kinetic and intelligible motion, see Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*,109-40.

The connection between the vowel letters and the Intellect is further articulated through their linguistic function: when combined, they form the creative imperative *yehi* ("let there be"; יה״י). This morpheme—*YaH*, or the imperative *YeHI*—constitutes the primary articulation of speech, and as such, it signals the existence of the first determinate being, namely, the Intellect.[150] Unlike the pre-articulate motion of the simple point, *yehi* already conveys a structured linguistic form that expresses the Intellect's definitive constitution.[151]

This reading aligns with Giqatilla's treatment of the principle of *hawayah*, discussed in Chapter 3. There, I examined his distinction between *hawayah qadmonit* (primordial being) and *hawayah meḥudeshet* (renewed being), the latter corresponding to the Intellect. By this account, the speech act—though in itself simple and non-essential—nonetheless gives rise to essential form. In this light, the relationship between the vowel letters and the intelligible forms cannot be reduced to symbolic or referential correspondence. Rather than functioning merely as tokens of the Intellect, the vowel letters articulate its emergence through speech. Insofar as the Intellect is brought forth by the act of speech—and thus depends on it—the letters comprising the morpheme *YaH* may be understood as constituting the principle through which essential forms are articulated.

[150] *GE* 53. Cf. Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam* 140b (p.44). Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 56a.

[151] This interpretation squares with Giqatilla's notion of 'the power of the Name of Being' (*koaḥ shem ha-hawayah*) that is realized through the decree *yehi* [*'or*] ('let there be [light]') and, consequently, in the intelligible forms. By Giqatilla's account, the power of the Name is clearly the source of, and thus distinguished from the vowel-letters which take the primary articulated form for which reason they are associated with the intelligible forms. See *GE* 23: "Know that the principle of all existents is the power of the Name of Being, as God communicated by the first decree *yehi 'or* ("let there be light"), and this is the principle of renewal (*teḥilat ha-ḥiddush*)." We should note that Kabbalists like R. Ezra of Gerona construed the decree *yehi* as *koaḥ ha-ṣurah*, 'the power (or: source) of the [intelligible] form'. (*Commentary on Songs*, 509) This power is further identified as *neshamah* ('soul'), to be distinguished from Giqatilla's principle of *ṣurah* ('form') or *Ṣurah le-ṣurot* ('Form of forms'), the latter identified with *ḥolam* (but compare *GE* 398-99).

The Inflected Name and the Intellect:

The idea that the movement from primordial being to the renewed forms is essentially a linguistic process is formulated by a distinction that is already made in Ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Shem*, and which Giqatilla adopts and modifies in *Ginnat Egoz*. This distinction concerns the two referential aspects of the Tetragrammaton, referring primarily to God, and secondarily to renewed existence by way of derivation.

Central to Ibn Ezra's doctrine of divine names is the principle of inflection, suggesting that the Tetragrammaton, the Proper Name *par excellence*, functions also as an adjective that describes the existence of created order and of the Universal Intellect in particular. Ibn Ezra considers this inflective function an anomaly, considering that grammatical inflection or derivation does not apply to proper names.[152] This anomaly is settled by the very function of the Tetragrammaton which, in Ibn Ezra's view, derives from the verb 'to-be'.[153] Since the simple existence is the source of all derivative existence, the name inevitably also describes divine creative activity, functioning as an adjective that signifies the ontological-constructive role of God's primary existence.[154] Ibn Ezra thus resolves the grammatical anomaly by grounding both functions in the same ontological

[152] According to Goshen-Gottstein, Biblical Hebrew differs from Arabic with respect to adverbial nouns. Apart from the word *yirah* (lit. "fear") of Isa. 7:25, Biblical nouns do not function as adverbial descriptions (though one may argue that the verb *moshe* of Isa 63:11 is another exception. Cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary on Exod. 3:15). This is not the case in Arabicized Hebrew which, modified by Arabic grammar, allows for the morphological rendition of nouns as adverbial descriptions. Cf. Moshe Goshen-Gotstein, *Taḥbirah u-Milonah shel ha-Lashon ha-'Ivrit she-be-tḥum Hashpa'at ha-'Aravit* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2006), 117. However, the examples cited by Goshen-Gottstein do not consider proper names, but only general nouns. Here, Ibn Ezra seems to go one step further by applying the morphological change to the proper name of God, as well.

[153] See our discussion in Chapter 1.

[154] *Commentary on Exod*. 3.14-15. Ibn Ezra employs the principles of *'omed be'aṣmo* (*status absolutus*) and *ma'amid* (*status constructus*) as distinguishing features of each of the two functions of YHWH. The distinction between the two ontological principles is reflected also on the linguistic-grammatical plane. *Status constructus* relates the general identification of the verb with the accidents (*miqrim*) of the substance (*shem 'eṣem*), the latter 'subsisting in itself' (*'omed be'aṣmo*). On the role of the verb, in relationship to the proper name, and its identification as an adjective, see Leo Prijs, *Die grammatikalische Terminologie des Abraham Ibn Esra* (Zurich: G. Olms Verlag, 1987), 104-05.

principle: the Tetragrammaton can serve as both proper name and adjective because simple existence is that upon which all derivative existence depends.[155]

Ibn Ezra employs the grammatical distinction between the two forms of the Tetragrammaton to explain some of its construct forms. Contrary to the grammatical rule that proper names do not take a construct state (*semikhut*), the Tetragrammaton is at times attached to an attribute, as in YHWH *Ṣeava'ot* (The God of Hosts). These components are "informed by one another, thereby forming one name," revealing the connection between the divine Name and its attributes.[156] In his commentary on Exodus 34:6, Ibn Ezra makes this point more explicitly: "The exalted name is at times adjacent to *Ṣeava'ot*, for the Tetragrammaton is sometimes a proper name (*shem 'eṣem*), at times an attribute (*shem middah*)."[157]

Giqatilla's treatment of the Divine Names in Part One of *Ginnat Egoz* alludes to key conceptual distinctions from Ibn Ezra's account, including the assumption that the Tetragrammaton is derivable and links it to the etymological meaning of *'Ehyeh*. In this respect, he takes issue with Maimonides' interpretation of 'necessary existence,' which, in Giqatilla's view,

[155] See the helpful discussion in Kreisel, *Kol*, 39-42. See also Harvey's remarks (*Tetragrammaton*, 129) as to the principle of derivation which, for Ibn Ezra, applies to both names YHWH and 'EHYeH.

[156] *Sefer ha-Shem*, 421. Compare *Sefer Ṣaḥot*, 113-14: "The exalted and awesome name [of God] shares a deep secret, by virtue of which it is counted among the Thirteen Attributes." In his commentary on Exod. 34:6, Ibn Ezra introduces Sa'adia Gaon's position, which excludes YHWH from the thirteen attributes. The crux of their disagreement concerns the proper syntactic analysis of the repeated divine name YHWH in Exod. 34:6. Sa'adia maintains that a dividing cantillation note (*ta'am mafsiq*) separates the first and second occurrence of YHWH, creating a grammatical distinction between them. According to this reading, the first name refers to the speaking subject (*ha-mesaper*), while the second YHWH should be understood according to its vocalization as 'Adonai (the inflected form of *'adon*) rather than its written form. This interpretation effectively severs the connection between God's proper name and the divine attributes. Ibn Ezra rejects this position, maintaining instead that the second YHWH bears direct relation to God's proper name and should therefore be counted as the first among the Thirteen Attributes. This exegetical dispute assumed considerable importance in later Kabbalistic literature. The Zohar appropriates this discussion under the formula "a cantillation note dividing between them" (*ta'amei pasiq b'gawweihu*), where the notion of a dividing note comes to signify the distinction between the hidden and the revealed aspects of the divine name YHWH. Cf. Asher ben David, *Sefer Ha-Yiḥud*, 104, 121.

[157] *Short Commentary on Exodus* (ed. Y. Fleischer), 22. Cf. *Commentary on Exod*. 6:3*; Short Commentary on Exod*. 3:13; *Sefer ha-Shem*, 421-22.

leads to the radical exclusion of the Tetragrammaton.[158] Instead, he presents it as the ground of divine creative activity, understood as a fundamentally linguistic act. This position accords with his broader metaphysical framework, which preserves a distinction between God's necessary existence and the renewed existence of the Intellect.

Giqatilla's notion of the creative Name seems to draw on Ibn Ezra's deliberations on the Name. There is nevertheless a fundamental difference between their respective accounts of the derived Name. Addressing the nature of the Tetragrammaton, Giqatilla attests that:

> I have seen some sages determining that the name 'Ehyeh is derived from *hayah*, like the name YHWH which indicates existence. However, I have not found them explaining the secret of the difference between them, and perhaps they will come to regard them as one. But it is not so, for great is the distance between them.[159]

Although names are not mentioned, the noted 'sages' likely include Ibn Ezra whose theology of the Name fits this very account. Rather than assuming that the Name is derived from the principle of being, Giqatilla considers that the Tetragrammaton itself, hidden and beyond pronunciation, is the source of a linguistic activity. This linguistic activity constitutes the Intellect while marking the transition between the ineffable and the articulated states of the Tetragrammaton. More

[158] "Notice the words of the great master the author of the *Guide*, who renders אהי״ה אשר אהי״ה as 'the existent that is [existent]' (*ha-nimṣa 'asher hu nimṣa*). How splendid his words are, for he construes [the name] 'Eheyeh as derived from the true existent. Nevertheless, I am puzzled by his choice to qualify this name ['Eheyeh] as exclusive to God, thereby rendering it identical with His being. In so doing, he disregards the distinction between the name YHWH, the reference of which is God's primordial existence, and the name 'Eheyeh. The latter refers to the existence of all finite beings which are contingent on the true existence of God." (*GE* 59) The attempt to divorce God from any predication encouraged Maimonides to interpret the tautology of אהיה אשר אהיה of Exod. 3:14 as "I am that I am," further considering it the etymological meaning of the proper name YHWH. Giqatilla accepts the interpretation as such, but objects to its tautological identification with God's simple existence. Rather, 'Eheyeh refers to the principle underlying the existence of finite beings. Giqatilla draws on Ibn Ezra's account of 'Eheyeh, identifying it with the derived name YHW (יה״ו=16=אהי״ה). On the 'Eheyeh-YHW *gematria*, see: Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, 191-92; *GE* 43, 60. See also Avraham Abulafia, *Mafteakh ha-Shemot*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem: n.p. 2001), 36; Jacob ben Jacob Hacohen, *Commentary on Sefer Yeṣirah* [ed. D. Abrams], 327. See also Mopsik's remarks (*Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 3) on Giqatilla's 'Ehyeh.

[159] *GE* 53.

fundamentally, this transforms the Proper Name from a purely referential principle—exclusive to true existence—into a creative one.[160]

The creative function of the Name, and the transition between its 'primordial' and 'renewed' states, discloses a tenet central to Giqatilla's linguistic theology. Earlier, I indicated that Giqatilla adopts magical or theurgic terms by rendering them as principles of metaphysical and cosmogenic procedures. One such example is the practice of *hazkarat ha-shem*, discussed above. Another is the term *shimmush* ('employment'; 'inflection') which held both theurgic and grammatical significance. Drawing on early Rabbinic sources, medieval esoteric accounts used the term *shimmush* to refer to theurgic activity through the manipulation of divine and angelic names.[161] Concomitantly, *shimmush* served as a technical term for grammatical inflection.[162]

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[160] Note the formula in MS 851: We find the following formula: ABGD (אבג״ד) consists in the *sod* (lit. mystery) of ABGDHW (אבגדה״ו), the latter consists in *sod* 'EHYeH (אהי״ה), which consists in *sod* of YHW (יה״ו). Finally, YHW is included in the secret YHWH (יהו״ה). ABGD refers to the cosmic order (1+2+3+4=10), ABGDHW is the principle of motion that is continued to the cosmic order, according to the HW/YA (ה״ו/י״א) formula (ABGD + HW = 10 + 11). Notable in this formula is the subjugation of the etymological meaning of the Tetragrammaton ('EHYeH), which implies the verb 'to be' to the name YHW (יה״ו). The latter is the *sod* (i.e., principle) of the verb 'to be'. The active transition to the Name which constitutes the created order further explains why the two sense of *ṣurah*—intelligible form and form of the letters—are conflated through the vowel-letters of the inflected Name. By contrast, the primordial Name is "without [articulated] form" (viz., ineffable) precisely because it refers to that which transcends any intelligible determination (*GE* 58-60).

[161] Cf. *GE* 42-44, 62-64. The Hebrew *shimmush*, central to Ginat Egoz, has a long history in Jewish literature. In its earliest mystical application, *shimmush* indicates theurgic activity through the manipulation ('inflection') of divine and angelic names, indication of which appears already in early Rabbinic sources. (Cf. Avot 1.13; b. *Shabbat* 88a. Cf. also Scholem's discussion of the phrase *u'd'ishtamesh b'taga ḥalaf* in Avot 1.13, where the verb *'ishtamash* (אשתמש) denotes manipulation, or exploitation, whereas *taga* (תגא), literally 'crown', signifies the ineffable name. Cf. Scholem, *Qabbalot*, 27-28. Scholem renders the Hebrew *shimmushim* as *práxeis* [πράξεις], in the sense of theurgic practices (ibid). We should also note the various manuals under the title *shimmush* (e.g., *Shimmusha Rabba*, *Shimmusha Zuta*, and *Shimmushiei Torah*), composed, according to Scholem, in twelfth-century Southern France, using Geonic figures as pseudographic references. Scholem (*Devils*, 129-32) entertained the possibility that works like *Shimmusha Rabba* drew on earlier possibly Geonic traditions, which made their way to Ashkenaz and Southern France from the East. Following Scholem on this issue, Moshe Idel focused on the transmission of the techniques pertaining to *shimmush*—the incantations of the divine names and their manipulation—from Ashkenaz to Catalonian and Castilian Kabbalah. Testimonies from the second half of the thirteenth century attribute such activities as *shimmush be'shem* (lit. inflection of the name) to figures from Ashkenaz and Northern France, such as R. Avraham of Cologne. On R. Avraham's connection to R. Elazar of Worms, see Idel 2008, 29-33. Note that *shimmush* appears also in Judah Ibn Tibbon's translation of Halevi's *Cuzari* in connection with R. Akiva's presumed theurgic activity, signifying the inflection of the pneumatic realms (*Cuzari*, 214-15).

[162] Judah Ibn Tibbon suggested the term *shimmush* as the Hebrew equivalent of inflection, relating to declensional and morphological changes of words. See Ibn TIbbon's translations of *Sefer ha-Riqmah*, 12, 14; *Cuzari* (ed. H. Hirschfeld), 214-15. I thank Prof. James Robinson for bringing this to my attention. Ibn Tibbon's translation of inflection as *shimmush*, as opposed to the typical *ṣeruf*, is in line with his preference of meaningful over literal translation Cf.

Giqatilla alludes to the latter to retain the metaphysical significance of *shimmush* while reconsidering its mystical or theurgic implications.[163] The morphological alteration of the letters is not a theurgic event, but rather the theological principle of inflection of the Name, which in turn establishes its renewed reference—the separate intelligence.[164]

Vowels and Consonants: Form and Matter

The function of the vowel letters as constituting the principle of form is further developed in their relationship to the consonants. The consonants are primarily analyzed as principles that compose the intelligible realm—in the sense that their varying combinations give rise to intelligible concepts and, by extension, to a world that is ontologically meaningful:

> Although there is no articulation (*ḥittukh 'otiyyot*) in the worlds above, know that the intention and intelligible forms of the letters (*kawanat ha-'otiyyot we-ṣurattan*) are fixed

translator's introduction to *Ḥovot ha-Levavot.* See Yosef Ibn Paquda, *Sefer Ḥovot ha-Levavot be-Targum Yehudah Ibn Tibbon*, ed. A. Ẓifroni (Jerusalem, 1924), 59. Cf. 235: "[The third level pertaining to the wisdom of Torah is those] who inquire into the vowel-points and cantillation marks, as well as the *shimmush* of language and its grammar." See also Zwiep, *Mother of Reason*, 71.

[163] But see *GE* 134. The grammatical principle of *shimmush* is retained in Giqatilla's later work, specifically *Sha'arei 'Orah* (Fifth Gate) which deals with the construct state YHWH-'Elohim or YHWH-Tsevaot. Here, *shimmush* indicates the syntactic options of the name YHWH: "Know that the glorious and exalted name YHWH is mentioned in the Torah with several '*inyanim* and through several *shimmushim*." Following this statement, Giqatilla proceeds with a detailed account of each of these syntactic possibilities (*Sha'arei Orah*, Vol. 1, 176). Cf. Giqatilla's stern objection to the magical practice of *simmush* in his introduction to *Sha'arei 'Orah* (Vol. 1, 46). We should note that the metaphysical rendition of the grammatical *shimmush* is intimated by Ibn Latif (*Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 56a) who renders the word *yehi* of Gen. 1:3 as an inflection of God's hidden Name YHWH, and in a fashion akin to Giqatilla. *Shimmush* is also central to the late thirteenth-century anonymous *B'rit ha-Menuḥah*, where it relates the science of the divine names in a chain of transmission, from Adam down to Rabbi Shimon. Cf. *Sefer B'rit ha-Menuḥah*: *Critical Edition and Introduction*, ed. Oded Porat (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2016.

[164] Cf. *GE* 27-28; 74-77; 316-17. In *GE* 135, Giqatilla employs the grammatical *ṣiruf* instead of *shimmush.* Elsewhere (*GE* 142) Giqatilla expands on the principle of *shimmush* when discussing the nine letters of the Tetragramic inflection—*y,h,w,h,–'e, h,y,h,–y,h* (יהו"ה, אהי"ה, י"ה)—each representing a particular *shimmush*. These *shimmushim* follow the logic of Name reduction, one letter omitted in the names YHWH (אהי"ה stands for יה"ו [YHW], both carrying the value 21). In *Glosses*, the form of the separate intelligences is said to "exist by [virtue of] the Name." (*Glosses* 23a. Cf. Ibn Latif's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, fol. 55a) Similarly, Ibn Ezra asserts that the separate intelligence "does not subsist in itself, but rather in [or: by] the name of God." see *Commentary on Exodus* [ed. A. Weiser], 34) Giqatilla further develops the relationship between the intelligible forms and the Tetragrammaton through the grammatical principle of *semikhut*, considered above in connection with Ibn Ezra. (See *GE* 115) The constructive state YHWH-*Ṣeava'ot* occupies an important place in Giqatilla's discussion on the relationship between the principle of being, communicated by the Tetragrammaton, and the cosmic structure, the latter consisting of the three hosts (*Ṣeava'ot*) – the intelligible, the spherical, and the sublunary (*GE* 115-29) Giqatilla further develops *semikhut* as an ontological principle that qualifies, more broadly, the contingency of all renewed existents on the principle of being, that is, the Tetragrammaton. (*GE* 117, 123, 125).

> in them. The letters thus carry the world in its totality with the power that they receive from God in the secret of the Name of Being, for existence belongs principally to the letters. [165]

The idea that the letters are elemental and endowed with intrinsic power is reworked by Giqatilla through the conceptual lens of matter and form.[166] Giqatilla's ultimate principle of linguistic form is not tied to the intelligible letters as such—those that give rise to conceptual meaning—but rather to the vowels, which activate the potentiality of the letters. He reinforces this view by referring to a rabbinic characterization of the Hebrew letters as the *kelim* through which the world was created.[167] In the context of *Ginnat Egoz*, *keli* may be understood in either of its primary senses—"instrument" or "vessel." Giqatilla focuses on the first: the letters serve as instruments in the ontological process that is actualized through them. In earlier discussions, he characterizes the consonants as *kelim*,[168] and here he expands the notion by treating them as instruments whose activation through specific combinations produces the essential qualities (*tekhunot*[169]) of all things. These essences are then carried as concepts within particular words—a view aligned with the second sense of *keli* as vessel.[170]

While the essential constitution of things is attributed to the letters, the closing remark in the cited passage distinguishes the Tetragrammaton as the source of the power that makes this

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[165] *GE* 377. On the tension between verbal and intelligible form of speech, see *GE* 422; *SN Long* 175a-b. Ibn Latif appears more judgmental about the 'sensorial delusions' which he ultimately associates with the material consonants. See Ibn Latif, *Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 21, and see also Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 31-33.

[166] The characterization of the phonetic elements as building blocks of the cosmic order has been speculated in various traditions, also in connection with the twofold meaning of the Greek *stoicheion*. See Juan Acevedo, *Alphanumeric Cosmology from Greek into Arabic: The Idea of Stoicheia through the Medieval Mediterranean* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 25–33, and passim.

[167] Possibly alluding to Genesis Rabbah 1:1, *Guide* I:64 identifies God's speech, or word, as an instrument for divine will; both Ibn Tibbon and al-Ḥarizi use the Hebrew term *keli*. On this term in medieval philosophical Hebrew, see Klatzkin, *Anthology*, vol. 2, 88–89. Giqatilla further connects *keli* to the principle of matter (*hergesh*). Cf. Glosses, 24d; *GE*, 22–23.

[168] Dunash ben Tamim, for example, distinguishes the consonants ("the firm letters") as *kelim*, insofar as they involve the use of *keli ha-dibbur*, the articulators. See Dunash ben Tamim, *Commentary on Sefer Yetsirah*, ed. Menashe Grossberg (London: Rabinowitch Press, 1902), 48.

[169] On the etymology of *tekhunah* as signifying the essential form of things, See Klatzkin, Anthology, vol. 4, 191–5. See also Giqatilla's *Commentary on Genesis*, fol. 41a-43a.

[170] *GE*, 377; cf. *GE*, 22, 133.

intelligible process possible. Although Giqatilla does not mention the vowel letters in that particular context, his treatment of the Name of Being centers on the function of the Tetragrammaton in sustaining the cosmic order and its hierarchical gradations. In this light, the distinction between the consonants and the vowels reflects a structural relationship between the plane of meaningful speech and the element that animates it:

> [T]he vowels are the foundation of the letters. One cannot pronounce *'aleph* with a motion external to the letter, but only through the motion that affirms its existence (*batenu'ah ha-me'ametet meṣi'utah*). Although concealed, this motion is the form of the letter, just as the Intellect is [form] to the soul. And this is true without doubt.[171]

Here, the consonant is portrayed as passive in relation to the active motion of the vowel. Their structural interrelation further clarifies this dynamic: "One cannot enter the intelligible (*muskalot*), which is the secret of the vowel point, except through the sensible (*murgashot*), that is, the consonants."[172]

Based on the foregoing analysis, it is reasonable to understand *murgashot* here as referring not only to physical speech but to the intelligible letters more generally.[173] On this view, the consonants and the vowels occupy the respective positions of matter and form. Ibn Latif likewise emphasizes the limits of human speech, noting that our dependence on material articulation confines us to the domains of sense and imagination. This constraint applies even to the vowel letters, "which the imagination cannot grasp except through the aid of corporeal matter (*ḥomer gashmi*)." Through the process of abstraction, the distinct properties of consonants and vowels are

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[171] *GE* 360.

[172] *GE* 422: Cf. *SN Long* 175a-b. Ibn Latif (*Ṣurat 'Olam*, Ch. 21) appears more judgmental about the sensorial delusions which he ultimately associates with the consonants.
See the discussion in Moshe Idel, *The Magical Experience of Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 30-31.

[173] This suggestion aligns with a similar assertion by Ibn Latif about the primacy of the vowel-letters as principles that "motivate (*meni'ot*) and [cause] speech in relationship to which the remaining [letters] are motivated (*mitno'a'ot*). The latter cannot form meaning (*lo yeṣuyar lahen dibbur*) but with the [vowel-] letters of the Tetragrammaton." *Ṣurat 'Olam*, fols. 143b-144a, 55-56). Applying the *meni'a-mittno'e'a*, Moshe de León makes a similar point: "The voice […] moves speech, and speech is moved by voice (*ha-qol* […] *hu ha-mani'a la-dibbur, we-hadibbur mittno'e'a 'al yedei ha-qol*)." *Shushan 'Edut*, 343.

revealed. The phonetic differences observable in spoken language correspond to deeper ontological roles: the vowels and consonants serve, respectively, as active form and passive matter.

I wish to conclude this section with two brief observations regarding Giqatilla's account of the vowel letters. First, as seen in Chapter 3, the connection between the vowel letters and the intelligible forms is grounded in the notion of *hawayah*. *Hawayah meḥudeshet*—renewed being—is closely linked to the principle of form. Since creation *ex nihilo* produces being not as formless matter but as determinate form, and since the act of creation is, for Giqatilla, fundamentally linguistic, this form is contingent upon the vowel letters, which function as the formal articulation of the consonants.

Second, with regard to the issue of emanation, also discussed in Chapter 3, I have suggested that Giqatilla frames the emergence of the Intellect in qualified terms: as an active expression of the One, which nonetheless denies both causal likeness and essential continuity between the created forms and their source. Giqatilla's account of metaphysical *shimmush*, and of the Tetragrammaton more broadly, sharpens the terms of such a linguistic emanation. It locates the process not in the essence of being, but in its non-essential, linguistic activity—thereby distinguishing divine action from divine substance.

Summary

The aim of this study is to explicate Joseph Giqatilla's theological conception of the Hebrew language as developed in his early work *Ginnat Egoz* (ca. 1274). Specifically, it examines the relationship between language and world as articulated in Giqatilla's work—two intimately connected domains that shape the structure and scope of *Ginnat Egoz*. Giqatilla's early works have received increasing scholarly attention in recent decades. Several important studies have contributed to a more precise understanding of their textual contours, thematic range, and place within the intellectual and spiritual world of thirteenth-century Castile. These contributions notwithstanding, the question that remains insufficiently addressed is how Giqatilla's study of the Hebrew language—understood not merely as an object of interpretation but as a medium through which the structure of divine reality is disclosed—serves to establish a cosmos grounded in the principle of divine speech.

A guiding hypothesis of this study is that Giqatilla develops a coherent and systematic method for construing the Hebrew language as a mode of divine activity. Specifically, he constructs a concept of language that rests not on the semantic function of words, but in the principle of simple activity. This method, while innovative, draws upon contemporary philosophical and exegetical models of language—especially those rooted in medieval Jewish thought. It is shaped by both inherited categories and novel interpretive strategies, and it serves to link linguistic structure with broader metaphysical and cosmological principles.

Chapter One examines the conceptual foundations of this method by tracing Giqatilla's constructive engagement with two distinct approaches to language in medieval Jewish philosophy.

On the one hand, following Maimonides, language is defined in terms of mental representation: exterior verbal expressions are secondary to interior speech, which constitutes the intelligible form of language. This framework privileges meaning over sound and conceptualizes verbal expressions as a vehicle for conveying universal, mental content. Giqatilla was demonstrably familiar with this construct, as seen in his deployment of the *murgash–muskal* distinction. But his theological conception of the Hebrew language also modifies this construct by privileging simple linguistic motion as the underlying vitality—its inner force— of linguistic meaning.

This revision of the interior and exterior dimensions of language reflects Giqatilla's integration of a second, distinct model—drawn from the grammatical and exegetical writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra—that emphasizes phonetic structure and the divine significance of letters. This model, combined with the inherited philosophical framework, shapes the constructive method through which Giqatilla articulates the theological dimensions of Hebrew. Here, language is not defined solely by its semantic or representational function, but by its structural and phonetic features—especially as expressed in the Hebrew vowel system. Ibn Ezra's reflections on the non-semantic aspects of language, particularly his analogies between linguistic and cosmic motion (both rendered by the term *tenu'ah*), play a formative role in Giqatilla's thinking. While the analogy between phonetic motion and cosmological movement is not original to Ibn Ezra, he was instrumental in transmitting this conceptual framework to later thinkers, including Giqatilla. While drawing on Ibn Ezra's analogy between phonetic and cosmic motion, Giqatilla reworks its terms by treating linguistic motion not merely as reflective of the cosmic order but as its generative principle.

Building on the idea that divine motion underlies natural order, Chapter Two reconstructs the ontological principles that govern Giqatilla's cosmos by tracing how he reconfigures core cosmological categories—such as causality, vitality, and elemental composition—through a theological framework of motion. While the chapter stops short of articulating the full implications of divine language, it lays critical groundwork by showing how natural motion and cosmic order are subtly reinterpreted through Giqatilla's conception of divine activity. A central focus of the chapter is Giqatilla's interpretation of the divine Name YHW—derived as an inflected form of the Tetragrammaton—which he further parses into the sememes YH and WH.

The chapter examines how Giqatilla construes these sememes as structural components within his cosmology, specifically in connection with motion. Drawing again on Ibn Ezra, WH is interpreted numerically as 11 (10 + 1), marking a principle of motion that exceeds the fixed structure of the ten spheres. From this, Giqatilla derives the designation YA (יא), which becomes a structural principle that links natural processes to a higher ontological source. Giqatilla's notion of WH, formulated through the principle of YA, reframes the natural principles of the cosmic order, as illustrated in his engagement with Maimonides' treatment of motion in *Guide* 2:13. Whereas Maimonides classifies motion as an unstable accident of the celestial spheres, Giqatilla argues that natural motion, though technically created, is properly and stably linked to the spheres—"like the blackness of tar." He attributes this stability to motion's higher origin: it is not an incidental feature of natural bodies but a sign of their enduring vitality, derived from their rootedness in a dynamic cosmic order.

Giqatilla's framework is further developed through his treatment of the natural elements (*yesodot*), which illustrates how natural phenomena are recast as expressions of theological principles of motion, using analogical reasoning. Here, his use of analogy comes to the fore—not

as a rhetorical device but as a method essential to his thinking. Although his cosmology adopts the model of essential causality arranged within a Neoplatonic scheme of cosmic emanation, he also develops a complementary notion of causal continuity grounded in simplicity and cohesion. The sublunar elements—fire, air, and water—are emblematic of this latter model, insofar as they retain their essential properties across descending realms. Giqatilla treats them not as abstract signs but as universal principles operative at every level of the cosmos. Their function is therefore not heuristic but ontological, revealing how Giqatilla envisions the world as unified by a principle of simple vitality that underlies multiplicity.

By structuring his cosmology using the interplay of divine Names, elemental analogies, and complementary models of causality, Giqatilla sets the stage for a theological method in which natural motion is grounded in a higher, unifying principle. Chapter Two thus lays the conceptual foundation for the linguistic theology developed in later chapters, showing how the natural order is already interpreted through categories that anticipate the framework of speech.

Chapter Three investigates the metaphysical foundations of Giqatilla's theology of language, focusing on how divine speech operates as a form of non-essential, spontaneous activity. It begins with the premise, developed in Chapter Two, that the cosmos is grounded in divine motion, and asks how this motion relates to the simplicity of God and the emergence of language as a creative principle. The chapter centers on the relationship between the transcendent One and the Universal Intellect—the two principal terms of the Jewish-Neoplatonic framework through which Giqatilla articulates divine causality. The guiding question is twofold: first, how does Giqatilla preserve the absolute simplicity of God while using that very simplicity to formulate a conception of linguistic activity? And second, what are the implications of this conception for understanding the world?

To address these questions, the chapter analyzes three interrelated themes common in the philosophical and theological discourse of the time: the problem of creation through emanation; the status of the Universal Intellect as the first determinate ontological principle; and the relationship between Divine Will and the principle of Nature. As a preliminary step, I argue—contrary to some scholarly interpretations—that Giqatilla generally rejects the classical Neoplatonic model of emanation from the One. Although he occasionally draws on its terminology, the act by which the Intellect is generated is consistently framed in linguistic terms. Often, this generative act is associated with the active force of the Tetragrammaton, conceptualized as a constitutive principle. This model frames Giqatilla's distinction rejection of ontological analogy between *hawayah qadmonit* (primordial existence) and *hawayah meḥuddeshet* (renewed existence), a pair of terms that resurface in Part One of *Ginnat Egoz*.

This foundational distinction assigns the Universal Intellect a key role as the first determinate level of being and the source of all subsequent cosmic gradations. Unlike the transcendent One, which does not create through emanation, the Intellect gives rise to the lower ontological grades through a determinate process of emanation. This contrast leads to a twofold metaphysical structure: a spontaneous, non-essential act of creation associated with the One, and an ordered, emanative unfolding from the Intellect.

This tension becomes a cornerstone of Giqatilla's theological method—not as a contradiction to be resolved, but as a productive interplay between two complementary causal principles. On the one hand, the cosmos is grounded in the simple, spontaneous vitality that issues from the transcendent One; on the other, it unfolds through the determinate, structured causality of the Intellect. Each principle entails a different mode of causation and carries distinct implications for the nature of the world. Accordingly, *Ginnat Egoz* frequently reflects this tension,

using Aristotelian ontological principles of form, on the one hand, and subjugating these principles to the simple activity of divine motion, on the other. For Giqatilla, the interplay between them is not only essential but constructive: it undergirds his account of divine speech and grounds the structure and dynamism of the cosmos alike.

This dual framework is treated through the third theme that this chapter addresses, namely, the relationship between Tetragrammaton and the attribute ’Elohim. I examine how Giqatilla employs his doctrine of the divine Names to establish the relationship between these two principles of causality. In *Ginnat Egoz*, the Tetragrammaton and the attribute ’Elohim typify the respective principles of Will and Nature, and are framed through a linguistic paradigm in which the divine Names are dynamically related. Giqatilla supports this linguistic paradigm with the terms *hazkarah* and *hakhraḥah*, drawn from ritual contexts involving the invocation and coercion of the divine Names. Giqatilla construes these terms as metaphysical principles that express the relationship between Will and Nature. Although Giqatilla rejects the idea of occasionalism, he nevertheless seeks to ground Nature in Divine spontaneous activity. This linguistic process is established through the principle of *hazkarah* which Giqatilla renders as a metaphysical principle rather than liturgical. In *Ginnat Egoz*, the invocation (*hazkarah*) of the Tetragrammaton—linked to divine Will—is said to coerce (*hakhraḥah*) the name *’Elohim*, associated with Nature. This relation exemplifies his broader claim: linguistic activity mediates between spontaneous vitality and essential form. In this model, language becomes the site in which the creative tension between these two principles is rendered operative.

Chapter Four completes the theological framework developed in the previous chapters by focusing on the structural distinction between Hebrew letters and vowels. For Giqatilla, the letters carry the semantic function of speech and are thus associated with the essential determination of the cosmic

order—a connection he frames through the term *pe'ulah*. By contrast, the Hebrew vowels, essentially non-semantic, are the active principle of speech. They epitomize the simple motion and vitality of the created order, through the term *tenu'ah*. This chapter examines how Giqatilla uses this linguistic distinction to reconfigure the principles and modes of cosmic motion, positioning the vowel system as the expressive core of his metaphysical model.

This approach represents a fundamental departure from contemporary theosophical treatments of Hebrew. While Kabbalists associated with sources like the *Epistle of Worms* subordinated vowel-points (*neqqudot*) to letters as instruments for actualizing essential potentialities, Giqatilla inverts this hierarchy, establishing simple phonetic motion as ontologically prior to semantic content. This methodological shift reflects competing conceptions of what constitutes the ultimate form of language and, consequently, of divine creative activity.

As a preliminary step, the chapter establishes the function of the vowel-points as non-semantic principles of motion, differentiating them from approaches that treat vowels as constructive instruments in service of meaning production—enabling proper pronunciation and word formation so that the semantic content carried by letters can be actualized. It traces Giqatilla's adaptation of the infinitesimal point (*neqqudah*)—which, in Kabbalistic doctrines, refers to the simple and ultimate source of the emanated order. Giqatilla redefines this point as a principle of simple linguistic activity. This modification is crucial to his broader theological project, which grounds divine creativity not in substance or essence but in spontaneous, non-essential speech. A key finding here concerns the distinction between Giqatilla's *ḥolam* and the theosophical *Neqqudah Maḥshavit* (ideational point). Despite apparent similarities, these represent fundamentally different theological projects: the theosophical point grounds systems focused on

essential potentialities, while Giqatilla's *ḥolam* establishes non-essential linguistic activity as divine transcendence's immediate expression.

Central to this reinterpretation is the vowel-point *ḥolam*, which Giqatilla adopts as the primary emblem of simple linguistic activity. By elevating *ḥolam* to metaphysical significance, he challenges prevailing models of language that locate its essence in semantic function and its power in the production of meaning. Giqatilla instead privileges simple motion as the primary act of divine expression and, consequently, as the foundational principle of nature. The conceptualization of the simple vowel as the principle of non-essential activity offers an alternative to Maimonides' theology. The vowel-point epitomizes simple activity issuing from the primordial God without implying any form of ontological analogy to the created order. This theological model resolves the tension between divine transcendence and creative activity by locating divine action in non-essential linguistic motion rather than essential emanation.

Central to Giqatilla's theology, however, is the constructive role that language plays in grounding his cosmos, extending beyond the simple function of the vowel-point *ḥolam*. In the third part of *Ginnat Egoz*, he offers a systematic account of the Hebrew vowels, drawing heavily on Ibn Ezra's linguistic system while integrating elements from the Qimḥi tradition. He extends Ibn Ezra's analogy between phonetic motion and cosmic motion, transforming it from a descriptive comparison into a structural claim: the vowel system itself becomes the ontological principle of cosmic dynamics. Giqatilla also modifies Ibn Ezra’s classification of the vowel-points in accordance with his broader theological and cosmological aims, among which is the designation of simple activity as the animating principle that runs through the cosmic order. To this end, Giqatilla reframes Ibn Ezra's system by establishing the so-called threefold simple point. This threefold point incorporates three of the seven Masoretic vowel-points—*ḥolam*, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*.

While similar in their graphic representation—all consisting of the single point—Hebrew grammarians did not treat them as representing a paradigmatic case of the vowel

Against this grammatical classification, Giqatilla's cosmology modifies the connection by formalizing the three vowel-points as modes of the simple principle. Specifically, the *shuruq* and *ḥiriq* are conceptualized as modifications of the primary and simple linguistic act—the *ḥolam*—in accordance with the descending gradations of the cosmic order. On this view, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq* epitomize divine simple expression insofar as this expression operates in connection with the middle and lower worlds, respectively.

This threefold vowel construct completes Giqatilla's deliberation of the natural elements as universal principles, the analogical terms of which I discussed in Chapter 2, while establishing a comprehensive cosmic linguistics where phonetic motion serves as the principle of existential unity underlying meaningful forms. The argument draws on a passage in Part Three of *Ginnat Egoz*, where the natural elements are deliberated in a twofold manner. They are first defined as principles of motion, not merely material qualities, and are then linked to the three vowel-points—*ḥolam*, *shuruq* and *ḥiriq*—the latter established as the ontological cause (*sod*) of these universal principles of motion.

This systematic treatment of vowel-points as cosmic principles extends to Giqatilla's analysis of vowel-letters (*'otiyyot ha-tenu'ah*), which completes his resolution of the theological tension between divine transcendence and creative activity. Through the principle of grammatical *shimmush* (inflection), he shows how the Tetragrammaton functions as a creative rather than purely referential principle. The transition from the ineffable Name to its articulated forms (like *yehi*, "let there be") represents the emergence of intelligible form through linguistic activity, preserving divine transcendence through the non-essential character of this creative

speech. This framework transforms Hebrew from a representational system into the very medium through which divine creativity expresses itself in cosmic structure, establishing what Giqatilla identifies as *Torah language*—as opposed to *philosophical language*—grounded in simple motion that transcends yet operates through semantic determination.

Taken together, these chapters reveal Giqatilla's early theology as an attempt to construct a coherent system in which language is not merely reflective of divine reality but constitutive of it. His approach positions linguistic activity—specifically the dynamics of Hebrew vowels—as the creative foundation of the cosmos.

Giqatilla emerges as a constructive Kabbalist whose thought develops through sustained interaction with diverse intellectual traditions, including medieval philosophy of language, Aristotelian and Neoplatonic cosmology, Hebrew grammar, the mysticism of the divine Names, and numerological speculation. This interaction is neither passive nor merely exegetical. He adapts these traditions through a method that privileges linguistic activity as simple, dynamic, and generative, rather than semantic. This conception frames Hebrew as a divine language whose primary function is creation rather than communication. Within this framework, the vowel functions as a metaphysical principle that serves as both a symbol of vitality and a structural element in his theology.

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