HEKHAL · READER'S EDITION

Sifra di-Tzeniuta (the prologue)

Zohar, Sifra di-Tzeniuta; The Prologue (the Parable of the Wheat)

ספרא דצניעותא

Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)

PROVISIONAL EDITION · MACHINE-ASSISTED · NOT YET REVIEWED BY A CREDENTIALED EDITOR

Edition of 2026-08-13 · hekhal.org

About this edition

The underlying text is in the public domain by age. The original-language text is reproduced verbatim from a digital transcription of a public-domain text; the licence of that transcription is not stated as open (a verbatim transcription of a public-domain text carries no new copyright under US law), and this English rendering and its apparatus are a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

TRADITION	jewish-mysticism
LANGUAGE	Aramaic
PERIOD	late-13c (pseudepigraphically 2c)
ATTRIBUTION	Anonymous Zoharic authorship (Castilian circle, late 13th c.; pseudepigraphically R. Shimon bar Yochai). Targum machine-assisted, 2026-05-29.
TRANSLATION	Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)
LICENCE	CC-BY-SA-4.0
ONLINE	https://hekhal.org/texts/zohar-sifra-ditzniuta-prologue-targum/

> **Cite this edition:** Hekhal Targum Project, trans. "Zohar, Sifra di-Tzeniuta; The Prologue (the Parable of the Wheat)." Hekhal reader's edition, 2026-08-13. https://hekhal.org/texts/zohar-sifra-ditzniuta-prologue-targum/

> What this is: a machine-assisted, provisional translation. Every rendering choice and every unresolved reading is recorded in the apparatus beside the text. If you read the original and something looks wrong, write to community@hekhal.org; corrections are credited.

This edition presents the verbatim original-language text beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

ספרא דצניעותא מאן צניעותא דספרא. אמר רבי שמעון, חמשה פרקין אינון דכלילן בהיכל רב, ומליין כל ארעא. אמר רבי יהודה, אי כלילן הני, מכלהו עדיפי. אמר רבי שמעון, הכי הוא, למאן דעאל ונפק, ולמאן דלא עאל ונפק לאו הכי. מתלא, לבר נש דהוה דיוריה ביני טורין, ולא ידע בדיורי מתא. זרע חטין. ואכיל חטי בגופייהו. יומא חד עאל למתא, אקריבו ליה נהמא טבא. אמר ההוא בר נש, דנא למה. אמרו נהמא הוא למיכל. אכל וטעם לחדא לחכיה. אמר וממה אתעביד דא. אמרו מחטין.

The Book of Concealment. What is the concealment of the book? R. Shimon said: there are five chapters that are comprised within a great palace, and they fill the whole earth. R. Yehudah said: if these are so comprised, they are more excellent than all. R. Shimon said: So it is, for one who enters and goes out; but for one who does not enter and go out, it is not so.

A parable: to a man who dwelt among the mountains and did not know the ways of the dwellers of the town. He sowed wheat, and ate the wheat in its own raw state. One day he entered the town. They

לבתר אקריבו ליה גריצין דלישין במשחא. טעם מנייהו, אמר ואלין ממה אתעבידו. אמרו מחטין. לבתר אקריבו ליה טריקי מלכין, דלישין בדובשא ומשחא. אמר ואלין ממה אתעבידו. אמרו מחטין. אמר ודאי אנא מארי דכל אלין, דאנא אכיל עקרא דכל אלין דאיהו חטה. בגין ההוא דעתא מעדוני עלמא לא ידע ואתאבידו מניה. כך, מאן דנקיט כללא, ולא ידע בכלהו עדונין דמהניין, דנפקין מההוא כללא.

brought him good bread. That man said: “What is this for?” They said: “It is bread, to eat.” He ate, and it was exceedingly sweet to his palate. He said: “And of what is this made?” They said: “Of wheat.” Afterward they brought him cakes kneaded in oil. He tasted them and said: “And these, of what are they made?” They said: “Of wheat.” Afterward they brought him royal pastries, kneaded in honey and oil. He said: “And these, of what are they made?” They said: “Of wheat.” He said: “Surely I am the master of all these, for I eat the essence of them all, which is wheat.” Because of that mind-set, he remained ignorant of the delights of the world, and they were lost to him. So it is with one who grasps the general principle and does not know all the delights that issue from that principle, that give such pleasure.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

▽

An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim original-language text beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

⁂

the-parable-of-the-wheat

pardes frame, layered relation (the parable performs the relation of the plain kernel to its higher elaborations). The man of the mountains who eats only raw wheat and imagines himself 'master of all' because he possesses the bare grain is the reader who grasps only the klala (the general principle, the peshat) and so misses the bread, the oiled cakes, and the royal honeyed pastries, the progressively refined delights that the same wheat yields when one knows how to prepare it. (The four food-stages can be read as the four PaRDeS levels, peshat / remez / derash / sod, but the text's own frame is the bare principle versus the delights that issue from it; the four-level mapping is an interpretive overlay, not stated by the source.) The Sifra di-Tzeniuta describes itself: its five terse chapters are the wheat; the Idra Rabba and Idra Zuta are the bread and the royal pastries. To rest in the kernel and refuse the elaboration is to lose 'the delights of the world.' The peshat is preserved as the substrate (the wheat is real and is the essence), but it is not the whole.

Tishby, Isaiah 1989

five-chapters-in-a-great-palace

idra-theosophy frame, the Sifra di-Tzeniuta register (terse, oracular). 'Five chapters comprised within a great palace that fill the whole earth' is the Sifra's self-framing: the most concealed root-text of the Idra stratum is five short, cryptic chapters whose compressed content unfolds to fill all worlds. R. Yehudah's objection ('if so comprised, they are more excellent than all') and R. Shimon's reply ('so it is, for one who enters and goes out') establish that the Sifra's excellence is available only to the initiate who can move through the concealment, which is precisely what the Idra assemblies stage (the chevraya gathered to unfold the kernel). On the Liebes / Hellner-Eshed reading, the Sifra-to-Idra relation (concealed seed to dramatic exposition) is the structural spine of the whole Idra literature; this prologue is its overture. The terse register is preserved rather than over-explained, per the Sifra discipline. *Liebes, Yehuda 1993*; *Giller, Pinchas 2001*

Editorial decisions

- **royal-pastries.** Rendered 'trikei malkhin' as 'royal pastries' (the king's refined confections, kneaded with honey and oil), the third and most elaborated stage of the wheat's preparation. The escalation raw-wheat -> bread -> oiled-cakes -> royal-honeyed-pastries is preserved as the figure of

progressive exegetical refinement; not collapsed. *(editor-vincent, 2026-05-29)*

- No public-domain English predecessor exists for this parable-prologue: Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin (and hence Mathers 1887) begins the Book of Concealed Mystery at 'the equilibrium of balance' (the Sifra ch. I proper), omitting the petichta. This rendering is therefore at or near a first public-domain English of the passage; the comparison with public-domain translations is empty by design. Modern renderings (Sperling-Simon/Soncino 1934; Matt Pritzker; Tishby/Goldstein 1989) are copyrighted verify-exact comparands. *(editor-vincent, 2026-05-29)*
- range cards is empty by design, not by omission: the passage contains no terms in the controlled kabbalah glossary (the Idra configurative vocabulary, atika/gulgalta/dikna/etc. does not occur in the petichta). The two conceptually central terms, klala (the general principle / kelal) and heikhal rav (the great palace housing the five chapters), are NOT yet controlled vocabulary; rather than fabricate range cards for uncontrolled terms, klala is surfaced via the proposed glossary updates for a future controlled rendering, and heikhal is already an extant lexicon page (from the Heikhalot work) cross-referenced where relevant. *(editor-vincent, 2026-05-29)*

Colophon

Zohar, Sifra di-Tzeniuta; The Prologue (the Parable of the Wheat). Hekhal reader's edition of 2026-08-13. Generated from the living edition at https://hekhal.org/texts/zohar-sifra-ditzniuta-prologue-targum/; the online text may since have been corrected. The English rendering and apparatus are released under the licence stated above (CC-BY-SA-4.0); you may copy, share and adapt them with attribution to Hekhal and a link to the online edition, under the same licence.

Hekhal is an open, sourced reference to the world's mystical traditions. New texts, maps and lexicon entries: hekhal.org. To fund the translation of a text that has none in English, see hekhal.org/sponsor.

© 2026 Hekhal · hekhal.org