

Reading the *Zohar*

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For Ronni, Ariel, and Maya

Preface

The *Zohar* is the central Jewish mystical work. The strategies employed by the *Zohar*'s main interpreters, particularly during the renaissance of the Kabbalah in the Galilee hill town of Safed, dominated the development of the Kabbalah, forming its contours to the present day. The interpretation of the *Zohar* is the foundation of classical Jewish mysticism.

And yet the task of *Zohar* interpretation is a complicated one, for reading the *Zohar* is different from reading other Jewish literature. The *Zohar*'s two dozen component compositions are written in an obscure symbolic code. The exegete faces the daunting task of determining the meaning of a given passage in light of all of the implications of the *Zohar*'s deliberately numinous and evocative language. Whole theories of language were devised to bridge the gap between the ideas of renaissance Kabbalah and those of the *Zohar*, resulting in hermeneutical strategies that employed all manner of misprision and subversion. Sometimes the interpretation of a text would reflect nothing more than the imposition of an extraneous idea onto the *Zohar*; other commentaries simultaneously drew on the later tradition while correctly elucidating the original intention of the text's nuances and internal dynamics.

The first chapter of this study will provide an overview of some general methodological questions regarding the *Zohar*'s structure and archeology. I will argue that schools of *Zohar* interpretation divide, ideologically, between scholastic approaches and approaches based on mystical revelation and transmission. These two points of origin reflect two views of the kabbalistic experience.

The following chapters will present the *Zohar*'s central compositions and analyze how these texts were interpreted by subsequent kabbalists. Chapter 2 will analyze the composition *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. This work is particularly beloved by kabbalists because of its romantic mise-en-scène and its bold doctrine of the soul and reincarnation. *Sabba de-Mishpatim* details the descent of the soul and the travails that it endures in the course of its incarnation in the present world. The text is filled with an overwhelming erotic pain, exploring themes of alienation and dislocation, illegitimacy, conversion, childlessness, and divorce. During the Safed renaissance, attempts were made to locate the origin of the reincarnation tradition in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, although that text allows for reincarnation only in limited, specific instances.

Chapter 3 will trace the development of the *Zohar*'s creation myth. This account describes the engraving of the initial shape of the universe in the midst of a primordial nothingness, or ether. The *Zohar*'s creation myth is reprised many times throughout the entire work and forms the basis of the oral myth of Lurianic Kabbalah. Chapter 4 presents the *Idra* texts. In chapters 5–7, I will discuss the most influential texts of the *Zohar*, the dramatic *Idrot*. These texts describe convocations in which

various members of the *Zohar's* pietistic circle perish in mystical ecstasy while beholding the wonders of the Godhead. The *Idrot* were viewed as a repository of particularly recondite, ancient traditions. The boldly anthropomorphic visions in the *Idrot* provided the basis of the Lurianic system that became standard in kabbalistic circles. Chapter 5 will examine some central themes in the *Idrot* and their related literature.

The last chapter will detail the central hermeneutical strategies pursued by some of the Safed kabbalists, who read the *Idrot* in such a way as to reinforce and underscore their special myth. I will emphasize the contribution of Isaac Luria, who combined the creation traditions detailed in chapter 3 with the anthropomorphism of the *Idrot*, making particular use of the latter texts' allusions to a primordial catastrophe invoked through the Torah's mysterious allusions to the deaths of the kings of Edom. Through the melding of these two traditions, Luria developed his theology of divine withdrawal and chaos.

The *Zohar* was integral to all later systems of Jewish mysticism. It was the basis of the civil religion of the Kabbalah. The Safed kabbalists, Polish Ḥasidim, and scholastic exegetes of Lithuania all produced vibrant and profound schools of *Zohar* commentary. The conclusions of the *Zohar* and the Safed kabbalists make up the central teachings of Jewish mysticism. These teachings were widely distributed and form the foundation of mainstream Kabbalah to this day. This study addresses these teachings, portraying and analyzing them in a way that differs from previous studies of the *Zohar*. The historiographical studies of Kabbalah that have typified research in the field employ a mimetic approach, which traces a given theme or phenomenon across the whole history of Jewish mysticism. This study addresses the world of one text, the *Zohar*, and its central transmitters. In so doing, I will examine the *Zohar's* main concerns and show that the ideas of the *Zohar* formed the central tenets of Jewish mysticism in its classical period.

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Los Angeles
Adar 1999

P. G.

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Transliterations

a, e	alef	m	mem
b	bet	n	nun
v	vet	s	samekh
g	gimmel	'	ayin
h	he	p	pe
v	vav	f	fe
z	zayin	z	zadi
ḥ	het	q, k	qof
t	tet	r	resh
y, i	yod	sh	shin
k	kaf	s	sin
kh	khaf	t	tav
l	lamed		

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Abbreviations

B.T. Babylonian Talmud.

IR *Idra Rabba*, *Zohar III* 127b–145a. Mantua, Vilna, and Jerusalem eds.

IZ *Idra Zuta*, *Zohar III* 287b–296b.

J.T. Jerusalem Talmud.

SdM *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, *Zohar II* 94b–114a.

SdZ *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, *Zohar II* 176b–179a.

ShMR Ḥayyim Vital. *Sha'ar Ma'amarei RaSHB"Y ve-RaZ"L*. Jerusalem: Hoza'at Kitvei Rabbeinu ha-AR"i, 1961.

Quotations from Ḥayyim Vital's rendition of the Lurianic canon—the *Shemonah Sha'arim* (Eight Gates) and the *Ez Ḥayyim* (Tree of Life)—are from the comprehensive edition of Yehudah Ashlag (Tel Aviv, 1962), with the exception of various individual texts not included therein, which will be identified by separate bibliographical data.

Double quotation marks (") indicate an acronym derived from the Hebrew letters of the word in which they appear.

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The emotive features of the divine are summed up in the *sefirah* *Hesed*, the quality of loving-kindness, and its opposite, *Din* or *Gevurah*, the faculty of divine judgment. These are combined in the central *sefirah*, *Rahamim* or *Tiferet*, which interconnects with all of the seven lower *sefirot*. The lowest four *sefirot* represent the four aspects of sentient existence. *Nezah* is the aspect of linear time, while *Hod* is the aspect of scope or grandeur. The *sefirah* *Yesod* governs sexuality, and the final *sefirah*, *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah*, governs the simple fact of existence in the physical world.

Reading the *Zohar*

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Look, this verse chases after you
and looks out from behind your
wall like a hind of the field
skipping after you with thirteen
leaps, leaping after you and
cleaving to you.

Zohar II 109a



The Zohar and Its Commentators

The Jews love their books. They express this love by reading, chanting, writing, publishing, studying, and interpreting the sacred books of Judaism, accepting that these works possess infinite depth, profundity, and numinosity. The Jews cherish their books and they love to interpret and reinterpret them. The Hebrew Bible contains traditions of internal commentary, and every Jewish community of the Second Commonwealth produced commentaries on the Bible. The surviving movement of that period, Pharisaism, was overtly committed to a hermeneutical spirituality, a spirituality in which sacred text was the instrument of the divine. The texts of Pharisaism, the Mishnah, Talmud, and midrashim, were themselves preserved as canonical works. Each of these genres of writing came to be the subject of commentaries, novellas, translations, and paraphrases.

The skills brought to the traditional analysis of a sacred Jewish text, such as the Bible or Talmud, are very specific. The reader attempts to understand the canonical text through the use of methodologies that derive from the reader's beliefs and critical faculties and that are relevant to the genre being studied. For instance, the narratives in the Bible are to be understood differently and serve different purposes than its legal codes or its poetry. Each of these three genres of writing demands a particular sensitivity. Similarly, rabbinic texts such as the Mishnah, Tosefta, and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds were compiled from the contributions of thousands of sages over a period of five or six hundred years. Nonetheless, each of

A traditional portrait of R. Shim'on bar Yoḥai, the hero of the *Zohar*.

these works has a literary consistency, because they were compiled and edited according to a unifying worldview. The very technical distinctions between halakhah (law) and aggadah (lore) define how each tradition is to be perceived, whether as, respectively, binding law or freely derived homily.

The *Zohar* Literature

Another body of literature entered the canon of Jewish sacred texts in the late Middle Ages. These works were the kabbalistic midrashim attributed to the circle of the second-century Palestinian sage Shim'on bar Yoḥai. These rambling compositions are collectively referred to as the *Zohar*. When collected, they fill well over a thousand pages of densely written Aramaic. Although it purports to originate in late antiquity, the *Zohar* reflects the collective wisdom of various strands of Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah, up to the thirteenth century, as it had developed in Provence and Gerona.¹ For later kabbalists, the *Zohar's* purported antiquity was an important source of its authority.² Tacit assumptions were made that the Talmud took precedence over the *Zohar*, but in determining a position in which the Talmud and the *Zohar* were not in conflict, they could be considered of equal authority.³

The *Zohar* was not the first mystical, theosophical midrash. The earliest text in this tradition was a mysterious midrash called the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. This brief work first appeared in twelfth-century Provence, yet its imagery indicated a connection with the esoteric traditions of late antiquity such as Gnosticism and the mystery religions of the Middle East and Mediterranean coasts. Other late midrashim, such as the eighth-century Galilean *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* or the tenth-century Babylonian *Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu*, had stretched the form of midrashic biblical commentary by emphasizing the biography of the central teacher and his adventures. Although the character of the *Bahir's* putative author, Nehuniah ben ha-Kanah, is not emphasized, it was a similar kind of narrative midrash in which the internal drama of the dialogues and interactions between the rabbis took on a particular literary weight. Moreover, the *Bahir's* methodology of interpretation began with the assumption that the Bible portrayed encoded understandings of God's emanation into the world. This emanation took place through a set of stages, or aspects, that were called the *sefirot*.

The *Zohar* continued the tradition begun by the *Bahir*. It, too, was an anthology of symbolic interpretations of the Bible, which reduced the biblical text to expressions of the interplay of the *sefirot*. Just as the *Bahir* and *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* each emphasized the role of a central figure—Nehuniah ben ha-Kanah or Eliezer ben Hyrkanos—so the *Zohar* stressed the role of Shim'on and his comrades as part of the teaching itself.

In the canons of Judaism, the existence of the text is the primary reality; its existence precedes its essence. This primary existence is the key to that work's holiness. The words of the text can be read with different interpretations. Reading a sacred Jewish text symbolically, so that its manifest content differs from its inner meaning, is a way to convey messages that are considered too powerful to communicate directly. The *Zohar* calls this way of reading the *orakh keshut*, the "way of

truth.⁴ The rationale for this hermeneutic lies in the linguistic possibilities of the Hebrew Bible, its convoluted order, and even the shape of its letters. This theosophical Kabbalah is really a mysticism of language, in which all the components of the written Hebrew language—its consonants, vowels, and cantillation—control metaphysical energies and specific powers.⁵ The Bible is written in code and is meant to be read in ways that go beyond its plain meaning.

Reading the *Zohar* is different from reading other Jewish literature, for the *Zohar* was consciously written in an obscure symbolic code, or “secret speech.”⁶ The *Zohar* considers the Hebrew Bible to be an encoded text, too. The Bible’s plain meaning is, in one of the *Zohar*’s most common analogies, the mere garment of its inner truth. The Bible’s narratives, genealogies, and songs describe the interplay of the *sefirot*. These *sefirot* are the emanating aspects of the divine. They make up the metaphysical underpinnings of the created world, the processes of the divine, and the human soul. The interplay of the *sefirot* underlies the dance of the divine into corporeal reality.

To read the *Zohar*, one must possess the text’s lexicon of symbols, which it refers to as *kinnuyim*. The *kinnuyim* are symbolic archetypes whose interpretation forms the core of theosophical Kabbalah. The import of these symbols is based on the images they evoke and the nuances of their linguistic structure. The need for a key to crack the code has spurred the composition of *Zohar* commentaries, both published and unpublished.⁷

In this study, I will examine certain sections of the *Zohar* and the ways that the central doctrines of classical Kabbalah took shape around them. I will employ the criteria used in the critical analysis of the *Zohar* but will adopt the considerations of the exegetical tradition. Sometimes the interpretation of a text reflected nothing more than the imposition of extraneous ideas onto the *Zohar*; other commentaries, while drawing on subsequent traditions, yet managed to elucidate the *Zohar*’s nuances and internal dynamics. The sections of the *Zohar* that I will address leapt out at the kabbalists as particularly important.

The Unfolding of the *Zohar*

The *Zohar* comprises at least two dozen separate compositions, which are far from homogeneous in their structure and inner nature. Moreover, as manuscripts come to light and textual analysis becomes more acute, new sections, many of which have been divided and scattered across the entire work, are identified.⁸ Taken together, its various elements make up some eleven hundred leaves of most standard editions.⁹ Each stratum has a distinct literary nature and mystical doctrines that are unique to it. Each successive stratum of the *Zohar* brings new elements to the mix of doctrines and influences that were to be fateful to the subsequent history of Jewish mysticism.

It has long been the position of scholars, whatever their ideological biases, that there is a pattern of development in the *Zohar* literature, with certain ideas and themes developing and coming to fruition over the course of the work’s composition. It is not hard to trace this development, as the various sections of the *Zohar*

cite one another. When one views the literature in this way, *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* emerges as the earliest stratum. It is followed by the long midrash on the Torah and by the family of compositions that most resemble that midrash. These works make up the central stratum of the *Zohar*. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* are clearly a later stratum, imposing kabbalistic concepts that are foreign to the doctrinal teachings of the central midrash.¹⁰

The collection of compositions known as *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* (literally the “hidden midrash”) is considered the earliest section of the *Zohar*. There are important differences between the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and the rest of the *Zohar*. Its mysticism seems to have its origins in Neoplatonism, as well as mystical speculations on the power of numbers and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The theosophical doctrine, in which the interplay of the *sefirot* underlies the nature of present existence, is less fully formed. For instance, *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*'s doctrine of the soul is very different from the ideas expressed in the *Zohar*'s subsequent development.¹¹

In *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, the author or editor searches for a literary center around which his text can be organized. This device comes in the form of the *Zohar*'s protagonist Shim'on bar Yoḥai, who does not appear until the later sections of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*. Until then, a series of rabbis from the second century C.E. deliver teachings, with no single figure coming to dominate the proceedings. The *Zohar*'s literary form coalesces around the famous account of Shim'on's hiding from the Romans. This account establishes the literary center of the rest of the *Zohar*.¹²

These differences led to scholarly debate about the relationship of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* to the rest of the *Zohar*. Apologists have argued that it is an authentic Hellenistic composition.¹³ The more conventional opinion is that *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* represents an initial stage of the author's development.¹⁴ Such is the case with another late-thirteenth-century kabbalist, Joseph Gikatilla, whose early work *Ginnat Egoz* posits a similar philosophical mysticism, as opposed to his later theosophical works, *Sha'arei Orah* and *Sha'arei Zedek*, which teach a bold symbolic theosophical doctrine.¹⁵ The main sections of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* were edited and published by Moshe Zakhut well after the Safed renaissance and thus were not in full circulation in the formative years of *Zohar* exegesis. Some classical *Zohar* exegetes go as far as to cast aspersions on the authenticity of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*.¹⁶ One contemporary scholar has concluded that it must have been composed by someone other than Moshe de Leon.¹⁷

Large portions of the *Zohar* do have strong stylistic and doctrinal similarities. These include the long and comprehensive midrash on the Torah that is the main part of the *Zohar*, as well as other compositions that explore specific themes. Such works include *Sabba de-Mishpatim* (*Zohar II* 94b–114a), in which doctrines of the soul and afterlife are presented through an encounter with an old man, and *Yenuka* (*Zohar III* 186a–192a), in which the mystical nature of the prayers over food are presented by a wonder-child. These compositions formally resemble the long midrash in their language, as well as reflecting its kabbalistic doctrines. Some sections of this stratum, the sections known as *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*, seem to experiment with rabbinic literary formats involving apodictic lawmaking like that of the Tannaitic period. They are attempts by the author to convey kabbalistic truths in a declamatory style. While these texts have been associated with the author of the main part of

the work, they have certain formal similarities to some later compositions, particularly the works known as the *Idrot*.¹⁸

The *Idrot* are final sections in which the various members of the circle of mystics perish, in mystical ecstasy, while beholding the mysteries of the Godhead. These mysteries are specifically anthropomorphic in nature, detailing a doctrine of *parzufim*, or divine countenances, which make up the very anatomy of the divine.¹⁹ These texts are related to a shorter treatise, *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (Hidden Book). A specific myth of prehistory, the mysterious account of “the death of the kings,” is linked to these traditions, all of which are very important to the development of Kabbalah in the sixteenth-century Safed renaissance.²⁰ *Zohar* exegetes, in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, came to view the *Idrot* as central to the development of any consistent *Zohar*-based doctrine of Kabbalah.

A number of changes in doctrine and literary setting were instituted by the author of the sections called *Tiqqunim* (Sections) and *Ra'aya Meheimna* (The Faithful Shepherd). These compositions recount dialogues that take place in the celestial Garden of Eden, presumably after the deaths of Rabbi Shim'on and his comrades.²¹ The defining literary quality of these works is the author's tormented emotional state. His social resentments give a bitter, anarchic, and borderline antinomian tone to much of the *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*.²²

At the same time, the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* contain a number of more sophisticated doctrines that are closer to conventional Jewish monotheism than the theology of the *Zohar*'s main sections. They contain more advanced kabbalistic doctrines from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, such as the instrumental understanding of the emanations of the divine, the immanence of God, and the doctrine of the four worlds. These doctrines are easier to reconcile with a Maimonidean philosophical approach to Judaism than are the doctrines of the main sections of the *Zohar*. These texts also have a broader understanding of reincarnation than do the earlier compositions.²³

The remarks in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* regarding the *kulmus* (quill) imply that the author employed the technique of automatic writing in composing that work in particular.²⁴ Amos Goldreich links six references to the quill in the *Tiqqunim* and various Hebrew writings to the same author. Goldreich has made a compelling argument for the author's self-identification with the biblical Moses, equating the charged pen with Moses' rod.²⁵ This is the context for the author's observations that “the sealing hand is from the Zaddik, while the writing hand is from the central pillar [the central, unifying *sefirah Tiferet*],” as well as “Happy is the one . . . whose mouth is filled with names and whose fingers write secrets; when he sends forth the name from his mouth, the birds and the beasts of the Chariot receive it.”²⁶ The tradition of referring to the independent power of the *kulmus* recurs in the works of the sixteenth-century Moroccan kabbalists Shim'on Lavi and Mordechai Buzaglo,²⁷ as well as in the original homilies delivered by Isaac Luria.²⁸

The *Zohar*'s particular use of Aramaic was also a factor in its effect on the reader. The *Zohar* is written in the Aramaic of the Land of Israel, c. third century C.E. This dialect sometimes retains Hebrew structures and values, with prefixes and suffixes and usages that are cosmetically Aramaic. In the Rabbinic period, Aramaic was the popular, colloquial tongue, while Hebrew was mainly used by Pharisee scholastics.

By the Middle Ages, Hebrew had become the more accessible language (as is the case today), while Aramaic became the more obscure language, reserved for serious talmudists.

The author occasionally reveals his medieval origins in his employment of philosophical terms directly borrowed from the Arabic translations of Plato and Aristotle. Terms such as *nefesh medaberet*, *nefesh ha-behemit*, *nefesh ha-sikhlit* (for the communicative, animal, and intellectual natures, respectively), and *koah ha-mettaveh* (passion) and other medievalisms appear, particularly in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*. None of the discrepancies of the language—its anachronisms and Iberianisms—can take away from the author's artistic desire to coin an idiom that would, for the reader, invoke the mysterious setting of the Galilee of late antiquity. The community of kabbalists viewed the grandiose, formal, and mystifying tropes as a particularly expressive form, prompting the authors of *Sefer Tashak* and *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* to copy it. Even Isaac Luria, who was not a prolific writer, found his muse with zoharic Aramaic in order to compose his liturgical hymns for the Sabbath day. This somewhat clumsy idiom, with its paucity of expression, is rendered with great power in the *Zohar*. Its undisciplined nature was responsible, to some extent, for the linguistic confusion of many kabbalistic texts, particularly those of the Ḥasidic tradition, whose authors' linguistic skills were often primitive and whose style was apt to be obscure.

Doctrinal Development

This documentary assessment provides an evolutionary model for the *Zohar's* ideas. The early work *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* portrays a Neoplatonic, emanational mysticism, with an emphasis on holy names and numerological speculations. The main sections have a theosophical character. As opposed to the universalistic philosophical stance of the earlier stratum, the main section's worldview invokes symbols, midrashic hermeneutics, and references to a unifying myth that underlies present reality. This understanding tends to posit a single author, so that the development of the literature as a whole mirrors the processes of that individual's enlightenment.

Gershom Scholem's articles on the *Zohar's* authorship reflect how obsession with the influence of a single author can skew the portrayal of a work. Scholem, at the opening ceremonies of the Hebrew University, had asked the question "Did Moshe de Leon write the *Zohar*?" and suggested, idealistically perhaps, that its origins were in antiquity.²⁹ Only later did he conclude that the whole text was composed by de Leon. An essay in Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, "The *Zohar*: The Book and Its Author," detailed the uncovering of Moshe de Leon's hand, analyzing the trail of linguistic mistakes, anachronisms, and "howlers" that make clear the work's late origins. Even as he portrayed de Leon's literary creation, Scholem neglected to acknowledge that de Leon was a towering spiritual and artistic genius of the Middle Ages.

Among his students, allegiance to Scholem's thesis regarding Moshe de Leon's authorship is a point of honor. Scholem maintained that de Leon wrote the main sections of the *Zohar*, then composed the Hebrew writings for which he claimed

authorship. In this way, Scholem explained these works' references to the *Zohar*. In subsequent researches, Isaiah Tishby concluded that the *Zohar* was largely written after the Hebrew works of Moshe de Leon.³⁰ De Leon's Hebrew writings certainly lack the poetic grandiosity of the *Zohar*. According to Tishby's view, de Leon found his muse in the character of Shim'on bar Yoḥai. The literary form of the pseudepigraphical midrash liberated his creativity, and he poured out the main sections of the *Zohar*, perhaps ending them with the *Idrot* shortly before his death.

Recently, some scholars have begun to move beyond the hypothesis that associates the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and the whole main text with Moshe de Leon's ambivalent hand. Yehudah Liebes has made a strong case for multiple authorship of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, the *Idrot*, and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. Liebes associates the origins of this circle of mystics with the gnostic kabbalists of Castile. Among the members of this group were Baḥya ben Asher, whose commentaries to the Torah and other writings remain popular to this day, and Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi. Liebes has also stressed the central role of Todros Abulafia, even suggesting that he is the model for R. Shim'on himself.³¹ Abulafia's own works combine the influences of the kabbalists of Castile and Gerona.³² The tensions and expectations that attended Todros Abulafia's charismatic circle may have formed the basis for the dramatic interactions between Shim'on bar Yoḥai and his followers, as well as the awe and anxiety expressed toward R. Shim'on's colorful personality.

Dilemmas of Exegesis

The *Zohar* is not an easy book. One problem is that it contains many contradictory doctrines. In critical terms, there are at least two ways of understanding the origin of doctrinal differences in the *Zohar*'s various compositions. The various sections may reflect the conclusions of different schools of thought, or they may be the product of a linear development in a single author's thinking and writing style. In either case, the different sections can be viewed as the *Zohar*'s strata.

Some *Zohar* exegetes felt compelled to reconcile the work's doctrinal discrepancies. To do this, ideas not actually contemporary with the *Zohar*'s composition were read into it. Whole systems of Kabbalah developed in an attempt to resolve the doctrinal discrepancies between the various strata.³³ Although they might have taken into account the existence of multiple authors³⁴ and the possible preexistence of certain texts, most classical exegetes of the *Zohar* did not see the work as developing internally or reflecting different contemporary influences. The *Zohar* literature was taken together as a unit, and the most critical act on the part of most commentators was to read portions of the main sections in the light of developments in the *Idrot*, *Tiqqunim*, *Ra'aya Meheimna*, or earlier sections of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* that were published in *Zohar Hadash*.

An example of such a reconciliation of doctrinal differences is the incorporation of the doctrine of the "worlds." A number of thirteenth-century kabbalists concluded that the emanation of the ten *sefirot* takes place across the continuum of four worlds of creation: *Azilut*, or "emanation"; *Briah*, "creation"; *Yezirah*, "formation"; and *Asiyah*, "making."³⁵ Each of these worlds contains its own emanation.

tion of ten *sefirot*, and each of the *sefirot* contains ten *sefirot* within itself. The existence of these four worlds quadruples the possibilities of interaction between the *sefirot*. The doctrine of the worlds is found in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, but not elsewhere in the *Zohar*. *Zohar* commentators used the doctrine of the worlds to resolve doctrinal contradictions between the various strata. For example, if the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* posited that two *sefirot* would interact in a certain way in a given situation and then elsewhere the *Zohar* referred to them as functioning in a different way, the interpreter might explain that one case refers to an interaction occurring in the world of *Briah* while the other situation takes place in the world of *Asiyah*.

An important role for commentary was to provide reliable interpretations of the work's symbols. For example, the seminal Safed exegete Moshe Cordovero analyzed every image and trope of the *Zohar* as a separate, unique image.³⁶ This close attention to the precise version is also characteristic of Yosef ibn Tabul (an important student of Isaac Luria), who would often remark that "the language and the subject must be resolved and interpreted."³⁷ Such a minute analysis of every image was also characteristic of the few texts written by Isaac Luria, especially insofar as the few commentaries that he composed were written in a markedly Cordoverean style.³⁸ For later kabbalists, other texts are also fair game for this minute reinterpretation.³⁹

Some interpreters, particularly after the sixteenth century, combed through the *Zohar* to uncover minute intrarelations, so that their kabbalistic systems became multitiered, gothic infrastructures.⁴⁰ Eventually, to better explain these systems, they stepped away from exegesis of the *Zohar* and composed or dictated *drushim*, apodictic homilies that explicated and laid out the structure of their *Zohar*-derived mystical worlds.

To determine the true meaning of the *Zohar's* symbols, its commentators employed the conventional repertoire of kabbalistic hermeneutical strategies.⁴¹ These include esoteric analysis of biblical and rabbinic texts, use of the *Targum* (Aramaic translations dating from late antiquity) for understanding difficult words, and analysis of the esoteric aspects of the Masoretic text. The *Zohar's* interpreters also used esoteric methods of commentary, such as letter mysticism, speculation on divine names, and linguistic manipulations, such as *gematriyot* (numerical coefficients) and *temurot* (substitutions of letters according to a predetermined system).

The need to properly interpret the *Zohar's* symbols led to a particular type of literature, the symbolic lexicon. In such works, symbols were listed alphabetically or under the headings of a particular *sefirah*, with explanations of the possible content that they might signify. This literary genre extends from the period contemporary with the *Zohar's* circulation to the present.⁴²

Another task for the exegete is to explain the dialogues between the rabbis in the stories that frame the *Zohar's* homilies. Contemporary scholars⁴³ insist that the framing story and the content of any given *Zohar* text are intertwined, whereas the classical commentators usually ignore the framing devices and go straight to the doctrinal discussions. For instance, a narrative theme characteristic of the *Zohar* is that of the protagonist rabbis being given their comeuppance by a marginal member of society whose spiritual profundity they had failed to recognize. This device is the basis for the extended compositions *Yenuka* and *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, and it recurs in many

shorter vignettes.⁴⁴ The exegetes of the *Zohar* had to determine the extent to which the framing narrative was germane to the content of a given article.

The exchanges between the protagonists superficially resemble talmudic debates. However, the Talmud presents artificial combinations of rabbis drawn from a continuum of five centuries and two countries, Israel and Babylonia. The *Zohar's* discussions are presented as the actual dialogues of the wandering mystics of the narrative. The dynamics of most of the dialogues are predetermined: the hero of the *Zohar*, Shim'on bar Yoḥai, usually has the last word, rather like the Buddha in a Mahayana sutra.⁴⁵ Subsequent kabbalistic movements portrayed themselves as carrying on R. Shim'on's mission. This particular aspect of the *Zohar's* mysticism flowered in the messianic eros and pathos of successive circles of *Zohar* exegetes, such as Isaac Luria, Shabbatai Zevi, and Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto.⁴⁶

The *Zohar* draws on many rabbinic sources. Classical *Zohar* commentators, being more interested in later doctrines, seldom address the use of these ancient sources. For example, the angel Metatron, the demiurge or "Captain of the World," is a figure whose origins are in the Gnostic and esoteric traditions of late antiquity. The students of the Gaon of Vilna portrayed Metatron as the aggregation of the lower three *sefirot*, *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, not as the demiurgic angel of the older tradition.⁴⁷ The mythos of these late medieval systems often reduced the earlier, primordial traditions to metaphysical constructs.

The *Zohar*, moreover, draws from certain antecedent rabbinic traditions while it ignores others. The important composition of late antiquity the *Sefer Yezirah* (Book of Formation), which is the source of the very term *sefirot*, is absent from the main sections of the *Zohar* (It is not mentioned, and its doctrines are rarely cited). Similarly, the main parts of the *Zohar* pay little attention to the Talmud's famous account of the four who entered the mystical orchard, or *Pardes*.⁴⁸ The *Zohar's* principal rabbinic sources are the midrashim *Bereshit Rabbah* and *Songs Rabbah*, the *Targum Yerushalmi*, the Babylonian Talmud, and, particularly, the eighth-century pseudepigraphical midrash *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eliezer*. These northern Galilean traditions engross the author and provide the model for his loquacious Palestinian Aramaic. Nonetheless, few commentators explore these textual relationships.⁴⁹

Zohar commentators explored the legal (halakhic) dimensions of the text, as the *Zohar* often uses the Commandments as the basis for theurgy.⁵⁰ Some commentators pointed out instances when Shim'on bar Yoḥai's opinion on a given legal matter was consistent with opinions in the Mishnah or Talmud. A number of kabbalists composed apologetics for the *Zohar's* myriad halakhic anachronisms,⁵¹ but a few, notably Ya'akov Emden in his polemic *Mitpahaṭ Sefarim*, made use of the legal inconsistencies to attack the *Zohar's* authenticity.⁵²

On rare occasions, commentators were moved to insert materials that came to them through visionary experiences. Such visionary commentators include Yiṣḥak Eizik of Komárno and possibly Yehudah Petaya of Baghdad. The entire kabbalistic system of Isaac Luria was based on a revelation from the prophet Elijah (*gilui Eliyahu*), and Luria's student Yosef ibn Tabul also indicated that aspects of his *Zohar* commentaries were based on divine revelation.⁵³

Such symbolic exegesis begins, more often than not, with the origins of a given kabbalistic symbol. The most classical of these symbols originate in rabbinic inter-

pretations of late antiquity. For example, the midrash to the Song of Songs (*Songs Rabbah* 2:22) interpreted the following verse in terms of the topography of the Jerusalem Temple:

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! He stands past our wall, peering from the windows, peeking from the cracks. (Songs 2:9): *Look who stands past our wall* This is the Western Wall of the Temple. Why? For the Holy Blessed One swore that it would never be destroyed. . . . *Peering from the windows* This is the merit of the Patriarchs. *Peeking from the cracks* This is the merit of the Matriarchs. *My beloved answered and said to me* (Songs 2:10) What did he say? (Exod. 12:2) *This month shall be for you the first of months.*

The midrash addresses a particular phenomenon: the Western Wall had not been destroyed by the Romans and remained as a constant reminder of the Jerusalem Temple. Elsewhere, the midrash reiterates the sanctity of the Western Wall in terms of the popular legend of the *Shekhinah*, the divine presence, which had been exiled, supposedly at the time of the Temple's destruction: "R. Aḥa stated: The *Shekhinah* has never moved from the Western Wall, as it says *Look who stands past our wall*" (*Exodus Rabbah* 2:2).

The Western Wall was understood as one of the places where the *Shekhinah*, God's incarnate presence in the world, was always present. For this reason, the Western Wall was the object of messianic expectations, as it would certainly be the cornerstone of the Temple to be built in the Messianic period. The Messiah is the young stag mentioned in the first stanza of the cited proof text, just as the end of the first statement, the invocation of the "first of months," refers to the coming Messianic era. The seminal Bible exegete Rashi echoed the messianic import of the verse in the following terms: "I had expected to dwell, abandoned for some time, but look! He notified me that he is standing *peering from the windows* of Heaven at what is prepared for me."⁵⁴

These understandings were transformed by the *Zohar*. According to the *Zohar*, any reference to the Western Wall signifies the *Shekhinah* and the messianic redemption. The *Zohar* combines the image of the *Shekhinah* as the guardian of the people Israel with an exegesis of a different verse:

R. Yehudah said, the *Shekhinah* has never departed from the Western Wall of the Temple, as it says, *Look! This one is standing past our wall* and it is the head of faith⁵⁵ of the whole world. *From the head of Shnir and Hermon* (Songs 4:8) From the place that the Torah goes out to the world. And why [has the *Shekhinah* never departed]? To protect Israel *from the lions' dens, from the mountains of leopards*, the pagan peoples. (*Zohar II* 5b)

In the work *Ra'aya Meheimna* (*Zohar II* 116a), the author of the *Tiqqunim* adds a further understanding. He analyzes the import of the very word "wall," *kotel* (בִּוּרֵל), in kabbalistic terms:

The lower *Shekhinah* has its dwelling in the Western Wall, for it is the Mount [Heb. *tel* תֵּל] toward which all turn. KO-TEL. K"ו [כ"ו] is twenty-six. And truly the *Shekhinah* is its *tel*, as it says (Songs 5:11), *His edges are curly* [*taltal* תֵּלְתַלְתַּל],

black as a raven, as the rabbis have said,⁵⁶ on every jot (of the Torah) are ringlets [*talei talim*] of laws.

The numerical value of the letter kaf (כ) is twenty, and that of the letter vav (ו) is six. This number is also the numerical coefficient of the name YHVH, the most ineffable name of God, symbolic of the *sefirah Tiferet*. Because the Western Wall is also synonymous with the feminized image of the *Shekhinah*, both the male and the female energies of the divine must be present.

The *Shekhinah* is synonymous with the *sefirah Malkhut*. The *Shekhinah* is archetypally feminine, *Tiferet* is a masculine principle, and their union defines the moment that divine effluence flows into the present world. According to Moshe Cordovero, the great kabbalist of Safed, both *sefirot* are present, in a state of union. In his lexicon of symbols, the entry *kotel* reads as follows:

Kotel—Rabbi Shim'on, may he rest in peace, in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* (II 116a) explains this implies [the *sefirah*] *Tiferet*, when it unifies with *Malkhut* through the *zaddik*. This is the explanation of K^וO, which is the same sum as the four-letter name that implies *Tiferet*. The text teaches us that it is the *tel* toward which all turn, the *Malkhut* with the *zaddik*, through which they unify. This is called *kotel*, for she, especially, has all of this glory.⁵⁷

In Cordovero's reading, *kotel* is the *Shekhinah*, as she unifies with the masculine principle, *Tiferet*. The term *zaddik* indicates the *sefirah Yesod*, which stands for the sexual juncture of the upper and lower worlds. West also signifies the *sefirah Yesod*, as was widely known among kabbalists.⁵⁸ The Western Wall, therefore, is the point of divine conjunction, the actual point at which Heaven and Earth meet and exchange energies. In making this bold declaration, Cordovero describes the spiritual energies that exist at a particular point in Jerusalem. He romanticizes the very topography of the Land of Israel and telegraphs an experiential dimension, implying that at the Western Wall, the kabbalist will be in the very presence of the divine union, just as the author of *Ra'aya Meheimna* had portrayed the Wall as the *tel*, the hill that is the cynosure of all eyes.

The *Zohar* as Sacred Text

The need to authoritatively interpret the *Zohar* presupposes its sacredness, its achievement of canonicity.⁵⁹ The appearance of the *Zohar* marked a watershed in the development of Jewish mysticism. With its circulation, the future development of Kabbalah was based on the *Zohar's* worldview. It became the central text of Jewish mysticism, from which the development of Kabbalah proceeded. For this reason, mystics became less interested in the *Zohar's* component elements or antecedent traditions. Kabbalists were more concerned in relating the newest developments in their movements to the *Zohar's* earlier teachings.

The central figure of subsequent Kabbalah, Isaac Luria, deprecated the efforts of prior kabbalists in a well-known passage referred to as "Naḥmanides and His Comrades," saying that up to the *Zohar*, kabbalistic teachings had been imperfect. In Luria's words:

Kabbalists such as Nahmanides and his comrades, as well as sages such as Nehuniah ben ha-Kanah, only mentioned the ten *sefirot* and not the revelation of any issues of the countenances [*parzufim*] at all. These only arise somewhat in the *Zohar*, *Ra'aya Meheimna*, and the *Idrot*. You must know now that Nahmanides and the *Rishonim* knew of the countenances, yet demurred from revealing much, for the permission had not been granted to reveal or extend the higher lights, for the evil was ascendant and *no stranger may eat of the sanctified* (Lev. 22:10).⁶⁰

Militant Lurianists viewed the *Zohar* as the central mystical canon, maintaining, in Luria's words, that "Cordovero and all who preceded him, their seed was sown in vain."⁶¹ They dismissed many of the earlier generation of kabbalists for merely producing, "all in all, two or three pamphlets worth of material."⁶² The canon of acceptable, nonzoharic works was very limited in the eyes of one important seventeenth-century kabbalist, Ya'akov Zemakh, who considered only Nahmanides, the commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* associated with Rabad, and the meditation text *Brit Menuḥah* worthy of attention. Of other works, Zemakh cautioned, "do not send forth your hand for them, for they are built on human logic and not received from the exalted ancients."⁶³

As the *Zohar* began to be circulated, a number of works written in a similar style followed. These works include *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, Joseph of Hamadan's *Sefer Tashak*,⁶⁴ David ben Yehudah ha-Ḥasid's *Sefer Mar'ot ha-Zove'ot*,⁶⁵ and Joseph Angeler's *Livnat ha-Sappir*.⁶⁶ Late examples of such works include Naftaly Zevi Bacharach's *Adam de-Azilut*⁶⁷ and the nineteenth-century *Zohar on Ruth*.⁶⁸ These authors may have considered the *Zohar* to be an open canon to which pseudepigrapha could always be added. This tradition of pseudepigraphical literature, talmudic romances with zoharic metaphysics, may also be considered the first generation of *Zohar* interpretations.

In Safed

The sixteenth-century Safed renaissance was a period of intellectual and spiritual ferment, fueled by the expulsion from Spain and other recent tragedies of the exile. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Safed, a secluded Galilee hill town, was home to no more than twelve hundred inhabitants, yet by the last quarter of the century, it was home to eighteen thousand Jews. In flight from the auto-da-fé and the Inquisition, mystics gathered in Safed, drawn by the *Zohar*'s romanticism and messianic pathos. The Safed mystics came to replicate the events described in the *Zohar*, to renew its tradition of the Jewish mystic as a knight of the Kabbalah, on a quest for enlightenment and battling the forces of evil and disunity. Pietists such as Shlomo Alkabetz, Moshe Cordovero, and especially Isaac Luria left their mark, physically, on the streets of Safed: the synagogues to which they withdrew for prayer and contemplation are scattered through Safed's winding Kasbah. As these visionaries pooled their many views of reality, they limned the contours of subsequent Judaism. Their teachings also influenced the authori-

rative halakhic and homiletical works that were also produced in the ferment of religious creativity that characterized the Safed renaissance.⁶⁹

This period saw a heightened interest in all aspects of *Zohar* commentary,⁷⁰ including, of course, discussion of the doctrinal content of the *Zohar's* homilies. The return to the actual setting of the *Zohar* piqued interest in the framing narratives of Shim'on and his comrades. The upper Galilee, at the foot of the Golan Heights, became part of the spiritual landscape for the immigrant kabbalists. The circulation of the *Zohar* within the previous three centuries gave the Safed renaissance an urgency that eventually overwhelmed it in messianic eros.

The *Zohar* posits a rather different conception of spiritual practice than that of the Judaism of the synagogue and study hall. The characters wandered through the author's conception of the Galilee, often having experiences among the more marginal elements of society: women, children, and the unlearned. The sixteenth-century kabbalists "relived" these spiritual practices. Fellowships of kabbalists assembled, basing their activities on those of Shim'on bar Yoḥai.⁷¹ Such groups were organized by Alkabetz, Cordovero, Isaac Luria, Elazar Azikri, and Moshe ibn Makhir. The development of the mystical circle would echo through subsequent Jewish history. Two messianic movements, those of Shabbatai Zevi and Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto, would be built on the mystique of the fellowship, as would Ḥasidism and Zionism in their classical periods.

An example of the mystic's desire to "live the experience" is evident in the practice of *gerushim*. Moshe Cordovero and his father-in-law, Shlomo Alkabetz (who is widely known for his composition of the liturgical hymn *Lecha Dodi*, "Come, O Bride"), wandered through Safed and its environs, in search of grave sites and other places associated with specific events in the *Zohar*. These ramblings, or *gerushim* (literally "exiles"), would be devoted to the resolution of intellectual problems, often in the realm of *Zohar* exegesis, that had been plaguing the kabbalists while in the study room.⁷² The *gerush* was a symbolic enactment of the sufferings of the *Shekhinah* in exile. The natural experience of walking entailed by the *gerush* freed the kabbalists' minds to address these issues of mystical import, much as the protagonists of the *Zohar* required the liberation of the road as a setting for their teachings.⁷³

As these kabbalists brought their households to Safed, they also began to pool their compilations of the *Zohar*, many of which were incomplete. Even the printed editions lacked important texts, which would be included in appendixes to subsequent editions.⁷⁴ The Mantua edition of the *Zohar* had just been published and was coming to be considered preferable to the earlier, large Cremona edition. Since initial interpretations of the *Zohar* had often been based on incomplete compilations of the work, the comparison of texts among the Safed exegetes allowed more definitive, sweeping interpretations of the *Zohar's* worldview.

One result of this pooling of texts was the compilation of the material in the *Zohar Ḥadash*, or "new *Zohar*," which is, paradoxically, dominated by texts that were composed earlier than the materials in the first editions. The *Zohar Ḥadash* was published for the first time in Salonika in 1597.⁷⁵ Another result was that, although the Mantua edition of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* was published in 1558, it would eventually be supplanted by the Orta Koj (Constantinople) edition, which was

riddled with textual emendations emanating from the circles of Isaac Luria's principal student, Hayyim Vital. The rapid circulation of the *Tiqqunim*, as opposed to the late appearance of the *Zohar Hadash*, meant that the later strata were more readily incorporated into comparative exegeses than the earlier strata.

Cordovero

In Safed's intellectual environment, the *Zohar's* contradictory ideas created textual problems that were the subject of open debate. The intellectual climate demanded a systematic thinker to fashion them into some sort of whole. That figure was the prolific, verbose Safed kabbalist Moshe Cordovero,⁷⁶ whose voluminous oeuvre synthesized a unified approach to the *Zohar's* variant traditions. Cordovero drew upon the great mass of diverse ideas expounded in Safed, organizing and presenting them with talmudic didacticism. Even his *Zohar* commentary, *Or Yaqar*, used a *Zohar* passage as a jumping-off point for a long exposition, or *drush*.⁷⁷ In these *drushim*, Cordovero compared ideas, combined and harmonized as many as possible, and argued for the irrelevance of minority opinions.

This style of sifting and combining accumulated teachings is characteristic of *Pardes Rimmonim* (Orchard of Pomegranates), Cordovero's most popular and most widely distributed work, which he composed at the age of twenty-seven. *Pardes Rimmonim* is built on exegeses of seminal kabbalistic works, such as the *Sefer Yezirah*, the *Zohar*, and the *Tiqqunim*. It is a work whose rambling style and optimistic tone betray the author's youth as much as its sweeping scope reveals the breadth of his knowledge.

Besides *Pardes Rimmonim* and *Or Yaqar*, Cordovero left other speculative works that make particular use of *Zohar* exegesis, among which are *Shi'ur Qomah*, an introduction to the *Idrot*, and a commentary on the prayerbook, *Tefillah le-Moshe*. Cordovero also produced a popular work, *Or Ne'erav*. A later work, *Elimah Rabbati*, represents Cordovero's mature doctrine. Cordovero intended *Elimah Rabbati* to be a comprehensive work encompassing the accumulated wisdom of Jewish mysticism.⁷⁸ Suffused with the spirit of Maimonides, it nonetheless seeks to subvert Maimonidean doctrine to kabbalistic ends.

Cordovero believed that the *Zohar* would eventually be considered an accessible, nonesoteric work.⁷⁹ His interpretive method, which he clearly maintained would become standard, utilized every word and phrase in terms of its symbolic content. It was not uncommon that every element of a sentence would be interpreted as signifying a function of the *sefirot*, so that every trope required analysis.⁸⁰ In doctrinal terms, Cordovero knew that the ideas of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* differed from those of the *Zohar* as a whole. He tended to see the main sections through the prism of the later strata, viewing them as the more perfect, overt mystical understanding.⁸¹ Cordovero was committed to reconciling the contradictions in the *Zohar* because he considered all the parts of the *Zohar* as one unity. He saw the most important voice in any zoharic debate as that of Shim'on bar Yohai, so that "anything that can be contradicted, even in the *Zohar* and *Tiqqunim*, in order to conform to Shim'on's words, we are required to overturn, for Shim'on allowed the fellows of his circle to make contradictory remarks."⁸²

Cordovero's theology resulted from a number of hermeneutical principles of *Zohar* exegesis. For Cordovero, the role of the *kinnui*, or mystical symbol, was paramount. *Kinnui* is a technical term for the mystical symbols that represent the interaction of the *sefirot*. The *kinnui* is a mechanism by which the processes of the divine may be represented and made palpable. As Cordovero put it in *Pardes Rimmonim*, "God and his wisdom are all one entity. They are *kinnuyim* and not *kinnuyim*, *kinnuyim* from the aspect of their combination with the [divine] qualities, and not *kinnuyim* from the perspective of themselves."⁸³ In other words, kabbalistic symbols in a sacred text are meant to be understood in and of themselves and also in terms of the divine attribute or *sefirah* which they mirror. Cordovero's understanding of the *kinnuyim* was directly based on their descriptions in the *Tiqqunim* and the works of Joseph Gikatilla.⁸⁴ He also linked his doctrine of the *kinnuyim* to the Maimonidean idea of the negative attributes.⁸⁵ In isolating the function of a *kinnui*, Cordoverean Kabbalah defined Jewish mystical spirituality as living life through the defining of symbols. The *kinnuyim* hark back to the distinction between God's precreated essence and present reality. Their presence is a response to the dilemma of God's abstraction and removal from the world.

Another product of Cordovero's struggle to interpret the *Zohar's* internal contradictions was his use of an idea in the later strata of the *Zohar*, the doctrine of *azmut* and *kelim*, the essential and the instrumental aspects of the descent of the divine into corporeality.⁸⁶ This issue originates in a basic problem in the *Zohar's* theosophy. The main parts of the *Zohar* portray *Ein Sof*, the transcendent infinite, located at the top of the sefirotic tree, in the *sefirah Da'at* or *Keter*. This idea generates two theological problems. First, although it puts the infinity of God in a direct line of human apprehension, the highest aspects of the divine are very far from the individual. This linear distance between the individual and the apex of the Godhead is monistic and impersonal. It is far removed from the personalism of biblical and talmudic religion, in which God is present, if not always in dialogue with humankind, then at least always listening to their prayers. Second, if *Ein Sof*, the highest point of the Godhead, is nonetheless a part of the same structure as the lower *sefirot*, then it is limited. The ineffability and abstraction of that highest, and by definition most transcendent, *sefirah* are limited by being merely part, albeit the apex, of the sefirotic structure.

The later strata of the *Zohar* (*Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*) resolve this problem by positing a transcendent dimension located above the sefirotic tree. This quality, which they most often call *Ein Sof*, "the infinite," or *Keter*, the "crown," is the essence (*azmut*), the wholly abstracted, ineffable reality of God. The *sefirot*, which sit below it, are merely the emanated aspect of the *Ein Sof*, its "vessels" (*kelim*). The highest *sefirah*, *Keter*, is the source of the *kelim*.⁸⁷ Although the tension between *azmut* and *kelim* did not originate in the *Zohar* literature,⁸⁸ the conclusions of the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* attempted to resolve the issue.

Cordovero adopted the view of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* to resolve these theological problems. Like the *Tiqqunim*, Cordovero used the euphemism *Ilal ha-Ilalut*, "Most Supernal," or *Sibat Kol ha-Sibot*, "Reason for All Reasons," to indicate the transcendent aspect of the divine.⁸⁹ However, Cordovero was not consistent in his usage of the euphemism *Ein Sof*, or "the infinite." Consistent with the *Idrot*, *Tiqqunei*

ha-Zohar, and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, he stated that “*Ein Sof* does not stand in the light of the *sefirot*; rather, it rules over them and does not reveal itself in them. For this reality necessitates its own existence before it extends through the *sefirot*.”⁹⁰ The *sefirot* are *kelim*, and the transcendent Infinite is their *neshamah*, or soul.⁹¹ This transcendent God is also the personal God of popular Judaism.

Cordovero employed similar reasoning in explaining the doctrine of the four successive worlds of existence. He concluded that in the interlocking infrastructure of the worlds *Azilot*, *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *Assiyah*, each has a successive relationship to the other that is like the relationship of the body to the soul.⁹² Cordovero saw *Azilot* as an act of extension of God’s essence, implying that between *Ein Sof* and the *kelim* extends an intermediary substance that is not identified with the essence of God.

Cordovero’s thought reflects the *Zohar*-based kabbalistic teaching that typified most of the Safed community. Other examples of this point of view include Shlomo Alkabetz, Elazar Azikri, Avraham Galante, Aharon ha-Levi Bruchim, and Elyahu de Vidas, author of *Reshit Hokhmah* (The Beginning of Wisdom).⁹³ This stance also influenced kabbalists and particularly moralists, such as Isaiah ha-Levi Horowitz, author of the widely circulated work *Shnei Luhot ha-Berit* (The Two Tablets of the Law). The works of these kabbalists constitute a sort of Safed civil religion, reflecting the mentality of the community at a certain point in time. Eventually this outlook would be overwhelmed by the mythos of Isaac Luria’s doctrine and personality cult. Nonetheless, for kabbalists in the Diaspora, such as Avraham Azulai, who were struggling to find consistency in the *Zohar*’s variant traditions, Cordovero’s scholastic approach to the *Zohar* remained persuasive.

Isaac Luria’s Life

The exegetical literature on the *Zohar* is most influenced by Safed’s main theological innovator, Isaac Luria, the AR”I ha-Kadosh (Holy AR”I).⁹⁴ Born in Jerusalem, Luria spent most of his life in Egypt.⁹⁵ There he came under the influence of Bezalel Ashkenazi, the author of the famous halakhic anthology *Shittah Mekubezet*. Luria himself was the author of a volume dealing with the tractate *Zevahim*, which was destroyed in the great fire of Izmir, in the eighteenth century.⁹⁶ In mystical subjects, his mentor was David ibn Zimra, the author of two influential treatises, *Magen David* and *Mezudat David*. Luria also spent seven years secluded in contemplation on a small island in the Nile, Jazirat al-Rawḍa, where he devoted himself to the contemplation of kabbalistic subjects.⁹⁷ At the age of thirty-six, Luria came to Safed, arriving not long before the death of Moshe Cordovero. Supporting himself as a spice merchant, he devoted himself to wandering the grave sites of the area.⁹⁸ In time, he gathered a circle of some forty members, of whom Ḥayyim Vital and Yosef ibn Tabul were the central acolytes. Luria began to teach a new system of Kabbalah that, to his followers, took on the force of revealed religion, as they believed it to have originated with a direct communication from Elijah the prophet.

Luria died just two years after his arrival in Safed. Shortly before his death, he delivered a homily based on the *Zohar* text regarding the “two fawns of a gazelle”

(*Zohar* III 55b, *Zohar Hadash* 20c).⁹⁹ An internal tradition posits that Luria revealed, in the homily, a messianic doctrine attached to his own circle and their identities in past lives. According to legend, his death was in retribution for revealing these esoteric truths about the Messianic age that were better left suppressed.¹⁰⁰ Luria's influence was acknowledged only gradually by the Safed community. Even his eulogy, given by R. Shmuel Ozeida, is quite reticent about his talents. The eulogy seems to have contained a subtext, acknowledging a strand of messianic tension among Luria's inner coterie, although apparently they were reluctant to share such ideas with the general community.¹⁰¹ Vital took control of the movement and formally organized the circle of elites who were to carry on a limited propagation of Luria's teachings.¹⁰²

Despite a quiet beginning, within thirty years Luria's teachings had become central among the mystics of the Land of Israel, and within fifty years they had become the single most powerful influence in Kabbalah. In retrospect, some of Luria's charisma lay in his sudden arrival and departure from the scene. This created a sense of urgency, as his students struggled to answer the question "Who was that figure who flashed so brightly across our world, and was gone?" Added to this mystique was the fact that Luria's written oeuvre was limited, consisting largely of commentaries on the *Zohar*,¹⁰³ among the longest of which is a commentary on the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, composed while he was still in Egypt.¹⁰⁴

Just as the framing mechanisms of the *Zohar* "set up" the work's kabbalistic speculation, so Luria's life story, particularly as addressed in such enthusiastic works as *Shivhei ha-AR"l* and *Toldot ha-AR"l*, provided a legendary context for his theoretical teachings. Luria's mystical practices, derived from the content of his teachings, became the subject of collections of "Customs of the AR"l," which became a standard part of the literature of the Lurianic school.¹⁰⁵ A cult of personality, modeled on the *Zohar's* veneration of Shim'on bar Yoḥai, was carried over into Luria's circle and from there to the movements that accompanied the heretical messianism of Shabbatai Zevi and the sages of Polish Ḥasidism.

Isaac Luria's Myth

Luria's early ideas were set down in his own hand when he was still in Egypt. His earliest writings were exegeses of the *Zohar*, with the exception of a few general introductions.¹⁰⁶ Luria then composed his commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* and to the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on Ruth.¹⁰⁷ These early writings have few of the characteristic elements of Lurianic Kabbalah, with the possible exception of an interest in the theory of the *parzufim*, or divine countenances, that the *Zohar* introduces in the *Idra* literature.

Lurianic theory is preoccupied with the processes of creation, so much so that one scholar has noted at least eleven different schematic processes of creation in the Lurianic writings.¹⁰⁸ The earlier writings see the creation as an act of sorting of materials. Creation is also linked to an important theme of the *Idrot*, the texts referring to the prehistoric catastrophe of "the death of the kings." In this tradition, the reference to the untimely deaths of the kings of Edom (Gen. 36:31) is allegorized by the *Idra Rabbah* as referring to a primordial catastrophe.¹⁰⁹

For adherents of Luria's final system, the mystic's existential starting place was an emptiness, a void, caused by God's withdrawal from the universe. Luria reached the conclusion that the vessels, whose formation he had described, had shattered in a catastrophe he called the "breaking of the vessels" (*shevirat ha-kelim*). The *shevirah* (shattering) is the source of the present dilemmas of humankind. Luria's response to this calamity was a theurgic system, called *tiqqun*, which was intended to repair the cosmos. The most daring practice in his system was the *yihud*, mystical unification, in which the mystic linked himself to the souls of the dead, and thence to the world-soul of the *sefirot*, in a rite of shamanistic ecstasy.¹¹⁰ The students who propagated this doctrine after his death were responsible for Lurianic Kabbalah's emergence into Jewish intellectual history. They sought to implement the idea of *tiqqun* as an attempt to heal and repair a broken and shattered world.

Kabbalists came to see themselves as facing a choice. Should they see the world through Cordoverean eyes, that is, a view based on the aggregate understandings of the *Zohar* in all of its strata? Or should they accept the Lurianic myth, which had grown, with its successive reinterpretations, to be a multitiered doctrine of gothic complexity? Should they read that myth back into the *Zohar's* words? There is a tendency to chart the shift from the Cordoverean system to the Lurianic as if a massive doctrinal change swept through Safed.¹¹¹ In fact, the shift came about in a number of ways and involved a number of trends in the religious life of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Some kabbalists were drawn to Cordovero in response to his resolution of the *Zohar's* contradictory doctrines. These kabbalists were apt to remain loyal to Cordovero. Others saw the Lurianic myth as superseding the Cordoverean system and contrived doctrines formalizing this process. Others employed strategies that posited different existential levels to the myths of creation and existence, with the Cordoverean and Lurianic systems occupying different dimensions of existence.

Ḥayyim Vital reported an appearance by Cordovero, after the latter's death, in a dream vision.¹¹² Such an experience was not uncommon in Safed, where revelatory experiences were part of the scholarly discourse. In the dream, Cordovero explained that, in the afterlife, it had become clear that his teaching had elucidated the *Zohar* only on its simplest level, indicated by the classical exegetical term *peshat*, whereas Luria's teaching operated on the most esoteric level, which is called *sod* (secret).

Kabbalists were comfortable applying the typologies *peshat* and *sod* to their own literature.¹¹³ Implicit in the *peshat/sod* dichotomy is an interpretive statement about the nature of the proof text. The *peshat* interpretation is considered closer to the overt concerns of the text. Calling the Lurianic dimension of the text *sod* implies that there is a second layer of meaning projected onto the more intrinsic understanding. The *sod* interpretation may have less to do, on the face of it, with the text's manifest content. This *peshat/sod* relationship also underlay Avraham Azulai's lost Lurianic *Zohar* commentary *Or ha-Gannuz*, and his popular Cordoverean anthology, *Or ha-Hammah*.¹¹⁴ It was also an organizational principle for the work of Azulai's colleague Ya'akov Z'emakh.¹¹⁵ Such an accommodation between the two doctrines was less artificial than it may sound. Jewish exegetes were tolerant of multiple readings and multiple levels of credibility, because Bible commentary had

long accepted the principle of multiple meanings for a given text. The practice of projecting an evolved tradition onto a simpler proof text was already standard in the Bible exegeses of such medieval commentators as Rashi and Nahmanides.

Another well-known way of categorizing the two systems was to refer to Cordovero's system as the world of *tohu*, primordial chaos, and to the system of Luria as the world of *tiqqun*, cosmic repair.¹¹⁶ This understanding goes beyond the difference in each system's hermeneutic. The *tohu/tiqqun* distinction implies that Luria had produced the definitive interpretation of the difficult parts of the *Zohar* and that Cordovero's approach of reconciling the various sections was less incisive. When the Italian kabbalist of the Sarug school Naftaly Zevi Bakharakh fulminated against the mixing of the Lurianic and Cordoverean modes of exegesis, he used the appellations *Olam ha-Tohu* (world of confusion) and *Olam ha-Tiqqun* (world of repair).¹¹⁷ In his usage, the term *tohu* was certainly perjorative, as in his remark "My own thoughts are unsettled with regards to Moshe Cordovero's commentaries, though Moses is true and his Torah is true, in the world of *tohu*, in the world of ineffability (*blimah*) and no other, but certain sections (of the *Zohar*) will not tolerate these explanations, for they are still *tohu*."¹¹⁸ In any case, for many kabbalists, the two traditions were best considered separate and not to be mixed; as the influential Italian kabbalist Menaḥem Azariah de-Fano put it: as one would demur from mixing various species in other situations.¹¹⁹

Beyond this typological distinction lay a deeper issue, for Cordovero was clearly operating as a scholastic, applying the values of exoteric Torah study, its clarity and casuistic style, to the creation of gothic systems that reconciled differing ideas in the *Zohar* and elsewhere. Lurianic ideas derived from a mystical revelation, for Luria claimed to have drawn his teachings directly from an appearance of the prophet Elijah. Therefore, the struggle of Cordovero's ideas with those of Luria is a struggle between a scholastic model and a revelation-based model. Such a distinction would also apply to some of the intellectual discord between the students of the Gaon of Vilna and the Ḥasidim of Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

Whatever its origins, the Lurianic reading of the *Zohar* came to be considered official and accepted in the eyes of the kabbalistic world.¹²⁰ Its divine origin, in a vision of the prophet Elijah, is in all respects the source of its authority. It is a self-limiting canon, because Luria and Vital diminished the credibility of most kabbalistic works other than the *Zohar* and their own revelations.¹²¹

***Kitvei ha-AR"i*: The Lurianic Canon**

The archeology of the Lurianic bibliography fascinates both scholars and acolytes as more manuscripts have come to light. Just as the *Zohar* accumulated a number of strata, the Lurianic writings took shape over several generations, at the hands of a number of authors and editors.

To identify Luria's original teachings, one must sift through a number of sources. Gershom Scholem, Ronit Meroz, and Yosef Avivi, in different ways, have attempted to identify Luria's essential teachings.¹²² Important sources are his earliest works: a commentary on the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* and one on the *Idra Zuta*,¹²³ probably com-

posed when he was still in Egypt.¹²⁴ Vital wrote that Luria had intended his commentary on the *Idra Zuta* to be comprehensive, but it remained unfinished.¹²⁵ The seventeenth-century Safed kabbalist and linguist Menahem de Lonzano in his *Imrei Emet*¹²⁶ portrayed Luria's *Sifra de-Zeniuta* commentary as unformed and still influenced by Cordovero, and this view, in the main, was adopted by Scholem in his early taxonomies of Lurianic writings.¹²⁷ In fact, as has been demonstrated by Menahem Kallus, the major themes of all subsequent Lurianic teachings may be represented in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* commentary.¹²⁸

Hayyim Vital, like Cordovero, wrote with loquacious ease. Before he met Luria, he had already composed a number of *Zohar* commentaries and a commentary on the Bible. Vital eventually argued, successfully in the judgment of history, for the primacy of his interpretation of Luria's ideas. As a result, materials from all stages of Vital's career—before, during, and after his time with Luria—were combined and successively reedited to make up what is commonly referred to as *Kitvei ha-AR"Y*, the Lurianic canon.

Vital resembled Cordovero in that he was intellectually curious and concerned with incorporating other kabbalistic doctrines into his teachings. Hence, his early writings include speculations on the role of the four worlds of creation,¹²⁹ vocalization and cantillation,¹³⁰ and alternative modes of emanation.¹³¹ Vital also portrayed the structure of the highest *parzuf* in terms of the descent of a series of holy names, specifically, the consonants of the name YHVH written with various vocalizations, which in turn added up to different *gematriyot*, or numerical values.¹³² Over the course of Vital's obsessive revisions, Luria's initial understandings became successively more complicated.

Lurianic writings employ two writing styles. The first style is laconic, reproducing the substance of Luria's original remarks; the second style incorporates Vital's editorial opinions and conclusions.¹³³ The latter type of writing typifies the *Sefer ha-Drushim*, *Sefer ha-Kavvanot*, and *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, which are reputed to have been spirited away from Vital's control during a serious illness. This style is also characteristic of the work *Ez Hayyim*, which Vital prepared, and his son Shmuel's *Shemonah She'arim* ("Eight Gates"). The earlier writings have a more transparent methodology and are more faithful to the *Zohar* and the Cordoverean method. The later strata of the Lurianic corpus, with their incorporation of Ashkenazic and Marrano sources, reflect the pathos of the times; they burn with messianic longing.

Vital was ambivalent about disseminating his teachings.¹³⁴ He labored to perfect his central text, *Ez Hayyim*, yet did his best to suppress the material, ordering it destroyed or put into the *genizah*, the burial ground for the disposal of sacred writings.¹³⁵ When he ordered his writings burned, during a critical illness, they were instead circulated by his disciples. Vital's students, moreover, were recording his teachings and maintaining personal redactions of material to be distributed within their limited circle.

Vital wrote three major redactions of the Lurianic canon. The first, including his notes, homilies (*drushim*), and the first version of *Ez Hayyim*, was written in Safed during Luria's life and immediately after his death.¹³⁶ The earliest published version, and the one that most resembles Vital's own first edition, is Shmuel Vital's *Shemonah She'arim*. The second body of writings includes the work *Mavo She'arim*,

which was found in Hebron and was edited between the years 1642 and 1648.¹³⁷ This work exists in three versions: *Mavo She'arim*, which was finally edited by Moshe Zakhut; *Toldot Adam*, the product of Ya'akov Z'emakh; and Natan Neta' Shapira's version of *Ez Hayyim*.¹³⁸ Another important text, "The Footsteps of Our Father Abraham," dates from this period.¹³⁹ Vital's third project was apparently written before the year 1598 and includes *Ozrot Hayyim*, which is to a large extent a concise version of the homilies in the original *Ez Hayyim*, and *Kehillat Ya'akov*, *Adam Yashar*, *Olat Tamid*, and *Zohar ha-Raki'a*. These show the editorial influence of the later editors Ya'akov Z'emakh and Meir Poppers.¹⁴⁰

Vital restlessly recast the essential Lurianic doctrine in ways that increasingly abandoned the *Zohar* as proof text.¹⁴¹ In this action, he was torn between preserving all of Luria's oral teachings, even if they were contradictory, and synthesizing an encompassing view that included all of the representative doctrines.¹⁴² The editions of Vital's writings that were edited by his students and their students have the ambivalent literary quality of preserving the enigmatic teachings of Luria while resolving their manifest contradictions. The first section (*Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*) of Shmuel Vital's *Shemonah She'arim* also provides a window into Vital's scholastic dilemmas. Vital received contradictory teachings from Luria that he would leave unresolved. In collecting the material for the "first edition," Shmuel Vital edited as unobtrusively as possible. Rather than collapse variant texts into a synthesized whole, he reproduced each one separately, with as much bibliographical information as he could muster.¹⁴³

In 1642, Avraham Azulai found a quantity of Vital's and Luria's writings, mainly *Zohar* commentaries, in the Jerusalem *genizah*.¹⁴⁴ This discovery caused great excitement among the kabbalists of Jerusalem and Hebron.¹⁴⁵ Z'emakh described the discovery and its import:

There also came into my hands, among those papers, some that were torn in certain places, also written in the hand of Hayyim himself, of blessed memory. These were some of his own explanations of the words of Shim'on bar Yohai. Among them were a number of profound matters, from his esoteric wisdom and broad consciousness, apparently from the period after he had studied with the Rav¹⁴⁶ [Luria], and I found no homily in conflict with the wisdom of the Rav . . . as was the case with the wholly wise kabbalist, our teacher Avraham Azulai of blessed memory, who separated the secret meaning from the plain meaning in these pages that came to his hand some twenty-five years ago.¹⁴⁷

Because the *Zohar* commentaries in the *genizah* do not have careful ascriptions as to the author, it is unclear whether they originate with Luria, Vital, or a later student. In the course of its years of obscurity, moreover, some of the *genizah* material was damaged and erased. These commentaries were edited by the central kabbalists of the period, Avraham Azulai,¹⁴⁸ Ya'akov Z'emakh, and, eventually, Meir Poppers. Azulai's *Or ha-Gannuz*¹⁴⁹ and Z'emakh's *Zohar ha-Raki'a* were composed on the basis of the *genizah* material; both were subsequently lost.¹⁵⁰ As in the case of Shmuel Vital's *Sha'ar Ma'amarei RaSHB"Y*, *Zohar ha-Raki'a* mixes Luria's writings with materials from Hayyim Vital. In addition, the published *Zohar ha-Raki'a* includes compositions from Natan Neta' Shapiro and Moshe Zakhut.

Azulai and Z̄emakh edited the *genizah* materials into usable form. Each editor exercised different criteria for the division of the materials. Azulai divided the materials methodologically, between Cordoverean and Lurianic texts. Z̄emakh busied himself with the compilation of the *Mahadura Batra*, the “final edition” of the Lurianic canon. His interest in the hermeneutical roots of the ideas in the *Zohar* seem secondary to his activity in the completion of the Lurianic canon.¹⁵¹ If a text originated from Vital, Z̄emakh included it, whether or not the material was “Lurianic” in nature.¹⁵² He saw Lurianic ideas as so thoroughly transcending Cordoverean concepts that the latter were rendered meaningless.

A student of Z̄emakh, Meir Poppers, then reedited the entire canon into the formats that came to be most widely circulated, particularly in Europe. These are the texts *Ez Hayyim*, *Pri Ez Hayyim*, and a number of sections called *Nof Ez Hayyim*, which survive today in other forms.¹⁵³ It was Poppers himself who coined the expression “first and last editions” (*mahadurah kammah* and *mahadurah batra*) to refer to Vital’s writing projects.

In his first edition of the canon, *Ez Hayyim*, Vital isolated the material actually written by Luria and placed it at the beginning of the work. In Shmuel Vital’s second edition, *Shemonah She’arim*, this material was rearranged. He combined all of the *Zohar* commentaries, from both Luria and Vital, calling it *Sha’ar Ma’amarei RaSHB”Y* (literally “The Gate of the Articles of Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai”), and scattered other compositions by Luria throughout the canon, according to their topic.¹⁵⁴ The subsequent editors of the canon also tended to organize all of the writings by topic. They combined all of the *Zohar* commentaries, regardless of the stage of Luria’s thought represented or whether their author was Luria, Vital, or someone else. By concentrating all of the *Zohar* exegeses in one place and isolating them, the exegetical origins of Lurianic thought came to be understood as merely an initial stage. Lurianic texts, perhaps to an unnatural extent, took on a life of their own, cut off from the *Zohar* as the proof text. To the mystics pondering and applying Luria’s ideas, the open processes of symbolization and interpretation characteristic of the *Zohar* were no longer important, only Luria’s and Vital’s conclusions.

In the first two hundred years after Luria’s death, only two compositions from the canon were formally published, while hundreds of manuscripts circulated, unofficially, in dozens of formats. Many of the texts were not printed and available in Europe until the nineteenth century. This caused the circulation of many secondary and tertiary recensions and summaries of the Lurianic doctrine, such as Emanuel Hai Ricci’s *Mishnat Hasidim* and Yizḥak Eizik Haver Wildmann’s *Pitḥei She’arim*.

Luria’s “Other” Students

Vital’s interpretation of Luria assumed intellectual hegemony over others, not least because he was always ready to criticize the acuity of other interpreters. In fact, Luria had presided over a circle of students whose interpretations, although neglected by history, may in fact have captured the actual nature of Luria’s teaching and personality better than did the thousands of pages of the three editions.¹⁵⁵ The writings of Luria’s other students also retain, in many cases, a more faithful relation-

ship to the nexus of *Zohar* commentary and Lurianic speculation. Considered separately from the overwhelming Vital oeuvre, they form a countertradition whose view is important in contextualizing subsequent *Zohar* commentary.

Besides Vital, the central avatar of Lurianic traditions was Yosef ibn Tabul, whose writings arguably reflect a closer summary of Luria's activity. A number of his writings are extant, published in anthologies and compendia.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, little is known of Ibn Tabul's life. His central works were circulated under Vital's name. Ibn Tabul's commentaries are conceived as concise introductions to Lurianic ideas. They are built on Luria's oral and written commentaries, many of which are found in *Sha'ar Ma'amarei RaSHB*^Y and which are cited, paraphrased, and quoted outright. All of Ibn Tabul's commentaries are suffused with the Lurianic spirit, including the doctrines of *zimzum*, *shevirah*, *tiqqun*, and *parzufim*. His main interest was to resolve unclear aspects of Lurianic doctrine and to explicate that doctrine in as coherent a way as possible.¹⁵⁷

Another student, Moshe Yonah, has left a number of extant writings.¹⁵⁸ His work *Kanfei Yonah* reflects Luria's ideas at the beginning of his sojourn in Safed.¹⁵⁹ *Kanfei Yonah* was truly an urtext for the Safed community, though it was never published except in a revised form by Menaḥem Azariah de-Fano, who himself was an important bridge between Cordovero and Luria.¹⁶⁰

Some confusion in the reception and transcription by Luria's students was inevitable. Luria had a number of secondary and tertiary pupils, including Yehudah Mishan, Moshe Yonah, Samuel de Podila, Yisrael Nag'ara, Yizḥak Arazin, Natan Neta' Shapira, Ephraim Panzeiri,¹⁶¹ Binyamin ha-Levi,¹⁶² and Elisha Gavastalla. Their comments and random homilies weave in and out of the canon. Panzeiri, a student of Vital, was responsible for bringing a collection of writings from Egypt not later than 1613.¹⁶³ In the words of Meir Benyahu: "The writings of Luria's students passed from hand to hand, and there is no doubt that each student saw what his fellows had written."¹⁶⁴

Lurianic Kabbalah was brought from the Holy Land to Italy by Yisrael Sarug. The image of this Italian Lurianism has undergone some revision of late. It was Gershom Scholem's contention that the Sarugian Kabbalah was manifestly inauthentic.¹⁶⁵ In arguing that Sarug was a charlatan who applied ideas out of Italian Neoplatonism to his faint grasp of Lurianic teaching, Scholem equated him with Moshe de Leon, Yizḥak Eizik of Komárno, and others whose ministries, in Scholem's opinion, unnecessarily confused the sweep of kabbalistic history. Recent studies, however, indicate that Sarug possessed early Lurianic texts, including Moshe Yonah's *Kanfei Yonah*, and that the Italian school's pretensions to direct transmission of Luria's ideas are more authentic than previously believed.¹⁶⁶ Sarug also composed an important commentary on the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.¹⁶⁷

Part of the confusion regarding Sarug's credibility stemmed from his having changed the Lurianic terminology in ways that obscured the original meaning of terms, sometimes borrowing self-consciously from philosophical jargon.¹⁶⁸ In fact, however, Sarug's understanding of the processes of emanation was identical with the classical Lurianic structure.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, any mention of Sarugian teachings is apt to be accompanied by a disclaimer, for Ḥayyim Vital had moved to suppress the teachings of his competitors.¹⁷⁰

Sarug's importance and influence ultimately lie beyond the realm of *Zohar* exegesis alone. Among his most illustrious students was Naftali Zevi Bakharakh, whose voluminous work *Emek ha-Melekh* set forth the Italian Lurianic system. Christian Neoplatonists, following in the footsteps of the noted Christian kabbalist Pico della Mirandola, translated sections of *Emek ha-Melekh* and other Italian kabbalistic works into Latin.¹⁷¹ These texts, in turn, were included in Knorr von Rosenroth's *Qabbalah Denudata* (1677–1684), just as selections from the *Zohar*, Joseph Gikatilla, and Menahem Recanati had been included in Johannes Reuchlin's compilation *Ars Cabalistica* (1517). These works, which blended Lurianic speculations with all manner of fanciful, ersatz Christian esotericism, were in turn translated into English, in the nineteenth century, and circulated in the West by Madame Blavatsky's Theosophists and other enthusiasts. Sarug had willfully blurred the technical language of the Safed kabbalists. Over the course of one or two translations, the material's Lurianic origin was further obscured. Its adulterated form lent itself to comparisons with Hermetic, Pythagorean, and Neoplatonic esoterica. As a result, Sarugian Kabbalah is available in texts that are in the public domain, in works that fill the shelves of "New Age" bookstores and other contemporary venues for esoterica. Among acolytes of Kabbalah and scholars, the random materials from Ibn Tabul,¹⁷² Sarug,¹⁷³ and the other students that have recently seen publication also point to the nature of Luria's original teaching.¹⁷⁴ The recently published *Sefer ha-Drushim* of Vital's student R. Ephraim Panzeiri contains superior versions, arranged in a coherent fashion, of materials that were subsequently cut up, embellished, and scattered across the "last editions" of Ya'akov Zemakh and Meir Poppers.

Avraham Azulai

Another response to the evolution of the Lurianic doctrine and the conflict of the Lurianic and Cordoverean systems is represented by the career of Avraham Azulai. Azulai described himself, during his formative years in the city of Fostat, Morocco, as enshrouded in spiritual darkness and drawn to heresies.¹⁷⁵ His obtaining Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim* eventually propelled him to Israel for the express purpose of studying Cordovero's *Zohar* commentary *Or Yaqar*.¹⁷⁶ That voluminous commentary began to see full publication only in 1972 and does not figure extensively in the early studies of Cordovero's thought. However, large portions of *Or Yaqar* had long been in the public domain.

Sections of *Or Yaqar* were circulated and eventually published in Avraham Azulai's *Or ha-Hammah*.¹⁷⁷ *Or ha-Hammah* is an anthology of *Zohar* commentaries by Azulai, Avraham Galante, Hayyim Vital, and Cordovero.¹⁷⁸ It was intended to be part of a trilogy of *Zohar* commentaries, along with *Or ha-Levanah*,¹⁷⁹ devoted to textual emendations, and *Or ha-Gannuz*, a collection of *Zohar* commentaries by Luria and Hayyim Vital.¹⁸⁰

The Vital commentary that is excerpted in *Or ha-Hammah* has a colorful history, as it was part of a trove of writings salvaged by Azulai and Ya'akov Zemakh from the Jerusalem *genizah* in 1618.¹⁸¹ Contemporary scholars have linked the Vital texts in *Or ha-Hammah* to periods after his encounter with Luria, and some por-

tions even seem to come from Luria's own hand, belying the earlier notion that all of the Vital material in *Or ha-Hammah* predates his contact with Luria.¹⁸²

Azulai's first allegiance was to the Cordoverean approach, which he testified had freed him from confusion and clarified the whole *Zohar*.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, it was Azulai's intention to excise the portions of Cordovero's commentary that were not in accordance with Lurianic principles. By way of explanation, he states: "Every issue in which he [Cordovero] went against the wisdom of the godly Luria I have erased and not written and sometimes even if it is against Luria I have written it in order to arouse the student who will be able to explain it easily after the fashion of the saintly Isaac."¹⁸⁴ Hence, *Or ha-Hammah* is in many ways the product of Lurianic influences. Azulai's decision to exclude portions of *Or Yaqar* that were in disagreement with Lurianic ideas was an act of realpolitik. The sections of *Or Yaqar* that he excluded were often lengthy presentations of kabbalistic topics that generally had little to do with the text at hand. Nonetheless, Azulai ultimately retained his methodological loyalty to Cordovero, whose work he continued to promote in many of his popularly conceived writings, including his shorter work *Hesed le-Avraham*, which owes much to citations from *Or Yaqar*.¹⁸⁵ Whether or not the compilation of *Or ha-Hammah* was intended to rectify Cordovero's fall from favor as a *Zohar* exegete, its circulation and publication certainly kept alive the idea of interpreting the *Zohar* in a way more faithful to its plain meaning.¹⁸⁶ Azulai's influence was largely in his role as purveyor of Cordovero to the masses, a function also performed by another unpublished work, the *Zohar* commentary of Elyahu Loans of Worms, *Aderet Eliyahu*, which was also substantially fleshed out with quotations from *Or Yaqar*.

Subsequent Commentaries

Following the *Zohar*'s initial circulation, its teachings were propagated by small numbers of European and Middle Eastern exegetes who worked in isolation, untouched by the revelations and developments of the Safed renaissance. These kabbalists either devised whole theological systems based on the *Zohar* or compartmentalized the *Zohar*, considering it only part of a larger theological system. Such worldviews could, as in the case of Moshe Isserles, be dominated by the conventions of Maimonides and the Jewish philosophical tradition or, as in the case of the Gaon of Vilna, take into account earlier sources, such as the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, a text that the *Zohar* itself seems largely to neglect.¹⁸⁷

Foremost among the commentators untouched by the Safed renaissance was the physician Shim'on Lavi. Lavi's career stretched from preexpulsion Spain to his death in Tripoli in the latter part of the sixteenth century. He composed his commentary *Ketem Paz* in 1571, at roughly the same time that Isaac Luria was completing his central teaching in Safed.¹⁸⁸ Lavi also popularized the zoharic tradition through his authorship of the song "Bar Yoḥai," the most popular hymn to the *Zohar*'s protagonist.¹⁸⁹ Although the printed edition of *Ketem Paz* covers only the *Zohar* on Genesis, Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai indicated that there was, in Tripoli, an entire commentary on Exodus. The lost sections of *Ketem Paz* are often confused with a tradition cited by Lavi that the *Zohar* itself, as printed, was but a fragment

of a vast original, which could be borne only by “forty camels.”¹⁹⁰ Lavi has traditionally been named as the author of a lexicon of difficult terms. Selections from this lexicon were published in the Sulzbakh edition of the *Zohar* (1784) and in subsequent editions under the name *Imrei Binah*. A number of these explanations also found their way into Azulai’s *Or ha-Hamah*, under the title *Gilyonot*. This anonymous commentary has many resemblances to the lexicon, as well as to *Ketem Paz*. Recently, Boaz Huss has demonstrated that Lavi was not the compiler of the lexicon.¹⁹¹

Lavi’s methodology, as he set it out in the introduction to *Ketem Paz*, derived from the *Zohar*’s linguistic nuances. He considered *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra’aya Meheimna* to be part of the *Zohar*, although he did not apply those texts’ resolutions of theological problems back to the main sections, as did Cordovero and Luria. His interest was in explaining the *Zohar*’s language, interpreting its more difficult words, and otherwise clarifying the intention of the text through the comparison of variant texts and printed editions. Otherwise, next to nothing is known about Lavi’s circle, though he refers to the standard Spanish Kabbalah of his time. For instance, he mentions the philosophical kabbalist Yizḥak ibn Latif¹⁹² and demonstrates familiarity with the writings of the Castilian theosophists: Joseph Gikatilla, Moshe de Leon, and Joseph of Hamadan. He was also willing to criticize such august figures as Yehudah Ḥayyat, Maimonides, and Naḥmanides, and in a manner characteristic of Spanish Kabbalah, he was apt to unburden himself of some critiques of philosophical rationalism. Nonetheless, Naḥmanides, whom he refers to as the “first of all commentators,” is the most widely cited source in *Ketem Paz*.¹⁹³

The sixteenth century Polish scholar Moshe Isserles (*RaM”A*) was one of the most important figures in Jewish law. Isserles’s glosses to Joseph Karo’s code of Jewish law became the standard of Ashkenazic religious practice. It was always known that Isserles had composed a commentary to the *Zohar*, but only in recent years has it come to light.¹⁹⁴ Two versions of the work are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. One version is included in a larger work, the voluminous *Zohar* commentary *Aderet Eliyahu* of Elijah, the “Ba’al Shem of Worms.”¹⁹⁵ The second is in a volume of selections by Avraham ben Simon Heide, the noted publisher who died in 1649. The Heide manuscript consists of the texts that Elijah attributes to Isserles. It may be assumed that this is, essentially, a reconstruction of Isserles’s commentary.¹⁹⁶ Isserles’s work illuminates the uses of the *Zohar* in the vibrant spiritual climate of sixteenth-century Poland, a world as yet unaffected by the new ideas coming out of Safed but nonetheless alive with Kabbalah.

The commentary *Aspaqlaria ha-Meira*, by Zevi Hirsch Horowitz (d. 1648?), interpreted the *Zohar* in terms of its plain, or *pesbat*, meaning. It was endorsed for publication by figures who were otherwise not enthusiastic about the circulation of kabbalistic texts, such as Jonathan Eibschuetz and Samuel Hilman of Miz. In the introduction to *Aspaqlaria ha-Meira*, the author apologizes for departing from Lurianic conclusions in elucidating the *Zohar*’s simple meaning. *Aspaqlaria ha-Meira* reflects the Polish schools of thought some hundred years after Isserles, as well as the influence of the visionary martyr Shimshon Ostropoler.¹⁹⁷

Mikdash Melekh

The watershed in the evolution of *Zohar* exegesis came with the circulation of Shalom Buzaglo's comprehensive work *Mikdash Melekh* and its subsidiary compositions, *Kavod Melekh* on the *Tiqqunim* and *Hod Melekh* on the *Idrot*. *Mikdash Melekh* was the first comprehensive commentary to the published *Zohar*, a commentary that began the task of relating the Lurianic doctrine in its final form with the *Zohar* passages that had provided its initial inspiration. Buzaglo was a student of Avraham Azulai,¹⁹⁸ but his main allegiance was to the Lurianic system, from which he "did not stray right or left."¹⁹⁹ The revelations to Luria are viewed as essential to apprehending the *Zohar's* true meaning.²⁰⁰

Mikdash Melekh was also significant for its incorporation of much of Moshe Zakhut's commentary *Kol ha-ReMeZ*.²⁰¹ Zakhut was an important kabbalist who was responsible, among other things, for editing some of the last Lurianic canonical material, particularly the Cracow edition of the work *Adam Yashar* (1885).²⁰² Zakhut's commentary is also quoted in the published *Zohar ha-Raki'a*,²⁰³ and some of this material seems to have been edited by the students of Natan Neta' Shapira. Zakhut also collected at least four paraphrases of early Lurianic material found in the *Zemakh/Poppers Sefer ha-Likkutim*.²⁰⁴ Perhaps the most significant of Buzaglo's commentaries is *Kavod Melekh*, which excerpts sections of an early edition of *Ez Hayyim* that are relevant to given passages of the *Zohar*.

Buzaglo seemed to have been compelled to clarify some issues in Zakhut's writing that remained obscure. As he put it:

The *ReMeZ* has been transcribed inadequately, with omissions and additions and substitutions, so that it is not understandable. I have set out to find its worthy essence and root in the AR"l's writings, concisely rather than verbosely, so that they may be easily understood by those who seek their truth.²⁰⁵

Buzaglo's commentary has remained influential, and many commentators set forth their mandate as simply to elucidate the remarks of *Mikdash Melekh*.²⁰⁶ The introductions to the work are suffused with messianic *eros*, centered on the circles around Shim'on bar Yoḥai and Isaac Luria. Buzaglo, in his own introduction, quotes the quasi-Shabbatean work *Hemdat Yamim* on the centrality of *Zohar* for Shabbat study.²⁰⁷ This reference eventually caused the famous polemicist against Shabbateanism, R. Ya'akov Emden, to withdraw his approbation from Buzaglo's work.²⁰⁸

Buzaglo's commentaries presented the central hermeneutical problem of Lurianic *Zohar* exegesis, namely, that the commentator applies the principles of a closed version of the Lurianic canon that has become distanced from the original exegetical moment. Buzaglo's work is significant because it was the first comprehensive commentary on the *Zohar*. It saw both the *Zohar* and the finished Lurianic canon as a single entity and attempted to impose the latter onto the former.

The late Isaiah Tishby correctly characterized the practice of "Lurianic Kabbalah" as an attempt to create a systematic whole out of the welter of confusion that characterized the canon.²⁰⁹ The original Lurianic doctrine came to be in the form of

Zohar exegesis. After that, further conclusions were reached through the apodictic *drush* form, in which the basic myth of the *shevirah* and *tiqqun* was elucidated without recourse to the *Zohar* as a proof text. Commentators applied the latest and most evolved recension of the Lurianic canon to the *Zohar*. In attempting to read the *Zohar's* words in light of the later recensions, they abandoned the early *Zohar* exegeses that had been the earliest stratum of Lurianic writings. Most exegetes following the Safed renaissance were concerned with imposing the mythos of those later kabbalistic systems onto the text. These later versions far overreached Luria's original writings, encompassing nuances and elaborations far beyond the scope of Luria's original teaching. As has recently been demonstrated by Meroz and Avivi, Luria's and Vital's teachings show independent patterns of development. Later interpreters, however, applied Lurianic traditions as fully formed, according to their last and often most abstruse form. The latter versions ignored the development of the ideas, and later theorists expended much energy reconciling many tentative and contradictory ideas that preceded the final version. The dominant genre of *Zohar* exegesis comprises commentaries that impose the final conclusions of the Lurianic canon onto the text. For these commentators, the task of reconciling two similar but by no means identical bodies of wisdom was engrossing, as well as exhausting.

Auteurism and Revelation

Understanding the function of *Zohar* exegesis means understanding some of the internal strains in the central line of Kabbalah in the Safed renaissance. As Zevi Rubin has stated:

The *Zohar's* position is so central that the subsequent development of the Kabbalah might be described as a debate on *Zohar* commentary, centering around these questions: Who is the true exegete of the *Zohar* and what is the secret of his authority, which commentaries are legitimate and which should be discarded? Whoever is thought to be the official interpreter of the *Zohar* becomes, thence, the authority for his generation.²¹⁰

A methodological interest in auteurism dominates Kabbalah studies in the post-Scholem era, as it dominates studies of mysticism in general. The writings and experiences of individual mystics are generally the subject of investigation, and their careers and the development of their thought are addressed chronologically, often in psychological terms.

In studies of the *Zohar* and Luria, such emphasis on auteurism has presented an inadvertent irony. The doctrinal development of a genre of literature, such as the *Zohar* or the Lurianic writings, is projected by scholars onto a single *anthropos*, the "author." In their classical studies, Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby portrayed the development of the *Zohar* as parallel to the spiritual development of Moshe de Leon. In the recent studies of Ronit Meroz and Yosef Avivi, Lurianic Kabbalah is portrayed as the product of the ideas of Isaac Luria and Ḥayyim Vital as they matured in their respective teaching and writing careers. In each case, the growth of a school of thought is projected onto a single author's experience, maturation, and death.

There is a paradigmatic similarity between this documentary understanding of the development of the *Zohar* and the documentary understanding of the Lurianic canon. The authors of each begin their creations showing the influence of earlier schools of thought. In the period of the *Zohar*'s compilation, this is exemplified by the Neoplatonic speculations of Gikatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* and the tentative theosophy of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*. This parallels Luria's early indebtedness to Cordovero, with whom he considered himself in dialogue, initially, on a number of points in the interpretation of the *Zohar*. In each case, the author begins with a formalistic style that derives from a prior tradition, which is then progressively left behind in favor of a new and wholly original worldview.

This projecting of a single author's experience onto an entire corpus is foreign to a devotional, subjective understanding of the literature. The religious conservatism of most mystics would require that the ultimate meanings must be implicit from the *beginning* of a mystical oeuvre's development. A documentary account of the unfolding of a mystical system is inadmissible, because the ideas must have come to the mystic out of whole cloth. This distinction forms the basis of an elemental disagreement between the critical and confessional analysts of Kabbalah. This is the bone of contention in the respective researches of Meroz and Avivi: the relationship of volition and revelation. According to Avivi, Luria revealed his teaching progressively, although he was always aware of its final conclusion. Meroz portrays Luria's ideas as developing over the course of his career. Avivi's portrayal of Lurianic teaching as coming in a series of controlled lectures (*shemuot*) remains consonant with the revelation mythos of Lurianic Kabbalah. Meroz, by psychologizing the process, violates the myth of the *gilui Eliyahu*, the revelation from Elijah that the tradition ascribes to the origin of the Lurianic doctrine.

Moreover, this contemporary disagreement parallels a theme in the later development of Kabbalah. In Jewish mysticism, there is a dichotomy between revealed doctrines and the doctrines arrived at through scholastic contemplative inquiry. There were exegetes of the *Zohar* who saw their role as bringing the entire kabbalistic and Jewish intellectual tradition to bear on the vast, rich, and resilient text. There were others who maintained that the true tradition was a revealed one, either applied directly by the one who was receiving the revelation or through the interpretations of his students. Proponents of these revealed traditions maligned the reliability of the other, more scholastic methodologies. In this way *Zohar* exegesis differed from other schools of Jewish interpretation, and this difference reflected the authority of the mystical experience.

Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, the most influential figure in Lithuanian Judaism, was a prime example of a scholastic kabbalist. Although he lived his life as an ascetic, mystical pietist, the Gaon resolutely held to an *intellectual* path in the study of the *Zohar* and Luria.²¹¹ His mystical worldview lay in his incisive intellectualism. Talmud Torah, rabbinic scholasticism, was the substance of his mystical practice in esoteric and exoteric subjects. In developing a mystical view that was based in learning, the Gaon remained consistent with the truth claims of the spiritual milieu and the scholarly world of Lithuania, of which he was the prime exemplar.

The Gaon's concern was to reconcile all of the extant aspects of the kabbalistic tradition, including *Sefer Yezirah* and the *Tiqqunim*. In fact, he was drawn to the

most apodictic, nondiscursive mystical texts. The Gaon's desire to reconcile the *Zohar* with early mystical works such as *Sefer Yezirah* derived from his faith in the scholastic coherency of the kabbalistic tradition. In fact, the main sections of the *Zohar* are indifferent to these earlier texts. His interest in *Sefer Yezirah* was also characteristic of another paragon of the scholastic approach, Cordovero, who based the initial section of *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* on a commentary to *Sefer Yezirah*, as well as composing a separate commentary that has recently come to light.

The Gaon's respect for works of avowed antiquity and apodictic style led him to comment extensively on the sections of the *Zohar* known as the *Heikhalot*. The conceit of these texts is that their descriptions of divine palaces are a natural continuation of the *Heikhalot* texts of late antiquity. His instinct for textual coherency led him to champion the Mantua edition of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*. The Orta Koj edition, which had become the standard, had been highly emended by the students of Ḥayyim Vital, and the Gaon recognized that the earlier edition was more free of interpolations by later editors.

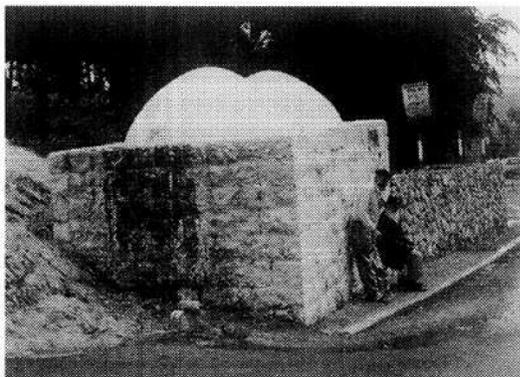
The Gaon's students attested to his desire to reconcile the *Zohar's* tradition with the dictates of Jewish law. The *Zohar* was considered a sealed and hidden work, which only the intellect could unlock. In the words of Ḥayyim of Volozhin: "although there are many enlightening points in Luria's works, these examples of his great and terrible wisdom are only on the beginning and the end and are not comprehensive."²¹² The Gaon was intellectually fearless and was willing to disagree with Luria's conclusions. His commentaries, and those of his student Yizhak Izik Ḥaver Wildmann, dare to see the *Zohar* with new eyes, interpreting the symbols from an open palette of possible understandings. The virtue of these commentaries is that they honor the *Zohar's* tradition of symbolization and its essentially Judaic nature. This symbolic tradition was often neglected by the mechanistic strategies of many Lurianic theorists.

The great ideological struggle of the Gaon's career was his battle against the emerging Ḥasidic movement. One of the venues of this conflict was the pure scholasticism of the Gaon's approach. The founder of the Ḥabad movement, Schneur Zalman of Liadi, averred that "since the saintly Gaon does not believe that the AR"Ī's Kabbalah is a revelation from Elijah, or that only a small part is from Elijah and the rest is from [Luria's] great wisdom, therefore there is no requirement to believe in it."²¹³ Luria's revelations were seen as providing the charter for Schneur Zalman's leadership. Kabbalistic movements such as Ḥasidism were instruments of the transmission of revealed religion. Ḥasidism, not coincidentally, brought the romanticism of the charged lineage into Jewish mysticism. Ḥasidic masters portrayed themselves as links in a chain of revealed religion that began with Shim'on bar Yoḥai and encompassed Luria and his circle. The unifying element in this spiritual lineage was the period of revelation of mystical secrets by Elijah the prophet or, in the case of the founder of Ḥasidism, Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov, the minor prophet Aḥiyah the Shilonite.

When proponents of the system of Isaac Luria criticized the Cordoverean school of exegesis, or when the Ḥasidim of Schneur Zalman of Liadi attacked the Gaon of Vilna, it was because the speculations of both Cordovero and the Gaon were avowedly scholastic in nature, the product of intellect and not mystical revelation. In

each case, revealed mystical experience was portrayed as having greater credibility than Jewish scholarship. Scholasticism and the revealed religion of the new mystical culture are two impulses in *Zohar* scholarship. An emphasis on the possibility of revealed experience is unusual in Jewish hermeneutics. The following chapters will begin a reexamination of the consensus of kabbalistic orthodoxy about what the most profound sections of the *Zohar* really say.

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Sabba de-Mishpatim

Love and Reincarnation

The conventional wisdom among kabbalists is that the main source of the *Zohar's* teachings on the nature of the soul is its composition *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, “(the oration of) the elder on the (Torah portion) *Mishpatim*.” In fact, the plain meaning of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* goes far beyond the soul and its afterlife. It encompasses the nature of love and the erotic metaphor that animates much of classical Kabbalah. The teachings of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* were interpreted by the Safed kabbalists and understood in ways that went far afield of the composition’s original scope.

Classical Judaism does not include a well-developed doctrine of the afterlife. The Bible barely implies a distinction between the body and the soul. Rabbinic traditions are reticent and certainly unsystematic concerning the fate of the soul after death.¹ Classical Kabbalah, on the other hand, is saturated with speculations on the soul and its fate. The *Zohar's* understanding of the afterlife combined rabbinic and Hellenistic traditions with contemporary traditions found among the kabbalists of Gerona and Provence. These traditions were then reinterpreted and embellished by the *Zohar's* authors.²

The *Zohar* combines three disparate traditions in its afterlife doctrine. From the apocalyptic, eschatological traditions of the Second Temple period came the idea of a physical resurrection at the end of time. Such ideas haunted the lore of the

The traditional grave site of R. Yeiva Sabba, the *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, in Meron.

Essenes and animated the nationalistic fantasies of Pharisaism. Resurrection was also central to Christianity and other Gnostic heresies of late antiquity. The doctrine of resurrection at the end of time served a number of didactic purposes. It provided Pharisaic Judaism with a mechanism for the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked and the blasphemous. It also served as an ideological litmus test. To accept the truth of “the resurrection of the dead as a doctrine taught by the Torah” meant that one accepted the basic premises of Pharisaism and that the Pharisaic way of interpreting the text was the correct one.³ The resurrection served as a metaphor for the national rebirth of the Jewish nation after its exile.

A second element in the *Zohar*'s afterlife traditions concerned celestial hierarchies, in which God the king holds court with the angels. If such convocations were held in the heavens, then it was not a great leap to assume that the truly righteous would be admitted to the table in the celestial paradise! The problem of evil also led believers to picture an underworld, the better to purge the wicked of their sins. This is the *Gehennom* discussed by the rabbis of the Talmud.⁴ This afterlife, unlike the myth of resurrection, was concurrent with present time, and not delayed until the end of time. Both the resurrection at the end of days and the concurrent afterlife were referred to as *Olam ha-Ba*, “the world-to-come.” The *Zohar*'s essential soul doctrine describes a concurrent afterlife as opposed to a passive wait, in the grave, for resurrection.

The *Zohar*'s most striking afterlife traditions concern transmigration and reincarnation. These traditions were derived from kabbalistic sources and were known as *sod ha-ibbur* (the secret of impregnation), *sod ha-yibbum* (the secret of levirate marriage), or simply *gilgul* (rolling).⁵ The earliest traditions of reincarnation may have been the vestiges of an earlier Jewish Gnostic tradition. The soul's reincarnation was proposed by the *Bahir*, arguably the first kabbalistic work,⁶ which defined the soul in terms of two general principles: that its origins were in the divine and that it could be reincarnated. These ideas were further developed by the Gerona and Provençal kabbalists.⁷ For the *Zohar*'s commentators, *gilgul* became a central mystery and object of speculation, and it served as a linchpin of the whole Lurianic system.

The *Zohar*'s soul doctrine is based on the reconciliation of all the aforementioned traditions of the soul and its fate in the afterlife. There are three aspects to the soul: the *nefesh*, or physical soul; the *ruah*, or emotive soul; and the *neshamah*, the transcendent spark of the Godhead that resides in the upper reaches of the believer's soul. The philosophical distinction between the *nefesh*, the *ruah*, and the *neshamah* entered the mainstream of Jewish thought through the work of the philosopher Sa'adiah Gaon,⁸ and it was standard among the various kabbalistic schools in Gerona.⁹

The *neshamah* originates in the divine superstructure, drawn from a storehouse beneath God's Throne of Glory. After the *neshamah* is created, it is transferred to the Treasury of Crowns (*Oẓar ha-Ketarim*), which is located, according to the *Zohar*'s cosmological scheme, in the fifth palace of the celestial Garden of Eden. There the *neshamah*¹⁰ waits to unify with the *Shekhinah* and descend into the world. The *neshamot* stream down from the most transcendent aspects of the Godhead through the *sefirah Binah* (the transformative feminine) to the *sefirah Yesod* (the realm of sexuality).¹¹ At the entrance to the realm of *Yesod*, some *neshamot* that are fated to be evil veer off and become demonic (*mazikin*).¹² At the end of the *neshamah*'s descent, it is imprisoned in the body. Its sojourn in the corporeal world

is a time of alienation, for it longs to return to its divine origins.¹³ The career of the *neshamah* is the most profound aspect of the soul, because of its theological resonance. God is present in the soul, and the fate of the *neshamah* is the sojourn of divinity in the world.

Various sections of the *Zohar* link the three parts of the soul with different sefirotic coefficients.¹⁴ The earlier strata of the *Zohar*, in particular, display uncertainty regarding which *sefirot* correspond to the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. At least one source associates the three aspects of the soul with the upper triumvirate of *sefirot*, *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), *Binah* (Understanding), and *Da'at* (Consciousness). In accordance with an early conclusion of Moshe de Leon's,¹⁵ another tradition associates the three-part soul with the middle *sefirot*, *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet* (*Zohar II* 155a). Elsewhere, the three divisions are associated with the *sefirot* *Binah*, *Tiferet*, and *Malkhut*.¹⁶ The tripartite division is also traced along moral lines, in the actions of the *zaddik* (saint), *rasha'* (wicked), and *beinoni* (average), with the *nefesh* alone housing a potential for evil.¹⁷

Eventually, the central teaching of the *Zohar* coalesced around an anthropomorphic model, in which the *sefirot* represent a cosmic *anthropos*. The lower *sefirot*, *Malkhut*, *Yesod*, *Hod*, and *Nezah*, constitute the most physical dimension of life, the *nefesh*. The middle *sefirot*, *Gedulah*, *Gevurah* (or *Hesed*), and *Tiferet*, make up the *ruah*, while the *neshamah* consists of the *sefirot* *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*. The middle *sefirot*, which surround the heart, represent the emotions, and the upper *sefirot* are the source of the *neshamah* in its role as arbiter of consciousness.¹⁸

The first great distinction within the three aspects of the soul occurs at the moment of death, when the *ruah* and *neshamah* leave the *nefesh* at the grave site. The *ruah* ascends to the celestial Garden of Eden. There, it retains its physical demeanor, studying and rejoicing with the other saints. On the Sabbath and festivals, the spirits (*ruhót*) adorn themselves and ascend higher to rejoice with God and the Throne of Glory.¹⁹ The *neshamah*, having always been a spark of the divine, is reabsorbed into the Godhead, losing all of its original identity.²⁰

Reincarnation

Various external developments in kabbalistic thought, as well as bold reinterpretations of the *Zohar's* basic teachings, led kabbalists to broad theories of reincarnation. These theories are most compelling when they approximate Eastern notions of karma and view the moral experiences of the soul in a prior lifetime as carrying over to a later incarnation. This "karmic" understanding also views reincarnation as the result of unfinished business left over from a past life. Reincarnation is seen as a dispassionate response to the effects of sin. The soul's fate is based on an empirical system of values for sin and virtue. This understanding is manistic and impersonal. It stands in contradistinction to the Western religious notion of a personal God who intercedes on the soul's behalf.

The main sections of the *Zohar* are reticent regarding reincarnation. The use of the term *gilgul* is limited in the *Zohar* and is mainly linked to the discussion of levirate marriage in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. Otherwise, the main sections of the *Zohar*

held that only the *nefesh* was reincarnated, while the other two, higher levels receive a concurrent afterlife as opposed to a linear rebirth. The only reason to be reborn would be to improve one's karmic record in order to attain a *neshamah*.²¹

An individual's moral history—the observance of the Commandments and the avoidance of sin—is the great determinant of the soul's fate in the afterlife. A karmic understanding of the soul's career equates the moral history of the soul to the fulfillment of the *mizvot*. Sin sullies the pristine nature of the individual's physical body and astral body. Therefore, the individual is doomed to reincarnation to redeem those limbs that remain tainted by transgression. According to the later sections of the *Zohar*, for every limb injured by the neglect of the *mizvah* that sustained it, a separate reincarnation for the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* is incurred. With this direct relationship of sin to the processes of reincarnation, the mandate of the reincarnation is to return and perfect the state of the whole soul, the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. To expunge the burden of sin for which there has been no repentance, the three parts of the soul might even transmigrate separately.²²

A theory of the soul's career that approximates Eastern karmic systems was proposed by the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*. According to this author, the soul is reincarnated six times, once for each of the six intermediate *sefirot*. This reincarnation is overseen by the angel Metatron, the demiurge of the lower *sefirot* in kabbalistic gnosis. The last reincarnation, which is from the realm of *Malkhut*, brings the soul's final liberation.²³

Tiqqunei ha-Zohar repeatedly stresses that the divine body is mirrored in the human body. The reincarnation of souls in this world corresponds to the processes of reincarnation occurring in the divine world; the *sefirot* are themselves transmigrating! Reincarnation contributes to the rebuilding of the idealized Adam, the *anthropos* that is the incarnate form of the divine. The reconstruction of the primordial Adam is a process of reincarnation of the spark of divine thought, which is itself the *neshamah*.²⁴ This anthropomorphic metaphor also means that the secret of the divine may be understood through contemplation of the self. The *nefesh* and *ruah*, which are often grouped together (*Zohar III* 170a), may be addressed and assessed, as aspects of the self, like the chakras of south-central Asian soul theory.²⁵

Safed Soul Doctrines

The Safed kabbalists continued to speculate on the soul's nature. The graves, dolmens, and Byzantine ruins signified the lost world and past glories of the *Zohar* and its mise-en-scène. Cordovero and Alkabetz made pilgrimages to grave sites, and Luria identified the *nefashot* of the righteous hovering over the graves. For these mystics, the environs of Safed contained a whole society of the dead, hovering over the shrines and tombs of the upper Galilee.²⁶ Little wonder that the grave of the protagonist of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, R. Yeiva Sabba, was located some fifty meters away from that of R. Shim'on bar Yoḥai, and that R. Yeira's words were subjected to the most rigorous analysis.

Cordovero synthesized a number of doctrines in order to present a systematic doctrine of the *neshamah*—its fate in the lower and higher worlds and the factors

influencing its fate in reincarnation. As in all of Cordovero's works, his opinions regarding the afterlife are colored by his intellectual predispositions. He was an optimistic theologian whose ideas were rooted in a Neoplatonist, nondualistic worldview. He tended to deny zoharic allusions to phenomena that threatened a classical Maimonidean worldview. Such phenomena included the anthropomorphic structure of God and the independent nature of evil. Similarly, he understood punishment in the afterlife in nondualistic terms, as mere separation from the benefits of the world to come.

According to Cordovero, sinful behavior produces results that are passed on from incarnation to incarnation. The *neshamah* is androgynous, and it is assigned to a body on the basis of its actions. It descends into the corporeal world to redeem itself through worthy actions. The soul's redemption of itself also helps to bring about the redemption of the whole of creation. The most essential incarnation of the *neshamah* is the first one, as the *neshamah* does not have a character prior to this first incarnation.²⁷

Cordovero combined two contradictory strains of thought in his understanding of punishment for the wicked in *Gebennom*. Basing himself on ideas current in thirteenth-century Castile, he determined that the *neshamah* may undergo two kinds of punishment. The first is merely a separation from divine goodness, and the second is a true punishment in *Gebennom*. Otherwise, the body and soul retain their relationship in the upper worlds.²⁸

As with his other doctrinal positions, Cordovero based his understanding of *gilgul* on *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*. The soul is reincarnated for three reasons: to rectify the effects of sin, to punish the neglect of a particular *mizvah*, or to complete unfinished business with those still living.²⁹ If they have left the living bereft, the dead may also return in another form to comfort them. He maintained that *gilgul* was nearly universal, although some sinners were never reincarnated, because of the "hard bitterness" of their deeds. The righteous, however, are rewarded for their good deeds, their *neshamot* are reincarnated, and their bodies are nourished "from the food of the righteous, which comes from the glow of the *Shekhinah*."³⁰

Another aspect of the soul's nature, which would find broader expression in the ideas of Isaac Luria, concerned the *neshamah*'s intrinsic predispositions. Cordovero did not believe that *neshamot* entered the world without predispositions or influences. Some *neshamot* have a tendency to follow the forces of the demonic, and some have a basically cold, bitter nature "because of their *neshamah*'s intrinsically bad nature and their proximity to *kelipah*" (the forces of evil).³¹ All souls, as well, have their root in the androgynous soul of Adam, the primordial man. These teachings presage the eventual Lurianic conclusion that the soul's root in Adam is influenced by its subsequent reincarnations, which affect its basic nature. The righteous could be reincarnated up to one thousand times, but the intrinsically wicked received only three chances to redeem themselves.³²

The kabbalists in Safed agreed that a *neshamah* is bequeathed or withheld from one according to one's merits. Luria evaluated the effect of various sins on the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. In doing so, he invoked the principle, widespread among the thirteenth-century German pietists, of specific atonements for different categories of sin.³³

The Safed kabbalists also examined the influence of astrology on *gilgul* and the resulting nature of the soul. This theme is first addressed in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*³⁴ and is further refined by Cordovero.³⁵ The latter explains that the tribes, astrological signs, and even the stones on the high priest's breastplate reflect twelve aspects of the *neshamah*. At least twelve reincarnations are devoted to the resolution of these twelve qualities and the karmic burdens that they incur.

Luria contradicted Cordovero's opinion. According to Luria, the effects of astrology were limited to the level of the lowest *sefirah*, *Malkhut*. Locating astrological influence on the higher levels of the soul would give altogether too much importance to astrology, a body of knowledge that classical Judaism had always deprecated as ancillary to the central workings of the divine.³⁶

The Safed kabbalists also integrated the doctrine of the four worlds with the processes of reincarnation.³⁷ One of the uses of this doctrine was to reconcile a classical midrashic statement with the standard teaching of the *Zohar*.³⁸ This statement refers to five names for the soul: *nefesh*, *ruah*, *neshamah*, *hayyah* (living), and *yehidah* (unique), two more than figure in the *Zohar*'s central teaching. According to Luria, all five levels, including the levels *hayyah* and *yehidah*, are linked to the five higher dimensions of the soul, which are in turn associated with the doctrine of the four worlds.³⁹

The highest level of the *neshamah*, as it exists in the highest world, *Azilut*, was of particular interest to the Safed kabbalists, because it represented the very highest aspect of the divine existing in the individual. The *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* of *Azilut* are created from the sexual union of the *sefirot* *Tiferet* and *Shekhinah*. The ancient *neshamah* of *Azilut* is produced by the processes of the divine according to the erotic metaphor that informs and predates the *Zohar*. It tolerates no punishment, sin, or blemish, nor can it ever incur sin. It enters the world as a fresh, new soul, hewn from the Throne of Glory, and when it is tainted by sin, it assumes the burden of reincarnation, returning to the world for the sake of humankind as a whole.⁴⁰

If a Safed kabbalist had not been born with the *neshamah* of *Azilut*, it could nonetheless be acquired through the mysterious and esoteric practice of the *sod ha-ibbur*, "the secret of impregnation,"⁴¹ in which the *neshamah* of a departed saint could be appropriated during the lifetime of the mystic. This "extra soul" could be used for the mystic's own redemption.

Cordovero described the *sod ha-ibbur* as a kind of reincarnation that occurs in the midst of one's life. *Ibbur* occurs as the result of an individual's spiritual ascent when one is impregnated with a second dimension of spirit. This extra soul is comparable to the added dimension of the soul that is traditionally vouchsafed to the Sabbath observer.⁴² This impregnation can have a negative aspect as well, when one takes on a soul that is still subject to suffering in this world.⁴³

By the time of the Safed renaissance, it was generally agreed that *ibbur* was a process by which the individual could be inhabited by a departed *zaddik*. Having taken in this extra dimension of the soul, the mystic could "pneumatically" acquire the departed *zaddik*'s qualities. Since one could be reincarnated as a punishment for sin, the opportunity to perform more *mizvot* could alleviate the soul's plight.⁴⁴ Vital portrayed the compelling nature of this phenomenon:

The wise call this living reincarnation *sod ha-ibbur*. The difference between *gilgul* and *ibbur* is that one may be conceived with the *ruah* of a *zaddik*, even one of the *ruhot* of the early *zaddikim*, even the Patriarchs. Even at this late time, everything is contingent on the value of the *mizvot* that this man does, for there are *mizvot* that have the power to draw forth the reincarnated *nefesh* of the *zaddik*. It is sometimes also possible that the *nefesh* of a *zaddik* is conceived, and afterward one will merit the conception of another *zaddik's* *nefesh* greater than the first one. One may have his own *nefesh* and the *ruah* of the first *zaddik* that he conceived in place of his *ruah*. The *nefesh* of the greater *zaddik*, which came to him last, will be his *neshamah*. Sometimes one's *nefesh* may be repaired so much that one will merit a *zaddik's* *nefesh* and then the *ruah* of one of the greatest of the *zaddikim*, until one achieves the soul of our father Abraham. Thus it says in the *midrashim*, particularly *Midrash Samuel*,⁴⁵ "Every generation has one like Abraham our father in it, and like Isaac, and like Jacob, Moses, and Samuel."⁴⁶

Luria and his early students expanded the possibilities of the *sod ha-ibbur* and the *sod ha-yibbum* by perceiving the whole world as a womb. This *ibbur* takes place for two reasons. It is a method for one to better one's own fate in the world to come. It is also a way of bettering the world, by invoking or conjuring the *zaddik's* actual presence. According to the Lurianic reading of the *sod ha-ibbur*, the *neshamot* of the righteous are fated to be reborn in order to cleanse their hosts' *nefashot*.⁴⁷ *Mizvot* performed by the recipients of the *neshamot* retroactively cleanse the *nefashot* of the earlier recipients of the *neshamot*. Residual *mizvot* from the first *gilgulim* will be applied to the latter, which, along with the tribulations encountered in this life, help to expunge the soul's karmic debt. According to Vital: "When a *nefesh* reincarnates in this world, the essence of its reincarnation is for the sake of the flawed aspect, which relates to that body; the parts of the *nefesh* that have appeared in other bodies and were repaired come only through *ibbur*."⁴⁸

Under the influence of earlier authorities, particularly the writings of Joseph of Hamadan, Cordovero adopted the view that reincarnation could occur into animals and possibly even plants.⁴⁹ Rabbi David ibn Zimra, a teacher of Isaac Luria, saw humans as reincarnating into plants and animals, as did Yosef ben Sholem Ashkenazi, in his commentaries to *Sefer Yezirah* and *Genesis Rabbah*.⁵⁰

Luria adopted his teachers' understandings. He explained the phenomenon of reincarnation into lower life forms with a pantheistic myth, in which God scattered divine sparks into all of creation to sustain the universe. This order was upset by Adam's sin. Luria revived a notion, common among fourteenth-century kabbalists, that eating in a state of ritual holiness is an act of gathering and redeeming the sparks. Even the ritual slaughter of the animal frees its transmigrated soul. Similarly, the fruit of trees less than three years old is forbidden by the halakhah because transmigrated souls have not yet entered the trees. In reviving this tradition, Luria provided for the repair of this aspect of the cosmos by teaching that the very act of eating is an act of transformation and transition, an interaction with the living universe, including the possibility of entering the bodies of animals and vegeta-

tion. These mystics were clearly wrestling with the possibility of a pantheistic universe in which phenomenal reality is haunted by dead souls.⁵¹

When he first began to teach,⁵² Luria spoke of three levels of the soul: new souls, reincarnated souls, and the souls of the proselytes.⁵³ Only limited numbers of *gilgulim* were possible.⁵⁴ The earliest Lurianic doctrines lack a number of classical Lurianic notions of the soul, such as the soul root and the identification of an individual's prior incarnations.⁵⁵ Later, however, Lurianic doctrine came to differ from Cordovero's, particularly regarding the number of possible *gilgulim* and the soul root. In the later stages of his career, particularly after the deaths of his two sons, Luria hinted that aspects of good and evil attend conception and birth. The notion that every soul comes with a predetermined root implies that there is some predestined fate for the soul, based on the soul root's intrinsic proclivities and tendencies.

Sabba de-Mishpatim

Classical *Zohar* exegetes saw the long composition *Sabba de-Mishpatim*⁵⁶ as the primary source of *gilgul* doctrine.⁵⁷ *Sabba de-Mishpatim* does collect and detail many aspects of the *Zohar*'s doctrine of the soul. Nonetheless, it is reticent about the possibilities of *gilgul*. In fact, a close reading of the text casts doubt on whether *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is "about" the soul at all, as the focus of the text seems to be on the dynamics of human relationships and the social politics of men and women in the throes of love.

The framing narrative of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* depicts an encounter "in the great tower of Tyre" between two students of R. Shim'on bar Yoḥai, R. Ḥiyya and R. Yossi, and an illiterate old donkey driver, R. Yeiva the elder (Yeiva Sabba).⁵⁸ R. Yossi complains of being plagued by the driver's "idle, empty words." The poetic nature of the "empty words" establishes the visionary, paradoxical tone of the work as a whole:

What is the serpent who flies through the air, passing in separation, with, in any case, one ant lying between its teeth, beginning in union and ending in separation? What is the eagle that nests in the tree that does not exist, bearing children not alive, created in an uncreated place? When they rise, they descend, and descending they rise? Two that are one, and one that is three? Who is the beautiful maiden who has no eyes, whose body is concealed and revealed, revealed in the morning and concealed in the day, adorned with ornaments that do not exist?
(*SdM* 95a)

From R. Yossi's repetition of the driver's "empty words," R. Ḥiyya observes that "in such empty people are often found golden dregs," casting doubt as to whether the driver should be so easily discounted. In fact, when confronted, the old man confesses that he is not unlearned but has been reduced to donkey driving to support his children's education. He then begins to explain his riddles, "piling irony upon irony."⁵⁹ In fact, R. Yeiva is a hidden *zaddik*, disguising his true nature and eking out an existence at the margins of society. The romantic motif of the spiritual possibilities of the socially marginal is characteristic of the *Zohar* and flowered in Shabbateanism and eighteenth-century Polish Ḥasidism.⁶⁰

To answer the paradoxes of the “empty words,” R. Yeiva commences a long homily, centering on the exegesis of the laws in the Torah portion *Mishpatim* (Exod. 21–24), the “covenant code,” which is customarily read in the synagogues at mid-winter. The homily is fitful and erratic, proceeding from one point to the next, then returning to explicate, in a more fundamental way, an earlier idea.

A number of times R. Yeiva breaks off his narrative to remonstrate with himself for revealing the secrets of the soul doctrine.⁶¹ He portrays himself as a prophetic warrior (*SdM* 97a) for the true meaning of the Torah, comparing himself to King David (*SdM* 101b) yet confessing, “now, I am afraid.”⁶² Shim'on bar Yohai is seen as the paradigm of the enlightened mystic, for R. Yeiva confides: “Bar Yohai knows how to cover his paths and does not enter the great sea without looking out first” (*SdM* 100b). At one juncture, R. Yeiva wraps himself in his prayer shawl as a means of empowerment, literally dressing for battle.⁶³ R. Yeiva's remonstrations and soul-searching emphasize that mystical exegesis is a process that entails a degree of risk.

The central allegory of the Sabba's homily is that the images of dislocation and alienation set forth in *Mishpatim* represent the fate of the soul in the body and in the afterlife. This is seen in the cases of the Israelite slave who chooses to stay with his master, the poignant situation of the Israelite who sells his daughter into servitude, the priest's daughter who marries a foreigner, and the upheavals of levirate marriage (*yibbum*), widowhood, divorce, illegitimacy, and conversion (*SdM* 95a–b).

Bondage and Exile

A central metaphor of R. Yeiva's homily compares the *neshamah's* descent to two cases of feminine debasement. The first image is that of the Israelite maidservant, whose servitude is compared to the people Israel's servitude to the gentiles. The maidservant also symbolizes the illegitimate child and the convert, as they are considered “enslaved in this world.”⁶⁴

A second recurring image is that of the priest's daughter (Lev. 22:12) who upon her marriage to a “stranger” (*ish zar*, a nonpriest) is barred from consuming the priestly tithes. The priest's daughter symbolizes the *neshamah* defiled through its descent into the world. Rabbi Yeiva distinguishes between two biblical appellations: *bat kohen*, the priest's daughter, which refers to the *neshamah* in its emanated state in the *sefirah Binah*, and *bat ish kohen*, the priestly man's daughter, which refers to the *nefesh*. The “stranger” symbolizes the physical body, devoid of holiness, due to its origin in physical passion. His prosaic nature is compared to the foreskin discarded at the circumcision and treated as a primary source of ritual impurity, like a corpse.⁶⁵

The priesthood, as intercessors between the transcendent and the earthly, is also an allegorical representation of the soul's descent into corporeality. The various grades of priests, such as “anointed priest” (or “high priest”), signify the various levels of the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*.⁶⁶

The vicissitudes of the priest's daughter and the maidservant are directly related to the suffering of the *Shekhinah*, the elementary feminine principle of God that is the predominant image in the *Zohar's* palette of symbols. The soul is defiled by its descent into the world, and its descent is compared to the descent of the *Shekhinah*

(*SdM* 97a–98b). The despoiling of the *Shekhinah* at the hands of the nations of the world is analogous to the suffering of a *neshamah* born into a gentile body (*SdM* 96a). The relationship between Israel and the nations is compared to that between the brain and the body; R. Yeiva proclaims, “Israel is the high consciousness [*moha*] of the world, rising in the primordial thought” (*SdM* 108b).

The Slave

Another metaphor for the travail of the soul in *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is the Hebrew slave, whom the Torah describes as having the option of going free after six years or agreeing to be enslaved forever. The slave’s profession of love for his master (Exod. 21:5) is seen by the *Zohar* as a profession of willingness to be reincarnated for the eventual benefit of all sentient beings.⁶⁷ The six years are symbolic of the transition from the world of the intermediate six *sefirot*, which are indicated by the male countenance *Zeir Anpin*, to the world of the feminine *nukvah* (*SdM* 105b). This male/female dichotomy informs all of the laws pertaining to the slave, including the partial release from certain *mizvot* for slaves and women.⁶⁸

In his preface to *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, the anonymous author of the *Tiqqunim* further explained the metaphor of reincarnation as bondage or servitude.⁶⁹ Cordovero defined the term “enslavement” as a euphemism for the soul’s entanglement in the *kelipot*. The *nefesh* is under the power of the demiurgic “servant,” Metatron. It is enslaved for six years, according to its six levels. The *neshamah* is not enslaved, even though it is reincarnated. Cordovero reconciled the conflicting doctrines of resurrection and *gilgul* by defining an “enslaved” soul as one that reincarnates and yet is not resurrected at the end of time.⁷⁰

Oppression

Bayu, Bayu, babies dead without
clothes, without a bed,
Unborn children, never mine,
Lost forever, lost in time.

Ansky, *The Dybbuk*, act 4

I further observed all the oppression that goes on under the sun: the tears of the oppressed, with none to comfort them. Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living; and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 4:1–3

Rabbi Yeiva devotes much of his discourse to tragic instances of alienation and dislocation in the processes of birth, death, and the soul’s incarnation. He calls the victims of these upheavals “the oppressed”: the illegitimate child, the convert, and

the infant who dies. The fate of the oppressed is central to the oration, so much so that it is referred to again in R. Yeiva's summation:

Would you have thought that King Solomon saw all the oppressed of the world? But who are the oppressed of whom he spoke?⁷¹ These are the infants who died on their mothers' knees, who are oppressed on many planes, oppressed above and below. . . . There is no one more oppressed than the one who originally oppressed, or [reincarnated] three times or more, as the one in which the sins of the father are visited on the children, to the third and fourth generation.⁷² (*SdM* 113b)

Rabbi Yeiva rationalizes the tragedy of death at birth by surmising that such children would have turned to evil anyway or would have been sent into the bodies of gentiles. If a soul is fated to sin, God may withdraw it from circulation. Clearly, some *neshamot* are fated to be tainted with sin:

When the Blessed Holy One wanted to create the world, he willed into form all of the souls that had been prepared to go to people afterward. They are all formed in front of him, with that true form that was prepared to be their human form afterward, and he inspected each one, and some were intended to besmirch their ways in the world. When it descends, God calls to that *neshamah*, saying, "Go to this place or to that body!" They answer, "Master of the Universe, this world is enough for me where I dwell; I do not wish to be enslaved in another world and be defiled by it!" The Holy Blessed One answers, "From the day that you were created, it was only to be in that world!" When the *neshamah* sees this, it descends and ascends against its own will. (*SdM* 96b)

Rabbi Yeiva associates infant death with the biblical account of the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:10).⁷³ Just as Abraham banished the maidservant and her son to the desert for the threat they posed, so God takes back the soul of the infant in order for it to avoid a similar fate. The image of the maidservant is a widespread metaphor for the demonic in the *Zohar*.⁷⁴ Luria boldly conjectured that Abraham's first seed, which engendered Ishmael, was inadequate. The divine spark had to be reincarnated in Isaac's purer body.⁷⁵

Cordovero saw death as occurring through the combined offices of the divine and the demonic. Commenting on the previous passage, he explained:

When the Holy Blessed One puts an [oppressed] *neshamah* into a body, his years are not decreed, though they are known and in hand. Whoever is good for many years will never die, but if he begins to sin, the Holy Blessed One removes him. . . . When the Evil One sees that their years are contingent on their goodness, he will try to trick them into sinning.⁷⁶

Rabbi Yeiva is in no way cavalier about the death of infants. The oppression is generated by the indiscretions of the infant's ancestors, which the infants are fated to bear. In this tragic situation, the sins of the parent have been visited on the children, and an array of demonic forces are employed to expedite the process:

A man through his sins causes a higher oppression and it is the oppression of his actions, his children's and his grandchildren's until three generations. . . . The Holy Blessed One knows the future and knows that a certain man will in the

future turn to evil and sin and that his punishment will be the death of his children, and so he waits for the proper hour for the drawing forth of the children who are going to die.⁷⁷

Lurianic theorists often tended to reduce divine causalities to the technical interplay of forces, leading to an impersonal quality in Luria's explanations of some phenomena. In his remarks, Luria seems particularly callous in his rationalization of the death of infants:

There are *neshamot* that were worthy and did not sin, such as those who die from the bite of the serpent. . . . There are various types and many reasons for the death of those infants. Perhaps they were the "old" *neshamot* and they came to suffer that punishment, as is often the case. Nonetheless, here we are dealing only with the young souls that will in the future go bad.⁷⁸

Luria's understanding of reincarnation represents a great journey from the worldly anthropocentrism of classical rabbinic Judaism to a model in which the transincarnational fate of the soul is more important than the drama of a single individual's life. The death of innocents, whether in infancy or as martyrs for the Jewish faith, came to be viewed as a necessary aspect of the soul's ascent and descent.

Casualties: The Convert and the *Mamzer*

As he details the drama of the soul's descent, R. Yeiva dwells extensively on the metaphysics of conversion, the convert's achievement of a Jewish soul. With its doctrine of the *neshamah* of the convert, or *ger*, the *Zohar* entered a realm about which classical Judaism is silent. The very terminology for each status is unclear. In the Bible, the convert and the "stranger," or non-Jew, are both referred to as the *ger*, as in "you know the soul" [*nefesh*] of the *ger*, for you were strangers [*gerim*] in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9).⁷⁹ Popular religious assumptions among Jews seemed to maintain a difference between the souls of Jews and gentiles. Given such differences, the questions that Judaism never asked were: What is the nature of the convert's soul? Is it originally Jewish, or is there a change in the nature of the *neshamah* during the individual's lifetime? Is there a moment of *becoming* in the process of conversion, or is the convert always Jewish in his or her essence?⁸⁰

In kabbalistic doctrine, the identity of the convert's soul was related to teachings about the nature of the gentile soul. According to the *Zohar*, Israel and the gentiles are under the control of different divine names (*SdM* 96a). The Safed kabbalists' understandings of Jewish/gentile relations reflect the brutal legacy of the recent Spanish expulsion. Cordovero portrayed the nations of the world as *kelipot*, empty shells or husks that surround the kernel of holiness. These demonic forces are under the control of the divine, particularly the *sefirah Tiferet*, particularly when that *sefirah* is euphemized with the name "Holy Blessed One."

Luria, however, went further, maintaining that only Jewish souls were "God's portion." Therefore, according to Luria, "there is no portion for the extraneous forces [*hizonim*] or the nations of the world in Israel or their *neshamot*."⁸¹ For Luria,

gentiles simply lack the transformative wisdom of *Binah* and *Da'at*.⁸² God has a mandate over the gentiles, but he is the personal ruler of Israel only, the people of the covenant.⁸³

Because of the travails that the convert's *neshamah* must undergo, incarnation in the body of an eventual convert is seen as a terrible fate.⁸⁴ The convert's body begins in a state of defilement, the literal and figurative state of the foreskin.⁸⁵ Rabbi Yeiva stresses that the processes of conversion are a journey and a quest, beginning with the different origins of the convert's *neshamah*. Most *neshamot* are taken from a treasury beneath the divine throne. In the celestial Garden of Eden, the *neshamah* is clothed in the *ruah*, which in turn is clothed in the *nefesh* (*SdM* 99b). The *neshamot* of converts, however, are generated by the sexual liaisons of the righteous in the celestial Garden of Eden. Rabbi Yeiva euphemizes that "the converts' *neshamot* flower in the Garden of Eden in a hidden way" (*SdM* 98b). The convert's *neshamah* is appropriated by the *nefesh* and *ruah* of particularly righteous Jews who have already been partially redeemed. The process of conversion provides a solution for those whose good deeds have gained them a partial release from the cycle of birth and death. As Hayyim Vital explained:

Sometimes, the *nefesh*, when it is rectified, is completed and cleansed very thoroughly, so that it does not have to return and reincarnate with the *ruah* when the *ruah* must be repaired. The *nefesh* waits above at the place which is appropriate for it in the knot of life, and the *ruah* alone descends in *gilgul* to repair itself. Since it cannot go alone, but must be clothed in the *nefesh*, it clothes itself in the soul of the convert.⁸⁶

The soul that requires a "free" aspect in order to reincarnate fully is called a "naked soul" (*neshamah artila'ah*) (*SdM* 99b). It appropriates the convert's soul, wearing it like a garment to enter Paradise. In the corporeal world, the convert's *neshamah* serves as an intercessor for the righteous between the holy and the profane. The convert's soul, after all, originated in the Garden of Eden and should be as familiar with it as are the souls of the righteous.⁸⁷ The souls of converts are claimed by the righteous in the lower Garden of Eden. The *nefesh* of the convert, after death, remains linked with the *ruah* and *neshamah* that appropriated it and therefore continues to be redeemed in the afterlife.⁸⁸

The role of the convert's gentile ancestors was also a factor in the metaphysics of conversion. Cordovero averred that righteous gentiles are the souls most oppressed by the processes of reincarnation.⁸⁹ The task of the Jewish *neshamah* is to draw upon and channel the spiritual energy of the parents, which is an option the child of gentile parents doesn't have.⁹⁰

Luria believed that righteous gentiles are rewarded by their children's conversion. An angel called Tahariel has the task of purifying the converts' *neshamot*: "for they abandoned their folly, cleaving to God's Torah, though their *nefesh* is from the demonic [Samael], they are worthy to cleave to the holy, for their father saved a Jewish life."⁹¹ Despite this positive view of conversion, Luria believed that the convert's *ruah* and *neshamah* retained a flaw (*nishmatin de-pog'in*) even after the convert's death.⁹² Later Lurianic theorists accepted the ambiguities inherent in the doctrine of the convert's soul by locating its origin in nebulous *kelipat Nogah*,

of which more will be said.⁹³ The *Zohar* and Cordovero, by stressing the redemptive dimension of conversion, expressed greater regard for the purity and profundity of the conversion experience than did Luria and his students.

Another casualty invoked by R. Yeiva is the *mamzer*, the illegitimate child born of an adulterous relationship, whom the Torah (Deut. 23:3) forbids to “enter the congregation of Israel,” that is, to marry a Jew. At maturity, the “foreskin,” a euphemism for the impurity attending the *mamzer’s* conception, afflicts him. The “poor wretched *mamzer*,” in the pathos of his ostracism, “sheds tears before the Holy Blessed One and beseeches him, and these tears protect the living.” In a paraphrase of the Talmud’s doctrines regarding the penitent, or *ba’al teshuvah*, a place is set up for him in the afterlife “where even the wholly righteous cannot stand . . . and the Holy Blessed One sets up a transcendent academy for them, out of pity and support.”⁹⁴ These extraordinary expressions of empathy seem to indicate that the *mamzer’s* experience was not merely theoretical but that this dilemma was part of the fabric of the author’s life experience.

Cordovero and Luria were of different minds regarding the *mamzer’s* essential nature. Cordovero was struck by the seeming injustice of Deuteronomy 23:3 although he admitted that the *mamzer’s* dilemma derived specifically from the sinfulness of his mother’s adulterous relationship.⁹⁵ It was this relationship that attracted the impurity (*kelipah*) that metaphysically attached itself to the child’s *neshamah*. Luria addressed this phenomenon with characteristic insensitivity, believing that “the progeny are but branches of the parents, who in this case were transgressing.”⁹⁶

Vital argued, in support of his master, Luria, that the very nature of the *mamzer’s* soul is inferior. *Neshamot* that are conceived in marital sanctity are made up of the purest divine effluence, “from the seven palaces, behind the separating curtain under the divine throne.”⁹⁷ Since the *mamzer’s* soul does not originate at this level, he remains, ultimately, a gentile.

The fully coalesced Lurianic doctrine interpreted the *mamzer* as a product of the breaking of the vessels.⁹⁸ All *neshamot*, in the Lurianic worldview, were originally salvaged from the living detritus of the fall of the seven kings of Edom. Some *neshamot* have detritus still clinging to them and are incarnated as *mamzerim*. The only redemption for the *mamzer*, then, is to wed a gentile, or “maidservant.” For Vital and his successors, the *mamzer* is part of the cosmic catastrophe. All of the initial processes of the *neshamah’s* creation and descent into the world—the punishment meted out at the scales, the determination of the soul’s incarnation, the functions of *kelipot*, the dilemmas of the convert and the *mamzer*—are aspects of the fragmented state of the cosmos.

The Scales of *Nogah*

The pivotal moment that determines the soul’s incarnation is the judgment on the celestial scales (*tiklah*).⁹⁹ This judgment determines the fate of the *neshamah* in its descent to the lower worlds, particularly the host body to which it will be sent. The judgment occurs at the level of the lowest *sefirah*, *Malkhut*. This is the only realm

that allows for the dualism of a good or bad outcome. Merely entering the realm of the scales, where evil exists in potentia, is a terrible trauma for the pristine *neshamah*. It would have been optimal for the soul to have lived a blameless life in the present world and thence avoided encountering the harshness of divine judgment altogether.¹⁰⁰ According to Luria's students, one option for the soul might be that it is sent to the underworld, the talmudic *Gehennom*, for purification. Even this release from the cycle of birth and death was far preferable to being sentenced to another reincarnation.¹⁰¹

According to Luria, the punishments meted out at the scales originate from an obscure *kelipah*, a shell or husk interceding between the divine and present reality. The husk is called *Nogah*, "the glow." As a *kelipah*, or "husk," it is an impediment, yet its function is not altogether demonic. It represents the initial departure from the realm of the holy, when the motivations and nature of the individual remain obscure and ambivalent. It is portrayed as being so soft, bland, and porous that its nature is sometimes combined with the holy and sometimes with the impure.¹⁰² It surrounds the holy as the bridge into the profane.¹⁰³ This doctrine is one of the most important and nuanced aspects of the Lurianic teaching of evil.

Cordovero addressed this *kelipah*'s significance in his explanation of R. Yeiva's portrayal of the oppressed *neshamot* (*nishmatin ashikin*) that are doomed to reincarnation. He portrayed this *kelipah* as a source for *neshamot* that are intrinsically flawed:

There are different types of *neshamot* from the inner core [*mo'ha*] of the Tree: those that are inadequate and those that approach *kelipah*. They are like the thin *kelipah* [of produce] that can be purified, the *kelipah* that is around the nut that may be eaten. R. Shim'on has called it "... a glow all around it [*nogah lo saviv*; Ezek. 1:28], a *kelipah* so thin and consumable that it is pure."¹⁰⁴

Cordovero explored the image of the *kelipah*, not as the shell of a vessel, but as the concentric layer of the Tree of Knowledge farthest from the core. This understanding established the premise that *kelipat Nogah* was the border where the holy and pure overlap with the profane and evil.

The definition of *kelipat Nogah* as the cusp of the holy and the profane led to certain conclusions in Lurianic Kabbalah. Luria contended that the first step of the struggle for repair (*tiqqun*) of the broken vessels is to redeem the sparks that have fallen into the realm of *Nogah*. Vital compared this *kelipah*'s porous nature to the "altar of earth" (Exod. 20:20), made to be broken, just like the vessels of the divine light.¹⁰⁵

Eventually, it became a central premise of mystical ethics that, in human terms, emotionalism, social passions, and religious violence all originated in *kelipat Nogah*. It was a border terrain in the cosmos and in the soul, a zone of potential amorality where the processes of the sacred could be distorted for evil purposes and where aspects of the demonic could be converted or otherwise utilized for the forces of good.

Locating *Nogah* on the border of the sacred and the profane had another theological effect. The decision regarding afterlife is made, not by a personal deity, but by the impersonal quantification of the scales, amplified by the soul's trespassing

into the zone of *Nogah*. The empiricism of this process brought a quality of monistic impersonalism to the processes of reincarnation.

The Soul's Descent

After introducing a number of casualties of the processes of conception and betrothal, R. Yeiva Sabba traces the descent of the soul into the body. He invokes an ancient tradition:

Within a mighty stone of a hidden firmament is a palace that is called the Palace of Love [*Heikhal Ahavah*]. All of the souls [*neshmatin*] are hidden and concealed there, and all of the kisses of the King's love are there, and it is to there that the finest of souls ascend.¹⁰⁶

The Palace of Love is the destination of the deceased *neshamot*, as well as their place of origin.¹⁰⁷ The soul descends from the Throne of Glory to the Palace of Love and from there through the other six palaces into present reality. This descent, according to Cordovero, is the *neshamah's* true mission, to "actuate the hidden reality."¹⁰⁸

In making this reference, R. Yeiva alludes to the sections of the *Zohar* that are called the *Heikhalot*, or "Palace" texts. These compositions¹⁰⁹ describe the angelic palaces that exist at the base of the sefirotic tree. The *Zohar's* *Heikhalot* texts are a literary embroidery of the earlier palace tradition of late antiquity, building on ancient images of successive throne rooms glimpsed by adepts on their ascent to the divine.¹¹⁰

There is not, in fact, a clear relationship between the allusion in *Sabba de-Mishpatim* and the *Heikhalot* accounts. The closest relationship seems to be with a "Palace of Eternal Love" (*Heikhal Ahavat Olam*) alluded to in one location in the *Zohar*.¹¹¹ Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, the second of the divine palaces is described as the origin of the soul's garment:

When the *neshamah* departs and comes to this palace, the minister of the soul garments, *Zadkiel*, is summoned. When one upholds the commandments of the Torah in this world, they weave a garment for him in that palace, that he may clothe himself in that world. When that *neshamah* departs, that minister takes the garment and escorts him to the river Dinor, where the *neshamah* is purified and cleansed.¹¹²

The purification of the soul at the river Dinor is a judgment rite of the afterlife, much like the judgment at the scales described in the Sabba's oration. This palace, which marks the point of the soul's judgment, is not, however, referred to as the "Palace of Love" and has no apparent connection to the celestial Garden of Eden or the phenomenon of the divine kisses.

The invocation of the Palace of Love leads inevitably to a general discussion of love and eroticism, an ongoing theme in the *Zohar* literature. The reference to "the kisses of the King's love" led the Safed commentators to link these texts to the teachings of the *Zohar's* commentary to the Song of Songs.¹¹³ Rabbi Yeiva alludes to an important zoharic theme when he refers to the doctrine of the divine kisses.¹¹⁴ The

Torah's admonition to "treat her according to the rule of the daughters" (Exod. 21:9) is interpreted as linking the Jewish maidservant to this doctrine. The "rule of the daughters," according to R. Yeiva, is "as a father does to his beloved daughter, loving her and kissing her and giving her gifts."¹¹⁵ The kiss is a metaphor for the point at which two dimensions touch and exchange energies, yet retain their separate identities in the processes of emanation.¹¹⁶ The descent of the soul is an act of love, yet it is not the charged erotic union of other kabbalistic processes.

The image of the soul's descent from the Throne of Glory is also analogous to the *Shekhinah's* departure from the Land of Israel (*SdM* 97a–b). These two motifs of descent then lead R. Yeiva to discourse on the creation imagery of Psalm 104. The plain meaning of this psalm served as a rich source for the creation theory (*Ma'aseh Bereishit*) of the Jewish mystics of antiquity.¹¹⁷ R. Yeiva combines the Psalmist's imagery of God as the triumphant sky rider with the *Zohar's* tradition of the Tree of Life and the rivers that flow out of the Garden of Eden.¹¹⁸ The latter tradition is particularly relevant, as the two World Trees are the origin of the soul, as well as the rivers that carry them (*SdM* 99b). Taken together, Psalm 104 and the Genesis traditions symbolize the paths through which the *sefirot* and, by association, the *neshamot* and *ruhot* emanate into reality.

To the mystic, the act of intercourse is an act of sanctification, not a mere release of physical desires.¹¹⁹ The nature of the infant's soul is influenced by the intention of the parents at the time of intercourse and conception. The parents' conduct generally affects the child's faith, and their combined merit can extend onto their progeny.¹²⁰ Even the guarantees listed in the marriage contract, namely sustenance, clothing, and conjugal gratification,¹²¹ were understood as symbolizing the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* that the child of the union will eventually receive.¹²² The emphasis on the proper practice of sexual relations reflects an uneasy relationship between the *Zohar's* erotic metaphor and sexual realities. Classical Kabbalah's response to the demonic aspect of sexual passions is a doctrine of severe chastity. The true erotic paradigm is the rectitude of the righteous, whose reticent sexuality reflects the erotic union of the *sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.¹²³

All sexuality, even that sanctioned and encouraged by the *halakhah*, runs the risk of falling prey to demonic influence. Cordovero noted that intercourse by candlelight is prohibited because it leads to the imaging of the sexual partner.¹²⁴ This visual stimulus invokes the power of Lillit, the ancient doyenne of nocturnal emissions and crib death. Lillit is a shape-shifting demoness who materializes through erotic images, entering the dreams of her hapless victims and, with a smile, stealing the drops of emission and taking them into her womb in the realm of *kelipah*.¹²⁵

Traditionally, scholars were admonished to reserve the Sabbath eve for their marital relations.¹²⁶ The important sixteenth-century kabbalist Shim'on Lavi interpreted this admonition as providing an assurance that the progeny would have "created" *neshamot* and not reincarnated ones.¹²⁷ This teaching is echoed in another early Lurianic document that emphasizes the importance of bringing souls into the world after midnight in the Sabbath eve coupling of husbands and wives.¹²⁸ The more exalted spiritual level of the Sabbath, in which the celestial host move to higher levels of prominence, ensures that the soul of the infant will be drawn from the highest levels of the celestial Academy.

Bar Mizvah

Having addressed the origin of the soul and its descent, R. Yeiva then explores the soul's entrance into the body. The soul enters the individual gradually, through the various stages of maturation, culminating with the entrance of the *neshamah* at the onset of maturity, when the child becomes a *bar mizvah* (*SdM* 98a). The *Zohar's* general teaching is that at birth there is only the *nefesh*.¹²⁹ Subsequent study and piety gain the individual a *ruah*.¹³⁰ The *neshamah* enters the body at the point of maturity, which in Judaism entails becoming responsible for keeping the Commandments and is celebrated in the rite of *Bar Mizvah* (*SdM* 98a). At birth, one is accompanied by a good and a bad angel. Only with maturity, and the possibility of repentance as mandated by the law, may one repudiate the bad angel (*SdM* 106a).

The gradual accumulations of the levels of the soul are suffused with erotic imagery. The good deeds and spiritual growth of the maturing child draw the *neshamah* into the body, in a bold metaphor of seduction. The child's ascent to the Torah at the *Bar Mizvah* ceremony is understood as a moment of divine marriage, in which God brings the *neshamah* to its *idra*, his "tent." The process of maturation marks the child's ascent through the sefirotic tree. The onset of puberty is seen as an ascent into the realm of the *sefirah Yesod*, the realm of sexuality. This entrance into the erotic continues until the age of twenty-one. Marriage brings the participants to the spiritual level of the *sefirah Binah*, a feminine aspect marked by a higher level of intuition and empathy.¹³¹

The author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, in his synopsis of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, imposes more complex kabbalistic doctrines onto the process of maturation. According to the author of the *Tiqqunim*, the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* are bequeathed, but the process takes place across the continuum of the four worlds of creation.¹³² Such is the case with the graded entrance of the higher aspects of the soul into the maturing child. According to the author of the *Tiqqunim*:

At birth, the child is brought a *neshamah* from the realm of the wheels of the chariot. If it merits more, they bring it a soul from the realm of the holy beasts. If it is more worthy, they bring it a soul from the realm of the *neshamah* of the throne. If it advances, they bring it a *ruah* of *Azilut* from the realm of the central pillar. If it is more worthy, they bring it a *neshamah* from the realm of *Abba* and *Imma*. The highest attainment is to be brought a soul from *Azilut*, which is the divine name: YHWH. (*SdM* 94b)

The safed kabbalists commonly identified the stages of the soul's entrance with the four worlds of creation. Every one of the worlds has a *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*, with the *neshamah* of *Azilut* the highest. In light of the bold eroticism of the processes of *Bar Mizvah*, the Safed commentators explored the use of the term *bar*, literally the "child." Cordovero calls the *bar mizvah* "a son of the *ecclesia* of Israel" (*kenneset Yisrael*), itself a very common symbol for the *Shekhinah* (*Malkhut*), a spiritual projection of the relationship with one's own mother. At the age of twenty, one becomes a "child of the Blessed Holy One," namely the *sefirah Tiferet*.

Luria wrote that immediately upon being born, one is given a *nefesh* of the level of creation, *Briah*, which is the animal level (*nefesh ha-be'irah*) associated with the

ofanim, the glowing wheels of the chariot.¹³³ Luria maintained that the child would receive the *nefesh* of *Azilot* at the age of thirteen years and one day. He was initially unsure whether at maturity the child received a *ruah* and *neshamah* from the lower world of creation (*Briah*). Vital eventually concluded that the *zaddik* receives all the aspects of the *neshamah* from *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *Asiyah*. The highest level is to become a man of emanation (*Adam de-Azilot*), a person whose very essence embodies the completion of the divine name. In this way, the soul's possibilities were defined in more and more abstruse terms, with more opportunities for reincarnation required to free the soul to return to its transcendent source.

Luria dramatized the themes of sexual struggle and subjugation of evil in these passages. According to Luria, circumcision begins the process of subjugating the sexual aspect of the self. The child's ascent to the Torah at the *Bar Mizvah* ceremony is the moment at which the power of the evil inclination is subdued and the way cleared for the entrance of the *neshamah*. This ascent at *Bar Mizvah* is a response to the sexual sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden.¹³⁴ Clearly, for Luria, the *Bar Mizvah* was a significant moment of *tiqqun*, divine repair, and the possibilities of the soul's restoration to an edenic state were part of the rite's mystique.

The Garment

If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to an outsider, since he has betrayed her.

Exodus 21:8

In an example of the *Zohar's* theosophical exegesis, the Sabba interprets the words "he has betrayed her" (*be-vigdo bah*) to mean "with her garment on her."¹³⁵ The garment is a central metaphor for the dimensional nature of existence. Sin affects the situation of the soul in the world, soiling it and lowering its status in the afterlife. The garment, in this case, is the accreted body of sin which, over the course of successive afterlives, clings to the soul like karma.¹³⁶

As the body is a garment for the soul, so all of reality is multilayered, a series of aspects hidden within each other. Such is the case with the most hidden thing, the Torah, whose exoteric nature is merely the garment for its inner meaning. The role of the mystical exegete, the *maskil* (enlightened one), is to see the inner nature of things: "The wise are *full* of eyes! Even though a word may be hidden in its garment, they see into that garment. When that word is revealed, even when its garment is not lifted, they cast the wisdom of their eyes on it. They do not miss it, even though it has hidden itself!"¹³⁷

Luria interpreted the metaphor of the garment in terms of *azmut* and *kelim*, the essence and the vessels. In his view, the human soul is also composed of *azmut* and *kelim*, a divine essence and the vessels that contain it. The *azmut*, or essence, consists of the three aspects of the soul, the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. Each of these is covered by the *kelim*, the soul's garments.¹³⁸

These meditations on the metaphor of the garment lead to its expression in erotic mythopoesis: the famous parable of the maiden in the tower (*SdM* 99). The Torah is compared to a beautiful woman “who has no eyes” and whose garments are the hermeneutical layers of the Torah’s exegesis.¹³⁹ The scholar-mystic is portrayed as a knight errant who quests for her, and to whom she yields after a prolonged seduction.¹⁴⁰ According to this metaphor, the Torah is most like the *Shekhinah*, whose imagery suffuses the entire account.

The *Zohar*’s interpreters explore the motif of eyelessness in various ways. It was generally understood by exegetes that having “no eyes” implied that “no eyes see her,”¹⁴¹ although it has recently been argued that it might mean, in line with the imagery of the *Shekhinah*, that she has no qualities of her own.¹⁴² Eyelessness represents the “soft eyes” of Leah (Gen. 29:17), so the adept closes his eyes during the recitation of the *Shema*.¹⁴³ Similarly, the commandment regarding the prayer shawl’s fringes, “and you shall see them,” was linked to the issue of eyelessness. The exclusion of women from the time-bound commandments was also associated with the metaphor of the *Shekhinah* as a beautiful, blind maiden.¹⁴⁴

The image of the questing mystic reappears near the end of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* in a meditation on the *eitanim*, the sacred mountains:

All the *eitanim* are contingent on the Holy Blessed One, except for the essence, the body of the Written Torah. . . . The *eitanim* are the *Tannaim*, the pillars that are separate from the body. Now we must make known the word, that in the time when those are called *eitanim* for the Written Torah and for the Oral Torah they are called *Tannaim*.¹⁴⁵

When the letters of the word eITaNiM (אִיתָנִים) are rearranged, they form the word TaNnaiM (תַּנְּנַיִם), the Pharisaic authorities who produced the seminal rabbinic commentaries on the Torah. The *Tanna*, the gifted sage who produces the most authoritative interpretations (and whose ranks included R. Shim’on as well as the rest of the fellowship), is the lover of the Torah. Rather than questing to uncover its hidden aspects, the *Tanna* is literally part of the geography of the divine. The *Tanna* draws out the Torah’s wisdom, as the *sefirah Yesod* draws effluence out of *sefirah Binah*.¹⁴⁶

Yibbum

—Who are you? —I
have forgotten. Only in your thoughts
can I remember myself.
—Ansky, *The Dybbuk*, act 4

Rabbi Yeiva repeatedly invokes the situation of *yibbum*, the marriage of a childless widow to her brother-in-law as mandated by the Torah (Deut. 25:5–10). This discourse on levirate marriage is the emotional center of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. The crisis of childlessness is a formative biblical motif. In the biblical accounts of Sarah,

Tamar, Hannah, and others, the childless woman is the object of the trauma. Here, however, it is the man who suffers the grief and deleterious effects.

The birth of a child as a remedy for the death of a forebear served as the basis for the idea of a redemptive form of reincarnation. The *Zohar* sees *gilgul* as the very reason for levirate marriage. Reincarnation as the metaphysical underpinning of levirate marriage was a common understanding among a number of thirteenth-century kabbalists. For the Gnostic kabbalists of Gerona, the *sod ha-yibbum* was a cosmic doctrine. The prior body that is discarded in the process of the soul's reincarnation is compared to the discarded worlds alluded to in most kabbalistic cosmogony.¹⁴⁷ Todros Abulafia, who was arguably the model for the figure of Shim'on bar Yoḥai in the *Zohar*,¹⁴⁸ portrayed *yibbum* as a context for reincarnation in his *Oẓar ha-Kavod*. His use of the term mainly reflected the influence of the Castile and Gerona schools.¹⁴⁹ Such notions contributed to the Lurianic doctrine that traced soul roots chronologically, following the karmic destiny inherent in the mystery of past lives, with the Davidic element providing messianic implications.

The Safed commentators made few distinctions between the reincarnation inherent in *yibbum* and standard *gilgul*. In the case of *yibbum*, it was universally accepted that the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* all reincarnated. In the case of *gilgul*, initially only the *nefesh* reincarnated, followed in most cases by the *ruah* and *neshamah*. Sometimes only the *nefesh* reincarnated. Vital maintained that even in the case of *yibbum*, only the *nefesh* was reincarnated.¹⁵⁰ Cordovero, too, linked the status of *ibbur* and *yibbum*:

This *ibbur* is when the *neshamah* of the *zaddik* withdraws and desires another soul, such as the case of [the biblical high priest] Pinchas with [his deceased uncles] Nadav and Avihu. . . . and this is different from a type discussed in the *Tiqqunim*, grafting *nefesh* to *nefesh*, as when a righteous man dies without children and does not require *yibbum* or *halizah*, and nonetheless it is a *mizvah* to marry his wife.¹⁵¹

Rabbi Yeiva's main interest, however, is the pathos of the deceased first husband and his "naked soul." The "naked soul" is reincarnated in the child born to his brother and former wife (*SdM* 99b–100a). The first husband is merely the first vessel for the *neshamah*. This vessel is not lost, but it absorbs the punishments of this world in order to liberate the *neshamah* for the afterlife. The childless, naked soul undergoes constant reincarnations until its redeemer comes along (*SdM* 99b).

The body-vessel is thought of as thrown aside: "The thrown-aside body has never been lost, it exists in the afterlife for the world to come, having weathered many torments. Nonetheless, no reward is withheld except from those who have no *mizvot* to their credit at all."¹⁵² Childlessness delays a man's ascent and eventual rest in the afterlife, as "one who has not fulfilled the *mizvah* of procreation: when he rises to the other world, he flies through the air like a rattling stone."¹⁵³

The metaphysical underpinnings of levirate marriage are full of tensions and anxieties. Rabbi Yeiva invokes the Oedipal, incestuous nature of the process: "The husband above, how can he be below? His spouse become his mother? . . . His brother become his father?" He seeks comfort from these troubling ideas in the rabbinic dictum "one who has intercourse with his mother in a dream will achieve understanding [*binah*], as it is written [Prov. 2:3], *Call understanding 'Mother.'*"¹⁵⁴

When the first husband becomes his wife's son, he is compared to a kidnapped child, reflecting the common childhood fantasy of having been stolen or kidnapped by usurpers.¹⁵⁵ The Safed kabbalists linked this disturbing motif of incest to the unsettling accounts of familial dysfunction among the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. The sordid account of Judah and Tamar and Reuben's seduction of his father's maidservant reflect the chaotic dimensions of the lower reaches of *gilgul*, "where one's brother is his father, and his wife is his mother."¹⁵⁶

As a result of these anxieties, the levirate marriage is wracked by dissension. The *ruh*ot of the first and second husband struggle in the wife's womb. The tragic outcome of this struggle is the spirit that, like the body-vessel, has been thrown away. This spirit has, in the struggle for hegemony, been overcome and pushed out to wander (*SdM* 102a). Wraithlike, it wanders the world, appearing to people in dream visions and haunting its own grave site.

The image of the restless spirit was not uncommon in earlier Jewish notions of the afterlife, although it is less apparent in the mainstream of zoharic Safed Kabbalah. In early Pharisaic speculations, the dead, whether inertly waiting for the resurrection or restlessly wandering the earth and observing the affairs of humankind, are untransformed, dependent on the living to define their existence. This untransformed state was certainly perceived as malevolent by *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, the thirteenth-century pietists of the Rhineland. The German pietists feared the dead as mischievous, restless, morbid spirits, wandering the earth as voyeurs. The world of the dead was an abode of dread and danger. In *Sefer Hasidim*, the dead are always ready to avenge neglect or, worse, being forgotten. This limbo derives from the unfinished nature of the afterlife, the product, in this case, of Pharisaic reticence and European morbidity.¹⁵⁷

In the act of *yibbum*, the woman is clothed in two *neshamot*, the shed soul of her first husband and that of her second husband.¹⁵⁸ The result is a power struggle between the two souls, in which each struggles for control of the wife's affections. In Lurianic theory, this rage extends to the act of *halizah*, in which the wife and the surviving brother express their unwillingness to proceed with the marriage. When she spits in his face, as the law mandates, the spittle comes directly from the sexual aspect of her husband's spirit, which is thrashing in her womb. The soul of the deceased leaves through the spittle, "and it is particularly propitious if the spittle is red, indicating the action of harsh judgment [*din gamur*]."¹⁵⁹

Rabbi Yeiva explains that in terms of the interaction of the *sefirot*, childlessness feminizes the first husband's soul. Dying without progeny, he leaves the realm of the male, *sefirah Tiferet*. This "uprooting" to the feminine realm is painful, for "he has been castrated, with no more appetite forever; he does not flourish or give forth fruit, for if he were to give forth fruit, he would wither."¹⁶⁰

This feminized first husband is signified, in the laws of the portion *Mishpatim*, by the "priest's daughter" who can only be redeemed and freed by *yibbum*. In the afterlife, the effeminate brother is granted ascent only to the lower Garden of Eden, the "women's section," so that "he may enjoy the delicacies of the female world, but one may not taste or gaze upon the things that the rest of the righteous are enjoying, for he is a stranger there" (*SdM* 101b). He is even banished from his grave site for he "has not achieved the world of holiness" (*SdM* 102a). Vital added

that the priest's daughter's "return to her father's house" refers to the time when the dead brother's soul ceases his wandering.¹⁶¹

This exile of the first husband parallels the dilemma of the *Shekhinah*, particularly in its poignant intensity. Therefore, the biblical injunction that bars the priest's daughter from the heave offering (*terumat kodshim*) indicates different things to various commentators. Cordovero saw the heave offering as symbolizing the essential effluence of the divine (*shef'a rishon*) while Luria maintained that it is the dimension of the immanent divine that is in present reality, the *Malkhut* gathered from the celestial Holy of Holies. Like the *Shekhinah*, the mendicant Messiah, and other symbols of the *sefirah Malkhut*, the first husband's feminized *neshamah* has nothing of its own.¹⁶²

The first husband's soul will not necessarily remain desolate and unfulfilled, for a man who sincerely tried to procreate is different from one who absented himself from it. In R. Yeiva's words, "one who in this world really tried to make the tree fruitful is not like one who willfully refused to have children, uprooting the tree, scattering its leaves and wasting its fruit." Fruitfulness is its own reward for an otherwise unhappy union in which a wife "is brought to him, though she is unfit for him, and the Holy Blessed One sees from afar and sees that this woman will bring generations into the World" (*SdM* 109a).

Remarriage

Sexual struggle and romantic pathos are not limited to *yibbum*. In any remarriage, whether in a case of *yibbum* or otherwise, the spirits of the former and present husband contend with one another. The second husband must vanquish the first husband's memory. If the first husband is allowed to maintain control, then the second husband will die as well (*SdM* 102a). The winner of the struggle is considered, in retrospect, to have been her "true intended" (*SdM* 102b). For this reason, R. Yeiva points out that "one who marries a widow is like one who sets sail on the sea in strong winds without ropes, not knowing if he will pass in peace or not" (*SdM* 102a).¹⁶³ The deceased husband's spirit dwells with the widow for the year after his death, leaving only to visit his *nefesh* (presumably at the grave site). It is, therefore, unwise for a widow to remarry within the first year of her husband's death, for the first husband's presence will come between her and her second husband.¹⁶⁴

Divorce is another tragic upheaval, a rending in the fabric of reality that literally damages the altar in the Temple,¹⁶⁵ a metaphor for the Temple's destruction.¹⁶⁶ Rabbi Yeiva avers that "divorces combine, divorces of this world and divorces of the upper world" (*SdM* 103a). When the wife is enjoined, in the Torah's injunction regarding divorce (Deut. 24:1), to go to another, this other is necessarily linked to the otherness of the demonic. Hence, divorce has an aspect of the demonic, and the divorced woman is forever suspect of harboring this evil quality: "because this woman was joined to the 'other,' she descended, to be enslaved on the lower level, so that the Holy Blessed One did not want her to return, bringing hatred" (*SdM* 103a). In every divorce, the fault must lie with the wife, and divorced women are agents of exile and catastrophe. Interpreting the symbolism of his own "empty

words,” R. Yeiva warns of the complications that ensue from the transferring of children from marriage to marriage: “one who has children from the first wife and brings them into his house, on that day he cleaves to the terrible two-edged sword; *the one that is two forces him down alone and now there are three!*” (*SdM* 103b). A misogynist horror is expressed toward the woman who marries a succession of husbands (Deut. 24:1–3). Contact with such a woman corrupts her spouses, for her womb is compared to a used vessel, unfit for sacramental purposes.

This horror of feminine power is also related to the perilous moments of childbirth. A text commonly appended to the Sabba’s homily at this point avers that during the physical anguish of childbirth, women are in danger of actually embracing the demonic. The text stresses that such torments are more likely to occur to women who have neglected the laws of menstrual purity or practiced halakhic leniencies, such as immersing themselves in the *mikvah* too early in the menstrual cycle (*SdM* 111a). This teaching echoes other condemnations of the practices of Jews who were influenced by philosophical rationalizations of the Commandments.¹⁶⁷

The peregrinations of marriage lead to some unlikely results. To die without offspring is to risk banishment to the realm of the demonic (*SdM* 105b). Nonetheless, R. Yeiva maintains that if the husband and wife were unable to conceive, “he will not go up alone nor come back alone. If he is the husband, then the Holy Blessed One does not withhold the reward of all creation, even though he did not merit children, as is written [Exod. 21:3], *his wife will go out with him*; they will go out in *gilgul* and will merit to be reunited” (*SdM* 106a).

Inherent in the relationship of the various partners in the marital upheavals of *yibbum*, widowhood, and divorce is the wife’s subjugation to her husband. The missionary position is a literal metaphor for the relationship of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, and so, in the act of procreation, the husband is considered the *mashpi’a*, the one who influences.¹⁶⁸ This dark patriarchy is echoed by Ḥayyim Vital, who repeatedly asserted that “you have no (man) who takes a wife and has intercourse with her who does not leave in her one part of his spirit.”¹⁶⁹

The Davidic Line

The topic of widows and second marriages leads R. Yeiva to a discussion of the Davidic lineage. Because King David is the Messiah’s progenitor, David’s ancestors in the tribe of Judah and his descendants have eschatological implications. David’s relationships were both sanctioned and illicit and are interwoven with images of widowhood and divorce, such as his union with Bathsheba. The messianic line is riddled with parallels to the cases presented in the interpretation of *Mishpatim* (*SdM* 103b–104a).

Rabbi Yeiva suggests that the effect of the ensuing exile has been to confuse the messianic lineages.¹⁷⁰ The Messiah’s lineage originates in the illicit union of Judah with his daughter-in-law Tamar. After her first two husbands die, Tamar has to trick Judah into impregnating her. David’s great-grandmother Ruth has to persuade Boaz to redeem her, as an adjunct to the process of *yibbum*. These biblical accounts could be read as showing a tradition of strong, bold women in the origins

of the tribe of Judah. In fact, the *Zohar* uses them to construct a model of the Davidic line as suffused in the pathos of *yibbum* thwarted and fulfilled.

The Davidic line is symbolized with yet another powerful zoharic image, the World Tree. Rabbi Yeiva portrays this tree in anthropomorphic terms:

God has one son who shines from one end of the earth to the other, the great and powerful Tree. Its head reaches to the heavens and underneath are its deepest roots; it roots in the holy ground, tells its name, and is suspended from the high heavens; and the five firmaments hang from it. (*SdM* 105a–b)

Yehudah Liebes has indicated that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as described in this passage, is synonymous with the divine scales, sitting below *Malkhut*.¹⁷¹ These scales extend into the realms of the secular, under the governance of the angel Metatron, and the demonic, under the sway of Samael.¹⁷² The World Tree has its roots in *Malkhut* or the countenance *Nukvah*.¹⁷³ The base of the tree also houses the coiled serpent, itself a universal symbol (*SdM* 108a). Rabbi Yeiva also relates the superstructure of the World Tree to the structure of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple and the World Tree intertwine as symbols pointing to the encompassing metaphor of the divine *anthropos* (*SdM* 108b).

Having set forth the metaphor of the World Tree, R. Yeiva rationalizes the upheavals attending the Messiah's family history by comparing the perfection of the Davidic line to the cultivation of a tree. In this way, the peregrinations of the line in its early stages are opportunities for the righting of a wrong course. King David's grandfather Obed was bequeathed the wandering soul of his mother Ruth's first husband, Mahlon, but he "worked and labored at the roots of the tree . . . turning the essence and root back . . . from the bitter side to the flowering branch."¹⁷⁴ This activity regenerated his soul and began the perfection of the Judean line, which continues through Jesse and David. The refinement of David's genealogical line leads to the perfected soul of the Messiah, the "strain of the Lion" (*SdM* 104b).

David's sin with Bathsheba is portrayed as having an underlying logic that vindicates David entirely, in keeping with popular aggadic portrayals of the events in question (*SdM* 106b–107a). Uriah's death comes about as a restitution for sins he had committed in his past lives. He had, according to talmudic tradition, given Bathsheba a bill of divorce before he went into battle.¹⁷⁵ Rabbi Yeiva makes clear that although "giving Uriah into the hand of Ammon was like giving him to the cult of the serpent," King David sinned in order to provide a precedent for the institution of repentance (*SdM* 107b).

The messianic aspect of the homily is further complicated by R. Yeiva's personal identification with King David (*SdM* 101b). The biblical David is a trickster, and in R. Yeiva's portrayal, the king's jester (*SdM* 107a; *bediḥa*). David is also a warrior, who, "drawing his sword, kills with the divine name" (*SdM* 108a). R. Yeiva's internal struggles and remonstrations mirror King David's battles and the Messiah's struggle to ascend from his exile. *Gilgul* expands the possibilities of this lineage. The Messiah, a descendant of King David, is the recipient of David's *neshamah*. Such a recipient need not be a lineal descendant. A different, spiritual lineage to King David is possible for someone not familiarly linked to the Davidic line.

Just as the Davidic line has a certain destiny that is fulfilled through reincarnation, other lineages have similarly preordained destinies. Great historical figures are often reincarnated in a single family line, and contemporary leaders may be considered, at least after their deaths, to have been the reincarnations of biblical or talmudic sages. This doctrine of past life lineages bound the biblical and rabbinic generations to the medieval world of the *Zohar's* commentators. Therefore, when a biblical figure is reincarnated in the body of a later figure, a preordained destiny is bequeathed to a later personality. Subsequent kabbalists drew bold conclusions from this doctrine, leading, in Polish Hasidism, to lineal dynasticism and struggles for inherited power among masters.

One example of this spiritual lineage is the *Zohar's* reworking of the account of ten rabbis who, according to a late aggadic tradition, were martyred at the hands of the Romans.¹⁷⁶ According to the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, the ten martyrs were the reincarnations of Joseph's ten brothers.¹⁷⁷ Their martyrdom came as an atonement for having sold Joseph as a slave.¹⁷⁸ According to Luria, another martyr, R. Ishmael, bears the spark of Joseph, in his legendary function as the High Priest.¹⁷⁹ Luria considered the ten martyrs as a sacrifice, a divine sifting of flour from chaff:

Whoever is liable for death at the hands of the court . . . will not be helped by repentance. They must reincarnate to repair what they have perverted, so that they may receive the execution that they evaded. . . . One might protest that even if they were liable to reincarnate, they need not have been handed over to the powers of the *kelipot*. . . . However, since they were executed by the *kelipot* and the forces of uncleanness, these had no sway over them, nor did the other side, Heaven forbid, for their Torah defended them from the *kelipot*, for the Torah can never be sullied.¹⁸⁰

Cordovero pointed out that one of the martyrs, R. Akiva, as the child of converts, represents the realm of the *Shekhinah*, thereby coming to complete the act of cosmic restitution.¹⁸¹ Cordovero also attributed the martyrdom to the sinful behavior that the aggadah records regarding Joseph's part in the incident of Potiphar's wife.¹⁸²

The fate of the biblical priests Nadav and Avihu, who die in the Tabernacle for having brought "strange fire," also piqued the interest of the *Zohar* and the Safed kabbalists. These hapless sons of Aaron shared their father's *ruah* and *neshamah*.¹⁸³ They, in turn, are reincarnated in High Priest Pinhas, causing him to reach the stature of Elijah the prophet, whose ascent to Heaven represents the quintessence of mystical achievement.¹⁸⁴ In his famous oration just before his death, Luria compared Nadav and Avihu to the "fawns of the gazelle."¹⁸⁵ Just as the gazelle, according to the *Zohar's* famous account (*Zohar III* 249a–b), requires the serpent's bite to give birth, so Nadav and Avihu are sacrifices to the messianic process. The *Zohar* explains why the Torah's account of the Day of Atonement rite (Lev. 16:1) begins with a reference to them:

As the deaths of the two sons of Aaron atone for all of Israel, from this we learn that for one whose master's punishment comes upon him, it is an atonement for his sins, and whoever sorrows for the travails of the righteous, this drives out sin

from the world, so that on [the Day of Atonement] we read [in the synagogue] “After the death of the two sons of Aaron . . .” so that the people should hear and sorrow for the loss of the righteous. (*Zohar III* 57b)

The processes of reincarnation came to their most detailed realization in Luria’s doctrine of the soul root. Luria rejected the Cordoverean premise that the soul comes into the world a veritable *tabula rasa*, only influenced by its accretion of this-worldly experience.¹⁸⁶ Luria’s eventual conclusion was that every soul has a basic predisposition in its makeup, because every reincarnated soul derives from a specific root.¹⁸⁷ These roots have their origin in the world progenitors: Adam, Cain, and Abel.¹⁸⁸ For example, Abraham’s nephew Lot came from the seed of Abel; and his father, Haran, was reincarnated in Aaron.¹⁸⁹ According to Luria, “the rabbis called Adam the dough [*ḥallah*] of the world, for all the *neshamot* of the world were contingent on him. After his sin, all the souls of the world descended from him.”¹⁹⁰

All of the *neshamot* that were created after the destruction of the Temple are considered “old,” or reincarnated, souls, even if they were conceived in a state of complete holiness. According to Luria, these are not thought of as a separate *gilgul*, but are all part of the original Adam. All of the sparks of Cain and Abel, as well, are included in Adam. When one of their sparks comes into the world, it is called a “new” soul.¹⁹¹ Such souls are those conceived from the “face-to-face union,” after midnight on the Sabbath. Souls that had already passed through Cain and Abel, however, are considered to have a lower position as “old *neshamot*.”¹⁹² The attitudes of the parents at the conception of a child will influence the status of the soul to be incarnated.

A soul may pass from the bodies of gentiles to those of Jews. According to Luria, Rahab, the helpful prostitute of the Bible’s fall of Jericho account, was reincarnated as Hever the Kenite, the spouse of the heroine Yael. Eventually, this soul passed to Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel. “That is why she called herself a hard-spirited woman, for the hardness came from the realm of the prostitutes.”¹⁹³ Cain was reincarnated in Moses’ father-in-law Jethro.¹⁹⁴

Every soul root may be traced back to uncover an individual’s past lives. For instance, Hayyim Vital was descended from the *Amora* Abbaye, Yeiva Sabba, Akiva, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, Hezekiah the king of Judah, and the prophet Samuel.¹⁹⁵ Because of their illustrious spiritual pedigrees as the reincarnations of Shim’on bar Yoḥai and his circle,¹⁹⁶ Luria saw the members of his circle as important players in the cosmic drama.¹⁹⁷ At some points, however, the initial redactors of Lurianic ideas demurred, particularly when their interpretations led to bold messianic conclusions. One statement from the *genizah* material is guarded about the potentials of the reincarnations:

In every generation there are those who are like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in the details of these explanations the power of the quill [*kułmus*] stumbles; the one who understands will understand and will link them to other details, for the root and principle of everything is according to the duality of the soul’s *tiqqun*.¹⁹⁸

Lurianic doctrine, then, perhaps in response to the escalating tragedies in Spain,¹⁹⁹ conceived an intense interest in past lives. Messianic speculations also underlay this

interest in past lives, for an assessment of a person's soul condition could lead to the Messiah's early identification. The ten martyrs memorialized in the liturgy of the Day of Atonement invoke the pathos of the lost chance, the messianic moment denied. The ability to locate the essence of the soul had a strong effect on messianic speculations.

The authority to determine the future evolution of Judaism was derived, in Cordovero's opinion, from the very authority and canonicity of the *Zohar*.²⁰⁰ Shim'on bar Yoḥai was identified as having the lineal soul root of Moses, so that whoever has this same soul root is allowed to reveal new secrets.²⁰¹ The *Zohar*, as a product of divine revelation, is to be transmitted to subsequent generations, and the authoritative purveyors of the *Zohar's* teaching are those most qualified to oversee the development of Judaism.

The Great Eagle

The *Sabba* ends his oration with a tale reworked and expanded from a midrashic tradition: the tale of King Solomon and the great eagle²⁰² (*SdM* 112b–113a). In the account, the statement "I returned and saw all the oppression . . . the tears of the oppressed and they have no comforter" (Eccles. 4:1) refers to Solomon's daily visitation by "a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud" and "a great and terrible eagle." All of these phenomena—the cloud, fire, and eagle—"would bow before him. The eagle bears two branches, which he presents to Solomon, who smells them and "would receive intimations from them, saying, 'this is fallen, and this is the Light of the Eyes, they have come to make things known to me.'" Solomon would then "seal his throne" with a signet ring that bore a divine name. The eagle would then bear him into the wilderness, to the "dark mountain of Tarmod,"²⁰³ so that he could "know all that he had to know":

Returning, he would hold his ring before him, approach pagan shrines and learn what was necessary to satisfy his curiosity. Then the eagle would bring him home. Sitting again on his throne, his mind would settle as he contemplated words of divine wisdom. So he would say, *I returned*, that is to say, I returned from that road, repented of that wisdom, and was settled in my heart and my mind. (*SdM* 113a.)

King Solomon's journey to the "dark mountain of Tarmod" parallels the evolution of the restless, questing mystic who "comes home" to his own tradition. King Solomon's quest took him into the realms of forbidden wisdom and speculation. His return from the quest and repudiation of foreign cultures parallels the resolution of R. Yeiva's oration. The upheavals and difficulties of the sentient world, particularly the suffering of the oppressed, propel the mystic into a hazardous exploration of the hidden causalities of existence. The author of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* intimates that he has traveled and quested far and wide, sampling the alien doctrines and philosophies of the world. At the end, the mystic returns to the bliss of the kingdom, there to contemplate the suffering of the oppressed, the central theme of the homily and the central problem of existence.²⁰⁴ Sin has an effect on the soul's

incarnation, and so the avoidance of sin will solve the dilemma of the *ashukim*, the oppressed (*SdM* 113a).

Rabbi Yeiva concludes by quoting the well-known aggadic account of the ten items that were created at twilight on the sixth day of creation, perhaps wondering if he has left anything out of his own composition (*SdM* 113b; cf. *Avot* 5:8). He then compares himself, obliquely, to Moses by invoking the theophany after the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:19), with the clear implication that only concern for the welfare of others has brought him to reveal the secrets of the soul. Finally, he takes an emotional leave of the two rabbis, identifying himself as R. Yeiva Sabba and leaving them with the assurance that they will henceforth be protected from the evil eye.²⁰⁵

The Empty Words

In the *Zohar's* compositions, the framing narrative serves to provide a context in which the content is presented. In *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, R. Yeiva's initial riddles, or "empty words," provide a bridge between the content of the homilies and the drama of the framing narrative:

What is the serpent who flies through the air, passing in separation, with, in any case, one ant lying between its teeth, beginning in union and ending in separation? What is the eagle that nests in the tree that does not exist, bearing children not alive, created in an uncreated place? When they rise, they descend, and descending they rise? Two that are one, and one that is three? Who is the beautiful maiden who has no eyes, whose body is concealed and revealed, revealed in the morning and concealed in the day, adorned with ornaments that do not exist? (*SdM* 95a)

From the outset, exegetes of the *Zohar* were divided over the extent to which the framing narrative was germane to the content.²⁰⁶ The literary nature of these framing narratives often overwhelms the content that is eventually presented. Modern readers are often left with a greater impression of the romantic, picaresque *mise-en-scène* of wandering Galilean mystics and their adventures than of the content of their teachings. The ecstatic deaths of Shim'on bar Yoḥai's fellowship in the *Idrot* and the Sabba's disingenuous presentation of himself in *Sabba de-Mishpatim* overwhelm the subsequent material. In the account of the wonder-child, *Yenuka* (*Zohar III* 186a–192a), the child humiliates a number of the comrades while presenting teachings regarding the importance of ritual handwashing and the mystical underpinnings of the grace after meals.

Initially, the old man exclaims, upon seeing R. Ḥiyya: "Now two have become three and three have become one." Later in the homily, this riddle is also used to explain Jacob and Esau's contentious relationship (*SdM* 111a). And further into the composition, the "beautiful maiden who has no eyes" is explained as a symbol of the incarnate Torah. In light of the various twists and turns of the Sabba's homily, what is the meaning of the "empty words" with which the homily commenced? Were these mysterious riddles actually relevant to the following homily, or do they

go beyond it and address other, unrelated kabbalistic issues? The resolution of this question was an important literary issue for the *Zohar's* classical exegetes and may perhaps provide answers for the contemporary reader about the manifest content of this composition.

Cordovero interprets the “empty words” as presaging the teachings of the subsequent homily.²⁰⁷ Every aspect of the riddles deals with the mysteries of *yibbum*. The serpent symbolizes the soul who has died without progeny, in this case the dead brother in the situation of levirate marriage. The ant stuck between the serpent’s teeth is the wife, and all of the movements (“who flies through the air, passing in separation . . . beginning in union and ending in separation”) allude to the reincarnation of the first husband in the progeny of the second marriage. The eagle’s nesting “in a tree that does not exist” signifies the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which inhabits the realm of *Malkhut*. The phrase “ascending and descending” refers to the ascent of the dead brother and his descent into the soul of the infant, while the “two that are one” refers to the dead brother himself, who exists simultaneously in the two incarnations. The phrases “in any case” (*bein cakh u-vein kakh*) and “beginning in union and ending in separation” are both allusions to the upheavals of the various marriage partners. The eagle who nests in the non-existent tree is also a symbol of the mystery of levirate marriage, and the eagle (*neshet*) is the soul (*neshamah*) itself. The ones that “ascend and descend” are the *ruah* and *neshamah* of the marriage partners, while the “two that are one” is the dead brother and the son in whom he will be reincarnated. The primary meaning of the “empty words,” according to Cordovero, is in the context of the main issues of the subsequent homily.²⁰⁸

Cordovero does intimate a broader understanding of the “empty words,” insofar as the theme of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is that the upheavals of marriage partners reflect cosmic dynamics in the universe. Both the *Zohar* and Safed traditions are governed by the erotic metaphor of divine union, in which the *sefirot* are bound together in a series of erotic couplings and withdrawals. In this way, the inner dynamics of male/female relationships underlie the inner structure of the universe. A disjunction such as the *sefirot* falling into reversed union, a “back-to-back embrace,” would set off a misdirection of the flow of divinity into the corporeal world. Cordovero addressed the hazards of the back-to-back position in his commentary to *Sabba de-Mishpatim*:

When *Malkhut* is aroused by the acts of the lower worlds, the light and excitement of her ornaments cause her face to shine. Then *Tiferet* shines his face on her with a great light and the faces shine on one another. But when *Malkhut* lacks this excitement and adornment, then there is no shining, because of the inadequate works of those on Earth. If any souls are drawn forth, they will not be illuminated and this union will be back-to-back. It cannot be rectified except through the repair of those below.²⁰⁹

Luria adopted Cordovero’s notion and expanded it, carrying it over to his doctrine of the world’s creation through divine catastrophe, *shevirat ha-kelim*, the “breaking of the vessels.” He interpreted the “empty words” with less of an eye to the *Sabba’s* subsequent homilies and with more interest in general theosophical issues.²¹⁰ The

shevirah is brought about by a shifting of the erotic embrace of the *sefirot* from face-to-face to back-to-back. The countenance *Nukvah*, which is the exterior *Shekhinah*, is unified with the male *Abba* and then separates and slips away.²¹¹ In such a flawed union, a flawed *neshamah* will be produced.²¹²

This teaching is echoed in another early Lurianic text, which emphasizes the importance of bringing Adam into a face-to-face union.²¹³ Only this union can create “new,” pristine souls that are brought into the world directly through divine processes and have, therefore, a chance at exiting the world unencumbered by any moral detritus incurred during their earthly incarnation. The back-to-back union, however, will create only old, reincarnated souls. An important proof text for Luria is the *Zohar*’s commentary to the Song of Songs, which states that the *sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut* will not be unified face-to-face until the “days of King Solomon,” clearly a reference to a post-Messianic era.²¹⁴

Although the manifest content of the Sabba’s homily reflects the tragedy of a wife coping with a succession of husbands, Luria saw another aspect of the “empty words” as reflecting the experience of Adam’s two wives. Some midrashic traditions maintained that the woman described in Genesis 1 was not the same as Eve, the wife described in Genesis 2. The first spouse is termed “the first Eve,” although she is in reality the demoness Lillit, who represents a negative, devouring aspect of the *Shekhinah*. The two Eves were taken from Adam’s upper and lower sections, which relate to different aspects of Adam, the solar plexus and the genitals (indicated by the *sefirah Yesod*). The first Eve was like the husk, or *kelipah*, surrounding Leah, while Rachel, the second Eve, is the aforementioned “beautiful maiden who has no eyes.”²¹⁵

Luria interpreted the phrase “beginning in union and ending in separation” as implying the creation of the *parzufim*, or divine countenances, which come about as a result of the dislocation of the divine union. This union binds the earthly *Shekhinah* and the more transcendent realms. Turning the *Shekhinah* toward the face-to-face union guards against the encroachments of the demonic *kelipot*. To prevent dislocation, the Safed kabbalists’ Sabbath eve trip to the fields enabled them to ensure that the “Sabbath bride,” or incarnate *Shekhinah*, would have the proper union with her lovers, the *sefirah Tiferet*.²¹⁶

Cordovero explained the phrase “when they ascend, they descend” as a reference to the reincarnation of the dead brother in the son. Luria considered it to simply refer to the punishment of interment.²¹⁷ According to Luria, the nesting eagle is the *ruah* that is taken away from its true abode. “The tree that does not exist” refers to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as the eventual source of demonic progeny, in Cordovero’s reading.²¹⁸

In sum, the classical *Zohar* commentators differed on the intent of the “empty words” and even, implicitly, on the nature of the framing narrative. Cordovero considered the empty words in the context of R. Yeiva’s subsequent homily. His understandings are faithful to the spirit of the text and are convincing as mirroring the intentions of the author of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. Luria interpreted the empty words for the purposes of his own myth, and he strains against the imagery of the riddles, for his use of the metaphor of *gilgul* is broader than the scope of the plain meaning of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*.²¹⁹

Conclusion

Wherefore, wherefore
 Did the soul
 From its exalted height
 Fall into abysmal depths?
 Within the fall the power lies
 To rise again.

Ansky, *The Dybbuk*, act 1

Jews have long found themselves declaring that “love is as bold as death” (Songs 8:6), but what does that *mean*? Ansky’s influential Yiddish play *The Dybbuk* tells the tale of two star-crossed lovers who are separated by death, yet reunited by love. This basic idea, that the souls of the dead and the living remain in communion after death has separated them, was widespread among Jewish mystics. It found expression in the teachings of Kabbalah’s most essential work, the *Zohar*, and, particularly, its doctrines of the soul. The most constant theme in the myth of the soul proposed by *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is pathos, and this pathos is sustained through the subsequent development of doctrines of reincarnation. The debasement of the priest’s daughter and the maidservant, the separation of lovers, the death of infants, and the upheavals of levirate marriage, widowhood, and divorce are all sources of alienation and dislocation, existing as halakhic and literary figures but also as metaphors for the career of the soul. Victims such as the illegitimate scholar and the convert have their fates determined in the metaphysical realm of the soul, not the present reality in which they find themselves.

The pathos of the soul’s descent is an ongoing theme through the *Zohar*, but it is accentuated in the marital peregrinations of the *sod ha-yibbum*. This phenomenon, as well as others such as *sod ha-ibbur* and *gilgul*, were invoked and expanded to address the emotional realities of the community’s recurring exiles and martyrdom. The shamanistic aspect of the *sod ha-ibbur* was particularly profound, for the mystic who invoked and appropriated the soul of the deceased literally denied the reality of death.

The primary focus of the text is not a sweeping *gilgul* doctrine, because the *Zohar* is generally reticent about such a doctrine. The *Zohar*’s exegetes imposed the recrudescing soul doctrines onto such texts as *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, transforming them into vehicles for the expanded *gilgul* doctrine. In extending the *Zohar*’s doctrine of reincarnation, the commentators were aided by the expanded karmic speculations of the author of the *Tiqqunim* in his introduction to *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. This understanding saw reincarnation as a dispassionate monistic response to the effects of sin, much as in an Eastern karma theory. Cordovero, Luria, Vital, and the later redactors such as Shmuel Vital and Meir Poppers produced a systematic doctrine of the *neshamah* that combined the views of the *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*, as well as the various other systems collected in Safed. In their hands, the personal pain of the unhappy marriage became the nationalized pain of an exiled nation in torment and a generation of martyrs whose deaths the kabbalists of Safed longed to understand. In such later works as Meir Poppers’s *Sefer ha-Gilgullim*, the motif of the

casualty was transferred from one who was merely unlucky in his lineage to the casualties of the social upheavals of the age.

The *Zohar* and Safed traditions are governed by the erotic metaphor of divine union, but the central motif of the Sabba's oration is a study of erotic pain. Luria reflected these themes in his use of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* as a device to examine such traditions as the back-to-back embrace²²⁰ and the machinations of Adam's two wives. These, as well as the general theme of "union and separation" and the divine embrace, are bases for Luria's penultimate conclusions regarding the catastrophes that took place in the anthropomorphic structure of the primordial man, *Adam Kadmon*.

Most treatments of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* have stressed the relationship of the "empty words" to the parable of the maiden in the tower, rendering these as a closed circle. The center of the composition, according to such a treatment, is the numinous nature of the Torah and the eroticized quest of the mystic for gnosis. This understanding is not ultimately faithful to the inner nature of the text itself. The center of the Sabba's oration is a study of the decimating nature of erotic pain and upheaval.

Rabbi Yeiva treasures an idealized reading of the marital state in which the relationship is characterized by absolute chastity, never to be sullied by divorce or interrupted by the premature death of one partner. This marriage is primarily an expression of religious faith, the union of souls. Sex and procreation are acts of holiness and chastity, originating in the Palace of Love and ending with the *neshamah's* descent into the world. The gradual descent of holiness is also the true underpinning of the processes of maturation, and forms the spiritual underpinnings of *Bar Mizvah*. When these beatific ideas fail, through fate or the inadequacies of the participants, R. Yeiva is left with the question: what happened to the union of souls? He therefore devotes his homily to these casualties of the marital process. Rabbi Yeiva examines the fate of the soul in the afterlife as evoked in the complicated feelings and innate distrust of levirate marriage. These complications lead him to address the love wars of trust and domination inherent in all remarriage, whether resulting from divorce or death.

Therefore, it is certainly true that, as Yehudah Liebes has pointed out, "Eros dwells at the peak of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*."²²¹ However, it does not dwell there in the idealized romanticism of the beautiful maiden who has no eyes but in the trials and vicissitudes of the processes of love and death, which remain the focus of the composition as a whole. The overwhelming tone of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is one of sadness. The Sabba preaches a doctrine of emotional guardedness, as evinced in the many disclaimers that punctuate his oration. His stance is one of hesitation in the face of gender warfare and subjugation. It is doubtful whether *Sabba de-Mishpatim* is "about" the soul at all; its true preoccupation is the upheavals of erotic love and pain.

It has been suggested that the parable of the maiden is, after all, the apex of the Sabba's homily, that R. Yeiva is proposing an idealized model of human relationship, an eroticized romance as opposed to the flawed models presented elsewhere.²²² This may be, in combination with the account of the great eagle and the isolation of King Solomon, the real center of the Sabba's homily. Nonetheless, it seems more plausible that the central theme of the work is that of erotic pain, the oppression of

the chaos of love. Rabbi Moshe Zakhut, in characterizing the whole oration, understood the theme of oppression as the central theme of the entire composition:

R. Yeiva, the *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, drew from the wellsprings of the secrets of reincarnation. He intended to clarify the elements that had fallen from the vessels, through the various punishments alluded to there, as well as the secret of the tears of the oppressed at the hands of the *kelipot*, ending with the breaking of the tablets, all of which came to make known to us the hints and descent of his own soul.²²³

Sabba de-Mishpatim lent itself to the spiritual agenda of the Safed kabbalists, but only to a limited extent. The vigorous reincarnation speculations of the Safed kabbalists were compelled by other factors, particularly the trauma of the Spanish expulsion.²²⁴ Spain had been the locus of Jewish life for a thousand years prior to the expulsion, and the Jews of Castile and Andalusia had every right to believe that their communities would continue indefinitely. They saw Spain as eternal, and their expulsion left them bereft and broken. The Jews of Spain, betrayed by God and history and confronted with martyrdom, needed to be assured that the soul was immortal.

A great morbidity seems to have accompanied the Jewish experience following the Spanish expulsion.²²⁵ The *gilgul* doctrine, with its premise that the spirits of the dead are never really lost, that they walk among us again in the bodies of little children, became an attractive motif of psychological renewal. The identity of classical figures in their subsequent reincarnations became a preoccupation of the Safed community. The mystics' identification of illustrious past lives give his life a mandate for which he was reincarnated. In the worldviews of Cordovero and Luria, the living and the dead remain intertwined. This need to deny death gave an extra piquance to the *Zohar's* intimation regarding traceable past lives. In this way, a strong tradition of past-life identities rises out of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* and its related literature. The purpose of this reincarnation was twofold: the purification of the individual soul in its own development and the pursuit of the good of humankind.²²⁶

While much has been made of the *Zohar's* pervasive use of erotic metaphor, it is the conclusion of the author of *Sabba de-Mishpatim* that acts of love directly affect the progeny who result. These progeny, the result of one generation's erotic impulses, are invested with particular burdens with no thought to their volition, as in the cases of the child of *yibbum*, the *mamzer*, and the convert. The products of deviant relationships, such as the *mamzer*, are obviously hapless victims, but even sanctioned transitions such as *yibbum* and remarriage entail emotional fallout among the various generations. The souls that are unsettled by the dislocations of love suffer in their next incarnations, and love is best understood as a vehicle of struggle and exile.

Hormanuta

A Zoharic Creation Tradition

Jewish mysticism originated in speculations on the mechanics of creation and the origins of the universe. In late antiquity, these speculations were referred to as *ma'aseh bereishit*, or “works of the creation.” The biblical creation accounts, such as Genesis 1 and 2, Psalm 104, and Job 38–41 (the “voice from the whirlwind”), were the proof texts for *ma bereishit*, which combined these accounts in an attempt to construct a coherent creation tradition. *Ma'aseh bereishit* is the subject of a number of rabbinic allusions, and the themes of this tradition continued to stimulate kabbalistic inquiry in its classical period.¹

The influence of medieval Jewish philosophy compelled kabbalists to address certain paradoxes in the Jewish understanding of creation. Most classical Jewish philosophers had long advocated the concept of creation ex nihilo (*yesh me-ayin*), in which God’s word created existence from nothingness. Aristotelean philosophy posited the preexistence of matter, a concept that offended Jewish monotheism. The philosophical notion of creation ex nihilo was acceptable to kabbalists, who nonetheless struggled with the inexplicable paradox of the transition from nothingness to being.

Philosophical speculations on the nature of monotheism presented another problem for kabbalists. The philosophical conception of God is abstracted beyond the point of accessibility. This understanding was to become normative in classical exoteric Judaism. Kabbalists, however, were certain that prior to the creation of the world, God’s infinite abstraction, *Ein Sof*, encompassed all of phenomenal and sentient reality. How could such a transcendent God develop or emanate the roiling, differentiated nature of reality?²

The *Zohar*’s authors resolved these questions by developing a specific set of creation accounts. I will refer to these works as the *Hormanuta* texts, as they begin with the phrase *be-reish hormanuta de-malka* (in the beginning of the king’s decree).³ These texts describe the engraving of the contours of the universe in the midst of a primordial nothingness. These accounts are repeated and embellished throughout the *Zohar*. These compositions are a central part of the *Zohar* and of subsequent Kabbalah. In most manuscripts, and in the Cremona edition, the *Zohar* begins with the following passage, the urtext of the *Hormanuta* tradition:

In the beginning of the will of the king [*be-reish hormanuta de-malka*], the concentrated spark [*buzina de-kardinuta*] engraved engravings in the supernal luster [*tehiru ilaah*],⁴ so that there emerged from within the concealed of the concealed,

the beginning of the infinite, a vaporous mass fixed in a ring; not white, black, red, or green, or any color at all. When the measure extended, it produced colors shining within. Within the spark there gushed a spring from which the colors were formed below. The concealed of the concealed, the mystery of the Infinite, broke and did not break through its aura. It was not known at all, until, from the force of its penetration, one high and hidden point shone, the supernal concealed one. Beyond this point nothing is known at all. Therefore, it is called *Reishit*, the first command of all.⁵

The *Zohar* reprises the language and theme of this text in a number of other compositions. One of these, *Kav ha-Middah*, portrays the processes of the “hardened spark” in a slightly different way. The urtext and *Kav ha-Middah* were glossed by the authors of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*⁶ and the compositions called the *Matnitin*, or “Mishnahs.”⁷ These later glosses introduced new elements. All of these *Hormanuta* texts, in turn, were widely quoted and embellished by subsequent commentators. The Lurianic schools, in particular, used them to provide a textual basis for the doctrine of divine withdrawal (*zimzum*). The *Hormanuta* passages contained many obscurities and inconsistencies, which had to be reconciled through interpretation. The later interpretations also reflected extraneous developments in kabbalistic thought for which the *Hormanuta* texts provided a rationale.

Buzina de-Kardinuta

The boldest image of the *Hormanuta* literature is that of the engraving spark, *buzina de-kardinuta*, which is emanated from the Infinite (*Ein Sof*). *Buzina de-kardinuta* is most widely understood as the instrument through which God begins the emanation of the ten *sefirot*. It is the instrument of the divine, the pen or stylus with which God engraves and colors the phenomenal world.⁸ The composition *Kav ha-Middah* describes *buzina de-kardinuta* as a measuring tool, “giving size and limit to the *sefirot* and distinguishing them for the infinite emanator.” A related account in the *Idra Rabbah* states:

When it arose in the will of the Great White Head⁹ to do a goodness to his dear ones, he fixed, brought, and extracted from *buzina de-kardinuta* one spark, which spread to three hundred and seventy directions. The spark rose out of the pure ether. He blew on it,¹⁰ forming and bringing forth a mighty head, which spread in the four directions.¹¹

Subsequent commentators interpreted the image of God blowing on the spark as glassblowing. The North African kabbalist Shim'on Lavi compared God's function in the *Hormanuta* literature to that of a glassblower who expands a hollow vessel from a small particle of matter, drawing on the images of “blowing and forming” that the texts themselves had adapted from Genesis 2.¹² Moshe Cordovero also compared the function of *buzina de-kardinuta* to that of a glassblower, blowing the light in to inflate the vessel and then withdrawing it. Cordovero stressed the act of divine contraction is measured so that the vessel is never exposed to more light

than it can bear. This understanding presaged the Lurianic doctrine of the creation and eventual breaking of the vessels.¹³

One issue that exercised various commentators was the meaning of the very term *buzina de-kardinuta*. One school of thought translates *kardinuta* as “hardened,” due to a misunderstanding of the talmudic *hitte kurdanaita*, “Kurdistani wheat.” The Gaon of Vilna translates the term as the “hard candle,” citing Rashi.¹⁴ Menahem de Lonzano and Meir Poppers compare it to the heart, or essence, like the Greek *kard*.¹⁵ A second school of thought translates *buzina de-kardinuta* as “the dark spark,” reading *kardinuta* as a play on *kadrut*, “darkness.” Cordovero quotes the *Targum Onkelos* reference to Mount Ararat as *Har Kardo*, implying height and exaltation, “although some say it means darkness.” Cordovero continues:

The *buzina* means a menorah, indicating the ascent of the light, to show that it is the high and exalted menorah, the menorah of the morning offering. And why dark? Because of its great light, it darkens the vision of those who gaze upon it, or possibly the menorah that darkens all the light, so that all of them are like darkness and nothingness.¹⁶

The image of a primordial point, stylus, or phallus that splits some primeval mass in order to create the universe is very ancient. The Platonic idea that God, in order to create the world, had to split the primordial ether (*avir kadmon*) remains a subtext of a number of early kabbalistic and prekabbalistic traditions, including the *Iyyun* text *Midrash of Simon the Just*¹⁷ and the poet Solomon ibn Gabirol’s work *Keter Malkhut*, which speaks of God “drawing forth the light from the nothingness, splitting existence and piercing it.”¹⁸ The image of engraving originates in the ninth-century *midrash Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*: “Until the world was created there were only the Holy Blessed One and his name alone, and it arose in his thought that he engrave the name before him.”¹⁹

Yehudah Liebes has compared the first *Hormanuta* text to the Greek Orphic cult of late antiquity. In Liebes’s view, the splitting of the supernal luster derived from the account in which the god Chronos created a cosmic egg from the ether and then split it.²⁰ The *Hormanuta* texts represent a stage in this ancient tradition, which flowered again in the speculations of the Safed kabbalists and their Italian students.²¹

Elliot Wolfson has portrayed the *Hormanuta* traditions as links in a chain that stretches back to an ancient myth regarding the divine “dance” or play (*she’ashu’a*).²² Wolfson traces this boldly phallic image from its inception in Jewish esotericism of late antiquity through the *Iyyun* circle of twelfth-century Provence to the *Zohar* literature.²³ The *Hormanuta* tradition may be a way station in the development of an ancient, phallic doctrine of divine play. The question remains open as to whether the intent of the earliest *Hormanuta* texts was to echo this tradition, or whether the ancient myth is being read into them.

Certainly, later kabbalists continued to portray the actions of *buzina de-kardinuta* in boldly erotic terms,²⁴ as in Moshe Cordovero’s insistence that “all the limbs are *buzina de-kardinuta*.” This remark implies that just as the point of circumcision is the summation point of the male body, so *buzina de-kardinuta* represents a similar concentration of the energies of the divine.²⁵ Furthering this association, Isaac Luria

portrayed *buzinah de-kardinuta* as the primordial point of *Hokhmah* in its archetypal role as seed, causing the “impregnation” of divinity in the womb of phenomenal reality.²⁶ The early Lurianic composition “Before the Emanation” also portrays the descent of *buzina de-kardinuta* as an orgasm in the processes of the divine, “an explosion within thought.”²⁷ This idea is echoed by the later commentator Menahem de Lonzano, who portrayed *buzinah de-kardinuta* as *yesod de-Nukvah*, the junction of the feminine countenance *Nukvah* with the phallic countenance *Zeir Anpin*.²⁸ All of these characterizations eroticized the penetration of *buzina de-kardinuta* into the lower realms of creation.

Beyond the simple meaning of the words, commentators were divided as to where the action of *buzina de-kardinuta* fit into the sefirotic system. *Kav ha-Middah* links it to *Din*, the power of judgment.²⁹ It is identified with *Zeir Anpin*, the countenance that embodies the intermediate six *sefirot*.³⁰ The *Idra Rabbah* makes clear that the spark that flies out from *buzina de-kardinuta* is the *sefirah Hokhmah*.³¹

Other understandings saw the function of *buzina de-kardinuta* as taking place within the two aspects of the highest *sefirah*, *Keter*.³² *Keter* has two aspects: the transcendent *Ein Sof* and the more accessible *sefirah Keter*. *Buzina de-kardinuta* intercedes between these two aspects.³³ *Buzina de-kardinuta* gathers up and concentrates the accessible elements in the highest *sefirah*, *Keter*. Through its action, *Hokhmah*, the second *sefirah* of divine wisdom, is then emanated out of *Keter*. This action allows the pure, undifferentiated oneness of the transcendent God to emanate into the differentiated plurality of the created world, resolving the paradoxes of the unity of God and the multiplicity of the sefirotic tradition. Having completed this action, *Ein Sof* develops a dual nature. It is at once accessible as the highest *sefirah* and simultaneously unattainable as the most supernal, abstracted, negatively defined aspect of the divine. In this way, transcendent divinity emerges into the phenomenal world.

Kav ha-Middah* and the *Heikhalot

An important key to the identity of *buzinah de-kardinuta* lies in an apparently early section of the *Zohar* called *Kav ha-Middah*, the “line of measure.”³⁴ This section describes the actions of *buzina de-kardinuta*, which is identified as the “measuring line.” The nature of *Kav ha-Middah* as an alternative reading begs the question: what is earlier in the *Zohar*’s collection of mythologies, *Kav ha-Middah* or the first *Hormanuta* account? The fact of its having been restated so often leads to the assumption that the urtext (*Zohar* I 15a) was the first image and that *Kav ha-Middah* represents a secondary tradition. According to *Kav ha-Middah*, *buzina de-kardinuta* draws forth the higher powers by outlining the created world:

This spark ascends and descends and it is called *buzina de-kardinuta*. It fixes and beats all of the planted sparks, saying to them: “Grow!” This hardened spark that shines on whomever it shines, ascends and descends and extends to all sides, and so it is called the line of measure [*kav ha-middah*]. Its measure stands above and below. The line of measure, the innermost hardened spark, the shining measure that brings beauty to all.³⁵

In this account, the hardened spark is described as originating in the depths of the *sefirah Keter*.³⁶ *Keter* has two aspects: the more abstract and infinite *sefirah*, *Ein Sof*; and the more immanent, manifest form, *Keter*, in which color and dimensionality exist in potentia. *Buzina de-kardinuta* is portrayed as the agent through which the *sefirot* remain limited to their own domains:

Buzina de-kardinuta makes its measure, gathers in every gradation, and supports them. Then it stands and rises, encrusted until it rises and is hidden and covered and becomes unknown. . . . Thus is the secret of the *buzina de-kardinuta*, to unify all the aspects of belief. *Buzina de-kardinuta* exists in secret, rises and descends. (*Zohar Ḥadash* 58c–d)

Cordovero equated *buzina de-kardinuta* with the *kav ha-middah* because it “weighs out” the entire sefirotic structure. Its names signify its functions. As an ineffable light, it is *buzina de-kardinuta*, and as the essence of emanation, it is the *kav ha-middah*. Cordovero compared the *buzina*, the glowing spark as found in coals, to the *sefirah Keter*,³⁷ rather than to *Ein Sof*, the infinity that is contained at the apex of the Godhead.

With each of these inner descents, a new level of prosaic corporeality was reached, as divinity withdrew from each new physical dimension. The descent into corporeality is portrayed by a number of metaphors, including the garment, the essence and the vessels, and the function of light. The relationship of the *kav ha-middah* and *Ein Sof* is also comparable to the soul/body dichotomy.³⁸ There is also a sexualized interpretation, for the section of the *Zohar* on the Song of Songs speaks of a male element of *kav ha-middah* that shines forth and contracts toward a female dimension whose *kav ha-middah* is a receptacle for the light.³⁹

The author of the *Heikhalot* was well aware of the mythos of *buzina de-kardinuta*, particularly as an agent of separation and distinction, the philosophical qualities of the *sefirah Din*. The composer of the *Heikhalot* texts accepted the account of *buzina de-kardinuta* as a given and also saw the initial movements of creation as an act of divine sifting, as would Luria at the beginning of his career.

In the *Heikhalot*, *buzina de-kardinuta* is associated with the brutal “winnowing” that occurred in the fable of the ten martyrs. This tradition, which appears in a liturgical poem and a number of midrashic accounts, tells the story of ten *Tannaim* who were involved in the Jewish revolt and its aftermath and were executed by the Roman occupying authority.⁴⁰ As the ten martyrs are the victims of a sifting of the sacred and the demonic, so the characteristic action of *buzina de-kardinuta* is the act of sifting by and irruption of the *sefirah Din*. These deaths are interpreted as placating the demonic forces. According to a famous midrashic account, when Moses, at Sinai, objects to the martyrs’ fate, God replies, “Silence, for thus it has risen in thought.”⁴¹ The “rising in thought” is the action of divine Providence in sifting the world’s events, separating good from evil. The *Heikhalot* text continues to explore the image of the sifting of seed:⁴² “At the first beginning of faith, within thought, the *Buzina de-kardinuta* smashed and rose into thought, bringing forth sparks . . . sifting the detritus from the thought. As [the martyrs to the Romans] arose in thought, as the detritus was separated, they were taken as payment. So they rose in thought, joyfully and sadly.”⁴³ This was echoed by Luria in his remark:

“*Buzina de-kardinuta* smashed and ascended within thought, sparks and sparks, these sparks ascended because it rose in thought.”⁴⁴ This idea of the creation beginning in an act of sifting is intrinsic to the Lurianic creation myth, as expressed in the earliest stages of Luria’s teaching.

In the *Tiqqunim*

As mentioned earlier in this study, the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* was among the first and most pivotal of the *Zohar*’s commentators. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* contains two important *Hormanuta* recensions. In each paraphrase of the zoharic original, the author augments the earlier statement with new elements drawn from other parts of the *Zohar*, separate kabbalistic and philosophical ideas from other sources, and his own innovations. The first recension appears early in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, in the fifth composition, or *tiqqun*:

In the beginning of the will of the King, buzina de-kardinuta when it measured its drawing out, there came forth from this point a hidden line [*kav*]. This thought was like this: ם, first it was the closed *me*”*m*, and when the line, which was the ך [vav], extended from the measure, it opened and was made into ך [bet]. This is *Bereishit, B”et Reishit*, the point in the palace, and when it is the closed ם, it is the great *me*”*m* as in [Isa. 9:6] *In token of abundant authority* [לְסִרְבָּה הַמְשֻׁרָה] and it was made into a ring. Therefore, it is said by all, “be thou betrothed to me with this ring” ם. Of this it says a *vaporous mass fixed in a ring, not white, black, red, or green, or any color at all*. When it extended to shine,⁴⁵ *the measure extended, it produced colors shining within*. And this is the secret of *He pulls the light around him as a cloak* [Ps. 104:2]. For this is the cloaked light that does not spread, hidden. The ether [*avir* אַוִיר] is called the light [*or* אֹר), and with the addition of the yod (י), the point in the palace, for when one takes the yod out of *avir*, one reveals light. And this is *And God said, Let there be light* [*or* אֹר; cf Gen. 1:3].⁴⁶

This text paraphrases the earlier model, expanding on the meaning of two particular aspects. The first aspect is that of the ring, which is compared to the Hebrew letter *mem* (ם). The *mem* is then portrayed as being made up of the union of the Hebrew *bet* (ב) and *vav* (ו). Each of these symbolizes a *sefirah*—in this case, respectively, the transformative womb of *Binah* and the thrusting phallic nature of *Tiferet*. The Hebrew proof text *le-marbeh ha-misrah* is written in the Masoretic Torah using a final *mem* (ם) in the middle of the word: לְסִרְבָּה הַמְשֻׁרָה (Isa. 9:6). Such examples of *kri ve-ketiv*, a text that is written in one way and read in another, are generally interpreted by the *Zohar* as profound hints of deeper meanings.⁴⁷ In this case, the obscure use of the final *mem* is taken as signifying the function of *buzina de-kardinuta* and the splaying of colors, like a prism, in the concentric ring of the *tehiru ila’ah*.⁴⁸ The Hebrew letters *bet* (ב) and *vav* (ו) combine to create the final *mem* (ם), which itself forms the ring, which the author of the *Tiqqunim* compares to the wedding ring.⁴⁹

Others interpret the function of the ring as the sphere that encompasses all dimensionality. Galante saw the ring as a signet, which embosses a reverse image of

divinity into phenomenal reality. In this way, *buzina de-kardinuta* reveals the reverse of the hidden image. The original emanation occurred within the limited space of the ring, and only then were the divine qualities revealed and emanated.⁵⁰ Galante also provided sefirotic coefficients for the various colors: the *sefirah Hesed* is white, *Din* is red, and *Rahamim* or *Tiferet* is green. Nonetheless, Galante reminded the reader not to project the imagery of the colors into the realm of the physical.

Cordovero emphasized the ring as the most important aspect of the emanation.⁵¹ The dimensions of the phenomenal world come from the colors that splay out from it. The point at the ring's concentric center is the point at which the divine enters the phenomenal world. Cordovero compared the ring to the womb that is the function of the *sefirah Binah*. Cordovero also described the refraction of the *sefirot* from *buzina de-kardinuta* as originating in the dichotomy between *azmut* and *kelim*.⁵² The essence of the divine (*azmut*) extends through the vessels (*kelim*), while the *sefirot* have no function except for the essence that spreads through them.⁵³ The colors themselves only inhabit the lowest *sefirah*, *Malkhut*,⁵⁴ for that is the realm of their change and refraction.

Shim'on Lavi compared the splaying refraction of colors in the *tehiru* to the action of light on water. As colors are potential in the unrefracted light of a prism, so the *sefirot* are inherently potential in *buzina de-kardinuta*. These colors flow into the ether to become the phenomenal elements.⁵⁵ The spark is devoid of all color and therefore requires the light and dark to cause the refraction, like a prism or the striking of an iron on an anvil.⁵⁶

The other contribution of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* is the image of the seminal and phallic associations of the letters yod and vav. Prior to the creation, existence could have had no dimensionality, because there was no phenomenal space. *Buzina de-kardinuta* was the primordial point in which all dimensionality was inherent. When *buzina de-kardinuta* began to engrave the outlines of reality in the luster, then the dimensions of existence splayed out beneath.⁵⁷ These two symbols are then applied to the image of the womb, symbolized by the letter bet.

This *Hormanuta* text then gives way to a long study of the powers inherent in the vowels and the notes of cantillation. The author of the *Tiqqunim* then commences an exploration of an aspect of the mystery of creation ex nihilo. The world is created through God's divine speech. The aurality is embodied in the notes of cantillation, and dimensionality is embodied in the vowels, just as the contours of the phenomenal world are nascent in *buzina de-kardinuta*.

The second *Hormanuta* recension in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* focuses on the effects of *buzina de-kardinuta* on the primordial ether (*avir kadmon*):

In the beginning of the will of the king, buzina de-kardinuta, not white, red, green, or black at all. This buzina is the kav ha-middah, which is clothed in the air, and when it is in the air, it is closed and not seen at all. When it extends itself to be revealed, there comes out from this air one point. What remains is light, the primordial light of the work of creation. As it says [Gen. 1:2] And God said, Let there be light [yehi or] Let there be yod + avir,⁵⁸ and this secret is passed to the wise of heart. This point, after it extends from that light is clothed in four colors from the upper palace, and this is called ׀ [bet], so it says [Prov. 24:3], In wis-

*dom he will build the house,*⁵⁹ and this point measures out five colors, as it says [Isa. 40:12] *who measured at the rising of the water?*⁶⁰

The second paraphrase also examines the splaying of light from *buzina de-kardinuta*, the source of the emanation. Like the first recension, this text also serves as an introduction to an extended meditation on the term *nikkud*, which means “point” and refers to the points of vocalization of the Hebrew text. The Torah text is not vocalized, and the application of the vowels may alter the meaning of the text in different ways. Each vocalizing point manipulates the possibilities of the consonants. Through different vocalizations, new meanings may emerge from the Torah. *Buzina de-kardinuta* is evoked by the pointed marks of vocalization, the *holem*, *shuruk*, and *hirik*. This teaching would lead, in the Lurianic parlance, to elaborate theories of the *nikkudot*, or points, for, in the words of Ibn Tabul, “Every point, because of its proximity to *Ein Sof*, was filled with light.”⁶¹

The *Matnitin* Version

The last *Hormanuta* text occurs in the penultimate section of the *Tiqqunim* in the *Zohar Hadash*, practically the last published piece of the *Zohar* canon. Although this section is included in the *Tiqqunim*, it really belongs to the mysterious writings known as the *Matnitin*, or “Mishnahs,” which classical commentators saw as composing a particularly early stratum of the *Zohar*.⁶² The *Matnitin* version of the *Hormanuta* text has a number of specific qualities that mark it as a separate entity. It is a commentary on the ten *sefirot*, in which each *sefirah* is presented in mythic terms.

The *Matnitin* version builds on the *Hormanuta* literature’s main theme: the emanation of the *sefirot* from the transcendent abstraction of the divine. *Buzina de-kardinuta* is described as engraving the *sefirot* into the *rehiru*, with each of the *sefirot* represented by a particular Hebrew letter. The only *sefirah* that is not represented is *Keter*, for, of course, no representation can attach to it. The letters are animated and anthropomorphized with mythic functions. For instance, the *sefirah Hokhmah* is represented by the first letter of the alphabet, aleph:

Matnitin: In the luster, in the beginning of the will of the king, were engraved nine engravings in the lustrous spheres, and one is hidden and not known. Engraved engravings and smashed within one spark and there comes from it \aleph of one hidden *hormanuta* hidden in a hiddenness that is known and unknown, in which all of the intelligence in it withdraws. It is slender [ze’ir], and from its slenderness it is hidden in the recesses of the belly.

In this version, the primordial point originates in the womb, in a relationship similar to that of Pistis and Sophia in the Greek mystery religions. The letter aleph (\aleph) represents the emanated *sefirah Hokhmah*, according to the emendations of commentators in printed editions. Wisdom is the seed, ensconced in the “womb” of the *sefirah Binah*. *Binah* is associated with all sorts of feminine imagery, including the celestial palace and the “house” for the slender seed of *Hokhmah*.⁶³ *Binah* is also identified as the “house,” as elsewhere in theosophical writings.

The text continues, diverging from the imagery of the original *Hormanuta* account and moving toward a separate creation myth, whose structure is reminiscent of the *Bahir* and incorporates the mythic traditions of subsequent Kabbalah. Each of the *sefirot* has certain mythic associations. The *sefirot Hesed* and *Tiferet* are apposed erotically as aspects of the phallus that unites with *sefirah Binah*: "And they unite in the day amid song and joy of the night." The *sefirah Gevurah*, or *Din*, is described in images of majestic judgment and the proximity of these processes to the forces of evil. *Din* is ambivalent, personified in the passive/aggressive action of "pushing away and pulling toward." But divine judgment also encompasses images of heroism, just as the literal meaning of *gevurah* is "heroism." Employing the ancient mythos of the warrior God, *Din* is described as surrounded by its minions and legions and waves its "flaming sword." *Tiferet* is the king, the unifier of all of the other *sefirot*. *Yesod* is portrayed in terms of the phallic arbiter of sexuality and fertility. It is a fructifying wand, invoked by the Song of Song's image of the apple as a symbol of male fertility. Its impression on the last *sefirah*, *Malkhut*, is like that of a signet ring in wax. *Malkhut* is personalized, not in terms of *Shekhinah* femininity, but in terms of a warrior who vanquishes the shadow of his own personality, reflecting the element of the demonic that is also present in that *sefirah*.⁶⁴

The author of the *Matnitin* version possessed a separate set of mythic symbols and a distinct literary style, incorporating tropes and images from earlier sources in a manner that is not characteristic of the main sections of the *Zohar*. He coins an admonition familiar from the *Sefer Yezirah*,⁶⁵ "Close your eye from seeing and your ear from hearing." Bahiric elements also haunt this account, in the very structure of the work, in its tracing of a linear ten *sefirot* with symbolic associations, and in its invocation of the thirty-two paths of wisdom.⁶⁶ The thirty-two eyes represent the paths of wisdom, the lines of interaction that join the various *sefirot* when they are portrayed in their hierarchical arrangement.⁶⁷

Gottlieb has portrayed the *Matnitin* version as a precursor of the *Idrot* in a number of its concerns.⁶⁸ As Gottlieb has pointed out, the *Matnitin* text emphasizes two separate rabbinic motifs: the hidden light put aside for the righteous and the thread of loving-kindness that stretches over the students of the Torah.⁶⁹

The interpretation of the *Matnitin* recension was important in the structure of Cordovero's oeuvre. His commentary on the text, which he called "The Secret of the Letters of R. Shim'on bar Yoḥai,"⁷⁰ was part of the introduction to his *Idra* commentary *Shi'ur Qomah*.⁷¹ Cordovero emphasized the distinction between two kinds of light, the "sown" light, or effluence that illuminates the sentient world, and the hidden light, the or *ha-gannuz*,⁷² a conclusion that had been independently reached by Shim'on Lavi.⁷³

The Interpretations of *Buzina de-Kardinuta*

Prior to the advent of the Lurianic movement, *Zohar* commentators had specific cosmogonic concerns that they projected onto the *Hormanuta* literature. Some of these understandings were mythic, in that they expanded on the narrative of the

first events of creation. Some commentaries, such as those of Cordovero and the later recensions of Ḥayyim Vital and R. Moshe Yonah, tended to describe the phenomena in quasi-philosophical terms.⁷⁴ The principal theological problem for all the commentators was that *Ein Sof* as described in the philosophical tradition was beyond the realm of the physical.

A clear distinction between philosophical and mythic interpretations cannot be made, however. The nature of the precreated world was necessarily paradoxical. For example, Vital, in the intermediate composition *Mavo She'arim*, carefully defined the precreation universe as a world in which there is only God, a presymbolic, undifferentiated realm:

All the light unified in complete equality, with no beginning and no end . . . [with] no name or euphemism. For a name signifies something which is limited and specific, indicating a distinction between one *sefirah* and its partner. Indeed . . . names, euphemisms, or symbols were irrelevant, as were images and forms.⁷⁵

The theological problem presented to the commentators was that *Ein Sof*, as described in philosophical sources, had to be abstracted beyond the realm of any visual image. Anthropomorphizing the divine processes or even conceiving them in time and space presented a philosophical problem that sometimes plagued the traditional commentators. To speak of the *Hormanuta* process was, inevitably, to enter the realm of the mythic.⁷⁶ Quantifying the divine in spatial terms was a particular issue for Vital, who asked: “Even if we want to say that the Rav, of blessed memory [Luria], knew that *Ein Sof* creates reality and is beyond it [*mehuyav ha-miziyut*], how can one use such terms as “in the middle?”⁷⁷ He concluded that all of the spatial language is really irrelevant to the abstract nature of *Ein Sof* and that all of the spatial language must refer to a somewhat degraded aspect of *Ein Sof*.⁷⁸ In Yisrael Sarug’s *Limmudei Azilut*, the image of the primordial point dictated the creation of spherical space around that point, so that the *sefirot* were now to be surrounded by spheres of ether. The *sefirot* were included in the womb of *Keter*, in concentric spheres of existence.⁷⁹

Philosophical issues also animated Shim’on Lavi, who interpreted the *Hormanuta* texts as explanations of the doctrine of *briah yesh me-ayin*, or creation ex nihilo. This doctrine maintained that there could be no preexistent matter and that God’s utterance was the beginning of phenomenal reality. The first Jewish philosopher, Sa’adiah Gaon, had posited this idea as a sine qua non of Jewish creation belief, against Platonic notions of preexistent matter.⁸⁰ Creation ex nihilo also provides a greater possibility for miracles than the Aristotelean view, because it ascribes to God the power to initiate wholly new things.

Shim’on Lavi maintained that creation did not arise from nothingness but was “extracted” from the world of *Azilut*. The descent of *buzina de-kardinuta* and its extraction of reality constitute the original moment of creation ex nihilo, as the existent world is emanated from the hidden to the apprehended. This reality then emanates to the perceptual realm and into the structure of the four worlds, *Azilut*, *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *Assiyah*, so that the physical world is called “the engraved.”

Lavi’s interpretation of *buzina de-kardinuta* made use of philosophical ideas while simultaneously critiquing them. He distinguished mystics and those who

accepted creation *ex nihilo* as “those who believe in renewal” (*ba’alei sevarat ha-bidush*) as opposed to “those who believe in “preexistence” (*ba’alei sevarat ha-kadmut*). The “belief in renewal” is conciliatory toward the possibility for miracles, whereas those who believe in preexistence reject the idea of miracles and other forms of Providence.⁸¹

Lavi showed that he was influenced by philosophical readings even as he rejected them. He adopted Nahmanides’ definition of *tohu*, the “unformed chaos” described in the biblical creation account, as the *hiele*, the primordial ether.⁸² He polemicized that “the philosophers are only interested in the physical *hiele*, but the mystics care about the *hiele* which is above the *hiele* . . . for there is *tohu* above *tohu*, higher than high.”⁸³ Finally, Lavi qualified his entire interpretation and stressed the ineffability and esotericism of the *Hormanuta* tradition:

And if you have a *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*, let what I have hinted here be enough for you. If not, cease from drawing near to this great and terrible labor. The sages stressed that the overt nature of this wisdom is not its essence, for the tongue must speak in parable and image. Therefore, they placed signs with their imprint and laws, so as to arouse men to the proper intention and, only then, to strip these issues from their physicality.⁸⁴

The image of potentiality in the act of creation is also stressed in a Shabbatean creation commentary, *Raza de-Arvan Glifin* (The Secret of the Engraved Letters), by the eighteenth-century visionary R. Leibele Prosnitz. This commentary speaks of the “four colors” that are hidden in the power of the essence of God before the creation. The purpose of creation is to bring these powers to actuality, though the action of the “line” or “spark,” clearly refers to the *kav ha-middah* and *buzina de-kardinuta*. According to this work, the world was created for the simple purpose of emanation, in order to bring existence into being, and so that the members of the created world would be aware of their benighted state.⁸⁵ Such is the conclusion of the famous Shabbatean work *Herdat ha-Yammim*, which maintains, in an exegesis of the Sabbath hymn *Lekha Dodi*, that the phrase “the end of the act is first in thought” is a reference to the processes of emanation described in the *Hormanuta* literature [The *sefirah*] *Malkhut* is indescribable. It is the reign [*shiltonuta*] and the will [*hormanuta*] of the king. . . . even though *Malkhut* is the last of the ten *sefirot*, nonetheless, in the thought to create the worlds it is the first.”⁸⁶

Moshe Cordovero’s student Avraham Galante portrayed the processes of the *Hormanuta* myth in particularly Neoplatonic terms. He emphasized the processes by which the *shefa’*, or divine effluence, poured into the phenomenal word. God’s “measuring the measure” was a process in which the *shefa’* ripened prior to its descent.⁸⁷ The *shefa’* descends from *sefirah* to *sefirah* and from aspect to aspect, until it comes to the *sefirah Malkhut*, from which it descends through the divine palaces.⁸⁸ This last descent is the *Hormanuta* texts’ “descent within” (*le-go be-go*). Similarly, the hidden nature of the process is responsible for the way that it “splits and does not split.” The split is so small, for the *shefa’* has become so diluted, that it is really more of a nudge than a piercing of the primordial ether of *Keter*.⁸⁹

Other commentators were more concerned with the resolution of internal difficulties in the *Hormanuta* tradition. For those concerned with incorporating the

various traditions in the *Zohar*, the synthesizing of all of the *Hormanuta* traditions was of paramount importance. Moshe Cordovero stressed that the *Hormanuta* texts were all of a piece. He compared the central text with the recensions in the *Tiqqunim* as well as *Kav ha-Middah*. Cordovero pointed out that the *Tiqqunim* equate the *buzina de-kardinuta* with the *kav ha-middah*.⁹⁰ *Buzina de-Kardinuta* is the light that is cloaked within the *sefirot*, the “soul” to the “body” of the *sefirot*, and the “essence of all reality.”⁹¹

Cordovero affixed the doctrine of *zimzum*, or divine withdrawal, to the *Hormanuta* tradition. This exegetical leap would be characteristic of subsequent Lurianic readings:

When the essence . . . flows through *Keter* and below it is called *buzina de-kardinuta*, when the *Keter* and the *Ein Sof* that is within it give a measure to the measurings. These measurings set out the limits of the function of the lower forces, for they have contracted [*zimzemu*] the light of their function and clothed it and drawn the upper life from *Din* to *Rahamim*.⁹²

Cordovero located the *Hormanuta* myth in the inner distinctions of the Infinite, *Ein Sof*, and its relationship to the highest of the *sefirot*, *Keter*. The highest *sefirah* then emanated the *sefirah Hokhmah* (Wisdom), which thence became enconced in the womb of *Binah* (Understanding), which in turn served as the womb of the lower *sefirot*.⁹³

Cordovero also maintained that the *Hormanuta* accounts were central to the processes of emanation. He posited three concentric circles of emanation. Originally, the *sefirot* were inside one another, in potentia, with *Binah* inside *Hokhmah* and *Hokhmah* inside *Keter*. Then, through the mysterious function of the divine “play” (*mishta’ashe’a be-’azmo*), God’s enlightenment (*haskalato*) and self-discovery (*hasagat azmuto*) led to the subsequent emanation of the *sefirot*. The first circle emanated from the most hidden places in *Ein Sof*. The second is the *kutra be-gulmah*, the “knot pressed in the ring,” in which the transcendent reality leaves its impression on the lower. The third circle of emanation is that which immediately precedes the refraction of the divine colors. The term *kav ha-middah* is described as “hidden within the hiddennesses” to imply the concentric containment of the *sefirot* within one another. The light described comes from *Binah*, which then “split and did not split,” because although the processes of emanation began, *Hokhmah* did not descend below *Binah*. The initial flow of emanation is called the first potentiality (*alul ha-rishon*), due to the possibilities nascent in it.⁹⁴

Another commentator concerned with the reconciliation of the variant traditions was the Gaon of Vilna. The Gaon cast the *Hormanuta* accounts in terms of other kabbalistic ideas. He projected the descent of *buzina de-kardinuta* across the trajectory of the four worlds of creation, which he also referred to as “the four countenances of Adam Kadmon.” *Buzina de-kardinuta* originates in the processes of *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da’at* of the world of *Azilut*. The Gaon referred to the anthropomorphic doctrines of the *Idrot*, speaking of the “thirteen engravings of the great white head” and associating *tehiru* with the “unknown head” (*reisha de-lo ityada*).⁹⁵

The Gaon also rendered the *Hormanuta* myth in personal terms for the mystic, comparing the descent of *buzina de-kardinuta* with the ascent of the human spirit through the agency of “the active intellect” (*sekhel ha-poel*), a Neoplatonic concept

that was appropriated by Castilian kabbalists such as Moshe de Leon.⁹⁶ The active intellect is the highest aspect of human intellect, the point at which the creaturely human intellect is closest to the properties of the divine. The Gaon located its function in personal terms, at the apex of the Godhead.

The *Drushim*

The interpretation of the *Hormanuta* texts played an important role in the development of Lurianic Kabbalah. Luria's initial teachings were oral, and some of them were rough retellings of the *Hormanuta* myth. From the versions that have been reconstituted in the studies of Meroz and Avivi, it is clear that Luria delivered *drushim* that explicated the *Hormanuta* tradition and that the disciples committed to memory. The *drush* was an oral presentation, with its exegetical quality being secondary. These creation accounts gradually abandoned the *Hormanuta* structure and became re-statements of the Lurianic myth.

Glosses of Luria's *Hormanuta drushim* came to form the basis of Lurianic creation accounts. They are generally referred to as the *Drushei ha-Azilot* (Sermons on Emanation). These accounts incorporated common elements: the divine dance (*she'ashu'a*), the stated desire of God to show his glory to an Other, God's withdrawal of himself, and his concomitant creation of the void. Some examples of the many in this literary genre include R. Moshe Yonah's *Kanfei Yonah*,⁹⁷ Vital's *Drush al Olam ha-Azilot*,⁹⁸ also known as the "*drush* that was transmitted to Shlomo Sagis," Yisrael Sarug's *Limmudei Azilot*,⁹⁹ the anonymous composition "Before the *Azilot*,"¹⁰⁰ and the Shabbatean text *Raza de-Atvan Glifn* (Secret of the Engraved Letters). These accounts originally followed the contours of the *Hormanuta* accounts. Gradually, they departed from the original account to become independent compositions. New elements were added, so that later compositions, such as the *Sha'ar ha-Kelalim* of Poppers's final edition of *Ez Hayyim*,¹⁰¹ have obscured the roots of the *Azilot* in the *Hormanuta* tradition.

A moment of crossover from the *Hormanuta* literature to the *Drushei ha-Azilot* comes in a widely circulated commentary to the urtext. This commentary has traditionally been considered to have been written by Luria himself. It was first published very early in the dissemination of Lurianic texts, by R. Shalom Buzaglo in one of the adjunct collections to his comprehensive *Zohar* commentary *Hadrat Melekh*.¹⁰² However, no contemporary of Luria authenticated it and even Avraham Azulai cast aspersions on its authenticity.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, the commentary's conclusions influenced subsequent recensions of *Ez Hayyim* Vital's writings and R. Yisrael Sarug's *Limmudei Azilot*.¹⁰⁴ Both Meroz and Avivi believe the text reflects an intermediate point in the development of Luria's ideas.¹⁰⁵ According to the version published by Avivi, the commentary begins as follows:

Before the *Azilot*, he and his name were one alone and they would fill whole worlds. It arose in his simple will to create all the worlds and to benefit those besides himself. He contracted [*zimzem*] his *Shekhinah* and withdrew his light upward. The remaining place in which he could create the worlds was left vacant.

The light returned and withdrew upward through the power of the *Din* that was there, for all the return of the light was only from the side of *Din*. From that same power of the *Din* that was there, a vessel was created.

The commentary emphasizes a number of themes that became central to subsequent Kabbalah. The first is that the act of creation necessitated God's withdrawal, or *zimzum*. Since there is no place empty of God, this had to be a contraction inward, creating an empty void. This withdrawal was an act of *Din*, that is, the judging, sometimes harsh aspect of the divine, based in God's propensity for disengaging from the phenomenal world. Hence, the *Hormanuta* tradition provides an exegetical origin for the Lurianic notion of *zimzum*, the divine withdrawal. This doctrine, and that of the subsequent *shevirah*, the breaking of the vessels, define the existential mood of the Lurianic tradition.

Luria did not coin the idea of divine withdrawal.¹⁰⁶ The idea of *zimzum*, if not the name itself, was certainly current in the kabbalistic world of the sixteenth century. Shim'on Lavi independently approximated the doctrine of *zimzum* in his doctrine of the hidden light,¹⁰⁷ and it appears in Hayyim Vital's *Zohar* commentaries that predate his encounter with Luria.¹⁰⁸ Cordovero adopted the idea of *zimzum* from its earlier formulators, and certain elements of his presentation found their way into Lurianic writings.¹⁰⁹ The *zimzum* doctrine agreed with his philosophical sensibilities. According to his reasoning, the withdrawal of God into God's self was necessarily the first act of creation, for prior to creation there was literally nothing besides God. Hence, Vital's "*Drush to Sagis*"¹¹⁰ invokes the midrashic notion of the *zimzum* of the *Shekhinah* "between the curtains of the Ark," which also appears in the writings of Cordovero.¹¹¹ Luria's employment of the idea of divine withdrawal, particularly as applied to the *Hormanuta* texts, portrayed *zimzum* in the existential terms that would become normative in subsequent Kabbalah.

Having established the phenomenon of *zimzum*, the *Hormanuta* commentary explores two subsidiary effects of the descent of *buzina de-kardinuta*. These aspects are the creation of the void and the formation of the vessels into which the divine light is poured. The existence of the vessels is an area in which Cordovero's advocacy of the relationship of *azmut* and *kelim* was accepted by Luria's disciples.¹¹² The commentary details the creation of the vessels:

There the residue [*reshimu*] remained from the light that had left, in the vacant place to which the light had initially extended. The residue that remained was made into the first vessel. This vessel filled all of the empty space. The vessel, which was made through the force and root of all the *gevurot*, and the residue, which was the light, mingled. The vessel was large, and the light returned to it, to create the worlds and give them life. The amount that was there earlier did not descend back, for were it so, it would be impossible to create a world. A tiny bit of it returned, which was YU"D [י"ד]. It entered this vessel, sorted the residue, which was the light, from the vessel, and the vessel was made smaller. The light, which is the residue, was clothed in this vessel.

This ingathering created a void, an empty space left by the *zimzum*. The principle of the void was destined to take on great existential weight in the thought of

subsequent kabbalists. The void is referred to as the “empty measure” and as the first vessel;¹¹³ the “*Drush to Sagis*” makes clear that “before that, there was nothing besides God; even inanimate rocks require the divine spark.”¹¹⁴ Luria and his students, like Cordovero, wrestled with the notion of the emptiness left over from the act of emanation, the emptiness that is not in the realm of the *sefirot* alone but is also above the *sefirot*, the “place” that lies between *Ein Sof* and *Keter*. In his commentary to the *Idrot*, Yosef ibn Tabul conflates the images of the four worlds of creation, *zimzum*, and the creation of the void: “When it arose in his simple will to emanate the world, *Azilot* and *Briah* and *Yezirah* and *Assiyah*, he contracted his light and left empty space [*makom panui*], and in it he emanated all of the worlds.”¹¹⁵ In the *Hormanuta* commentary associated with Luria, the void is the space that contains the vessels:

There was left, below, an empty measure to emanate the *Azilot*. Everything was clarified in thought, for thought is the YU”D that clarifies everything. The first vessel is the primordial ether called the *tehiru*,¹¹⁶ for it is clear and very glistening, and it is not a vessel except for the merit of the Infinity that shines within it.

The second action after God’s withdrawal was the creation of vessels in the newly created void. This understanding presupposes the acceptance of the distinction between the divine essence and the vessels that contain the emanations—*Azmut* and *kelim*, as portrayed by Cordovero. The vessels were made out of the residual light that remained after the contraction. The vessels are then refilled, in a more measured way, with the divine light. Then, in an act of internal catharsis, the divine delight produced a space within the Infinite for other realities besides God.¹¹⁷

Echoing Cordovero’s reading, the creation of the vessels drew on the theory of *azmut* and *kelim*, the essential and instrumental concepts of classical Kabbalah. The first vessel as described by Luria is an expansion of Cordovero’s idea of the various *sefirot* being concentrically contained, in potentia, in the first.

The commentary continues:

The YU”D split the vessel. It descended below into the empty space. It returned and withdrew into the first vessel. Upon its return it was made into the vessel of *Azilot* in this empty place. This is “descending and not descending” for in the beginning, the light descends below, and it does not descend, in that it returns and withdraws in order that he may create that vessel and create the worlds.

The author adapts the trope “second vessel” from the laws of ritual implements. As in the laws of ritual purity and dietary restrictions, the second vessel produces a muting and countering force for another action. In this case, the descent of the light to a second vessel has a qualifying effect on whatever action is transpiring. Illustrating this idea, the commentary continues:

The second vessel is darker than the first, for it was made from the return of the great light and the other from the return of the small light, this one from one return of light and this one from two returns. When the light descends below to the second vessel [*keli sheni*], it has no countenance [*parzuf*] except for the power of the extent of the soul [*neshamah*] that is within it. The power of the *Gevurah*

came from the power of the YU”D, which is the rock that is inert [*Golem*], and extends this way and that. According to its extension, thus does the vessel expand in order to be entered.

The image of the contraction of the divine light is also present in another Lurianic text, the “*Drush* given to R. Shlomo Sagis” by Hayyim Vital.¹¹⁸ This text also describes the creation of the void as a product of the paradox of *zimzum*, which is followed by the emanation of the Primordial Man. The “*Drush* to Sagis” makes clear that “before that, there was nothing besides God, for even inanimate rocks require the divine spark,”¹¹⁹ until the *zimzum* left open an empty space.

The writings of the later redactor Meir Poppers emphasized the creation of the void, which contained the created worlds. In his collection of *Zohar* commentaries, *Zohar ha-Raki’a*, the creation of the void seems to be the most important aspect of the process, as opposed to the absence of God:

When it arose in his will to emanate the worlds, he contracted himself in the middle of his light to the surrounding [sides] and emanated to all the worlds within the empty space. Behold! The empty and voided space in which he emanated the first emanation, that is called by us the Primordial Man [*Adam Kadmon*], more primordial than all the primordial things.¹²⁰

The innovations of the *Hormanuta* commentary—*zimzum*, the creation of the vessels, and the leaving of the void—are echoed in another early Lurianic text, R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s *Drush Hefzi Bah*. This work is significant because it bypassed the editing of R. Hayyim Vital.¹²¹ In this composition, Ibn Tabul portrays the *Hormanuta* account in terms of the *parzufim*, or countenances, the central innovation of the *Idra* literature.¹²² Otherwise, *Drush Hefzi Bah* and the *Hormanuta* commentary are similar, although from redaction to redaction, some terminological confusion remains.¹²³

Ibn Tabul portrays *buzina de-kardinuta* as the source of *Din*, which, along with the *sefirah Malkhut*, has its root in *Ein Sof*, a doctrine that would recur in Shabbatean literature.¹²⁴ Luria echoes this notion in his *Sifra de-Zeniuta* commentary, which maintains that “*buzina de-kardinuta* is the source of the *dinnim* which are hidden in the womb of the mother, *Binah*, from whom the *dinnim* are aroused.”¹²⁵ Similarly, the “*Drush* to Sagis” emphasizes that *Din*, “which was like a handbreadth in the great sea,” was gathered together to form a mass, or “*golem*,” and from this mass extended the four worlds of creation, into which the emanated light was released.¹²⁶ It is clear that the earliest Lurianic tradition identified the *buzina de-kardinuta* as having its origins in *Din*, particularly the *dinnim* that have their root in the higher *sefirah Binah*. The residue of divinity, which is called *reshimu* and is left inside the void, is also constructed from *Din*.¹²⁷ Luria had generally been circumspect about positing this aspect of the *zimzum* doctrine, because if *Din* originated in *zimzum*, then evil had its origins in the withdrawal of God. This would imply that evil is enfranchised as apposite to God, a boldly dualistic theory. This possibility was qualified by the later redactor Meir Poppers, who pointed out that “anything with a limit or measure is only *Din*, for the nature of *Hesed* would be to expand endlessly.”¹²⁸ This emphasis on the origins of *Din* in the processes of *zimzum*

may be the reason for the isolation of *Drush Hefzi Bah* and the mysterious *Hormanuta* commentary from the other works of the Lurianic canon.¹²⁹

The *Hormanuta* commentary and *Drush Hefzi Bah* demonstrate that the *Drushei Azilut* blended extraneous elements into the original *Hormanuta* myth. They pulled away from close exegesis of the *Zohar*. This departure may have occurred at the outset of the tradition, for the imagery of emptiness and void presaged the Lurianic interest in vessels and flowing light. In these accounts, the action of *buzina de-kardinuta* not only originates at the most transcendent levels of the Godhead but also functions at the lower *sefirot*, where the breaking of the vessels concentrates elements of the *sefirah Din*, or harsh judgment. The divine light that has been gathered is then allowed to escape.¹³⁰ This scattering of the forces of judgment, and their eventual concentration and implosion, creates the present chaos of existence as envisioned in Lurianic theory.

She'ashu'a

In incorporating new elements in the transition from the *Hormanuta* accounts to the *Drushei Azilut*, it is unclear whether the kabbalists consciously adopted an old myth or uncritically applied a received idea for their own ends. One example of the resurfacing of a lost tradition appended to another through the processes of *Zohar* commentary is the tradition of divine play, or *she'ashu'a*, which seems to have maintained itself through the hidden history of the Kabbalah.¹³¹ The word *she'ashu'a* is most commonly used in referring to a monarch, after the fashion of rabbinic parable, who wants to “delight” or “delight with himself.” The term *she'ashu'a* reasserted itself in the writings of Cordovero¹³² and the *Drushei Azilut* in a classic example of a phenomenon common in Kabbalah, the spontaneous recrudescence of ancient motifs in later teachings.¹³³

The divine play, in combination with the various images of *buzina de-kardinuta*, implies a phallogocentric eroticism. In his voluminous commentary *Aderet Eliahu*, Elijah the Ba'al Shem of Worms described the *she'ashu'a* as being the phallic extension (*hitpashhut*) of the divine, to bring about the “engraving.”¹³⁴ A similarly tumescent image appears in Ibn Tabul's commentary to the *Idra Rabbah*,¹³⁵ which describes the “rising of the will” as the force that “excites the feminine waters” of the divine.

Yisrael Sarug's construction of the material incorporates many related aspects of this eroticism. His association of the *buzina de-kardinuta* with the letter yod, as signified by the notes of cantillation, also invokes the role of the *sefirah Hokhmah* as the source of seminal seed.¹³⁶ The *she'ashu'a* in which *Ein Sof* “rejoices with himself”¹³⁷ is portrayed as consisting of ten “shakings” (*na'anu'im*), an autoerotic theme that has been noted by Wolfson.¹³⁸ In the early, anonymous Lurianic composition “Before the Azilut”¹³⁹ and in Sarug's *Limmudei Azilut*,¹⁴⁰ the *Ein Sof* rejoiced (*mishta'ashe'a*) with himself before “exploding in thought.”

Bracha Sack has noted that the difference between Cordovero's notion of *she'ashu'a* and that of his forebears was its emphasis on the internalized and solipsistic nature of God's existence prior to the creation of the world.¹⁴¹ God did not rejoice with

any other but only in himself. The way out of this solipsism is to create the world, the divine other. This solipsistic usage is also present in Cordovero's well-known parable from his *Shi'ur Qomah* in which *Ein Sof* itself is compared to a sage who "delights with himself" (*mishta'ashe'a be-azmo*), erecting a palace and gardens and wandering through them.

The *Zohar* also presented the trope, so widespread among subsequent theorists, that God "wanted to benefit the world" as an act of love to an unspecified "other." The aforementioned example from the *Idra Rabbah* specifying that "when it arose in the will of the Great White Head to do a goodness to his dear ones . . ." ¹⁴² implies that the emanation of creation involves interaction, a desire and act of love toward an *other*. Cordovero even insisted that God's impulse in withdrawing came from a desire for an other, to whom God could express and show the glory of the divine. Lurianic writings stress that God's withdrawal, limitation, and contraction were acts of divine love toward the created world. ¹⁴³

Galante echoes this theme of divine desire, a theme that would become common in the subsequent *drush* literature of the Lurianic tradition. He describes God as wanting to extend his emanation through the worlds, "for as long as all of the emanation was gathered in God's essence, there could be no corporeal existence." In describing this process, Galante makes use of the trope that "God wanted to benefit the world" and therefore commenced creation. ¹⁴⁴

These statements imply that the *Hormanuta* tradition began in an ancient phallocentric myth. The *Zohar* represents a watershed in which the mythic elements were reinterpreted in various ways or otherwise stripped of their associations. However, these associations reappeared among the Safed kabbalists, among Cordovero's students no less than Luria's. All of these remarks imply an earlier, eroticized understanding that reentered the discourse of kabbalists through the *Drushei ha-Azilut*.

The *Hormanuta* texts provided the literary base on which the subsequent *Drushei Azilut* were composed. The first hermeneutic move was to combine the cumulative conclusions of the various recensions, including *Kav ha-Middah* and various fragmentary versions of the account of the *buzina de-kardinuta's* descent into the *tehiru ila'ah*. Other ideas, such as the notion of *zimzum* and *she'ashu'a*, were already in the minds of medieval kabbalists. These doctrines gained credibility as a result of the elegance with which they were employed to elucidate the *Zohar*.

The *Hormanuta* texts' oblique imagery was interpreted as alluding to a number of theological and metaphysical themes in Judaism. They were central to the *Zohar's* contributors and editors, who placed them in central positions in their various canons. The Lurianic principle of *zimzum*, as first portrayed by Luria, Ibn Tabul, Sarug, and Vital, understood the *Hormanuta* texts as blueprints for these doctrines. Such a reading is not unfaithful to the nuances and implications of the texts themselves, especially in conjunction with *Kav ha-Middah*. Lurianic texts employ the *Hormanuta* accounts to launch and anchor their theories of *zimzum*, while Cordovero does not rely on those texts but draws from all over the *Zohar*, using the notion of divine withdrawal to explain all manner of metaphysical situations. ¹⁴⁵

Contemporary research in Kabbalah has stressed the extent to which the conclusions of Isaac Luria and his students may have been a response to the historical vicissitudes of Jewish life in the fifteenth century, particularly the Spanish expul-

sion.¹⁴⁶ Although Gershom Scholem understood the emergence of *zimzum* in the Lurianic myth as a response to the Spanish expulsion, Moshe Idel has pointed out that the idea of *zimzum* developed in Kabbalah over the course of the generation, until it finally coalesced in the doctrines known as “Lurianic.” Idel concludes that it cannot be seen as a response to the Spanish expulsion.

I will address this issue more fully in the last chapter of this study. I would not underestimate the extent to which these interpretations summed up the existential mood of the postexpulsion era, as Scholem argued. It is clear from the material reviewed here that the Safed kabbalists relied on the *Hormanuta* myth as the proof text for their doctrines of divine withdrawal and catastrophe. The development of encompassing theories was motivated by the nature of the proof texts, for the variant readings of the *Hormanuta* myth in the *Zohar*, *Tiqqunim*, and *Matnitin* begged for resolution through an encompassing theory. The *Hormanuta* myth provided the initial exegetical rationale for these traditions, which would eventually overwhelm all of the movements of Kabbalah. It is also true that the later recensions of the Lurianic canon bring an element of literary intensity and pathos that similarly mythologized and inflated the processes of the divine. The writings that carry the weight of pathos and messianic longing are chiefly the later versions by refugee scholars such as Poppers and Ya’akov Zemakh, whereas the earlier material from Luria, Ibn Tabul, and Yonah is more laconic and lacks the emotive nature of the later editions.¹⁴⁷ The emotive content of the Lurianic doctrine is not as present in the initial exegeses of Luria and Ibn Tabul as it is in the tortured and traumatized editions of these later redactors. In the course of the development of the canon, Lurianic writings accumulated a greater messianic pathos. The act of *zimzum* gained emotional and existential weight, as kabbalists contemplated the emptiness that lies at the beginning of existence.

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The Idrot

The Literary Tradition

The mystical premise that God is a force that continually fills the world with divine energy is universal in theosophical Kabbalah, just as it permeates most Western mysticism. Among the boldest presentations of this material in the *Zohar* literature are the texts known as the *Idrot*, or “convocations.” The *Idrot* share a number of common elements: similarities in the framing narratives, overlapping contents, and references to common myths of prehistory. The Safed kabbalists, along with most readers, were in consensus that the *Idrot* were core texts of the *Zohar*.¹ These texts include the *Idra Rabbah* (or “great *Idra*”: *Zohar III* 127b–145a) and the *Idra Zuta* (“lesser *Idra*”: *Zohar III* 287b–296b). A third *Idra*, the *Idra de-Bei Mashkena*, “the *Idra* of the Tabernacle,” is also referred to at the beginning of the *Idra Rabbah*. The terse and oblique *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (*Zohar II* 176b–179a), or “hidden book,”² was considered to be a distillation of the longer works (see appendix).

The eponymous assembly of the *Idra de-Bei Mashkena* is mentioned by the *Idra Rabbah* as having already taken place. This text remains unidentified. Joseph Angel’s *Livnat ha-Sappir* identifies it with a lengthy discourse delivered by R. Shim’on “by the shores of Ginoseret” (*Zohar II* 127a–146b), while the standard editions of the *Zohar* have labeled a brief composition subsequent to R. Shim’on’s death as the text in question (*Zohar II* 122b–123b).³ In fact, the second and third volumes of

The traditional site of the *Idra Rabbah*, in the hills between Meron and Safed.

the *Zohar* contain a number of compositions on the nature of the Tabernacle. They may be related to the lost *Idra de-Bei Mashkena*, albeit shorn of the self-conscious framing devices by which the *Idra* literature is defined. To maintain the literary conventions of the framing narratives of the *Idrot*, the official *Idra de-Bei Mashkena* would have had to include an element of risk. It would, as mentioned by R. Shim'on, have had to involve R. Hamnuna Sabba, and the text ought to refer to itself, rather self-consciously, as an *Idra*. Nonetheless, analysis is limited by the fact that certain *Idra* texts are simply lost, while the role of others awaits scholarly analysis. The text identified in standard *Zohar* editions as the *Idra de-Bei Mashkena* is manifestly not that work because it takes place after R. Shim'on's death and eschews any interest in the Tabernacle. Nonetheless, it is an *Idra* text with the same characteristics of the genre; I will refer to it as the "shorter *Idra*." Although it portrays itself as chronologically late, taking place after R. Shim'on's death, it nonetheless lacks certain elements of the eventual theology of the *Idrot*.

The contents of the *Idrot* detail the structure of the divine body and the paths of the flow of divine effluence into the world. The divine body is made up of the three countenances: *Arikkh Anpin* (which is also called *Attika Kadisha and Attik Yomin*), *Zeir Anpin*, and *Nukvah*. *Arikkh* and *Zeir* are each portrayed in images of masculine physicality, with terms such as the "beard," the "mane," and so forth, whereas *Nukvah* is portrayed as a feminine realm paralleling the function of the *Shekhinah* in other kabbalistic systems. The *Idra Zuta* brings in another factor, recasting the imagery of the *Idra Rabbah* in terms of a further erotic dynamic, the union of the countenances *Abba* and *Imma* ("father" and "mother"). The doctrine of the countenances, in all of their facets, draws on the imagery of the *Hormanuta* material from other traditions of theosophical Kabbalah.

Writings similar to the *Idrot* are to be found elsewhere in the theosophical Kabbalah of the thirteenth century.⁴ Yehudah Liebes also considers certain compositions by contemporaries of Moshe de Leon to be earlier versions of the *Idrot*, albeit without those texts' messianic pathos. These works may have been composed contemporaneously with the *Idrot* from a common model, particularly Gikatilla's *Secret of the Thirteen Attributes*. Another example of a work developed from a common model would be R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*, which has been described by its major scholarly analyst as an example of a "hesitant, inconsistent plagiaristic tendency, which was apparently unaware of itself right up to the end."⁵ Within the *Zohar*, as well, there seem to be early or parallel recensions. For example, an early text related to the illness of Shim'on bar Yoḥai⁶ and a similar section of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*⁷ are considered by Liebes as early recensions of the *Idra Zuta*.⁸ Nevertheless, the number of works that share the characteristic blend of literary style and noetic content remains limited to the texts that refer to themselves, self-consciously, as *Idrot*.

The Framing Narratives

In the *Idra Rabbah* and *Idra Zuta*, the members of Shim'on bar Yoḥai's circle gather, in a setting of awe, gravity, and dread, to recite materials relating to the structure

of the divine and the flow of divinity into present reality. At the climax of each gathering, some perish in mystical ecstasy while beholding the wonders of the Godhead.⁹ The fatefulness of the hour is a recurring theme, and the texts' messianic tone derives from the author's strong sense that time is closing in on him and the members of his fellowship. In the *Idra Rabbah*, R. Shim'on portrays the dilemma of the generation with the following complaint:

How long may we dwell in the place of one pillar? *It is time to act for YHVH, for they have abrogated your Torah!* [Ps. 119:126]. Time is short and the creditor is impatient.¹⁰ A herald cries out every day. But the reapers of the field are few and they are in the edges of the vineyard. They do not look, nor do they know their way.¹¹

The sense of urgency is related to the nature of the times, in which there is the danger that if the recondite mystical doctrine is not spread, then the fate of the world will be turned over to those who have "abrogated (the) Torah."¹²

Rabbi Shim'on then summons the fellows of his circle: his son R. Eliezer, R. Abba, R. Yehudah, R. Yossi bar Ya'akov, R. Yizhak, R. Hezekiah bar Rav, R. Hiyya, R. Yossi, and R. Yesa.¹³ Of these, the most significant are R. Shim'on, R. Eliezer, and R. Abba, who are similarly juxtaposed in other zoharic narratives.¹⁴ The comrades gather at the grove by the *idra*, or threshing floor, and swear an oath of spiritual fealty to R. Shim'on.¹⁵ The literary tone of the accounts of the gathering of the comrades is comparable to the resolution of warriors approaching a fateful struggle.

In most sections of the *Zohar*, there is a distinction between the romantic setting of the framing narrative and the content of the homily offered. The *Idrot* deliberately blur this distinction. The fellows of the mystical group present the *tiqqun*; that is, they describe an aspect of the divine physiognomy, particularly the "beard" of the primordial Adam. At that point, the same feature of the divine countenance is "restored." In the words of Yehudah Liebes, "mythopoesis is myth itself,"¹⁶ for the act of the *tiqqun* (restoration) literally "creates" the cosmic reality between the framing narrative and the noetic, doctrinal content of the work.

The *Idra Zuta* makes use of a different literary motif, since it takes place at R. Shim'on's deathbed. As his disciples gather, he refers to other instances of risk and spiritual peril. These include a prior illness, when he was accompanied by the historical figure R. Pinchas ben Yair (*Zohar Hadash* 18d–19a), and an incident in which R. Isaac was pursued by the angel of death (*Zohar I* 217b–218b). Rabbi Shim'on calls upon R. Abba to record the events and R. Eliezer to explain them, for "the dead will not praise the Lord" (Ps. 115:17). Two other seminal figures, R. Hamnuna Sabba¹⁷ and R. Pinchas ben Yair,¹⁸ return for the final *Idra*, as R. Shim'on explains the most recondite aspects of the Godhead.¹⁹ In one case (*Zohar I* 4a–8b), R. Hamnuna Sabba is associated with the countenance *Attika Kadisha*, and this amalgam of *Attika/R. Hamnuna* appears at the beginning of the *Idra Zuta* (288a).²⁰

As in the composition *Sabba de-Mishpatim*,²¹ the *Idrot* are punctuated by periodic expressions of ambivalence about R. Shim'on's revelation of the secrets of the divine.²² God's anthropomorphic nature is particularly controversial,²³ so that

R. Shim'on invokes Deuteronomy (27:15): "*Cursed is anyone who makes an idol or an earthen image and keeps it secret*, to which all of the comrades assent by answering, 'Amen!'" Similarly, another member of the circle, R. Ḥiyya, echoes the misgivings of Jeremiah (1:7) about his maturity and readiness to receive divine inspiration, for, like the giving of the tablets at Sinai, "the whole world trembled upon hearing the word" (*IR* 133a). In the *Idra Zuta*, R. Shim'on expresses remorse for his earlier revelations, saying: "Perhaps, God forbid, it has been decreed that we should be punished because matters have been revealed through us that had not been previously revealed since Moses stood at Mount Sinai. . . . Of what worth am I if they were punished because of this?"²⁴

These reservations generally give way to assertions of enthusiasm and joy that the secrets are being revealed. In the *Idra Zuta*, R. Shim'on joyfully exclaims that "it is time to reveal everything . . . These words shine in my heart with wholeness, love, and awe. . . . Until now I have only hinted and have not stated it until these days" (*IZ* 290a).²⁵ In any case, the revelations were incomplete:

All the words of the *Idra* are pleasant, and they were hidden away until this day. Until now they are revealed only to the ones who entered and departed, for I was afraid to reveal them and now they are revealed, and I did so only that I might not enter in shame before the palace. The Holy Blessed One and all of the *zaddikim* agreed, and so all will be invited to the celebration of my passing, my *hilulah*. (*IZ* 291a)

Life, in turn, has imitated art, as the practice of celebrating the personality cult of R. Shim'on and his fellowship has become established among kabbalists and enthusiasts in a number of Jewish communities. The framing narrative of the *Idra* was very important in setting the tone of subsequent spiritual circles and kabbalistic movements, as will be made clear in the last chapter of this study. According to one of the most important students of Luria, the standard mystical experience of the main sections of the *Zohar* involved only the lower countenances. To access and set forth the highest aspects of God, the special, hazardous convocation of the *Idra* was called for.²⁶

Setting Forth the *Tiqqun*

An important question and technical point to master in understanding the *Idrot* is the use of the term *tiqqun*, and one must resolve its multifaceted uses *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, in particular, uses the term to mean "embellishment," the principle of an ongoing verbal riff on the nature of a given symbol or passage.²⁷ The term is very multivalenced in the *Idrot*, meaning *sefirot*, countenances (*parzufim*); or aspects of the divine beard. The act of visualizing an aspect "fixes" or "sets" (*metaqgen*) the *tiqqun*.²⁸ The very flow of energy from the divine *anthropos* is also known as a *tiqqun*. Rabbi Shim'on explains:

Thirteen qualities engraved before me and shining like candles. When you explain them all, it will rise and they will be fixed, crowned and hidden in the

secrets of the beard's *tiqqunim*. Each *tiqqun*, when explained, sits like a king over his armies. Be aware that such an array will not be until the days of the Messiah. (IR 132b)

As has been stated before, *tiqqun* is also a synonym for *sefrab*, as is the term *atarah*, "crown."²⁹ The *tiqqun* that is prepared becomes the *tiqqun* that is effected, illuminating the *tiqqun* of the divine body itself. Hence, a *tiqqun* itself will be described as "running in a full *tiqqun*, flowing down in a full *tiqqun*" (IR 131a).

The act of "setting forth the *tiqqun*" is actually a self-immolation. It leads to the deaths of R. Yossi bar Ya'akov, R. Yesa, and R. Hezekiah, who have been most successful in their act of embodiment. In the initial framing narrative, each of the fellowship was to "set forth one aspect" (*metaken had tiqqun*). Luria's student Yosef ibn Tabul described the process as the mystic's becoming a "vehicle" (*merkavah*) for the countenance:

RaSHB"Y and his comrades implied the ten aspects of the countenance of *Zeir Anpin*, so that they were a vehicle for *Zeir Anpin*. They explained *Arikkh* and *Abba-and-Imma*, but they were not a vehicle for the higher countenances, so there came a time to set forth *Arikkh*.³⁰

The risk for the rabbis derives from the dangers of revealing the secrets. Prior to the ceremony, they are seated in places corresponding to the countenances. Each rabbi "sets forth the *tiqqun*" by describing an aspect of the divine *anthropos* and embodying the features of a countenance. As the rabbis embody that aspect of the body of God, they are absorbed into it and become agents of it. As a result of this act of mystical unification, the earthly divine presence, the *Shekhinah*, unites with the Godhead in a perfected union, the moment when, as Yehudah Liebes put it, "mythopoesis is myth itself."³¹ The order of the *tiqqun* must be from the top downward, "for it is the absence of *tiqqun* at a higher level that causes disturbance at the level below it, and it is the higher level, once it has undergone the *tiqqun*, that brings about the *tiqqun* of that below it."³² As each rabbi presents his description of the beard curling and cascading down the divine visage, he risks immolation by positioning himself directly in the flow of divine energy. They "act out" the catharsis of the divine union, immersing themselves in the metaphor of the beard (IR 141a–b).

The *tiqqun* is also a source of gnosis, the acquiring of deeper esoteric knowledge. Rabbi Hezekiah begins his presentation of the second *tiqqun* of *Atika* with a testimony to his own experience: "I once saw the glorious light of the high candle, shining to every side. I asked the meaning of what I had seen and was told 'this is the second *tiqqun*: *forgiving iniquity*'" (IR 132b). In Gikatilla's parallel presentation of this material, this light is compared to that which shone from the face of Moses.³³

In the *Idra Rabbah*, the attending rabbis are physically arranged according to the *tiqqun* that they present.³⁴ Each presentation is punctuated by an exhortation from R. Shim'on, who exclaims:

Now the world is perfumed! . . . All the lights come through this holy seal. . . . I witness by the highest heavens that I now see what no man has seen, from the second time that Moses ascended to Mount Sinai, the face that shines like the sun, like the shining face of Moses, which will someday heal the world!³⁵

The *Idra Zuta*'s presentation of *Zeir's tiqqunim* has a strong elegiac quality, an awareness that R. Shim'on will perish once union is achieved. Nonetheless, he declares that "the words of the *tiqqun* will delight all the worlds, that are hidden as they rise to the curtain of *Attika*." He notes:

When I began to speak, the comrades did not know that all these holy things were being awakened here. Nonetheless, happy is their portion! Israel cleaves to God, more so in the world to come, in which those who cleave to the Holy Blessed One in this world are not released from the knot of life. . . . Everyone is blessed and the elder of Israel is blessed by this! (*IZ* 295a)

In the presentation, the culmination of the account is the description of the actual moment of union of *Attika* and *Zeir* and the feminine aspect, *Nukvah*. This is the most perilous time, when the beard, in its metaphorical role as surrogate phallus, extends into the feminine realm. The exchange of energies in that act is the propelling fact of all existence. By interceding at the very juncture of the exchange of divine power, R. Shim'on and his acolytes are present at the catalyst of existence. It is therefore no surprise that a number of them die in the divine orgasm, immolated in the erotic heat of the union. In sefirotic terms, the position of R. Yossi bar Ya'akov, R. Hezekiah, and R. Yeisa in the presentation of the *tiqqunim* was at the point of the *sefirot Tiferet, Neẓakh, and Hod*, the *sefirot* that are directly at the point of divine junction, while in the *Idra Zuta*, R. Shim'on is himself the *sefirah Yesod*, and so he dies at the juncture (*IZ* 296a).³⁶

When, at the conclusion of the *Idra Rabbah*, R. Yossi bar R. Ya'akov, R. Hezekiah, and R. Yeisa are immolated in the orgasm of the cosmos, they describe the moment of juncture of the male and female countenances (*Zohar III* 144a–b). Their mortal rapture comes as they visualize the "man on the throne" of Ezekiel's chariot vision, which is the inner nature of the divine union. Witnessed by the others, their souls are borne aloft by angels to the "hidden storehouses" and the "mountains of pure balsam," their deaths a fulfillment of the "*tiqqun* of the *Shekhinah*."³⁷ This theme of immolation is directly related to the image of the four who entered the Pardes, as is particularly evinced by the phrase "to enter and depart in peace,"³⁸ although in this case, "ten entered and seven emerged." The important Lurianist R. Moshe Zakhut attributed their deaths to their simply having been absorbed and immolated, "for they cleaved too much to the holiness."³⁹

Upon the death of the three comrades, Elijah the prophet arrives, "radiant with sparks of divinity" (*IR* 144b) and declares that the three comrades have died as a sacrifice, that they are "the portion of the Blessed Holy One" in what would come to be called the *Hilulah de-RaShB*"Y, the celebration of the eros of R. Shim'on.

As the narrative of the *Idra Zuta* proceeds, R. Abba asserts his narrative voice. The conclusion is a powerful recounting, in the first person, of R. Shim'on's departure:

When the great spark [R. Shim'on] had finished this remark, he lifted his hands, wept, and smiled. He wished to reveal one thing, of which he said, "All my life I have been painfully preoccupied with this thing, and now they are not permitting me [to reveal it]." He revived, sat up, murmuring. He prostrated himself three times, and nobody could look in his direction, let alone at him. He said,

“Mouth, mouth, that has merited to all this, may your fountain not dry up, let it flow unceasingly! This is *the river flowing out of Eden* [Gen. 2:10], *a gushing fountain whose waters never fail* [Isa. 58:11].” . . . He had not finished saying the word “life”⁴⁰ when his words were silenced. I wrote, and I meant to write more, and I did not hear. I could not lift my head, for the light was so great, so that I could not look. I trembled, and I heard a voice call, *length of days and years of life* [Prov. 3:2], and another voice responding, *He will ask life from you* [Ps. 21:5]. All that day fire surrounded the house, no one could approach it, they were unable because of the light and the fire. . . . All that day I lay on the ground and moaned. After the fire had departed, I saw that the Holy spark, the holy of Holies, had departed from the world. He was robed in his prayer shawl, lying on his right side, smiling.⁴¹

The account returns to the third person, as R. Eliezer kisses his father’s hands and refers again to Pinchas ben Yair. The house is suffused with a lovely fragrance, and the comrades leave the house. Townspeople from Sephoris and Meron vie to bury R. Shim’on in their districts. When the bier is borne out of the house, it rises through the air in a burst of flame, and a divine voice rings out: “Gather to the *hikulah* of R. Shim’on bar Yoḥai!” At the burial site in Meron, another heavenly voice is heard proclaiming:

This is the man who made the earth tremble, who angered the monarchies, who silenced many detractors in the heavens on this day. This is R. Shim’on ben Yoḥai, whose Master praises him every day. Happy is his portion above and below! How many supernal treasures are set aside for him! (*IZ* 296b)

The Death of the Kings

These are the kings who reigned in the Land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites. Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city was Dinhabah . . . Yovav . . . Husham . . . Hadah . . . Samlah . . . Saul of Reḥovot on the river . . . Ba’al Ḥanan son of Akhbor. . . . And when Ba’al Ḥanan son of Akhbor died, Hadar succeeded him as king; the name of his city was Pau and his wife’s name was Mehitabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Mei-Zahav.

Genesis 36:31–39

The themes of upheaval and catastrophe invoked by the *Idra* literature are not limited to the framing narratives. The *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* are haunted by an incident in prehistory, the mysterious account of the “death of the kings.”⁴² This tradition maintains that the kings of Edom mentioned in Genesis 36 are an allegory in an internal myth. It has its origins in a midrashic tradition, which states that God had made many worlds prior to the present one but then discarded them.⁴³ The *Idrot* expound on this allusion in a number of ways, such as: “We learn in the hidden book that before the *Attika de-Attikin* prepared his attributes, he brought the kings, gathered the kings, and arranged the kings,⁴⁴ and they could not survive

until he had crushed them and put them away after a time" (*IR* 135a). The *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* do not present this myth in a systematic fashion; they merely allude to a myth known to the author(s). Gikatilla, similarly, implied that the account was too esoteric for general circulation, maintaining to his audience that "if you are worthy, you will hear tremendous traditions regarding this from mouth to mouth, things that represent the furnace of the world."⁴⁵

The *Sifra de-Zeniuta*'s allusion to the death of the kings of Edom states that "the primordial kings died and their unions were not found, and the land came to naught. Until the start of the desire of desires [*kisufa de-kisufin*] the garments of glory were perfected and stored" (*SdZ* 176b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta* links the death of the kings of Edom to an incomplete or stillborn union, which wasted the "land" (*arez*). Divine energy was then forced to emanate through a series of garments, which, as has been noted elsewhere,⁴⁶ were called the "garments of glory." The *Zohar* compares them to patterns woven into a curtain or veil that become indistinct (*IR* 128a) or to the sparks that fly off a hammer.⁴⁷ These sparks were the detritus of the divine mind, the necessary product of the cleansing of the divine consciousness.

The *Idra Rabbah* explains that "before *Attika de-Attikin* prepared his attributes," that is, before he emanated the *sefirot* in a balanced way, he "brought, gathered, and measured out" the kings. "*Attika de-Attikin* prepared his attributes, he created the kings, who could not survive" (*IR* 135a, 142a). The "gathering and measuring" of the kings took place so that the *sefirot* might emanate in the proper balance. The *Idra* literature compared the balanced emanation of the *sefirot* to a number of images of balance, complementarity, and sexual continence, such as the observation that "one who does not encompass the male and female is called a partial body and no blessing can rest on him" (*IZ* 296a).

The *Idra Rabbah* also explains the instability of unbalanced *sefirot* in erotic terms (*IR* 142a). According to this understanding, *Nukvah*, the feminine countenance, was "unperfumed" until the quality of transcendent loving-kindness (*Hesed Elyon*) descended, at which time "the *tiqqunim* of *nukvah* were perfumed in *Yesod*," the *sefirah* that regulates sexuality. The nation of Edom symbolizes the source of the powers of judgment (*dinnim*), which is associated with the color red (Heb. *adam*). *Hesed*, the realm of loving-kindness, descended and nestled in the mouth of *Yesod*, and "they were suffused, *Din* in *Din*." In sefirotic terms, the original worlds were not balanced appropriately in the proper measures of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*, which balance, complement, and counter one another. This balance is the "weighing on the scale," literally the hanging scale of antiquity. The early kings who are not "weighed on the scale" are constructed in a world based on the causalities of judgment, untempered by the quality of mercy. Certain names in the original text, such as Mehitabel, Matred, Mei-Zahav (literally "golden waters") (Gen. 36:39), and Edom, refer to the extraneous aspects of *Din* as it is symbolized by the image of gold or the color red (*adam*).⁴⁸

The "weighing on the scale" (*SdZ* 177a; *IZ* 290a) also refers to the sexual complementarity embodied in the *parzufim* *Abba* and *Imma* and the union of the *Zeir* and *Nukvah*.⁴⁹ Similarly, R. Shim'on avers that he can only reveal the secrets to those who are "weighed in the balance" (*Zohar III* 141a), or, as Luria put it: "The kings died because they were not in the *tiqqun* of the scale."⁵⁰ In his commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, Luria further implied that the balanced emanation

tion was also essential to channel the flow of *Hokhmah*. He defines this in the terse and telegraphic style of his early writings:

The book that is weighed in the scale, the scale that is called male and female, as it says (*Zohar I 255a*) those that are married are weighed in the scale, male and female, these with the others. And we learn in the *Idra Zuta* (290a) that when the hiddenmost *Attika Kadisha* wanted to set everything forth, it was done according to male and female. They could not exist in any way other than through male and female, so that Wisdom, encompassing everything, when it wanted to shine, could not shine except through male and female. This spreading wisdom, found in male and female, is the Wisdom of Wisdom-Father, Understanding-Mother, weighed in one scale. (*ShMR*, p. 105)

The words of the *Idra* are all “weighed in the scale” (*IR 141a*), and their contemplation and dissemination are restricted to those who have been similarly weighed, “not to those who entered and did not leave” (*IR 142a*). This last trope refers to the casualties of another mystical quest, the expedition to the garden of mystical wisdom undertaken by R. Akiva and his comrades and detailed in a number of rabbinic sources (B.T. *Hagigah* 14a). The queen of Edom, Mehitabel bat Matred, is invoked as an example of a balanced union.⁵¹ Mehitabel is the consort of Hadar, who is associated with the “goodly fruit” (*pri ez hadar*, Lev. 23:40) or citron, a symbol of the *Shekhinah*, which suckles the divine emanation from both *sefirot Hesed* and *Din*.⁵² The very name Bela ben Beor, which is made up of the verb roots *BL*, “to swallow,” and *B'R*, “to eradicate,” implies that the kingship was fated to collapse.⁵³

The *Idra Zuta* portrays the aftermath of the death of the kings as resulting in the “*tiqqunim* of the King and the Holy City.” The “King and the Holy City” symbolically represent the male and female countenances, for “now she is upheld by virtue of the male that dwells with her” (*IZ 292a*). According to this understanding, the kings of Edom were destroyed because “before the world was created they did not look upon each other face-to-face; therefore, the primordial worlds were destroyed and the earlier world was made with no *tiqqun*” (*IZ 292a–b*).⁵⁴ Therefore, the lack of a face-to-face embrace for the male and the female countenances is the source of the disjunction of the worlds in prehistory. These aspects were reintegrated into the divine superstructure when the worlds were emanated again.

The *Idra Rabbah* explains that the kings could not survive because they did not have the “*tiqqun* of Adam.” This *tiqquna de-Adam* was the emanation of the *sefirot* in their anthropomorphic model, in which various *sefirot* are balanced in a series of triune structures along the model of a human body or the Tree of Life. This balancing allowed negative aspects to be included in the divine superstructure and not render it unstable. Hence, the *tiqqun* practiced by the comrades of the *Idra* has, as its purpose, the expediting of a stable and balanced emanation into the world, through the balanced invocation of the countenances *Attika*, *Zeir*, and *Nukvah* (*IR 144a*). The *tiqqun* of Adam encompasses a number of elements: the balancing of the countenances, the face-to-face embrace of union, and the balancing of the *sefirot*. Luria refers to teachings derived from the Song of Songs, which states that the *sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut* will not be unified face-to-face until the “days of King Solomon,” clearly a reference to a post-Messianic era.⁵⁵

The account of the kings of Edom alludes to a vast prehistory of cosmic upheaval that was among the original sources for the existence of evil. Interestingly, exegeses of the death of the kings returned to reexaminations of the biblical texts themselves, and such biblical exegeses are characteristic of Cordoverean and Lurianic traditions.⁵⁶ This foreshadowing of divine catastrophe is mentioned as a principle in the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* and provided a basis for the later Lurianic myth.⁵⁷ This notion of the necessity of destruction, sacrifice, and chaos would figure prominently when the Lurianic myth was brought to bear on the *Idra* traditions.⁵⁸

Cross-referencing in the *Idrot*

The *Idra* texts are related to one another in both form and content. They are also distinguished by certain patterns of cross-referencing and allusions to lost works. The particular profusion of these references prove the interrelations of the *Idrot* as a literary genre. The *Idrot* make myriad references to “our *matnita*” (*IZ* 294b–295a) and “our *baraita*” (*IZ* 293b, 294a), and other statements of “the *Idra*.”⁵⁹ Cross-referencing in the *Zohar* is not unusual. The *Idrot*, however, are particularly distinguished by this feature.

References to actual events are mentioned in the framing narratives. In the *Idra Zuta*, for instance, as R. Shim'on lies on his deathbed, he refers to a prior illness, when he was healed by R. Pinchas ben Yair.⁶⁰ Rabbi Shim'on also refers to an incident in which a member of the fellowship, R. Isaac, was pursued by the angel of death.⁶¹ In the *Idra Rabbah*, Elijah the prophet refers to the time he saved R. Hamnuna Sabba from catastrophe (*IR* 144b).

Sifra de-Zeniuta

The most striking instances of cross-referencing in the *Idrot* are to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (*Zohar II* 176b–179a). This terse and oblique little work, or “hidden book,” was considered to be a distillation of the conclusions of the *Idrot*.⁶² This work is often glibly portrayed as being the “Mishnah” for the “Gemara” of the *Idrot*. The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* is also a commentary to the first chapter of Genesis, and it is possible to read it as melding the conclusions of the *Idrot* into the structure of a creation midrash.

The record of contemporary quotation of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* further obscures its origins. There seems to be no trace of it in the Hebrew writings of Moshe de Leon,⁶³ while R. Joseph Angeler's first work, “Twenty-four Secrets,” quotes only from the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* and not from the rest of the *Zohar*.⁶⁴ Moreover, there are serious discrepancies between the citations of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* as they appear in the *Idrot* and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* text that appears in printed editions of the *Zohar*. Often quotations are made, ostensibly from *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, that are not to be found in the extant texts. Clearly, the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* were distributed unevenly and in variant editions among the kabbalists of thirteenth-century Castile.

In some cases, there is a close correspondence between the *Idra* and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.⁶⁵ In other cases, the *Idra* will gloss a text or expand on a mere allusion from the shorter work.⁶⁶ In these sections, the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* is not quoted directly, but its elliptical, oblique style is paraphrased and interpreted.⁶⁷ Sometimes the *Idra* will allude to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, interpreting what is, in the shorter work, merely an allusion.⁶⁸ At other times the emphases of the quotation are rather different from the apparent original intent of the words.⁶⁹ Other paraphrases are even farther afield, in that the *Idra* allusion has only the most general relationship to anything in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.⁷⁰

The *Idra Zuta*'s two references to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* are also a paraphrase of a number of prior sources. At one point the *Idra Zuta* acknowledges a doctrinal discrepancy between its position and that of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.⁷¹ In a number of instances in the *Idra Rabbah*, no parallel is apparent.⁷²

These discrepancies lead, inevitably, to the question: Did the author/editor of the *Idrot* have a different version of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* than the one that was eventually published? And leaving that question aside, which is the earlier text of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*? Was the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* compiled as a series of allusions to the *Idrot*, which were already in existence, or did it predate the longer compositions? Was it composed as a shorter version of the *Idrot*? If so, was it composed before or after? Is it the work of the same author as the *Idrot*?⁷³

The status of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* presents many questions for scholarship. Liebes has pointed out that there seems to be no trace of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* in the Hebrew writings of Moshe de Leon.⁷⁴ Clearly the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that we have before us is not the one referred to in either of the *Idrot*, so shared authorship is unlikely. Moreover, the self-consciousness with which the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* refers to itself implies that it is the central version, the ur-text.⁷⁵ If theosophical Kabbalah is a mysticism of language, then the medium of mystical practice is not merely the oral riffing on linguistic tropes but also the composition of new textual variants. In such cases, the act of *tiqqun* truly becomes the act of "embellishment" of a hidden proof text.⁷⁶

Lost Compositions

References in the *Idrot* and the *Zohar* in general are not restricted to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. The *Zohar* often refers to works that are lost and unavailable, if not altogether fictional.⁷⁷ Although such references are common in the other parts of the *Zohar*, most are found in the *Idra Zuta*.

The *Idra Zuta* alludes to "earlier books,"⁷⁸ particularly to the "Secret of the Letters of King Solomon," in a discussion of the guttural letters and their role in the divine speech that brought about the creation.⁷⁹ This topic is also found in the *Sefer Yezirah*.⁸⁰ References to *Sefer Yezirah* are not characteristic of the main sections of the *Zohar* and are generally confined to the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Mebeimna*. This allusion to *Sefer Yezirah* would also support the theory that the *Idra Zuta* is the product of a different author than *Idra Rabbah*.

Besides this reference to the "Secret of the Letters of King Solomon," the *Idra Zuta* refers to three works in particular: the "Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba,"

the “Aggadah Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba,” and the “Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba.” Rabbi Moshe Zakhut, in a letter quoted in his *Iggerot ha-ReMeZ* proposed a typology for these, and other, works. Zakhut identified the book of R. Yeiva with the composition *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, even though the latter contains none of the elements quoted in the *Idrot*.⁸¹ Zakhut also maintained that the lengthy entry recounting a meeting with R. Nehorai is from the “Aggadah Book of R. Nehorai Sabba (*Zohar II* 183b–187b)” and that there must, by definition, be an “Aggadah Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba” somewhere in the *Zohar* literature. In Zakhut’s words, “we have not seen R. Hamnuna Sabba’s book, for it only came to Rabbi Shim’on bar Yohai and others, being a very supernal work.”⁸²

Since there must have been a *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that resembles, but is not identical with, the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that we have before us, might there have been extant texts that were the sources of the “Aggadah Books”? The consistency of some of the allusions points to the existence of actual sources, although I have not, as yet, identified a “smoking gun.”

The *Idra Zuta*’s references to the “Aggadah-Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” dwell on classical Kabbalah’s well-known erotic metaphor of mystical union. The quotations present the most important aspects of this subject. The work is invoked as a source for a description of the union of the countenances *Abba* and *Imma*, in which the engendering seed of the *sefirah Hokhmah* is nurtured in the transformative womb of the *sefirah Binah*.⁸³ Rabbi Yeiva’s work is quoted as stressing that the *sefirah Binah* derives its name from the offspring of the divine union, the *ben*, or child (*IZ* 290a).

Two quotations from the “Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” portray the letters of the tetragrammaton as symbolic of the sexual union of the divine countenances (*IZ* 293a). The “Aggadah book of the school of R. Yeiva” apparently links the beginning of the beard of *Attik* to the realm of “the higher loving-kindness” (*Hesed*; *Zohar III* 295a), after the well-known quotation; “Yours, YHVH, is the greatness [*gedullah*] and the heroism [*gevurah*] and the glory [*Tiferet*], the everlasting [*Nezah*] and the grandeur [*hod*]” (Chron. I 29:1). This quotation associates the doctrine of the countenances with the more widespread doctrine of the *sefirot*, as they are evoked in the divine name YHVH.

These references to the “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” share a number of common themes: the Pistis/Sophia relationship of the *sefirot Hokhmah* and *Binah*, the relationship of the doctrine of the countenances to the name YHVH, and the erotic nuances of the anthropomorphic metaphor in general. Perhaps the “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva” was a meditation on the structure of the divine name and also stressed the Pistis/Sophia relationship of *Abba* and *Imma*. One of the main differences between the *Idra Rabbah* and the *Idra Zuta* is that the latter text recasts the doctrine of the countenances against the model of gender balance evoked by the relationship of the countenances *Abba* and *Imma*. In presenting this refinement of the processes of emanation, the *Idra Zuta* uses the “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva” as an important source of its authority. The quotations in the *Idra Zuta* point to the possibility that the “Aggadah Book of the School of R. Yeiva Sabba” was a study of the mysteries of the divine name in which the union of the countenances is projected across the divine name.

The “Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” to which the *Idra Zuta* refers may be a different text than the “*Aggadah* Book of the School of R. Yeiva Sabba.” The former work is mentioned elsewhere in the *Zohar*, as well as in the *Idra Zuta*, which quotes it as the source for the use of term *ir*, or “city” (1 Sam 28:3.) to imply the arousal of the sexual energies of the divine (a play on the Hebrew root ‘R). This statement is attributed to the “Book of *Aggadah*” (*IR* 295b). It parallels a quotation, elsewhere in the *Zohar* (*II* 6a), attributed to “R. Yeiva Sabba’s Book,” which interprets the term “*irin*” (Dan. 4:14) as meaning “the watchers, literally ‘those who are aroused/aware’” (*Zohar III* 290b).

Another widely quoted work is the “Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba.” References to this work also involve the use of erotic metaphor, particularly in exegeses of the Song of Songs. For example: “In the ‘Book of Rav Hamnuna Sabba,’ the first *tiqqun* revealed by King Solomon is that of the verse [Songs 1:15] *behold you are fair, my beloved*. The second *tiqqun* is called bride, the lower *Nukvah*” (*IZ* 290b).⁸⁴ Other references point to a number of traditions regarding the Song of Songs as being associated with R. Hamnuna. The “*Aggadah* Book of Rav Hamnuna Sabba” is quoted as equating the *na’arot* (young women) of Proverbs 31:15 with the maidens (*alamot*) of Song of Songs 1:3 (*Zohar III* 58b). Elsewhere (*Zohar II* 146b), it is recorded: “According to the book of the first R. Hamnuna Sabba, the kiss of love spreads to the four winds, and they join together, within the secret of faith. It rises in the Name upon which four letters of the holy name are contingent. Everything above and below is contingent on it, and the praise of the Song of Songs is contingent on it.”⁸⁵

This preoccupation with erotic union is echoed by other references elsewhere in the *Zohar*. For example “It may be found in the book of R. Hamnuna Sabba that in every place the male runs after the female and his love is aroused for her, and here we find that she pursues him, which is unseemly, but it is a high, hidden word of the treasuries of the king” (*Zohar I* 245a; see also *III* 236b, 287a, 292a): The *Idra Zuta* cites the “*Aggadah* Book of Rav Hamnuna Sabba” as linking the well-known account of the deaths of the kings of Edom (Gen. 36:31–39) to the imagery of the four species brought at the Sukkot festival, through the mention of the names of the wives of the hapless kings of Edom.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, quotations from R. Hamnuna Sabba’s work, as they appear elsewhere in the *Zohar*, do not reflect a consistent content.⁸⁷ In fact, the role of R. Hamnuna Sabba himself in the *Zohar*’s framing narratives deserves investigation. There are, for instance, a number of references to a *yihud*, or shamanistic rite, associated with R. Hamnuna Sabba. This *yihud*, “that he learned from his father, and his father from his Rav, and his Rav from the very mouth of Elijah,” is mentioned throughout the *Zohar*.⁸⁸ A related obscurity of R. Hamnuna’s identity as a thaumaturge occurs in the course of one narrative passage (*Zohar III* 71a) in which the “Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba” is produced in order to rectify the situation of a buried person who has been barred from the afterlife. However, the “buried person” may be a corrected Torah scroll, based on the context of the account.⁸⁹

In one instance, the “Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” and the “Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba” are referred to as contradicting one another.⁹⁰ The passage in question concerns whether the *Shekhinah* was always turned toward the people Israel during

the wandering in the desert. Rabbi Eliezer quotes the “Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” that the *Shekhinah* encompassed both the people and the ark, while R. Shim’on maintains that the catastrophes of the desert wanderings came about when the people Israel turned away, according to the “Book of R. Hamnuna Sabba.” The latter view is significant because it presages the theology of the reverse embrace, which was to be so significant in the *Idrot* and Lurianic Kabbalah.

Although it is easy to dismiss all of the lost works cited in the *Zohar* as mythical, at times they seem to reflect a coherence in the mind of the author or authors. In the case of the works of R. Yeiva and R. Hamnuna Sabba, the shared emphases of their “books” and the “aggadah books” attributed to their “schools” tend to point to a unified character to the compositions in question. The works are also cited preponderantly when illustrating the metaphor of divine union, with its concomitant radical sense of sexual upheaval and anthropomorphism. Perhaps the authors saw fit to introduce these extreme images as derived from primordial sources, the lost writings of these unimpeachable sages.

The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* is the proof text of choice for the *Idra Rabbah*, as are the lost works for the *Idra Zuta*. Nonetheless, in linking these lost works to extant texts, some cautionary words are in order. The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that is included in the *Zohar* does, at least, refer to itself as the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. There is no extant work that calls itself the *Idra de-Bei Mashkana* and satisfies the criteria for an *Idra*: for example, that there be a framing narrative involving risk or the actual deaths of a number of the comrades that, in the *Zohar*’s narrative frame, predates the events of the *Idra Rabbah* and the *Idra Zuta*.⁹¹ It may be countered that references to the *Zohar* in contemporary writings tend to obscure the *Zohar*’s identity and call it by different names. There is no proof that any of the *Zohar*’s references to anonymous works have any relationship to extant texts. The only related phenomenon would be references to the *Zohar* itself, as in the “Midrash of R. Shim’on bar Yoḥai” or “Yerushalmi” by Moshe de Leon and his contemporaries. *Idra Rabbah*, *Idra Zuta*, and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* are very self-referential, and the lost works, were they actually to have existed, would have had to have a similar self-consciousness about their own literary identity. Until there is an extant text that self-consciously refers to itself as, for example, *Idra de-Bei Mashkana* or *Sifra de-Aggadata de-Bei R. Yeiva Sabba*, attempts to identify extant texts with these works will be unsuccessful.

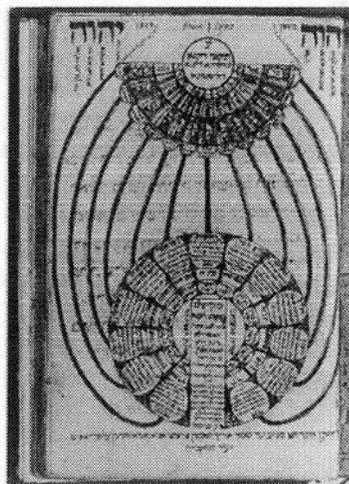
The issue of whether the aggadah books of R. Yeiva and R. Hamnuna really exist, and whether the references to them are consistent, has a direct bearing on conjecture regarding the *Zohar*’s origins among kabbalistic circles in Castile. If these texts could be linked to other compositions contemporary with the *Zohar*’s origins, then it could be determined whether the framing narratives of the *Zohar* are romans à clef based on the circles surrounding Todros Abulafia.

The identity of the references in the *Idrot* presents a paradox in the study of the *Zohar* and its commentators. Lacking pivotal information about the author(s)’ intent in compiling the works as they have come down to us, scholars can either link the extant texts and create analyses based on psychohistory or accept that the desiderata hinder a sweeping analysis. If pivotal works are unavailable, then important pieces of the puzzle are missing. The *Zohar*’s classical interpreters, however, were compelled to create a canon from the material that was in front of them,

identifying extant works garbled as the lost sections in question. These methodological questions point to a weakness in *Zohar* research, inherent in the pursuit of the identities underlying the roman a clef which the *Zohar* makes up. When Moshe de Leon is posited as the sole author, the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* is identified with his immature theosophy, the main sections of the *Zohar* with the creative work of his maturity, and the *Idrot* with his dying testament. The *Idra Zuta* becomes de Leon's swan song, with a concurrent tendency to map a developmental series within the *Idra* literature. If we leave the separate elements to separate authors, one gratefully takes leave of de Leon's ambivalent religious personality and these reductive strategies. The *Idrot* demand analysis of their doctrinal aspects to determine the nuances of their internal development.

There is, nonetheless, an argument to be made for the lost works' being wholly mythical. Jewish literature is full of lost works. The "Books of the Wars of the Lord" referred to in the Bible, the "Fox Fables," and other lost traditions of rabbinic literature refer to works that were unavailable to the reader in postantiquity. Such references, in canonical texts, convey a strong sense of mystery and enigma. When the *Zohar* refers to a lost or otherwise enigmatic text, it may simply be reflecting an experience available elsewhere in Jewish literature. It may, then, be most useful to understand the works as being wholly legendary, a literary device to evoke the eros of the hidden and secret and to further the *Zohar's* ongoing tone of arcane mystery.

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The Idrot

The Doctrine of the Countenances

The Anthropos

The descriptions of the *parzufim*, or divine countenances, have the literary center of the *Idrot* and their main contribution to kabbalistic doctrine. These *parzufim* make up the form of a great “primordial man,” *Adam Kadmon*, an *anthropos* that envelops all of creation and forms the structure of the universe.¹ The countenances are a series of anthropomorphic structures that sit uneasily on the surface of *Adam Kadmon*. They overlap and interlock, forming a hierarchy that runs from the apex of the Godhead down into present reality.

The first of these countenances is *Arikkh Anpin*, which the *Idra Rabbah* describes as an amalgam of the *sefirot Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da’at*. *Arikkh Anpin* is the abstract Godhead, which, in philosophical terms, lies above those divine emanations that can be signified or symbolized. *Arikkh Anpin* is also variously called *Attika Kadisha* and *Attik Yomin*.² In the *Idra Zuta*, the *parzufim* that correspond to the *sefirot Hokhmah* and *Binah* are called *Abba* and *Imma*, literally “father and mother.” These two counte-

¹ The beard of Attika Kadisha as it flows onto the beard of Zeir Anpin, according to a manuscript in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Mic. 4599, f. 345). Courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

nances provide a nurturing energy that extends up and down the entire structure of the *parzufim*.

Beneath the highest countenance sit *Zeir Anpin* and *Zeir's* consort, *Nukvah*. *Zeir Anpin* covers the intermediate *sefirot* linked by the *sefirah Tiferet* (*Hesed, Din, Tiferet, Nezah, Hod, and Yesod*), while *Nukvah* parallels the *sefirah Malkhut*. *Zeir* and *Arikkh Anpin* are portrayed in terms of overlapping “faces.” The energy flowing through *Arikkh Anpin* unifies and then descends to the head of *Zeir Anpin*, filling all of the “halls and storerooms” of *Zeir's* body.

The *Idra Rabbah* makes the most detailed presentation of the *parzufim*., but the *Idra Zuta* adds another factor, namely, that operating within *Arikkh, Zeir,* and *Nukvah* is an inner, eroticized system consisting of the unions of *Abba* and *Imma*. Finally, the shorter *Idra*, which refers to events after the death of R. Shim'on bar Yoḥai, details the body of *Attika*, which is otherwise not addressed in the earlier texts.

These anthropomorphic visions of God have many antecedents in Judaism, particularly in the anthropomorphisms of the Bible. Classical descriptions of God's inclined ear, flaring nostril, furrowed brow, and so forth are adapted by the *Idrot* as direct references to the countenances. Besides the overt anthropomorphisms of the Torah's narratives, another important proof text is the Bible's portrayal of *Attik Yomin* as the patriarchal intellect, seated on a celestial throne, as described by the prophet Daniel (7:9):

As I looked on, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days [*Attik Yomin*] took his seat. His garment was like white snow, and the hair of his head was like lamb's wool. His throne was tongues of flame, its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire streamed forth before him, thousands upon thousands served him, myriads upon myriads attended him. The court sat and the books were opened.

Another earlier anthropomorphic tradition was the ancient and recondite *Shi'ur Qomah* literature of late antiquity. This tradition consisted of lengthy excursions on the dimensions of God's astral body. However, the actual imagery of the ancient *Shi'ur Qomah* resembles the *Idrot* in only the most general way. Both rely on a literal reading of the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs as describing the divine body, but otherwise there is no strong literary similarity between the two works.³ Occasionally, the *Idrot* will echo the mentality of *Shi'ur Qomah* through references to divine dimensions, such as the *Idra Rabbah's* declaration that *Attika's* nose has a length of three hundred and seventy-five worlds, all of which cling to *Zeir Anpin*.⁴ But overall, there seems to be little relationship between the *Idrot* and the *Shi'ur Qomah*.

The key to the esotericity of the *Idrot* is their strong literary sense of disclosing a great and hitherto withheld secret, namely, the bold anthropomorphism of the *parzufim*. The compositions are haunted by a strong sense of the ineffability of the moment, that great secrets are being revealed. The event itself, in which the rabbis portray and embody the structure of the divine, causes the arousal of *Attik Yomin*, during which the divine effluence or spirit (*ruah*) suffuses the cosmos in a wholly new way.

Sefirot and Parzufim

The *parzufim* correspond, roughly, to the structure of the *sefirot* when the sefirotic tree is portrayed as an anthropomorphic structure. In such a structure, *Binah* symbolizes the heart, *Tiferet*, the torso, *Yesod*, the genitals, and so forth. The relationship of the *parzufim* to the *sefirot* is ambiguous, and there is a sense that the two theosophical systems exist simultaneously. The *parzufim* may be visualized as sitting, somewhat uneasily, over the workings of the sefirotic tree.

The language of the *Idrot* obscures the relationship of the *sefirot* to the *parzufim*, particularly in the description of subsidiary concepts. We don't know whether some terms were euphemisms for the *sefirot* or whether they referred to other entities entirely. The *Idrot* often speak about "worlds" extending from the various aspects of the *anthropos*. For example, hundreds of thousands of worlds are described as tumbling out of *Attika Kadisha* (IZ 288a), three worlds flow from the first *tiqqun* (IR 132a), and the extraneous fragment at the end of the first *tiqqun* speaks of "one thousand worlds sealed with the pure signet flow from the first *tiqqun*" (IR 132a). In early Kabbalah, there is a doctrine of successive worlds of being that make up complete sefirotic structures. Doctrines of successive worlds, which came to be normative in Kabbalah, largely bypass the main sections of the *Zohar*, coming to the fore in the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*.⁵ The use of the term "worlds" in the *Idrot*, however, seems to bear no resemblance to these understandings. In their vague and promiscuous use of other kabbalistic terminology, the *Idrot* underscore that the doctrine of the *parzufim* is their paramount worldview.

The greatest complexity in the *Idrot* results from the extent to which the doctrines of the *sefirot* and *parzufim* coexist and interact. Exegetes of the *Zohar* questioned whether the anthropomorphic materials were merely a metaphor or context for the *sefirot*, with the interplay of the *sefirot* as central, or whether the *sefirot* were just energies within the *parzufim*, with the mythos of the *anthropos* overwhelming that of the *sefirot*. According to the latter view, the *parzufim* are structures that exist in some actuality, while the *sefirot* are metaphysical principles that underlie the function of the *parzufim*. In general, Moshe Cordovero subsumed the *parzufim* within the dynamics of the *sefirot*. For Isaac Luria and his students, however, the reverse was true, and the idea of the *parzufim* engulfed and overwhelmed the doctrine of the *sefirot*.

Attika Kadisha

There are gradations of creation. In each of these [gradations] *Attika Kadisha* is revealed, and these [gradations] are his aspects [*tiqqunim*]. . . . If you say, who is *Attika Kadisha*? Come and see, above, there is that which is not known, apprehended, or sensed, encompassing everything, encompassing its two heads, the source of all emanation. It is not to be counted, included, or specified, except through the will of the heart.

IZ 288a–289b

Attika Kadisha is the first and highest countenance, the source of the emanation that enlivens the lower countenances and the rest of creation. In terms of the divine physiognomy, *Attika* is structured as a disembodied head, whose attributes flow down through its beard, unlike the lower countenance *Zeir Anpin*, which has the structure of a full *anthropos* (IZ 289a). The full body of *Attika* is described only in the shorter *Idra*, apparently as an afterthought. The processes of emanation begin in the inner chambers of the skull, the “silent” consciousness that is the core from which divinity emanates into the sentient world (IZ 289a). The skull (*gulgolta*) of *Attika* is described as having no beginning or end. It shines out, in an embracing unity, emanating an encompassing whiteness or clarity (IR 128a–b, IZ 288a). The effects of the processes in *Attika*’s skull are transmitted into the mane and thence to *Zeir Anpin* (IR 136a–b).⁶

Attika is called, variously, “the elder of elders,” “the crown of all crowns,” “the point from which all of the sparks shine, the unchanging one,” and “the highest spark” (*buzina*), hidden and unknown. All of these circumlocutions present the paradoxes of God’s unity and ineffability. The emanation of *Attika* is called God’s patience (Heb. *erekh appayim*), hence the Aramaic name *Arikh Anpin* (long or forbearing face, IR 12 8b).

Other terms stress the hidden nature of *Attika*. Rabbi Shim’on refers to this countenance as *ayin*, or “nothingness” (IZ 288a), for it exists and is also beyond existence. The ineffable aspect of *Attika Kadisha* comes from its origins in the union of the highest *sefirah*, *Keter*, and the infinite *Ein Sof*, the aspect of divinity that cannot be portrayed or conceptualized. As Luria explained, “This is the aspect of *ayin*, nothingness, to which the children of Israel tried to cleave, the nothingness that is between *Arikh Anpin* and *Zeir Anpin*.”⁷ For this reason, as well, *Attika* seems to have no ears, for no cry from below can penetrate the inner consciousness of the divine.

The emanated aspects, or *tiqqunim* of *Attika*, emerge from its most inner recesses:

The *tiqqun* of *Attika Kadisha* is set forth as the *tiqqun* that is the essence of all *tiqqunim*. It is the high, hidden wisdom, the essence of all the rest, the high hidden Eden, the consciousness of *Attika Kadisha*. This consciousness [*moah*] extends in all directions and another Eden is engraved from it. (IZ 289a)

Some of the processes of *buzina de-kardinuta* begin in the recesses of *Attika*’s skull, in the “marrow” (*mohin*).⁸ The *Idra Zuta* describes a ray⁹ of light that descends and immolates itself in the celestial consciousness (*moah*), becoming the divine will. This illuminated will flows down onto the lower reaches of the brow and thence to the beard. There it transforms into the power of the *sefirah* *Hesed*, which in turn moves to subdue the forces of *Din*. According to the *Idra Zuta*, thus does God’s loving-kindness begin to circulate throughout the world. This flow of divine energy is described in various ways: as divine effluence (*mazal*), as a revivifying dew (*tal*) dripping out of the ether in *Arikh*’s skull, and as a fountain, flowing down to *Zeir Anpin*.

The *Idra Zuta* has a number of characteristic emphases that are not found in the *Idra Rabbah*. The *Idra Rabbah* describes *Attika* as a triumvirate of the three highest *sefirot*, with *Hokhmah* and *Binah* included within it. The *Idra Zuta* por-

trays a triune structure within *Attika* that is separate from the mythos of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, which themselves are subsumed in the actions of the countenances *Abba* and *Imma*. The *Idra Zuta* (289a) also focuses on a series of interconnected aspects: *Reisha de-lo Ityada'* (the unknown head),¹⁰ *Arikh Anpin* (the long face), and *Moħa Stimata* (the hidden brain).¹¹ This triune structure accounts for the function of the emanating, immanent nature of God, as well as the transcendent, ineffable God of Jewish philosophy. Hence, descriptions of the function of the three heads are riddled with paradoxical elements:

The three heads of *Attika* are one inside the other, one over the other, and yet they are one head, the head of all heads that is not a head, for no one knows what is in that head, for no *Hokhmah* or *Binah* clings to it. (IZ 288b)

The *Idra Zuta* describes the three heads as consisting of three triune systems, for “just as the *Attika Kadisha* is crowned with three heads, in each of them are three shining heads, each contingent upon the other, two from two sides, and one that encompasses them” (IZ 289b). All of these make up the unified consciousness of *Attika* (IZ 288b). The multiple seats of consciousness are an important image when they are used to describe the emanation of the thirty-two paths of wisdom, which the *Idra Zuta* portrays as the thirteen aspects of the beard (IZ 289b).

***Attika Kadisha* in Lurianic Kabbalah**

The Lurianic interpretation of the *Idrot* followed the *Idra Zuta*'s position that *Attika Kadisha*, *Attik Yomin*, and *Arikh Anpin*, which had hitherto been read as interchangeable synonyms for the highest countenance, actually represent three separate aspects of the highest countenance.¹² The three heads are described as “engraved” within one another, with their internal sefirotic structures overlapping, as well as inhabiting one another as the soul does the body,¹³ with each aspect serving as a vessel for a higher level of spirituality. Each internal aspect of the three heads overlaps the others through certain *sefirot*. This relationship is telegraphed, according to Vital, in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (176a):

Aspect within aspect, they are set forth and summoned in one skull, which is full of the dew of the bedellium. The membrane of the air is gleaming and sealed. All are below and are contingent on the seven of the skull, until the glory of glories.

In physical terms, the triunity of the highest *parzuf* is portrayed in different ways. Each of these three heads has three inner dimensions: the skull, the ether, and the hidden consciousness (*moħa penima'ah*).¹⁴ *Attik Yomin* is the highest head; the second is the *Keter* and *Hokhmah* of *Arikh Anpin*, which are the skull (*gulgolta*); and the third is the hidden consciousness (*moħa*).¹⁵ The terms *Keter* and *Attika Kadisha* are used interchangeably.

Luria emphasized the inclusion of *Reisha de-lo Ityada'* in the structure, although it is positioned in various ways in different recensions of the Lurianic writings. An important early collection, Ephraim Panzeiri's *Sefer ha-Drushim*, describes both the total structure and the highest *parzuf* as *Attika Kadisha*. According to Panzeiri's

structure, the second *parzuf* is the *Keter* of *Arikkh Anpin*, and the third is *Hokhmah*, with *Reisha de-lo Ityada*, the “unknown head,” hovering over all of them.¹⁶ Luria had taught that *Reisha de-lo Ityada* was one of the three heads, while Vital immediately added that it was a separate countenance, albeit “clothed” in *Arikkh Anpin*.¹⁷ This is typical of Vital’s tendency to complicate Luria’s original teaching, doubling and redoubling it along the structure of the consecutive worlds of existence.

The three aspects of the uppermost *parzuf* also interact with the ten *sefirot*, showing their respective interactions and garbings, particularly across the context of the divine physiognomy and the sefirotic tree. There is a recurring emphasis on the seven lower *sefirot* that extend from every aspect of the higher *parzuf* onto the lower one. As the heads descend through *Reisha de-lo Ityada*, *Attik Yomin*, and *Arikkh Anpin*, the element of wisdom (*Hokhmah*) grows within them, with a commensurate increase in the forces of judgment (*dinnim*). This wisdom is inherent in the processes of *buzinah de-kardinuta*, which is also the source of the *dinnim*. The distinctions between the internal overlap of the *sefirot* led to much of the internal debate in the later versions of the system.¹⁸

Luria and his students also emphasized elements of the divine physiognomy that had received only scant attention in the *Idrot* themselves. For instance, the point of transition between the uppermost *parzufim* is the membrane that surrounds the brain (*kruma de-moha*). This organ is mentioned in the *Idrot* but is the focus of greater emphasis in Lurianic doctrine, as the point at which the internal *sefirot* of the highest countenance overlap. This membrane is a conduit, the transition between the physical head to the consciousness contained within. As a point of transition between the skull and the consciousness of *Attika*, it is visualized as the object of mystical prayer.¹⁹

The Relationship of *Attika* and *Zeir*

The *Idrot* portray *Zeir Anpin* as a complete *anthropos*, as opposed to *Attika Kadisha*’s portrayal as a disembodied head. Nonetheless, *Zeir* is still considered to be constructed in the image of *Arikkh*, and the aspects of *Zeir* come from *Attika Kadisha*’s emanation (*IR* 135a–b). *Arikkh Anpin* originates in the transcendent realm, while *Zeir* carries the abstract divinity of *Attika* into present reality, “an image inside an image; breathing in his nose the breath of life [Gen. 2: 7] to bring out the hiddenness.” *Zeir Anpin* extends into the world, “to the end of all that is hidden,” the source of the human soul and the soul of the universe (*IR* 141a–b). The relationship of *Attika* and *Zeir* is that of master and disciple, in a relationship so esoteric that the *Idra Rabbah* avers that it is reserved for the “reapers of the field.”

Nonetheless, the functions of the divine face differ between *Attika* and *Zeir*. The realm of *Attika* is a realm without differentiation, whereas the realm of *Zeir* is the realm of divisions. *Zeir* encompasses the *sefirah Din*, harsh judgment, which must always be mitigated by the *sefirah Hesed*, the outpouring of loving-kindness. *Din* and the negativity associated with it are found throughout the structure of *Zeir Anpin* (*IR* 141b; *IZ* 293a–295b). *Zeir* must serve as a context in which the forces of *Din* and *Hesed* strive with one another. *Zeir* is made up of a series of dualities, two eyes

instead of one, two arms, and so forth. For example, the eyes of *Attika* see with undifferentiated love, whereas the eyes of *Zeir* reflect the divided nature of lower reality; one eye guards the righteous and one eye is watchful over the wicked (*IR* 130a–b). *Zeir*'s mouth also proclaims divine decrees, for good or ill (*IZ* 295b). God's forbearance (*erekh appayim*) occurs when the faces of *Attika* and *Zeir* are aligned together, "for there is no healing except when they gaze upon one another" (*IZ* 292b).²⁰

Zeir and *Attik* also relate through *buzina de-kardinuta*. The "white head" produces *buzina de-kardinuta*, which is described in the *Idra Rabbah* as "a ray of wisdom [*hokhmah*] that spread in three hundred and seventy directions" (*IR* 135b). The spark descends, limning the contours of *Zeir*'s skull, cutting through the primordial ether (*avir kadmon*) and the primordial fire. *Zeir* is created by *buzina de-kardinuta* and then serves as a context for its further engraving of reality.

Masses of hair grow concentrically out of the skull of *Attika*. Each strand of hair illuminates a separate "world." These strands are like fountains, pouring forth light from the hidden intellect (*moha*). The bundles and strands²¹ cover the skull and pour forth the hidden springs of light. The mane falls over the shoulders of *Attika Kadisha* like pure bundles of wool (an image clearly indebted to Dan. 7:9: "the hair of his head was like lamb's wool"). The mane covers the back of the neck, leaving the ears revealed. The thirteen strands of hair stand on either side of the skull, and within them each hair is distinct. *Attika*'s mane serves as a series of channels for the emanation of divinity out of the skull (*IR* 128b–129a).

Attika's Face

As the human face looks out and interacts with the world around it, so the faces of *Arieh* and *Zeir* interact with the reality that they emanate. Each aspect of the face has a function that parallels its function on the human visage. Just as the ears and eyes take in information, and the mouth, nose, and brow express emotion, so the divine countenances perform these functions. The brow of each countenance acts as an active agent of divine judgment (*Din*) (*Zohar III* 136a–b). The eyes and nose similarly express joy and rage at the acts of humankind, while the ears of *Zeir* serve as a conduit for their prayers and entreaties (*Zohar III* 138a–b).

The brow is the seat of God's will (*IR* 129a–b). The state of the brow can trigger either forbearance or the application of *Din*, with its accompanying judgment and punishment:

The brow that is revealed in *Attika Kadisha* is called will, it is the supernal head that is sealed above . . . the will of all wills, set forth on the brow, revealed in the spark. (*IZ* 288b)

The state of the brow is a litmus test for fate. If it is provoked into a negative response, the divine will looses the forces of *Din*. If it is appeased, however, the sins of the people Israel are ameliorated. The brow is therefore the site to which prayer must be directed. The revelation of the brow signals the acceptance of these prayers.

The brow responds to prayers, and the liturgy is full of mysteries that are designed to trigger the revelation of the brow. The *Idra Rabbah* draws on the rich

zoharic heritage of liturgical mystery in which the *sefirot* ascend and descend during prescribed times of the day, week, and year. The *Idra Zuta* understands the Sabbath afternoon as a confrontation between the forces of *Din* and those of *Rahamim*, stressing that the forces of judgment (*dinnim*) are indeed aroused on the Sabbath afternoon. However, when the divine brow is revealed and the forces of *Din* are vanquished by an eruption of divine mercy:

The Sabbath has no *Din*, not above or below, and even the fire of *Gebennom* stays in its place, and the guilty have rest, and there is an extra soul bequeathed for the Sabbath. Therefore, a person must rejoice on the three Sabbath meals; it is the secret of faith. When one sets his table and celebrates three meals: the queen's meal, the king's meal and the meal of *Attika Kadisha*. . . . When this will is revealed, the will of wills is found in the whole world, all the prayers from below are accepted, and the face of *Zeir Anpin* is illuminated, and everything is found in *Rahamim*, and all the *dinnim* are hidden away and overcome on Sabbath, at the time of the afternoon prayer. (*IZ* 288b)

The *Idra Zuta* describes the "time of will" as a time of temptation for the forces of *Din*, when *Zeir Anpin*'s brow is revealed.²² The forehead encompasses two hundred thousand of the "reddest rednesses" (signifying the color of harsh *Din*), which unite with it and are included in it (*Zohar III* 293a). This sign of acceptance occurs during the afternoon service of the Sabbath day, when the forces of *Din* are precluded from appearing. Since there is no divine judgment, the prayers of Israel must be received; it is the "time of will" (*et rason*) or "favorable time" (Ps. 69:14), at which God's brow emanates only love and forbearance.

The *Idra Zuta* meditates on the relationship between *Attika*'s brow, or *mezah*, and the *sefirah Nezah*, signifying eternity. As in the Roman alphabet, the letters M (𐤌) and N (𐤍) are consecutive, so that the wrath of the brow (*mezah*) is necessarily followed by the everlasting (*Nezah*) judgment. Through this play on words, the brow is linked to the *sefirah Nezah*. *Nezah* through the brow floods the entire divine body (*IZ* 293a). On the Sabbath day, in particular, when "the forces of judgment may not be aroused, *Attika Kadisha* reveals his *mezah* and all the *dinnim* are silenced and brought low" (*IZ* 293a).

Attika's eye is single and undifferentiated, for it derives from the abstraction of the transcendent God, with no lids or brows. It never wavers or blinks, for "the guardian of Israel never dozes nor sleeps" (Ps. 121:4; *IR* 129b, *IZ* 289a). Divine consciousness, or *moah*, shines through *Attika*'s eyes (*IZ* 289a), which are the origin of earthly blessings. This *moah* is called the fountain of blessings, and from it flow three degrees of "whiteness" or clarity (*hivver*), which are the source of divine blessing (*IZ* 289a). The levels of clarity are enfolded within each other, "one clarity within another and a third that encompasses both." These degrees of clarity create paths for the light of the highest consciousness, which shines out through the lower *sefirot*, taking in information and emanating it forth (*IR* 129b). Each level governs a separate grouping of *sefirot*. The first degree of clarity originates in the *sefirah Binah* and descends the left side of the sefirotic tree, through the *sefirot Hod* (grandeur), *Hadar* (greatness, general equivalent to the *sefirah Gevurah*), and *Hedvah* (joy, probably the *sefirah Yesod*). The second clarity, originating in *Hokhmah*, "shines, rises,

and descends” the right side of the sefirotic structure onto the *sefirot Nezah, Hesed, and Tiferet*. The third clarity is the most inner light, shining from the hidden *moah* to the lower *moah*.

Attika's nose is also the conduit of divine spirit, bestowing the breath of life on *Zeir Anpin*. Divine spirit is called the *ruah*, a word that serves a range of meanings in biblical Hebrew, from “wind” to “breath” to “spirit.” This flow of divine breath is different and separate from other forms of effluence described in the *Idra* literature. It is also separate from the direct flow from *Keter* that will be described in the section on the beard. This *ruah* provokes the “arousal” of *Attik Yomin*. The flow of *ruah* is introduced in a flurry of messianic imagery:

In the days of King Messiah, one will not say to another, “teach me wisdom.” . . . At that time, *Attik Yomin* will be aroused, the spirit that goes out from the hidden consciousness. And this going out will arouse all the *ruhot* below. Who are they? The six crowns²³ of *Zeir Anpin*, which are the six other *ruhot*. (*IR* 130b)

The Physiognomy of *Zeir*

Zeir is the countenance in which the abstract, spiritual essence of *Attika* flows into the world. Hence, *Zeir* is the interacting God of biblical myth and liturgical trope, and *Zeir's* body parts are the anthropomorphic aspects of God to which humankind relates: the object of the anthropomorphisms of prayer, and the locus of God's proverbial “mighty hand” and “outstretched arm.” Hence, *Zeir* is portrayed in both *Idrot* as a full anthropomorphic figure.

The *Idrot* emphasize the duality of *Zeir's* eyes, ears, and lips, for they reflect the dual possibilities in the divine responses: God's harsh judgment (*Din*) or loving-kindness (*Hesed*). *Zeir's* mouth decrees, the nostrils flair and generate anger, and the ears hear the beseeching of the people and channel those pleas into the divine consciousness.

Zeir's skull has three chambers of consciousness (*mohin*), through which *Attika's* energy is made manifest. The three chambers of the *moah* pour out effluence, mixed with purity and impurity, “because of all the reasons and secrets, revealed and hidden, hinted at in *I am YHVH your God*” (*IZ* 293a). Three lights shine from the chamber of the skull, fusing into a fourth, which is called the “inheritance” of *Abba* and *Imma*, “the one still *moah* that underlies them, as wine floats on its dregs” (*IR* 140a). These lights, which the *Idra Zuta* calls the *mohin*, are invoked by the *tefillin*, which, in human and divine terms, illuminate the divine face.

Zeir's mane radiates out from the skull, a conduit for divinity flowing out of the skull. The mane is full of cascades of black and tangled hair, tangled because its sources originate in the union of *Abba* and *Imma* (*IZ* 292b). This wisdom/energy then flows out from the hanging curls of *Zeir's* beard, “stiff and strong, each one coming out to its side, thousands and ten thousands hanging, without number.” One side flows directly in line with the “path of *Attik Yomin*.” Its bristly hairs convey the forces of judgment. From the second *moah*, through the soft hairs, come the “master of the scales,” the force of mercy. From the third *moah* flows the middle

lock, “on which is contingent the master of masters, the face that shines and does not shine” (*IZ* 293a).

These hairs are conduits for the divine effluence, “flowing springs from the first chamber of the divine consciousness, from the fifty springs of the second chamber, and in a million rooms and balconies from the third chamber” (*IR* 136a–b).

The central part running through the mane breaks into six hundred and thirteen separate paths, corresponding to the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah, which themselves derive from the various levels of the mane.²⁴ These paths from the mane are compared to a series of garments,²⁵ existing in a relationship to the divine body like that of the human body and soul. The outermost garments are the Torah’s narratives in their plain sense, which do not originate in the *sefirot* but in the heavens and celestial phenomena (the stars, spheres, and angels). Beneath this exoteric Torah lies the body, comprising the commandments, which are called *gufei Torah*, the “bodies of the Torah”; their source is the *Shekhinah*. Beneath the body is the soul, which is the true essence of the Torah and has its origin in *Tiferet*. The fourth stratum is the “soul of the soul” of the Torah, which originates in *Attika Kadisha*.

The mane and paths dovetail into the emanation of the divine into present reality through the medium of the Torah. The dualisms in the curls reflect the dialectics characteristic of Jewish teaching. The practice of the laws of the Torah is a means of relating to God. The true Torah is only realized through the illumination and *tiqqun* of the Torah of *Zeir Anpin*. When the two parts in the manes of *Arikkh Anpin* and *Zeir Anpin* are synchronized, the commandments performed by the pious directly affect the intention and inclinations of the highest aspects of God, in *Arikkh*.

The workings of the divine consciousness are enunciated into reality by the mouth (*IZ* 295b). The creation recorded in Genesis 1 took place only through the agency of divine speech, so *Zeir’s* mouth is the instrument of creation. In exploring the possibilities of divine speech, the *Idra Zuta* presents a linguistic allusion found in the doctrines of the ancient *Sefer Yezirah*.²⁶ *Sefer Yezirah* organized the consonants of the Hebrew alphabet according to their linguistic characteristics: the glottals, labials, and so forth. The *Idra Zuta* quotes the mysterious work “The Secret of the Letters of King Solomon” as maintaining that the guttural GYKh”K (גיכ”ק) “crown” the glottal consonants (אחד”ע). This combination of the gutturals with the glottals is described as the “special letters engraved with their crowns.” The Divine enunciation of these consonants in the act of creation is cathartic and destructive, “casting out kings, raising and returning them . . . crowning and conquering them with fire, engraving them with spirit and hurling them into the abyss” (*IZ* 295b).²⁷ The *Sefer Yezirah’s* emphasis on the perfect forming of the letters found its way into subsequent Kabbalah, leading to meditative techniques that made use of the energies inherent in the letters combined with the visualization of the *parzufim* on the model of one’s own body. The workings of the human mouth are a reflection of the divine, making the secrets of the letters a key to practical Kabbalah. This understanding occurs in the *Idrot*; R. Shim’on confides that

I was always scrupulous with [the letters], so as not to err, except for one day, when the crowns of the King were crowned in the cave of Meron, as I say a spark

of fire scorching the whole district of Meron. I was shaken, and since then I have never put aside my caution with them. (*IZ* 295b)

The brows of *Attika* and *Zeir* are the central arbiters of judgment. The forehead of *Attik*, the “will of wills,” illuminates the forehead of *Zeir*. The prayers of Israel can rise directly to *Attik Yomin* and arouse its forbearance. *Zeir Anpin*’s brow can execute and expediate judgment (*IR* 136a–b).²⁸ *Zeir*’s brow may emanate love and forbearance, but its judgments “are eternal and will not be denied” (1 Sam. 15:29; *IZ* 293b).

Although *Attik Yomin* has only one eye, *Zeir Anpin* has two. Because of the contradictions and dualities of the lower reaches of reality, “an eye is required to keep track of the doings of the wicked” (*IR* 129b). The two eyes are balanced together as one (*IZ* 289a), “never closing, two eyes that are like one, they are all right and no left, for if this eye were closed for a moment, everything would collapse” (*IR* 129b). The eyes of the two countenances are coordinated: “The lower eye [of *Zeir*] has no light besides that reflected off the upper eye, and only the lower eye knows when the upper eye shines, but when the Messiah comes, the righteous will be able to perceive it” (*IR* 130a). *Zeir*’s eyes have eyelids and are not always open. *Attik Yomin* is always beneficent, but the gaze of *Zeir Anpin* affects people for good or for ill: “If the lower eye is mixed with red, woe to those on whom it shines! But the ones upon whom even one clarity of *Attik Yomin* shines are blessed” (*IR* 130a).

The nose is regarded as the key feature of the countenance. A proof text derived from the laws of witnessing (B.T. *Yevamot* 120a), which requires that the face be described from the nose down, is repeated, stating that “through the nose of *Zeir*, the face may be known” (*SdZ* 177b, *IZ* 294a). The distinctions between the nose of *Arikkh* and the nose of *Zeir* are inherent in their respective physiognomies. The nostrils of *Attika* are long (in the Aramaic, literally *arikkh*); this length “cools” the smoking anger of *Din*. The nostrils of *Zeir* are short (*zeir*, literally “small” or “quick”) so that the wrathful smoke is expelled prematurely (*IZ* 294a). Only *Attika*’s nose, through its life spirit, can restrain the wrath that pours forth from *Zeir* (*IZ* 289a).

The nose of *Zeir* signals and triggers divine rage. The origins of the association are based on the biblical usage *ḥaron af*, the “flaring of the nose,” as the expression of God’s anger. Similarly, the description of the two nostrils of *Zeir* breathing fiery smoke and burning fire, respectively, has as its proof text “for smoke rises in his nostrils” [2 Sam. 22:9; *IZ* 281a], for “the essence of anger is in the nose” (*IZ* 281a). This rage originates in the *dinnim*, the agents of God’s judgment in the sentient world. The forces of *Gevurah* expelled by the nose are expressed by different euphemisms for rage (*IZ* 281a). These forces are also indicated by the final letter, heh (ה), of the divine name YHVH, whose numerical coefficient is five. These five *Gevurot* then multiply to fourteen hundred, which then spread through the nose, mouth, arms, hands, and fingers, becoming eventually 1,400,000 *gevurot*: “and when they all come together they are called one *Gevurah* . . . shining as they descend to the shining sword” (*IR* 137b). The multiples of fourteen indicate the numerical coefficient of the Hebrew *yad*, “hand,” indicating that the hand of God is the agency of judgment.

There are various strategies for ameliorating the negative energies that issue from the nose of *Zeir*. Sacrifices may appease this wrath. Through the power of their

“sweet savor [*reah nihoah*, Gen. 8:21], they perfume, sweeten, and defuse the *Geurot*, sweetening the fire that pours out of the left nostril” (*IZ* 294a).

The ears serve as conduits through which spiritual practices such as prayer and Torah study enter the divine body. The ears open into the chambers of the divine consciousness (*mohin*), and the prayers and cries of the people flow into the ear like a river. The sound is filtered through the processes of hearing, exemplified by the discernment (*mavhinah*) of good and evil through the “fifty gates of hearing” (*IR* 138b). The inner chambers of the ear descend gradually to delay the voice from entering the consciousness, “so that it may not be hasty and less wise” (*IZ* 294a).

This discernment draws on the sefirotic force of the *sefirah Binah*, the aspect of intuitive understanding and empathy, “in the way that *Shema*’ means ‘understand.’” In humans, this hearing and understanding are a form of prophecy (*IR* 138b). As in the case of all of the dual orifices, *Zeir Anpin*’s two ears service a realm of dualities: good and evil, right and left, *Rahamim* and *Din*. The cries of the people Israel part the hair over the ears. The eyes fill with tears, rage pours from the nostrils, and God responds to their entreaties.²⁹

In receiving prayer, all of the orifices are contingent upon one another: the eyes, mouth, nose and ear—hence the halakhic admonition that prayer must be said out loud, formed and enunciated by the lips (*IZ* 294b), for the prayers are taken up by the angels whose service is contingent on the ears. Once the prayers are delivered, the nose of *Attika* can restrain the wrath that pours forth from *Zeir*. The sweetening of the *dinnim* by the nose of *Zeir* is portrayed in mythic terms as the moment when “the nether world of *shahat* changes from the qualities of *Din* to those of *Rahamim* when the great white head of *Attika de-Attikin* is revealed” (*IZ* 294a).

The Beard

Like fine oil on the head, running onto the beard, the beard of Aaron that descends over the collar of his robe, like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion. There God ordained blessing, everlasting life.

Psalms 133:2

Divinity flows from *Attika Kadisha* to *Zeir Anpin* and thence into the phenomenal world through their overlapping beards, in tumbling streams and fountains of divine effluence. Hence, the beard is referred to as the “beard of faith,” for it dispatches God’s loving-kindness and mercy into the world. The passages detailing the *tiqqunim* of the beard (*tiqqunei diknah*) are among the most recondite in the *Idrot* and entered the liturgy of practicing kabbalists.³⁰ The beards are made up of facets or aspects, which are called its *tiqqunim*. On one level, the *tiqqunim* are actual features of actual cosmic beards. They are also the realization of many textual allusions and kabbalistic symbols. Their physical position, as well as the proof texts that describe them, are part of their function.

The central distinction between the two beards is that while *Attika* has thirteen *tiqqunim*, *Zeir* has only nine.³¹ *Attika*’s thirteen *tiqqunim* are initially defined by

their respective positions on the divine face. The first *tiqqun* is the mane (*IR* 131b–132b), which begins at the crown, descends to the ears, and flows in one great strand to the mouth. The second *tiqqun* is the mustache, the third *tiqqun* runs beneath the nostrils,³² the fourth *tiqqun* connects the heads of *Attika* and *Zeir*, and the fifth forms two parallel channels, one above the other. At the sixth *tiqqun*, the hairs circle the mouth, and the seventh *tiqqun* covers the cheeks. The eighth *tiqqun* sends out one strand of hair around the beard which then extends to the navel. The ninth *tiqqun* descends to the throat, and the tenth *tiqqun* covers the throat beneath the chin. The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth *tiqqunim* extend to the lower reaches of *Attika* and into the beard of *Zeir Anpin* (*IR* 131b).

Arikkh's tiqqunim flow onto *Zeir's* nine *tiqqunim*, although they differ in line with *Zeir's* different physiognomy (*IR* 135a–b, 139a). The forces emanating from *Zeir's* beard have a more direct relationship to the *sefirot* than do *Attika's*, because *Zeir's* beard is rent by the conflict between *Din* and its opposite partners, loving-kindness (*Hesed*) and mercy (*Rahamim*). According to the “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” (*IZ* 295a), the beard originates from the higher *Hesed*. When *Attika's* thirteen “springs” flow onto *Zeir's* nine “lights,” they are entities of *Rahamim*. *Zeir's* beard makes use of this *Rahamim* to combat suffering in the present world. The beard is also an agent of *Din* to wreak vengeance on Israel's enemies. The curls that tumble from *Zeir's* head are full of dichotomies, right/left, light/darkness, *Rahamim/Din*. These dichotomies represent the dialectical and conflicted state of present reality, as opposed to the beatific unity of the divine realm.³³ The hairs of *Zeir's* beard are stiffer than *Attika's* because of their mixture of *Din* and *Rahamim*. In the Messianic age, “when the holy white beard is revealed, they will be bathed in its shining, as one who bathes in a deep river to cleanse himself. The *Rahamim* will sustain humanity, and the forces of judgment will be dispersed” (*IR* 139b).

The first *tiqqun* is the mane, from which descends the spark of *buzina de-kardinuta* (*IR* 139a, *IZ* 295a). The area of this *tiqqun* extends from *Zeir's* ears into the mane. The emanation of the nine *tiqqunim* begins at the mane, which consists of hairs “without number” hanging in clusters on either side of the skull. *Zeir's* second *tiqqun* descends and surrounds the mouth (*IR* 140a), the third *tiqqun* is the mustache, and the fourth *tiqqun* covers the cheeks. The fifth *tiqqun* covers the “apples,” or genitalia, and the sixth *tiqqun* descends to the abdomen but not the navel. The seventh is below the mouth, the eighth covers the neck, and the ninth, like the thirteenth *tiqqun* of *Attika*, connects all of the former (*IR* 139b–140b).

Sometimes the beard's physical position is part of its function. For instance, by virtue of their proximity to the mouth, *Attika's* twelfth *tiqqun* and *Zeir's* seventh are venues of prophecy, the “unobstructed” flow of divine spirit (*IR* 134a–b). An obstruction of the mouth would be an irruption of *Din*. But for such a blockage all of the divine flow would be from realm of mercy (*Rahamim*), “for from this mouth, the Holy of Holies breathes forth the spirit that cleaves to and cloths *Zeir Anpin*. From this *ruah* are clothed all that are below” (*IR* 134a–b). In *Gikatilla's* recounting of the thirteen attributes, the mouth is described as “the fountain of prophecy, the foundation of the kings, of all the forces of garments of all the *sefirot* that clothe all the prophets.”³⁴ Similarly, *Zeir's* seventh *tiqqun* (*IZ* 141a) consists of the hairs that are past the mouth. This is the locus of prophecy in *Zeir*, for the prophet is

“God’s mouthpiece.” The seventh *tiqqun* is the realization of the higher six, and prophet is the conduit for this aggregate energy. The fifth *tiqqun* encompasses the area beneath the mouth and is the seat of divine anger. Gikatilla describes the fifth attribute as that which “counters the masters of *Din*.”³⁵ This process takes place only in the lower worlds, which may be assured, in Micah’s words, that God “has not maintained his wrath forever.”

Parallel Sources for the Beard

The portrayal of *Attika’s tiqqunim* mirrors an earlier tradition, that of the thirteen receptacles of mercy. This tradition has its origins in the *Iyyun* circle, a group of kabbalists in the generation immediately before the circle that composed the *Zohar*, who speculated on the thirteen *middot* (qualities or attributes) in a number of writings.³⁶ Mark Verman has traced the development of the idea of the thirteen attributes through the unfolding recensions of the *Iyyun* literature.³⁷ One of the oldest versions of the myth is the *Midrash of R. Shim’on the Righteous*, which links the thirteen attributes to a specific angelology.³⁸ An *Iyyun* text known as the “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy” reflects the influence of Joseph Gikatilla and the *Zohar’s* circle.³⁹ This last version focuses on the inflection of various versions of the name YHVH with various forms of vocalization.

For the *Iyyun* circle, these qualities constituted “modes of God’s action.” The thirteen *middot* are not *sefirot* but are powers “enclosed in the first *sefirah* and erupting from it,” an idea that Scholem located among the Catharites and in the writings of John Scotus Erigena.⁴⁰ This portrayal of a realm of powers that bypasses the sefirotic system recurs in the *Idrot*. The same idea is expressed in the introduction to the “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy”:

The secret of the thirteen receptacles of mercy. In their names and existence they refer to the *Keter Elyon* and are imprinted from *Hokhmah* and explicated through *Binah* and extend into practice in the thirteen attributes that were stated to Moses our teacher of blessed memory. . . . All of these qualities [*middot*] are *middot* of *Rahamim*. There is no particular overseer of *Din*, for *El* is also *Rahamim*.⁴¹

Theosophical kabbalists appropriated the *Iyyun* circle’s doctrine of the thirteen qualities. They made use of the doctrine, as did the *Iyyun* circle, to evade the sefirotic structure. The most important parallel text is Joseph Gikatilla’s “Secret of the Thirteen *Middot* That Flow from the Highest Crown and Are Called the Springs of Salvation.”⁴² Gikatilla’s work serves as a bridge to the earlier *Iyyun* tradition, which the *Idrot*, with their notion of the beard of *Attika*, modified nearly beyond recognition.

Gikatilla defined the thirteen aspects as a set of energies that emanate from *Keter*, the *sefirah* that he defined, in Maimonidean terms, as the “primordial reality” (*meziut kadmon*). The thirteen “qualities” (*middot*) emanate from the infinite abstraction of *Keter* and thereby bypass the sefirotic structure. Gikatilla calls this bypassing flow the “secret of *Keter*, which is *Attik Yomin*, the essence of the emanation . . . for the

essence of the *Azilot*, all of its drawing forth is in the secret of the thirteen fountains of mercy that flow from *Keter* in this order."⁴³ Like the earlier *Iyyun* texts, Gikatilla describes the first of the attributes as "the secret of *Keter* hidden in the realm of *Binah* which is *Din*."⁴⁴ In his further description, Gikatilla characterizes different qualities as signifying different processes of divine flow. Hence, the third *middah* is described as "clearing the way," the seventh is called the gushing fountain of Eden, emanated from *Binah*, and the eighth is the source of *mazal*, another form of divine flow. The qualities of mercy originate in the first *sefirah*, as Gikatilla asserts that "*Keter* is emanated as the foundation and root of all places. . . . It is the source from which [everything] suckles."⁴⁵

Otherwise, the *tiqqunim* as presented by the *Idrot* and the *middot* as presented by Gikatilla largely parallel one another. The accounts of the subsequent *tiqqunim* of *Attika* are shorter, as if presented in a rush to get to the summarizing and encompassing thirteenth *tiqqun*. The eleventh *tiqqun* has no lore at all, in the expositions of both the *Zohar* and Gikatilla! The *Idra* notes only that "one hair is not preeminent over another hair, as it is the *Hesed* unto Abraham" (*IR* 134a–b), so that the impulse of the eleventh *tiqqun* is to deprecate itself and be subdued.⁴⁶ Gikatilla elides the problem by presenting part of the material from the *Zohar*'s twelfth *tiqqun* as the eleventh.

However, Gikatilla may not have been telling all that he knew. In his work *Sha'arei Orah*, he implies that the emanation of existence from *Keter* is too esoteric a secret for general circulation.⁴⁷ The material that he would not circulate may have been the anthropomorphic mythos. His allusion to an esoteric tradition underlying this material may be related to the repeated references in the *Idrot* to the beard's "hidden" nature. This hiddenness serves as a rationale for the fact that there is little trace of the *parzufim* in exoteric Judaism, with the possible exception of the beard of the higher high priest, which flows onto that of the lower high priest, as described in Psalm 133.⁴⁸ Isaiah's reference to God's dread majestic presence is a veiled reference to the beard (after Lev. 19:32; *IR* 141a).

Both Gershom Scholem and Yehudah Liebes contended that Gikatilla possessed more complete account of the thirteen *middot*. Hence, Liebes' statement that:

It may be logically concluded that Gikatilla and the *Zohar* both drew from a no longer extant Spanish pseudomidrashic text which can be identified with the first edition of *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. . . . It might also be shown, however, that it is not a question only of a more complete version of the *Zohar*, but of a third version, which was elaborated both by the *Zohar* and Gikatilla.⁴⁹

Gikatilla's version was a bridge between the *Iyyun* tradition and the anthropomorphized readings of the *Idrot* and the earlier recensions of the *Iyyun* circle, presenting the metaphysical underpinnings of the thirteen *middot* without the anthropomorphic model of the beard.⁵⁰ Eventually, Moshe Cordovero would base his influential ethical work on *imitatio Dei*, *Tomer Devorah*, on the thirteen attributes, as expressed through the thirteen facets of the beard. Hence, the doctrine of the thirteen attributes both preceded and succeeded the *Idrot*, a kabbalistic model of a nonsefirotic portrayal of God's attributes.

Proof Texts

The descriptions of the beard's *tiqqunim* are accompanied by the exegesis of certain characteristic biblical proof texts. These proof texts are interpreted as references to divine attributes, of which each *tiqqun* is the realization. Other proof texts indicate the position of the given *tiqqun* on the beard. The primary biblical proof texts, which serve as urtext's for the beards of *Attika* and *Zeir*, are the delineations of God's qualities, or *middot*, as drawn from two biblical passages. The proof text for the beard of *Attika* is the presentation made by the prophet Micah (7:18–20):

Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; who has not maintained his wrath forever against the remnant of his own people because he loves *Hesed*! He will take us back in love; he will cover up our iniquities; you will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob, *Hesed* to Abraham, as you promised on oath to our fathers in days gone by.

The thirteen images contained in this text correspond to the thirteen attributes of *Attika's* beard (Micah 7:18–19; *IR* 130b–131a). The nine aspects of *Zeir Anpin's* beard are invoked in the attributes recited at the incident of the golden calf (Exod. 34:6–7; *IR* 131a):

YHVH! YHVH! God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in *Hesed* and truth, extending *Hesed* to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, remitting . . . !⁵¹

Each of the beard's *tiqqunim* embody a divine *middah*. The signifying *middah* assigned to each *tiqqun* can dictate its nature. For example, the second *tiqqun* of *Zeir* (*IR* 140a) takes as its proof text Micah's "merciful God," *El Rahum*. This *tiqqun* embodies the force of *Rahamim*, the *sefirah* of divine mercy. The third *tiqqun* (*IR* 133a) corresponds to Micah's quality of *remitting transgression*. Because of this association, this *tiqqun* is portrayed as the path of forgiveness, and it holds sway over many squads⁵² of rabbinical courts, as well as silencing the forces of judgment, "whose wailing and moaning is stilled, silencing the hidden, silent masters of *Din*" (*IR* 133a).

The description of a given *tiqqun* incorporates imagery from the accounts of Micah and Exodus, along with secondary groups of images that define the *tiqqun's* function. The fourth *tiqqun* of *Attika* begins at the two parallel paths that are beneath the mouth. These parallel paths of the fourth *tiqqun* are signified by every proof text that is composed of double images, particularly Moses' cry at the incident of the golden calf: YHVH! YHVH! (*IR* 133a, *IZ* 289a). These two paths lead "from one head to the other," between *Zeir* and *Attika*. A second set of associations for this *tiqqun* is the image of partiality, specifically the "remnant" of Israel. This *tiqqun* is signified by Micah's reference to "the remnant of his own people," and it draws resonance from the verses "and you will bear prayer for the remnant that is left" (2 Kings 19:4) and "the remnant of Israel will do not evil" (Zeph. 3:12). Gikatilla also invokes the image of the remnant in his portrayal of this *tiqqun*.⁵³ In every version, however, the portrayal of the fourth *tiqqun* is laconic, a "remnant" of a teaching.

Imagery may also be combined with supporting proof texts to give a very specific description of a *tiqqun*'s nature. For instance, the hairs of the eighth *tiqqun* cover the back of the neck (*IZ* 141a), which is visible under the beard only during battle, for exposure of the neck is the revelation of heroism (synonymous with the *sefirah Gevurah*). This image is expanded in the Song of Songs reference to the heroes' shields hung on the wall (4:4).

In the ninth *tiqqun* the hairs hang down, entangled, like the swirling shoals of the sea, over the throat of *Attika Kadisha* (*IR* 134a). Images of the sea are repeatedly invoked to represent this *tiqqun*. Divine effluence cascades down like seawater from the chambers of consciousness (*moah*). Hence, this *tiqqun* is associated with the *Tashlikh* prayer of the Jewish New Year, during which the divine attributes from Micah are recited as one's sins are symbolically thrown away. The hairs are "entangled" to thwart the efforts of the "creditors" and "agents of judgment" (*ba'alei din*). This image also occurs in Gikatilla's presentation, which characterizes this attribute as the mercy which is the "swirls of the sea," that "wipes away sins like a cloud" (Isa. 44:22).⁵⁴

In the tenth *tiqqun*, R. Yehudah associates the lower reaches of the beard with the "caverns of the rocks" of Isaiah 2:21 (*IR* 134a): "they shall enter the clefts in the rocks and the crevices in the cliffs, before the terror of the Lord and his dread majesty, when he comes forth to overawe the earth." The prophet's reference to God's dread majestic presence is understood as a veiled reference to the beard, as is the Torah's injunction (Lev. 19:32): "You shall rise before the aged and show deference for the old; you shall fear your God; I am the Lord!" Gikatilla also mentions the "dread majesty, which through its honor overwhelms the force of *Din*."⁵⁵

The thirteenth *tiqqun* is portrayed with particular intensity in the *Idra Rabbah*, for it is the summary of all of the *tiqqunim* (134b). This thirteenth *tiqqun* unites all the *sefirot* and all the *tiqqunim* of the beard, the "upper and lower treasuries," and, finally, it unites *Attika Kadisha* and *Zeir Anpin* in their entirety. All of the higher, transcendent aspects of the beard are brought down and actualized in present reality. Because of the general importance of this *tiqqun*, it is discussed by R. Shim'on (*IR* 134b). A similarly comprehensive function attends the presentation of *Zeir*'s ninth *tiqqun* (*IR* 141a). The completion of the beard is its glory, embodied in the unifying energies of the *sefirah Tiferet*. In the presentations of *Zeir*, the implicit point is that the very condition of being human is to embody dualities, as does *Adam Kadmon* (*IR* 141a–b) in the variegated structure of *Zeir*.

A symbol may carry over from one *tiqqun* to other kabbalistic symbols. For instance, in the dramatic presentations of the thirteenth *tiqqun*, R. Shim'on employs, as a proof text, the symbolic image of the "day." The other *tiqqunim* are "the days of old" (*yemei kedem*; Jer. 46:26), and the ones found in *Zeir Anpin* are "eternal days" (*yemei olam*; Amos 9:11, Micah 7:14) and are contingent on the "days of old." The image of the "day of the Lord" leads inevitably to the invocation of the "day" of the advent of the Messiah. Therefore, the revelation of the thirteenth *tiqqun* of the beard, with its attendant unification of the countenances, is portrayed in a burst of Messianic imagery:

When *Attik Yomin* is aroused in the upper *tiqqunim*, it will be called "One Day" [Gen. 1:5] when the beard will one day be glorified, as it is written [Zech. 1:10]:

*But there shall be one day. It will be known to YHVH. He alone is greater; he contains all of them and is called by that name. Wherever there is day, there is night, and there is no day without night. For that time will be the time of the glory of the beard, and he alone will find its secret. There will be no day or night, for what we called “day” and “night” are only from our realm. For this *tiqqun* contains everything, it is not known or visible, and from it flows the pure oil of the thirteen facets or springs, through which all below are enlightened. (IR 134b)⁵⁶*

Messianic themes are also invoked throughout the *tiqqunim* of *Zeir*, for which a recurring proof text is Psalm 118, which is also the mainstay of the liturgical Hallel prayer, recited on festival days. The nine *tiqqunim* correspond to the use of the name *Yah* and *Adam* in the psalm (5–6). These nine *tiqqunim* are the source of King David’s power, as he boasts of his victories throughout the psalm. David is portrayed as “seizing the beard” after the reference in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.⁵⁷ Here, the proof text is brought as symbols or hints of the function of a given part of the beard. When these texts are used in the Jewish liturgy, then that moment of the prayer service is considered an invocation of that particular *tiqqun*, a moment when its power is manifested and may be drawn upon. The quotation of this ancient war psalm revives the militant imagery of the proof text.

The pleas and praises to God recited after the incident of the golden calf signify the paths of divine mercy. These exegeses are often referred to in the *Zohar* as the *raza de-meheimnuta*, the “secret of faith.” For the mystic, belief and trust in God consisted of putting one’s faith in the images of forbearance and mercy of the texts from Micah and Exodus and trusting that divine effluence would continue to flow into present reality. Hence, the beard is called the “beard of faith” because it is the means to expedite the flow of divine mercy and compassion into the world. Hence, the beard is the destination of the mystic’s faith in divine Providence, for “the thirteen *tiqqunim* of the beard, when it is whole, are called ‘the faithful man,’ for whoever sees his beard sees the faith that is contingent on it” (IR 131a).

The Eroticism of the *Tiqqunim*

Certain *tiqqunim* have, as part of their “bundle” of mystical symbols, an erotic character. *Attika*’s sixth *tiqqun* (IR 133b) is compared to the incense, or spice, offering of the Temple service. Rabbi Yeisa links the imagery of the spice offering to a portrayal of two kinds of *Hesed*, one associated with *Attika* and one with *Zeir*.⁵⁸ The seventh *tiqqun* is dominated by images of fructifying maleness (IR 133b–134a) and is also linked to the musky catharsis of the “spice offering.” Its physical location is at the cheeks, which are, in the Song of Songs (5:12), called the “bundle of spices.” The spice offering is related to the “two apples,” an evocation of the testes that has its origins in the Song of Songs (2:3). These apples are described as the source of the world’s life, “showing joy to *Zeir Anpin*” and lighting the divine face as described in the priestly blessing “May God illuminate the face” (Num. 6:24). The burning spices that rise for these testes/apples are the source of world blessing. The apple is also a theme in Gikatilla’s treatment of the seventh attribute, which

he describes as “the spring that is called ‘apple,’ the Eden of life that is emanated from *Binah*.” Gikatilla links this attribute to the liturgical exclamations “who brings down the dew” and “who sustains all life with *Hesed*.” This is the source of human souls, as derived from Genesis 2:7 “he breathed into him the breath of life.”⁵⁹ Gikatilla notes that the “scent of your nose like apples” (Songs 7:9) is a reference to this force that revives the dead.⁶⁰ Luria and his students also emphasized the image of the testes,⁶¹ which Vital saw as the location of the lower *sefirot* *Nezakh* and *Hod*, which in turn are hidden by the ears.⁶² This emphasis on libidinal power is also evident in the early Lurianic composition “Before the Emanation” (*Kodem ha-Azilot*), which explores the genitals and the solar plexus as centers of power.⁶³

This eroticism recurs at two further points. The thirteenth *tiqqun*, which marks the emergence of divinity into present reality, is accompanied by a similar strong sexuality, invoking the “spice offering,” which is not seen by the face, except for its “two beautiful white apples.” The “white apples,” or genitalia, are the “*mazal* from which everything flows [*mizdelzel*], the *tiqqun* that completes the *tiqqunim*.” The “apples” themselves are hidden from the divine face. This imagery recurs at *Zeir*’s fourth *tiqqun*, in which the tufts of hair on the cheeks are called “the spice offering.” They represent the *sefirah* *Hod*, which is also compared to the incense offering. *Zeir*’s fifth *tiqqun* signifies the “holy apple,” a symbol that oscillates between the testes, as in the Song of Songs, and the red lips, as foreshadowed in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (177b). As the beard’s other aspects, the holy apples of *Zeir* mirror the higher, sacred apples of *Attika*. In the perspective of *Attika*, they lose their red hue and appear white like the divine face mentioned in the priestly blessing. As the apple is composed of three colors, so two apples are composed of six colors, corresponding, apparently, to the six intermediate *sefirot* encompassed by *Zeir* (*Zohar* III 74a). All *Zeir*’s nine *tiqqunim* are refracted through these two apples (*IZ* 141a).

This symbolic nexus of the apples, the spice offering, and the tufts of hair on the cheeks lends to a general sense of coital musk to the imagery of the seventh *tiqqun* of the beard, which is echoed in other invocations. These images are the core of the erotic aspect of the *Idrot*, which is otherwise less eroticized than the lengthy excurses about the *Shekkinah* that characterize the rest of the *Zohar*. The seventh *tiqqun* “descends and rises in the offering of spices” (*IR* 295a). Similarly, *Sifra de-Zeniuta* observes that “the male extends and is perfected in his *tiqqunim*, in the *tiqqun* of pure covering” (*IR* 142a).⁶⁴ In these accounts, these aspects of the beard become a euphemism for a phallus or pubic “beard,” and the allusions to “joy,” an invocation of sexual delight. This sexuality also derives from the seventh *tiqqun*’s being a crossover point between *Attika* and *Zeir*—according to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, the point at which the aspects of divinity become “present in the world” (*IR* 131a–b; *SdZ* 177a), begging the question of whether the relationship of *Attika* and *Zeir* is eroticized or merely one of influence (albeit with its anxieties).

The premise of Western mysticism, that God fills the world with divine energy, entails certain tensions. This flow of divine effluence may be defined in monistic, impersonal terms. The animating myth of Judaism, however, is that of the personal God who exists in relationship to the believing Jew. The doctrine of the *parzufim*, as presented in the *Idrot*, *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, and the writings of Gikatilla,

encompasses both the impersonal appeal to a gothic divine infrastructure and the personalism of classical Jewish theology.

The theological drawback of the doctrine of the *parzufim* lay in its bold anthropomorphism. The images of the divine body scandalized the prevailing Maimonidean tradition. The mystique of the *parzufim* lies in the conceit that the Bible alludes to inner mysteries of the divine patriarch. The very absence of the tradition of the countenances from exoteric Judaism was, for Isaac Luria, a key to its esoteric truth, so that he declared that “the highest crown is not mentioned in the Torah at all, not this or *Abba* and *Imma*.”⁶⁵

The authors of the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta* made a number of editorial decisions in their accounts of the *parzufim*. In the case of the *Idrot*, these accounts were melded with the framing narratives. Was there doctrinal development among the *Zohar*'s circle that led to the *Idra Zuta*'s “improvements” on the *Idra Rabbah*'s presentation, or were all of the traditions available at the beginning, to be released over time by a guiding authorial and editorial hand? To develop an archeology of the *Idrot*, one would have to untangle the various pronouncements in the *Idrot* and link them to parallel teachings among members of Moshe de Leon's circle. The *Zohar*'s exegetes denied the inconsistencies in the *Idrot*. They claimed that differences between the various presentations originated with the participants in the *Idrot*. According to this understanding, Rabbi Shim'on revealed the ultimate secrets in the *Idra Zuta*, thus bringing about his own immolation. The most ambitious exegetes of the *Zohar*, such as Cordovero and the Lurianists, combined the various descriptions of the *parzufim* into one superstructure. Such systematic presentations elided differences between the various texts, viewing the traditions of the divine astral bodies as one unified and internally coherent system.

The Idrot

The Emanation of Divinity

The idea that palpable divinity flows into the sentient world, emanating from a single divine source, is basic to Western mysticism. The irruptions and interruptions of this divine flow also form the underlying assumptions of much of Gnostic literature and classical Neoplatonism. The literature of theosophical Kabbalah is full of expositions of the ways that God's divinity shines, emanates, flashes, and flows into the world as a palpable effluence. The *Idrot*, too, describe the energies coursing through *Adam Kadmon*. Some of these processes involve the *sefirot*, but not all. Certain *sefirot*, such as *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, or *Gevurah* and *Hesed*, are portrayed as independent forces in the dynamics of the *parzufim*. Other forces, such as the flow of *mazal* and *tal*, are not related to the *sefirot*.

A number of metaphors are employed to depict this divine flow, particularly the aspects, or *tiqqunim*, of the beards. The *Idra Zuta* portrays the *mazal*, or divine effluence, as streaming through a series of "springs of choice oil" to *Zeir Anpin*. *Zeir* then transfers this energy into nine springs (*IZ* 289b), which are used to anoint the Messiah, implying that the messianic line is the line of the cosmic *anthropos* (*IR* 139b–140b). *Gikatilla*, similarly, compares the name *El*, which commences the text in *Micah*, to the "emptying out of oil through higher channels." The *tiqqunim* are sometimes referred to as "lights," as in the *Idra Rabbah's* reference to the nine "lights" that shine from the *tiqqunim* of *Attika*, which "flow like the beard of Aaron" (*IR* 138b, *IZ* 288a). *Attika* is also compared to a candle, and its *tiqqunim* are the light shining forth. Another image of the emanation of divine effluence is that of a special dew dripping onto *Zeir Anpin*. This dew is also the substance that revives the dead at the resurrection.¹

Besides the relationship of the *sefirot* and other forces, the *Idrot* describe energy as flowing through *Adam Kadmon* in a series of erotic unions. These couplings of the male and female aspects of the divine differ from other understandings presented in the *Zohar*. Taken together, the various symbols and metaphors of the divine emanation formed the basic tropes of subsequent kabbalistic thought.

The Flow of *Hokhmah*

One element that originates in Western esotericism, as well as being represented in classical Kabbalah, is the incarnate power of Wisdom, or *Hokhmah*. In theosophical Kabbalah, *Hokhmah* is one of the upper triumvirate of *sefirot*. It is generally

understood as the opposite of the *sefrah* of intuitive understanding, *Binah*. *Hokhmah* and *Binah* are the gates through which the divine emanates into the phenomenal world. The successive levels of emanation are referred to as the “children” of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, which are the divine “parents” (IZ 289b).²

In terms of the divine physiognomy presented in the *Idrot*, *Hokhmah* originates beneath *Attika Kadisha*. It originates in the ether of the hidden consciousness (*moah*) in the shell of the skull of *Attika Kadisha*. *Hokhmah* is the beginning of the emanated world, since the head is the seat of the intellect, and the intellect is the highest attainment of human spirituality. This hidden wisdom is silent and tranquil, for the skull blocks it from the turbulent, differentiated lower reaches of *Zeir Anpin*. *Hokhmah* descends through the beards of *Arikkh* and *Zeir* to *Nukvah*. Flowing through the mane, bypassing the beard, the light of *Hokhmah* fills the successive chambers of the consciousness of *Attika*, into *Zeir* (IR 128b, IZ 290a).

Intimations of this flow of *Hokhmah* are given in a number of different teachings: analyses of divine names, symbolic exegeses of biblical texts, and analyses of the myth of *Adam Kadmon*. One ancient kabbalistic tradition that comes into play here is that of the thirty-one or thirty-two paths of wisdom (IZ 289b). The thirty-two paths of wisdom are derived from the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the ten acts of speech that compose the creation account in Genesis 1. The *Idra Zuta* describes this *tiqqun* as flowing in “thirty-two strands, and from each one come out thirty-one worlds, each of which gives off a thousand worlds” (IR 132a). It seems that the mane is not directly connected to the beard but is a separate channel of *Hokhmah*. *Zeir* also produces thirty-two paths of “a flowing spring of *Hokhmah*,” extending in all directions (IR 136a) and flowing through a series of rooms, antechambers, and balconies through the chambers of *Zeir Anpin*’s consciousness (IR 136a).

Gikatilla derives the thirty-one worlds from the divine name El,³ the numerical coefficient of which is thirty-one (ס"א). Gikatilla defines these as the paths of emanation from *Keter*, particularly as it is “hidden in the realm of *Binah* which is *Din*.” Similarly, the *Idra Rabbah* describes the first *tiqqun* of *Attika*’s beard, the mane, as beginning with thirty-one locks of hair (IR 132a). These hairs are soft, “for if they were hard, the wisdom would not flow through them” (IR 131b), and are white as snow.

The image of the flow of *Hokhmah* from *Attika* to *Zeir* is invoked in the important proof text Genesis 2:10: river flowing out of Eden to water the Garden.” The Semitic root NHR, here meaning “river,” also means “to flow” and “to shine.” God is referred to with the doubled name YHVH Elohim. His “planting” of the Garden of Eden signifies the unity of *Arikkh Anpin* and of *Zeir Anpin*. *Hokhmah* forms a river, which waters the celestial Garden of Eden, the entrance into *Zeir Anpin* (IZ 289b, 290b). This teaching is also echoed in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*’s remark: “The higher Eden [is] sealed and hidden, [but] the lower Eden is carried away” (*SdZ* 178b). The higher wisdom is hidden, but the lower is revealed. The upper Eden can never be perceived by *Zeir Anpin*, unlike the lower Garden of Eden (IZ 289b, 290b). Each of these forms of wisdom is symbolized by the letter *heh* (ה) in the name YHVH.⁴

The lower *Hokhmah* is the source of the *tiqqunim* of *Zeir Anpin*. Wisdom flows, in a metaphor of discipleship, from *Hokhmah*, the master, to *Zeir*, the disciple. The

metaphor for the descent of *Hokhmah* then transforms into one of heterosexual eroticism in the union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. Thus, wisdom is an extension of fructifying maleness, as in the early mythos of *Pistis* and *Sophia*. This flow is also portrayed in erotic terms: it stimulates the flow of the lower waters of *Nukvah*, the moisture of excitation.

Din and *Hesed*

Another paradigm of flow and interaction in the *Idrot* is the interplay of the *sefirot* *Din* and *Hesed*. The image of *Din*, as the force of judgment and severity, being mitigated by the divine loving-kindness in *Hesed*, has pre-Socratic origins.⁵ In the *Idrot*, forces of harsh judgment, or *Din*, are mitigated by the powers of *Hesed* (loving-kindness) and *Rahamim* (mercy), the latter being the combination of the two former *sefirot*. In the course of the downward flow, *Din* must be dispatched or mitigated, for “everything needs *Hesed* to grow and multiply, so as not to be cut off and banished from the earth” (*IR* 133b). In the divine embrace that climaxes the *Idrot*, the right and left arms affect the forces of *Hesed* and *Din*, respectively. In this way, *Attik Yomin* combines the qualities of *Din* and *Hesed*, “for otherwise the world could not survive” (*IR* 142b). The joints and limbs of *Zeir*’s right arm contain and subsume those of the left, so that they are together called “the arm of YHVH” (*IR* 142a–b).

The powers of *Rahamim* flow through the thirteen *tiqqunim* of the beard of *Attika*.⁶ Certain *tiqqunim* are particularly important in controlling this flow, such as the sixth *tiqqun*, which is at the point of the beard’s descent to the abdomen and where the beard becomes a fructifying phallus (*IZ* 141a). Similarly, in Gikatilla’s “The Secret of the Thirteen *Middot*,” certain *middot* (attributes) counter the negative energy of the *sefirah* *Din*. The fourth attribute seeks mercy for those who, by rights, ought to be destroyed, whereas the fifth counters the forces of *Din*. The sixth attribute calls forth the supernal *Hesed*, “which through its honor overwhelms the force of *Din*.” The ninth is the force of *Rahamim*, divine mercy, “which wipes away sin like a cloud.” The thirteenth is the source of *Rahamim*, the *sefirah* “that is not day or night, not like the nine *sefirot* that are below *Keter*.” As much as the thirteen attributes may be conceived as bypassing the sefirotic superstructure, as a theosophical kabbalist Gikatilla nonetheless commits the actions of the thirteen *middot* to addressing the problem of evil entailed by the irruption of *Din*.

The *Idrot* and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* posit two levels of the *sefirah* *Hesed*, each representing a separate aspect of this quality of loving-kindness. The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* portrays the two levels of *Hesed* in the following fashion: “The high beard that shines on the lower, for the higher is called ‘full of loving-kindness,’ and the smaller is called simply ‘loving-kindness,’ and when necessary the higher beard shines on it and it is also called ‘full of loving-kindness’” (*SdZ* 177b).

As a proof text for the existence of these two aspects, the *Idra Rabbah* draws on the prophetic text proclaiming that “with everlasting *Hesed* I will take you back in love” and “my *Hesed* will not depart from you” (Isa. 54:8). The *Idra* interprets this

text as meaning that there are two types of *Hesed*, inner and outer. The inner, or higher, *Hesed* originates in the supernal realms of *Attika de-Attikin*, which is hidden by the corner of the beard. This *Hesed* is called the “eternal” and “true” *Hesed*, because its origins are beyond the realm of the body and the soul. In the divine physiognomy, this *Hesed* is analogous to the *peot*, the side curls, which are analogous to the third and fourth *tiqqunim* of the beard of *Zeir* (*IR* 140b). Hence, halakhic strictures against cutting the beard and side curls are injunctions not to disturb the inner paths of this *Hesed*.⁷

The lower *Hesed* restrains the wrath that pours forth from the nose of *Zeir*. Besides being nullified with loving-kindness, the force of *Din* may also be “sweetened.” God’s anger flashes in the nostrils of *Zeir*. The nose expels forces of *Din* or *Gevurah*, which are in turn expressed in the various euphemisms for God’s anger. A portion of the netherworld known as *Shahat* is reserved for changing the qualities of *Din* to those of *Rahamim* when the great white head of *Attika de-Attikin* is revealed (*IZ* 294a).⁸ Sacrifices appease this wrath through the sweetening power of the “sweet savor” (*reah nihoah*, after Gen. 8:21; *IZ* 294a). The sacrifices of the lower altar in the Temple perfume, sweeten, and defuse the *Gevurot* that pour out of the left nostril of *Zeir*. Hence, there is a dark quality in *Zeir*’s beard, so that the dark hairs reflect the presence of harsh judgment: “therefore, the beard of *Zeir* is black, indicating the aspects of judgment in it, whereas the beard of *Attik* is white as snow” (*IR* 132a, 137b–138a). *Zeir Anpin* governs God’s interaction with the phenomenal world, and in quieting the fires of *Din*, it’s *tiqqunim* are transformed. The *Hesed* of *Attik de-Attikin* is the true *Hesed* because its origins are beyond the realm of the body and the soul, while the *Hesed* of *Zeir* is the manifested form of the true *Hesed*. *Hesed*’s nature as a form of “giving” or outpouring leads to its role as male symbol, and *Din*, insofar as it represents receptivity, is viewed as female.⁹

Mazal

Mazal is another form of divine energy. The term is derived from the Hebrew root NZL, “to flow.” In the physiognomy of the *parzufim*, *mazal* is the energy that courses through the hairs, “the holy precious thread on which all hairs are contingent” (*IR* 134a).¹⁰ Other citations in the *Zohar* support this understanding, such as “from the light that flows and shines from Eden . . . the *mazal* of all good blessings and blessed rain flow [*nazlei*] from it” (*Zohar I* 115a) and “the *mazal* that descends and flows” (*Zohar I*. 181a).¹¹ Life, sustenance, Heaven and Earth, the rains, and the higher and lower Gardens of Eden are the products of the nourishing flow of divine *mazal* (*IZ* 289b). The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* underscores that *mazal* is the aggregate flow of all of the thirteen aspects of the beards, stating that “in that *mazal* of everything flow thirteen anointings of pure persimmon. All are found and hidden in that *mazal*” (*SdZ* 177a).

The term *mazal* is most widely recognized as meaning “astrological constellation,” and its popular use as a synonym for luck (as in the expression *mazal tov*) derives from this association. The *mazal* referred to in the *Idrot* was something else

entirely. Joseph Gikatilla discounted astrology completely. His understanding of *mazal* has little to do with the astrological causalities:

This *mazal* overcomes all the structures of the constellations [*mazalot*]. Nothing stands before it. Whoever desires it will merit it, for everything is contingent upon it, and all the constellations in Heaven are thought of as nothing, even though Israel has no portion in the constellations and stars, for there is no *mazal* for Israel [B.T. *Nedarim* 32a]. In this situation, the other constellations have no power to override if this *mazal* is determined to harm them, just as this *mazal* may overturn the order of the constellations from evil to good.¹²

Allowing astrological forces a role in a Jewish mystical superstructure would be a threat to classical Jewish theology, which deprecated astrology, science, and witchcraft in favor of divine Providence. When the term *mazal* is interpreted as simply the “flow” of effluence, these theological complexities disappear.

Mazal flows into the world through the eighth *tiqqun* of the beard of *Attika*. According to R. Eliezer, the eighth *tiqqun* actually channels the flow of *mazal* into the phenomenal world. The revelation of this *tiqqun* is described as “releasing the upper knot” from the “head of all heads, unknowing and unknown, on which everything is contingent” (*IZ* 289a–b, *IR* 134a):

From this beard of *Attika* hangs the most precious, the *mazal* of everything, this most precious *mazal* of the above and below, to which all turn their attention. All life and all sustenance are contingent on this *mazal*. Heaven and Earth and the rain that God wills are contingent on this *mazal*.¹³ In this *mazal* is the oversight of everything [*ishgahuta de-kulla*]. On this *mazal* are contingent all of the higher and lower forces, the thirteen springs of bounteous flow, which are contingent on the beard of this precious *mazal*. (*IZ* 289a)

Mazal is the medium for descent of *Attika*'s divinity. *Mazal* “releases the tangles of the higher knot, from the head of all the heads, unknowing and unknown and on which everything is contingent” (*IZ* 289b). Gikatilla employs similarly fateful imagery in illustrating the role of *mazal*. He stresses its role as the “lights of the countenance,” the biblical model of Moses’ “shining face” and the horn of the Messiah, which, in the *Idrot*, appears in R. Shim'on's subsequent comparison of himself to Moses.¹⁴

The *Zohar*'s interpreters were divided as to the origins of *mazal* and the sefirotic powers that it contains. Some stressed the relationship of *mazal* to the sefirah *Hesed*. *Hesed* is described as blinding whiteness, shining with an immolating power. The light of *mazal* splits into the thirty-two paths of wisdom (*IZ* 289b).¹⁵ Gikatilla portrayed *mazal* as the antithesis of *Din*:

Keter . . . is called *mazal*, upon which even the scroll of the Torah is contingent. It is the source from which suckle all those helpless ones in the realm of *my children, my life, my sustenance* [B.T. *Moed Katan* 28a]. When this *mazal* is revealed, all the masters of *Din* are ashamed before it, and *Din* disappears. This aspect overcomes all iniquity wherever it is found. . . . Nothing stands before it; whoever desires it will merit it, for everything is contingent upon it.¹⁶

Like Gikatilla, Moshe Cordovero defined *mazal* as the *sefirah Keter* itself:

Keter is called *mazal* because it influences, flows, and spreads to all of the *sefirot*. As the *mazal* is above, so this is above all of the *sefirot*. Indeed, it is called *mazal* because of its aspect which reveals and influences all of them.¹⁷

Among the writings on *mazal*, an apparently rabbinic dictum (*IR 134a*) is invoked, that “everything is contingent on *mazal*, even the Torah scroll in the palace.” This statement, erroneously attributed to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, is presently extant nowhere but the writings of Gikatilla.¹⁸ The “Torah scroll in the palace” signifies another powerful biblical image, the prophetic theophany of Isaiah in the “palace” of the Jerusalem Temple (Isa. 6). According to this interpretation of the prophet’s account, the angelic cries of “Holy! Holy! Holy” indicate three levels of holiness, which are mirrored in the Torah, its covering or mantle, and the “palace,” or ark, itself (*IR 134a*). The *Idra Zuta* projects this triune model onto *Adam Kadmon*, insisting that the *mazal* illuminates the “three high heads” (*IZ 289b*). These are the three uppermost *sefirot*, because they are subsumed in the womb of *Binah*. *Mazal* is “the light which flows from the seventh celestial palace from the three initial *sefirot*, as signified by [the angels’ song in Isa. 6] ‘Holy Holy Holy.’”¹⁹ The sets of three are really one, in a paradox:

The three heads extend unified and present in this *mazal*, so that all that is precious is contingent on this *mazal*. All the letters that are contingent on this *Attika* are contingent on this beard and are connected to this *mazal*, so as to sustain other letters. If these letters had not risen in *Attika*, these others would not have been upheld. Therefore, Moses cried [at the incident of the Golden calf] “YY’ YY’” two times, with a distinction between them, for the *mazal* was contingent on it. Those above and below desire this *mazal* and are overcome by it. Happy is the portion of the one who merits this! (*IZ 289a–b*)

Isaac Luria, in his commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, interpreted the “three heads” as three aspects of *Attika*, of which one was *Keter* and one was *mazal*:

Who is *Attika Kadisha*? We would have thought that the *mazal* is called *Attika*, and there are three heads, the high *Keter*, the hidden consciousness [*moha stima’ah*] and the *mazal* that receives from the two of them like any other deciding factor in the world. . . . [*Attika*] is the unknown, which is the essence of all of them and the two heads are continued in him.²⁰

Luria saw *mazal* as a force that extends from the divine and also points back to the ultimate hiddenness of the highest levels of divinity. For Luria, as for Gikatilla, *mazal*, like the other thirteen aspects of the beard, was a dynamic process separate from the sefirotic system.

The *Idra Zuta* associates *mazal* with the descent of the revivifying dew, *tal* (*IZ 292b*), the *tal* of *Attik Yomin*, which accumulates in the skull of *Zeir*.²¹ This dripping dew has two colors or aspects, white and red, which correspond to the aspects of *Din* and *Hesed* inherent in it (*IR 135b*).²² The dew collected in the skull will revive the dead at the coming of the Messiah. This dew is also the source of the manna, the “bread from Heaven” (Exod. 16:4), which is like the “dew from Heaven”

(Gen. 27: 28). The primordial ether and the dew of *Attika* mix, and the light of *Zeir's* skull shines out with two colors, illuminating the lower worlds. This revivifying dew drips onto the realm of *Nukvah*, here described in the classical euphemism for the *Shekhinah*, the “field of holy apples” (*IR* 128b).²³

Divine Union: *Abba* and *Imma*

The narratives of both *Idrot* make use of the erotic imagery of the divine union. Aspects of *Adam Kadmon* extend, exchange, and excite sexual energies among the *parzufim*. These energies are the animating forces of the descent of the *parzufim* themselves. The first union is that of the *parzufim* *Abba* and *Imma* (literally “father” and “mother”), which parallel the *sefirot* *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. The second is the union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*, which parallel the *sefirot* *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.

Descriptions of the union of *Abba* and *Imma* are a literary feature of the *Idra Zuta*. These references often invoke the mysterious “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” as a reference and proof text for this doctrine. *Abba* is the seed of wisdom, and *Imma* is the nurturing womb for this seed. Together, they are divine parents, a royal couple, “crowned with crowns” (*IZ* 291a). The lower *parzufim*, and even the upper *sefirah* *Da'at*, are their children. The entire structure of *Adam Kadmon* requires the union of *Abba* and *Imma* in order to stand (*IZ* 295b–296a).

Abba and *Imma* bear progeny in two ways. In the upper reaches of the *sefirotic* structure, the *Da'at* is produced by their union, in which “*Imma* is drawn into the pure ether and assumes the whiteness of *Attika*” (*IZ* 290a–b). *Da'at* has two aspects. One aspect fills the chambers of the head, while the other shines out through the divine body (*IZ* 291a). The child of *Abba* and *Imma* is also called *Binah*, literally *ben Ya”H*, the “son of Yah” (*IZ* 290a–b).²⁴ Through the multileveled process of childbearing in either direction, *Abba* and *Imma* bind the structure of the *parzufim*. They are “contained in everything . . . everything is sealed up in them; they are sealed in the holy *mazal* of *Attika de-Attikin*; he is everything and everything is him” (*IZ* 291a).

Zeir is the child of the royal couple, taking on the qualities of both parents (*IZ* 291a). The qualities that *Abba* and *Imma* bequeath are called the two crowns of *Zeir*, “for the crown of *Hesed* is hidden in the *Abba* and the crown of *Gevurah* is from *Imma*” (*IZ* 291a). Through these crowns, the divine light from *Attika Kadisha* shines on the son, *Zeir*, and the daughter, *Nukvah*. The agency of transfer, not surprisingly, is *buzina de-kardinuta* (*IZ* 291a). *Buzina de-kardinuta* is generated by the chafing energy of *Abba* and *Imma*. *Buzina de-kardinuta* creates the emanation of *Zeir Anpin* from *Abba* and *Imma* and is also illuminated by them (*IZ* 291a–292b).²⁵

Imma is depicted as a transformative, feminine, nurturing, and generative Sophia figure, whose union with male wisdom, *Abba*, takes place at the higher reaches of *Zeir*. The *Idra Zuta* explains the letter yod as being the primordial point from which all existence flows:

The yod is suspended from the holy *mazal* and contains all the other letters and is itself the most hidden of all the letters, the beginning and end. The light that

flows is called the world to come, always coming and never stopping . . . the river of light flowing from Eden. (IZ 290b)

Buzina de-kardinuta is also a factor in the creation of *Abba* and *Imma*. As the *Idra Zuta* describes it:

When the craftsman went to his work, the male and female [*zakhar* and *nukvah*] were set in place. From *buzina de-kardinuta* came the spark of the mighty hammer that smashed and brought forth sparks, early worlds, mixing with the pure air, suffusing one another. When *Abba* and *Imma* were unified, *Abba* came from the hidden spirit of *Attik Yomin*, in which the pure air was hidden, including the spark of *buzina de-kardinuta* that was hidden in its mother's womb. When they were linked, there came forth a mighty skull, extending over all of its aspects, for, in *Attika Kadisha*, three heads are together as one. (IZ 292b)

The drama of the seed, phallus, and womb is also represented, according to both *Idrot*, in the structure of the divine name YHVH, which is “the essence of everything” (IZ 290b). YHVH represents the function of both the *sefirot* and the *parzufim*; yod [י] is *Hokhmah* or *Abba*, heh [ה] is *Binah/Imma*, and the final vav and heh [יה] are the progeny, *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. The crowning *sefirah*, *Da'at*, is *Zeir Anpin*, which is *Hokhmah* and *Binah* (IZ 291a).

A deeper mystery associates the divine names with *Abba* and *Imma* through the transliterated form of the letter *yud*. When yod (*y*) is written in transliterated form as *yu"ד* (י"ד), it represents the union of *Abba* and *Imma*. The *yu"ד* is an acronym for the numerical coefficients of *yu"ד* (י"ד) of the ten *sefirot*, the *vav* of the six *sefirot* of *Zeir* (ו), and the four rivers of Eden indicated by the letter dalet (ד), as described in Genesis 2:10–14. The *Idra Zuta* explains: Why are *vav* and *dalet* in *yu"ד*? Rather, the planting of the garden is called *vav* and irrigating it is called *dalet*” (IZ 290b).

The transliterated *yu"ד* is also the source of one of the most brazen and yet hidden traditions in the *Idrot*, that of the “withdrawal,” or *nesirah*. According to this tradition, *Imma* is equated with the transliterated *yu"ד*, which she “carries in her mouth” into the divine embrace:

We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that “the male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim*,” the *tiqqun* of pure covering. . . . Everything is contingent on the mouth of that *Imma* who is called *Yu"ד*. When this yod is revealed in *Imma*'s mouth, the higher *Hesed* is revealed. This *Imma* is called *Hesed*. It is contingent on that *Imma*'s mouth. It is not called *Hesed* until it is revealed in the mouth of *Imma*. . . . Whoever uncovers this *Yu"ד* is protected and will never go the *yud* of the other realm. He is assured the world to come, bound in the knot of life. When this mother extends, the realm of *Gevurah* extends from the *Gevurot* of the left side of *Nukvah*, and it takes root in one place in *Nukvah*. This is called the *arayot* of everything, the hidden place of put aside the *Imma* that is called *Hesed*, *Hesed* in the right and *Gevurah* is the left, and they are scented, this one in the other and called Adam, made up of two sides, *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. All the *sefirot* have right and left, *Din* and *Rahamim*.²⁶

According to this dense and complex passage, the womb of *Imma*, here called the “mouth,” sheaths the extended phallus of *Hokhmah*, which in turn “sweetens”

the aspects of *Din* that are inherent in the receptive sexual nature of the feminine. Hence, the transliterated *yu'd* evokes the power of divine loving-kindness, the *sefirah Hesed*, which is esoteric meaning of the “revelation of *yu'd* in the mouth of this great mother.” The “uncovering” of the *yu'd* is a euphemism for the enclosing of the male member in the womb, or “mouth,” of the female. The womb is called the “*riqqun* of the pure garment,” that is, the proper sheath for the engendering phallus. In this case, the extension of *yu'd* is indicative of the dynamic element of the union.²⁷ Paradoxical language characterizes these passages. The “uncovering” of the *yu'd* simultaneously invokes tumescence and the moment of circumcision, yet also stands for the sheathing of the phallus the protection of *Imma*.²⁸

The emphasis on *Abba* and *Imma* in the *Idra Zuta* resolves certain philosophical questions. These two *sefirot/parzufim* are portrayed as separate from the inner working of *Attika*. This removal keeps the nature of *Attika* forever hidden from the emanated world. The relationship of *Abba* and *Imma* to *Da'at* is the point of juncture between the *parzufim* and the *sefirot*. *Da'at* encompasses the influence and indivisibility of the two *parzufim*. The *sefirah* is the principle or dynamic that underlies the function of the *parzufim*, which are *actual* entities. The relationship of *Abba* and *Imma* to the various *sefirot* and *parzufim* is employed by the *Idra Zuta* to resolve the tension between these two theosophical systems.

The Embrace of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*

When face-to-face unification is desired, they are linked together and are as one body. From this we learn that the male is alone, only a part of the body, all *Rahamim*. Thence *Nukvah*, when they are perceived as one body, so it is. All the worlds are one, and all are blessed from that body. This is the meaning of God's blessing the Sabbath day and making it holy [Exod. 20:8], unified, in one body together in one whole body.

IZ 295a

The union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* is described extensively in both the *Idra Rabbah* and the *Idra Zuta*. The *Idra Rabbah* emphasizes the development of the male image, then the emanation of *Nukvah*, their immersion in one another, the divine embrace, and the climax of their union. In terms of the divine physiognomy, *Zeir Anpin* springs from the beard of *Attika* at the chest level, and *Nukvah* springs from the chest of *Zeir*. The *gulgolta* of *Nukvah* emerges, her red hair intertwined with *Zeir's* beard. (*IR* 141b–142a). *Nukvah's* emergence from the solar plexus of *Zeir* invokes the libidinal *chi* energy of *Tiferet*. The energies of this *sefirah* are an important force in the emanation of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. *Tiferet* is an amalgam of the *sefirot Din* and *Hesed*, the male navel is the source of divine mercy, and the female is the repository for the energies of *Din* thrown off by the male. This union culminates in the immolation of the corners of *Zeir's* beard by the consuming energies of the *Shekhinah*.

It is only in speaking of the union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* that we encounter *Nukvah* at all. *Nukvah* is the counterpart of the *sefirah Malkhut*, the romanticized feminine

aspect of earthly existence typified by the *Shekhinah*. “All the lower realities are unified in *Nukvah*, they nurse from her and return to her, she is the mother of all of them, from which the whole body is nourished. She is called the little *Hokhmah* compared to the greater” (IZ 296a). “All blessings are found on that day. One who does not encompass the male and female is called a partial body, and no blessing can rest on him” (IZ 296a). However, *Nukvah* does not share the picaresque traditions that so characterize the *Shekhinah*’s myth. She is sublimated, an accessory to the aggregate maleness of the two higher *parzufim*, *Attika* and *Zeir*, in the doctrine of the countenances.

The divine union begins dramatically in the *Idra Rabbah* with the arms of *Zeir* reaching out to immolate the forces of *Din* and thence “perfume the world.” This embrace mitigates the effects of *Din* by opening the channels through which the divine effluence flows into present reality. In the perfuming, the two partners are suffused in each other’s presence (IR 143b). It is fitting that during their description of this union, three of the comrades of the *Idra Rabbah*, R. Yossi, R. Hezekiah, and R. Yesa, perish (IR 144a–b).

The embrace may be marred by certain flaws, one of which has to do with the time of the embrace. The conventional union, which takes place on a weekday, is inferior to the Sabbath embrace. It is flawed by postcoital flaccidity and depression, evident in the characterization of *Zeir* as “harsh at the beginning and softer at the end” (IR 142b), while for the female the reverse is true. This mirrors the statement of *Sifra de-Zeniuta*:

Male and female were created to complete everything: YHVH the realm of the male. Elohim the realm of the female. The male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim* like a mother in the mouth of a maidservant. The kings that were negated are set up here. The *dinnim* of the male are mighty at the beginning and rest at the end, while the reverse is true of the female. And Y”H, the hard shells of the knots, are tucked into the bosom, and the small Y’ is found within it. (SdZ 178a)

Nukvah and *Zeir* are plagued by distractions from the forces of *Din*. There also are lesser unions that have been conceived in *Din*. Such flawed unions are typified by the strife or violence that underlies the relationship of the serpent and Eve and that produces troubled progeny such as Cain and Abel (IR 142b–143a). An association that is common in the *Idrot* is that the feminine is distinguished by a tendency to *Din* or *Gevurah*, the *sefirot* and qualities that are characterized by withdrawal and judgment. The arousal of *Nukvah* causes an outpouring of *Din*, specifically in the five *dinnim* of prohibited relationships, that must be overwhelmed and “sweetened” in the divine embrace by the counterpart five loving-kindnesses (*hasadim*) of *Abba*. It was the unperfumed *dinnim* that led, in the primordial past, to the catastrophic death of the kings (IR 137b). The union of *Abba* and *Imma* also causes the “perfuming of the *dinnim*” through the combination of the qualities of left and right in all of the *sefirot* and *parzufim* (IR 142a).

The construction of the anterior side of *Nukvah* (*ahorayyim*) is necessary to broker the junction of the male and female (IZ 295b–296a). The dangers and complexities of the back-to-back embrace had asserted themselves as issues in Cordovero’s and Luria’s understandings of *Sabba de-Mishpatim*.²⁹ On the Sab-

bath, however, *Din* is precluded from appearing, for “all blessings are found on that day” (*IZ* 296a). As a result, there is no other possibility of divine anger, and the prayers of Israel are necessarily received; it is the “time of will” (*et ragon*, Ps. 69:14). In the weekday embrace, the “perfuming of the *dinnim*” is followed by the withdrawal (*nesirah*), which is portrayed in terms that mirror the biblical account of the creation of Eve:

As the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* teaches, the *dinnim* of the male are hard at the beginning and soft at the end, while the *dinnim* of the female are soft in the beginning and hard at the end. Were they not to unify, the world could not tolerate it. So *Attik Yomin*, the most hidden of all, separates them and then unifies them. When he separates them, he casts a sleep on *Zeir Anpin*, drawing *Nukvah* away to the side. He sets her forth in her and conceals her until his day, when he will bring her to the male. As with Adam [Gen. 2:21], *he slept . . . and he took one of his ribs*. This is *Nukvah*. . . . It rises and receives its *tiqqun* and in its place are implanted mercy [*Rahamim*] and loving-kindness [*Hesed*]. . . . And the hour that he rises is the Sabbath, he creates spirits and demons and plagues, and before they are finished, the Matronita comes with her *tiqqunim* and sits before him. At the hour when she sits before him, he puts these creations aside and does not complete them. When the Matronita sits with the King, and they unify face-to-face, who could come between them and distract them? When they unify, they perfume one another, on the day that all are perfumed, and the *dinnim* are perfumed. (*IR* 142b–143a)

After the *nesirah* (*IR* 142a), in which the union is accomplished while *Zeir* is asleep, *Nukvah* desires a direct embrace (*IZ* 296a) to complete the divine body: “when the Matronita cleaves to the King and they are as one body.” A flawed embrace invites the interference of demonic forces, resulting in demonic progeny. Such is the case with the conception of Cain, which was the result of Eve’s liaison with the serpent. The passages that detail the relationship of Cain and Abel are rendered in terms that are far more reliant on the interplay of the *sefrot* than on the anthropomorphic mythos of the *Idrot*. The spirit of Cain is incarnate *Din*, although upon his emergence, this spirit is perfumed, apparently by the emergence of Abel. Cain’s murder of Abel is the elementary triumph of *Din* over *Hesed*. In response to this murder, the aggregate power of *Tiferet* had to cast *Din* into the *nukvah de-tehomah rabbah*, the “cleft of the great abyss” (*IR* 143a). The use of the term *nukvah* to signify both the feminine and the “realm of the abyss” reflects the belief that *Din* is inherent in the feminine, as well as exemplifying the patriarchal phallocentrism of the text’s authors.

The unfinished business of these lingering pockets of unsweetened *Din* is resolved in the “third perfuming” (*IR* 143b). This third perfuming is the final act of unification, uniting all of the world in one body, the union of the Holy Blessed One (*Tiferet*) and the Matronita (*Malkhut*). This union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* is compared to a number of hierarchical unions in the Jewish tradition: the heavenly and earthly Jerusalems and the higher and lower Edens (*IZ* 290a). The weekday embrace of *Nukvah* and *Zeir* must be “perfumed” in order to transmit and project the perfected Sabbath embrace of these countenances “on the day that the Matronita sits with the King” (*IR* 143a).

The final embrace and the third perfuming are expressed in boldly erotic terms and summon up the climactic force that kills those who tell the tale. *Zeir Anpin* is described in terms of phallic maleness, thrusting out of *Da'at* at its inception, filling all the chambers of the divine body with libidinal energy. This shining is sparked by *buzina de-kardinuta*, which cleaves to *Zeir* from behind and shines through the two *mohin*. The hairs of *Nukvah* are aflame with color, as the five *gevurot* burn with an immolating fire. *Nukvah* suckles the divine body, unified in *Tiferet*, "the great tree." The tree extends through the thighs, the kidneys, and the testes, the strength and "moisture" of the whole body, the heavenly "hosts." The foundation (*yesod*) of the male "perfumes" and fructifies the woman (*IZ* 296a). "All that is male and female begins and is set forth by the essence of male and female" (*IR* 141b). "The beauty of the female is all from the male" (*IZ* 296a). In the face-to-face union on the Sabbath, they become one body (*IZ* 296a):

Blessed be his glorious name forever and ever! The words stand to this day crowned for the world to come, revealed here! Happy is his portion! The Matronita, when in union with the King, blesses all of the worlds, and she is only blessed through *Nezah*, *Hod* and *Yesod*. . . . In this union is the blessing of the Holy of Holies, beginning in the highest aspects of consciousness and descending into the world! (*IZ* 296a)

This discussion is complicated by a discrepancy among the theosophical Kabbalists whose work is contemporary with the *Idrot*. As noted earlier, Gikatilla's "The Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,"³⁰ R. Joseph of Hamadan's *Toledot ha-Adam*³¹ and portions of R. Joseph Angelet's *Livnat ha-Sappir*³² seem to be earlier versions of the *Idrot*. One doctrinal similarity shared by these texts is that of different identities for *Zeir Anpin* and *Attika Kadisha*. Gikatilla saw *Zeir Anpin* as synonymous with the *Shekhinah*. The effect of this view on the structure of the *parzufim* was to shift the locations of the eroticized divine embrace to the apex of the Godhead.³³ Joseph of Hamadan also portrayed *Zeir Anpin* as a female presence.³⁴

Yehudah Liebes has recently contended that a passage arguing for the unity of the countenances (*IR* 141a-b) is a non sequitur that implies a male/female relationship for *Attik* and *Zeir* and may, in fact, originate with Joseph of Hamadan. Liebes avers that this may be an early position of the *Idra*, making note of the statement of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (176a) "For formerly there was no balance, they did not look each other in the face, and the kings of ancient time died," which implies an earlier sexual union in another locale "when their faces were turned to one another, it was well with the world . . . but when the male turned his face from the female, it was ill with the world" (*Zohar III* 59b). Liebes continues: "Without the *Idrot*, I think it would be unlikely that we would have interpreted 'small countenance' in *Sifra de-Zeniuta* as the male and not the female, since nowhere in *Sifra de-Zeniuta* does the use of the term imply this."³⁵ To make this argument, Liebes asserts the existence of various points of view within the *Idrot*, which would themselves be an amalgam of traditions of the classical theosophical kabbalists brought together by one editor.

Moreover, the cumulative researches of Elliot Wolfson have challenged the hegemony of the erotic metaphor, particularly in terms of the role of the *Shekhinah*

as it was generally conceived by the scholarly world.³⁶ Wolfson has uncovered the ambiguity of gender in the essential kabbalistic myths. The mythologizing of the divine realm as male and female emerged in the earliest “kabbalistic” writings—that is, among the German pietists. In fact, by the time of the myth’s fruition in the *Zohar*, the dynamics of union cannot be limited to a mundane technical model. The union of the male and female aspect of the divine is a transformative act, incorporating a strong element of androgyny.³⁷ According to Wolfson, the union proposed by classical Kabbalah glorifies, not the masculine and feminine models, but rather their transformation.

The discrepancies among these early generations of kabbalists leave the reader with a number of questions. What was the nature of the divine embrace as originally conceived? Is the union of *Attika* and *Zeir* originally sexual in nature and if so, since these are manifestly male paradigms, what is the nature of the eroticism? How should the various types of union in the *Idrot* be understood? Is the union of *Attika* and *Zeir* autoerotic, or is it the union of two aspects?

The accounts of the divine union challenge conventional notions about the erotic metaphor in classical Kabbalah. Two unions take place, *Attika Kadisha* with *Zeir Anpin*, and *Zeir Anpin* with *Nukvah*. One union is a mentoring, male-to-male relationship, but the union with *Nukvah* is explosively eroticized. When one reads the *Idrot* in the order of their presentation, one is left with a peculiar task in trying to order and make sense of the structure of the *parzufim*. The lower union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* is presented in the earlier *Idra Rabbah*, while the more encompassing and intrinsic model of union, *Abba* and *Imma*, is not presented until the *Idra Zuta*. The relationship of *Abba* and *Imma* underlies the entire structure of the cosmos, so that the reader must reconceive the dynamics of the *parzufim* in light of the new doctrine. It seems as if the entire *Zohar* is devoted to preparing the reader for the perfected doctrine of the *Idra Zuta*, for only then does the reader learn, for instance, that the structure of *Attika* is triune and that *Abba* and *Imma* are a pervasive force throughout the structure of the *parzufim*.

The descriptions of the divine union are the most difficult sections of the *Idrot* because they retreat into the most recondite of metaphors and allusions. The rising and arousal of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*, *Zeir*’s embrace and the flow of energy into its “limbs,” the regenerative flow of *mazal* into the “crowns of the beard,” and so forth are complex processes accompanied by great drama. This drama is reflected in the immolation of the comrades at the close of the account. This is one of the few instances in which the framing narratives cross over into the content itself! At the same time, however bold the myth, it was never the conscious intention of the kabbalists to reduce the myth to its technical imagery.

The sense of union is the most universal of characteristics of mysticism. For contemporary scholars, it is this model of union that brings the *Idrot* into discourse with other forms of mysticism. For even if the union is one of immolation, the model of divine union is almost necessary for us to call it “mysticism,” as the sense of unity has been widely recognized as the most universal of mystical phenomena. Moreover, as with all of the paradigms of divine flow—*Hokhmah* and *Binah*, *Din* and *Hesed*, *tal* and *mazal*—we must view these as separate traditions that the *Zohar*, through the *Idrot*, combined into one system, in which they coexist uneasily.

The divine unions are best described through allusion and nuance. The union of *Attik* and *Zeir* seems autoerotic: “The sum of all these words is that *Attika de-Attikin* and *Zeir Anpin* are all one . . . unchanging . . . the formless form in which all forms are visualized” (*IR* 141a). The union of the *parzufim* is less a union of the upper male entities with a female other than the closing of a ouroboric circle. The union of *Abba* and *Imma* is a transformative one, which moves to unify the cosmos and produce progeny in the form of perfectly developed *sefirot* and *parzufim*.



Reading the Idrot

Kabbalists have always sought to understand the metaphysical nature of the universe. Once it began to be circulated, the *Zohar* served as the source text for these understandings. Nonetheless, the *Zohar's* contradictory traditions presented a challenge to those kabbalists who demanded a systematic structure of the creation. As full texts of the *Zohar* became available in the late sixteenth century,¹ the challenge for mystics was to reconcile these contradictions.

Because of its symbolic, encoded nature, it was always clear that the *Zohar* had to be interpreted. The act of interpretation began in the course of the development of the canon itself. The main sections of the *Zohar* build on the initial understandings of the earlier *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*. These sections incorporate the earlier text and develop elaborate new teachings from it. The various versions of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* were composed to be read by mystics who understood their allusions and esoteric subtexts. Similarly, the author of the *Tiqqunim* and the *Ra'aya Meheimna* imposed new ideas on the conclusions of all of the earlier compositions, including the *Idrot*. The Lurianic and Cordoverean schools of Kabbalah made use of an amalgam of teachings from the main sections, the *Idrot*, and the later strata.

Across the entire zoharic literature, at least five disparate theories of the cosmos are presented. Each of these teachings describes a separate process in which divinity flows into present reality. The first tradition is that of the *Hormanuta* texts, with

The face of *Arikh* and its tributary energies, according to a diagram originating from the school of R. Ya'akov Zemakh.

their mythos of the hardened spark, *buzina de-kardinuta*, engraving the contours of the universe in the primordial void.² The second understanding is the doctrine of the *sefirot*, the hypostases through which God flows into present reality. Inherent in the doctrine of the *sefirot* is the idea that each of them has a certain character that is signified by different tropes and words of the Bible.

Two other doctrines appear in the later strata of the *Zohar*, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, and *Ra'aya Meheimna*. The first of these is the doctrine of the four worlds of creation, which multiplies the sefirotic teaching across four worlds of emanation. Three of these worlds, *Briah* (creation), *Yezirah* (formation), and *Asiyah* (construction) are arranged according to the sefirotic structure, while *Azilut* (emanation) is transcendent and abstracted, the unknowable highest aspect of the divine. *Azilut* parallels the God of medieval philosophical Judaism. The doctrine of the *sefirot* as portrayed in the main sections of the *Zohar* coexists uneasily with the doctrine of the four worlds.³

Another contribution of the later strata is the inquiry into the nature of the *sefirot*: to whether the *sefirot* are the essence of God or whether they merely serve as vessels into which the divine energy is poured. Although some parts of the *Zohar* posit that the *sefirot* themselves are the essence of God (Moshe Idel has referred to these as “essentialist” doctrines), other parts maintain that the *sefirot* are merely vessels (in Idel’s words, “instruments”).⁴ The majority of Safed kabbalists, including Isaac Luria, adopted the idea of the *sefirot* as vessels from Moshe Cordovero.

Yet another body of teaching is the doctrine of the countenances, or *parzufim*, of the cosmic *anthropos*, *Adam Kadmon*. This teaching is elaborated in the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. These countenances are the main locus of the emanation of divinity into present reality. The relationship of the *parzufim* to the *sefirot* is explained in different ways in the *Idra Rabbah*, *Idra Zuta*, and *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.

These different cosmic theories complicated the scholastic task of later kabbalists. In the *Idrot*, the anthropomorphic structure of the countenances, the uneasy relationship of the countenance tradition to the sefirotic tradition, and the allusions to lost materials leave the reader with a strong sense of unfinished business. Hence, the central exegetical problem for the *Zohar*’s classical interpreters was that of reconciling the variant traditions to create a consistent mystical theology. Interpreters were also concerned with the minute analysis of the *Zohar*’s symbolic language through close attention to every nuance of the text. Most commentators combined the variant ideas of the different texts and created complicated, multileveled systems that incorporated the contradictory readings. Bold application of sweeping theories was also useful in resolving the contradictions of the source material, as in Luria’s combination of the *Idra* and *Hormanuta* traditions. The relationship of these complex texts was seen as the largest problem in resolving the contradictions of the whole *Zohar* literature.

This need for resolution sharpened in Safed during its spiritual renaissance. The *Zohar* became the charter of all of the Safed kabbalists. Their scholastic lives were devoted to resolving the contradictions of the *Zohar*’s variant traditions. The first published editions of the *Zohar* circulated among the Safed mystics. These editions presented the *Zohar* in its entirety while, at the same time, as the Safed kabbalists were compiling the manuscripts of the earliest strata and examining them for dis-

parities of doctrine. The *Zohar's* prominence was reinforced by the efforts of Luria, Vital, and Ya'akov Z'emakh to limit the materials in the canon to the *Zohar* and their own teachings.⁵ Abulafian traditions were channeled through Safed theorists such as Cordovero and widely circulated texts such as *Brit Menuḥa*, which found their way into Ḥasidic thought.

The identification with the *Zohar* during the Safed revival prompted a situation in which life rather imitated art. The Safed kabbalists patterned their lifestyles after the romanticism of the texts' framing narratives. One of the boldest instances of Luria's attempt to imitate the *Zohar* was a foray to the site of the *Idra Rabbah*:⁶

Once the Rabbi [Luria] brought the comrades to the grave of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai in Meron, saying: "My comrades, here sat Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai with the comrades to arrange the *Idra Rabbah*. There is still a residue of that light in this place, for even when the light departs, a residue is left." . . . He seated the rest of the comrades in the places of Rabbi Shim'on's circle. In each case, he indicated that the soul of the departed sage awakened in our comrade. . . . While they were still learning, he said, "Comrades, know that a plume of fire is surrounding us, and Rabbi Shim'on of blessed memory and his comrades are standing with us, along with the *neshamot* of other *zaddikim* and other *Tannaim* and ministering angels who have come to hear the true Torah from my mouth. Therefore, do not interrupt your mystical intentions [*kavvanot*]. Uphold them [for] . . . you are seeing the great gathering that is here, for these things are as they were given at Sinai, but only I am permitted to see. . . ." Afterward, he studied the *Idra* with the comrades and revealed to them secrets and allusions that Rabbi Shim'on had made.⁷

This incident was certainly the point at which Luria imparted many of his original understandings of the *Idrot*. However, it is hard to tell how far Luria intended to go in his reenactment of the *Idrot*. It is unclear whether he believed that he was risking his own and his students' lives, as did the participants in the original gathering. However, it *is* clear that the Safed mystics had begun to take the development of Kabbalah to its next stage, while "uncovering" the spirituality of the Galilee of late antiquity, as they imagined it.

Cordovero on the *Idrot*

The greatest compiler of mystical systems, zoharic and otherwise, was Moshe Cordovero, who composed literally thousands of pages of commentaries and speculative writings.⁸ Cordovero combined the *Zohar* with the meditation traditions of R. Abraham Abulafia, as well as with the Pythagorean imagery of the *Sefer Yezira* (Book of Formation) of late antiquity. As has been widely noted, Cordovero gave greater credence to the teachings of the later strata, such as *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, which he believed resolved the earlier, variant traditions.

Cordovero's full commentary to the *Zohar* was not published until the latter part of the twentieth century.⁹ The suppression of this material is not hard to explain, because Cordovero's interpretations of the *Zohar* differed from those of Luria,

and these differences were codified into Cordovero's system. The later, gothic readings of Luria's disciples often appropriate Cordoverean readings, but many of the excurses and *drushim* that pepper Cordovero's commentary remained, to the theorists of Luria's and Vital's teachings, indigestible.

Cordovero devoted a complex and enigmatic composition, *Shi'ur Qomah*, to the interpretation of the *Idrot*. This work consists of a lengthy introduction and lexicon of terms, followed by an analysis of the *Idrot*. In his analysis, Cordovero collapsed the structure of the *Idrot*, explained each feature of the countenances in turn, and incorporated the innovations of the *Idra Zuta* into the teachings of the *Idra Rabbah*. He also excised the framing narratives of the *Idrot*¹⁰ and broke up the consecutive structure of each *Idra* in order to examine the *parzufim*, image by image, according to the order of the limbs.¹¹ He described this recasting as completing the work of R. Shim'on, who "commented a bit on the analysis of the limbs, so that we also, from within his words, will add some details of emphasis that have hitherto only been given as a hint."¹²

In his interpretation of the *Idrot*, Cordovero retreated from the anthropomorphism of the *Idrot*, denying their physical incarnation. He insisted that the doctrine of the *sefirot* was the essential kabbalistic doctrine, into which all other ideas should be absorbed. For example, the countenances, the *tiqqunim* of the beard, and the flow of *mazal* were merely symbols for the underlying structure of the universe. He viewed the *sefirot* and the four worlds of creation, as portrayed by the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, as the empirical building blocks of existence. The countenances were metaphors for the ways that the effects of the *sefirot* and the worlds were grouped or bundled. Therefore, his assessment of the nose of *Attika* can be as terse as the "nose is *Tiferet* in the secret of *Da'at*."¹³ This bias in favor of the *sefirot* is evident in the first section of *Shi'ur Qomah*, which includes a lexicon of important terms.¹⁴ The lexicon presents terms that are necessary for an orthodox sefirotic metaphysical structure. It fails, however, to include a number of other important terms, such as *mazal*, *tal*, and even some important anatomical features of the divine body. The deprecation of these images is contrary to the spirit of the *Idrot*. The plain meaning of the *Idrot* places the anthropomorphic doctrine as central, while the *sefirot* are secondary. This avoidance of physical imagery extends to the recently published first two chapters of *Shi'ur Qomah*, in which he declares his wish to comment on the *Matnitin* in a way that is "stripped of all physicality."¹⁵ His avowed purpose in subsuming the countenances to the *sefirot* was "to distance the reader from anthropomorphism,"¹⁶ thereby "distancing the physical from Kabbalistic imagery."¹⁷

The Island Sage

Shi'ur Qomah also contains one of Cordovero's most powerful homilies, an allegory for the function of the *parzufim*. The homily encompasses images from the *Idrot* and the aggadic tradition, particularly the parables that allegorize the relationship of God and the sentient world as that of a king and his subjects, counselors, children, and works. The homily is then employed as the proof text for an

extended interpretation. In the manner of later fantasists like Shimshon Ostropoler and R. Nahman of Breslav, Cordovero provides a linear commentary for his own myth.¹⁸ This commentary composes nearly half of the introduction to *Shi'ur Qomah* and may be Cordovero's most daring leap into mythopoeisis.

Cordovero's venture into magical realism describes the existence, "in one of the islands of the sea," of "a very great wise man, wise in all of the wondrous wisdoms, with enormous power to create reality."¹⁹ The sage "rejoices in his wisdom."²⁰ Because "the essence of wisdom is to create creations so that they [the creations] might know and recognize his greatness and wisdom," the sage creates a world on his mysterious island. This microcosmos is a palace of many tiers and courtyards, with a garden watered with myriad canals and pools, roofed with an aviary of birds, whose song fills the palace. The artisan and his creations live in symbiosis. He does not need them for his own existence. Nonetheless, their songs and delights sometimes attract him, and he requires, periodically, their recognition. He also has to teach them their songs, so that "when [the sage] descends into his rooms . . . all of their voices rise together and come in through the open windows, as one sound."²¹

Cordovero's parable recasts the anthropomorphic mythos of the *Idrot* in the ancient theme of God the artisan, following from the monotheistic notion of God as the creator. The rooms are the *sefirot* and the worlds of existence, and human-kind, with their prayers and pleas, are the birds. The parable portrays the sefirotic realm as operating on many dimensions. The universe is conceived in spatial terms, in the form of the rooms, landings, and courtyards of his palace. Divinity then spreads through the microcosm in the flow of effluents, through the waterwheels and canals, and in the flow of sound, through the song of the birds, who live in the lower courtyards. The worlds are enlivened and require the artisan's attentions for their very sustenance, offering only their song in return. Cordovero's myth of the lonely artisan includes and yet overwhelms the literary mythos of the *Idrot*.²²

In this idyll, however, are intimations of catastrophe. Although the artisan enjoys the recognition of his creations, he also withdraws periodically into his upper chambers. During his seclusion, the mechanisms that he has set in place, particularly for irrigating the garden, fall into disrepair. As a result of his neglect, the irrigation channels become stopped up, and dust, soil, and debris also block up the halls and windows of the palace. Some of the birds become trapped in the debris, and the sage must teach them not to exacerbate the damage to the palace and to themselves. Some of the birds perish in the "punishment of the dust," while those whom the sage manages to rescue receive the "*tiqqun* of the dust." The latter "rise to the outer chambers" and "are received there in joy, for [they] have learned the path of the song and the praise."²³ Hence, even before the Lurianic myth of the divine withdrawal and the fragmentation of the world, Cordovero described a world fallen into disrepair, a cosmic nation-state with a collapsed infrastructure. However, his portrayal of catastrophe denies the existence of an incarnate spirit of evil, describing rather a monistic blocking of the creator's palace, brought on by the absence of the Godhead.

For all of its daring, the parable of the sage on the island is not ultimately faithful to the traditions of the *Idrot*. The doctrine of the countenances is utterly anthropomorphic, the palace of the divine artisan is really a body, not a place. Cordovero interpreted their anthropomorphisms in terms of the interaction of the *sefirot*, sub-

suming the anthropomorphic myth to the sefirotic. In fact, the *Idrot* are distinguished by elements that depart from the *Zohar*'s basic sefirotic teaching; they are based not on the *sefirot* but on the *parzufim*. To follow Cordovero into the *Idrot*, sensitive kabbalists had to turn a blind eye to the anthropomorphisms or accept them primarily as metaphor. Few readers were prepared to go so far as to, in the words of Isaiah Tishby, "erase, entirely, the mythic element"²⁴ and distance themselves from the bold anthropomorphism of the *Idrot* and *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.

Luria and the *Idrot*

For Isaac Luria, by contrast, the anthropomorphic images of God and the cosmos were essential to his teaching. In his oral homilies, Luria's main concern was to combine the *Hormanuta* myth, the countenance doctrines of the *Idrot*, references to the mysterious deaths of the kings of Edom, and the doctrine of the four worlds. When all of these factors were combined in equal measure, the sefirotic infrastructure came to be depicted in more and more complex and unstable terms.

Most Lurianic portrayals of the cosmic order portray the universe as initially "conceived" and emanated in an unstable or unbalanced way. This lack of balance caused the seven lower *sefirot* to be unbalanced by forces of *Din*. The central premise of the Lurianic myth is that this initially imperfect emanation could be perfected or repaired. According to Luria, the "place of one pillar"²⁵ mentioned in the introduction to the *Idra Rabbah* is the world emanated according to the *sefirot*, which is too unsteady to stand, as opposed to the universe as emanated in the form of the *parzufim*. The universe will be balanced when the ten *sefirot* are contained in the five *parzufim*.²⁶ Lurianic *tiqqun* consisted of integrating these two systems, thereby bringing about the repair of the universe.

This story is retold in many ways and through many analogies, in which the same processes are portrayed in terms of different metaphors.²⁷ In one account, the *sefirot* are emanated as vessels that become flawed by impurities. In another version, the *zimzum*, or withdrawal, is followed by the renewed outpouring of effluence into the vessels. In yet another version, the *parzufim* are initially locked in barren "back-to-back" embraces, which must be redirected into fecund, "face-to-face" unions.²⁸ Each version invokes different motifs and images from the *Zohar*. Hence, the Lurianic motifs of the "death of the Kings," the back-to-back embrace, the conception (*ibbur*) of the lower countenance *Zeir*, the withdrawal (*zimzum*), and the emanation of the divine into the vessels, which then rupture, may have originated in descriptions of the same set of phenomena. Subsequent editors, in collecting the various accounts, saw them as separate stages and combined them into complex, baroque images of the divine order.

Catastrophe

Prior to leaving Egypt, Luria had already determined that the world had suffered a great catastrophe that had produced the malevolent *kelipot*, or husks of impurity.²⁹

The first intimation of a cosmic catastrophe along the lines of his eventual “breaking of the vessels” comes in Luria’s *Sifra de-Zeniuta* commentary.³⁰ Cordovero’s teachings had been pointing toward an increasingly complex sefirotic tree. The four worlds *Azilut*, *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *Assiyah*, with ten *sefirot* in each of the original ten *sefirot*, and with palaces below, demonic realms, errant souls, and *kelipot* were all arranged in a minutely detailed infrastructure.

In the midst of this complex structure, according to Luria’s earliest speculations, the forces of *Din*, the *sefirah* of harsh judgment and withdrawal, had broken away from their dilute status within each of the other *sefirot* and had concentrated together. This implosion of judgment had interrupted the erotic union of the upper countenances *Abba* and *Imma*. Formerly face-to-face, they now stood back-to-back, in order to protect themselves from the encroachments of the aggregate forces of judgment, which had coalesced to create a realm for evil.

As a result of the interrupted union of *Abba* and *Imma*, the uppermost countenance, *Attika Kadisha*, could no longer emanate directly onto the lower *sefirot*. The “kings,” that is, the seven lower *sefirot*, died and dropped beneath the upper world of *Azilut*. In response to this collapse of the sefirotic structure, the higher *sefirot* then diminished their light so that the lower *sefirot* could better receive it. The entire sefirotic structure moved down a degree, into the second world of *Briah*, or creation. Vital explained that due to the catastrophic “death of the kings,” *Keter* was emanated with no supporting *sefirot* or, in his words, *tiqqunim*. *Hokhmah* and *Binah* found themselves in a back-to-back embrace. The male countenance *Abba*, which sits over the *sefirah* *Hokhmah*, or wisdom, sorted out the forces of *Din*. *Abba* and *Imma* were united in a sexual union, and the ten *sefirot* were reconfigured beneath them. The countenances *Abba* and *Imma* sustained the lower *sefirot* with *mohin*, or intellects, as series of conduits for the transcendent effluence. From this point on, the union of *Abba* and *Imma* was necessary for the existence of the lower worlds.

Nonetheless, Luria did not initially teach that the lower worlds were in need of repair, although the lower countenances, *Zeir Anpin* (which represents the middle six *sefirot*) and *Nukvah* (the countenance of the *Shekhinah*), do require human works to sustain the divine effluence and the descent of human souls. In the future, the union of the lower *sefirot* will be like the union of the higher; the effluence and blessing will be uninterrupted. In this teaching, the act of creation is also portrayed as an act of conception.

Impregnation

After he settled in Safed, Luria’s ideas began to reflect his encounter with Moshe Cordovero. He had earlier portrayed the three *sefirot* *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da’at* as overlapping one another, just as the six aspects of the countenance *Imma* overlap with the six *sefirot* that make up *Zeir Anpin*. He retreated from this view upon his arrival in Safed, preferring to locate the increasingly complex sefirotic structure inside the structure of the four worlds. Luria then portrayed *Zeir Anpin* as being nursed in the womb of *Imma*, an expansion of the classical image of *Imma* and *Binah* as the womb of the world. This view of the embryonic *sefirot* in the womb of

the divine is couched in terms of the anthropomorphic imagery of the *Idrot*, so that the creation of the world is portrayed in terms of impregnation (*ibbur*) and the suckling of, conferring of consciousness (*mohin*) on, and maturation of *Zeir Anpin*.³¹

The conception of *Zeir* caused the conception of the natural world. Through these overlapping and interlocking relationships, the *sefirot* and the *parzufim* are interwoven with other structures.³² Cordovero had already declared that the vessels were created in an act of divine conception, in a process that resembled the growth and maturation of a body from infancy to adulthood.³³ Vital, as well, would later declare that the *parzuf* is completed in nine months and one day. When the embryonic *Zeir* rises to *Attika*, it encounters three layers of *kelipah*, or shell, which are compared to the three years of *orla*, the years in which a fruit tree cannot be harvested according to biblical law.³⁴ This process of conception and birth paralleled the development of the soul over the course of maturity, as described in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*.³⁵

In the early part of his sojourn in Safed, Luria also concluded that the catastrophe of the “death of the kings of Edom” caused the *sefirot* *Hokhmah* and *Binah* to fall out of the world of *Azilut*, forming the *parzufim* *Abba* and *Imma*. These are portrayed in mythic terms as Jacob and Leah, whose union sustains the transcendent souls (*neshamot*) of the people Israel. The seven lower *sefirot*, when they fell into the world of *Briah*, became the countenances *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah*. When nourished in the womb, they take on the mythic identity of Israel and Rachel and create new souls.³⁶

The Death of the Kings

The interpretations of the “death of the kings of Edom” are good examples of these various interpretations. The *Zohar* does not present these traditions in a systematic way but only through mysterious allusions.³⁷ These enigmatic allusions preoccupied the Safed commentators, who developed a number of systematic expositions of the “death of the kings.”³⁸

Cordovero and his teacher Shlomo Alkabetz had associated the death of the kings with martyrdom, as a prehistoric slaughter of innocents, related to the rabbinic traditions of the ten martyrs,³⁹ the deaths of the four who entered the mystical *Pardes*, and so forth. The death of the kings was not the central event of prehistory but merely one of a number of images of divine upheaval attending the initial act of creation.⁴⁰ According to Cordovero’s worldview, every act of emanation is preceded by an “ascent in thought.” This trope is borrowed from the statement attributed to God upon the martyrdom of R. Akiva: “be silent, for thus it has risen in thought.”⁴¹ The death of the kings was a figurative reference to an event that occurred in the divine mind. The emanating power of the divine withdrew into successive realms of pure “thought.”⁴²

This emphasis on martyrdom may have been informed by the late medieval zeitgeist, or at least the events of the Spanish expulsion.⁴³ Nonetheless, Cordovero’s interpretations qualified and rationalized the memory of catastrophe. The upheavals of prehistory occurred because the divine periodically had to cleanse and purge itself.

One way of purging impurities from the divine superstructure was through the act of sifting. The *Zohar* employs sifting as an explanation of the phenomenon of martyrdom for the sanctification of God's name,⁴⁴ and this image was adopted by Cordovero.⁴⁵ "Sifting" for impurities was a common practice in many areas of life, such as metallurgy (smelting). Sifting was also a widely disseminated image in Jewish law. For example, to adjudicate various degrees of menstrual impurity, an expert was required to sort various kinds of menstrual blood. Similarly, there is frequent reference to the sorting out of impurities in grain before baking bread destined for the Temple altar.

Luria also considered the death of the kings as part of this purging of impurity, and his earliest teachings invoke the sifting of grain in terms of the extraction of *kelipot*, the husks that are equated with the demonic *dinnim*.⁴⁶ The sifting process brought about the emanation of the *parzufim* from the *sefirot*. *Keter* was originally a single point, which "required no sifting."⁴⁷ The first sifting caused the primordial point of *Keter* to extend beyond itself, and the second sifting resulted in the emanation of *Abba* and *Imma*.⁴⁸ These subsidiary *parzufim* served as a garment for *Keter* and subsequently clothed *Arikkh*, with the *Hesed* of the lower *sefirot* sweetening the *Din* therein.

The sifting that occurred at the death of the kings was a process that consisted of a brutal winnowing of the improperly emanated worlds. The kings were lost "because their weapons and roots and sprouts had fallen out of *Attika Kadisha*."⁴⁹ Too much light blazed out of the highest countenance, so that the lower emanations could not withstand the full force of the light. The inadequacy of the lower *sefirot* is telegraphed by the names of the various kings mentioned in the original biblical account.⁵⁰ Figures such as Bela' ben Beor and, for that matter, the biblical prophet Bila'am are linked to the root BL' (to swallow) because they are literally "swallowed up" by the force of *Din*.⁵¹ Similarly, Yovav's name is similar to the shofar blast, which is called *yevava*, leading Vital to speculate on the ways that the shofar blast acts to rectify the effects of these divine catastrophes.⁵²

Later interpretations of the death of the kings incorporated the image as but one expression of the initial, imperfect emanation. *Keter* was emanated with no *tiqqunim*, with no supporting *sefirot*. *Hokhmah* and *Binah* found themselves in a back-to-back embrace, and the lower seven *sefirot* died and fell beneath the world of *Azilut*, the initial emanation.⁵³ In the eventual "great *tiqqun*" of the Messianic age, the *parzuf* *Abba* will sift through the *dinnim*, and *Abba* and *Imma* will couple face-to-face, thereby correcting the chaotic state of the seven lower *sefirot*. Ibn Tabul embellished this theme, adding that the deposed, "dead" kings were hidden away to await the resurrection, "the time of the great *tiqqun*, for their descent to the world of creation is called death."⁵⁴ In every instance, the underlying message is the same: the *parzufim* were emanated to compensate for the instability and vulnerability of the *sefirot*.

Zimzum and the Breaking of the Vessels

Luria was especially interested in the moment of emanation. The first world, *Azilut*, emanated from *Ein Sof*, the Infinite, through the drawing forth of its light. The

lower lights are the roots and sources of *Azilut*. It was at this juncture in the development of his thought that Luria appropriated the ancient concept of *zimzum*, in which God, as the transcendent light of *Ein Sof*, withdraws to make room for the created worlds. This withdrawal created a vessel out of the *sefirah Din*, which was left with but a trace (*reshimu*) of residual light uprooted from its original context. The divine light then returned and shone into the vessel. The withdrawal of the light created the vessels (*kelim*) and the return of the light put the light in the vessels.⁵⁵ The *zimzum* begins the processes of emanation, creating a void at the peak of *Azilut*. This light returns through the void in a thin line from which the ten *sefirot* emanate. The vessels were formed from the taking away of the light, not from the return of the light.⁵⁶

Luria's commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* stresses that in the initial emanation, the *sefirot* were not balanced in terms of their genders. In a complementary relationship, *Hokhmah* would be balanced by *Binah*, the force of *Din* would be countered by that of *Hesed*, and *Tiferet* would be unified with *Malkhut*. This balance is referred to as the "weighing on the scale." Without this gender balance, the sefirotic hierarchy is dangerously unstable. As Luria himself put it: "The first worlds died because they were made without a *tiqqun*, but the craftsman, *Keter Elyon, Attika Kadisha*, the wondrous craftsman, came and set forth the male and the female, and these sparks were purified and gave way."⁵⁷

In the homilies that characterize the middle period of his teaching, Luria began to use the image of *zimzum* in his explanations of the processes of emanation.⁵⁸ In prehistory, *Ein Sof* "filled all the worlds."⁵⁹ When God wanted to create the world, he withdrew in order to hollow out a space. This space was, nonetheless, not completely empty, for it contained a residue of the divine light (*reshimu*).⁶⁰ The vessels that had been created to contain the divine light were unequal to the task, "because of the greatness of the light"⁶¹ or, in the words of Ibn Tabul:

When the light of the Emanator descended to its location in the vessels, in order that it could rule and complete all the worlds to benefit from its light, to reveal the hidden, then the *Keter* and the *Hokhmah* and the *Binah* could bear it, but the seven lower [vessels] shattered. Because they shattered, the light turned above in the first three and fled upward . . . and made a union above.⁶²

The *zimzum* muddled all the material beneath itself, creating an unformed mass, or *golem*. The vessels formed ten intermediate points inside the mass. As the divine light of *Keter* moved farther away, the lower vessels become more and more "darkened." These vessels shattered as a result of their inability to withstand the renewed influx of divine light. Upon the shattering of the vessels, the light divided into two forms, the inner and the surrounding light, so that "whatever the Wisdom could bear was made the inner part, and the rest become the surrounding light." This surrounding light was greater than the inner light, for it was not constrained by vessels. The inner light, which is less strong, is more fit to be contained in the lower vessels.⁶³

An early composition by Vital, the "*Drush to Sagis*," portrayed God's role in the creation of the vessels as that of a divine potter.⁶⁴ According to this account, the vessels were physically formed by the creator in the same way that the thickness of a pot is determined by the potter.⁶⁵ The shell of the vessels was composed of

Din. The finest craftsmanship went into the formation of *Keter*. As the light descended through the sefirotic structure, the vessels became more and more crude. The light left its residue (*reshimu*) in a descending stream as it passed from the highest sefirot. *Keter* retained the largest amount of light, as it was the strongest and highest vessel. The lower vessels of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, however, could not stand the light, and their “backs were broken.” These sefirot then descended to the level of the sefirah *Yesod*. According to the “*Drush to Sagis*,” only the rearmost sections (*ahorayyim*) of the upper three sefirot were broken. The lower six were not as strong, and so they shattered completely. The shattered sefirot combined to create a formless mass, or *golem*. Hence, “the *golem* was made from the forces of *Din* and so the seven died. These were the six points of *Zeir* and one of *Malkhut*. Their spirituality, their light, fled up to the womb of *Imma*.”⁶⁶

Having shattered, the vessels were reassembled as countenances. The light began to flow through the vessels, which became new conduits for the divine light that again emanated out of *Keter*. The first three vessels for the divine light were the strongest, and they retained the ability to receive the light. The vessel of *Keter*, which was not broken at all, was followed by the vessels of *Abba* and *Imma*, whose fronts remained whole but which were broken from behind. The seven lower vessels of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* were altogether broken, “forward and back.”

The “*Drush to Sagis*” also described the emanation in terms of the doctrine of the successive worlds of creation posited by the *Zohar*’s later strata. This idea is combined with Luria’s notion of the conception of the *parzufim*. The primordial ether in which the creation occurred is a womb. Initially, the heavens of the present world were at the same level as the world of *Yezirah*, or formation. Then all of the worlds descended, and at that point, “the gross, coarse *golem* fell into this world and was empty and dead.”⁶⁷

Lurianic Kabbalah came to emphasize the autonomy of the forces of evil. These forces are personified in the *kelipot*, the shells of the vessels that are left following the shattering.⁶⁸ In the simplest terms, these broken shards form the pockets of *Din* in which evil originates. In developing the doctrine of the *kelipot*, Lurianic kabbalists exploited a literary distinction between the *Idrot* and the main sections of the *Zohar*. In the main sections, the sefirah *Din* is most often associated with an incarnate aspect of divine judgment. In the *Idrot*, however, the generally negative image of *Din* as portrayed in the sefirotic system is replaced by the *dinnim*, a demonic pantheon. These multiple *dinnim* and *gevurot* are expelled through the noses and mouths of the *parzufim* (*IR* 143a). These diffuse *dinnim* are purely demonic, with their origins in a theory of divine waste and detritus.⁶⁹

While developing his idea of *zimzum*, Luria began to address the philosophical idea of a creation taking place as an act of divine thought. He also wrote his commentary on the first section of the *Zohar*, with its conception of the *buzina de-kardinuta*, the hardened or darkened spark that engraved the first strokes of creation into the primordial ether, a process that Luria posited as taking place above the realm of *Azilot*.⁷⁰ Luria defined *buzina de-kardinuta* as the power of *Din* that withdraws the light of *Ein Sof*. Its engraving action creates the first emanated vessels. The “*Drush to Sagis*” describes a process in which *Din*, “which was like a hand-breadth in the great sea,” was gathered together to form an inanimate *golem*. From

this mass extended the worlds of emanation, into which God released a little of the light that had been withdrawn, and this was the emanation of the vessels, “the secret of the land of Edom.”⁷¹

Finally, toward the end of his life, Luria introduced *Adam Kadmon*, the Primordial Man, who stands at the peak of the *Azilut*, the emanated world. *Adam Kadmon* is the context within which the processes of creation occur. Luria’s last teachings described the processes of creation, as well as the catastrophe of the breaking of the vessels, as occurring within the anthropomorphic structure of *Adam Kadmon*. The primordial lights are portrayed as shining out through the divine *anthropos*, particularly through the orifices. Although Luria developed this doctrine during the later stages of his career, it was widely reproduced in the Lurianic canon and became a starting point for many of its recensions.⁷²

Union

As is common throughout theosophical Kabbalah, the Lurianic system described the structure of the cosmic order through the image of divine union. The *sefirot* and *parzufim* interacted in sexual couplings, followed by “conception” and eventual “birth.” In most versions of the Lurianic myth, the *parzufim* are “conceived” in the womb of *Imma* and are then “born” into the lower realms. Vital portrayed the interplay of the various *parzufim* as polymorphous and incestuous. This is the case in the sexual couplings both of *Abba* and *Imma* and of *Nukvah* and *Zeir*. For Vital, these unions were synonymous with other images of divine interplay, such as the overlapping of the beards of *Arieh* and *Zeir* and the *parzufim* as the garment of the *sefirot*.⁷³ The union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* is also described as a divine kiss, in which “the head tilts down to bequeath the *mazal* of the beard.”⁷⁴

Another example of ambiguous sexuality is the instance in which *Zeir* “covers the opening” of *Imma*. Vital identifies this theme as originating in the following remark from the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “The feminine darkens, *Imma* shines and is open through her gates. Comes the key that is subsumed into six and covers the opening and unifies below with this one and that one. Woe is he who reveals the opening!”⁷⁵ According to Vital, the “key that is subsumed into six” refers to the situation in which *Zeir Anpin*, which encompasses the six intermediate *sefirot* connected by *Tiferet*, is created. *Zeir Anpin* “covers the opening” of *Imma*,⁷⁶ and elsewhere it “pours in” to the feminine countenance *Nukvah*. As a male archetype, *Zeir* performs the dual function of protecting *Imma*, the supernal mother, while engaging with *Nukvah*, the eroticized consort. In a chain reaction, the *mazalot* of *Arieh* and *Zeir* provoke the union of *Abba* and *Imma*, as well as of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. The latter union manifests itself among humankind as the source of the “extra soul” that is present on the Sabbath and holidays, as well as the resurrection of the dead posited by classical rabbinic theology.⁷⁷

Ibn Tabul also dwelled on the eroticism of the conception, particularly the phallic engorgement that precedes it. The seminal drop contains male and female aspects that rise to the corona or “head” of *Yesod*, the “beginning of sexuality” of *Abba*. Then the lower *sefirot* (*Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*) of *Imma* enter the upper *sefirot* (*Hokhmah*,

Binah, and *Da'at*) of *Zeir Anpin*.⁷⁸ These seminal energies then converge in a flow of *Hesed* that descends to the lower countenances through the medium of *mazal*.⁷⁹

The *Mohin*

To explain the internal dynamics of the increasingly complex structure of the universe, Luria emphasized elements that were nascent or merely the objects of allusion in the *Idrot*. An example of this is Luria's use of the *mohin*, or inner consciousness of the countenances. Luria portrayed the *mohin* as the *sefirot* that underlie and enliven the *parzufim*. The *Idrot* mention the *mohin* in an unsystematic way, as the "brains" or inner intelligences of the *parzufim*. The male countenance, *Arieh Anpin*, has three *mohin*: *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*.⁸⁰ After the breaking of the vessels, the *mohin* were left in a greater state of order as one descended through the structure of the countenances. That is, the *mohin* *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*, which underlie *Arieh*, are in a state of good repair. The *mohin* *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*, which underlie *Zeir*, are less perfect, and the *mohin* of *Nukvah* are altogether in disarray.⁸¹

The *mohin* are also described as the aspect of the *sefirot* that grows. This quality is particularly evident throughout the process of conception. The *mohin* are necessary in order that the *sefirot* could be "reborn" from the womb of *Imma*.⁸² The *mohin* engage in various kinds of unions and conjunctions, such as the *mohin de-gadlut*, or "greater" *mohin*, and the *mohin de-katnut*, or "lesser" *mohin*.⁸³

The *mohin* are first conceived through the union of the *parzufim* *Abba* and *Imma*. Then, the first *mohin* are conveyed to the lower *parzufim* *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. As the *mohin* grow into maturity, the *parzufim* extend farther and farther into phenomenal reality. After *Zeir's* "conception" by *Arieh*, it acquires its *mohin* as it grows, like an infant gradually acquiring its faculties. The first three *mohin*—*Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*—are bequeathed by the countenances *Abba* and *Imma*. These *mohin* mature in three stages. The first stage is the actual impregnation (*ibbur*), before which the *sefirah* *Da'at* lacks *moah* altogether. The second stage is called the *mohin de-katnut*, which is comparable to the undeveloped mind of an infant. The infantile *Zeir* suckles at the higher *parzufim* and draws the three *mohin* of "greatness" (*gadlut*) into itself.⁸⁴ Having reached a state of "maturity," *Zeir* unifies with *Nukvah*, bestowing its material development to the *mohin* of *Nukvah*, the feminine countenance.⁸⁵

Vital's later teachings portrayed the function of the *mohin* and their aspects, or *behinnot*. Later Kabbalists referred to the movement of the entire system as the "function" (*hanhagah*).⁸⁶ This macrostructure encompassed the various channels of divine effluence, the *sefirot* and countenances, as well as such phenomena as the *zimzum*, *shevirah*, and *tiqqun*. As far as Vital was concerned, the principal result of the death of the kings was that the rearmost aspects (the *ahorayyim*) of *Abba* and *Imma* fell away from the world of *Azilut*, creating, thereby, the *parzufim* *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. The later redactors also derived a second set of *parzufim*, so that the union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah* evolved into the complicated couplings of the biblical archetypes Israel, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, representing the *sefirot* *Tiferet*, *Malkhut*, and *Binah*.⁸⁷ Complicating this relationship further was the later emphasis on a minor tradition in the *Zohar*, that of the *nesirah*.⁸⁸ According to this tradition, the *parzufim*

experience a sort of postcoital depression, in which they fall away from one another until they are restimulated by the feminine aspects. The mysterious doctrine of the *nesirah* was combined with the doctrine of the perfect and imperfect embraces to create an enveloping doctrine of embrace and release.

One area of doctrinal development between Luria's early teachings and Vital's eventual conclusions concerned the idea that prior to the creation, the *sefirot* were housed concentrically within one another. Their subsequent emanation was really a linear extension into phenomenal reality. The *sefirot*, *parzufim*, and *mohin* overlapped one another. Hence, Luria portrayed the first *sefirah* as being clothed in the lowest *sefirah*. Similarly, the inner dimensions of *Imma* were clothed in the six dimensions of *Zeir*, and the *Hesed-Gevurah* and *Tiferet* of *Imma* were the *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at* of *Zeir*.⁸⁹ Luria's oral commentary to the *Idra Zuta* portrayed this theory of the garment as the doctrine of the *zelem*, or divine form. Vital complicated this structure further, maintaining that each *sefirah* was only partially clothed in the lower. The *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod* of *Imma* were clothed in all the *sefirot* of *Zeir Anpin*, while *Arieh Anpin* was clothed in all the *sefirot* of *Azilut*.⁹⁰

Vital portrayed the full embrace of the countenances as a goal, the "great *tiqqun*," which would come about as an aspect of the Messianic era. In full sight of humankind, the surrounding *mohin* would spring from the brows of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. *Abba* and *Imma* would channel various kinds of divine flow, including the flow of the *sefirah* *Hesed* and the flow of *mazal*. The engorged aspect of *Hesed*, with *Abba* and *Imma* fully unified, would then pour out, bequeathing the inner *mohin* to *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. The inner *mohin* of the highest *parzufim*—their *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*—would then coalesce to produce new souls. The face-to-face union of the *parzufim*, in the Messianic age, would be characterized by an unobstructed flow of spiritual energy through the astral bodies, from *Attika Kadisha* to *Nukvah*. Even now, while the world remains unredeemed, new human souls are conceived by the union of *Zeir* and *Nukvah*. Hence, human *neshamot* are the "children" of the Primal Man, *Adam Kadmon*.

Kavvanot

Upon his arrival in Safed that Luria wrote his commentaries to the sections of the *Zohar* that deal with the Sabbath meals. He also composed his popular hymns for the three Sabbath meals.⁹¹ Throughout his teaching, Luria explored ways that Jewish rituals could complete and restore the structure of the *parzufim*. In the course of developing strategies to channel the *mohin* through directed religious practice, Luria portrayed the flow of those powers in increasingly complex ways.

Through the practice of mystical *kavvanot*, or "intentions," the mystic took an active role in bringing together the shattered superstructure, mending the "broken vessels."⁹² This theurgic aspect of religious practice was one of the most widely disseminated aspects of Lurianic Kabbalah.⁹³ Through the practice of the *kavvanot*, Lurianic Kabbalah appropriated practices that were already rife among the Safed kabbalists, such as the grave site veneration of Cordovero and Alkabetz⁹⁴ and the shamanism associated with Joseph Karo.⁹⁵

The *parzufim* are evoked in religious practice by putting on *tefillin*, the leather boxes and scrolls that have served as the accoutrements of Jewish prayer since the Hellenistic period. Every aspect of the *tefillin*—the shape, the scrolls contained in the boxes, and the straps and knots—communicate aspects of the relationship of the *parzufim*. The energy inherent in the *tefillin* channels the force of the *mohin* as well as that of the *sefirot Hesed* and *Din*, effecting the overlap of the *sefirot* and the *parzufim*. The embrace of the lower *parzufim* is also acted out in the binding of the *tefillin* to the mystic's body. The chambers that house the sacred scrolls are the earthly counterparts of the chambers of ether in the skulls of *Arikkh* and *Zeir*. The four chambers of the *tefillah* of the head signify the four *mohin* of *Arikkh Anpin*. The two straps of the head *tefillah* represent the balance of the *sefirot Hesed* and *Gevurah*. The hand *tefillah* represents the union of Jacob and Rachel, the backward union.⁹⁶ Hence, the worshipper, through the boxes, chambers, straps, and knots of the *tefillin*, aligns and channels the energies of the *parzufim* into his own body and soul.⁹⁷

The unions of the various *parzufim* could be evoked through the correct intention in prayer. Mystical prayer, when performed at a propitious hour of the day, is a method by which the mystic insinuates himself into the middle of the divine embrace. The liturgies of various times of the day are means for aligning the loving countenances into a full embrace from an imperfect one. For instance, night is the time of the union with Leah, the archetype of the *sefirah Binah*, and the day is the time of the union with Rachel, the archetype of the *sefirah Malkhut* and the *Shekhinah*. The blessing “who obtains everything” in the first paragraph of the silent devotion channels the descent of the *mazal* into present reality through the beard.⁹⁸ Depending on the time of the prayer, the adept may assume the role of *Zeir* or *Nukvah*.

The observance of the *mizvot* and the act of prayer also have the affect of neutralizing the *Din* produced in the flawed or demonic embraces.⁹⁹ The mystics were required to align themselves with the powers of purity and not be engulfed by evil, for there is a special demonic aspect that can entrap them into the realm of *Din*.¹⁰⁰ Luria emphasized that the *sefirah Hesed* was the energizing factor through which the countenance *Abba* channeled the flow of energy from *Keter* in a seminal, fructifying effluence. Energy also flowed from a *Hesed* inside *Attika*; in earlier periods, this energy had been channeled by the function of the high priest in the Temple.¹⁰¹

Reading the *Zohar*

The preeminent scholar of Kabbalah Gershom Scholem understood Luria's teaching of the “breaking of the vessels” as a historical metaphor. He interpreted the themes of upheaval and catastrophe inherent in this mystical system as a reaction to the expulsion of the Jewish community from Spain in 1492. Scholem reiterated this point many times in his portrayal of the Safed renaissance:

After the Catastrophe of the Spanish Expulsion, which so radically altered the outer aspect of the Kabbalah if not its innermost content, it also became possible to consider the return to the starting point of creation as the means of precipitating the final world catastrophe, which would come to pass when that return had been

achieved by many individuals united in a desire for “the End.” . . . The Kabbalah of Isaac Luria may be described as a mystical interpretation of Exile and redemption, or even as a great myth of Exile. Its substance reflects the deepest religious feelings of the Jews of that age.¹⁰²

Scholem saw mystical experience as being mediated by the vicissitudes of history. Thus, the most important aspect of Lurianic Kabbalah was its messianic character. The “purpose” of Lurianic Kabbalah was to bring the Messiah, who would provide the remedy, or *tiqqun*, needed to repair the broken world. Scholem’s interpretation of the emergence of Lurianic Kabbalah follows the tendency of Jewish historians to explain mystical trends as the result of mass irruptions of emotional response to history on the part of whole populations.

Such understandings are also characteristic of contemporary historical interpretation. The seminal historian of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Graetz, portrayed the *Zohar* as nothing but a response to Maimonidean rationalism.¹⁰³ As noted before, Scholem portrayed Lurianic Kabbalah as an emotional response to the trauma of the Spanish expulsion. The popularity of Shabbatai Zevi’s heretical messianism was widely perceived as a response to the Chmelnizki massacres of 1648–49. Scholem, in turn, portrayed Hasidism as a response to the collapse of Shabbateanism. Modern scholars are apt to see mystical impulses as emotional responses to history.

The premise of the great emotional response is itself a product of modernity, in which the Jewish populace was observed attaching itself to movements that demanded the mass uprooting of prior understandings. Reform Judaism in Germany, Zionism, Socialism, and the other great stimulants of Judaism in modernity required great restructuring of the given premises of Jewish life. Hence, the analysts of medieval Judaism, Scholem and Buber, but also Graetz and others, maintained that the propelling energy of Judaism is one of response to trauma.

Having embraced Zionism as an act of rebellion against an aggressively assimilationist community in Germany that included his own family, Scholem defined the development of Kabbalah as an experience in which the mythic constantly interacted with the unfolding of history. As a key intellectual figure in the closed society of the fledgling Jewish state, he portrayed a world in which messianism, Zionism, and historiography dovetailed into one nationalistic impulse.¹⁰⁴

In recent years, Moshe Idel has taken issue with Scholem’s historiographical approach. Scholem had portrayed the concept of *zimzum*, or divine withdrawal, as a novelty of Lurianic Kabbalah. Idel and Bracha Sack have demonstrated that the image of *zimzum* far predated Luria and was present very early in the development of Jewish mysticisms.¹⁰⁵ Building on this discrepancy, Idel has questioned the extent to which the development of mystical movements should be attributed to mass psychological response:

Given the absence of Lurianic discussion of the expulsion issue, Scholem’s universally accepted theory regarding the interconnection of the two is in fact only one of the many options that could easily be advanced. . . . But Scholem’s thesis, or any other like it, places psychology between history and theosophy, and a theory that attempts seriously to connect all three must be carefully proved.¹⁰⁶

Idel's critique of psychological interpretation of mysticism is persuasive. Mystical movements may serve as mass responses to national trauma. However, to dismiss the inner development of a body of theoretical literature is reductive in a way that is inauthentic to the Jewish literary tradition. Because historicism is so much at the forefront of Jewish theology, it is tempting to interpret mystical social phenomena as responses to historical events. Nonetheless, it does not ultimately do justice to the religious power and ongoing spiritual validity of such movements.

Another result of Scholem's influence is that contemporary portrayals of the history of Kabbalah have emphasized specific schools of thought, one following upon the other. According to this understanding, the "*Merhavah* school" was followed, after a hiatus of five centuries, by German Hasidism and the circles that flourished in Provence and Gerona in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The speculations of Abraham Abulafia were historically contemporary with the *Zohar's* circle, although these two worldviews were not combined until the Safed renaissance, by Moshe Cordovero, Luria, Vital, and, especially, the seventeenth-century Yemenite kabbalist Shalom Sharabi. According to this documentary point of view, one school of mystical thought follows upon another, creating distinct layers of development. Such an emphasis, encouraged by romantic, charismatic auteurs, is characteristic of the classical study of mysticism in general.¹⁰⁷

Another way of understanding classical Kabbalah, the mysticism of the *Zohar*, Cordovero, and Luria is to think of it in terms of its inner development. Kabbalah originated in the coalescing of certain aggadic themes from rabbinic literature, particularly works written in the Land of Israel in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The main sections of the *Zohar* show the influence of the Aramaic translations of the Bible popularly ascribed to Yonatan ben Uzziel (the *Targum Yerushalmi*) and other Galilean sources, such as *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, as well as the extensive aggadic passages of the Babylonian Talmud. The *Zohar's* authors also appropriated ideas from the Provençal and Gerona kabbalists and the pietists of the thirteenth-century Rhineland. These traditions were combined and augmented with other important themes, such as the mysteries of *yibbum*,¹⁰⁸ the *Hormanuta* traditions, the secret of the thirteen attributes, and the anthropomorphic traditions of the *Idra* literature.¹⁰⁹ The *Zohar* is best seen as a treasury of these aggadic and medieval traditions. This anthology became the charter of most subsequent Kabbalah, particularly, as we have seen, in Safed.

Cordovero's resolution of the *Zohar's* myth was less effective than Luria's willingness to create a new structure to encompass the great multiplicity of traditions. Cordovero's teachings are considered more "zoharic," when in fact they only emphasize *certain* characteristic teachings of the *Zohar* while incorporating a vast number of extraneous ideas drawn from the various teachings and texts that had been collected in sixteenth-century Safed. Cordovero was influenced by the *Tiqqunim* and preferred to emphasize the interaction of the four worlds of creation and the interaction of the *sefirot* within that model. As we have seen, Cordovero insisted upon reducing all of the teachings that he had collected into the model of the *sefirot* and the worlds, including the powerful doctrine of the *parzufim* as portrayed in the *Idra* literature.

For Luria, however, the *parzufim* were more *real* than the *sefirot*. Luria's understanding came about gradually over the course of his brief and tragic life. He initially labored to reconcile the sefirotic structure, multiplied across the context of the creation of the worlds, with the actions of the "hardened spark" occurring within it and the countenances laid across it. Luria's teaching moved from an emphasis on the emanation of the *sefirot* to more and more unwieldy structures. The final versions of Luria's own teaching posited the unstable processes of the divine as taking place in the context of the divine *anthropos*, *Adam Kadmon* and its *parzufim*.¹¹⁰ Eventually, he could only conclude that the structure had ruptured.

The *Zohar's* tradition of the death of the kings of Edom underlay Luria's central existential statement: that the divine superstructure described in the *Zohar* had in fact collapsed and ruptured, that there had been a breaking of the vessels, and this had occurred within the structure of the Primordial Man, *Adam Kadmon*. God had withdrawn from the phenomenal world and then refilled the empty world with divine energy through a series of cosmic vessels. However, the vessels of holiness ruptured, leaving the world in a state of spiritual chaos and anarchy. The most widely circulated recensions of Lurianic doctrine began with the *zimzum* and then continued the account in terms of the outpouring and withdrawal of the divine essence into the vessels.¹¹¹ The *existential* condition of *zimzum* emerged with greater force among later redactors, particularly in the works of Meir Poppers and Ya'akov Zemakh, who, in their recensions, generated much of the messianic eros and literary pathos identified by Gershom Scholem.¹¹² Nonetheless, this personalized view of *zimzum* owed much to the enveloping sense of psychological dread evident in Luria's original writings.

Luria's incorporation of the breaking of the vessels into the theology of the *Zohar* is an instance of a phenomenon that has occurred in other religious systems when the gothic superstructures and pantheons that have been built up over time are sweepingly discarded. The disparate traditions that have been incorporated into a religion become so unstable that they compel a reordering. In the Protestant response to Catholicism and in the Zen response to Hua Yen and Tantric Buddhism, unwieldy and complex infrastructures were jettisoned in favor of the reductive solution of a single idea or group of ideas. Sometimes this process is violent and schismatic, while other systems may quietly purge their unwieldy infrastructures in favor of the reductive solution.

The historical success of Luria's teaching stands well apart from his own brief career. Luria's mystique also lay in the fact that his written oeuvre was not large, consisting mostly of a few pages of commentary on the *Zohar*. He was an enigmatic figure, like Jesus and Lao Tzu; he arrived, stated his message, and withdrew. This quality was only enhanced in the biographical accounts that surfaced in later years. The parallel studies of Meroz and Avivi have demonstrated that Luria came to his theory of a broken world, portrayed within the contest of a divine *anthropos*, only after the death of his son, for whom he had messianic expectations. Implicit in the studies of Meroz and Avivi is a developmental psychohistorical theory compatible with that posited by Scholem. Luria's image of a fragmented, destroyed world originated in his psychological history, and the final version was completed following the death of his heir and before his own sudden death.¹¹³ This intimation of

personal catastrophe dovetailed with the tone of fateful messianism characterizing the *Idrot*.¹¹⁴ The revelation of the supreme mysteries, as well as the death of the various comrades, is seen as the prelude to the Messianic era.

But there is more to the *Zohar*, and particularly the *Idrot*, than the sefirotic doctrine. Luria knew this, and by addressing this aspect, Lurianic Kabbalah seems to fulfill one aspect of the *Zohar*'s spirituality more authentically than Cordovero's, hence its hegemony among scholars and exegetes. Luria's model of the shattered world resolved the contradictions inherent in the *Zohar*. Just as entire systems of Kabbalah developed to try to resolve the doctrinal discrepancies between the *Zohar*'s various strata, later Lurianic theory is the act of reconciling the various ideas of Luria and his disciples. The development of Kabbalah in its classical period is as much the internal development of its scholastic and intellectual history as it is the reflection of external historical events. Nuances of the *Zohar* and intellectual problems in its body of texts led to certain inevitable trends. Luria's teaching spread throughout the Jewish world. Luria's reading of the *Zohar* became the most widely disseminated understanding. The Lurianic influence may be quantified in its presence in subsequent kabbalistic doctrine, in its appearance in editions and manuscripts of central works, and in the pervasive presence of *zimzum* and *shevirah* in subsequent Kabbalah.¹¹⁵ Luria's conclusions were seen as most plausible and truest to the spirit of the *Idrot*. The most compelling aspect of this teaching was its subjective truth, for the Jews of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of its salient message: that the universe was locked in an ongoing process of destruction and upheaval.

I have been reading the *Zohar* for twenty years. To determine the correct interpretation of its symbolic language, I first turned to the classical commentaries. In those days, I had an a priori sympathy for Cordovero's teaching as representing the plain meaning of the *Zohar*. In beginning this way, I was influenced by Scholem's contention that the Lurianic system, particularly its doctrines of *zimzum* and *shevirah*, was extraneous to the *Zohar*'s essential teaching. However, in the end, I concluded that all of the Safed kabbalists based their teachings on doctrinal considerations inherent in the *Zohar* itself. The roots of Lurianic mysticism are in the *Zohar*'s teachings, just as the impetus for the subsequent growth of Kabbalah was an effort to make the *Zohar*'s world manifest. Nuances of the *Zohar* and intellectual problems in its body of texts led to inevitable trends in the later development of Kabbalah. This development is as much the internal development of its scholastic and intellectual history as it is the reflection of external historical events. The ascent of the Lurianic Kabbalah owed as much to its depth of understanding of the *Zohar* as to its existential relationship to recent history. The emanation of divinity into the world from the primordial point was added to the anthropomorphic mysteries of the *Idrot*. These teachings were then flung into the picaresque romance of the rabbis of antiquity who wandered the Galilee, and the symbols of their world were read into the forces of the divine. The enlivening force of Jewish mysticism drew on the eternalities of Judaism, recovering and reconstituting Judaism's hidden inner secrets. Kabbalah is a lineal chain of enlightenment in which successive generations continue to probe the essence of reality through their sacred work and its enchantments. So I find that, although I have been reading the *Zohar* for twenty years, I have only just begun.

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Appendix

Idra Texts

Sifra de-Zeniuta

1

It has been learned—The hidden book, the book that was weighed on the scale. Until there was a scale, they did not examine face-to-face.

The primordial kings died and their weapons vanished, and the land came to naught.

Until the start of the desire of desires, the garments of glory were set forth and stored.

This scale hangs in a place that is not, weighed on it are those who do not exist. The cups are balanced on the stand.

It is not unified and it is not seen.

On it rise those who are not, who are, and who will be.

Aspect within aspect, they are set forth and summoned in one skull, which is full of the dew of the bedellium.

The membrane of the air is gleaming and sealed.

The bleached wool hangs like a weight, the Will of Wills is revealed in prayer of those below.

Sharp, watchful, unblinking Overseen, watched constantly, ever guarded.

The oversight below is like the oversight that shines above.

Two windows of the command post [*pardashka*], arousing the spirit to all.

First God Created Heaven and Earth, six-Created six¹ above them.

All are below and are contingent on the seven of the skull, until the glory of glories.

And *the Earth* two, but not in number, and does it not say, from that which was cursed it came forth, as it is written, *from the land that God cursed* [Gen. 5:29].

It was *unformed and chaos and darkness was on the face of the Deep and the spirit of Elohim hovered on the face of the water.*

Thirteen contingent on thirteen, glory of glories.

Six thousand years contingent on the first six.

The seventh above them, overcoming alone.

Everything was destroyed in twelve hours.

As it is written, *it was unformed and void and darkness was on the face of the Deep and the spirit of Elohim hovered on the face of the water.*

Thirteen are upheld in mercy and renewed as before, and the six arise, as it says, *created*, after which it says, it was, for it truly was.

And in the end, unformed and chaos and darkness.

None but the Lord shall be exalted on that day [Isa. 2:11].

He engraved engravings, like the image of a long snake, extending here and there, its tail to its head and its head to its shoulder,² passing and raging, guarded and hidden.

Once in a thousand short days is revealed the understanding, absorbing the gleanings.³

Its fin is its portion.

Its head is broken in the waters of the great sea as it says [Ps. 74:13]: *You broke the head of the sea serpents on the water.*

There were two, and one was returned (for *taninim* is written in the shorter way).

Heads, as it says [Ezek. 1:22]: *The image was on the heads of the beasts of the firmament.*

And God said, Let there be light and there was light.

As it is written [Ps. 33:9]: *He spoke and it came to pass.*

He alone.

And afterward, there returned one YHV"Y YH"V VY"V.

And the last Y' is the lower *Shekhinah*, as the *Shekhinah* is found in the H', and they are weighed in one scale.

And the beasts flew back and forth, as it says: *God saw the light, that it was good. Say of the zaddik that he is good* [Isa. 3:10].

This one rises on the scale.

The first one is alone, and all returns to one.

The sister⁴ and her intimate are subsumed, one in the other in YU" D H" E, the loving crowns that embrace.

Six go out from the branch of the root of the body.

The language⁵ of great speech.

The language, hidden between YU" D and H" E.

As it is written [Isa. 44:5]: *This one will say, I am for YHVH, another will use the name "Jacob," another will mark his arm for YHVH and adopt the name of Israel.*

Truly, this one will say, for YHVH: sister.

And everything is said in YH" V (u).

All are contained in the hidden language for Imma, for she opens herself to bring forth.

Abba sits at the head.

Imma in the middle, covered here and here.

Woe to the one that uncovers their nakedness!

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of Heaven, the male ruling the female.

As it is written [Prov. 10:25]: *The zaddik is the foundation of the world.*

The YU" D shines in two and shines past the feminine [*nukvah*].

The YU'D unifies alone, rising though its levels, higher and higher.

The feminine darkens; Imma shines and is open through her gates.
 Comes the key that is subsumed into six and covers the opening and unifies
 below with this one and that one.
 Woe is he that reveals the opening!

2

The beard of faith is not mentioned because it is the preciousness of all.
 From the ears it goes out, circling the face; rising and falling, a white hair.
 In the thirteen they separate.
 In that glory of glories, it is written [Jer. 2:6]: No man [*ish*] passed by it and no
 man [*adam*] sat there.

Adam is outside.

*Adam*⁶ is not included here, or *ish*, all the more so.

In the thirteen rushing springs, four are specifically guarded, and nine water the
 body.

Before the orifice of the ears, the glory begins to set itself forth.

It descends in the beauty of the head of the lips.

It stands over this head to that head.

The path that goes out under the two windows of the command post, passing
 off sin, as it is written [Prov. 19:11]: *And his glory passes over sin.*

His lower lip is surrounded by hair for the other head.

The other path goes out beneath it, heaped with the fragrant offering for the
 upper head.

The two apples appear, shining with sparks.

The *mazal* of everything hangs down to the heart, on it are contingent the upper
 and lower.

The hanging ones do not go out from one another.

The shorter ones cover the throat of the glory.

The greater ones are measured out in a full measure.

The lips turn in from all sides.

Worthy is the one who is kissed with those kisses!

In that *mazal* of everything flow thirteen anointings of pure persimmon.

All are found and hidden in that *mazal*.

When Tishrei comes, the seventh month, these thirteen are found in the upper
 world and thirteen gates of mercy open.

In that time it is written [Isa. 55:6]: *Seek YHVH where he is found.*

It is written [Gen. 1:11]: *Let the earth be covered with grasses sprouting seed, trees
 bearing fruit.*

As it is written [Lev. 16:31]: *You will afflict your souls* on the ninth of the month
 toward evening.

ADN^Y YHVH you began to show your servant your greatness [Deut. 3:24].

YHVH, whole in his aspects.

And here, in this arousal of the land, it is not whole.

YH^Y Y [י^Y] is not written.

We call the higher Yo" d the lower Yo" d. Va-yiyzer [And he formed: ויִיָּצַר] the higher Y', the lower Y'.

Va-Yehiy (And it was: *huhu*) The higher Y', the lower Y, H' in its body, the general wholeness.

Whole, [but] not to every aspect.

This name is uprooted from this place and planted in another.

As it says [Gen. 2:8]: *YHVH the Lord planted.*

H' between Yo" d to Yo" d of YH"Y.

A breeze from the command post⁷ of *Attika* to *Zeira Anpin*.

With no spirit [*ruah*], it could not stand.

In H"e are contained the higher H', the lower H', and it is written [Jer. 1:6]:

Aha, YHVH Lord!

In the divine flow⁸ in the spirit of the scale YH" Y.

The higher Y' that is crowned in the knot of *Attika* is the higher membrane that is shining and sealed.

The higher H" e, which is crowned in the spirit of the "windows of the command," goes out to give life.

The higher V', the dark spark (*buzina de-kardinuta*) that is crowned in its aspects, letters spreading back, subsumed in *Zeira de-Anpin*.

As it begins in the skull, it is found extending through the whole body, to ornament everything like clean wool as these letters hang from it.

As it is revealed to *Zeira*, these letters are settled in it and it is called by them.

The Yo" D of *Attika* is sealed in its crowns, for the left is present.

The H"E opens in another and is penetrated in two orifices and is present in its *tiqqunim*.

Va" v is opened in the other as it is written [Songs 7:10]: *My beloved walks the straight path.*

In the dark spark is the opening covered.

V' above and V' below.

H' above and H' below.

Y' above and no other joins with it and it does not rise in this, except through a hint that is hinted when the two are revealed and unify as one level, one feeling in order to separate.

O" D included in Yo" d.

Woe, when this departs and is revealed!

These spices of the empty scale,⁹ passing, are not detained in their places [Ezek. 1:14]: *The beasts passed back and forth.*

Flee back to your place!

If you nest high as an eagle and if you place your nest between the stars, from there I will bring you down [Obad. 1:4].

And the land brought forth seed [Gen. 1:12].

When? When the name was planted.

Then the ether went forth and the spark was summoned.

One skull, extended in its aspects, full of dew, ascending in two colors.

Three chambers of the engraved letters are revealed in it.

Black as a raven, hanging over deep chasms that cannot be heard here, right or left.

Here is one slender path upward.

The brow in which no worldly conflict shines, except when the will oversees it.

Eyes of three hues glimmer before him, surrounded by shining milk.

As it is written [Isa. 33:20]: *Your eyes will see Jerusalem, the tranquil dwelling.*

And it is written [Isa. 1:21]: *Righteousness will lodge there.*

The *tranquil dwelling* is the sealed *Attika*.

It is written: *your eyes*.¹⁰

The nose of the countenance *Zeir*, to be known!¹¹ Three torches burning in its nostrils. A deep level, teaching good and evil.

It is written [(Isa. 42:8)]: *I am YHVH; it is my name.*

And it is written [Deut. 32:39]: *I kill and bring to life.*

And it is written [Isa. 46:4]: *I will bear and I will suffer.*

He is the one who made us and not ourselves [Ps. 100:3].

He does not reply to any man's charges [Job 33:13].

He is that which is called sealed, inaccessible and unseeable.

He is that which cannot be called by a name.

H' [ר] containing V' [י].

V' containing A' [ס] and not containing H'.

A' Y' [י], which is hidden of all hiddennesses to which the O" d does not connect.

Woe when the Y' does not shine on the O" d!

When the Y' withdraws from the O" d through the sins of this world, the nakedness of all is revealed.

Of this it is written [Lev. 18:7]: *Do not reveal the nakedness of your father.*

When the Yo" d deserts the H" e, of this it is written [Prov. 2:3]: *And the nakedness of your mother, do not reveal her nakedness.*

She is truly your mother, *For you shall call Understanding [Binah] your mother.*

3

Nine precious *tiqqunim* were passed on to the beard.

Everything that is hidden and not revealed, high and precious, it is found, and yet it is called "hidden."

The first *tiqqun* of the beard, strands upon strands, from above the opening of the ears until the upper lip, this top to that top it is found.¹²

Beneath the two nostrils, a path so full that it is not visible.

The cheeks overlap from this side and that.

In them are visible the apples that are red as roses.

On one thread, strong black locks hang to the chest; lips turning red as roses.

Short ones descend down the throat and cover the neck.

Long and short fall down evenly.

In these is found the mighty hero, wherever it is found.

As it is written [Ps. 118: 5]: *From the straits I called, Y" H.*

Nine did David say,¹³ until *all the Gentiles surrounded me*, to surround and to defend himself.

Let the earth be covered with grasses sprouting seed, every seed in its own kind, trees bearing fruit. [Gen. 1:11].

These nine were uprooted from the whole name and afterward were planted in the whole name, as it is written [Gen. 2:8]: *and YHVH Elohim planted.*

The *tiqqunim* of the beard are thirteen in the higher one, and nine are visible in the lower.

Twenty-two letters are engraved because of them.

On this, whoever sees in a dream that he has seized the beard of an important man, or that he stretches out his hand to him, let him know that he is one with his Master.¹⁴

Those who hate him will be bent beneath him.

So much more so is the high beard that shines on the lower, for the higher is called "great loving-kindness," and the smaller is called simply "loving-kindness," and when necessary, the higher beard shines on it and it is also called "great loving-kindness."

And Elohim said: Let the waters swarm with every manner of living creature [Heb. *nefesh hayah*] [Gen. 1:20]; that is to say, H"Y Y"H extended the shining of this one onto that.

All of them were aroused at one time, the good waters and the evil waters, for he said: *Let [them] swarm*

The higher creature and the lower creature.

The good creature and the evil creature.

And Elohim said: Let us make man! [Gen. 1:26].

Not "the man" but simply "man."

To exclude the higher man, who was made from the whole name.

When this one was completed, that one was completed.

Male and female were created to complete everything: YHV" H, the realm of the male; Elohim, the realm of the female.

The male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim* like a mother in the mouth of a maidservant.

The kings that were negated are set up here.

The *dinnim* of the male are mighty at the beginning and rest at the end, while the reverse is true of the female.

And Y" H, the hard shells of the knots are tucked into the bosom, and the small Y' is found within it.

Attika wanted to discern if the *dinnim* had been perfumed.

The serpent had intercourse with Eve, and a nest of pollution was established within her, creating a dwelling of sin, as it is written [Gen. 4:1]: *she conceived and bore Cain*, the nest¹⁵ of the dwelling of the evil spirits, the storms¹⁶ and malevolent demons.¹⁷

He set forth in that man crowns,¹⁸ general and specific¹⁹ contained in specific and general.

Thighs and arms, right and left.

This one divided in its aspects.

Set forth male and female, YHⁿV. Y', male; H', female.

V', it is written [Gen. 1:27]: *Male and female he created them, and he blessed them, and he called their name Adam.*

The form and countenance of a man sitting on a throne.

And it is written [Ezek. 1:26]: *And on the image of the throne, the image like a man on it from above.*

4

Attika is hidden and sealed.

Zeira de-Anpin is revealed and not revealed.

For it is revealed in written letters, and concealed, sealed in letters that are not settled in their places, for the higher and the lower are unsettled in it.

And Elohim said, Let the earth bring forth every living being in its kind, animal and creeping thing [Gen. 1:24].

As it is written [Ps. 36:8]: *Man and beast will praise God.*

One is found in the essence of another.

The beast in the category of the man, as it is written [Lev. 1:2]: *When a man [Adam] brings a sacrifice from you to YHVH, of an animal . . . , because it is in the category of the man.*

When Adam descended below in the higher form, there were found two spirits from two aspects, and the man included both right and left.

From the right, the holy soul [*neshamah*].

Of the left, the living soul [*nefesh hayyah*].

When Adam sinned, the left extended, and these extended incorporeally.

When they embraced together, they gave birth like that beast that gives birth to many from one embrace.

Twenty-two sealed letters, twenty-two revealed letters. A hidden Y' and a revealed Y'.

Hidden and revealed, weighed on balanced scales.

Male and female come out of Y'. Uⁿ D²⁰ in this place, V' male, D' female.

In this way, DⁿU two²¹ crowns.

Y' specifically male. H' female. H' [ה] was first D' [ד].

And when it conceived in a vav [ו] within it, there came forth a vav.

It appeared as Y' in the general vision of YHⁿ V.

When Yoⁿ d came forth, as male and female, it dwelt behind and covered Imma.

And the sons of God saw the daughters of man [Gen. 6: 2] As it is written [Josh. 2:1]: *Two men, secret spies.*

What are the daughters of men? As it is written [1 Kings 3:16]: *Then came two prostitutes to the king.*

Because of them, it is written [1 Kings 3:28]: *For they saw that the wisdom of Elohim was within him.*

Then they came, and not before.

On the rule of the embrace [knot] of the stillborn, there were two embracing above.

Below, they descended and inherited the dust.

They lost the good portion that they had, the crown of mercy, and they were crowned in a tunic of grapes.

And Elohim said to Moses, why do you cry out to me? [Exod. 14:15].

To me, specifically.

Speak to the children of Israel and let them move.

Let them move, specifically.

In the *mazal* on which it is contingent, that comes to glorify the beard.

Do what is right in his eyes and hearken to his commandments and keep all of his laws (Exod. 15:26).

For I, YHVH, am your healer, specifically for this.

5

Oh sinning nation, people laden with iniquity, evil seed, degenerate children [Isa. 1:4]!

Seven levels Yo" d H' V' H' H' Y' [י"ד ה"ה ה"י ו"י] bringing forth V' D', it is H' bringing V', V' bringing forth H' [ה"ה ה"י ה"ה]. V' D', outside are hidden the Adam, the man and woman who are two [D"U, ו"ד].

As it is written: *degenerate children.*

In the beginning [he] created.

In the beginning, a statement.

Created, a half-statement.

Father and son.

Sealed and revealed.

The higher Eden, sealed and hidden.

The lower Eden is carried away²² and there are revealed YHV"H, Y" H Elohim Et. ADN" Y AHY" H.

Right and left combined as one.

The heavens and as it is written [1 Chron. 29:11]: *the glory and the everlasting.*²³

The Earth

As it is written [Ps. 8:2]: *How great is your name in all the earth.*

The whole earth is full of his Glory [Isa. 6:3].

Let there be a firmament within the waters [Gen. 1:6] to divide the Holy and the Holy of Holies.

Attika to Zeira, separate and cleaving, not really separate and the mouth says great things.

They are detached and crowned with small crowns, with five kinds of waters.

And it is written [Num. 19:17]: *He places upon it living waters.*

He is the living Elohim and King of the World [Jer. 10:10]. *I will walk before YHVH in the lands of life* [Ps. 116:9].

And let the soul of my master be bound in the bond of life [1 Sam. 25:29].

And a Tree of Life within the Garden [Gen. 2:9].

Y" H Yo" d H" e AHY" Y.

Between the waters and the waters [Gen. 1:6].

The whole waters and the waters that are not whole.

The whole mercy and the mercy that is not whole.

And YHVH said, my soul will not be vexed by man forever, for he is also flesh
[Gen. 6:3].

And YHVH said, when it was settled in Zeira.

From this, to say the word in the name of the one who said it.²⁴

For *Attika* is hidden, as was said.

My soul will not be vexed by man, above.

For in that spirit exhaled from the two windows of the guardhouse was drawn down.

So it is written [Gen. 6:3]: *And his days will be one hundred and twenty years.*

Yo" d, whole and not whole.

Y' alone is one hundred.

Two letters, two instances.

One hundred and twenty years.

Y' alone when it is revealed in *Zeira*, it is drawn down in ten thousand years.

From this it is written [Ps. 139:5]: *You lay your hand upon me.*

And the nefillim were in the land then [Gen. 6:4].

As it is written [Gen. 2:10]: *From there it separated and came to four heads.*

From the place that the Garden divided is called "the *nefillim*," as is written:

From there it separated.

They were in the land in those days and not at another time.

Until the arrival of Joshua, and the sons of Elohim were hidden.

Until the arrival of Solomon, and the daughters of man were subsumed

As it is written [Eccles. 2:8]: *and delights* [*ta'anugot*, f.]; not *ta'anugim* [m.].

The sons of man were cast forth from the other spirits, not included in the higher wisdom, as it is written [1 Kings 5:26]: *YHVH gave wisdom to Solomon.*

And it is written [1 Kings 5:11]: *and he was wiser than any man* [*adam*].

For these were not included in Adam.

YHVH gave wisdom.

The higher H' *and he was wiser*, for through him was conveyed wisdom below.

They are the heroes that were forever [*me-olam*] [Gen. 6:4].

The higher world. *Men of renown* [*anshei shem*] [Gen. 6:4].

That they conducted themselves according to the Name [*shem*].

What is the Name?

The Holy Name, according to which the less than holy ones below conduct themselves, who only conduct themselves according to the Name.

Simply men of the Name.

Not men of YHVH.

Not of the hidden hiddenness but flawed, and those who are not flawed.

Anshei ha-shem come out of the category of Adam.

As it is written [Ps. 49: 13]: *Man* [*adam*] *does not abide in honor.*

A man's honor is in the honor of the king.

He *does not abide*, without a spirit.

Thirteen kings of war in seven.

Seven kings in the land, appearing as victorious in battle.

Nine ascend on levels that run with their will and there is none that will erase it from their hands.

Five kings exist in confusion.

Before four no one can stand.

Four kings go out before the four.

From them hang, like grapes in a cluster, knots of seven runners, bearing witness when they are not in their own place.

The perfumed tree sits within, its branches unified, a nesting place for birds.

In its shade shelters the beast that rules that tree in twelve paths, passing through seven columns that surround it.

In the four beasts they revolve through four sides.

The serpent that runs in three hundred and seventy leaps over the mountains and skips over the heights.

Its tail is in its mouth, with its teeth it punctures both sides.

When it takes its portion,²⁵ it divides to three sides.

As it is written [Gen. 5:23]: *And Hanokh walked with Elohim.*

And it is written [Prov. 22:6]: *Educate [hanokh] the youth [na'ar] according to his way.*

The youth, that is known.

With Elohim and not with YHVH.

And he was not [Gen. 5:28].

With this name.

For Elohim took him, to be called by his name.

The three courts are really four.

Four courts above and four below.

As it is written [Lev. 19:35]: *You shall not falsify measures [mishpat] of length eight or capacity.*

Harsh *Din* [judgment].

Din that is less harsh.

Din that is weighed and *Din* that is not weighed.

And soft *Din* that is neither this one nor that.

And when man had begun to multiply upon the face of the earth [Gen. 6:1].

Man had begun to multiply, as it is written [Gen. 6:6]: For he is also flesh . . .

The higher Adam.

As it is written [Gen. 6:1]: *upon the face of the Earth.*

And Moses did not know that his face was shining rays [keren or] [Exod. 34:29].

As it is written [Gen. 3:24]: *a tunic of leather [or].*

Keren, as it is written [1 Sam. 16:13]: *and Samuel took the horn of oil.*

There is no anointing [meshiah] except through the keren: and through your name will our keren be exalted [Ps. 89:18].

There will flower the keren of David [Ps. 132:17].

The tenth of the king, coming from the Jubilee which is *Imma*, as it is written

[Josh. 6:5]: *And it shall come to pass when they draw the keren of the Jubilee.*

The *keren* of the Jubilee is crowned with the tenth of *Imma*.

A *keren*, for he takes a *keren* and the spirit to return the spirit to him. And this *keren* is of the Jubilee. And the Jubilee is H'. H' is the drawing of spirit for all.

All return to their place, as it is written [Jer. 1:6]: *Aha, YHVH Elohim!* And when the H' is seen and the H' of YHVH Elohim is called the full name, as it is written [Isa. 2:17]: *None but the Lord shall be exalted on that day.* Therefore, he is sealed and crowned the hiddenness of the king, the Book of Hiddenness [*Sifra de-Zeniuta*]! Worthy is the one who ascended and went out and knew its paths and ways!

The Shorter *Idra*

It is learned in the secret of secrets,²⁶ the King's head is set forth in *Hesed* and *Gevurah*.

From this head hang hairs, locks upon locks, which draw forth all the union of above and below.

The Masters of Masters, masters of truth, masters of the scale, masters of murmuring, masters of wailing, masters of *Din*, masters of *Rahamim*, and the cantillation of the Torah, and the secrets of the Torah, pure and impure, all are called the gates of the King.

That is to say, the drawing forth that flows from the Holy King, all of it descends from the hidden Ancient.

The King's brow, overseeing the wicked, when their actions are examined, and when their sins are revealed, then it is called the King's brow.

That is, the *Gevurah* overwhelms its *dinnim* and extends through its side.

This is different from the brow of *Attika Kadisha*, which is called *Will*.

The King's eyes are the oversight of everything, the oversight of the higher and the lower, and all of the masters of oversight are called thus.

Colors unify in the eyes, and these and these colors are called all the masters of the King's oversight, each one according to his path, all are called the colors of the eye.

As the oversight of the King is seen, so are the colors aroused.

The eyelids are called the place where oversight is given to all of the colors, the masters of oversight.

They stand over what is below, eyelids overseeing from the river that flows out, the place to draw forth that light, to bathe in the whiteness of *Attika*, the milk that flows from *Imma*.

When the *Gevurah* extends, the eyes flash with the color red; *Attika Kadisha* flashes his whiteness and shines on *Imma*.

She is filled with her milk and suckles them; the eyes are bathed in her milk, in that milk from *Imma* that is ever flowing, as it is written, (Songs 5:13):

Bathed in milk that flows forever, unceasingly.

The King's nose is the perfection of the countenance.

When the *Gevurot* extend and unify as one, they are the nose of the Holy King. These *Gevurot* unify and extend from one *Gevurah*.

When the *dinnim* are aroused and go out from their realm, they may be sweetened only by the smoke of the altar. Thus it is written [Gen. 8:21]: *God smelled the sweet savor.*

The nose of *Attika* is different, for it does not need this; it is called complete Forbearance.

The light of the hidden Wisdom is called his nose. It is also called praise, as it is written [Isa.48:9]: *and my praise I will seal to you.* This aroused David, *A song of praise to David.* [Ps. 145:1].

The ears of the King, when Will is present, and *Imma* suckles, and the light of *Attika Kadisha* shines, arousing the light of the two consciousness as, and the shining of *Abba* and *Imma*.

All these are called the consciousness of the King, flashing as one.

When they flash as one, they are called the ears of YHVH.

For do they not receive the prayers of Israel?

When they are aroused to good and to evil, and in this arousal, the masters of wings are aroused, who take the voices of the world, and they are all called the ears of YHVH.

The King's face, the shining of *Abba* and *Imma*, their extension, shining and surrounding, flashing in this, the King's head.

They witness testimony about the King.

The King's visage is most precious of all.

From the head begins the supernal *Hesed* and *Gevurah*.

The shinings of *Abba* and *Imma* separate from one another, the shining of *Abba* with three lights, and *Imma* with two, so that they are five.

Hesed and *Gevurah* with one light, so that they are six.

Afterward, *Hese*"d is crowned and flashes and shines with two lights, so that they are eight.

After it is crowned, then *Gevurah* is crowned, and so there are nine.

And when all of these lights are connected together, they are called the visage of the King, as it is written [Isa. 42:13] *YHVH goes forth like a warrior, as a man of wars arouses his rage.*

The King's lips, thus it has been taught, when the light of *Abba* shone forth, it shone in three lights.

From one light, shines the higher *Hesed*.

From one light, shines the light that is called the King's consciousness.

And one light was suspended, until the shining of the light of *Imma*.

When they shine, they shine with five lights.

From what did it shine?

From one path, hidden and secret, that *Abba* cleaves to, as it says [Job 28:7]: *no bird of prey knows the path to it.*

How the male embraces the female, she conceives, gives birth, bringing forth five lights.

And from these five lights are engraved fifty gates of many lights.

They are fifty, for the forty-nine aspects of pure and forty-nine aspects of impure,²⁷ in the Torah, One remaining, that illuminates all, and *Abba* is contingent on it.

When they combine as one, they are settled in the King, and are called the King's lips.

Because of this, he decrees words of truth.

The mouth, its opening is contingent on them.

What is the mouth? Rather, *Da'at* is hidden in the mouth of the King, which is called *Tiferet*.

The extension of *Tiferet*, that unifies all the treasures and all of the colors, as it is written [Prov. 24:4]: *By Da'at are its rooms filled . . .*

This *Da'at* is hidden in the mouth of the King.

And it fills all the threshing floors and storehouses.

When its light is aroused and goes out, then it is called the mouth of YHVH.

The lips, which are the two lights of *Abba* and *Imma*, at the hour that they are aroused with that shining of *Da'at*, unite as one, and the words are decreed²⁸ in truth, with *Hokhmah* and *Tevunah* and *Da'at*.

Therefore, all of the words of the Blessed Holy One are decreed in these.

These three shine and enter within and are crowned as one.

When they unite with one crown, they are called [Songs 5:16] *His palate is delightful*.

This is called the palate of the King, the sweetness of the King, of which it says [Ps. 34: 9] *Taste and see that YHVH is good*.

And from this palate hang all of the princes and officers of the Kings [Ps. 33:6] *and with the Ruah of his mouth all of their hosts*.

In this palate is found the wholeness of all.

Therefore, all the letters that are in this place appear whole.

אֱהָיָה א [ע"הא].

A [א] the shining of *Attika Kadisha*, the most hidden.

ה [ה] the shining of Wisdom, which is not present or perceived, as it says [Prov. 28:13] *no man knows its limit*.

ח [ח] the light of *Imma*, the light that issues forth, watering everything, suckling the young, until it reaches that apex and fills the *Zaddik*, which is suffused in the lower *Nukvah* and is blessed by it, and they are inseparable.

White in red, as it says [Songs 4:6] *the mountain of myrrh, the hill of frankincense*.

'A (ע) the shining of the seventy faces²⁹ that follow that *Ruah* that goes out from the mouth, like the seventy names of the Blessed Holy One.

According to the land [Gen. 46:27]: *All the souls from the house of Jacob that came to Egypt were seventy*.

For Jacob was the land's tree, seventy souls, seventy branches.

From these letters, shine four others.

From one shines gimel [ג], which is the good reward for the righteous, which is called fate,³⁰ so it is written [Isa. 58:14]: *Then you will rejoice in YHVH*.

From ה shines yod [י], which is wisdom; everything is shut up in yod, which is the hiddenness of all the aspects, and therefore it is absent, as it says [Job 28:13]: *you will not find it in the land of the living*.

From ח shines out kaf [כ], which is the shining and drawing forth, emptying out of *Imma* to the place that is called the horn, the horn of the Jubilee.

This is the kingdom of David.

Therefore, there is no drawing forth, but for the secret of kaf.

K[כ] from ayin [ע] comes kof [כ], as *ayin* is seventy, so kof is one hundred, for they are the completion, and so it is, therefore, that in this palate is found the wholeness of everything.

Whoever knows this secret and is careful of it, happy is his portion!

The body of the King is the extension of *Tiferet*, in which all the colors are united.

The King's arms are the shining of *Hesed* and *Gevurah*.

Therefore, they are right and left.

His solar plexus set forth in *Da'at*, rising to the head, set forth and extended within, into the body.

The thighs are united in two lights, which are really two lights.

The thighs and the two kidneys. All are united in one place, where all of the flow is gathered, all of the flow of the body.

All of these flows preside in that place which is called foundation [*yesod*] of the world.

Foundation, from the place that is called world.

These are *Nezakh* and *Hod*, therefore YHVH of hosts, his blessed name, blessed is his glorious name forever and ever.

All of these *tiqqunim* come to unify in one, until all of the holy flow is received by this *Yesod*, which pours it onto *Nukvah*, who is blessed by it.

In the hour that the lower *dinnim* are set forth, when they are set forth below, then they are set forth above, and all the *tiqqunim* of the King, in joy and wholeness, which are the Holy Name, everything is one.

And when the *dinnim* are not set forth below, so to speak, thus it is above, for all of the *tiqqunim* are not arranged thus, for the mother has stolen away from the children, and the children do not suckle, for *Yesod* is not emanating onto *Nukvah*, and all of the *dinnim* are aroused, and the great serpent rules, so to speak.

The *tiqqunim* of the King have withdrawn because of the *Din*.

As this feminine has not been blessed, the *Zaddik* does not receive it.

The great serpent rules.

Woe to the world that suckles from it!

R. Eliezer said: All of these *tiqqunim*, Father revealed them, so that he should not go in disgrace into the world to come. But why must they be revealed now?

R. Abba said to him, This is what I have transcribed from the holy spark. I said it for the fellowship, who do not know these things and yet must know them, as it is written [Exod. 10:2]: *you will know that I am YHVH*, and [Exod. 29:46]: *they will know that I am YHVH*.

In order to settle these words in our hearts; from now on, these things will be sealed thus. Happy is their portion in this world and the next for until now the holy spark was crowned in these words. Come and see! I saw him in a dream, and I asked before R. Shim'on, did I not learn before him, that the Y[ח] is Wisdom [*Hokhmah*]? It is truly thus! H [ח], why is it Understanding [*Binah*]?

He said to me: Come see, is it not written [Gen. 2:10] *A river issued from Eden to water the Garden?*

What is this river³¹ that issues from Eden? This is Understanding.

Therefore, that river has Y [ʔ] sealed up within it.

And *Yu*^ד, its light extends through all of the aspects.

and this is dalet [ד] after which a child goes out from beneath, which is vav [ו], which is, in this way, hey [ה].

In this way it is YH.

After the birth and emergence of this child, it stands before them as YH^וV, for V [ו] stands before them.

Therefore we learn in our Mishnah that hey was first dalet.

When the male linked to her, she was impregnated by one son and was called hey.

Afterward, she gave birth and brought out one son, vav and hey stood before her.

Of this it says, *a river flowed out from Eden, truly from it to water the garden and to suckle it.*

I seized his hand and he kissed my hand, in that suffusion, I stirred, wept, and laughed.

Three days passed, and I ate nothing, one from joy, and one because I never was worthy to see him again. Nonetheless, I always cleaved to him, wherever he walked illuminated me. I see his form aroused before me.

Happy are the righteous in this world and the next, of them it is written

[Ps. 140:14]: *So the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will dwell in your presence!*

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1. The *Zohar* and Its Commentators

1. The movement of theosophical Kabbalah in Provence, Gerona, and the Middle East included Isaac the Blind, Ezra and Azriel of Gerona, Moshe de Borgos, Todros Abulafia, the brothers Jacob and Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen de Soria, Isaac ben Samuel of Acre, Jacob ben Sheshet, Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, Joseph Gikatilla, Shem Tov ibn Gaon, and Moshe de Leon. The antiphilosophical element in the Kabbalah associated with Shem Tov ben Shem Tov and his *Sefer ha-Emunot*, the anonymous *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, as well as the *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *Sefer ha-Peliab*. Much of kabbalistic literature was presented in the conventional literary forms of the Middle Ages: scriptural commentaries, books of commandments, and didactic works such as Joseph Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orab* and Joseph of Hamadan's *Ta'amei ha-Mizvor*. Important studies of this period include Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Jewish Publication Society and Princeton University Press, 1987); and Joseph Dan and Ron Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah* (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989).

2. Boaz Huss, "Ketem Paz: The Kabbalistic Doctrine of Rabbi Simeon Lavi in His Commentary to the *Zohar*" (Hebrew) (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1992), p. 76.

3. Such was the opinion of Avraham Zakhut (*Sefer ha-Yohasin*, p. 45) and Meir ibn Gabbai (*Tola'at Ya'akov* 16b). The supreme legal authority, Joseph Karo (*Beit Yosef, Orakh Hayyim* 25), stated: "(In the case of a discrepancy) We find that R. Shimon, in the *Zohar*, writes the opposite of the Talmud's conclusion, while the halakhists only write the Talmud's conclusion, for even if they had known RaSHBY's opinions, they would not have heeded him if he had disagreed with the Talmud." See Huss, "Ketem Paz," p. 78; Jacob Katz, *Halakhah and Kabbalah* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), pp. 34–51; c.f. Isaiah Tishby and Fischel Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, David Goldstein, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 27.

4. Perhaps this is a translation of Nahmanides' euphemism for Kabbalah, *derekh ha-emet*; cf. Yehudah Liebes, "Zohar and Eros" (Hebrew), *Alpayyim* 9 (1994): 88.

5. See Elliot Wolfson, "Biblical Accentuation in a Kabbalistic Key: Mystical Interpretation of the Ta'amim," *Journal of Jewish Liturgy and Music* 21 (1988–1990): 1–15; 22 (1988–1990): 1–13; Yehudah Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1982), pp. 174–175; Yehudah Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 56–57; Huss, "Ketem Paz," pp. 153, 170n; cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash* 101a; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 20b, 39b, 40b, 45a–51b, 104b, 105a, 108a; *Ra'aya Meheimna* III 247b.

6. David Stern, "The Rabbinic Parable and the Narrative of Interpretation," in *The Midrashic Imagination* p. 82. The use of symbols in Kabbalah is addressed in Joseph Dan, "Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah," in *Midrash and Literature*, Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 127–139; Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 7–20; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New*

Perspectives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 173–249; idem. “Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah,” in *Midrash and Literature*, pp. 141–157; Moshe Idel, “Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Mysticism and Language*, Steven Katz, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 42–79; Ronit Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching” (Hebrew) (Ph.D. diss.; Hebrew University, 1988), pp. 33–35; Mikhal Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart: Studies in the Poetics of the *Zohar*’s Author in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*,” in *Massuor: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Thought Presented in Memory of Professor Ephraim Gottlieb* (Hebrew), Amos Goldreich and Mikhal Oron, eds. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1994), pp. 8–13; Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 32–86; Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah,” *Diogenes* 79–80 (1972): 59–80, 164–194; Isaiah Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), pp. 11–22; Elliot Wolfson, “By Way of Truth: Aspects of Naḥmanides’ Kabbalistic Hermeneutic” *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 116–117 n. 43; Elliot Wolfson, “Female Imaging of the Torah: From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol,” in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism, Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, vol. 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 271–307; Elliot Wolfson, “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the *Zohar*,” *Religion* 18 (1988): 311–345; Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 283–285, 298, 356–392.

7. See Gershom Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1933), pp. 185–210.

8. For instance, the section *Ta Hazei* (Come and See) (*Zohar Haddash* 7a; *Zohar I* 256a–262a) was not identified by Scholem or Tishby in their original delineations of the sections, but in his article on the *Zohar* for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Scholem identified it (see also Scholem, *Kabbalah* [New York: New American Library, Meridian, 1978], pp. 217–218). The section exists in its entirety in at least two manuscripts, the one used as the basis for Moshe Cordovero’s *Sefer Or Yaqar* (Jerusalem ed., 3:277) and also MS Vatican 206. In an interesting example of the nuances of the transmission of manuscripts, *Ta Hazei* is, in both cases, included with the composition *Eleh Razin de-Mashkena* (*Zohar II* 159a).

9. Descriptions of the compositions that make up the *Zohar* are found in Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 214–219; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3d ed., rev. (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 159–162; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1–7.

10. Even so pious and unassailably fundamentalist a *Zohar* exegete as R. Yizḥak Eizik Safrin of Komárno considered the *Ra’aya Mebeimna* to be an inspired work of Gaonic origin. Safrin also felt that the author’s poverty and low social status were significant contributing factors in his spiritual position (see *Zohar Hai II* 25a). The text is also quoted by Amos Goldreich in “On the Self-Image of the Author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*,” in *Massuor*, Amos Goldreich and Mikhal Oron, eds. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1994), p. 481.

11. See Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 703–714.

12. *Zohar Haddash* 41d, 59c–60b; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 1a; see B.T. *Shabbat* 33b, J.T. *Shevi’it* 9:1, *Genesis Rabbah* 79:6, *Esther Rabbah* 3, *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 10:8, *Shoḥet Tov* 17:13.

13. See S. Belkin, “The *Midrash ha-Ne’elam* and Early Alexandrian Midrashim” (Hebrew), *Sura* 3 (1957–1958): 25–92; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Philo and the *Zohar*,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1959): 25–44, 112–135.

14. See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 87; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 159–163; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 214–219; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the*

Zohar, pp. 2, 25–28, 87–96; Elliot Wolfson, introduction to *Sefer ha-Rimmon* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 3–9.

15. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 99–103; Asi Farber, “Traces of the *Zohar* in the Works of R. Joseph Gikatilla” (Hebrew), *Alei Sefer* 9 (1981): 70–83.

16. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 107–108, 133n.

17. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 88.

18. Ephraim Gottlieb, “The *Marnitin* and the *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” in *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature* (Hebrew), Joseph Hacker, ed. (Tel Aviv: Rosenberg, 1976), pp. 163–214; Daniel C. Matt, “The Aura of Secrecy in the *Zohar*,” in *Gershom Scholem’s “Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism” 50 Years After* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), p. 184 n. 16.

19. The *Idra Rabba* (IR) is located at *Zohar III* 127b–145a, and the *Idra Zuta* (IZ) is located at *Zohar III* 287b–296b. Issues in the *Idrot* form the core of two essays by Yehudah Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*” (originally published in 1982 in Hebrew) and “How Was the *Zohar* Written?” which are contained in Liebes’s *Studies in the Zohar*. See also Ronit Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” in *Massuot*, Amos Goldreich and Mikhal Oron, eds. (Jerusalem: Massad Bialik, 1994), pp. 312, 313; and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 371–372, n. 155.

20. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 26, 136; Yehudah Liebes, “On the Image, Writings, and Kabbalah of the Author of *Emek ha-Melekh*” (Hebrew) in *The Kabbalah of the AR^l*, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., Jerusalem, Studies in Jewish Thought 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 101–139; Tishby, in *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 23–29.

21. See Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero* (Hebrew) (Beersheba: Ben Gurion University, 1995), p. 37; Cordovero, *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:23.

22. See Yizhak Baer, “The Historical Context of the *Ra’aya Meheimna*” (Hebrew), *Zion* 5 (1940): 35, 39; Yizhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, Louis Schoffman, trans. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), p. 277; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 59–79; Goldreich, “On the Self-Image,” pp. 439–496; Yehudah Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1982), p. 48; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1973), pp. 11–12, 53, 59, 72, 228, 741–742, 746–747; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1109, 1112.

23. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 85, 97n; Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 232, 248–249. Moshe Idel, in his *Menahem Recanati the Kabbalist* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1998), pp. 101–110, argues persuasively for the importance of this Catalanian mystic as a bridge between the thought of the *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*. Idel has identified a lost commentary to the *Zohar* by Recanati (pp. 68–71) that may have served this purpose. I regret that Idel’s study arrived too late to be further addressed in this book.

24. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 32b, 44b, 89a. See Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 49; cf. Cordovero, *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:15, 2:98–102.

25. Goldreich, “On the Self Image,” pp. 481–486, 491.

26. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 32b, 35b *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 44b–45a. The authenticity of this fragment is questioned by the Gaon of Vilna in his commentary and also by the Muncazer Rav, R. Tsvi Hirsch Shapira, in his commentary *Be’er laHai Ro’i*.

27. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 51, 52, 61n; cf. R. Mordechai Buzaglo, *Ma’ayanot Hokhmah* 1:63–64.

28. Hayyim Vital, *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 72d; see also Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim*, pp. 14, 15.

29. Cf. Gershom Scholem, “Did Moshe de Leon Write the *Zohar*?” (Hebrew), *Madda’ei ha-Yahadut* 1 (1926): 16–21.

30. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 53–54, 91–96; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 168–180.

31. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 86–88, 90–95; see also Matt, “The Aura of Secrecy in the *Zohar*,” in p. 183.

32. These would include R. Isaac and R. Jacob ha-Cohen and their progeny, R. Moshe de Borgos, and Gerona kabbalists such as Nahmanides, R. Ezra, R. Azriel, R. Jacob ben Sheshet, and R. Asher ben David. Cf. Mikhal Oron, “Paths to the Doctrine of the Soul and Reincarnation in Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah and the Works of R. Todros ha-Levi Abulafia” (Hebrew), in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, Sara Heller-Willensky and Moshe Idel, eds. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), p. 278.

33. Similarly, later Lurianic theory is the act of reconciling the chronologically developed ideas of Isaac Luria and his disciples.

34. As in Avraham Azulai’s well-known thesis that the material was compiled only in the Gaonic period (*Or ha-Hammah* 2b).

35. On the doctrine of the worlds, see Gershom Scholem, “The Development of the Tradition of the Worlds” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 2 (1931): 415–442; 3 (1932): 33–66; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 54–57.

36. Zeviya Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” in *The Kabbalah of the AR”I*, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), pp. 377–378, on Cordovero’s *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 3c, 8c, 9b, 18d, 20b, 23d, 24a, 33a, 44c, 46d, 77b.

37. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” pp. 377–379; see also Israel Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” *Temirin* 1 (1982): 123–167.

38. This has been pointed out by Ronit Meroz: “Certainly Luria is conscious of the full meaning of the premise of the kabbalistic symbol, in that it differs from allegory [*mashal*]. Images that are used as symbols, as opposed to images that are used as mere allegories, have to be reconciled with one another in their minutiae, for otherwise the forces being symbolized would not be reconciled with one another” (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 157).

39. For example, the founder of Ḥasidism, Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov, composed a famous account of his own ascent to Heaven and interview with the Messiah. This text has been minutely, symbolically reinterpreted by the contemporary kabbalist Yizḥak Ginzburg in ways that totally alter and recast the original meaning. See his *Sod ha-Shem le-Yireyav* (Jerusalem: 1985), pp. 362–370.

40. Daniel Chanan Matt presents a faithful rendering of the integrity of the *Zohar*’s phrasing in his free-verse translations in *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983). He preserves the inner structure of every trope, as opposed to the greater use of paraphrase by Scholem, Sperling, Tishby, and David Goldstein.

41. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 380.

42. *Zohar* lexicons include those of Moshe Cordovero, *Sha’ar Erkei Kinnuyim*, in his *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* (Munkács 1872); Jacob Zvi Yellish, *Kehillat Ya’aqov* (Lemberg 1870); Aaron Meyer Altshuler, *Kelalei Hatḥalat ha-Ḥokhmah* (Warsaw, 1893); Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*; and Elyahu Peretz, *Ma’alot ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University 1987). Important lexicons still in manuscript include the listings of R. Moshe Zakhrut (MS Cincinnati 538) and a very old, anonymous collection (Jerusalem: National Library 4’80, referred to in Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, p. 162). A lexicon of difficult terms has been attributed to Shim’on Lavi (MS Jerusalem National Library 4080). Although it is not a symbolic lexicon, it is nonetheless important for understanding the *Zohar*’s peculiar Aramaicisms (Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 16–20, 31; see n. 191, below). The aforementioned *Kehillat Ya’aqov* is influenced by Lurianic ideas, as is the lexicon compiled by

R. Ya'akov Z'emakh (published in Koretz (in 1652). Cf. Gershom Scholem, "On the Biography and Literary Activity of the Kabbalist R. Ya'akov Z'emakh" (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 26 (1950): 193n; David Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and Italy* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Reuven Moss, 1973), pp. 154–155; David Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1981).

43. Oron, "Place Me for a Sign," p. 3n; Yehudah Liebes, "The Messiah of the *Zohar*" (Hebrew), *Ha-Ra'ayan ha-Masbihi be-Yisrael* (1982): 103–104.

44. See Yehudah Liebes, "Two Young Roes of a Doe" (Hebrew), in *The Kabbalah of the AR"l*, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), p. 149.

45. Rubin, "The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul," p. 369; Liebes, "The Messiah of the *Zohar*" (Hebrew), pp. 105–119.

46. *Zohar I* 6a–7a, 9a.; See Oron, "Place Me for a Sign," p. 5n.

47. See Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, *Likkutei ha-GR" A* 39b.

48. This account is, however, addressed by the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna* (see *Zohar I* 26a–b) and in the *Heikhalot* texts (*Zohar II* 254b); see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 69–71.

49. Three exceptions are Shalom Buzaglo's *Sefer Mikdash Melekh* (Amsterdam, 1766); Zvi Hirsch Horovitz's *Aspaqlaria ha-Meirah* (Firode, 1732); and Reuven Margoliot's contemporary annotations to the *Zohar*, *Nizuzei ha-Zohar*, which is found in the mossad ha-Rav Kook editions of the *Zohar*.

50. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 81–105.

51. See Yizhak Izik Haver Wildmann, *Magen ve-Zinah* (B'nei Barak: Nezah 1985); David Luria, *The Antiquity of the Zohar* (Hebrew) (New York: Nezah, 1951).

52. See also Emden, *Zoharei Ya'avev*, Abraham Bick, ed. (Jerusalem: Da'at Torah, 1976). A new edition of Emden's *Mitpahat Sefarim* was published in Jerusalem in 1995.

53. Rubin, "The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul" pp. 370, 379, 381.

54. See also Rashi's commentary to Songs 2:9.

55. Hebrew *rosh amanah*, after Songs 4:8.

56. B.T. *Eruvin* 21b.

57. Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 23:11. This interpretation is echoed, with some embellishment from the Lurianic Kabbalah, by Jacob Zvi Yellish, *Kehillat Ya'aqov* 41b.

58. Elijah of Vilna, *Biur le-Ra'aya Meheimna* (reprint, Jerusalem: Makor 1975), 17b.

59. The strongest treatment of the nuances of the *Zohar's* canonicity is that of Boaz Huss, "Sefer ha-Zohar as a Canonical, Sacred, and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* (1998): 207–257; Huss, "Ketem Paz," p. 89.

60. The printed version is found in *Ez Hayyim* 2, p. 413 (119a in the Warsaw ed.). This translation follows the manuscript edition (New York: Columbia MSS. X 893 and M 6862), published by Ronit Meroz ("Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," p. 169, cf. p. 79). See also Ya'akov Z'emakh's introduction to *Kol Ramah*, in Scholem, "On the Biography of R. Ya'akov Z'emakh," p. 194. This view is echoed in Vital's introduction to *Ez Hayyim* and in *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, which deprecate forms of Kabbalah "built upon the human intellect" (Hayyim Vital, introduction to *Ez Hayyim*, Jerusalem, 1910, ed., p. 8); cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 269; Ronit Meroz, "R. Avraham Azulai's *Or ha-Gannuz*" (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 60 (1985): 317–318; Ronit Meroz, "The AR"l's Homily in Jerusalem and the *Kavvanot* of Eating, from the *Likkutim* of Ephraim Panzeiri (Hebrew) Lurianic Kabbalah, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 8 (1992): 224.

61. Isaiah Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah and Its Branches*, vol. 1 (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Manges, 1982), p. 177.

62. Vital, introduction to *Ez Ḥayyim* (Warsaw ed.), p. 8.

63. Introduction to Zëmakh's 'Edut le-Ya'akov, brought in Yosef Avivi, *Binyan Ariel* (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 1987), p. 65. See also Zëmakh's *Nagid u-Mizaveh* (Premishla, 1880), p. 4. *Brit Menuḥa* was also important in the circles of Yisrael Sarug; see Ronit Meroz, "An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Raba* by a Member of the Sarug School," *Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*, Joseph Dan and Rachel Elior, eds. Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 12 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), p. 335.

64. Jeremy Zwelling, *Sefer Tashak* (Ph. D. diss., Brandeis University, 1975); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 103–110; Moshe Idel, "Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid's Translation of the *Zohar* and His Lexicon" (Hebrew), *Alfei Sefer* 8 (1980): 61.

65. Edited by Daniel Chanan Matt (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 128.

66. According to Yehudah Liebes, Angelet wrote *Zohar Ḥadash* 29a–d, which parallels *Livnat ha-Sappir* 55c–56d, 98b. All of these texts (including *Or Yaqar* 3:18, Angelet's *Kuppah ha-Rokhelin*, p. 154, and *Ra'aya Meheimna* 252a) posit the messianic redemption as coming in 1328, which is also mentioned in *Tiqqunei Zohar Ḥadash* 102c (a gloss of *Livnat ha-Sappir* 98b–c). According to Liebes, Angelet also composed *Zohar Ḥadash Ki Tissa* (cf. *Livnat ha-Sappir* 86d–88a; *Zohar II* 276a–277a) and the commentary on Psalm 133 in *Zohar Ḥadash* 42b, (Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 86, 224 no. 298; Liebes, "On the Image," p. 131 n. 31).

67. Liebes, "On the Image," pp. 115–137.

68. Included in *Yalkut ha-Ro'im* (Jerusalem: Levin Epstein, 1973).

69. See Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and Italy*, pp. 69–80; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, pp. 12, 52–69; Zeev Gries, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae): Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Ḥasidism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1989), p. 32.

70. Liebes, "On the Image," 121 n. 163; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 34–54.

71. See Gershon Scholem, "A Charter of the Students of the AR" I" (Hebrew) *Tziyyon* 5 (1940): 133–160.

72. See Cordovero's *Sefer Gerushim* (Jerusalem 1962) for accounts of these practices. See also Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 49, 198; Bracha Sack, "The RaMaK and the AR" I," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992): 312; Bracha Sack, "Exile and Redemption in R. Shlomo ha-Levi Alkabetz's *Berit ha-Levi*" (Hebrew), *Eshel Beer Sheva' 2* (1980): 268; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and Italy*, p. 96. On the subject of grave site prostration, see Pinchas Giller, "Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee: The Veneration of Sacred Relics in the Classical Kabbalah," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1995): 156–166; Boaz Huss, "The Hidden Light in R. Shim'on Lavi's *Ketem Paz*, in Comparison to the Lurianic Doctrine of *Zimzum*" in *Lurancic Kabbalah*, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), p. 354.

73. See *Zohar I* 181a; Cordovero, *Sefer Or Yaqar* 4:147–160, 6:58; Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 1:77b–88b, 2:41b; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 44; Sack, "The RaMaK and the AR" I," p. 334; Bracha Sack, "The Influence of R. Avraham Galante's Teachers on His Commentaries" (Hebrew), in *Misgav Yerushalayim Studies in Jewish Literature*, Ephraim Ḥazan, ed. (Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Sephardic and Eastern Judaism, 1987), p. 69; Elliot Wolfson, *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 91; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and Italy*, pp. 95–100.

74. See Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 7–90.

75. Gershom Scholem, “Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR”I?” (Hebrew) *Tziyyon* 5 (1940): 214–243; Liebes, “Two Young Roes” p. 148n.

76. *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:24. On the messianic dimension of Cordovero’s mystique, see Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 36–38. On the effects of the Inquisition, see Sack, “The Influence of R. Avraham Galante’s Teachers,” p. 69.

77. Such is the case with the large *drush* on the soul in *Or Yaqar* 21:10–12.

78. Sack, “The RaMaK and the AR”I,” p. 337; Bracha Sack, “The Exile of Israel and the Exile of the *Shekhinah* in R. Moshe Cordovero’s *Or Yaqar*” 157. *Or Yaqar* was published in Jerusalem in 1972–1990. It includes the original text of *Shi’ur Qomah*, which had been published in Warsaw in 1883. *Tefillah le-Moshe* was published in Premishla in 1892. *Elimah Rabbati* was published in Hebron in 1879, and in Lvov in 1881. *Or Ne’erav* has recently been translated into English by Ira Robinson, as *Moshe Cordovero’s Introduction to Kabbalah: An Annotated Translation of His Or Ne-erav* [New York: Yeshivah University Press, 1994].

79. See *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:23a; Bracha Sack, “Three Dates of Redemption in R. Moshe Cordovero’s *Or Yaqar*” (Hebrew), in *Meshihiut ve-Eschatologia* (Hebrew), Z. Baras Beres, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1984), p. 392.

80. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef Ibn Tabul,” p. 377, on *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 3c, 8c, 9b, 18d, 20b, 23d, 24a, 33a, 44c, 46d, 77b.

81. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 401. See also Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” p. 95n; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 37–38; cf. *Or Yaqar, Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:15a.

82. *Or Yaqar* 21:28.

83. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 29b–30a; see also *Or Yaqar* 21:7.

84. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 13–20, 56.

85. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 28a, 29b. The progression from the Maimonidean notion of the divine attributes to the sefirotic *kinnuyim* is the subject of Moshe Idel’s “Divine Attributes and *Sefirot* in Jewish Theology,” *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Hebrew), Sara O. Heller Willensky and Moshe Idel, eds., Jerusalem: Magnes 1989, and is also addressed in Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), pp. 286–294.

86. Moshe Idel defined *azmut* as the essentialist view, while the principle of *kelim* is the instrumentalist view. See his *Kabbalah*, pp. 136–144; see also Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, p. 287.

87. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 193–194; Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 144–146, 185, 210n.

88. *Azmut*, the idea that *Ein Sof* was essential to the sefirotic structure, was the view of Nahmanides, Isaac the Blind, Meir ibn Gabbai, Yosef Karo, Moshe de Leon, and the anonymous author of *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut*, as well as its commentary by Reuven Zarfati. The *kelim* approach was adopted by the author of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra’aya Meheimna*, Asher ben David, Ezra of Gerona, and Menahem Recanati. Shlomo ha-Levi Alkabetz and Moshe Cordovero synthesized these various views. The Alkabetz commentary on the Song of Songs, *Ayelet Ahuvim*, deals with these issues in particular.

89. Cf. *Elimah Rabbati* 2a.

90. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 26a. See Cordovero’s commentary to the *IZ* in *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* and also in the *Or Yaqar*. *Zohar* III 255a. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 76a, commenting on the *Zohar* (II 239a), seems to indicate that *Keter* is the primordial *Ein Sof*.

91. *Elimah Rabbati* 101a.

92. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 25a, 26a; cf. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 26a.

93. See Sack, “The Influence of R. Avraham Galante’s Teachers on His Commentaries,” pp. 61–86.

94. Ar”I is an acronym for *Adoneynu* (Our Master) Rabbi Isaac.

95. Meir Benayahu, *Toldot ha-AR”I* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben Zevi, 1967), pp. 153–155.

96. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 1.

97. In this time, Luria clearly internalized the ideas of the *Zohar*, the *Bahir*, the Neoplatonic ideas of the Provence kabbalists, including R. Avraham ben Yizhak of Narbonne, R. Avraham ben David of Posquieres, R. Jacob the Nazir of Lunil, R. Isaac the Blind, and the *Iyyun* circle, as well as the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* and the Gerona kabbalists (Naḥmanides, R. Jacob ben Sheshet, and Ezra and Azriel of Gerona). Luria’s early commentary on *Zohar Ruth* shows the influence of the Gnostic kabbalist R. Isaac ha-Cohen. See Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 10–11, 132–142; Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 325; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, pp. 70–85.

98. The main source on grave site prostration from Luria’s own hand is published in Vital’s *Sha’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh* Tel Aviv, 1961, 108–110.

99. See also *ShMR*, p. 186.

100. Ronit Meroz, “. . . from the *Likkutim* of Ephraim Panzeiri,” p. 212. See Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” pp. 113–169. Aspects of Luria’s final address are discussed in Vital’s *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot*, pp. 187–191.

101. Cf. Mordekhai Pachter, “The Image of the AR”I in R. Shmuel Ozeidah’s Eulogy” (Hebrew), *Ziyyon* 37 (1972): 22–40; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, pp. 107–118.

102. Soon after meeting Luria, Vital claimed, “My hand never strayed from his for even a moment.” See Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 2, citing Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot, Ez Ḥayyim* 20b; Scholem, “A Charter of the Students of the AR”I,” pp. 133–160; Israel Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 124.

103. Complex as it is, Luria’s canon has been subjected to taxonomical considerations by a number of scholars. Gershom Scholem made an important initial assessment, finding the extant texts in the canon that actually originated from Luria’s own hand. See Gershom Scholem, “The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings” (Hebrew), *Qiryat Sefer* 19 (1942–1943): 184–199. Meroz (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 75–78) has listed all of the texts by Luria in their various compilations, including thirteen articles found only in manuscript. More recently, Ronit Meroz and Yosef Avivi of the Hebrew University have independently arrived at taxonomies of the transmission of Luria’s ideas. Avivi and Meroz have each provided a comprehensive listing of all the extant texts by Luria himself. In their extensive bibliographies, they have built upon Scholem’s initial conclusions. These theories overlap and complement one another, yet are distinct in certain philosophical ways.

Avivi’s *Binyan Ariel* presents an archeology of the Lurianic oeuvre, which he then reconstructs in its original form. After giving the Lurianic bibliography, similar in many respects to that of Meroz, Avivi posits eight stages in the unfolding of the Lurianic doctrine.

Meroz provides a review of her differences with Avivi in her thesis (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 371–382). Meroz’s essential premise is psychohistorical; she contends that the evolution of Luria’s teaching took place in his own mind and paralleled the vicissitudes of his short and tragic life. It is Meroz’s contention that there are five stages in the development of the canon, corresponding to the development of Luria’s thought. Meroz’s first stages parallel the first teachings reconstructed according to Avivi, though Meroz is critical of Avivi’s lack of distinction between these two first levels (p. 378). See also Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 317.

Quotations from Vital’s rendition of the Lurianic canon, the *Shemoneh Sha’arim* (Eight Gates) and the *Ez Ḥayyim* (Tree of Life), are from the comprehensive edition of Yehudah

Ashlag (Tel Aviv, 1961), with the exception of various individual texts not included therein, which will be identified by separate bibliographical data.

104. See Luria on *Zohar II* 165a, *III* 65a, 290b; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 17. Meroz speculates that Luria might not have seen *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* before he arrived in Safed and therefore concentrated mainly on *Elimah Rabbati*. See Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 131; Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 325; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, pp. 79–85.

105. Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 192. This literature is beautifully represented in Gries, *Conduct Literature*.

106. Notably the article *Kodem ha-Azilot* (Before the Emanation), published in Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 327–330.

107. Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 324–325; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 26, 95–127. Cf. Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” p. 125; see also Benyahu, *Toldot ha-AR”I*, p. 199.

108. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 23, 25, 101, 108.

109. *Zohar III* 135b; cf. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 26.

110. See Lawrence Fine, “The Contemplative Practice of Yihudim in Lurianic Kabbalah,” in *Jewish Spirituality II*, Arthur Green, ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1987), pp. 64–98.

111. See Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 177–268.

112. See Vital’s *Book of Visions* (Jerusalem: Yashlim 1954), p. 57; see also Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 178, 203; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 49–51; Meroz, “R. Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz*” p. 321.

113. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 63–64; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 187.

114. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 49–51; Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Z̄emakh,” p. 187; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, p. 12.

115. On R. Ya’akov Z̄emakh’s *converso* origins, see Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Z̄emakh,” pp. 185–187. The widely circulated chart of the *Ilan ha-Parzufim* (Tree of Countenances) probably originates with Z̄emakh (cf. Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Z̄emakh,” p. 190).

116. See R. Shimshon Beck’s widely reprinted letter, cited by Scholem, “A Charter of the Students of the AR”I” p. 156; see also Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 177; Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef Ibn Tabul,” p. 366n.

117. *Emek ha-Melekh* 6b; cf. Liebes, “On the Image,” p. 103; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 131.

118. *Emek ha-Melekh* 6b, brought in Tishby in *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 179 n. 3.

119. Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 262.

120. See examples in Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 366.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 370. See Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 86, 97n; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 79–169. The irrelevance of most earlier *kabbalah* is spelled out in Luria’s homily “*Naḥmanides and His Companions*.” *Ez Ḥayyim II* 413b–c.

122. See above, n. 103.

123. Ephraim Panzeiri, *Sefer ha-Drushim* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1996), pp. 210–226; also in Shalom Buzaglo, *Hod Melekh* (London, 1766).

124. Scholem, “The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” pp. 187–190; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 19; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 30; Panzeiri, *Sefer ha-Drushim*, pp. 237–267.

125. *ShMR*, p. 235.

126. MS OR. 9167/1, British Museum, London.

127. Scholem may have been predisposed toward de Lonzano by virtue of his having obtained a number of autograph manuscripts. He praised de Lonzano's emendations to the Mantua edition of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, maintaining that they were "valuable beyond evaluation (*Kabbalistic Manuscripts Found in the National and University Library in Jerusalem* [Hebrew] [Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1930], p. 38. Moreover, three volumes of the Mantua edition of the *Zohar* in Scholem's private collection were the personal copies of de Lonzano and contain extensive marginal notes.

128. Paper presented at the Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, Mass., December 16, 1996. In comparing Luria's *Idra* commentaries in the *Sefer ha-Drushim* with the classical *SdZ* commentary, Menahem Kallus has noted a number of areas of overlap between the various sections. See M. Kallus, "The Relationship of the Baal Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 2 [1997]: 151–168; Yehudah Liebes, "Mythos as Opposed to Symbol in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah" (Hebrew), *Eshel Beer Sheva'* (1996): p. 205.

129. *ShMR*, p. 211.

130. *ShMR*, p. 248; *Mavo She'arim*, pp. 10–20.

131. *ShMR*, pp. 226, 256–257.

132. *ShMR*, pp. 106, 195, 196, 238–239; cf. *IZ* 288b; *IR* 129a.

133. These styles have been described in Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 17–23, 85–88, 94, 102–108.

134. As was R. Yosef ibn Tabul; see Rubin, "The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul," pp. 382–383.

135. Scholem, "Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR?" p. 215.

136. Two homilies indicate that Vital wrote them down when he heard them from Luria; cf. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 20, 86–88. Scholem was stunned to obtain a clear version of the first edition ("The AR?"'s Actual Kabbalistic Writings," p. 186). Avivi (*Binyan Ariel*, p. 26) has revealed the existence of a copy of the first edition of Vital's *Ez Hayyim*, arguably the earliest recension, the first half of which is in an unidentified library in Jerusalem, the second half in Tiberias. The existence of these texts has also been confirmed to me by Ronit Meroz.

137. Avivi and Meroz differ regarding the primacy of the material in the section *Mavo She'arim*. Meroz assigns it to the last stages of the development of the bibliography and see it as a departure, on the part of Vital, from the conclusions of Luria's thought (Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," p. 380). Avivi sees the material as the true Lurianic doctrine, which Vital did not reveal before or after the composition of *Mavo She'arim* (Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 46, 256).

138. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 46, 50, 52.

139. It has been published in the Amsterdam edition of Azulai's *Hesed le-Avraham* (pp. 22–28), in Shmuel Vital's *Sha'ar Ma'amarei RaZ*'L (Ashlag ed.), pp. 7b–10b, and in the recent *Ketavim Hadashim me-Rabbeinu Hayyim Vital* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1988), pp. 32–47.

140. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 17, 56–57, 96, 98.

141. See below, pp. 144–152.

142. *ShMR*, pp. 235–288, especially p. 258.

143. "I heard the doctrine of the countenances *Abba* and *Imma* in two ways from my teacher, and I don't recall how to reconcile them" (*ShMR*, p. 182; p. 252).

144. Avivi (*Binyan Ariel*, p. 46) dates the composition of the *genizah* material and *Mavo She'arim* to before 1598. See also Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 257.

145. See Avraham Azulai, *Or ha-Hammah* 2a; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 56; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 52; Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” pp. 191–192. Meroz considers the best extant source of *genizah* material to be the *Ez. Hayyim* manuscript Codex Amsterdam 47825.

146. Regarding the use of the term “Rav” to indicate Luria, see Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily,” p. 212.

147. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 56, first published by Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” pp. 191–192.

148. According to Meroz (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 72), these are hard to date, being scattered between *Or ha-Hammah* and *Or ha-Gannuz*.

149. See Meroz, “R. Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz*,” pp. 310–324.

150. Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” p. 192, identifies the original *Zohar ha-Raki’a* with the printed edition; this is contradicted and clarified in Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 197 n. 21; cf. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 52–54, 62; Meroz “R. Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz*,” p. 312. Ya’akov Zemakh’s *Zohar ha-Raki’a* is extant in manuscript—for instance, Kaufman A210 (no. 14698), and 538 (no. 19467). The material in the published *Zohar ha-Raki’a* on *Zohar I* 217–226, as well as the *Sabba de-Mishpatim* commentary, is interspersed with material from Vital and later students such as Zemakh and Natan Neta’ Shapira. In addition, the circumstances surrounding its rescue from the *genizah* confused the text’s coherency (Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 75–78). Meroz has located a significant fragment, from the seventeenth or eighteenth century, of Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz* in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary; see Meroz, “Avraham Azulai’s *Sefer Or ha-Gannuz*,” pp. 310–324. The three best versions are JTS 2155/1, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York; MS 11253, National Library of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; and a fragment, MS 799 (HU, no. 5778), British Museum, London.

151. Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” pp. 190–191.

152. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 53, 70.

153. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 69, 74.

154. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 27; Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 364. The contents of *ShMR* are detailed in Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 37. Meir Poppers’s first edition of *Nof Ez Hayyim* also isolated the *Zohar* commentaries into one section at the beginning (Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 446; Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” pp. 363–387; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 66–67).

155. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 364.

156. For instance, *Drush Hefzi Bah*, which is published in *Simhat Kohen* by Masoud Alhadad (Jerusalem, 1921), pp. 1–20. Other examples include *Zohar ha-Raki’a*, pp. 25–33, the commentary on 1:51b, “The Forty-five Weapons . . .,” as well as the commentary to Exodus 21:2 in *Sefer ha-Likkutim*. Other important texts exist only in manuscript; for instance, *Drush ha-Tanimim* (the homily on the sea monsters) is to be found in the manuscript of *Nof Ez Hayyim* (MS 2155, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York; and in MSS Heb 8^o 1588, pp. 1–13 and 8^o 1660, pp. 6–7 Israel National Library. See Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 81–99; Isaiah Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil and the “Kelippah” in Lurianic Kabbalism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), pp. 22–24; Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” pp. 384–385. Rubin presents a full list of Ibn Tabul’s writings (pp. 384–385) and lists his extant *Zohar* commentaries (pp. 367–368). The commentary on a portion of the *IZ* in *Zohar ha-Raki’a* (Munkács 1875), p. 183, also derives from Ibn Tabul (Scholem, “The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” p. 189). A number of Ibn Tabul compositions are included in manuscripts of *Nof Ez Hayyim*, J.T.S. 2155. See also Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 84–85, 88–89.

A large portion of Ibn Tabul's commentary on the *Idrot* was published by Israel Weinstock in 1982 ("R. Yosef ibn Tabul's Commentary on the *Idra*," pp. 124–167). Much of the commentary is reproduced in the published *Zohar ha-Raki'a*, but apparently Ya'akov Z'emakh had already begun the process of obliterating its connection to Ibn Tabul, for all of the references such as "it seems to me, Yosef," in the original have been obliterated (Weinstock, p. 126).

157. Rubin, "The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef Ibn Tabul," pp. 370–381.

158. Most notably, these include *Kanfei Yonah* and the *Sha'ar ha-Kelalim* at the beginning of Meir Poppers's *Ez Hayyim*, which is a paraphrase of the *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot* from Hayyim Vital's first edition.

159. Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," p. 4; see also Scholem, "On the Biography of R. Ya'akov Z'emakh," pp. 185–194.

160. See Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," p. 90. Parallels to *Kanfei Yonah* include the *Sha'ar ha-Kelalim*, which is in the original *Ez Hayyim*, which is itself a paraphrase of the *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot* in the first edition. Meir Benyahu has reviewed the history and extant manuscripts of *Kanfei Yonah* in his "R. Moshe Yonah, Luria's Student and the First to Record His Teaching" (Hebrew), in *Sefer Zikkaron le-Rav Nissim*, (Jerusalem: Yad ha-Rav Nissim, 1985), vol. 4, pp. 7–74. The work has been reprinted: *Sefer Kanfei Yonah* (Jerusalem: Benei Yisasskhar, 1998).

161. The recent publication of Panzeiri's *Sefer ha-Drushim* has provided a version of the earliest Lurianic teaching that is perhaps superior to the reconstituted texts in Avivi's *Binyan Ariel*. Certainly the edition of Luria's commentary to the *SdZ* in the *Sefer ha-Drushim* is "cleaner" than that of *Sha'ar Ma'amarei* or *Zohar ha-Raki'a*.

162. Cf. Meir Benyahu, "The Work *Beit Moed*, an Unknown Edition of *Sefer ha-Kavvanot* according to Binyamin ha-Levi and His Son, Shlomo ha-Levi," (Hebrew) in *Sefer Zikkaron le-Rav Nissim*, vol. 4, pp. 109–154.

163. Panzeiri's own work was called *Galei Amiktab*. See Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 24–25; Meroz, "The AR's Homily," pp. 211–257; Meroz, "Early Lurianic Compositions," p. 312; Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," p. 27; Scholem, "On the Biography of R. Ya'akov Z'emakh," p. 190.

164. Benyahu, "R. Moshe Yonah," p. 22.

165. Scholem, "Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR?" pp. 214–243.

166. A number of studies have argued for the authenticity of Yisrael Sarug's relationship with Luria and the importance of *Kanfei Yonah* as an urtext for the teachings of Vital and Sarug, against Gershom Scholem: Yosef Avivi, "Luria's Writings in Italy to 1620" (Hebrew) *Alei Sefer 11* (1984): 91–134; Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, pp. 190, 205 n. 90; Yehudah Liebes, "On the Image," pp. 101–139; Ronit Meroz, "Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR?" New Research" (Hebrew), *Da'at 28* (1992): 41–56; Ronit Meroz, "Faithful Transmission versus Innovation: Luria and His Disciples," in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After* pp. 257–274; Ronit Meroz, "An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Rabbah* by a Member of the Sarug School" in *Rivka Schutz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume I & II: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 12*: 307–378; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 179 n. 4. See also Boaz Huss, "The Hidden Light . . .": 345. Liebes ("Two Young Roes," p. 129n) mentions Sarug's use of the meditation text *Brit Menuhah* in his commentary to the *SdZ*, published at the end of *Limmudei Azilut* (Munkács 1897).

167. Avivi, "Luria's Writings in Italy to 1620," pp. 107, 115. Sarug's *SdZ* commentary is available in the Mantua Manuscript [74] 124 and was published in Munkács in 1897.

168. Sarug's peculiar language and style rendered the particular Lurianic terminology in figurative and general terms, e.g., Sarug's *malbush* (garment) representing Luria's first vessel; *avir kadmon* (the primordial aether) or representing Luria's second vessel; *she'a'shua*

for *zimzum*; *nekkudah* and *kav* for *iggulim* and *yosher*. Most pivotally, Sarug called the *tehiru* the *hiele*, and he called the *shevirat ha-kelim* the “scattering of the letters.” Except in terminology, Sarug’s understanding of the function of the primordial man is synonymous with Vital’s (Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” pp. 121–122). The *Mahberet ha-Kodesh* of Yisrael Sarug is the same as with Natan Neta’ Shapira’s *Meorot Natan*. See Scholem, “Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR”I?” pp. 214–243; Scholem, “The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” p. 184.

169. Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” p. 122.

170. See, e.g., Meir Poppers’s remarks, upon invoking Sarug, in *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23b: “For R. Ḥayyim Vital commanded, in the introduction to *Ez Ḥayyim*, that we not study the words of any man besides him, and it is a *miqvah* to uphold his words, so in all of my compositions you will not find that I mention any *drush* besides the holy words of R. Ḥayyim, but here I have come to show you that I have said nothing from my own theory, for this is true and correct.”

171. Pico’s original translator was the apostate Samuel be Nissim Abulfaraj, who later changed his name to Raymond Moncada and also styled himself as the Hermeticist Flavius Mithridates.

172. Ibn Tabul also influenced the commentary linked to Sarug, although the former was not the author. See Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Rabbah* by a Member of the Sarug School,” p. 348.

173. See the beginning of Sarug’s commentary on the *SdZ*, in *Sefer Limmudei Azilut* 34a, 36c–d; cf. *Sefer Hatpalat ha-Hokhmah*, MSS Bodleian 1793, p. 135, Bodleian Library, Oxford; *Ḥemdat ha-Yammim 1* (Shabbat) 39c; Yehudah Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1995), pp. 57, 308–309. Another important *Idra* commentary has been published recently by Ronit Meroz. The commentary has three strata of composition: a first level coming directly from the students of Luria, a second level encompassing Sarug’s conclusions, and a third level of extraneous material and glosses (Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Rabbah* by a Member of the Sarug School,” pp. 308, 346, 349).

174. “Before the Emanation” and “A General Introduction to the Secret of Emanation” have been published by Ronit Meroz in “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 327–330. Other early materials are included in *Likkutim Ḥadashim mi-Morenu Ḥayyim Vital* (New Writings from Our Teacher Ḥayyim Vital) (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1988) and *Likkutim Ḥadashim me-ha-AR”I Z”L u-me-Ḥayyim Vital Z”L* (New Gleanings from the AR”I of Blessed Memory and from Ḥayyim Vital of Blessed Memory) (Jerusalem, 1985).

175. Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 255–267.

176. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

177. Abraham Azulai, *Sefer Or ha-Hamah* (Jerusalem, 1876).

178. Galante’s full commentary, *Yerakh Yaqar*, has never been published. See Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” p. 132; Sack, “The Influence of R. Avraham Galante’s Teachers,” p. 61. The best manuscript is JTS 1821 (*Sifriah Leumit* 10919); Jewish Theological Seminary, New York; cf. Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, no. 41.

179. Published, partially, in Premishla in 1899.

180. *Or ha-Gannuz* is mentioned a number of times by Azulai in *Or-ha Ḥammah*. The work has been lost, although a thirty-nine page fragment exists in the Jewish Theological Seminary library, New York (JTS 2155). See Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 49; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 259–260.

181. Meroz, “R. Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz*,” pp. 310–324; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 45; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 258; Scholem, “On the Biography of R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” p. 191.

182. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 38; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 79; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 259 n. 12.

183. Meroz, “R. Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Gannuz*,” pp. 316–324, Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 255–267.

184. Azulai, *Or ha-Hammah*, introduction 2a.

185. Bracha Sack, “On the Sources of R. Avraham Azulai’s *Hesed le-Avraham*” (Hebrew) *Kiryat Sefer* 56 (1981): 164–175.

186. Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, p. 261.

187. Yosef Avivi, *The Kabbalah of the GR”A* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Makhon le-Hoza’at Sifrey ha-GR”A, 1993); Elliot Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Memory, and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics,” in *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*, Steven Kepnes, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1996) pp. 145–180.

188. Boaz Huss has published a number of studies that shed light on this important kabbalist. See his thesis “*Ketem Paz*”; Huss, “The Hidden Light”; Huss, “The Doctrine of the *Sefirot* in R. Shimon Lavi’s *Ketem Paz*,” *Pa’amayim* 43 (1990): 50–51. See also Moshe Halamish, “On the Kabbalists in Morocco,” *Da’at* 16 (1986): 128–129.

189. Moshe Halamish, “The Song ‘Bar Yoḥai,’” in *The Zohar and Its Generation Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989) Jerusalem: Hebrew University; Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 75–76.

190. *Ketem Paz* 1:30a–b, 95a, 271a; Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 16, 75–76.

191. A critical edition was published recently by Boaz Huss, “A Dictionary of Foreign Terms in the *Zohar*,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 1 (1996): 167–204. Cf. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 31–41, 99, 104, 105, 107, 128–129n, 131n, 147.

192. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” 61n; *Ketem Paz* 2:438b.

193. Lavi also cites Shem Tov ibn Gaon, Yehudah ibn Schweib, Yehudah ha-Ḥasid, Yosef ben Shalom Askenazi’s commentary to *Sefer Yeẓirah*, the anonymous *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut* (Mantua, ed.) with the commentaries of Yehudah Ḥayyat and Reuven Zarfati, and the Torah commentary of Menahem Recanati. See Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 8, 53–56, 60, 62n, 63n, 64n, 66n, 268, 271; *Ketem Paz* 1:101b, 137a, 167a–b, 192b, 221a, 2:348b; Ephraim Gottlieb, Joseph Hacker, ed. (Tel Aviv: Rosenberg, 1976), Chapter 5:10, “The Book *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut*,” *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, Joseph Hacker, ed. Tel Aviv: Rosenberg, 1976, pp. 575–578.

194. See Benjamin Richler, “From the Treasures of the Manuscript Institute,” *Kiryat Sefer* 58 (1983): 196–197; Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, pp. 148, 180, 183–184, 286–292; Isaiah Tishby, “Manuscripts of Moshe Loans,” *Sefer Assaf*, Jerusalem 1953, pp. 515–528. See Moshe Idel, “Attributes and Sefirot,” *Studies in Jewish Thought*: 100–106. Isserles also left a commentary to the important kabbalistic work *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut* (Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, p. 92).

195. Opp. 395–397, MS Bodleian 1829, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Isserles’s commentary is worked into *Aderet Eliyahu*, along with a number of other sources, including Cordovero’s *Or Yaqar*. The commentary includes the *parashiot Bereshit* to *Va-Yelakh*, with Elijah’s annotation. In his introduction, Elijah writes that he received Isserles’s commentary from the latter’s brother as a gift for having copied the work *Darkhei Moshe*. Elijah completed *Aderet Eliyahu* in 1629. Elijah also left a commentary on *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* entitled *Zafnat Paneah* (Oxford Bodleian MS 1830–1831; also Moscow, Gunzberg 22).

196. Neubaur no. 1911 (Opp. 519) Bodleian Library, Oxford, is listed as being the work of Avraham ben Simon Heide of Prague. Avraham ben Shimon Heide was, however, not the author but the copyist. The manuscript is lost up to *Zohar I* 25a. Elḥanan Reiner has surmised that Heide copied it out for publication. Cf. Richler, “From the Treasures of the Manuscript Institute,” pp. 196–197.

197. See Yehudah Liebes, “Mysticism and Reality: Towards a Portrait of the Martyr and Kabbalist R. Samson Ostropoler,” in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 221–256.

198. Buzaglo also names Ya’akov Pinto, Yehoshua ha-Kohen, and Ya’akov Gedalyah as influences; see Buzaglo, *Sefer Mikdash Melekh* (Amsterdam, 1766), pp. 2b–3a.

199. Editor’s introduction to Buzaglo, *Sefer Mikdash Melekh*, p. 3a. The B’nei Yisasskhar Institute has begun the publication of an expanded edition of *Mikdash Melekh* based on Buzaglo’s emendations to the first edition; see *Sefer Mikdash Melekh ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: B’nei Yisasskhar, 1998).

200. Editor’s introduction to *Sefer Mikdash Melekh*, pp. 3b–4a.

201. Publication of Zakhut’s full commentary, as excerpted from the *Mikdash Melekh* and a number of manuscripts, has begun; see Moshe Zakhut, *Perush ha-ReMeZ le-Zohar ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Kol Bithah, 1998).

202. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 18, 64; Liebes, “On the Image,” p. 111 n. 83.

203. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 76d, 78b–c.

204. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 92. The *Zohar* commentaries in *Sefer ha-Likkutim* are often summaries of other sources.

205. Editor’s introduction to Buzaglo, *Sefer Mikdash Melekh*, p. 3a.

206. Cf. Yizhak Eizik of Polotsk, introduction to *Be’er Yizhak ‘al Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* (Amsterdam, 1778); Yehudah Petayah, introduction to *Sabba de-mishpatim in Perush Matok le-Nefesh* (Jerusalem 1940); Zevi Elimelekh of Lizensk, *Ateret Zevi* 69b.

207. Editor’s introduction to Buzaglo, *Sefer Mikdash Melekh*, p. 2b; cf. *Hemdat Yamim* 121 (*Shabbat*), 29 (*Pesah*).

208. See the editor’s introduction to Buzaglo, *Sefer Mikdash Melekh ha-Shalem*, vol. 2, pp. 19–33.

209. Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*, pp. 27, 57; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 23.

210. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 366.

211. Ḥayyim of Volozhin described Elijah’s lifestyle in his “Introduction to the Vilna Gaon’s Commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*,” which is reproduced in an appendix to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky’s *Rabbi Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1977). An important work that addresses Lithuanian mystical spirituality is Allan Nadler’s *The Faith of the Mišnagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 29–39.

212. Ḥayyim of Volozhin, “Introduction to the Vilna Gaon’s Commentary to the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*,” p. 1; introduction to Elijah of Vilna, *Yahel Or* (Vilna, 1810).

213. Schneur Zalman of Liadi: *Iggeret, Beit Rabbi* 1:12. See Ḥayyim of Volozhin, *ibid.*, pp. 3–4; Avivi, *The Kabbalah of the GR”A*, pp. 29–31.

2. *Sabba de-Mishpatim*

1. See Saul Lieberman, “Some Aspects of After Life in Early Rabbinic Literature,” in *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature*, Henry A. Fischel, ed. (New York: Ktav, 1977), pp. 387–424. An important recent study of ancient and medieval afterlife traditions is *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* by Simcha Paull Raphael (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1995).

2. See Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 88; Daniel Matt, “Their Teaching: The Technique of New Interpretations in the *Zohar*” (Hebrew), in *The Zohar and Its Generation*, Joseph Dan, ed., *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), pp. 123–

145; Daniel Matt, “The Aura of Secrecy in the *Zohar*,” in *Gershom Scholem’s Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, Peter Schaefer and Joseph Dan, eds. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), p. 183.

3. B.T. *Sanhedrin* 90a.

4. B.T. *Eruvin* 19a, *Sotah* 10b, *Pesahim* 54a, *Babba Meziyah* 85a, *Babba Batra* 74a, *Midrash Psalms* to Ps. 11:6.

5. *Gilgul* is addressed by Gershom Scholem, “The Doctrine of *Gilgul* in the Thirteenth Century” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 16 (1945) : 135–150; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. (New York: Schocken, 1991), pp. 197–250; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 684–698; Ephraim Gottlieb, “The Debate on *Gilgul* in Candia,” in *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature* (Hebrew), Joseph Hacker, ed. (Tel Aviv: Rosenberg, 1976), pp. 370–396; Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily, p. 23; Mikhal Oron, “Lines of Influence in the Doctrine of the Soul and Reincarnation in the Thirteenth Century and in the Writings of R. Todros ha-Levi Abulafia,” in *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Hebrew), Sara Heller-Willensky and Moshe Idel, eds. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), pp. 277–290; Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart.”

6. See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, Margoliot ed. (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1974), nos. 22, 23, 58, 121–122, 154–156, 174, 195. Cf. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 200–203, 207–209, 219–221; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 188–198.

7. The terms *ibbur* and *gilgul* were first employed by the Gerona kabbalist Todros Abulafia (Oron, “Lines of Influence,” p. 286; Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, p. 295).

8. *Beliefs and Opinions* 6:3; see also Abraham ibn Ezra, *Commentary to the Torah*, Exod. 23:25. The idea of the tripartite soul has philosophical antecedents. The Platonic understanding of the soul divided human impulses between the paradigms of intellect, strife, and lust, while Aristotelean thought posited the existence of the intellectual, animal, and vegetative soul, which provided a model for Maimonides’ conception of the intellectual soul (*nefesh ha-sikkliit*) (*Guide of the Perplexed* 1:68).

9. Mikhal Oron (“Lines of Influence,” pp. 278–284) cites R. Ezra (*Commentary to the Aggadat*, MS Vatican 294, 48b), R. Ya’akov ben Sheshet, and the brothers Cohen and Joseph Gikatilla. Nahmanides understood the soul as having two aspects, the living soul and the transcendent soul. The latter is called the *neshamah* and has its origin in the divine (*Commentary to the Torah*, Gen. 2:7; cf. *Zohar I* 12b). Cf. Moshe Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:1.

10. Plural, *neshamot*.

11. *Zohar I* 13a, 80b, 205b–206a; Moshe Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:1; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 793; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 235–237.

12. *Zohar I* 100a, *III* 25a, 70a; *Zohar Hadash* 18a.

13. *Zohar I* 12b–20a, 103b, *II* 156b–157a; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 682–683, 692–698.

14. The *Zohar* follows Nahmanides and Isaac the Blind with regard to the *neshamah* originating in the upper *sefirot*, although Moshe de Leon’s *Shekel ha-Qodesh* (A. W. Greenup, ed. [London, 1911], pp. 34–36) locates the source of the *neshamah* in the middle *sefirah Tiferet*, as does the zoharic composition *Sitrei Torah* (*Zohar I* 81a). *Sitrei Torah* avers that the source of the *nefesh* is outside the realm of the *sefirot* (*Zohar II* 94b, *Zohar Hadash* 18a–c, 33b, 34c; Moshe de Leon, *Nefesh ha-Hokhmah* 2:3:3; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 694, 696). Some sources in the main sections of the *Zohar* do seem to locate the origin of the *neshamah* in *Tiferet* (*Zohar I* 12b, 79a–b, 255b, *III* 250a; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 761).

Cordovero located the source of the *neshamot* in the *sefirah Binah*, the *ruhot* in the *sefirah Tiferet*, and the *nefashot* in the *sefirah Malkhut*, although there are exceptions to the rule (*Or Yaqar* 21:23). Some *neshamot*, according to Cordovero (symbolized by the Priest's daughter referred to in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*), are drawn from the realm below *Tiferet*. Luria contradicted this assertion, saying that the "higher place" (*atar ila'ah*) of the *neshamah's* origin is the *sefirah Binah*, although some of them may drift "into the hiddenness [*stimaah*] of the Tree of Life," *Tiferet* (*Zohar ha-Raki'a* 71d). Shim'on Lavi posited the source of the *neshamah* in the *sefirah Binah*, that is, in the union of the *sefrot* (*Ketem Paz* 1:154b, 193a, 202b; Huss, "Ketem Paz," p. 224).

15. Moshe de Leon, *Nefesh ha-Hokhmah* 1:2:4, 1:3:1.

16. *Zohar I* 50b–51b, 206a, *II* 142a. There is a hint, in certain sections of the *Zohar*, of a much more complex infrastructure to the soul. The *SdZ* refers to gradations within the *neshamah*, as does *Zohar I* 103b, *II* 156b, *III* 152a (Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 709–711).

17. *Zohar III* 25a, *Zohar Hadash* 14b; see *Genesis Rabbah* 14:9. The tripartite division is also portrayed as three functions: intellect (*sekhel*), wisdom (*hokhmah*), and passion (*koah ha-metaveh*) (*Zohar I* 109a, 110b).

18. Midrashic sources imply an anthropomorphic view of the *neshamah*, similar to that of angels (*Genesis Rabbah* 8:11, *Exodus Rabbah* 30:16).

19. *Zohar II* 97b, 98a, 99b. *Zohar I* 62a, however, implies that the *ruah* is not from a divine source. Some sources locate the *neshamah* in the higher garden and the *ruah* in the lower garden (see Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:2 on *Zohar I* 224b). On study in the afterlife, see *B.T. Niddah* 30b; Cordovero, *Or Yaqar* 21:17, 37.

20. *Zohar I* 72a, *II* 75b–76a, 176a, *III* 168a; de Leon, *Nefesh ha-Hokhmah* 1:3:2, 2:3:4; Giller, "Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee," pp. 156–158; Huss, "Ketem Paz," pp. 230–231.

21. C.f. *Zohar I* 186b, 239a, *III* 57b, 167a, 177a, 182b, 308a–b; *Zohar Hadash* 59a, 89b–d, which is itself a commentary on *Bahir* 195a; de Leon, *Nefesh ha-Hokhmah* 85–90 (on levirate marriage); de Leon, *Shushan Edut* (Gershom Scholem, "Two Short Compositions of R. Moshe de Leon" [Hebrew], *Kovez al Yad* 8 [1976]: 355–360). See also Huss, "Ketem Paz," p. 232; Liebes *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 294–296.

22. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 219–221; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 95–96; cf. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 132a; *Zohar III* (RM) 178b; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 12.

23. *Zohar II* 94a–b; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 63a. Other contemporary theorists posited a set number of reincarnations to resolve residual problems of the soul. According to R. Joseph of Hamadan, the person has three reincarnations, which provide opportunities for the individual to repent his sins (Meroz, "The AR"Y's Homily," p. 227; cf. R. Yosef of Hamadan, *Ta'amei Mizvot*, negative mizvah no. 57).

24. *Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash* 109b–110b; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 93–96.

25. See Wendy O'Flaherty, ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1974), pp. 330–391; C. G. Jung, "Concerning Mandala Symbolism," in *Collected Works of Jung*, IX.1, pars. 647–649.

26. See Giller, "Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee," pp. 158–162; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, pp. 181–185.

27. *Or Yaqar* 21:11, 79–80; *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:8; see Vital, *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 84a.

28. *Or ha-Hammah II* 125c; *Or Yaqar* 21:28; *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:5, 10–11; Nahmanides, *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* (Jerusalem: Levin Epstein, 1951), p. 27; Plotinus, *Enneads* IV 3:12, 8:8. See Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 1–20.

29. *Or Yaqar* 21:3–5, 26; cf. Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, p. 33.

30. *Or Yaqar* 21:79–80; cf. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:1.

31. *Or Yaqar* 21:8.

32. *Or Yaqar* 21:2–3, 11; see also *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:10; cf. Vital, *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 94d; Ronit Meroz, “Faithful Transmission versus Innovation: Luria and His Disciples,” in *Gershom Scholem’s Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, Peter Schaefer and Joseph Dan, eds. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), pp. 261–263.

33. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 80b-c. According to this dark, often morbid understanding, self-immolation and flagellation were required to avoid the punishment of premature death. This idea appears among the German Ḥasidim of the thirteenth century; see R. Eliezer of Worms, *Sefer ha-Rokeah* (Jerusalem: Ozar ha-Poskim, 1967), pp. 25–28.

34. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 100b, 133a; Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily,” p. 230.

35. *Or ha-Ḥammah II* 132c; *Or Yaqar* 21:49–50. This idea is also present in the writings of R. Shim’on Lavi, see Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” p. 233.

36. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 109a.

37. See pp. 9, 18 on the doctrine of the four worlds.

38. *Genesis Rabbah* 14:9.

39. Ḥayyim Vital portrayed the union of the *neshamah* and *ruah* in terms of the erotic union of the countenances *Zakhar* and *Nukvah*, which takes place across the continuum of the four worlds (*Zohar ha-Raki'a* 95a).

40. *Or Yaqar* 21:3; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 63c, 82d, 83a.

41. Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, Mikhal Kushner Oron, ed. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1989), pp. 60–61, 68–69, 90, 137–138; *Ozar ha-Kavod* (Warsaw 1870), 14b, 22c, 27b; Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Meirat Einayim*, Amos Goldreich, ed. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1981), pp. 29–37; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, Margoliot ed., nos. 194–195; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 208, 216; Scholem, “The Kabbalistic Doctrines of R. Isaac and R. Jacob ha-Cohen” (Hebrew), *Mada'ei ha-Yahadut 1–2* (1931–1934); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 134–135; Elliot Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 115.

42. On the additional Sabbath soul (*neshamah yeteirah*), see Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1230–1232.

43. *Or Yaqar* 21:27, 79–80.

44. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 110a; Tamar, *Studies in Jewish History in the Land of Israel and the Orient*, p. 79.

45. *Genesis Rabbah* 56:7; *Midrash Samuel* 9:13.

46. Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 14.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17; *Ez Ḥayyim*, pp. 247–248; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 92a, 105a; *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim*, pp. 200–201, 247; *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, p. 222.

48. Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 17.

49. *Tomer Devorah*, end ch. 3, *Shiur Komah*, pp. 166–169. Reincarnation into lower sentient beings, vegetation, or even inanimate objects was suggested in the thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-Temunah* (Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily,” p. 228; *Sefer ha-Temunah* 66b–67a) and by the sixteenth-century kabbalist R. Meir ibn Gabbai (*Avodat ha-Kodesh*, ch. 34, pp. 100–101; Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily,” p. 21); cf. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, p. 226).

50. *Magen David* 13a; *Mezudat David* 28a; Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily.”

51. These speculations on reincarnation into lower sentient beings and plants were the topic of an important sermon given in Luria’s name by his student R. Yosef Don Don,

which was preserved in the writings of R. Ephraim Panzeiri. See Meroz, “The AR”T’s Homily,” pp. 222, 234, 244.

52. Early Lurianic theories of *gilgul* are to be found in the first three introductions to Vital’s *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim*. Luria also wrote a clear exposition of the descent of the *neshamah* in his *drush* (explanation or homily) on the Torah portion *Noah* (*Zohar ha-Raki’a* 95d), as well as in the *drush ha-gilgul* (*Zohar ha-Raki’a* 96b). Other contemporary sources for these ideas include Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:10; 8:1 Elyahu De Vidas, *Reshit Hokhmah*, *Sha’ar ha-Yir’ah*, 9:8–10.

53. See Hayyim Vital’s commentary in *Or ha-Hammah II* 116d–118c, 119a, 123b–c, 124b–d; *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 72b; *Sha’ar ha-Mizvot*, Ashlag ed., p. 136, Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 250–251; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 272–276.

54. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 82d.

55. According to Ronit Meroz, the doctrine of the soul root would be asserted only at the fifth stage of the development of his ideas (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 228, 267–282, 287–306).

56. *Zohar II* 94b–114a. Henceforth, *Sabba de-Mishpatim* will be abbreviated *SdM*.

57. The author of the *Tiqqunim* set forth many of his ideas in a preface to *SdM*. In his view, the word *mishpatim* means “decrees, or sentences, of *gilgul*,” “in which each *neshamah* receives its proper sentence” (*Zohar II* 94a). This introduction seems to be a gloss of *SdM*, as it contains a number of related literary elements. Certainly other texts by the author of the *Tiqqunim* are based on earlier *Zohar* compositions, such as the treatise on physiognomy, which is based on the composition *Raza de-Razin*; cf. *Zohar Hadash* 31a–35b, based on *Zohar II* 70a–75a; see also *Zohar Hadash* 56c–60a.

Cordovero’s portrayal of the *gilgul* doctrine in his commentary on *SdM* follows his general literary tendencies. The commentary is particularly full of long excurses, or *drushim*, such as his presentation on the *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* that follows his commentary to R. Yeiva’s statement about the presence of the *neshamot* at creation (*Or Yaqqar* 21:10–12; see also 18–19, 22–25, 29–30, 54–60).

Among Luria’s rare compositions are his refutations of Cordovero’s commentary to *SdM*. These were included in the published *Zohar ha-Raki’a* and *Sha’ar Ma’amarei RaSHB”Y*. Luria’s actual objections to Cordovero can be found in *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 71a–b, 74b–d, 77a–b, 78a, 79c, 82c, 87c–d, 91b. Hayyim Vital’s interpretation of *SdM* seems to derive from Luria’s commentary to *Zohar II* 117b. All these interpretations are extensions of Cordoverean theory.

The sources of various entries in the *SdM* commentary in *Zohar ha-Raki’a* were of interest to Gershom Scholem and have been further addressed by Ronit Meroz and Yosef Avivi. Meroz has compared statements in the supposed pre-Lurianic Vital commentary in *Or ha-Hammah* 2:117b, 118c, 119b, 124c, with Luria’s statements in *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 72b, 77b, 78b, and 79b, and 91b, respectively (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 267–269). This indicates that Vital’s commentaries were written under Luria’s influence or perhaps by Luria himself (*Zohar ha-Raki’a* 119a–125b; *Sha’ar Ma’amarei RaSHB”Y* [Tel Aviv: Ashlag, 1961], pp. 88–93; see Scholem, “The AR”T’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” p. 193; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 19).

58. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 370, speculates on the homoerotic undertones of R. Hiyya and R. Yossi’s meeting.

59. Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 89.

60. Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 15; Daniel C. Matt, “The Aura of Secrecy in the *Zohar*,” pp. 192–194, 201; Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 89. See also *Zohar I* 6a on the humble situation and hidden aspirations of R. Hamnuna Sabba.

61. *SdM* 95a–b, 96a, 98a, 100b, 104a, 110a, 111b; cf. Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 89.

62. *SdM* 98a. Yehudah Liebes maintains that this remorse is directly connected to his revelation of a particular secret, that of the nature of the gentile soul. Rabbi Yeiva compares this to David's apparent recantation of part of Psalm 104 (*SdM* 98b). According to Liebes: "The storyteller is really the creator, not just describing the process of emanation but dictating it as the Creator did at the time of creation. Thus we remember that David's recantation has a parallel in the works of God, as in the case of the discarded worlds. . . . Mythopoesis is the myth itself" (*Zohar* and Eros," p. 93). Liebes credits the mystic with the creation of his reality, so that if the mystical vision is heretical, then actual reality will be similarly heretical. In making this claim, Liebes neglects the medieval dread of heresy as a motivation for R. Yeiva's hesitations and soul-searchings. It seems to me more plausible that R. Yeiva feared straying into heretical beliefs, thereby losing his portion of the afterlife.

63. Cordovero notes that since the dialogue takes place in the evening, it is unlikely that R. Yeiva formally put on a prayer shawl, which is not customarily worn at night. He implies that the enrobement might have been figurative, a preparation for the divine encounter (*Or Yaqar* 21:2).

64. *Zohar* II 96a–97a; cf. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 82a.

65. *Zohar* II 95a–b; see *Zohar ha-Raki'u* 72c–d.

66. *Zohar* II 95a–b; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 63c, 70b; cf. Oron, "Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart," p. 14.

67. *Or Yaqar* 21:61.

68. *Or ha-Hammah* II 134a.

69. *Zohar* II 94b. Liebes ("Zohar and Eros," p. 87 n. 26) points out the thematic similarities between the preface by the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and the *SdM*. Similar motifs include the image of the elder (*sabba*) who descends from Heaven, deus ex machina, the laws of slavery, the metaphor from the doctrine of the soul, and the attainment of a higher *neshamah* through earthly merits. Liebes also points out a number of motifs in common between the *Tiqqunim* and *SdM* that are absent in the rest of the *Zohar*. These include the use of the term *gilgul* as "reincarnation" and the positing of an *Adam Belya'al*, an Adam from the realm of evil (Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 54–55).

70. *Or Yaqar* 21:12; *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:3.

71. In Eccles. 4:1–3

72. Exod. 20:5.

73. *Zohar* II 95a; Oron, "Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart," p. 16.

74. In a linguistic play in *Zohar* III 142a, the Hebrew *imma*, "mother," is contrasted to *ammah*, the ambivalent "maidservant," whose role is potentially demonic (cf. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 82a). On the image of the maidservant, see Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, pp. 243–305; Baer, "The Historical Context of the *Ra'aya Mebeimna*," pp. 1–44; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 74–77, 84, 102, 109, 116, 152n; Amos Goldreich, "Iberian Dialect in an Unknown Fragment from the Author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*," in *The Zohar and Its Generation; Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8, Joseph Dan, ed. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989: 108.

75. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 79c.

76. *Or Yaqar* 21:10.

77. *Ibid.* 21:8.

78. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 81c.

79. *Zohar* II 99a; *Or Yaqar* 21:24–25.

80. Moshe de Leon's contemporary R. Isaac of Acre made it clear that the converts' souls are originally Jewish, and this point of view is echoed in the responsa of Joseph of Castile and Yehudah H̄ayyat (*Meirat Einayim*, Goldreich ed., p. 31). On the implications

of this topic, see J. A. A. Wijnhoven, “The *Zohar* and the Proselyte,” in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to N. Glatzer*, Michael Fishbane, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1957), pp. 120–140.

81. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 77a–b, on *Zohar II* 95b.

82. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 104c.

83. *Ibid.*, 82a; Ḥayyim Vital, *Or ha-Ḥammah* 2:116d; cf. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 270.

84. *Zohar II* 95b, *III* 168; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 239–242; Sack, “Exile and Redemption in R. Shlomo ha-Levi Alkabetz’s *Berit ha-Levi*,” p. 285; *Or Yaqar* 6:173, 21:4 (on *Zohar II* 95b). See Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Pesuqim* on Gen. 41:55 and Exod. 1:8.

85. Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 15; J.T. *Berakhot* 14:2; *Genesis Rabbah* 14:8:10; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, Margoliot ed., no. 58; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 90d (Gilyon).

86. *Sha’ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 13.

87. *Or Yaqar* 21:22–23; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 91b (Gilyon).

88. *Or Yaqar* 21:23.

89. *Ibid.* 21:5.

90. *Ibid.* 21:4.

91. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 93a (Gilyon).

92. *Ibid.* 90c.

93. *Ibid.* 93c–94a. These teachings seem to originate with the late redactor Natan Neta’ Shapiro.

94. *Zohar II* 113a–b; cf. B.T. *Berachot* 34b; B.T. *Horayyot* 13b; Yehudah Liebes, “*Zaddik Yesod Olam: Shabbatean Mythos*” (Hebrew), *Da’at I* (1978): 87 n. 88; Vital, *Sefer ha-Gilgullim*, ch. 2.

95. *Or Yaqar* 21:4, 6, 77.

96. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 74d.

97. *Ibid.* 74c; cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Issurei Biah* 15:1–3.

98. Vital, *Sefer ha-Likkutum*, p. 318.

99. *Zohar II* 95b, *III* 99b. See Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, p. 331; Liebes, “*Zaddik Yesod Olam*,” p. 87 n. 88; Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, p. 316.

100. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 73b.

101. Meroz, “The AR”’s Homily,” p. 218.

102. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 93b (Gilyon).

103. *Ibid.* 66c. On *kelipat Nogah*, see *Zohar II* 208b; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 74b, 75d, 88d; Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*, pp. 69–72.

104. *Or Yaqar* 21:5.

105. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 109b–c.

106. *Zohar II* 97a–b; see 260b.

107. Eliezer Safrin of Komárno also associates this palace with the celestial Garden of Eden, the nightly abode of the righteous. See *Demeshke Eliezer* 5:101a; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 991.

108. *Or Yaqar* 21:4.

109. *Zohar I* 38a–48b, *II* 244b–268b.

110. According to the *Zohar*’s rendering of the *Heikhalot*, the seven palaces (*heikhalot*) are synonymous with the celestial Garden of Eden. They are separated from present reality by the curtain (*pargod*) that, according to talmudic tradition, divides the mundane world from the celestial Academy (*Berakhot* 18b; cf. *Or Yaqar* 21:36). The seventh palace is called the Holy of Holies, and it fulfills the function of the earthly *sefirah Malkhut*, beneath which lies the Heavenly Firmament (*Zohar II* 43a; *SdM* 96b). The location of the palaces in the sefirotic system was a bone of contention between the Lurianic and Cordoverean schools,

particularly those of Cordovero's student Avraham Galante. Cordovero's students located the palaces in the world of *Yezirah*, while Luria's students placed them higher, in the realm of *Briah*. Shalom Buzaglo (*Mikdash Melekh* to *SdM* 97a) is careful to stress the Palace of Love's location in *Briah*. See Galante, *Kinat Setarim* on Lam. 3:40, in *Kol Bokhim* (Venice, 1589); Ysrael Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 24d–33d, Naftaly Zvi Bakharakh, *Emek ha-Melekh* 168b–175c; Tishby, *Studies in the Kabbalah*, vol. 1, pp. 197–198 nn. 71–72. The foremost commentator on the *Heikhalot* texts was the Gaon of Vilna; see his selective commentary *Yabel Or*.

111. *Zohar II* 260b.

112. *Zohar II* 247a; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 90b.

113. The most important sections of Song of Songs exegesis are *Zohar II* 141a–145b and *Zohar H'adash* 60c–75c.

114. *Zohar H'adash* 60c–d, 69c.

115. *SdM* 97a. Cordovero explained that “the King's kisses are there in the Palace of Love, which is beneath the Throne of Glory, and from there is fixed the spirituality of the world, which arouses the kisses” (*Or Yaqar* 21:16–17).

116. See *Or Yaqar* 21:10, 16.

117. In late antiquity, speculations on *Ma'aseh Bereishit* were a companion domain to the *Merkavah* tradition. The nature of *Ma'aseh Bereishit* seems not to have been meditative but hermeneutical and contemplative, an attempt to construct a unified cosmology based on the variant creation and cosmological traditions found in the Bible, with some use of esoteric postbiblical sources. See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, “Is *Ma'aseh Bereishit* Part of Ancient Jewish Mysticism?” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1995): 185–201.

118. *Zohar II* 98b. Cordovero employed the image of the Garden of Eden as a meditation on the nature of sensuality (*Or Yaqar* 21:28).

119. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 71d.

120. *Or Yaqar* 21:79–80.

121. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 22b, 110b; *Zohar II* 86b, III 212b.

122. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 85b–86a; *Or Yaqar* 21:2, 17.

123. *Or Yaqar* 21:10.

124. *Ibid.* 21:8–9; cf. B.T. *Niddah* 18, *Shulchan Arukh Orakh H'ayyim* 240:11.

125. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 71d, 74a–b, 75a, 81b; cf. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 366.

126. B.T. *Ketubot* 62b.

127. Cf. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” p. 228; *Ketem Paz I* 99b, 188b, 278b.

128. *Beur Mizvat Shiluah ha-Kan* (Explanation of the Mizvah of Sending the Mother Bird Away from the Nest) 57b. See Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 250–251.

129. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 100b; Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 19; cf. *Maharal, Gur Arieih*, on Gen. 8:21 (*Ozar Perushim Al ha-Torah I* 30a); Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:4.

130. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 87c–d.

131. *SdM* 98a, 101a; cf. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 100b.

132. A motif specific to the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*; see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 54–57.

133. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 87c–d.

134. *Ibid.* 87d, 88a–b; see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 33–40.

135. The verb root BGD means “to betray,” yet as a noun the root signifies “clothing.” Cordovero notes this confusion; *Or Yaqar* 21:9. See B.T. *Kiddushin* 18a–b.

136. *SdM* 97a; see Dorit Cohen-Alloro, *The Secret of the Garment and the Image of the Angel in the Zohar* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1987), pp. 45–67; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 63.

137. *SdM* 98b; Elliot Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden without Eyes: *Peshat* and *Sod* in Zoharic Hermeneutics,” in *The Midrashic Imagination*, Michael Fishbane, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993: 168; Elliot Wolfson, ed., *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions* (Chappaqua: Seven Gates, 1998), pp. 124–135.
138. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 71a–b, 75d, 82b; cf. *Zohar I* 288b.
139. The *Zohar*’s most common metaphor for the Torah’s hermeneutical strata is the acronym *PaRDeS*, standing for *peshat* (simple meaning), *remez* (allegory), *derash* (midrash), and *sod* (the esoteric meaning). Rabbi Yeiva departs from the usual formula, neglecting the level of *peshat* and substituting *haggadah* (narration) for *remez*. See Frank Talmage, “Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism,” *Jewish Spirituality I*, Arthur Green, ed. New York: Crossroads, 1986, pp. 319–321; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, p. 61; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 172–173.
140. Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 88; Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 10.
141. *Or Yaqar* 21:2.
142. Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden without Eyes,” p. 186; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 93, 339, 384–386; see also Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 97.
143. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 69a.
144. *Ibid.* 68b. According to Luria, the maiden’s eyes are in the Palace of Merit (*Heikhal ha-Zekhut*) (*Zohar ha-Raki*’a 69a).
145. Cf. *SdM* 110b. The *aitanim* and the *harim* represent two groups of *sefirot*. The *harim* are the *sefirot Binah* and *Da’at*, and the *aitanim* are lower *sefirot*, *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. The *harim* indicate the stages of the descent of the soul and the rise of enlightenment.
146. See Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 30a.
147. The thirteenth-century Geronese kabbalist Jacob ben Sheshet associated the principle of *yibbum* with a series of reincarnations going back to King David. See his work *Emunah u-Bitahon*, which was erroneously attributed to Nahmanides but therefore, luckily, included in Chavel’s *Writings of Nahmanides (Kitvei Ramban)*, vol. 2, p. 364; see Oron, “Lines of Influence,” p. 284. Specific transmigrations are also mentioned in a Genesis commentary linked to R. Asher ben David and Isaac the Blind. Bibliotheque Nationale MS, Paris 832, included in Joseph Dan, “The Kabbalah of R. Asher ben David” (Hebrew); cf. Oron, “Lines of Influence,” p. 285.
148. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 86–88. See Matt, “The Aura of Secrecy in the *Zohar*,” p. 183.
149. Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 14 nn. 50–51; Oron, “Lines of Influence,” p. 284.
150. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 97a.
151. *Or Yaqar* 21:27.
152. *Zohar II* 100a; cf. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 82d.
153. *Or Yaqar* 21:1; see also *Zohar I* 186b; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 92–93.
154. *Zohar II* 100b; cf. B.T. *Berakhot* 57a.
155. *Or Yaqar* 21:1.
156. *Or ha-Hammah II* 131d; *Or Yaqar* 21:32, 49, 79.
157. See Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee,” pp. 154–156.
158. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 99a. Cordovero (*Or Yaqar* 21:38) makes clear that the struggle in no way mirrored woman’s physical state.
159. Vital (?), *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 97c.
160. *SdM* 101a, 102a, 109a.
161. *Zohar ha-Raki*’a 101d.

162. Ibid. 72b.

163. An instance of this type of conflict is detailed in R. Elyahu ha-Kohen of Izmir's eulogy for Jacob Hagiz (1674), which is reproduced in Marc Saperstein's *Jewish Preaching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 320–322.

164. *SdM* 102b. Theoretically, were the widow to visit the grave site, with the *ruah* of her husband in her and the *nefesh* at the grave, her presence would be an eroticized kind of union. This possibility is never explored, as expressive women's spirituality is largely absent from middle kabbalistic tradition. The erotic potentials of this encounter are alluded to in the last act of Ansky's *The Dybbuk*.

165. *SdM* 102b, after B.T. *Sanhedrin* 22a.

166. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 84c. Avraham Galante, in *Or ha-Hammah* 14d, sees divorce as a kind of *tiqqun*.

167. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 152n; Yizhak Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, pp. 243–305; Goldreich, "Iberian Dialect in an Unknown Fragment by the Author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*," p. 108.

168. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 100c.

169. Ibid. 99a, 102c; *Or ha-Hammah II* 127b.

170. *Zohar II* 105a–b. The unraveling of this confusion is the subject of a Shabbatean commentary on Ruth. See Liebes, "*Zaddik Yesod Olam*," p. 77.

171. Liebes "Zohar and Eros," p. 87 n. 26.

172. This description has much in common with the Tree of Knowledge as portrayed in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Mebeimna*. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 40–43.

173. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 104d.

174. *SdM* 103b; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 105d.

175. *SdM* 107a; see B.T. *Shabbat* 55b.

176. Adolph Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash II*, pp. 64–72, VI, pp. 19–35 (1938).

177. *Zohar Hadash* 46a, 93b.

178. Cordovero stressed the travesty of the Roman decree of execution. This perversion of justice came about as the result of an irruption of the quality of *din gamur*, or "harsh judgment"; cf. *Zohar Hadash* 29a; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 270.

179. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* (Gilyon) 93a.

180. *Sha'ar Ma'amarei RaSHB"Y*, Ashlag ed. pp. 301–302, on *Zohar Hadash* 46a; Bracha Sack, "The RaMaK and the AR"l":330–333; Liebes, "Two Young Roes," p. 113.

181. *Or Yaqar* 3:126. According to Luria, the *Akiva ben Joseph* signals R. Akiva's origin in the *sefirah Yesod*, the sexual principle. This association implies that R. Akiva's *neshamah* has its origin in the union of the *zaddikim* in the celestial Garden of Eden (*Zohar ha-Raki'a* 96a).

182. *Or Yaqar* 3:123–126, on *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 110b; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 87:6.

183. Liebes, "Two Young Roes," p. 161.

184. The identification of Pinhas with Elijah dates to *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 47, *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exod. 6:18, Num. 25:12; *Or Yaqar* 17:227. See also Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," pp. 283–284; Liebes, "Two Young Roes," pp. 161–162.

185. See chapter 1, n. 97, above.

186. Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 31:8.

187. "Eventual" in that Meroz believes that this conclusion came fairly late in the development of Luria's ideas; see Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," pp. 228, 267–282, 287–306.

188. See Cordovero's commentary in Abraham Azulai's *Or ha-Hammah* 3:56a. See also Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 197–250; Liebes, *Some Chapters*

in a *Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 294–296; Lawrence Fine, “Maggidic Revelation in the Teachings of Isaac Luria,” in *Mystics, Philosophies, and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altman*, Jehudah Reinharg, Daniel Swetschanski, and Kalman Bland, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982), pp. 146–148, cf. *Limmudei Azilut* 9a.

189. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 92b (Gilyon).

190. Ibid. 65d.

191. Ibid. 83a.

192. *Sha'ar ha-Mizvot*, Ashlag ed., p. 136; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 250–251.

193. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 91a (Gilyon).

194. *Limmudei Azilut* 16d.

195. See Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 149. See also Vital's *Book of Visions (Sefer Hezyonot-Shivhei R. Hayyim Vital)* (Jerusalem: Yashlim, 1988), pp. 2, 18; Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” p. 150.

196. Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” p. 115.

197. Ibid., p. 114.

198. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 91d (Gilyon).

199. As surmised by Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 244–268.

200. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 39–41.

201. Vital, *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 22d; *Sha'ar ha-Gilgullim*, p. 123; *Sefer Limmudei Azilut* 34a; Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” p. 160; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 34–54.

202. *Kohelet Rabbah* 2:25; see *SdM* 96b.

203. In the midrash, Tadmor.

204. Rabbi Yeiva's identification with Solomon was pointed out by Scholem in the notes he wrote in his personal copy of the *Zohar*; see *Sefer ha-Zohar shel Gershom Scholem*, Jerusalem, Magnes 1993, p. 224.

205. *SdM* 113b–114a. According to Avraham Galante, R. Yeiva takes leave of the company with a blessing for their protection (*Or ha-Hammah II* 140b).

206. Liebes is adamant that the *essence* of the composition is in the framing story (“*Zohar and Eros*,” pp. 87, 91).

207. Cordovero began his interpretation with a disclaimer: “Though these words are like a dream without an interpretation, we will, with God's help, explain them.” Cf. *Or Yaqar* 21:1 and *Or ha-Hammah* 2:115b–c.

208. *Or Yaqar* 21:1.

209. Ibid. 21:10. Issues relating to the face-to-face embrace also appear in the *IZ (Zohar III* 292a–b); see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, p. 84.

210. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 63d–67d.

211. Ibid. 63d.

212. Ibid. 82c.

213. *Sha'ar ha-Mizvot*, Ashlag ed., p. 136; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 250–251. See also Israel of Kozeniz, *Nezer Yisrael* 21a, published in Elijah of Vilna's *Kovez Perushim al Sefer ha-Zohar*, Jerusalem: Makor, 1972; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 4c.

214. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 64a, referring to *Zohar II* 145a.

215. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 63d–64c; cf. Vital, *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, pp. 28, 383.

216. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 65a–d.

217. Ibid. 67d–68a.

218. Ibid. 68a.

219. Yehudah Liebes (“*Zohar and Eros*,” p. 87) has argued the bold thesis that R. Yeiva did not even know the questions' final interpretation, because he asks them at the outset of

the homily. The process of answering the questions over the course of the homily is an improvisation on the questions themselves.

220. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 65a–d, 82c.

221. Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 95. Michal Oron has isolated the themes of love, the Torah, and the redemption as organizing principles (Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart,” p. 8). Liebes has recently developed an interesting interpretation of the role of R. Yeiva as a remote and picaresque wanderer. See his “Mythos as Opposed to Symbol in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah” (Hebrew), in *Mythos in Judaism-Eshel Be'er Sheva*, Havivah Pedaya, ed., vol. 4, (Beersheba: Ben Gurion University, 1996), pp. 198–200.

222. By my friend Elliot Wolfson.

223. *Iggerot ha-Remez*, nos. 23, 21a (Livorno, 1785).

224. This is the argument of Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 244–251.

225. These preoccupations were overtly expressed by Cordovero's teacher, Alkabetz; cf. Sack, “Exile and Redemption,” pp. 265–266.

226. Shim'on Lavi determined that the process was two-tiered: *gilgul* for the wicked is for purposes of atonement, while the reincarnation of the righteous is for the good of all humankind; Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 237–238; *Ketem Paz* 1:84b, 2:409b; cf. *Sefer ha-Temunah*, pp. 334–336.

3. *Hormanuta*

1. See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, “Is *Ma'aseh Bereishit* Part of Ancient Jewish Mysticism?” pp. 185–201. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 20, 42, 55, 73, 75.

2. This question is addressed in Daniel Matt's article “*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Essential Papers in Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 67–108.

3. The term *hormanuta* seems to derive from the Aramaic *harmana*, implying a royal appointment to office; see *Targum Job* 1:12, 2:7; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Num. 17:11; B.T. *Babba Mezia* 84a, *Hullin* 57b. In Babylonia, this term also referred to the office of the exilarch (*Erwin* 59a). Cordovero translates it as “the word” (*Or Yaqar* 1:119) or, according to Avraham Galante, the “first speaking” of the king (*Or ha-Hammah* 1:22a). Among *Zohar* exegetes, the most common translation is the “will” of the king; see Reuven Margoliot, *Nezuzei Orot I* 2a; the Gaon's commentary on *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 19a, in which he defines *keter* as the divine will; cf. Elijah of Vilna, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Bi'ur ha-GR"A* (Vilna, 1877), 20a–21a.

4. According to Scholem in his notes to *Zohar I* 15a, *tehiru* is best translated as “luster,” the atmosphere of the Infinite (*Ein Sof*) at the beginning of emanation; cf. Gottlieb, “The Matnitin and the *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” p. 174.

5. *Zohar I* 15a–b; cf. Elliot Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne,” in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History*, L. Silberstein and R. Cohn, eds. (New York: New York University Press 1994), pp. 177–178; Matt, *Zohar*, pp. 49–50. Daniel Abrams has published an interesting comparison of a number of variant readings: “When was the Introduction to the *Zohar* Written?” (Hebrew) *Assufot* 8 (1994): 216–217.

6. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 19a–20b, 37b.

7. *Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash* 122a.

8. *Zohar II* 233a; *Zohar Hadash* 58b. The image of God as measurer originates with Isa. 40:12; see also *Genesis Rabbah* 1:8–9; Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbenu Azriel*, (Isaiah Tishby, ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1945), pp. 89–90; Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 183, 209n; Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 146–148.

9. See also *Zohar III* 48b–49a; cf. Vital, *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 23b, 181b–182a.

10. Certain *Idra* texts do not contain this trope of blowing on the spark, while others contain extra interpolations of the image. Compare the version in the standard Vilna edition with that of Yehudah Petaya, *Yayin ha-Rekah* (Jerusalem, 1937), 80b.

11. *Zohar III* 135b.

12. *Ketem Paz* 43a–b; Huss, “Hidden Light,” p. 359.

13. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 66; Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati* (Lemberg, 1881), 33a.

14. Elijah of Vilna, *Yabel Or* (Vilna: Romm, 1918), 6a; *ShMR*, p. 252; Natan Kenig, *Torat Natan I* (B’nei Barak, 1990), p. 143; Wolfson, “Woman,” p. 177.

15. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23b.

16. *Or Yaqar* 1:119. See also Shim’on Lavi, *Ketem Paz* 41b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 276–277; Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 145–151; Liebes, “The Kabbalistic Myth of Orpheus,” in *Studies in Jewish Myth and Mysticism*, trans. Batya Stein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 81–82, 161–164; Huss, “Hidden Light” pp. 343, 345; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 336 n. 278.

17. Mark Verman, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 79–82; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 47; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 343–344.

18. See Gershom Scholem, “Traces of Gabirol in the Kabbalah” (Hebrew), *Meassef Sofrei Eretz Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1940): 160–178.

19. *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 3.

20. Liebes, “The Kabbalistic Myth of Orpheus,” pp. 81–82.

21. Ibn Tabul, *Limmudei Azilur* 21d–22a; Naftaly Zevi Bacharach, *Emek ha-Melekh* 1:2; Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Raba* by a Member of the Sarug School,” pp. 313, 322.

22. Elliot Wolfson, “Erasing the Erasure/Gender and the Writing of God’s Body in Kabbalistic Symbolism,” in *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press 1995), pp. 177–178 nn. 109–110. See also Wolfson, “Woman,” n. 60; Liebes, “On the Image,” pp. 104, n. 24, 118 nn. 141–142.

23. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 331–347; Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, pp. 153–156; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 281–282; Liebes, “The Kabbalistic Myth of Orpheus,” pp. 82–83; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1995), p. 319 n. 160.

24. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 331–347; Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, pp. 153–156; Liebes, “The Kabbalistic Myth of Orpheus,” pp. 82–83; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 63–64; Liebes, “On the Image,” pp. 104 n. 24, 118 nn. 141–142; Wolfson, “Erasing the Erasure,” pp. 57–78; Wolfson, “Woman,” p. 179; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 281–282.

25. Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 4:7; *Or Yaqar* 1:122–123; see also in *Or ha-Hammah* 1:22b; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 420–424; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 111–112; Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 145–151; Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbenu Azriel*, pp. 89–90.

26. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 112–113.

27. *ShMR* 31b; Cordovero, *Shi’ur Qomah* (Warsaw, p. 105; Jerusalem, vol. 18, p. 145); Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 327; Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” p. 118; Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 136, 147.

28. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23b.

29. Liebes, *Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, pp. 147–148. Liebes links the image of the striking hammer to the text from the *Iyyun* circle *Ma’ayan ha-Hokhmah* (*Some Chapters in a Zohar Lexicon*, p. 147); *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23b.

30. *Zohar III* 48b–49a.
31. *Zohar III* 135b. Cf. Scholem, “Traces of Gabirol in the Kabbalah,” p. 168.
32. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 244, 280.
33. Cordovero, *Or Yaqar* 1:120; Elijah of Vilna, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Bi’ur ha-GR*”A 20a–21a; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 65. This understanding is evident in the early Lurianic text “Before the Azilut” (published by Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 327), which stresses that the creation consisted of a dual action on the part of *buzina de-kardinuta*. *Buzina de-kardinuta* is symbolized by the letter *yod*, which descended and emanated *Keter*, leaving behind one aspect of itself, which was “the soul of *Keter*.” Shim’on Lavi explained that the highest *sefirah*, *Keter Elyon*, is called *ayin*, or “nothingness,” so that *yesh me ayin* literally means that the revealed reality is emanated from the hidden reality (*Ketem Paz* 42b).
34. *Zohar Haddash* 56d–58d; see also *Zohar II* 122b–123a, *III* 48b, 291a; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 271.
35. *Zohar Haddash* 57a.
36. Scholem linked the notion of color proceeding “like a flame that issues from the ether” to the *Iyyun* work *Ma’ayan be-Hokhmah*; see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 335–336; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, p. 59. The original text of *Ma’ayan ha-Hokhmah* appears in *Yalkut ha-Ro’im* 4a.
37. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 21a.
38. *Or ha-Hammah* 1:22a; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 62–63; Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*, p. 73.
39. *Or Yaqar*, MS Modena 98a, on *Zohar Haddash* 63a. See also *Or Yaqar* 1:120–121.
40. See Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1938) 2:64–72, 6:19–35.
41. B.T. *Menahot* 29b.
42. “Before the Azilut”; see Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 328.
43. *Zohar II* 254b. See *ShMR*, p. 61; Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 59.
44. *ShMR*, p. 109.
45. *Itpashta le-inhara*, as opposed to *Zohar I* 15a, *kad madid meshiḥa*, “when it measured its drawing forth.”
46. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 19a–20b.
47. See, e.g., *Zohar Haddash* 5b; *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 96c–d; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, p. 320 n. 165.
48. The ring is synonymous with the function of the primordial ether in Isaac the Blind’s commentary on *Sefer Yeziarah* (Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 333). Wolfson (“Woman,” pp. 178–179) quotes Moshe de Leon in an unpublished manuscript (MS JTSA mic. 1805, fol. 20b, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York) on the significance of the ring.
49. *Or Yaqar* 1:120; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 19a–20b.
50. *Or ha-Hammah* 1:22a.
51. *Or Yaqar* 1:120.
52. See above, chapter 1, nn. 94–95.
53. *Or Yaqar* 1:120.
54. *Ibid.* 1:121; א, as it says in the *Sha’ar ha-Gavvanim*.
55. *Ketem Paz* 43b.
56. *Ibid.* 43a.
57. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 38a–42a.
58. As in the earlier selection, a play on the possibilities of the Hebrew אַוִיר (*avir*, “ether”), אור (*or*, “light”), and י (the letter *yod*, symbolic of *buzina de-kardinuta*).
59. Hebrew *bayit*.
60. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 37b.

61. *Limmudei Agilut* 11c.
62. Ephraim Gottlieb presented some of the defining aspects of the *Matnitin* texts in his article “The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” pp. 163–170. He demonstrated that the *Hormanuta* text is definitely part of the *Matnitin*. Cf. Avraham Azulai, *Zoharei Hammah* 25a–b; Reuven Margoliot, *Nizuzei Orot to Zohar I* 154b, n. 3; Ya’akov Emden, *Mitpahat Sefarim* (Lvov, 1870), p. 39.
63. Gottlieb, “The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” pp. 164, 191; see Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim II* 9c–d.
64. “Gottlieb, The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” p. 212.
65. See *Sefer Yezirah* 1:7.
66. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, Margoliot ed., nos. 94, 98; Scholem ed., nos. 63, 67.
67. Cf. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 92, 450 n. 202; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, pp. 73 n. 103, 75 n. 122.
68. The notion of the *Matnitin* relating directly to the *Idrot* was also a guiding premise of the Safed kabbalists (Gottlieb, “The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” pp. 170–171; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 320 n. 8; Hayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Nizuzei Orot to Zohar I* 154b).
69. Gottlieb, “The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* in the *Zohar*,” pp. 165–166; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 322.
70. *Or Yaqar* 21:3; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 320.
71. Cordovero’s *Idra* commentary was unavailable until it was published by Bracha Sack in *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 319–361.
72. *Or Yaqar* 10:1–2, on *Zohar I* 148b–149a; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 322.
73. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 177–205; Huss, “Hidden Light” pp. 341–362.
74. Moshe Idel, “The History of the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah Research,” in *The Kabbalah of the AR*’I, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), p. 89; Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*, pp. 21–28; Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Raba* by a Member of the Sarug School,” p. 314.
75. *Mavo She’arim* (Tel Aviv: Ashlag, 1961), p. 2.
76. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 420–424.
77. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23a.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Limmudei Agilut* 4a, 10c–d, 12d, 14d–15a.
80. *Ketem Paz* 42b. See Sa’adiah Gaon, *Emunot ve-Deot* 1–2; Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 1:73–74, 2:15, 21, 25. Gersonides, however, accepted the Aristotelean view of eternal matter (*Milhamot Adonai* 6:1, 2, 7).
81. *Ketem Paz* 42b.
82. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 331–347; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, pp. 53–59.
83. *Ketem Paz* 42b.
84. *Ibid.* 43b.
85. Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 55, 57, 308 n. 71.
86. *Hemdah ha-Yammim I* (*Shabbat*) 39c.
87. *Or ha-Hammah* 1:22a.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.* 1:22b.
90. *Or Yaqar* 1:119.
91. In Maimonidean terms, *nimza kol ha-nimzaot*.

92. *Elimah Rabbati* 25b; *Or Yaqar* 15:203; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 63.

93. *Or Yaqar* 1:120. See Elijah of Loans, *Aderet Eliahu*, where he maintains that “*buzina de-kardinuta* is the beginning of Wisdom” (*reishit hokhmah*) (Opp. 395–397, Bodleian 1829, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, p. 13).

94. *Or Yaqar* 1:119–121; *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 5:4, 25a; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 69–72.

95. Elijah of Vilna, *Yahel Or* 6a.

96. Elijah of Vilna, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Bi'ur ha-GR" A* (Vilna, 1877), 20a–21a; see Asi Farber, “On the Problem of Moshe de Leon’s Early Kabbalistic Tradition” (Hebrew), in E. Schweid, R. Schaz-Uffenheimer, eds., *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), pp. 56–76.

97. MS Sassoon 993, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 505; R. Menahem Azariah mi-Fano, *Sefer Kanfei Yonah* (Lemberg, 1884); cf. Alexander Altmann, “Notes on the Development of the Kabbalistic Doctrine of R. Menahem Azariah mi-Fano” (Hebrew), in *Studies in Kabbalah, Jewish Philosophy, and Ethical Literature Presented to Y. Tishby on His Seventy-fifth Birthday* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), pp. 241–267; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 4; Scholem, “On the Biography and Literary Activity of the Kabbalist R. Ya’akov Zemakh,” pp. 185–194.

98. In *Likkutim Hadashim me-ha-AR" I Z" L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z" L*, pp. 17–23.

99. Sarug’s *Limmudei Azilut* was published under the name of Hayyim Vital (Munkács, 1897); see Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, p. 301 n. 1.

100. Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 327–342.

101. *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 1–3.

102. *Hadrat Melekh* 43a–b. Corrected versions were published by Gershom Scholem (“The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” pp. 198–199) and, more recently, by Yosef Avivi (*Binyan Ariel*, pp. 354–358; cf. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 73, 181, 380). The best manuscript seems to be Ben Zvi 2218, 175b–179a.

103. Azulai seems to have left his main treatment of the *Hormanuta* texts in his lost *Zohar* commentary, *Or ha-Gannuz*; cf. *Or ha-Hammah* 1:21d.

104. Meroz, “Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR”I? p. 45. See Menahem Azariah de-Fano, *Yonat Ilem* 1a; Ibn Tabul, *Drush Hefzi Bah* 1b, in Masoud Alhadah, *Simhat Kohan*, Jerusalem 1921.

105. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 73, 380; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 89.

106. The history of pre-Lurianic *zimzum* doctrines has been documented by Moshe Idel in his “The History of the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah Research,” in *The Kabbalah of the AR”I*, Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992); see also Stephen G. Wald, *The Secrets of the Letters from the Divine Name* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 18–20. A *zimzum* doctrine appears in Nahmanides’ commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*, as well as in the *Masekhet Azilut*, a text that also serves as an important source for the doctrine of the four worlds; cf. Jellinek ed., p. 2, in *Yalkut ha-Ro'im* (Jerusalem: Levin Epstein, 1973); Huss, “Hidden Light” p. 341; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 57–82; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 14.

107. Huss, “*Ketem Paz*,” pp. 177–205; Huss, “Hidden Light,” pp. 341–362.

108. *Or ha-Hammah I* 28a, on *Zohar I* 29a; Huss, “Hidden Light,” p. 341.

109. Bracha Sack devotes a chapter of her study of Cordovero to this subject (*The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 57–82).

110. In *Likkutim Hadashim me-ha-AR" I Z" L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z" L*, p. 17.

111. *Or Yaqar* 4:150; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 61.

112. See chap. 1, p. 17.

113. This notion would recur in Ḥasidic and Mithnagdic thought. See R. Naḥman of Breslav, *Liqqutei Moharan*, 78a–79b; Yiṣḥak Eizik Ḥaver Wildmann, *Pitḥei She'arim* 3b.

114. *Likkutim Ḥadashim me-ha-Ar"i Z"l u-me-Ḥayyim Vital Z"l*, p. 17; Yisrael Sarug, *Limmudei Aẓilut* 10b, 15a.

115. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 137.

116. Literally “the purity.”

117. *Or Yaqar* 15:33.

118. In *Likkutim Ḥadashim me-ha-Ar"i Z"l u-me-Ḥayyim Vital Z"l*, pp. 17–23.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

120. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 23a.

121. *Drush Ḥefẓi Bah* is published in Masoud Alhadad’s *Simḥat Kohen* 1a–c. See Meir Benyahou, “Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital in Jerusalem” (Hebrew), *Sinai* 30 (1952): 65.

122. See chap. 5.

123. In Luria’s commentary to *SdZ*, the first vessel is the primordial ether, and the *tehiru*, the supernal luster, is separate from it. In Ibn Tabul’s explanation, the first vessel is the primordial ether and also the primordial man, and the term *tehiru* is not mentioned at all. The confusion is further exacerbated in the recensions of R. Yisrael Sarug, who called the first vessel the garment (*malbush*) and the second vessel the primordial ether (*avir kadmon*). See Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” pp. 119, 121–122.

124. Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 57, 308 n. 71.

125. *ShMR*, p. 108; see *Zohar I* 254b, III 292b.

126. *Likkutim Ḥadashim*, p. 18. This tradition draws on a prominent idea in the *Idrot* (*IR* 137b): five aspects of *Din* are essential to the creation. The early Lurianic text “Before the *Azilut*” (p. 327) compares the letter *yod* to an anvil, and the five aspects of *Din* are the five elements of *gevurah* (cf. Ps. 29:3).

127. Idel, “The History of the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah Research,” p. 90; Vital, *Mavo She'arim*, p. 1.

128. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 23b; Vital, *Ez Ḥayyim I* pp. 26–28.

129. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 88, citing *Mavo She'arim*, p. 1. Yehudah Liebes has surmised that the *Hormanuta* commentary is in fact the work of Ibn Tabul. Their shared doctrinal emphasis on the role of *Din* supports that claim, as well as the lack of literary resemblance between the *Hormanuta* commentary and works that are manifestly the product of Luria’s own hand, such as, for instance, his commentaries to *SdZ* and the *Idrot*.

130. Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 369; Huss, “Hidden Light,” pp. 346, 350, 356.

131. Wolfson, “Erasing the Erasure,” pp. 177–278, nn. 109–110; Wolfson, “Woman,” p. 178; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 281–282; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and its Kabbalah*, pp. 63, 319 n. 160, 321–322 n. 167; Liebes, “The Kabbalistic Myth of Orpheus,” pp. 82–83; Liebes, “On the Image,” pp. 104 n. 24, 118 nn. 141–142; Joseph Ben Shlomo, *The Nature of the Divine according to R. Moshe Cordovero* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1965), pp. 60–61; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 331–347; Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, pp. 153–156.

132. Cordovero, *Shi'ur Qomah* (Warsaw 1883, 9b; Jerusalem I, 1990, p. 91).

133. Yehudah Liebes has also referred to the *she'ashu'a* tradition, although he traces it only to Cordovero and Sarug (particularly in his *Limmudei Aẓilut*.) Liebes maintains that for Sarug the term had been largely divested of its sexual connotation (*On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 63, 321–322 n. 167; see also Ben Shlomo, *The Nature of the Divine*, pp. 60–61; Shaul Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning, and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Hazot*,” *Daat* 36 [1996]: xxix).

134. Opp. 395–397, Bodleian 1829. Thanks to Daniel Abrams for his help in obtaining portions of this work. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
135. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” pp. 137, 142; *ShMR*, p. 187.
136. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 23b.
137. *Limmudei Azilut* 21d.
138. See Elliot Wolfson “Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of an Esoteric Doctrine,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 78 nos. 1–2. (July–October 1987): 77–112; “Circumcision, Vision of God and Textual Interpretation, From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol,” *History of Religions* 27 (1987–88): 198–215; “Coronation of the Sabbath Bride: Kabbalistic Myth and the Ritual of Androgynization,” *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 6: 30–343. *Ibid.*, 3a.
139. Published in Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 327.
140. *Limmudei Azilut* 3a.
141. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 190; *Shi’ur Qomah* (Warsaw, 1883, 9b; Jerusalem, p. 91); *Or Yaqar* 6:20, 10:6–7; *Or Yaqar Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 1:237.
142. *Zohar III* 135b.
143. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 3:4, 12b; “The General Introduction to the *Azilut*,” published in Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 327; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 60; Meir Benyahu, *Studies in Memory of the Rishon le-Zion R. Yizhak Nissim* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad ha-Rav Nissim, 1985), vol. 4, p. 21.
144. *Or ha-Hammah I* 21b–22a.
145. Sack, “R. Moshe Cordovero’s Doctrine of *Zimzum*,” p. 207 n. 1.
146. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 245, 246, 286; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Directions*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 265.
147. Idel, “The History of the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah Research,” pp. 33–43.

4. The *Idrot*: The Literary Tradition

1. *Or Yaqar Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 1:15, on *Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash* 93b. In the interest of brevity, references to the *Idra Rabbah*, the *Idra Zuta*, and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* will be abbreviated *IR*, *IZ*, and *SdZ*, respectively.

2. The word *zeniuta* implies being put away for later use, according to *Targum Yonatan* Exod. 16:23 and *Targum Onkelos* Exod. 16:24; see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 201 n. 58.

3. Yehudah Liebes has noted that these identifications are problematic because these texts do not otherwise seem to fulfill minimal literary requirements of the *Idra* literature. Elliot Wolfson has suggested a number of parallel identities for this text, including the section “These are the supernal secrets of the Tabernacle” (*Zohar II* 159a–160b), a text that has an interesting manuscript history, being found in two cases with the most recently identified *Ta Hazei* (in Cordovero’s *Or Yaqar*, Jerusalem ed. 3:277, and also MS Vatican 204; see chap. 1, n. 8). Wolfson also suggests a relationship between the *Idra de-Vei Mashkena* and R. Joseph of Hamadan’s *Sefer Tashaq*, a work that reiterates the teachings of the *Idrot*, albeit with a number of doctrinal differences. Wolfson has suggested that aspects of the *Idra de-Bei Mashkana* were incorporated into Joseph of Hamadan’s *Sefer Tashaq*, but in any case this text is manifestly later. Wolfson and Liebes agree that the identity of the *Idra de-Bei Mashkena* remains a desideratum (Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 35, 177 n. 109; Wolfson, “Forms of Visionary Ascent,” p. 212, n. 17; Jeremy Zwelling, ed. “*Sefer Tashaq*” [Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1975], pp. xix–xx).

4. Among these works are Joseph Gikatilla’s *Sha’arei Orah* (ed. Warsaw 1883) 50a, which parallels *Zohar III* 139b; Gikatilla’s “The Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” in

Kabbalistic Manuscripts Found in the National and University Library in Jerusalem, Gershom Scholem, ed. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1930), pp. 223–224; as well as compositions by the elusive R. Joseph of Hamadan (*Toledot ha-Adam* in *Sefer ha-Malkhut* [Dar el Beida, Casablanca, 1930] and portions of R. Joseph Angelet's *Liivat ha-Sappir* (Jerusalem, 1913), p. 66c. Yehudah Liebes (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 98) refers to “several kabbalistic writings parallel to the *Idrot* [that] were written in the same period as the *Zohar* (in addition to the writings of Gikatilla and Rabbi Joseph of Hamadan . . . the author of *Sefer ha-Yihud* and the author of “The Secret of the Types of Colors [*Sod ha-Gevvanim le-Minehem*].” See Moshe Idel, “Commentaries to the Ten Sefirot and Fragments of the Writings of R. Yosef-Who-Came-from-the-City-of-Shushan” (Hebrew), *Alei Sefer* 6–7 (1979); 82–84; Gershom Scholem, “Colours and Their Symbolism in Jewish Traditions and Mysticism,” *Diogenes* 109 (1980); 71 n. 93.

5. Amos Goldreich, “R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*: Methods of Adaptation of a Zoharic Text after the Appearance of the *Zohar*” (Hebrew) (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1972), p. 58; see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 98.

6. *Zohar II* 9a–9b. This text paraphrases the well-known Tannaitic convocation in the vineyard at Yavneh involving Shim'on bar Yoḥai referred to in B.T. *Shabbat* 138b and *Leviticus Rabbah* 11:8.

7. *Zohar II* 14a–15a; Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 23, 167 n. 34.

8. *Zohar Ḥadash* 18d–19a; *Zohar III* 309a–b. Liebes (“The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 11) notes that in R. David ben Yehudah ha-Ḥasid's *Sefer ha-Gevul*, the section on names for man (*Zohar III* 48a) appears after the *Idra*. Liebes maintains that this was originally part of the *Idra* and was subsequently removed (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 114). In evaluating these texts, Liebes clearly considers the framing narrative (in this case, R. Shim'on's illness) as the defining factor in determining the evolution of the author's thought. In my opinion, the noetic content of the term is at least of equal importance in the evolution of the literature. I am doubtful as to whether the intent of the author, in the first version, was to produce an *Idra*. I believe, rather, that the *Idrot* are “about” the content, not the context.

9. Cordovero compared the framing device of *Idrot* and the *Heikhalot* to the Sanhedrin, which also sat in a half-circle on a threshing floor; see Sack, “The RaMaK and the AR” I,” p. 339; *Or Yaqar* 9:179 on *Zohar I* 43b.

10. A paraphrase of *Avot* 5:15, “the day is short and the master is impatient.”

11. *IR* 127b–128a; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 157. Liebes (“The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 13, 18) defines the single pillar as, simultaneously, R. Shimon himself and the overarching effect of unmitigated *Din* in the world. It also refers to a recurring theme in the *Idrot*, the lopsided, unbalanced emanation of the *sefirot* into existence. The symbolism of the pillar is found in the works of the Gnostic kabbalists of thirteenth-century Gerona (Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 18–19).

12. The messianic aspects of this dilemma have been explored by Liebes (“The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 2–9, 54–67). On p. 2 of the same essay, he cites other *Zohar* texts of specifically messianic import, including *Zohar I* 119a, 139a–140a; *II* 7b–10a; *III* 212b; *Zohar Ḥadash* 55b–56c.

13. Liebes (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 130) notes that R. David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, in his work *Or Zar'u'a*, stated that he personally “knew the members of the *Idra*.” This declaration lends credence to the assumption that the framing narratives of the *Zohar* are roman à clef drawing on the spiritual personalities of a number of rabbis: Moshe de Leon, Joseph Gikatilla, Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, and Todros Abulafia.

14. *Zohar I* 20a–b, 244b–245b; *Zohar Ḥadash* 37c. Liebes has stressed the special role of the triumvirate of R. Shim'on, R. Abba, and R. Eliezer, which figures in the early recension (*Zohar II* 9a) and in the *IR* (128a) and *IZ* (*Zohar III* 287b). Liebes maintains that the

figure of R. Abba is attached to minority opinions most often traceable to other kabbalists than Moshe de-Leon. Such is the case in the shorter *Idra* (*Zohar II* 123b). See Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 10; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 115; Gershom Scholem, “A Charter of the Students of the AR”I” (Hebrew), *Tziyyon* 5 (1940): 133–160; see also Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Raba* by a Member of the Sarug School,” p. 329.

15. Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 25; see *Zohar III* 106a, 159a, 179b.

16. In another context, see Liebes, “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 93, with which I have taken issue (see p. 194), but here his point is certainly applicable.

17. Boaz Huss has observed that the figure of R. Hamnuna is closest, in his opinion, to the historical figure Todros Abulafia, were one to explore the theory of the *Zohar* as a roman à clef describing Castilian mystics such as Todros, de Leon, and Gikatilla; cf. *ShMR*, p. 219.

18. See Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 11.

19. *IZ* 287b; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 161.

20. Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 62, 75.

21. See chap. 2, p. 43.

22. Liebes compares this section to a separate excursus that also contains dimensions of risk, the account of the *tanin*, the sea serpent that serves as an embodiment of evil (*Zohar II* 34a–35b). See Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 32; and the Hebrew original “Ha-Mashiah shel ha-Zohar,” in *Ha-Ra’ayon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 122–123.

23. See Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 29, 31, 34.

24. *IR* 144b; see also *IR* 138a, “Woe to the one who reveals the secrets [*megaleh razin*], for whoever reveals the secrets is as one who holds back the *tiqqun*, for above it is set forth to draw in the secrets and not to throw them outside!”

25. *IZ* 290a–b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 341–342.

26. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 130.

27. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 130 n. 6; Matt, *Zohar*, p. 10.

28. Liebes points out the military imagery of *tiqqun*, compatible with the *Zohar*’s chivalric references to weapons and armor, and links the term to “the restoration of the upper works or to the restored worlds themselves” (“The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 22, cf. pp. 55–74). As Liebes has pointed out, there is the *tiqqun* of the death of the comrades and the *tiqqun* of the expounding of the secrets, which brings about the “*tiqqun* of the worlds” (p. 55). Liebes also maintains that the creation of a new Torah, the creation of the *Zohar* itself, is an act of *tiqqun* (pp. 56–57).

29. Sometimes the two terms blend into one another: “Who can see the hiddenness of the elder’s mane, sitting with the crown of crowns of the crowns of all the crowns? Crowns that are not subsumed into other crowns and are like no other crowns. The crowns of the lower crowns are unified with it, and through them the *tiqqunim* unify with the lower *tiqqunim*. The *tiqqunim* that have been set forth must be blessed with whatever requires blessing, for all the *tiqqunim* are set forth to receive them; the blessings are brought about as they must be, for everything is contained in these *tiqqunim*. . . . If *Attik* was not set forth with those *tiqqunim*, then the upper and the lower would not exist; everything would be as nothing” (*IR* 132a).

30. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 129.

31. “*Zohar* and Eros,” p. 93.

32. Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 61. On the function of the divine *anthropos* in the *Tiqqunim* and *Ra’aya Mebeimna*, see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 93–96.

33. Gikatilla, “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 222.

34. Rabbi Yizhak rises and begins by reciting the *ur*-text of the attributes; he “sets forth” the first *tiqqun*. Rabbi Hezekiah presents the second *tiqqun* (*IR* 132b). After R. Shim’on’s

effusive praise, R. Hezekiah stands to speak again, but an angel comes and adjures him that “no messenger may bear two messages.” Rabbi Ḥiyya presents the third *tiqqun* (*IR* 133a). Rabbi Yossi, the fifth *tiqqun* (*IR* 133a), R. Yeisa, the sixth (*Zohar III* 133b), R. Eliezer, the eighth (*IR* 134a), R. Abba, the ninth (*IR* 134a), and R. Yehudah, the tenth. The narrative fails to indicate who presents the fourth (*IR* 133a), seventh (*IR* 133b–134a), and eighth *tiqqunim* (*IR* 134a). In the *IR*'s presentation of Zeir Anpin's nine *tiqqunim*, R. Shim'on calls on his son, R. Eliezer, to recite the first *tiqqun* (*IR* 139b–140b). Rabbi Abba presents the second *tiqqun* (*IR* 140a) and seems to present the third and fourth *tiqqunim* as well. The presenters of the fifth, sixth, and eighth *tiqqunim* remain unclear. Rabbi Yehudah presents the seventh *tiqqun* (*IR* 141a), and R. Shim'on, apparently, completes the presentation.

35. *IR* 132b, after Mal. 3:20, “But for you who revere my name, a sun of victory shall rise, with healing in its wings.”

36. Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” p. 63.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 52, 61–63.

38. B.T. *Hagigah* 14b; Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 35, 178 n. 110.

39. Quoted in Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Nizuzai Orot*, *IR* 144a.

40. From the verse “For there did God command the blessing, everlasting life” (Ps. 133:3).

41. *IZ* 291a, 296b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 164–165.

42. *SdZ* 179a; *IR* 128a, 135a–b, 142a, 292a–b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 276–277, 289, 332–336; Tishby, “Paths of Fulfillment and Emanation,” in *Paths of Faith and Heresy* (Hebrew), Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982, p. 25. The kings of Edom are absent from the contemporary work *Sefer ha-Gevul*, and according to Liebes (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 128), Joseph of Hamadan had “no notion of the relationship between the deaths of the kings and the emanation of the worlds,” although Elliot Wolfson has noted the “ontological dependence of the female on the male” in Hamadan's description of the cherubim, which is related to the inner meaning of the death of the kings accounts (Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, p. 81; cf. Moshe Idel, “The Evil Thought of the Deity” [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 49 [1980]: 364; Goldreich, “*Sefer ha-Gevul*,” p. 63).

43. *Bereishit Rabbah* 3:7, 15:1; *Kobelet Rabbah* 3:11; cf. Cordovero, *Shi'ur Komah* (ed. Warsaw, 1883, 65c–66a; Jerusalem, pp. 160–161).

44. Aramaic *baanah melakhin*, *kanam melakhin* (he built worlds and set them up), which Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, in his marginal notes, tries to portray as the Hebrew *boneh malakhim u-ma'amidan*, as in the midrashic trope *boneh olamot u-mahrivan*. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*.

45. *Sha'arei Orah* 98b; cf. Avi Weinstein's translation, *Gates of Light* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 346.

46. See above, chap. 2, n. 135.

47. *IZ* 292b; Isaiah Tishby, “Distinguishing the Nature of Embodiment and Ineffability in Kabbalah,” in *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 25–26; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 289. See *Zohar III* 48b–49a.

48. Cf. Ibn Tabul: “These are the kings; the land of Edom is the place of the judgments [*dinnim*]. It refers to the first emanation, for these vessels were made in the secret of *Din*” (Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul's Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 135.)

49. This is the view of Luria in his commentary to *SdZ* (*ShMR*, p. 106): “These kings were not in the balance, and *Artika Kadisha* was not set forth as male and female, so they had no grasp above, and died.” Liebes (“How the *Zohar* Was Written,” p. 110) maintains that the image of “weighing on the scale” refers to the internal balance of the kabbalists' own lives, namely their eschewing of celibacy and practice of normative sexual continence in marriage.

50. *ShMR*, p. 106. Liebes views this as a reference to celibacy, on the part of R. Shimon, the comrades or, in cosmic terms, the kings of Edom. It also refers to an epistemological flaw, in that the secrets of the Torah are not being understood. It is also R. Shim'on's personal defect, which is why the redemption of the cosmos is also his personal redemption ("The Messiah of the *Zohar*," p. 68).

51. Liebes ("The Messiah of the *Zohar*," p. 68) points out that "none of the kings of Edom in the list . . . is the son of the king who preceded him; none but the last is mentioned as having a wife; and it is said of each but the last that 'he died.' The author of the *Zohar* concludes from this that they were celibate and regards this as the cause of their death, while the last king is viewed as the beginning of the world of *tiqqun*."

52. *IR* 135a–b. The *Zohar* and R. Todros Abulafia developed a common source for this text, albeit with the protagonist being R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai (Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 93).

53. Cordovero, *Shi'ur Qomah*, Warsaw ed. 1883, 65d; Jerusalem, pp. 161.

54. See chap. 6, pp. 133–138.

55. *Zohar ha-Raki'a*, 64a.

56. Examples of mystical analyses of the biblical text of the kings of Edom include Cordovero's *Elimah Rabbati*, Hebron ed., pp. 57a–58b, 87a–88b; *Drush ha-Melakhim* (attributed to Luria), *ShMR*, pp. 306–310; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 173a–175b.

57. Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," pp. 26, 136. See Liebes, "On the Image," pp. 101–139; Isaiah Tishby, "Assessing the Qualities of Fulfillment and Emanation in Kabbalah," in *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 23–29.

58. Liebes has explained the passage relating to the kings of Edom as implying the fall of the last Crusader stronghold in the Holy Land (Acre in 1291). "On their own, the kings of Edom function as the agents of harsh judgment (just as the judgment of *Zeir Anpin* is harsh when he is separated from *Arikkh Anpin*) and that is the reason for their severity toward the Jews" (Liebes, "The Messiah of the *Zohar*," p. 66).

59. *Zohar III* 292b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 161–165.

60. *Zohar Ḥadash* 18d–19a; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 159–161.

61. *Zohar I* 217b–218b; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 135–137.

62. See note 2 on the term *zeniuta*.

63. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 54–67, 98.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 225 n. 298; Moshe Idel, "Patterns of Redemptive Activity in the Middle Ages," in *Messianism and Eschatology* (Hebrew), Zevi Baras, ed. (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center 1984), p. 264 n. 46.

65. *Idra Rabbah*: "We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that King David stated nine *tiqqunim* here, six of which are with the divine name, which has six names, including three times the name Adam" (*Zohar III* 139b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: "Nine did David say" (*Zohar II* 177b; see Liebes, "How the *Zohar* Was Written," p. 107).

Idra Rabbah: "We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that one who sees himself clutching the beard of someone important in a dream should know that he is at peace with the higher powers" (*Zohar III* 139b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: "Whoever sees in a dream that he has seized the beard of an important man, or that he stretches out his hand to him, let him know that he is one with his Master" (*Zohar II* 177b).

66. *Idra Rabbah*: "As written in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, the Holy King is unknown, but he is, however, known through his *tiqqunim*" (*IR* 128a–b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: "The male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim*" (*Zohar II* 176b).

Idra Rabbah: “In the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* we learn that the beard of faith descends from the ears, surrounding the mouth and the rest of the face . . . We learn in the *Zeniuta de-Sifra* that these thirteen *tiggunim* stand on the sacred beard on the seventh, found in the world” (*Zohar III* 131a). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “The beard of faith is not mentioned because it is the most precious of all. From the ears it goes out, circling the face; rising and falling, a white hair. In the thirteen they separate in glory” (*Zohar II* 177a).

67. *Idra Rabbah*: “We learn in the *Zeniuta de-Sifra* that through the nose of *Zeir Anpin*, the countenance comes to be known” (*Zohar III* 137b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “The nose of the countenance *Zeir*, to be known” (*Zohar II* 177b).

Idra Rabbah: “Do we not learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that everything that is hidden away is not mentioned or revealed?” (*Zohar III* 139a). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “Everything that is hidden and not revealed, high and precious, it is found, and yet it is called hidden” (*Zohar II* 177b).

68. *Idra Rabbah*: “In the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* we learn that the first *Hesed* of *Attik Yomin* is called *Rav Hesed* [full of loving-kindness]” (*Zohar III* 140b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “The high beard that shines on the lower, for the higher is called ‘full of loving-kindness,’ and the smaller is called simply ‘loving-kindness,’ and when necessary, the higher beard shines on it and it is also called ‘full of loving-kindness’” (*Zohar II* 177b).

69. *Idra Rabbah*: “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that the holy precious thread on which all hairs are contingent is called *mazal*” (*Zohar III* 134a). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “In that *mazal* of everything flow thirteen anointings of pure persimmon. All are found and hidden in that *mazal*” (*Zohar II* 177a; cf. *Zohar III* 141a, 142a).

70. *Idra Rabbah*: “We learn in the *Zeniuta de-Sifra* the Adam is made up of higher crowns, the general and the specific [Heb. *kelal u-prat*]. And, in man, are contained lower crowns, the specific and the general” (*Zohar III* 143a). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “He set forth in that man crowns, general and specific contained in general and specific” (*Zohar II* 178a). Yehudah Liebes has pointed out that this reference is based on a misreading or a scribal error: “the correct version is in *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, *be-tren* (in two) and not *kirrin* (crowns)” (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 202 n. 65).

Idra Rabbah: “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that *Attika Kadisha*, to see if the *dinnim* had been perfumed, bound them together” (*Zohar III* 143a). “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that there is a third union of perfuming, leaving more perfumed than any other thing. It is the essence of a man, male and female” (*Zohar III* 143b). “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, as they are perfumed above, the general nature of man is the holy body, male and female . . . higher and lower worlds are embodied in the holy body” (*Zohar III* 143b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “*Attika* wanted to see if the *dinnim* had been perfumed” (*Zohar II* 178a). “The tree that is perfumed sits within, its branches unified, a nesting place for birds” (*Zohar II* 179a).

71. “In the *Zeniuta de-Sifra* we learned that there is a higher *yod* and a lower *yod*, a higher and lower *heh*, a higher and lower *vav*, all of which are contingent on *Attika*” (*Zohar III* 289a). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “The *YU'D* unifies alone, rising though its levels, higher and higher” (*Zohar II* 176b). *Sifra de-Zeniuta*: “*YH*”*Y* (hvh) is not written, we call the higher *Yo*”*d* the lower *Yo*”*d*/*Va-yizer* . . . the lower *Y*”*The higher Y*, the lower *Y*, *H*” in its body, the general whole wholeness and not to every aspect” (*Zohar II* 177a). *Idra Zuta*: “In the book of *Aggadata* we learn: *YHVH* is the god of ideas [*de’or*; 1 Sam. 2:3]. Do not read this as *de’ot* but *edut*, for it is the witness for everything, both portions, as it is written [Ps. 78:5]: *Witness has arisen for Jacob*. Even though this word was explained differently in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, let it be whole in its own place; here it is wholly perfect” (*Zohar III* 291a).

72. *Idra Rabba*: “In the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, the overseeing of the lower eye, when it oversees the higher light, and that higher light rises over the lower” (*Zohar III* 130a). *Idra Rabba*: “In the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, everything needs *Hesed* to grow and multiply, so as not to be cut off and banished from the earth” (*Zohar III* 138a–b). *Idra Rabbah*: “In the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, ears distinguishing between good and evil” (*Zohar III* 138a–b). *Idra Rabbah*: “Everything is contingent on *mazal*, even the Torah scroll in the palace, as this was demonstrated in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*” (*Zohar III* 134a).

73. Liebes maintains that these internal contradictions demonstrate that the *Idrot* and the *SdZ* are wholly independent compositions, the product of multiple authors: “The *Sifra de-Zeniuta* remains obscure even after the study of the *Idrot*. The commentaries contained in the *Idrot* do not always seem to contain the true meaning . . . and in cases where the commentary and the original do coincide, the original core of the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* has often been improved or reworded in accordance with the commentary of the *Idrot*” (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 96).

74. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 98.

75. According to Liebes’s interpretation of the preface to the *SdZ*, the mystic is enjoined to elaborate upon the meaning of a given scripture, as the baker devises fine cake from raw wheat. This may refer to the use of a skeletal original text of the *SdZ* to serve as a starting point for subsequent mystical exegeses. Liebes has surmised that the author of the *Zohar* embellished the older traditions, mixing the dualistic versions with a text portraying an “almighty concealed God who is entirely mercy and the God of Righteousness, identified with the God of the Torah and known by Jewish sacred names, that is, a text whose first source is the ancient gnosis” (*Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 97–98).

76. Matt, *Zohar*, p. 10.

77. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 174; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 81–82. The Cahana edition of the Apocrypha argues that the references to the Book of Enoch in the *Zohar* are actual references to these Hellenistic and *Merkavah* works, although a direct correspondence is difficult to demonstrate; cf. Avraham Cahana, *Sefarim Hizoniyyim* (reprint, 1978), p. 21, on *Zohar I* 58b, 55b, *II* 100a, 105b, 180b, 192b, 217a, *III* (*Ra’aya Mebeimna*) 240a, 248a, 253b.

78. “All are one in the Holy Name as the wise stated in the earlier books, that they are created gradations through which *Attika Kaddisha* is revealed, in every one of them” (*Zohar III* 288a).

79. *Zohar III* 295b.

80. *Sefer Yezirah* 2:3; *Zohar I* 80a (*Sitrei Torah*); *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 41b; *Tiqqunei Zohar Haddash* 111c. Vital explains that the glottals are in the throat, the domain of the *sefirah Binah*, while the palate signifies the *sefirah Hokhmah*, and the tongue intercedes between them (*ShMR*, pp. 254, 296).

81. *Iggerot ha-ReMeZ*, nos. 23, 20b–21a.

82. *Iggerot ha-ReMeZ* (Livorno, 1745), nos. 23, 24. Zakhut avers: “These three saints [R. Hamnuna Sabba, Rav Yeiva Sabba, and Rav Nehorai Sabba] are the foundations of the world. They are called *Sabba* for they are the ‘Ancients of Days’ who are alluded to in the emanation of the worlds before the *Tiqqun*. . . . Rav Hamnuna Sabba is the secret of the cantillation, R. Nehorai is the secret of the vowels, and R. Yeiva is the secret of the crowns.”

83. In the “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” we learn: “What is *Binah*? When they have union with one another, *Yu”d* and *H”e*, there is conceived and born a child [*ben*], therefore is called *Binah*, *Ben Y”ab*, the wholeness of everything” (*Zohar III* 290a; cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 341–342).

84. A similar interpretation occurs in Yizḥak ibn Sahulah's commentary to the Song of Songs: "behold you are fair, this is an allusion to the *Shekkinah* and those who are drawn after her" (cf. Art Greene, "Perush Shir ha-Shirim le-R. Yizḥak Ibn Sahulah," in *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe*, Joseph Dan, ed. Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 6 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1987], p. 422).

85. This is part of the doctrine of the divine kisses (*Zohar II* 143a–147a) and seems to be the passage identified by Luria and Vital as "The *Zohar* on the Song of Songs." Other references to the "first" R. Hamnuna Sabba include *Zohar II* 145a, *III* 199a. *Zohar II* 52a refers to the "Secret of the *Tekiyot* [blowing of the shofar] of R. Hamnuna Sabba."

86. *Zohar III* 292a: "Hadar as in *pri ez hadar* [Lev. 23], that Mehitabel is the palm frond, as it says: *the righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, male and female.*"

87. R. Hamnuna Sabba's book is quoted elsewhere on the inclusion of the two letters *het* and *tet* in the act of creation (*Zohar II* 152a).

88. *Zohar II* 216b, *III* 7b, 58a, 236b, 287a. At one point, R. Hamnuna Sabba refers to the recitation of the *Shema* as a *yihud* (*Zohar III* 236b).

89. See Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 860–863.

90. *Zohar II* 71a, *III* 155a–b; see Reuven Margoliot's marginalia: *Nizuzei ha-Zohar* 1–2.

91. See pp. 89–90.

5. The *Idrot*: The Doctrine of the Countenances

1. See *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 112b, *Ez Hayyim I*, p. 25; M. Idel, "The World of the Angels in the Image of Man" (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 3 1984): 1–2, n. 4; Huss, "*Ketem Paz*," p. 241; *Ketem Paz* 1:74b, 79a, 138a.

2. Reference to this countenance according to one name or another may reflect nuances of the function of this countenance. In this study, the name cited is the one used in the original context.

3. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 148; Martin Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983); Martin Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985).

4. *IR* 130b.

5. The author of the *Tiqqunim* seems to have been influenced by *Masekhet Azilut*, an early-fourteenth-century work, as well as the writings of R. Isaac of Acre. These works portrayed the four worlds of creation, *Azilut*, *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *Asiyah*, as the beginning of a doctrine of divine immanence. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 88–89; Scholem, "The Development of the Tradition of the Worlds," p. 82; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 54–57.

6. *ShMR*, p. 109.

7. *ShMR*, p. 112, cf. *IR* 129a.

8. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 170 n. 65. The term *moah* (plural *moḥin*) literally means "brain." Its use in the *Idrot* is multifaceted, encompassing the physical brain and, more abstractly, the divine consciousness.

9. *Turna*, "officer," although some versions read "color," *gavna*; see Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 334–336.

10. Luria associates *reisha de-lo iyada* with the *SdZ*'s "head of all desires" (*ShMR*, p. 107). The Vilna Gaon associates it with the "higher luster" (*tehiru ila'ah*) of the *Hormanuta* accounts (*Yabel Or* 6a).

11. Meroz, "Early Lurianic Compositions," p. 313; Wolfson, "From Sealed Book to Open Text," p. 155.

12. *ShMR*, p. 194; *Sefer ha-Drushim*, p. 33, *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 48–49, 168–170, 177–178, 181, 252–253; *Sha'ar ha-Pesukkim*, pp. 272–273.

13. *ShMR*, pp. 243–244; *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 148–149, 180.

14. *ShMR*, pp. 195, 238.

15. *ShMR*, pp. 236, 237, 240; *Ez Hayyim I*, *Sha'ar Arikh Anpin*, pp. 31, 167; *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, p. 29; *Zohar I* 65a, II 227a, 269a.

16. Ephraim Panzeiri, *Sefer ha-Drushim* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom 1996), p. 32; *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 161, 180–182.

17. *ShMR*, p. 238; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 251–252.

18. *ShMR*, pp. 197–199, 240–243.

19. *ShMR*, pp. 200, 240–241.

20. The paths of emanation from *Attika* to *Zeir* are also signified through the use of the Hebrew pronouns *hu* (“he,” “it,” or “that”) and *atah* (you). The “Aggadah Book of R. Yeiva Sabba” refers to *Zeir Anpin* as *atah* (*IZ* 290a), while *Attika Kadisha* is called *hu*.

21. *Kozim* and *nimin*: the Aramaic *koz* seems to be a *kevuza*, “lock,” and the Aramaic *nim* is an *agudah*, “strand.”

22. Cf. Luria: “Will is finer than thought. This crown has no *tiqqunim*; they are all in the hidden consciousness” (*ShMR*, p. 114).

23. This is probably one of the most literal uses of the term *keter*, “crown,” to indicate the *sefirah*.

24. *IR* 129a, 136a–b, 152a; Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 45, 47.

25. As in the composition *SdM*, see chap. 2, pp. 53–54.

26. *Sefer Yezirah* 2:3; *Zohar I* 80a (*Sitrei Torah*); *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* 41b; *Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash* 111c. See Margoliot, *Nizuzei ha-Zohar le-Tiqqunei Zohar Hadash*, p. 258. On Cordovero’s reading of the secret of the letters, see Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 47.

27. Cf. *ShMR*, pp. 254, 296.

28. Cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 439–440.

29. *IR* 138a–b; *IZ* 294b; *SdZ* 178a.

30. See *Edut be-Yehosef* (Jerusalem: 1993), pp. 104–109, the volume of meditation published, posthumously, by students of the Jerusalem kabbalist Yosef Dayan.

31. One association deriving from the combination of thirteen and nine is that of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which classical kabbalistic teaching understood as essential to the processes of creation (*IR* 138b).

32. Gikatilla’s “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes” (see pp. 118–119) refers to this *tiqqun* as the “clearing of the way,” after Isa. 37:4, 40:3.

33. This idea is further developed in *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra’aya Meheimna*; see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 71–79.

34. “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” published by Gershom Scholem in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts Found in the National and University Library in Jerusalem*, p. 224.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

36. Gershom Scholem characterized *Iyyun* mysticism as “an irruption of Neo-Platonic language and concepts into the older cosmological and Merkabah teachings.” (*Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 312).

37. Verman, *Books of Contemplation*; cf. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 309–364.

38. These are listed as (1) primordial wisdom (*Hokhmah*), (2) the “wondrous light,” (3) the electrum, (4) the fog (*arafel*), (5) the throne of the cosmic glow (*nogah*), (6) the great wheel, (7) the cherub, (8) the wheel of the chariot, (9) the surrounding ether, (10) the curtain (*pargod*) (11) the “higher superstructure” or the holy throne, (12) the place of

the souls, and (13) the “great structure” (*ma’arekhah*) or “Holy Palace” (*heikhal ha-kodesh*) (Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, pp. 213–215; this is also printed in the commentary of R. Moshe Botariel to the *Sefer Yezira*, Vilna ed. 39a–b).

39. Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, pp. 216–224.

40. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 313.

41. Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, p. 216.

42. “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” pp. 220–227.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 220–221.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.

46. Liebes considers this common lack of an eleventh attribute as one of the clearest proofs of a lost common source for both the *Idrot* and *Gikatilla* (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 101).

47. *Gikatilla*, *Sha’arei Orah* 98b; see Weinstein’s translation, *Gates of Light*, p. 346.

48. *IR* 132a; *SdZ* 177a; see p. 116.

49. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 100–101; cf. “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 223.

50. See *Elimah Rabbati*, *Ein Roi*, *Tamar* 4, on the aspects of the beard; *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 23:7; *Or Yaqar* 8:221; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 215, 245; Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 314.

51. A version of this teaching originated with the *Iyyun* circle, which linked the text to the thirteen *middot*: (1) YHVH! (2) YHVH! (3) God (El), (4) compassionate, and (5) gracious, (6) slow to anger, (7) abounding in *hesed* (8) and truth, (9) extending *hesed* to the thousandth generation, (10), forgiving iniquity, (11) transgression, and (12) sin (13) remitting (Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, p. 224).

52. *arkisaot*, an obscure Aramaicism.

53. “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 222.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Gikatilla* echoes aspects of this teaching, maintaining that the upper *tiqqunim* as a group are the “sources of *Rahamim*, the *sefirah* which is not day or night, not like the nine *sefirot* which are below *Keter*” (“Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 225). For *Gikatilla* as well, the last *tiqqun* completes and exemplifies the divine flow. However, since he avoids anthropomorphic imagery, the messianic import of this doctrine, with its charged notion of the “day of the Lord,” is absent.

57. *IR* 139b, quoting *SdZ* 177b; see also *IZ* 295a.

58. *IR* 133b; cf. *SdZ* 177b: “The high beard that shines on the lower, for the higher is called ‘full of loving-kindness,’ and the smaller is called simply ‘loving-kindness,’ and when necessary the higher beard shines on it and it is also called ‘full of loving-kindness.’” See also *Gikatilla*, “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 223.

59. *Va-yefah* (he breathed), which *Gikatilla* relates linguistically to *tapuah*, “apple.”

60. “Secret of the Thirteen Attributes,” p. 223.

61. See p. 161.

62. *ShMR*, pp. 198, 241.

63. This text has been published by Meroz in “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 327–330, and in “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 96, 106, 109; see also Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 295–298; *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 63d.

64. After the *SdZ*: “the male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim* like a mother in the mouth of a maidservant” (178a).

65. *ShMR*, p. 112.

6. The *Idrot*: The Emanation of Divinity

1. Gikatilla, "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," pp. 221–222.
2. Cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 334–336.
3. "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," pp. 221–222; Wolfson, "From Sealed Book to Open Text," pp. 156, 162, on *Sifra de-Zeniuta im Biur ha-Gr" A* (Vilna, 1882), 1b, 7d.
4. Liebes, "The Messiah of the *Zohar*," p. 62.
5. See Wald, *The Secrets of the Letters from the Divine Name*, pp. 12–15.
6. Wolfson, "From Sealed Book to Open Text," p. 151.
7. Luria was particularly interested in the function of this *Hesed*: "The *tiqqun* of the *moab* is in order that the higher *Hesed* may exit, and from this *Hesed* shines the other *moab*, in which the smashing of *buzina de-kardinuta* occurs" (*ShMR*, p. 113). "The *tiqqun* of *Attrika Kadisha* is to close its membrane so that the effluence [*shefa*] should come though the supernal *Hesed*" (*ShMR*, p. 112).
8. Of course, the *sefirot* themselves balance *Din* and *Hesed*, as Luria averred: "Each of these seven *sefirot* had the seventy-two-letter name for *Hesed* and the forty-two-letter name for *Gevurah*" (*ShMR*, p. 107).
9. *IR* 133b; cf. *SdZ* 177b; see also Gikatilla, "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," p. 223.
10. *Zohar III* 134a. This is erroneously attributed to the *SdZ*; cf. *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 193, 243–244; *Pri Ez Hayyim I*, p. 279.
11. *Zohar II* 174b. See R. Margoliot, *Nizuzei Zohar*, no. 7 to *Zohar I* 43b; cf. Gershom Scholem's notes to his personal *Zohar I* 115a, 195a, *II* 223. Most of these sources were quoted by Ze'ev ben Aryeh of Telz in his *Hagahot ben Aryeh* on B.T. *Moed Katan* 28a, who also quotes the Vilna Gaon, *Yabel Or* 17b, cautioning, "What is explained here as *mazal* is not intended to mean the stars, only that the five higher ones behave according to the thirteen qualities of mercy."
12. Gikatilla, "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," pp. 223–224.
13. In the usual parlance of the *Zohar*, this would refer to the *sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.
14. "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," pp. 223–224; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*," pp. 101–102.
15. The Gaon of Vilna, in his commentary *Yabel Or* 17b on *Zohar I* 43b, elided the theological problems of having the palpable *mazal* originate in the ineffable *Keter*: *Mazal* is "the supernal light that flows from *Binah*. From it flow all the lights, from this flowing *mazal*. . . . This is the language of *mazal* in every instance. It is the supernal *mazal* that includes the thirteen *tiqqunim*, originating in the supernal world in *Binah*, and it is the supernal *Yesod* which is also called *mazal*."
16. "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," pp. 223–224.
17. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 13:13.
18. *Sha'arei Orah* 3–4, 6, 37a, 74a; *Sha'arei Zedek* 17a; "Secret of the Thirteen Attributes," p. 223; Ze'ev Gries, "The Hasidic Managing Editor," in *Hasidism Reconsidered*, Ada Rapaport-Albert, ed. (London: Littman Library, 1996), p. 153; Scholem, "Did Moshe de-Leon Write the *Zohar*?" p. 12.
19. *Yabel Or* 26a on *Zohar II* 294a.
20. *ShMR*, p. 113.
21. Similarly, Eliezer Safrin of Komárno defined *mazal* as "the dew that flows and draws out the effluence [*shefa*]" (*Dameshek Eliezer*, Reuven Margoliot, *Nezuzei ha-Zohar* on *IR* 134a).
22. Cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 336–337. Images of the function of dew in rabbinic literature are addressed in Brigitte Kern-Ulmer, "Consistency and Change in Rabbinic Literature as Reflected in the Terms 'Rain' and 'Dew,'" *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36 (1995): 55–75; cf. *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, nos. 33, 34.

23. *ShMR*, p. 111.

24. Cf. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 341–342.

25. Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 148–149.

26. *Zohar III* 142a.

27. Luria conflated the doctrine of the uncovered *yod* and the perfuming of the *dinnim* into one concept: “The second consciousness is called *Abba*, as we learn in the second chapter. The higher *yod* is crowned in the knot of *Attika*, the gleaming higher closed membrane. The higher *yod* is *Abba*, while the lower *yod* is *Zeir Anpin*, as it says in the *Idra Zuta* [289a], in the *Zeniuta de Sifra* we learn of the higher and lower *yud*. And it says that the higher *yod* is crowned and influenced in the knot [*kitur*] of *Attika*, that is the incense [*kitur*] that goes out of *Attika* through the purifying membrane” (*ShMR*, p. 108).

28. The nuances of “revelation” are extensively addressed in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 357–368; Elliot Wolfson, “Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of an Esoteric Doctrine,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78. 1–2 (July–October 1987): 77–112; Elliot Wolfson, “Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation, from Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol,” *History of Religions* 27 (1987–1988): 198–215; Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text,” pp. 149, 169 n. 23. Wolfson points out the valorization of the feminine according to the interpretations of the Gaon of Vilna; see *Sifra de-Zeniuta ‘im Biur ha-Gr”A* (Vilna, 1882), 6a; *Yabel Or* in *Kovez Perushim al Sefer ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972) 6a–b, 23a; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Bi’ur ha-GR”A* (Vilna, 1877), 19b; *Sefer Yezirah ‘im Perush ha-GR”A* (Vilna, 1884), 3c, 7b.

29. See chap. 2, pp. 64–65; cf. Vital, *Mavo She’arim* 2:1:6.

30. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 100; see also *Sha’arei Orah* (Warsaw, 1883), 50a, which parallels *IR* 139b.

31. In *Sefer ha-Malkhut* (Dar el Beida, Casablanca, 1930).

32. Jerusalem 1913, p. 66c.

33. Liebes maintains that this was the original conclusion of the *SdZ*, and that this point of view appears in the *IR* (*Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 106–107, 110).

34. See Zwelling, “Joseph of Hamadan’s *Sefer Tashbak*,” pp. 112–117.

35. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 107.

36. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 306–317.

37. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 79–121.

7. Reading the *Idrot*

1. Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 97–99.

2. See chap. 3, pp. 70–86.

3. See pp. 18, 40.

4. See pp. 17, 53.

5. See pp. 13–14.

6. On the identification of certain sites in the Galilee with occurrences in the *Zohar*, see Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee,” pp. 147–169.

7. Meir Benyahu, *Toledot ha-AR”I* (Jerusalem: Makhon ben Zevi, 1967), pp. 179–180; *Shivhei ha-AR”I* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1991), p. 111.

8. See chap. 1, pp. 16–18.

9. The introduction to the *Shi’ur Qomah*, a commentary on the *Matnitin* version of the *Hormanuta* texts, has been published by Sack in her *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 319–361. It is a commentary on the final *Hormanuta* texts in the *Tiqqunim* of the *Zohar Hadash*. See pp. 76–77.

10. See Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 47, on *Or Yaqar* 8:76–77, 13:253.
11. *Or Yaqar* 21:199; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 319.
12. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 47n; *Shi'ur Qomah* (Warsaw) 68b, (Jerusalem), p. 164.
13. *Hotem hi Tiferet she-be-Sod Da'at (Shi'ur Qomah)*, Warsaw, p. 142); Jerusalem, p. 168.
14. This lexicon was published quite early (Warsaw, 1883), but the entire *Shi'ur Qomah* commentary remained unpublished until 1991–1996.
15. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 322. See chap. 3, p. 77.
16. *Shi'ur Qomah*, Warsaw, p. 36; Jerusalem, p. 91.
17. Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, p. 280 n. 13.
18. *Shi'ur Qomah*, Warsaw 1883 9b, Jerusalem I p. 91.
19. The image of the craftsman is echoed in Luria's commentary to *SdZ*, according to Vital (*ShMR*, p. 108).
20. This “rejoicing” (*she'ashu'ah*) has been the subject of much attention by contemporary scholars. See chap. 3, pp. 85–86.
21. *Shi'ur Qomah*, Warsaw 1883 9b, Jerusalem p. 91.
22. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 190.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, p. 27.
25. *IR* 127b–128a.
26. *ShMR*, p. 186; *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, pp. 16–18.
27. I first heard this view from Menaḥem Kallus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
28. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 7a; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, pp. 384–385; *Ez Hayyim II* pp. 270–272.
29. Meroz, “The AR”I’s Homily, p. 217.
30. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 115–167; Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” p. 325.
31. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 171–256; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 120, 164.
32. *ShMR*, pp. 256–257, 262, 264–266, 286–287; see p. 107.
33. *Or Yaqar* 13:43; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 67.
34. *ShMR*, p. 263.
35. *ShMR*, p. 262; cf. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167; see chap. 2, pp. 52–53.
36. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 257–348.
37. See pp. 95–98, 209–210.
38. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167; *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 171a–175a; *ShMR*, pp. 188–189, 207, 211, 213–214; Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” pp. 135, 143; *Ez Hayyim II* pp. 226–228.
39. *Zohar Hadash* 93a–b; *Or Yaqar* 17:195. This association is also evident in the Lurianic composition *Mavo She'arim* (pp. 18–19): “These are the ten martyrs to the government, who were really the ten kings who died, and whose vessels and bodies were broken, because they were without *tiqqun* of the male and female, till the glory of the king . . . and through it they were repaired.”
40. *Shi'ur Qomah* (Warsaw, 1883 65d, Jerusalem p. 160); see also *Zohar II* 254b, in which this theme is linked to the fates of the four who entered the *Pardes*.
41. B.T. *Menahot* 29b.
42. *Shi'ur Qomah* (Warsaw, 1883 65c–66a, Jerusalem pp. 160–161); *Elimah Rabbati* (Lvov, 1881), 51a–60a, 87b–88a, 101b–109b; Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 25–27; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 131.

43. Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 231; *Or Yaqar* 11: 292.
44. Sack, “The RaMaK and the AR”I,” pp. 314, 329–330; *Zohar II* 254b–255a.
45. Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim* 25:1; Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 232; Moshe Idel, “The Evil Thought of the Deity” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 49 (1980): 356–364.
46. *ShMR*, p. 106; *Ez Hayyim I*, p. 208. In ibn Tabul’s *Idra* commentary, they are the chaff in the dough; cf. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 138.
47. See *Zohar III* 33b; Vital, *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 195–196, 219–234; *ShMR*, p. 188; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167; Meroz, “Early Lurianic Compositions,” pp. 315, 327, 329. Meroz cites a number of antecedents to this idea. See David ben Zimrah, *Mezudat David* 35b; cf. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbenu Azriel*, Isaiah Tishby, ed. (Jerusalem, 1945), p. 42; Yehudah ha-Hayyat, commentary to *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohot* (Mantua, 1568), p. 140a; Menahem Recanati, commentary to Torah 61a–b; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 114–115; Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, pp. 357–369.
48. *Likkutim Hadasim me-ha-AR”I Z”L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z”L* (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 23.
49. *Ibid.*
50. See p. 95.
51. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 135.
52. *ShMR*, pp. 190, 203–205.
53. *ShMR*, pp. 188–189.
54. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 135; *IR* 135b. See also Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167; Vital, *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 49–50, 112–117, 123, 144–165; *II*, pp. 89–91, 262–263, 316, 347–348, 413–415; *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, pp. 33–34; *Likkutei Torah*, p. 228.
55. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 349–353, 371–411; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 27.
56. *Ez Hayyim I*, pp. 85–88.
57. *ShMR*, p. 107
58. See chap. 3, pp. 81–82.
59. Vital incorporated the doctrine of the four worlds throughout his writing. See in particular *Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot*, pp. 279–281, 383–384; *Ez Hayyim I*, 45–52, *II*, pp. 297–370; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 77–79, 92–94.
60. Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut*, 11b.
61. *ShMR*, p. 274.
62. Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 139.
63. *Zohar II* 96a, *III* (RM) 109b; *ShMR*, pp. 190, 192, 217–218; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut*, 4b, 7d; *Ez Hayyim II*, pp. 345–349; *Likkutim Hadasim me-ha-AR”I Z”L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z”L*, p. 18; Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*”; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 252, 359.
64. *Likkutim Hadasim me-ha-AR”I Z”L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z”L*, pp. 19–20, 22.
65. The image of God as a cosmic potter is presented in Jer. 18:6.
66. *Likkutim Hadasim me-ha-AR”I Z”L u-me-Hayyim Vital Z”L*, p. 20.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 21; see chap. 1, pp. 21–22.
68. Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*.
69. See Elliot Wolfson, “Left Contained in Right: A Study in Zoharic Hermeneutics,” *Association for Jewish Studies Journal* 11 (1987): 27–32.
70. This teaching is found in Shalom Buzaglo, *Hadrat Melekh* (Amsterdam, 1766), 43a–b; Scholom, “The AR”I’s Actual Kabbalistic Writings,” pp. 198–199; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 354–358.

71. *Likkutim Ḥadashim me-ha-AR"Y Z"Y u-me-Ḥayyim Vital Z"Y*, pp. 18, 21; Meroz, "Early Lurianic Compositions," p. 327; Panzeiri, *Sefer ha-Drushim* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1996), p. 3; Vital, *ShMR*, pp. 204–205, 219; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, pp. 342–346; *Likkutei Torah*, pp. 204–205; *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 196–197.

72. The source for the last teaching is the *Drush Adam Kadman*. This *drush* begins the *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, and it also forms the foundation of Meir Poppers's *Derekh Ez Ḥayyim*. These texts are adapted from the *kontros ha-kizur*, the short pamphlet that Ḥayyim Vital transcribed while Luria was still alive; see, Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 359–370; Meroz, "Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching," pp. 28, 52–54; *ShMR*, p. 68, to *Zohar I* 65a.

73. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 251; *ShMR*, pp. 250, 252.

74. *Zohar II* 146a; *ShMR*, p. 270; *Ez Ḥayyim II*, pp. 245–246.

75. *SdZ* 168b–177a.

76. *ShMR*, p. 236.

77. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167, 188–189, 252–253; *ShMR*, pp. 262–264, 292–293; *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 89–90; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 7a. At one point Vital explains that *Abba* and *Imma* are not mentioned in the *IR*, "because they are subsumed in *mazal*" (*IZ* 291a; *ShMR*, p. 236).

78. Weinstock, "R. Yosef ibn Tabul's Commentary on the *Idra*," p. 129; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 8c.

79. The prevalence of this theme in classical Kabbalah has been explored by Elliot Wolfson, particularly in the articles "From Sealed Book to Open Text," "Woman," and "Eunuchs Who Keep Sabbath," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, Jeffrey Graham and B. Wheeler, eds. (New York: Garland, 1997). See also Pinchas Giller, "Elliot Wolfson and the Study of Kabbalah in the Wake of Scholem," *Religious Studies Review* 25. 1 (January 1999): 23–28.

80. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 104a; *ShMR*, p. 249. See also Melilah Hellner-Eshed, "A River Issues Forth from Eden: The Language of Mystical Invocation in the *Zohar*," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 2 (1997): 299.

81. Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil*, p. 146; *ShMR*, pp. 217, 249; *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 93, 281, 283–335, *II*, pp. 3–4, 54, 69, 82; *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, p. 263; *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, pp. 133–135; *Sha'ar ha-Pesukkim*, p. 161; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, pp. 41–44, 126–128, 162; *Likkutei Torah*, p. 332.

82. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 166–167, 252.

83. *ShMR*, pp. 249, 267, 269–270.

84. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 252; Vital, *ShMR*, pp. 260, 262, 286; *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 221–234, 264–265, *II*, pp. 60–69, 184–186; cf. *Zohar III* 65b.

85. *Zohar ha-Raki'a* 104a.

86. On the origins of the term *hanhagah*, see Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 4–11.

87. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 292.

88. *Zohar I* 34b, *II* 55a, *III* 44b, 203b, and *IR* 142b–143a; Vital, *ShMR*, pp. 219–220; see also introduction to *IZ* commentary; *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 21–22, *II*, p. 69; *Likkutei Torah*, p. 11; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, pp. 206–207, 217–218; *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim*, p. 17; *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, p. 451 (thanks to Menachem Kallus for direction in this area).

89. Vital, *Ez Ḥayyim II*, p. 45; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 7d; Weinstock, "R. Yosef ibn Tabul's Commentary on the *Idra*," pp. 132, 138–139; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 251.

90. Thanks to Menachem Kallus for explaining this to me. Cf. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 252; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, pp. 50–51; *ShMR*, pp. 196, 197, 246, 284; see also the *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, *Yihud* 17, p. 126.

91. *Zohar II* 88a–b; *ShMR*, pp. 86–88; Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 116n, 117; cf. Yehudah Liebes, “Sabbath Meal Hymns of the Holy AR” (Hebrew), *Molad* 4 (1972): 540–555.

92. As Yosef ibn Tabul put it, insofar as God originally “built worlds and destroyed them,” so “everything requires *tiqqun*, even *Keter*.” See Weinstock, “R. Yosef ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the *Idra*,” p. 140.

93. In the early years of Polish Ḥasidism, for instance, the most widely disseminated purely Lurianic documents were instruction manuals of Lurianic theurgy, such as Vital’s *Sefer ha-Kavvanot* (Korez, n.d.). This body of literature has been explored in the works of Ze’ev Gries, particularly his *Conduct Literature*.

94. See p. 15.

95. See Fine, “The Contemplative Practice of Yiḥudim,” pp. 64–98; Werblowsky, *Rabbi Joseph Karo*.

96. *ShMR*, p. 278; hence, the lack of a requirement for women to put on *tefillin*, because the hand *tefillah* is for Rachel, who is already bound to Jacob (*ShMR*, p. 283).

97. *ShMR*, pp. 274–279.

98. *ShMR*, p. 271; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 252.

99. *ShMR*, pp. 192–193, 236, 266–267, 272–273; *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 74a.

100. *Limmudei Azilut* 9b; *ShMR*, p. 208.

101. *Zohar ha-Raki’a* 71a–b.

102. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 245, 246, 286.

103. See Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1894), pp. 10–22.

104. See Robert Alter, “Jewish Mysticism in Dispute,” *Commentary*, September 1989, pp. 53–59; David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

105. Idel, “The History of the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah Research,” p. 89; Bracha Sack, “R. Moshe Cordovero’s Doctrine of *Zimzum*” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 58 (1989).

106. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 265. See also Idel’s *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 5–14, 169–175. This important work was published as the present book was going to press, and I regret not having been able to make fuller reference to Idel’s challenging understandings of the relationship of Kabbalah and messianism.

107. Another useful schema for the development of Kabbalah, taking into account the influence of Islamic culture, has been recently offered in Moshe Idel’s *R. Menahem Recanati*, pp. 13–15.

108. See pp. 54–57.

109. See chap. 5. See also Yehudah Liebes’s review of Charles Mopsik’s edition of Moshe de Leon’s *Shekel ha-Kodesh* in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 2 (1997): 279.

110. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 349; Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” pp. 121–122.

111. See pp. 147–150. Vital, *Ez Ḥayyim I*, p. 24; Sarug, *Limmudei Azilut* 4d, 6a–b, 12d.

112. See pp. 23–24.

113. Liebes, “Two Young Roes,” pp. 117–118, 126–127, 144; Rubin, “The *Zohar* Commentaries of R. Yosef ibn Tabul,” p. 363.

114. The classic presentation of these themes is Liebes, “The Messiah of the *Zohar*” in his *Studies in the Zohar* (S.U.N.Y. 1981), pp. 1–84.

115. See above, n. 120. Isaiah Tishby documented the patterns of that success, although Moshe Idel has challenged whether Cordovero’s teaching’s fell quite so deeply from dis-

favor (Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995], pp. 33–43).

Appendix

1. This is a play on the first word of the Bible, *bereshit*, which in Aramaic signifies *bara shii*, “he created six.”
2. Cf. Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 292–301.
3. This term, *kultra de-kultrui*, is difficult. See *Zohar III* 288a, 289b, particularly the comments of Margoliot in *Nezuzei ha-Zohar*, who refers to Menaḥem de Lonzano’s *Shtei Yadot*, on the word *kltr*. My translation is based on the marginal comments of R. Shim’on Lavi and Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai.
4. The term *ahṭa*, for “sister,” is also used to mean “I descend.”
5. Or “tongue.”
6. Yehudah Liebes addresses the nuances of the use of the term “Adam” in a different section of the *Zohar* (*Studies in the Zohar*, p. 114, on *Zohar III* 48a).
7. *Pardashka*, implying the nose.
8. *Kitfui de-kitfin* is somewhat impenetrable usage. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai interprets it as “cleaving.” Based on the interpretations, I am tempted to read this as, literally, the “sap of saps.”
9. *Tifsa shereikin*, based on pseudo-Lavi.
10. *Einakha*, omitting the *yod* that is customarily written in the second syllable, implying the hiddenness of the divine (symbolized by *yod*).
11. *Zohar II* 177b. See *Zohar III* 294a; Margoliot (*Nizozei ha-Zohar* 8) on B.T. *Yevamot* 120a (“There is no witnessing except of a countenance with the nose”).
12. Namely, from the top of the ears to the top of the lips.
13. Compare the *Idra Rabbah* “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that King David stated nine *tiqqunim* here, six of which are with the divine name, which has six names, including three times the name Adam” (*Zohar III* 139b). The nine phrases beginning with Psalm 118:5 are interpreted as signifying the nine *tiqqunim* of the beard of *Zeir Anpin*.
14. *Idra Rabbah*: “We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that one who sees himself clutching the beard of someone important in a dream should know that he is at peace with the higher powers” (*Zohar III* 139b).
15. A play on words, the Hebrew *kayin* (Cain) being linked with the word *ken* (nest).
16. *Al’ulin*; see Targum to Ps. 107:25.
17. *Katfurin*; cf. *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* on Eccles. 10:2.
18. According to the Gr”a *kitrin* (crowns), in some editions *be-train*, “in two,” is offered as an alternative reading.
19. Hebrew *klal u-prat*.
20. Transliterations of Yu”d (Heb. *swwuh*).
21. Aramaic *du*, “two”.
22. Aramaic *Nafik le-metaltelai*.
23. *Ha-Tiferet ve-ha-Nezakh*.
24. A talmudic injunction; to always repeat an adage in the name of its author.
25. *Gistera*, cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 15.
26. This précis of the material in the *Idrot* (*Zohar II* 122b–123b) was widely considered to be the *Idra de-Bei Mashkana* by mainstream kabbalists. See Yehudah Liebes’s extensive discussion of this issue in “The Messiah of the *Zohar*,” pp. 87, 177 n. 109. See also Elliot R. Wolfson, “Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Lit-

erature,” in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, Peter Schaefer and Joseph Dan, eds. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994) pp. 212–215.

27. This is a strange use of Hebrew *tahor* and *tameh*, rather than the expected Aramaic *dakhya* and *zohamah*.

28. *Itgazru*, from the root GZR, which could also mean “to cut.”

29. The numerical coefficient of the Hebrew *gw* is seventy.

30. Hebrew *gemul*.

31. *Nahar*, “river,” also means “light” in Aramaic.

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