



In the [GRA-version](#) of the 'tree of life' (etz chayim) there are 10 sefirot—let us call them substances—and 22 connections between them: they are units of volume, number and story. As you have heard, they come together in the human breath: in breathing, sounding and expression—musically in-1.

In the Genesis, creation is related through acts of calling: every time G-d calls/cries something is brought to exist. G-d's name (HaShem) occurs 32 times in the Genesis: 10 times 'G-d says' and 22 times just 'G-d'. Hence the architecture of 10 nodes and 22 connections in the [tree of life](#). 32 = Leb/Heart.



Abraham H-Cohen de Herrera met his teacher Sarug—an adept of Lurianic kabbalah—in Ragusa: which at the time was the name of the city of Dubrovnik. He later returned to Judaism in Amsterdam and wrote his work The Gates of Heaven there. It may have influenced Spinoza. The historical tracery of the kabbalah from Spain & Portugal, its impact on the Italian renaissance to the Baroque has been belaboured by e.g. [Moshe Idel](#) and [Miquel Beltrán](#).

There's a whole branch of **Spinoza-studies** that has been tasked with determining the **influence** of the **kabbalistic** tradition on Spinoza's philosophy, particularly [Abraham Cohen de Herrera](#)'s book **The Gates of Heaven**, which he published after **returning** to Judaism in Amsterdam. He was a [Marrano](#).

At the core of these speculations is 'substance': the inconceivable yet necessary **unity** within the Cartesian notions of **thought** and **extension**. The question, left open by Spinoza in *Ethica*, of the relation between substance—its attributes—and G-d. The architecture of **relay** between G-d and Creation.

How are the in/infinite connected? How does the higher connect with the lower [and back]? How does **thought** connect with **extension**? In the beginnings—Genesis—it is G-d's **breath** (Hebr. **ruach**) that hovers over the waters. The waters are the **torah**. It contains the world and everything that is in it (A-T).

It is G-d's reflection in the multiple. The conceptual determinations of G-d are **always** [negative](#). In the kabbalistic cosmogony G-d retracted (**tzimtzum**) to give space to creation. For the rest, everything is in G-d's **name**: the ineffable name YKVK and the multiple name Elokim. They are separated by **4 letters**.

These letters are **alef**, **lamed**, **mem** and **vav**. The 22 Hebrew letters are also numbers. The sum of **Alef (1) + Lamed (30) + Mem (40)** is **71**, which is the number of members in the **sanhedrin**: the **torah's** assembly of 71 elders, or "supreme court". So, the mitigation of the **multiple** is through **judgement**.

The Vav is the 6th: in term of the 6th day of creation the **promise** of the **shabbat**—that connects heaven and earth—which is the **messiah** and the **world-to-come**. So, this is the radical unity aspect (1-in-1). The **tetragramme** (what Jews call Ha-Shem, the **name**) occurs throughout the **torah**.

But it was only **revealed** to Moshe/Moses. This is why it is said that Moses wrote the **torah**. Which is where the adventure with **source-criticism**—modern *wissenschaft*—begins. Most of what has been written on the history of the **kabbalah** belongs to that tradition: *who owes **which bit to whom***.

The methodological problem I see at this point, is the **sealing** of written works by their **author**: i.e., there is a claim for **originality/originarity** in authorship; while, in the Jewish setting, the idea that something comes from Abraham—or, Moses—is that it **descends** from them, or their descendants/descendants.

The rest is **commentary** and the **work of time**. So it is with the **zohar**, a major source of kabbalistic learning. Tradition ascribes its origin to an **esoteric** part of the **talmud** that was kept **secret** for **1000 years**. This means that if its **authorship** is ascribed to Moses de Leon (~1291), its **legacy** is from the **talmud**.

In the Jewish tradition one does not quote scripture. The **manifestation** of **earlier** knowledge is a **growth** phenomenon: a new **branch** on the **whole** tree. The chances are that what is known as **kabbalah** occurs at an **edgeland**: between **talmud** and **philosophy**. Spinoza both **teaches** from and **cuts off** from it.