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year after his death. The story is recorded in the eight-century Arab history by Muhammad ibn Ishāq, *Strat Rasūl Allah* (tr. by Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (1955), 364-9).

Bibliography: H. Z. Hirschberg, *Yisrael be-Arav* (1946), index; W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (1956), 209f.; EIS, 2 pt. 1 (1927), 583. [ED.]

KABBALAH. This entry is arranged according to the following outline:

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL NOTES. "Kabbalah" is the traditional and most commonly used term for the esoteric teachings of Judaism and for Jewish mysticism, especially the forms which it assumed in the Middle Ages from the 12th century onward. In its wider sense it signifies all the successive esoteric movements in Judaism that evolved from the end of the period of the Second Temple and became active factors in the history of Israel.

Kabbalah is a unique phenomenon, and should not

generally be equated with what is known in the history of religion as "mysticism." It is mysticism in fact; but at the same time it is both esotericism and theosophy. In what sense it may be called mysticism depends on the definition of the term, a matter of dispute among scholars. If the term is restricted to the profound yearning for direct human communion with God through annihilation of individuality (*bitul ha-yesh* in hasidic terminology), then only a few manifestations of Kabbalah can be designated as such, because few kabbalists sought this goal, let alone formulated it openly as their final aim. However, Kabbalah may be considered mysticism in so far as it seeks an apprehension of God and creation whose intrinsic elements are beyond the grasp of the intellect, although this is seldom explicitly belittled or rejected by the Kabbalah. Essentially these elements were perceived through contemplation and illumination, which is often presented in the Kabbalah as the transmission of a primeval revelation concerning the nature of the Torah and other religious matters. In essence, the Kabbalah is far removed from the rational and intellectual approach to religion. This was the case even among those kabbalists who thought that basically religion was subject to rational enquiry, or that, at least, there was some accord between the path of intellectual perception and the development of the mystical approach to the subject of creation. For some kabbalists the intellect itself became a mystical phenomenon. So we find in Kabbalah a paradoxical emphasis on the congruence between intuition and tradition. It is this emphasis, together with the historical association already hinted at in the term "kabbalah" (something handed down by tradition), that points to the basic differences between the Kabbalah and other kinds of religious mysticism which are less closely identified with a people's history. Nevertheless, there are elements common to Kabbalah and both Greek and Christian mysticism, and even historical links between them.

Like other kinds of mysticism, Kabbalah too draws upon the mystic's awareness of both the transcendence of God and His immanence within the true religious life, every facet of which is a revelation of God, although God Himself is most clearly perceived through man's introspection. This dual and apparently contradictory experience of the self-concealing and self-revealing God determines the essential sphere of mysticism, while at the same time it obstructs other religious conceptions. The second element in Kabbalah is that of theosophy, which seeks to reveal the mysteries of the hidden life of God and the relationships between the divine life on the one hand and the life of man and creation on the other. Speculations of this type occupy a large and conspicuous area in kabbalistic teaching. Sometimes their connection with the mystical plane becomes rather tenuous and is superseded by an interpretative and homiletical vein which occasionally even results in a kind of kabbalistic *pilpul*.

In its form the Kabbalah became to a large extent an esoteric doctrine. Mystical and esoteric elements coexist in Kabbalah in a highly confused fashion. By its very nature, mysticism is knowledge that cannot be communicated directly but may be expressed only through symbol and metaphor. Esoteric knowledge, however, in theory can be transmitted, but those who possess it are either forbidden to pass it on or do not wish to do so. The kabbalists stressed this esoteric aspect by imposing all kinds of limitations on the propagation of their teachings, either with regard to the age of the initiates, the ethical qualities required of them, or the number of students before whom these teachings could be expounded. Typical of this is the account of the conditions for initiates in Kabbalah found in Moses *Cordovero's *Or Ne'erav*. Often these limitations

were disregarded in practice, despite the protests of many kabbalists. The printing of kabbalistic books and the influence of Kabbalah on widening circles broke down such restrictions, especially as far as the teachings on God and man were concerned. Nevertheless, there remained areas where these limitations were still more or less adhered to; for example, in the meditations on the letter-combinations (*hokhmat ha-zeruf*) and practical Kabbalah.

Many kabbalists denied the existence of any kind of historical development in the Kabbalah. They saw it as a kind of primordial revelation that was accorded to Adam or the early generations and that endured, although new revelations were made from time to time, particularly when the tradition had been either forgotten or interrupted. This notion of the nature of esoteric wisdom was expressed in apocryphal works like the the Book of Enoch, was again stressed in the *Zohar, and served as the basis for the dissemination of kabbalistic teaching in *Sefer ha-Emunot* by *Shem Tov b. Shem Tov (c. 1400) and in *Avodat ha-Kodesh* by Meir b. *Gabbai (1567). It became widely accepted that the Kabbalah was the esoteric part of the Oral Law given to Moses at Sinai. Several of the genealogies of the tradition appearing in kabbalistic literature, which were intended to support the idea of the continuity of the secret tradition, are themselves faulty and misconceived, lacking in any historical value. In actual fact, some kabbalists themselves give concrete instances of the historical development of their ideas, since they regard them either as having deteriorated to some extent from the original tradition, which found its expression in the increase of kabbalistic systems, or as part of a gradual progress toward the complete revelation of the secret wisdom. Kabbalists themselves rarely attempt to attain a historical orientation, but some examples of such an approach may be found in *Emunat Hakhamim* by Solomon Avi'ad Sar-Shalom *Basilea (1730), and in *Divrei Soferim* by *Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin (1913).

From the beginning of its development, the Kabbalah embraced an esotericism closely akin to the spirit of Gnosticism, one which was not restricted to instruction in the mystical path but also included ideas on cosmology, angelology, and magic. Only later, and as a result of the contact with medieval Jewish philosophy, the Kabbalah became a Jewish "mystical theology," more or less systematically elaborated. This process brought about a separation of the mystical, speculative elements from the occult and especially the magical elements, a divergence that at times was quite distinct but was never total. It is expressed in the separate usage of the terms *Kabbalah iyyunit* ("speculative Kabbalah") and *Kabbalah ma'asit* ("practical Kabbalah"), evident from the beginning of the 14th century—which was simply an imitation of *Maimonides' division of philosophy into "speculative" and "practical" in chapter 14 of his *Millot ha-Higgayon*. There is no doubt that some kabbalistic circles (including those in Jerusalem up to modern times) preserved both elements in their secret doctrine, which could be acquired by means of revelation or by way of initiation rites.

Once rabbinic Judaism had crystallized in the *halakhah*, the majority of the creative forces aroused by new religious stimuli, which neither tended nor had the power to change the outward form of a firmly established halakhic Judaism, found expression in the kabbalistic movement. Generally speaking, these forces worked internally, attempting to make of the traditional Torah and of the life led according to its dictates a more profound inner experience. The general tendency is apparent from a very early date, its purpose being to broaden the dimensions of the Torah and

to transform it from the law of the people of Israel into the inner secret law of the universe, at the same time transforming the Jewish *hasid* or *zaddik* into a man with a vital role in the world. The kabbalists were the main symbolists of rabbinic Judaism. For Kabbalah, Judaism in all its aspects was a system of mystical symbols reflecting the mystery of God and the universe, and the kabbalists' aim was to discover and invent keys to the understanding of this symbolism. To this aim is due the enormous influence of the Kabbalah as a historical force, which determined the face of Judaism for many centuries, but it too can explain the perils, upheavals, and contradictions, both internal and external, which the realization of this aim brought in its wake.

TERMS USED FOR KABBALAH. At first the word "kabbalah" did not especially denote a mystical or esoteric tradition. In the Talmud it is used for the extra-Pentateuchal parts of the Bible, and in post-talmudic literature the Oral Law is also called "kabbalah." In the writings of *Eleazar of Worms (beginning of the 13th century) esoteric traditions (concerning the names of the angels and the magical Names of God) are referred to as "kabbalah," e.g., in his *Hilkhot ha-Kisse* (in *Merkabah Shelemah*, 1921), and *Sefer ha-Shem*. In his commentary to the *Sefer *Yezirah* (c. 1130), when he is discussing the creation of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the *Shekhinah*, *Judah b. Barzillai states that the sages "used to transmit statements of this kind to their students and to sages quietly, in a whisper, through kabbalah." All this demonstrates that the term "kabbalah" was not yet used for any one particular field. The new, precise usage originated in the circle of *Isaac the Blind (1200) and was adopted by all his disciples.

Kabbalah is only one of the many terms used, during a period of more than 1,500 years, to designate the mystical movement, its teaching, or its adherents. The Talmud speaks of *sitrei torah* and *razei torah* ("secrets of the Torah"), and parts of the secret tradition are called *ma'aseh bereshit* (literally, "the work of creation") and *ma'aseh merkabah* ("the work of the chariot"). At least one of the mystical groups called itself *yoredei merkabah* ("those who descend to the chariot"), an extraordinary expression whose meaning eludes us (perhaps it means those who reach down into themselves in order to perceive the chariot?). In the mystical literature from the close of the talmudic period and afterward, the terms *ba'alei ha-sod* ("masters of the mystery") and *anshei emunah* ("men of belief") already occur, and the latter also appears as early as the Slavonic Book of Enoch. In the period of the Provençal and Spanish kabbalists the Kabbalah is also called *hokhmah penimit* ("inner wisdom"), perhaps a phrase borrowed from Arabic, and the kabbalists are often called *maskilim* ("the understanding ones"), with reference to Daniel 12:10, or *doreshei reshumot* ("those who interpret texts"), a talmudic expression for allegorists. In the same way as the word Kabbalah came to be restricted in meaning to the mystical or esoteric tradition, so, at the beginning of the 13th century, the words *emet* ("truth"), *emunah* ("faith"), and *hokhmah* ("wisdom") were used to designate the mystical or inner truth. Hence the widespread use of *hokhmat ha-emet* ("the science of truth") and *derekh ha-emet* ("the way of truth"). There is also found the expression *hakhmei lev* ("the wise-hearted"), after Exodus 28:3. The kabbalists are also called *ba'alei ha-yedi'ah* ("the masters of knowledge"—Gnostics) or *ha-yode'im* ("those who know") beginning with *Nahmanides. Nahmanides also coined the phrase *yode'ei hen* ("those who know grace"), after Ecclesiastes 9:11, where *hen* is used as an abbreviation for *hokhmah nistarah* ("secret wisdom"). The author of the Zohar uses terms such as *benei meheimnuta* ("children of

faith"), *benei heikhala de-malka* ("children of the king's palace"), *yade'ei hokhmeta* ("those who know wisdom"), *yade'ei middin* ("those who know measures"), *mehazdei hakla* ("those who reap the field"), and *inon de-allu u-nefaku* ("those who entered and left in peace"), after *Hagigah* 14b. Several authors call the kabbalists *ba'alei ha-avodah* ("masters of service"), i.e., those who know the true, inner way to the service of God. In the main part of the Zohar the term Kabbalah is not mentioned, but it is used in the later strata, in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Sefer ha-Tikkunim*. From the beginning of the 14th century the name Kabbalah almost completely superseded all other designations.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE KABBALAH

The Early Beginnings of Mysticism and Esotericism. The development of the Kabbalah has its sources in the esoteric and theosophical currents existing among the Jews of Palestine and Egypt in the era which saw the birth of Christianity. These currents are linked with the history of Hellenistic and syncretistic religion at the close of antiquity. Scholars disagree on the measure of the influence exerted by such trends, and also by Persian religion, on the early forms of Jewish mysticism. Some stress the Iranian influence on the general development of Judaism during the period of the Second Temple, and particularly on certain movements such as the Jewish apocalyptic, a view supported by many experts on the different forms of Gnosticism, like R. Reitzenstein and G. Widengren. That there was an extensive degree of Greek influence on these currents is maintained by a number of scholars, and various theories have been adduced to explain this. Many specialists in the Gnosticism of the first three centuries of the common era see it as basically a Greek or Hellenistic phenomenon, certain aspects of which appeared in Jewish circles, particularly in those sects on the fringes of rabbinic Judaism—*ha-minim*. The position of *Philo of Alexandria and his relationship with Palestinian Judaism is of especial weight in these controversies. In contrast to scholars like Harry Wolfson who see Philo as fundamentally a Greek philosopher in Jewish garb, others, like Hans Lewy and Erwin Goodenough, interpret him as a theosophist or even a mystic. Philo's work, they believe, should be seen as an attempt to explain the faith of Israel in terms of Hellenistic mysticism, whose crowning glory was ecstatic rapture. In his monumental book, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (12 vols. 1953–68), Goodenough maintains that, in contrast to Palestinian Judaism which found expression in *halakhah* and *aggadah* and in the esoteric ideas which were indigenous developments, Diaspora Judaism showed little evidence of Palestinian influence. Instead, he avers, it had a specific spirituality based on a symbolism which is not rooted solely in the *halakhah*, but which is endowed with an imaginative content of a more or less mystical significance. He believes that the literary evidence, such as the writings of Philo and Hellenistic Judaism, provides extremely useful keys to an understanding of the archaeological and pictorial documentation which he has assembled in such abundance. Although considerable doubt has been cast on Goodenough's basic theories there is sufficient material in his great work to stimulate investigation into previously neglected aspects of Judaism and into evidence which has been insufficiently examined. His argument on the basically mystical significance of the pictorial symbols cannot be accepted, but he did succeed in establishing a link between certain literary evidence extant in Greek, Coptic, Armenian, and esoteric teachings prevalent in Palestinian Judaism. A similar link between Philonic ideas and the

viewpoint of the *aggadah*, including the *aggadah* of the mystics, was also suggested by Yitzhak Baer (*Zion*, 23–24 (1958/59), 33–34, 141–65). Philo's book *De Vita Contemplativa* (*About the Contemplative Life*, 1895) mentions the existence of a sectarian community of "worshippers of God," who had already formulated a definitely mystical understanding of the Torah as a living body, and this paved the way for a mystical exegesis of Scripture.

An important element common to both Alexandrian and Palestinian Judaism is the speculation on Divine Wisdom which has its scriptural roots in Proverbs 8 and Job 28. Here Wisdom is seen as an intermediary force by means of which God creates the world. This appears in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (7:25) as "a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty . . . For she is an effulgence from everlasting light, And an unspotted mirror of the working of God, And an image of His goodness" (Charles). In the Slavonic Book of Enoch God commands His Wisdom to create man. Wisdom is here the first attribute of God to be given concrete form as an emanation from the Divine Glory. In many circles this Wisdom soon became the Torah itself, the "word of God," the form of expression of the Divine Power. Such views of the mystery of Wisdom demonstrate how parallel development could take place, on the one hand through rabbinic exegesis of the words of Scripture, and on the other through the influence of Greek philosophical speculations on the Logos. It should be noted that there is no definite proof that Philo's writings had an actual direct influence on rabbinic Judaism in the post-tannaitic period, and the attempt to prove that the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* of the Zohar is nothing but a Hellenistic Midrash (S. Belkin, in: *Sura*, 3 (1958), 25–92) is a failure. However, the fact that the Karaite *Kirkisānī (tenth century) was familiar with certain quotations drawn from Philonic writings shows that some of his ideas found their way, perhaps through Christian-Arab channels, to members of Jewish sects in the Near East. But it should not be deduced from this that there was a continuous influence up to this time, let alone up to the time of the formulation of the Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. Specific parallels between Philonic and kabbalistic exegesis should be put down to the similarity of their exegetical method, which naturally produced identical results from time to time (see S. Poznański, in *REJ*, 50 (1905), 10–31).

Against the theories concerning Persian and Greek influences should be set the inner dynamism of the development taking place within Palestinian Judaism, which was in itself capable of producing movements of a mystical and esoteric nature. This kind of development can also be seen in those circles whose historical influence was crucial and decisive for the future of Judaism, e.g., among the Pharisees, the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, that is to say, at the very heart of established rabbinic Judaism. In addition, there were similar tendencies in other spheres outside the mainstream, in the various currents whose influence on subsequent Judaism is a matter of controversy: the *Essenes, the *Qumran sect (if these two are not one and the same), and the different Gnostic sects on the periphery of Judaism whose existence is attested to by the writings of the *Church Fathers. Some have sought to demonstrate the existence of mystical trends even in biblical times (Hertz, Horodetzky, Lindblom, Montefiore), but it is almost certain that the phenomena which they connected with mysticism, like prophecy and the piety of certain psalms, belong to other strands in the history of religion. Historically speaking, organized closed societies of mystics have been proved to exist only since the end of the Second Temple era; this is clearly attested to by the struggle taking place in this period between different religious forces, and by the

tendency then current to delve more deeply into original religious speculation.

Apocalyptic Esotericism and Merkabah Mysticism. Chronologically speaking, it is in apocalyptic literature that we find the first appearance of ideas of a specifically mystical character, reserved for the elect. Scholars do not agree on whether the origins of this literature are to be found among the Pharisees and their disciples or among the Essenes, and it is quite possible that apocalyptic tendencies appeared in both. It is known from Josephus that the Essenes possessed literature which was both magical and angelological in content. His silence concerning their apocalyptic ideas can be understood as his desire to conceal this aspect of contemporary Judaism from his gentile readers. The discovery of the literary remains of the Qumran sect shows that such ideas found a haven among them. They possessed the original Book of Enoch, both in Hebrew and Aramaic, although it is quite likely that it was composed in the period preceding the split between the Pharisees and the members of the Qumran sect. In fact, traditions resembling those embedded in the Book of Enoch found their way into rabbinic Judaism at the time of the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, and it is impossible to determine precisely the breeding ground of this type of tradition until the problems presented by the discovery of the Qumran writings have been solved. The Book of Enoch was followed by apocalyptic writing up to the time of the *tannaim*, and, in different ways, after this period also. Esoteric knowledge in these books touched not only upon the revelation of the end of time and its awesome terrors, but also upon the structure of the hidden world and its inhabitants: heaven, the Garden of Eden, and Gehinnom, angels and evil spirits, and the fate of the souls in this hidden world. Above this are revelations concerning the Throne of Glory and its Occupant, which should apparently be identified with "the wonderful secrets" of God mentioned by the *Dead Sea Scrolls. Here a link can be established between this literature and the much later traditions concerning the *ma'aseh bereshit* and the *ma'aseh merkabah*.

It is not just the content of these ideas which is considered esoteric; their authors too hid their own individuality and their names, concealing themselves behind biblical characters like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Baruch, Daniel, Ezra, and others. This self-concealment, which was completely successful, has made it extremely difficult for us to determine the historical and social conditions of the authors. This pseudepigraphical pattern continued within the mystical tradition in the centuries that followed. The clear tendency toward asceticism as a way of preparing for the reception of the mystical tradition, which is already attested to in the last chapter of the Book of Enoch, becomes a fundamental principle for the apocalyptics, the Essenes, and the circle of the Merkabah mystics who succeeded them. From the start, this pietist asceticism aroused active opposition entailing abuse and persecution, which later characterized practically the whole historical development of pietist tendencies (*hasidut*) in rabbinic Judaism.

The mysteries of the Throne constitute here a particularly exalted subject which to a large extent set the pattern for the early forms of Jewish mysticism. It did not aspire to an understanding of the true nature of God, but to a perception of the phenomenon of the Throne on its Chariot as it is described in the first chapter of Ezekiel, traditionally entitled *ma'aseh merkabah*. The mysteries of the world of the Throne, together with those of the Divine Glory which is revealed there, are the parallels in Jewish esoteric tradition to the revelations on the realm of the divine in Gnosticism. The 14th chapter of the Book of Enoch, which

contains the earliest example of this kind of literary description, was the source of a long visionary tradition of describing the world of the Throne and the visionary ascent to it, which we find portrayed in the books of the Merkabah mystics. In addition to interpretations, visions, and speculations based on the *ma'aseh merkabah*, other esoteric traditions began to crystallize round the first chapter of Genesis, which was called *ma'aseh bereshit*. These two terms were subsequently used to describe those subjects dealing with these topics. Both Mishnah and Talmud (Hag. 2:1 and the corresponding *Gemara* in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud) show that, in the first century of the common era, mystical traditions existed within these areas, and severe limitations were placed on public discussion of such subjects: "The story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, nor the chapter on the Chariot before one person, unless he is a sage and already has an independent understanding of the matter." Evidence concerning the involvement of *Johanan b. Zakkai and his disciples in this sort of exposition proves that this esotericism could grow in the very center of a developing rabbinic Judaism, and that consequently this Judaism had a particular esoteric aspect from its very beginning. On the other hand, it is possible that the rise of Gnostic speculations, which were not accepted by the rabbis, made many of them tread very warily and adopt a polemical attitude. Such an attitude is expressed in the continuation of the Mishnah quoted above: "Whoever ponders on four things, it were better for him if he had not come into the world: what is above, what is below, what was before time, and what will be hereafter." Here we have a prohibition against the very speculations which are characteristic of Gnosticism as it is defined in "Excerpts from the writings of [the Gnostic] Theodotus" (*Extraits de Théodote*, ed. F. Sagnard (1948), para. 78). In actual fact, this prohibition was largely ignored, as far as can be judged from the many statements of *tannaim* and *amoraim* dealing with these questions which are scattered throughout the Talmud and the Midrashim.

In an age of spiritual awakening and deep religious turmoil there arose in Judaism a number of sects with heterodox ideas resulting from a mixture of inner compulsion and outside influence. Whether Gnostic sects existed on the periphery of Judaism before the coming of Christianity is a matter of controversy (see below); but there is no doubt that *minim* ("heretics") did exist in the tannaitic period and especially in the third and fourth centuries. In this period a Jewish Gnostic sect with definite antinomian tendencies was active in Sepphoris. There were also of course intermediate groups from which members of these sects gained an extended knowledge of the theological material on *ma'aseh bereshit* and *ma'aseh merkabah*, and among these should be included the Ophites (snake worshipers) who were basically Jewish rather than Christian. From this source a considerable number of esoteric traditions were transmitted to Gnostics outside Judaism, whose books, many of which have been discovered in our own time, are full of such material—found not only in Greek and Coptic texts of the second and third centuries but also in the early strata of Mandaic literature, which is written in colloquial Aramaic. Notwithstanding all the deep differences in theological approach, the growth of Merkabah mysticism among the rabbis constitutes an inner Jewish concomitant to Gnosis, and it may be termed "Jewish and rabbinic Gnosticism."

Within these circles theosophical ideas and revelations connected with them branched out in many directions, so that it is impossible to speak here of one single system. A particular mystical terminology was also established. Some

of it is reflected in the sources of "normal" Midrashim, while part is confined to the literary sources of the mystics: the literature of the *heikhalot* and the *ma'aseh bereshit*. Verbs like *histakkel*, *zafah*, *iyyen*, and *higgi'a* have specific meanings, as do nouns like *ha-kavod*, *ha-kavod ha-gadol*, *ha-kavod ha-nistar*, *mara di-revuta*, *yozer bereshit*, *heikhalot*, *hadrei merkabah*, and others. Particularly important is the established usage of the term *Kavod* ("glory") as a name both for God when He is the object of profound mystical enquiry and also for the general area of theosophical research. This term acquires a specific meaning, distinct from its scriptural usage, as early as the Book of Tobit and the end of the Book of Enoch, and it continues to be used in this way in apocalyptic literature. In contrast, the use of the word *sod* ("mystery") in this context was relatively rare, becoming general only in the Middle Ages, whereas *raz* ("secret") is used more often in the earlier texts.

Merkabah terminology is found in a hymn-fragment in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the angels praise "the image of the Throne of the Chariot" (Strugnell). Members of the sect combined ideas concerning the song of the angels, who stand before the Chariot, with other ideas about the names and duties of the angels, and all this is common to the sect of Qumran and to later traditions of the *ma'aseh merkabah*. From the very beginning these traditions were surrounded by an aura of particular sanctity. Talmudic *aggadah* connects exposition of the Merkabah with the descent of fire from above which surrounds the expositor. In the literature of the *heikhalot* other and more daring expressions are used to describe the emotional and ecstatic character of these experiences. Distinct from the exposition of the Merkabah which the rabbis gave while on earth below was the ecstatic contemplation of the Merkabah experienced as an ascent to the heavens, namely descent to the Merkabah, through entering *pardes* ("paradise"). This was not a matter for exposition and interpretation but of vision and personal experience. This transition, which once again connects the revelations of the Merkabah with the apocalyptic tradition, is mentioned in the Talmud alongside the exegetic traditions (Ḥag. 14b). It concerns the four sages who "entered *pardes*." Their fate demonstrates that here we are dealing with spiritual experiences which were achieved by contemplation and ecstasy. *Simeon b. Azzai "looked and died"; *Ben Zoma "looked and was smitten" (mentally); *Elisha b. Avuyah, called *aḥer* ("other"), forsook rabbinic Judaism and "cut the shoots," apparently becoming a dualistic Gnostic; R. *Akiva alone "entered in peace and left in peace," or, in another reading, "ascended in peace and descended in peace." So R. Akiva, a central figure in the world of Judaism, is also the legitimate representative of a mysticism within the boundaries of rabbinic Judaism. This is apparently why Akiva and *Ishmael, who was his companion and also his adversary in halakhic matters, served as the central pillars and chief mouthpieces in the later pseudepigraphic literature devoted to the mysteries of the Merkabah. In addition, the striking halakhic character of this literature shows that its authors were well rooted in the halakhic tradition and far from holding heterodox opinions.

In mystic circles particular conditions were laid down for the entry of those fit to be initiated into the doctrines and activities bound up with these fields. The basic teachings were communicated in a whisper (Ḥag. 13b; *Bereshit Rabbah*, Theodor-Albeck edition (1965), 19–20). The earliest conditions governing the choice of those suitable were of two types. In the *Gemara* (Ḥag. 13b) basically intellectual conditions were formulated, as well as age limits ("at life's half-way stage"); and in the beginning of *Heikhalot Rabbati* certain ethical qualities required of the

initiate are enumerated. In addition to this, from the third and fourth centuries, according to Sherira Gaon (*Ozar ha-Ge'onim to Hagigah* (1931), *Teshuvot*, no. 12, p. 8), they used external methods of appraisal based on physiognomy and chiromancy (*hakkarat panim ve-sidrei sirtutin*). *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, chapter 29, quotes an Aramaic *baraita* from the Merkabah mystics concerning physiognomy. A fragment of a similar *baraita*, written in Hebrew in the name of R. Ishmael, has been preserved, and there is no doubt that it was a part of Merkabah literature. Its style and content prove its early date (see G. Scholem in *Sefer Assaf* (1953), 459–95; the text itself is translated into German in *Liber Amicorum*, in honor of Professor C. J. Bleeker, 1969, 175–93).

Esoteric Literature: the Heikhalot, the Ma'aseh Bereshit, and the Literature of Magic. This literature occupies an extremely important place in the development of esotericism and mysticism. It is connected to innumerable points with traditions outside its boundaries, in the Talmuds and Midrashim, which can sometimes be explained from within; but, in addition, it contains a wealth of material that is found nowhere else. Many scholars, including Zunz, Graetz, and P. Bloch, have tried to show that a vast distance, both in time and subject matter, separates the early Merkabah ideas from those embedded in Talmud and Midrash, and they ascribed the composition of Merkabah literature to the geonic era. Even though it is quite possible that some of the texts were not edited until this period, there is no doubt that large sections originated in talmudic times, and that the central ideas, as well as many details, go back as far as the first and second centuries. Many of the texts are short, and in various manuscripts there is a considerable amount of basic material quite devoid of any literary embellishment. (For a list of the books belonging to this literature see *Merkabah Mysticism.) Of great importance are the texts entitled *Heikhalot Rabbati*, whose main speaker is R. Ishmael; *Heikhalot Zutrat*, whose main speaker is R. Akiva; and the *Sefer Heikhalot*, which has been published under the name of the Third Book of Enoch or the Hebrew Enoch. The traditions assembled here are not all of the same kind, and they indicate different tendencies among the mystics. We find here extremely detailed descriptions of the world of the Chariot, of the ecstatic ascent to that world, and of the technique used to accomplish this ascent. As in non-Jewish Gnostic literature, there is a magical and theurgic aspect to the technique of ascent, and there are very strong connections between Merkabah literature and Hebrew and Aramaic theurgic literature from both this and the geonic period. The earliest stratum of the *heikhalot* strongly emphasizes this magical side, which in the practical application of its teachings is linked to the attainment of the "contemplation of the Chariot." It is very similar to a number of important texts preserved among the Greek magic papyri and to Gnostic literature of the *Pistis Sophia* type which originated in the third or fourth century C.E.

The *heikhalot* books mentioned above refer to historical figures, whose connection with the mysteries of the Chariot is attested by Talmud and Midrash. On the other hand, there also existed early sources containing traditions attributed to various *tannaim* and *amoraim*; as some of them are almost or completely unknown, there would have been no point in appending their names to pseudepigraphical writings. In the Cairo *Genizah* a few fragments of a tannaitic Midrash on the Chariot were discovered (Ms. Sassoon 522), and the short fourth-century text *Re'iyot Yehezkel* belongs to the same category. It could be inferred from this that the mystics did not always try to conceal their identities, although in most cases they were inclined to do

so. The ascent to the Chariot (which in the *Heikhalot Rabbati* is deliberately called "descent") comes after a number of preparatory exercises of an extremely ascetic nature. The aspirant placed his head between his knees, a physical position which facilitates changes in consciousness and self-hypnosis. At the same time, he recited hymns of an ecstatic character, the texts of which are extant in several sources, particularly in the *Heikhalot Rabbati*. These poems, some of the earliest *piyyutim* known to us, indicate that "Chariot hymns" like these were known in Palestine as early as the third century. Some of them purport to be the songs of the holy creatures (*hayyot*) who bear the Throne of Glory, and whose singing is already mentioned in apocalyptic literature. The poems have their own specific style which corresponds to the spirit of "celestial liturgy," and they have a linguistic affinity with similar liturgical fragments in the writings of the Qumran sect. Almost all of them conclude with the *kedushah* ("sanctification") of Isaiah 6:3, which is used as a fixed refrain. *Isaac Nappaha, a third-century Palestinian *amora*, puts a similar poem in the mouth of the kine who bore the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 6:12), in his interpretation of "And the kine took the straight way" (*va-yisharnah*, interpreted as "they sang"; Av. Zar. 24b), for he sees a parallel between the kine who bear the ark singing and the holy creatures who bear the Throne of Glory with a glorious festive song. These hymns clearly show their authors' concept of God. He is the holy King, surrounded by "majesty, fear, and awe" in "the palaces of silence." Sovereignty, majesty, and holiness are His most striking attributes. He is not a God Who is near but a God Who is afar, far removed from the area of man's comprehension, even though His hidden glory may be revealed to man from the Throne. The Merkabah mystics occupy themselves with all the details of the upper world, which extends throughout the seven palaces in the firmament of *aravot* (the uppermost of the seven firmaments); with the angelic hosts which fill the palaces (*heikhalot*); the rivers of fire which flow down in front of the Chariot, and the bridges which cross them; the *ofan* and *hashmal*; and with all the other details of the Chariot. But the main purpose of the ascent is the vision of the One Who sits on the Throne, "a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above" (Ezek. 1:26). This appearance of the Glory in the form of supernal man is the content of the most recondite part of this mysticism, called **Shi'ur Komah* ("measure of the body").

The teaching on the "measure of the body" of the Creator constitutes a great enigma. Fragments of it appear in several passages in the *ma'aseh merkabah* literature, and there is one particularly long section which has come down separately (an early *genizah* Ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Heb., c. 65). Such passages enumerate the fantastic measurements of parts of the head as well as some of the limbs. They also transmit "the secret names" of these limbs, all of them unintelligible letter combinations. Different versions of the numbers and the letter combinations have survived and so they cannot be relied upon, and, all in all, their purpose (whether literal or symbolic) is not clear to us. However, the verse which holds the key to the enumeration is Psalms 147:5: "Great is Our Lord, and mighty in power," which is taken to mean that the extent of the body or of the measurement of "Our Lord" is alluded to in the words *ve-rav ko'ah* ("and mighty in power") which in *gematria* amount to 236. This number ($236 \times 10,000$ leagues, and, moreover, not terrestrial but celestial leagues) is the basic measurement on which all the calculations are based. It is not clear whether there is a relationship between speculations on "the greatness of the Lord of the world" and the title *mara di-revuta* ("Lord of greatness") which is one of the predications of God found in the Genesis

Apocryphon (p. 2, line 4). The terms *gedullah* ("greatness"; e.g., in the phrase "*ofan* [wheel] of greatness") and *gevurah* ("might") occur as names for God in several texts of the Merkabah mystics. We should not dismiss the possibility of a continuous flow of specific ideas from the Qumran sect to the Merkabah mystics and rabbinic circles, in the case of the *Shi'ur Komah* as well as in other fields. The paradox is that the vision of the *Shi'ur Komah* is actually hidden "from the sight of every creature, and concealed from the ministering angels," but "it was revealed to R. Akiva in the *ma'aseh merkabah*" (*Heikhalot Zutrati*). The mystic, therefore, grasps a secret which even the angels cannot comprehend.

The provocative anthropomorphism of these passages perplexed many rabbis, and was the object of attacks by the Karaites—so much so that even Maimonides, who at first regarded the *Shi'ur Komah* as an authoritative work requiring interpretation (in his original Ms. of his commentary to the Mishnah, Sanh. 10), later repudiated it, believing it to be a late forgery (*Teshuvot ha-Rambam* (1934), no. 117). In fact, as G. *Scholem and S. *Lieberman have demonstrated, the *Shi'ur Komah* was an early and genuine part of mystic teaching in the days of the *tanna'im*. The theory does not imply that God in Himself possesses a physical form, but only that a form of this kind may be ascribed to "the Glory," which in some passages is called *guf ha-Shekhinah* ("the body of the Divine Presence"). *Shi'ur Komah* is based on the descriptions of the beloved in Song of Songs (5:11–16), and it apparently became a part of the esoteric interpretation of this book. The early date of the *Shi'ur Komah* is attested by allusions to it in the Slavonic Book of Enoch, chapter 13 (ed. Vaillant (1952), p. 39), which still reflects the Hebrew terminology in its translation. Similarly, the Gnostic teaching of Markos (second century), on "the body of the truth" is a spiritualized Gnostic version of the *Shi'ur Komah*. Perhaps the idea of the "tunic" and garment of God also belonged to the *Shi'ur Komah*. This "tunic" is of great significance in

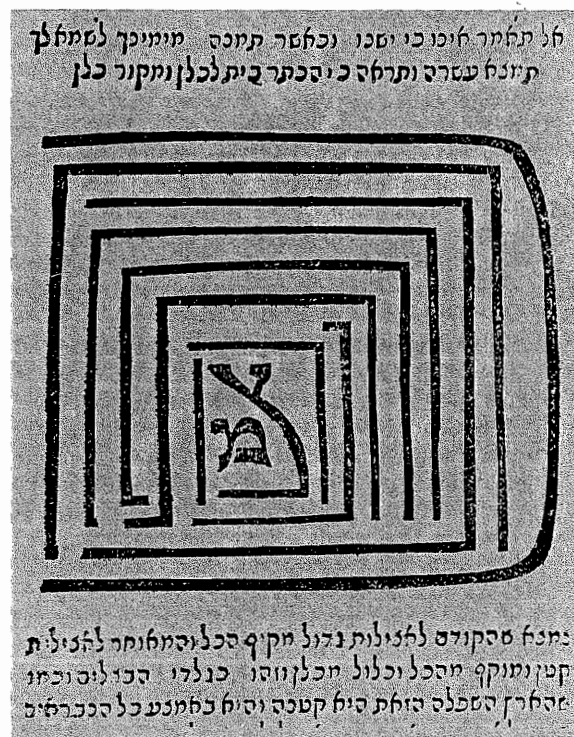


Figure 2. Perspective diagram of the world of the ten *Sefirot*, composed of the initial letters of the name of each *Sefirah*, starting with the first *Sefirah* and going to the last. From Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, Cracow, 1592. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

the *ma'aseh bereshit* of the *Heikhalot Rabbati*, and echoes of this idea can be found in the rabbinic *aggadot* concerning the garment of light in which the Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped himself at the moment of creation.

The ascent and passage through the first six palaces are described at length in the *Heikhalot Rabbati*, with details of all the technical and magical means which assist the ascending spirit and save it from the dangers lying in wait for it. These dangers were given much emphasis in all Merkabah traditions. Empty visions meet the ascending soul and angels of destruction try to confound it. At the gates of all the palaces it must show the doorkeepers "the seals," which are the secret Names of God, or pictures imbued with a magical power (some of which are extant in the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*), which protect it from attack. The dangers especially increase in number at the entrance to the sixth palace where it appears to the Merkabah mystic as if "one hundred million waves pour down, and yet there is not one drop of water there, only the splendor of the pure marble stones which pave the palace." It is to this danger in the ecstatic ascent that the words of R. Akiva refer in the story of the four who entered *pardes*: "when you come to the place of the pure marble stones, do not say 'water, water.'" The texts also mention a "fire which proceeds from his own body and consumes it." Sometimes the fire is seen as a danger (*Merkabah Shelemah* (1921), 1b) and at other times as an ecstatic experience which accompanies the entry into the first palace: "My hands were burned, and I stood without hands or feet" (Ms. Neubauer, Oxford 1531, 45b). The *pardes* which R. Akiva and his companions entered is the world of the celestial Garden of Eden or the realm of the heavenly palaces and the ascent or "rapture" is common to several Jewish apocalypses, and is mentioned by Paul (II Cor. 12:2-4) as something which needs no explanation for his readers of Jewish origin. In contrast to the dangers which attend those who, although unfit for them, indulge in these matters and in the magical science of theurgy, great emphasis is laid on the illumination which comes to the recipients of the revelations: "There was light in my heart like lightning," or "the world changed into purity around me, and my heart felt as if I had entered a new world" (*Merkabah Shelemah* 1a, 4b).

An early passage enumerating the basic subjects of the mystery of the Chariot is to be found in the Midrash to Proverbs 10, and, in a different version, in R. *Azriel's *Perush ha-Aggadot* (ed. Tishby (1945), 62). The subjects mentioned are the *hashmal*, the lightning, the cherub, the Throne of Glory, the bridges in the Merkabah, and the measurement of the limbs "from my toenails to the top of my head." Other subjects which are of great importance in a number of sources are not mentioned. Among these are ideas concerning the *pargod* ("curtain" or "veil") which separates the One Who sits on the Throne from the other parts of the Chariot, and upon which are embroidered the archetypes of everything that is created. There are different, highly colored traditions concerning the *pargod*. Some take it to be a curtain which prevents the ministering angels from seeing the Glory (Targ. of Job 26:9), while others hold that "the seven angels that were created first" continue their ministry inside the *pargod* (*Massekhet Heikhalot*, end of ch. 7). There was no fixed angelology, and different views, and indeed complete systems, have been preserved, ranging from those found in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch to the Hebrew Enoch found among the literature of the *heikhalot*. These ideas occupy a considerable place in the extant Merkabah literature, and, as would be expected, they reappear in various forms of a practical nature in incantations and theurgical literature. Knowledge of the names of the angels was already part of the mysticism of the Essenes, and it

developed in both rabbinic and heterodox circles up to the end of the geonic period. Together with the concept of the four or seven key angels, there developed (about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century) a new doctrine concerning the angel *Metatron (*sar ha-panim*, "the prince of the Presence")—who is none other than Enoch himself after his flesh had been transformed into "flaming torches"—and the place assigned to him above all the other angels. There are some sources which contain little or no reference to this subject or to other views associated with it (e.g., concerning the angel *Sandalphon), while others like the Hebrew Enoch (ed. H. Odeberg, 1928), dwell on it at length. At the beginning of the tannaitic period speculations are found concerning the angel who bore within him the name of God Himself, the angel Yahoel, who occupies a dominant position in the Apocalypse of Abraham. Everything said here of Yahoel was transferred in another circle to Metatron, to whom the mystics assigned many other secret names, most important of which were Yahoel and "the lesser YHWH." While traditions concerning Yahoel and the lesser YHWH reappeared in different forms among the Gnostics, the subject of Metatron remained confined to Jewish circles for a long time. Metatron also took upon himself several of the duties of the angel *Michael, and from the amoraic period onward he was identified with the "prince of the world." His title *ha-na'ar* ("the boy") refers to his role as servant of God and is based on the linguistic usage of the Bible. Several extant passages of the *Shi'ur Komah* include references to Metatron and his role as servant of the Chariot.

In Merkabah literature the names of the angels easily intermingle with the secret Names of God, many of which are mentioned in the fragments of this literature still extant. Since many of these names have not been completely explained it has not yet been possible to ascertain whether they are meant to convey a specific theological idea—e.g., an emphasis on a particular aspect of God's revelation or activity—or whether they have other purposes which we cannot fathom. Fragments of *heikhalot* literature mention names like Adiriron, Zoharariel, Zavodiel, Ta'zash, Akhtriel (found also in a *baraita* emanating from this circle in Ber. 7a). The formula "the Lord, God of Israel" is very often added to the particular name, but many of the chief angels also have this added to their names (e.g., in the Hebrew Enoch) so it cannot be deduced from this whether the phrase refers to the name of an angel or to the name of God. Sometimes the same name serves to designate both God and an angel. An example of this is Azbogah ("an eightfold name") in which each pair of letters adds up, through *gematria*, to the number eight. This "eightfold" name reflects the Gnostic concept of the *ogdoas*, the eighth firmament above the seven firmaments, where the Divine Wisdom dwells. In the *Heikhalot Zutрати* it is defined as "a name of power" (*gevurah*), i.e., one of the names of the Divine Glory, while in the Hebrew Enoch chapter 18 it becomes the name of one of the angelic princes; its numerical significance is forgotten and it is subject to the customary aggadic interpretation of names. The same is true of the term *ziva rabba*, which from one angle is no more than an Aramaic translation of *ha-kavod ha-gadol* ("the great glory") found in the apocalypses and also in Samaritan sources as a description of the revealed God. But it also occurs in the lists of the mysterious names of the angel Metatron, and it is found with a similar meaning in Mandaic literature. Just as non-Jewish Gnostics sometimes used Aramaic formulae in their Greek writings, so Greek elements and Greek formulae found their way into Merkabah literature. The dialogue between the mystic and

the angel Dumiel at the gate of the sixth palace in the *Heikhalot Rabbati* is conducted in Greek (J. Levy, in *Tarbiz*, 12 (1941), 163–7). One of the names of God in this literature is Totrossiah, which signifies the *tetras* of the four letters of the name YHWH. The reverse parallel to this is the name Arbatiao which is found frequently in the magic papyri of this period.

The different tendencies of Merkabah mysticism established ways of contemplating ascent to the heavens—ways which were understood in their literal sense. Their basic conception did not depend on scriptural interpretation but took on its own particular literary form. The magical element was strong in the early stages of *heikhalot* literature only, becoming weaker in later redactions. From the third century onward interpretations appear which divest the subject of the Chariot of its literal significance and introduce an ethical element. Sometimes the different palaces correspond to the ladder of ascent through the virtues (e.g., in the *Ma'aseh Merkabah*, para. 9, ed. by Scholem in *Jewish Gnosticism* . . . (1965), 107); and sometimes the whole topic of the Chariot completely loses its literal meaning. This kind of interpretation is especially evident in the remarkable mystic utterance of the third-century *amora* *Simeon b. Lakish: "the patriarchs are the Chariot" (Gen. Rabba, 475, 793, 983, with regard to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Statements like these opened the door to the type of symbolic interpretation which flourished afterward in kabbalistic literature.

The first center for this type of mysticism was in Palestine, where a large part of *heikhalot* literature was written. Mystical ideas found their way to Babylonia at least as early as the time of *Rav, and their influence is recognizable, among other places, in the magical incantations which were inscribed on bowls to afford "protection" from evil spirits and demons, and which reflect popular Babylonian Judaism from the end of the talmudic period to the time of the *geonim*. In Babylonia, apparently, a number of magical prayers were composed, as well as treatises on magic, like the *Harba de-Moshe* (ed. Gaster 1896), *Sefer ha-Malbush* (Sassoon Ms. 290, pp. 306–11), *Sefer ha-Yashar* (British Museum, Margoliouth Ms. 752, fol. 91ff.), *Sefer ha-Ma'alot, Havdalah de-R. Akiva* (Vatican Ms. 228), *Pishra de R. *Hanina b. Dosa* (Vatican Ms. 216, fols. 4–6), and others, some of which were written in Babylonian Aramaic. In all these the influence of Merkabah ideas was very strong. In Palestine, perhaps at the end of the talmudic period, the *Sefer ha-*Razim* was composed, which contains descriptions of the firmaments greatly influenced by *heikhalot* literature, while the "practical" part, concerning incantations, has a different style, partly adopted verbatim from Greek sources. From circles such as these emanated the magical usage of the Torah and Psalms for practical purposes (see JE III, s.v. Bibliomancy). This practice was based on the theory that essentially these books were made up from the Sacred Names of God and His angels, an idea that first appeared in the preface to the *Sefer Shimmushei Torah*; only the midrashic introduction, with the title *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah*, has been printed (Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, part I (1938), 58–61), but the whole work is extant in manuscript. Of the same type is the *Sefer Shimmushei Tehillim*, which has been printed many times in Hebrew and also exists in manuscript in an Aramaic version.

The poetical content of the literature of the *ma'aseh merkabah* and the *ma'aseh bereshit* is striking; we have already noted the hymns sung by the *hayyot* and the ministering angels in praise of their Creator. Following the pattern of several of the Psalms, the view was developed that the whole of creation, according to its nature and

order, was singing hymns of praise. A hymnology was established in the various versions of the **Perek Shirah*, which without any doubt derives from mystical circles in the talmudic period. Connected with this poetical element is the influence that the Merkabah mystics had on the development of specific portions of the order of prayer, particularly on the morning *kedushah* (Ph. Bloch, in MGWJ, 37, 1893), and later on the *piyyutim* which were written for these portions (*silluk, ofan, kedushah*).

Jewish Gnosis and the Sefer Yezirah. In these stages of Jewish mysticism, the descriptions of the Chariot and its world occupy a place which in non-Jewish Gnosticism is filled by the theory of the "aeons," the powers and emanations of God which fill the *pleroma*, the divine "fullness." The way in which certain *middot*, or qualities of God, like wisdom, understanding, knowledge, truth, faithfulness, righteousness, etc., became the "aeons" of the Gnostics is paralleled in the tradition of the *ma'aseh bereshit*, although it did not penetrate the basic stages of Merkabah mysticism. The ten sayings by which the world was created (Avot 5: 1) became divine qualities according to Rav (Hag. 12a). There is also a tradition that *middot* such as these "serve before the Throne of Glory" (ARN 37), thus taking the place occupied by the *hayyot* and the presiding angels in the Merkabah system. The semi-mythological speculations of the Gnostics which regarded the qualities as "aeons" were not admitted into the rabbinic tradition of the Talmud or the Midrashim, but they did find a place in the more or less heterodox sects of the *minim* or *hizzonim*. To what extent the growth of Gnostic tendencies within Judaism itself preceded their development in early Christianity is still the subject of scholarly controversy. Peterson, Haenchen, and Quispel, in particular, along with several experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls, have tried to prove that Jewish forms of Gnosis, which retained a belief in the unity of God and rejected any dualistic notions, came into being before the formation of Christianity and were centered particularly around the idea of primordial man (following speculation on Gen. 1: 26; see *Adam Kadmon). The image of the Messiah, characteristic of the Christian Gnostics, was absent here. These scholars have interpreted several of the earliest documents of Gnostic literature as Gnostic Midrashim on cosmogony and Haenchen in particular has argued that their basic Jewish character is clearly recognizable in an analysis of the teaching of Simon Magus, apparently the leader of Samaritan Gnosis, a first-century heterodox Judaism. Even before this, M. *Friedlaender had surmised that antinomian Gnostic tendencies (which belittled the value of the Commandments) had also developed within Judaism before the rise of Christianity. Although a fair number of these ideas are based on questionable hypotheses, nevertheless there is a considerable measure of truth in them. They point to the lack of Iranian elements in the early sources of Gnosis, which have been exaggerated by most scholars of the last two generations, whose arguments rest on no less hypothetical assumptions. The theory of "two principles" could have been the result of an internal development, a mythological reaction within Judaism itself, just as easily as a reflection of Iranian influence. The apostasy of the *tanna* Elisha b. Avuyah to a Gnostic dualism of this kind is connected in the Merkabah tradition with the vision of Metatron seated on the Throne like God. Mandaic literature also contains strands of a Gnostic, monotheistic, non-Christian character, which many believe originated in a Transjordanian Jewish heterodox sect whose members emigrated to Babylonia in the first or second century. The earliest strata of the *Sefer ha-*Bahir*, which came from the East, prove the existence of definitely Gnostic views in a circle of believing Jews in

Babylonia or Syria, who connected the theory of the Merkabah with that of the "aeons." These early sources are partly linked with the book **Raza Rabba*, which was known as an early work at the end of the geonic period; fragments of it can be found in the writings of the **Hasidei Ashkenaz*. Concepts which did not originate exclusively in Jewish mysticism, like the idea of the *Shekhinah* and the hypostases of stern judgment and compassion, could easily have been interpreted according to the theory of the "aeons" and incorporated with Gnostic ideas. The "exile of the *Shekhinah*," originally an aggadic idea, was assimilated in Jewish circles at a particular stage with the Gnostic idea of the divine spark that is in exile in the terrestrial world, and also with the mystic view of the Jewish concept of the *keneset Yisrael* ("the community of Israel") as a heavenly entity that represents the historical community of Israel. In the elaboration of such motifs, Gnostic elements could be added to rabbinic theories of the Merkabah and to ideas of Jewish circles whose connection with rabbinism was weak.

THE SEFER YEẒIRAH. Speculation on the *ma'aseh bereshit* was given a unique form in a book, small in size but enormous in influence, that was written between the second and sixth centuries, perhaps in the third century, in a Hebrew style reflecting that of the Merkabah mystics. In early manuscripts it is called *Hilkhot YeẒirah* ("Halakhot on Creation"), and later *Sefer YeẒirah* ("Book of Creation"; uncritical edition by L. Goldschmidt, 1894). We should not dismiss out of hand the possibility that the *hilkhot yeẒirah* mentioned in *Sanhedrin* 65b and 67b could be one early version of this text. There is here an independent adaptation of the concept of the *ma'aseh bereshit* conceived in the spirit of the Pythagoreans of the talmudic period. On the one hand the book is closely connected with Jewish speculation on "Divine Wisdom," *Hokhmah*, and with the traditions concerning cosmogony, and on the other hand it introduces new concepts and an original plan of cosmogony far removed, for example, from the *baraita* of the work of creation. The "32 secret paths of Wisdom," by means of which God created His world, are nothing more than the "ten *Sefirot*" added to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The *Sefirot*, a term which first appears in this text, are merely the primordial numbers of the later Pythagoreans. They are created powers, and not emanations from within the Divine. They also fulfill a decisive role in both the creation and the order of the world. When he describes their work the author uses expressions purposely taken from the description of the *hayyot* in the first chapter of Ezekiel. The first four *Sefirot* represent the four elements of the entire world: the spirit of God; ether—the spirit which is the world's atmosphere; water; and fire. The following six *Sefirot* represent the six dimensions of space. The *Sefirot* are described in a style full of mysterious solemnity almost without parallel in Jewish tradition. This enigmatic style enabled both philosophers and kabbalists of a later age to base their ideas mainly on the first chapter of the book, interpreting it in their own individual ways.

In the rest of the book there is no further mention of these *Sefirot*, and there follows a description of the parts that the letters play in creation. The whole work of creation was enacted through the combinations of the Hebrew letters that were inscribed on the sphere of heaven and engraved into the spirit of God. Every process in the world is a linguistic one, and the existence of every single thing depends on the combination of letters that lies hidden within it. This idea is very close to the view mentioned in *Berakhot* 55a in the name of the *amora* Rav, that there are "letters through which heaven and earth were created," and that Bezalel built the tabernacle (which, according to some, was a microcosmic symbol of the whole work of creation)

through his knowledge of the combinations of these letters. Perhaps this view can be seen as the ultimate conclusion of the theory that the world was created through the Torah, which is made up of letters and which contains these combinations in some mysterious way. At this point an element common to the concepts of the *Sefer YeẒirah* and to ideas concerning the practice of magic through the power of letters and names and their permutations clearly emerges. The author compares the division of the letters according to their phonetic origin with the division of creation into three areas: world (place), year (time), and soul (the structure of the human body). The relationship of the letters to the *Sefirot* is obscure. The whole of creation is "sealed" with combinations of the name Yaho (יהו), and the emphasis on this name in the *Sefer YeẒirah* recalls Gnostic and magical speculations on that same name, in its Greek form *Iáω*. Through "contemplation" of the mysteries of the letters and the *Sefirot* Abraham attained a revelation of the Lord of All. Because of this conclusion the authorship of the book was attributed to Abraham, and in some manuscripts it is even entitled "The Letters of our Father Abraham." The *Hasidim* of Germany (see **Hasidei Ashkenaz*) read the book as a manual of magic, and they connected it with traditions about the creation of the **golem* (see G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (1965), 165–73).

Mysticism in the Geonic Period. The mishnaic and the talmudic periods were times of irrepressible creativity in the field of mysticism and esoteric inquiry. In the geonic era (from the seventh to the 11th centuries) little that was essentially original emerged, and the various streams already mentioned continued to exist and to intermingle. The center of mystical activity shifted to Babylonia, although its continuing influence in Palestine is evident in several chapters of later midrashic literature and particularly in the **Pirkei de-R. Eliezer*. The poems of Eleazar **Kallir*, which are greatly influenced by *heikhalot* literature and the *Shi'ur Komah*, belong to the end of the earlier period or were composed between the two eras. The poet made no attempt to conceal ideas which had been transmitted through old mystical theories. As mysticism developed in this period, in both Palestine and Babylonia, it followed the pattern of the earlier period. Apocalyptic writing continued with great momentum; examples are extant from the time of the *amoraim* almost to that of the Crusades, and they were collected in Judah Even-Shemuel's great anthology, *Midreshei Ge'ullah* (1954²), most of them from the geonic period. They display a marked connection with the Merkabah tradition, and several have been preserved in manuscripts of works by mystics. **Simeon b. Yoḥai* appears here for the first time, side by side with *R. Ishmael*, as a bearer of apocalyptic tradition (in the *Nistarot de-R. Shimon b. Yoḥai*). Apocalypses were also attributed to the prophet Elijah, Zerubbabel, and Daniel.

At the other extreme there grew and flourished in these circles an angelology and a theurgy which produced a very rich literature, much of it extant from this period. Instead of, or in addition to, the contemplation of the Chariot, this presents a many-sided practical magic associated with the prince or princes of the Torah, whose names vary. Many incantations addressed to the angel *Yofiel* and his companions, as princes of wisdom and of Torah, are found in a large number of manuscripts of magical manuals, which continue the tradition of the earlier magical papyri. There was also a custom of conjuring up these princes particularly on the day before the Day of Atonement or even on the night of the Day of Atonement itself (see G. Scholem, in *Tarbiz*, 16 (1945), 205–9). Formulae for more mundane purposes have also been preserved in many incantations written in

Babylonian Aramaic by Jewish "masters of the Name," and not always on behalf of Jewish customers. Concepts from the Merkabah mystics' circle, as well as mythological and aggadic ideas—some unknown from other sources—filtered through to groups which were far removed indeed from mysticism and much closer to magic. A demonology, extremely rich in detail, also grew up side by side with the angelology. Many examples of these (published by Montgomery, C. Gordon, and others) were found on clay bowls which were buried, according to custom, beneath the thresholds of houses. They have important parallels among the incantations transmitted through literary tradition in the fragments of the *Genizah* and in the material which found its way as far as the Ḥasidim of Germany (e.g., in the *Havdalah de-R. Akiva*). The theology and angelology of the incantations were not always explained correctly by their editors, who saw in them a heterodox theology (for an example of this see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism* (1965), 84–93). It was in Babylonia also, apparently, that the book *Raza Rabba* ("The Great Mystery") was composed. Attacked by the Karaites as a work of sorcery, the book does indeed contain magical material but the extant fragments show that it also has some Merkabah content, in the form of a dialogue between R. Akiva and R. Ishmael. As the angelology in these fragments has no parallel in other sources, it would seem that the work is a crystallization of an early form of a theory of the "aeons" and of speculations of a Gnostic character. The style, quite different from that of the *heikhalot*, indicates a much later stage. These fragments have been published by G. Scholem in *Reshit ha-Kabbalah* (1948), 220–38.

The beginnings of new trends in this period can be discerned in three areas:

(1) The utterances employed in the creation of the world were conceived either as forces within the Chariot or as "aeons," *middot*, or hypostases. To what extent this speculation is associated with the view of the ten *Sefirot* in the *Sefer Yezirah* is not altogether clear. It is evident, however, that in Jewish Gnostic circles the concept of the *Shekhinah* occupied a completely new position. In the early sources "*Shekhinah*" is an expression used to denote the presence of God Himself in the world and is no more than a name for that presence; it later becomes a hypostasis distinguished from God, a distinction that first appears in the late Midrash to Proverbs (Mid. Prov. 47a: "the *Shekhinah* stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him"). In contrast to this separation of God and His *Shekhinah*, there arose another original concept—the identification of the *Shekhinah* with *keneset Yisrael* ("the community of Israel"). In this obviously Gnostic typology, the allegories which the Midrash uses in order to describe the relationship of the Holy One, blessed be He, to the community of Israel are transmuted into this Gnostic concept of the *Shekhinah*, or "the daughter," in the eastern sources which are embedded in *Sefer ha-Bahir* (G. Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbale* (1966), 175–94). Gnostic interpretations of other terms, like wisdom, and of various talmudic similes in the spirit of Gnostic symbolism, can be understood as going back to the early sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (*ibid.*, 78–107). Several of the book's similes can be understood only against an oriental background, and Babylonia in particular, as, for example, the statements concerning the date palm and its symbolic significance. The ascent of repentance to reach the Throne of Glory is interpreted in a late Midrash (PR 185a) as an actual ascent of the repentant sinner through all the firmaments, and so the process of repentance is closely connected here with the process of ascent to the Chariot.

(2) In this period the idea of the transmigration of souls

(**gilgul*) also became established in various eastern circles. Accepted by *Anan b. David and his followers (up to the tenth century)—although later rejected by the Karaites—it was also adopted by those circles whose literary remains were drawn upon by the redactors of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. For Anan (who composed a book specifically on this subject) and his followers the idea, which apparently originated among Persian sects and Islamic Mutazilites, had no mystical aspects. It is apparent, however, that the mystics' idea of transmigration drew upon other sources, for in the sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* it makes its appearance as a great mystery, alluded to only through allegory, and based on scriptural verses quite different from those quoted by the sect of Anan and repeated by Kirkisānī in his *Book of Lights* (pt. 3, chs. 27–28).

(3) A new element was added to the idea of the Sacred Names and angels which occupied such a prominent position in the theory of the Merkabah. This was an attempt to discover numerological links, through *gematria*, between the different types of names and scriptural verses, prayers, and other writings. The numerological "secrets," *sodot*, served two purposes. They ensured, firstly, that the names would be spelled exactly as the composers of *gematriot* received them through written or oral sources—though this system did not entirely save them from mutilation and variation, as is clearly shown by the mystical writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. Secondly, by this means they were able to give mystical meanings and "intentions" (*kavvanot*) to these names, which served as an incentive to deeper meditation, especially since many of the names lacked any significance. This process seems to be connected with a decline in the practical, ecstatic use of this material during preparation for the soul's ascent to heaven. Names which originated through intense emotional excitement on the part of contemplatives and visionaries were stripped of their meaning as technical aids to ecstatic practice, and so required interpretations and meanings on a new level of *kavvanah*. All the names, of whatever kind, have therefore a contemplative content; not that ascent to the Merkabah completely disappeared at this time, for the various treatises in many manuscripts on the methods of preparation for it testify to the continuity of their practical application. However, it is clear that this element gradually became less significant. Another new factor must be added to this: the interpretation of the regular prayers in the search for *kavvanot* of this numerical type.

It is impossible to determine with any certainty from the evidence that remains where the secrets of the names and the mysteries of prayer according to this system of *gematria* first made their appearance. The new interpretations of prayer link the words of phrases of the liturgy generally with names from the Merkabah tradition and angelology. Perhaps this link was first formulated in Babylonia; but it is also possible that it grew up in Italy, where the mysteries of the Merkabah and all the associated material spread not later than the ninth century. Italian Jewish tradition, particularly in the popular forms it assumed in the *Megillat *Ahima'az* of Oria, clearly shows that the rabbis there were well versed in matters of the Merkabah. In addition it tells of the miraculous activity of one of the Merkabah mystics who emigrated from Baghdad, namely Abu Aharon (see *Aaron of Baghdad), who performed wonders through the power of the Sacred Names during the few years that he lived in Italy. The later tradition of the Ḥasidim of Germany (12th century) maintained that these new mysteries were transmitted about the year 870 to R. *Moses b. Kalonymus in Lucca by this same Abu Aharon, the son of R. *Samuel ha-Nasi of Baghdad. Afterward, R. Moses went to Germany where he laid the foundations of the mystical

tradition of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, which grew up around this new element. The personality of Abu Aharon remains obscure in all these traditions, and the recent attempts (in several papers by Israel Weinstock) to see him as a central figure in the whole development of the Kabbalah and as author and editor of many mystical works, including the *heikhalot* literature and the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, are founded on an extreme use of *gematriot* and on dubious hypotheses (see *Tarbiz*, 32 (1963), 153–9 and 252–65, the dispute between I. Weinstock and G. Scholem, and Weinstock's reply in *Sinai*, 54 (1964), 226–59). In any event, there is no doubt that at the end of the geonic period mysticism spread to Italy, in the form of Merkabah literature and perhaps also in the form of the above-mentioned theory of names, which served as an intermediate link between the orient and the later development in Germany and France. These ideas reached Italy through various channels. The magical theurgic elements in them came to the fore, while the speculative side became weaker. This latter was represented in the main by the commentary of the physician Shabbetai *Donnolo to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* which was indisputably influenced by the commentary of *Saadia b. Joseph Gaon to the same work. It is impossible to say to what extent theosophic writings of a Gnostic character, in Hebrew or Aramaic, also passed through these channels, but this possibility should not be denied.

From the numerous remains of mystical literature extant from the talmudic and geonic periods it can be deduced that these types of ideas and attitudes were widespread in many circles, wholly or partially restricted to initiates. Only on very rare occasions is it possible to establish with certainty the personal and social identity of these circles. There is no doubt that, apart from the individual *tannaim* and *amoraim* whose attachment to mystical study is attested by reliable evidence, there were many whose names are unknown who devoted themselves to mysticism and even made it their chief preoccupation. In addition to the rabbis that have already been mentioned, R. *Meir, R. *Isaac, R. *Levi, R. *Joshua b. Levi, R. *Hoshaiah, and R. Inyani b. Sasson (or Sisi) were also involved with mystical ideas. The identity of those who studied theurgy (who were called, in Aramaic, "users of the Name," and only from the geonic period onward "masters of the Name," *ba'alei ha-Shem*) is completely unknown, and most of them, of course, did not come from rabbinic circles. Our knowledge of the exponents of mysticism and esotericism in the geonic period is even more limited. Geonic responsa reveal that mystical traditions did spread to the leading academies, but there is no proof that the foremost *geonim* themselves were steeped in these teachings or that they actually practiced them. The material touching on Merkabah traditions in the responsa and in the commentaries of the *geonim* (the greater part of which were assembled by B. M. Levin in *Ozar ha-Ge'onim* to *Hagigah* (1931), 10–30, and in the section on commentaries 54–61) is notable for its extreme caution, and occasionally for its forbearance. The main attempt to link the theories of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* with contemporary philosophical and theological ideas was made by Saadia Gaon, who wrote the first extensive commentary to the book. He refrained from dealing in detail with the subject matter of the Merkabah and the *Shi'ur Komah*, but at the same time he did not disown it despite the attacks of the Karaites. In several instances *Sherira b. Hanina Gaon and *Hai Gaon set out to discuss matters in this field, but without connecting their explanations with the philosophical ideas expressed elsewhere in their writings. Hai Gaon's opinion in his well known responsum concerning some of the Secret Names, such as the 42- and the 72-lettered Name, led others to attribute to him more detailed

commentaries on these subjects, and some of these came into the possession of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (see J. Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*, 1968). The words that Hai Gaon addressed to the rabbis of Kairouan show that the mystical teaching on names had an impact even on the more distant Diaspora, but they also demonstrate that there was no tradition and little textual distribution of the literature of the *heikhalot*, of which the *gaon* says "he who sees them is terrified by them." In Italy this literature did spread, particularly among the rabbis and the poets (*paytanim*), and an important section of the work of Amittai b. Shephatiah (ninth century) consists of Merkabah poems. As these traditions passed into Europe, some circles of rabbinic scholars became once more the principal but not the only exponents of mystical teaching.

Aggadot and Midrashim with angelological and esoteric tendencies were also written in this period. The *Midrash Avkir*, which was still known in Germany up to the end of the Middle Ages, contained material rich in mythical elements concerning angels and names. The remains of it which appear in the *Likkutim mi-Midrash Avkir* were collected by S. Buber in 1883. Various parts of the *Pesikta Rabbati* also reflect the ideas of the mystics. The *Midrash Kohen* is made up of different elements (Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, pt. 2 (1938), 23–39, and, with a commentary, in *Sefer Nit'ei Na'amanim*, 1836); the first part contains a remarkable combination of ideas concerning the Divine Wisdom and its role in creation and the theory of the *Shekhinah*, while the rest of the work includes different versions of angelology and a version of *ma'aseh bereshit*. An element of *gematria* also appears. Judging from the Greek words in the first part, the extant text was edited in Palestine or in southern Italy. In the tradition of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (British Museum Ms. 752 fol. 132b) a fragment of a Midrash survives concerning the angels active during the Exodus from Egypt, which is also based to a large extent on the exegesis of *gematriot*, and it would seem that there were other Midrashim of this type whose origin is not known.

While many ideas concerning God and His manifestation are expressed or implied in the Merkabah literature, no particular concentrated attention is paid in these early stages of mysticism to the teaching about man. The emphasis of the Merkabah mystics is on the ecstatic and contemplative side, and man interested them only insofar as he received the vision and revealed it to Israel. Their speculations contain no specific ethical theory nor any new concept of the nature of man.

Hasidic Movements in Europe and Egypt. Religious impulses which were mystical in the sense of involving man's powerful desire for a more intimate communion with God and for a religious life connected with this developed in the Judaism of the Middle Ages in different places and by various means; not all are associated exclusively with Kabbalah. Such tendencies resulted from a fusion of internal compulsion with the external influence of the religious movements present in the non-Jewish environment. Since their proponents did not find the answer to all their needs in the talmudic and midrashic material which purported to bind man closer to God—although they utilized it as far as they could and also at times based far-fetched interpretations on it—they drew extensively on the literature of the Sufis, the mystics of Islam, and on the devout Christian ascetic tradition. The intermingling of these traditions with that of Judaism resulted in tendencies which were regarded as a kind of continuation of the work of the *Ḥasideans of the tannaitic period, and they stressed the value of *ḥasidut* as a way of bringing man nearer to *devekut* ("communion" with God) although this term was

not yet used to designate the culmination of *ḥasidut*. Extremism in ethical and religious behavior, which in the sayings and literature of the rabbis characterized the term "*ḥasid*" ("pious") as against "*zaddik*" ("righteous"), became the central norm of these new tendencies. They found their classical literary expression, first and foremost, in 11th-century Spain in the Arabic work *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* ("Duties of the Heart") by *Baḥya ibn Paquda. The material dealing with the life devoted to communion of the true "servant"—who is none other than the *ḥasid* yearning for the mystical life—is taken from Sufi sources and the author's intention was to produce an instructional manual of Jewish pietism which culminated in a mystical intent. A Hebrew translation of the *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* was made on the initiative of *Abraham b. David of Posquières and the early circle of kabbalists in Lunel. The book's great success, especially in Hebrew, shows how much it answered the religious needs of people even beyond the confines of the Kabbalah. The obvious connection with talmudic tradition, which served as the point of departure for explanations of a remarkable spiritual intent, was a distinguishing feature in works of this kind, which also clearly reveal neoplatonic philosophical elements. Such elements facilitated the creation of formulations of a mystical character, and this philosophy became one of its most powerful means of expression. Several of the poems of Solomon ibn *Gabirol, Baḥya's older contemporary, evidence this trend toward a mystical spirituality, and it is expressed particularly in the concepts of his great philosophical work, *Mekor Ḥayyim*, which is completely saturated with the spirit of neoplatonism. The extent to which his poems reflect individual mystical experiences is controversial (cf. the view of Abraham Parnes, *Mi-Bein la-Ma'arakhot* (1951), 138–61). In Spain, after a century or more, these tendencies intermingled with the emerging Kabbalah, where traces of Gabirol may be seen here and there, especially in the writings of Isaac b. *Latif.

Parallel with this was a growth of *ḥasidut* of a mystical bent in Egypt in the days of Maimonides and his son *Abraham b. Moses b. Maimon; this, however, found no echo in the Kabbalah, remaining an independent occurrence of a Jewish Sufi type which is recorded as late as the 14th or even the 15th century. No mere figure of speech, the epithet "*Ḥasid*" was a description of a man who followed a particular way of life, and it was appended to the names of several rabbis from the 11th century onward, in both the literary and the personal records that survived in the *Genizah*. The Egyptian trend of *ḥasidut* turned into "an ethically oriented mysticism" (S. D. Goitein), particularly in the literary productions of Abraham b. Moses b. Maimon (d. 1237). The mystical aspect of his book *Kifāyat al-ʿĀbidīn* (ed. S. Rosenblatt, 2 vols. (1927–38), with the title *The High Ways to Perfection*) is entirely based on Sufi sources and bears no evidence of any similar Jewish tradition known to the author. The circle of Ḥasidim which grew up around him stressed the esoteric aspect of their teaching (S. D. Goitein), and his son, R. Obadiah, also followed this path (G. Vajda, in *JJS*, 6 (1955), 213–25). A much later work of the same kind was discussed by F. Rosenthal (*HUCA*, 25 (1940), 433–84). What remains of this literature is all written in Arabic, which may explain why it found no place in the writings of the Spanish kabbalists, most of whom had no knowledge of the language.

An essentially similar religious movement grew up in France and Germany, beginning in the 11th century. It reached its peak in the second half of the 12th and in the 13th century, but it continued to have repercussions for a long time, particularly in the Judaism of the Ashkenazi

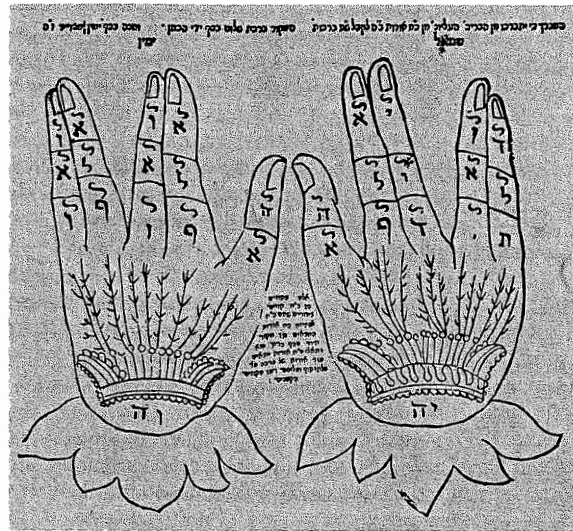


Figure 3. The hands extended in the priestly blessing, as a cosmic symbol. From Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz, *Shefa Tal*, Hanau, 1612. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

world. This movement—known as the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz—has two aspects: the ethical and the esoteric-theosophical. On the ethical plane a new ideal developed of extreme *ḥasidut* linked to a complementary mode of life, as described particularly in the *Sefer Ḥasidim* of *Judah b. Samuel he-Ḥasid, extant in two versions, one short and the other long. Along with specific pietistic customs there grew up a particular method of repentance which, remarkable for its extremism, had a marked influence on Jewish ethical behavior. The common factor in all the ḥasidic movements of Spain, Egypt, and Germany was the violent opposition that they aroused, attested by the Ḥasidim themselves. A Ḥasidism which does not arouse opposition in the community cannot, according to their own definition, be considered a true one. Equanimity of spirit, indifference to persecution and ignominy; these are the distinguishing traits of the Ḥasid, to whichever particular circle he belongs. Although the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz reflect to some extent the contemporary Christian asceticism, nevertheless they developed mainly within the framework of a clear talmudic tradition, and the basic principles were often identical with the principles of this tradition. All these movements had from the beginning a social significance intended "to revive the hearts." The Ḥasidei Ashkenaz did not, relatively speaking, lay great stress on the mystical element associated with the ḥasidic ideal. Despite the paradox inherent in the situation, they tried as far as possible to integrate the Ḥasid, ostensibly an unnatural phenomenon, into the general Jewish community, and to make him responsible in practice to the community. The Ḥasid who renounced his natural impulses and always acted "beyond the limit of strict justice" was the true embodiment of the fear and love of God in their purest essence. Many of these Ḥasidim attained the highest spiritual levels, and were considered to be masters of the holy spirit, or even prophets, a term applied to several men who are known for their activity in tosa'ist circles, e.g., R. Ezra ha-Navi ("the prophet") of Montcontour, and also to others who are otherwise completely unknown, e.g., R. Nehemiah ha-Navi and R. Troestlin ha-Navi from Erfurt. These men's attainment of such spiritual heights was connected not only with their behavior on the ethical plane but also with the distinction they achieved in the realm of esoteric theosophy. The latter was assigned an important

position; in it all earlier trends were maintained, joined and mingled with new forces. Remaining the main object of enquiry, and even a practical guide toward the "ascent to heaven," the theory of the Merkabah became largely interwoven with number mysticism and the speculations based on it. In addition to the ecstatic or visionary ascent to heaven, there developed a tendency toward deep meditation, toward prayer and the mysteries of prayer, which were communicated orally. Philosophy introduced a new element, mainly channeled by Saadiah Gaon through his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* (which had been translated into Hebrew as early as the 11th century), and through the early translation of his *Sefer Emunot ve-De'ot* in a style reminiscent of the *piyyutim* of the Kallir school. This was the source of the theory of the *Kavod* ("Glory"), transmitted through ḥasidic literature, which saw the Divine Glory as the first created entity, although the mystics dared speak of it only with trembling awe. Despite their distinction between God and the *Kavod*, which is also called *Shekhinah*, they continued to refer to the *Shekhinah* in terms of the talmudic and midrashic conception of it as an attribute of God. An additional factor from the 12th century onward was the influence of rabbis of the neoplatonic school, especially Abraham *ibn Ezra, and *Abraham b. Ḥiyya. Perhaps Ibn Ezra's travels to France and his personal contacts there contributed to this influence as well as his books. In all the literature they inherited from Saadiah and the Spanish rabbis, the Ḥasidim concentrated on that part that was closest to their thought, practically turning these authors into theosophists. Arriving at no unified systemization of these disparate and contradictory elements, in formulating their ideas they contented themselves with eclectic presentations.

The ideas of the Merkabah and the *Shi'ur Komah* were already known in France at the beginning of the ninth century, as witnessed by the attacks on them by *Agobard, bishop of Lyons. Here and there glimpses of these traditions appear in the writings of *Rashi and the tosafists of the 12th and 13th centuries. The study of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* was looked upon as an esoteric discipline, consisting both of revelations concerning creation and the mysteries of the world, and of a profound knowledge of the mysteries of language and the Sacred Names. Traditions of this type have come down from *Jacob b. Meir Tam, Isaac of Dampierre, Elhanan of Corbeil, and Ezra of Montcontour. The latter, claiming divine revelation, aroused messianic excitement in France and beyond in the second decade of the 13th century (Scholem, *Origines de la Kabbale*, 254–5). These traditions were given written form in France in the *Sefer ha-Ḥayyim* (Munich Ms. 107), written around 1200. However, following Ibn Ezra, its basic doctrine assimilated other theosophical elements concerning the divine attributes and their place in the *Kavod* and beneath the Throne whose similarity to the kabbalistic outlook is clear.

In all aspects, including the esoteric, the movement reached its peak in Germany, first within the widespread Kalonymus family from the 11th century on. In Worms, Speyer, and Mainz, and afterward in Regensburg, the main upholders of the tradition are known: *Samuel b. Kalonymus, *Judah b. Kalonymus of Mainz, and his son, *Eleazar of Worms; his teacher, Judah b. Samuel ha-Ḥasid (d. 1217); Judah b. Kalonymus of Speyer (author of *Sefer Yihusei Tanna'im ve-Amora'im*), and the descendants of Judah he-Ḥasid who were scattered throughout the German cities of the 13th century. They and their pupils gave a far-reaching popular expression to the movement, and several of them wrote books of a wide compass which embodied a major part of their traditions and ideas. In

addition to the bulk of the *Sefer Ḥasidim*, Judah he-Ḥasid, the movement's central figure in Germany, wrote other books known to us only through citation in other works, particularly the *Sefer ha-Kavod*. According to J. Dan he was also the author of a large work extant in Oxford manuscript 1567. His pupil, Eleazar of Worms, included in books large and small (most of which have been preserved in manuscript) the major part of the material he had received concerning the teachings of the *ma'aseh merkabah*, the *ma'aseh bereshit*, and the doctrine of Names. They are a mixture of mythology and theology, of Midrash and speculation on one side, and of theurgy on the other. All the tendencies already mentioned above find expression in his work, existing side by side, as in his *Sodei Razayya* (considerable parts of which were published in the *Sefer *Razi'el*, and all of which is extant in Munich Ms. 81) or in those texts which are arranged like *halakhot*: *Hilkhot ha-Malakhim*, *Hilkhot ha-Kisse*, *Hilkhot ha-Kavod*, *Hilkhot ha-Nevu'ah* (printed under the title of *Sodei Razayya*, 1936), and also in many others that remain unpublished. The scope of this literature is very wide (see J. Dan in: *Zion*, 29 (1964), 168–81), and it contains some fragments of traditions of an unusual type, Gnostic in character, which apparently traveled from the east by way of Italy. The mysteries of prayer and the extensive interpretation of Scripture through number mysticism were further developed in Germany, partly through the chain of tradition of the Kalonymus family and partly through other developments which went so far that the emphasis on the search for associations by way of *gematriot* was considered by *Jacob b. Asher (Tur OH 113) to be the most characteristic feature of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. In the 13th century a very rich literature grew up, grounded on the different aspects of ḥasidic tradition but still independent of the kabbalistic literature that developed in the same period. The names of many rabbis who trod the path of ḥasidic theosophy are recorded in these sources, most of which are in manuscript. Many of their sayings were incorporated in Eleazar Hirz Treves' commentary to the liturgy (in *Siddur ha-Tefillah*, 1560), and in the *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem* of *Abraham b. Azriel, an early 13th-century commentary on the *piyyutim* of the *maḥzor* of the Ashkenazi rite (ed. E. Urbach, 1939–63; see the introduction (vol. 4) in the section on mysticism). In this circle the *Sefer Yeẓirah* was nearly always interpreted in the manner of Saadiah and Shabbetai Donnolo, with an added tendency to see the book as a guide for both mystics and adepts of magic. The study of the book was considered successful when the mystic attained the vision of the *golem*, which was connected with a specific ritual of a remarkably ecstatic character. Only in later times did this inner experience assume more tangible forms in popular legend (Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 173–93).

The theological views of the Ḥasidim are summarized in the *Hilkhot ha-Kavod*, and in the *Sha'arei ha-Sod ve-ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah* (*Kokhevei Yiḥzak*, 27, 1862), and in the various versions of the *Sod ha-Yihud* from Judah he-Ḥasid to Moses Azriel at the end of the 13th century (Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, 206–9). In addition to the ḥasidic version of the concept of the *Kavod*, another view developed in a particular circle in the 11th or 12th century which is not mentioned in the writings of Judah he-Ḥasid and his school. This is the idea of *keruv meyuḥad* ("the special cherub") or *ha-keruv ha-kadosh* ("the holy cherub"). According to this view, it is not the *Kavod* pure and simple which sits upon the Throne but a specific manifestation in the shape of an angel or a cherub, to whom the mysteries of the *Shi'ur Komah* refer. In the writings of Judah ha-Ḥasid

and Eleazar of Worms, and in the *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, there are a number of variations on the theme of the *Kavod* and various ways of presenting the idea. Sometimes a distinction is made between the revealed and the hidden *Kavod*, and so on. The special cherub appears as an emanation from the great fire of the *Shekhinah* or from the hidden *Kavod*, which has no form. In this circle the two basic divine attributes are contrasted with one another: God's "holiness," which denotes the presence of the *Shekhinah* in all things and the hidden *Kavod*, and God's "greatness" or "sovereignty," which has both appearance and size. Such an idea is somewhat reminiscent of the speculations of members of an eastern sect, like Benjamin b. Moses *Nahawendi, who believed that the world was created through an angelic intermediary (a concept which also had precedents among early heterodox sects during the development of Gnosis). This idea becomes apparent among the Ḥasidim in the pseudepigraphical text called the *Baraita of Yosef b. Uzziel*, which appears, from its language, to have been written in Europe. *Joseph b. Uzziel is taken to be the grandson of Ben Sira. The *baraita* is found in several manuscripts and was published in part by A. *Epstein (in *Ha-Hoker*, 2 (1894), 41–47). This idea was accepted by several rabbis, including Avigdor ha-Zarefati (12th century?); the author of *Pesak ha-Yir'ah ve-ha-Emunah*, which was mistakenly combined by A. *Jellinek with the *Sha'arei ha-Sod ve-ha-Yihud*; the anonymous author of the commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*, which was apparently composed in France in the 13th century and printed under the name of Saadiah Gaon in the editions of the *Sefer Yezirah*; and, finally, *Elhanan b. Yakar of London, in the first half of the 13th century (J. Dan, in *Tarbiz*, 35 (1966), 349–72). In the course of time such ideas, and particularly that of the special cherub, became combined and confused with Spanish Kabbalah, and in Germany in the 14th century several texts were composed which reflect this combination; some are still extant (British Museum Ms. 752; Adler Ms. 1161 in New York, and the commentary of *Moses b. Eliezer ha-Darshan to the *Shi'ur Komah*; *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, 204ff.).

Hasidic ideology, particularly in its French manifestations and in the form given it by Elhanan of London, adopted the theory of the five worlds. Mentioned by Abraham b. Hiyya in his *Megillat ha-Megalleh* and originating among the Islamic neoplatonists in Spain, this theory enumerates in order the worlds of light, of the divine, of the intellect, of the soul, and of nature (Scholem, in *MGWJ*, 75 (1931), 172–90). Occasionally the writings of this circle incorporated material which originally came from Latin Christian literature, as G. Vajda demonstrated in connection with Elhanan of London (*Archives d'histoire doctrinale du moyen-âge*, 28 (1961), 15–34). The views of the Ḥasidim were reflected to a large extent in their own special prayers, composed either in the style associated with Saadiah's concept of the *Kavod* (e.g., in the *Shir ha-Yihud*, a hymn which was perhaps written by Judah he-Ḥasid or even earlier), or frequently based on the Secret Names, alluded to in the acronym. Many of these have survived in the writings of Eleazar of Worms, particularly in the manuscript of his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*. There are also prayers and poems which their authors intended to represent the songs of heavenly beings, a kind of continuation of the *heikhalot* hymns, the songs of the sacred *hayyot*. Generally speaking, these prayers were not accorded a fixed place in the liturgy, and they were apparently the preserve of a chosen few. At a much later time they were included in liturgical anthologies in Italy and Germany, collected by kabbalists in the Safed period, and many of them were finally published in the *Sha'arei Ziyyon* by Nathan

*Hannover (ch. 3). Several of them were attributed in manuscript to Spanish kabbalists, e.g., *Jacob b. Jacob ha-Kohen of Segovia, who was, in fact, personally connected with the German Ḥasidim, or Solomon *Alkabez (see Werblowsky, in *Sefunot* 6 (1962), 135–82).

Eleazar of Worms clearly recognized the esoteric character of those subjects that merited special study, and he enumerates with some variations the areas involved: "The mystery of the Chariot, the mystery of Creation, and the mystery of the Unity [*Yihud*, a new concept] are not to be communicated except during a fast" (*Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* (1876), 3:3). He defines "the science of the soul," to which he devotes one of his main works, as the means and gateway to the "mystery of the Unity," which he apparently saw as the root of mystical theology. In the *Sodei Razayya* he enumerates "three kinds of mystery," those of the Chariot, Creation, and the Commandments. The question of whether the Commandments also have an esoteric purpose is also discussed in the *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Wistinetzki (1891), no. 1477). This book (no. 984) mentions "the profundity of piety [*hasidut*], the profundity of the laws of the Creator, and the profundity of His Glory [*Kavod*]," and initiation in these subjects depends on the fulfillment of the conditions laid down in the Talmud in connection with the *ma'aseh merkabah*. The mystics (*hakhmei ha-ḥidot*) are "nourished" in this world on the savor of some of the mysteries that originate in the heavenly academy, most of which are treasured up for the righteous in the world to come (no. 1056). Associated with the ḥasidic affinity for mysticism was their desire to synthesize the early material, including the anthropomorphic elements, with the spiritual interpretation that denies these elements. Aroused by this compromise, Moses *Taku (writing in the early 13th century), denied the Saadian principles and defended a corporeal point of view. His attack was included in the *Sefer Ketav Tammim*, of which two extensive fragments survive (*Ozar Nehmad*, 3 (1860), 54–99, and *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 1, 263–8). Seeing in the new tendencies "a new religion" which smacked of heresy, he also denounced the attention that the Ḥasidim paid to the mysteries of prayer, and particularly the dissemination of these mysteries in their books. By his attack he shows how widespread the ideas and literature of the Ḥasidim were in his time.

The Establishment of the Kabbalah in Provence. Contemporaneously with the growth of *hasidut* in France and Germany, the first historical stages of the Kabbalah emerged in southern France, although there is no doubt that there were earlier steps in its development which cannot now be discerned. These earlier stages were connected with the existence of a Jewish Gnostic tradition, associated in particular eastern circles with Merkabah mysticism. The main remnants were incorporated in the early parts of *Sefer ha-Bahir* and also in a few records preserved in the writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ostensibly an ancient Midrash, appeared in Provence some time between 1150 and 1200 but no earlier; it was apparently edited there from a number of treatises which came from Germany or directly from the East. An analysis of the work leaves no doubt that it was not originally written in Provence (Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbale*, 59–210), and to a large extent confirms the mid-13th-century kabbalistic tradition concerning the history of the book and its sources before it reached the early Provençal mystics in a mutilated form. That the book reflects opinions which were not current in Provence and Spain is quite clearly shown by the commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* by Judah b. Barzillai, written in the first third of the 12th century and containing all that the author knew of the traditions of the *ma'aseh bereshit* and especially the *ma'aseh*

merkabah. In his interpretations of the ten *Sefirot* of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* there is no mention of them as "aeons" or divine attributes, or as powers within the Merkabah, as they appear in the *Bahir*. His commentary is impregnated throughout with the spirit of Saadiah Gaon, quite unlike the *Bahir*, which is completely unconcerned with philosophical ideas or with any attempt to reconcile philosophy with the concepts it advances. Cast in the form of interpretations of scriptural verses, particularly passages of mythological character, the *Bahir* transforms the Merkabah tradition into a Gnostic tradition concerning the powers of God that lie within the Divine Glory (*Kavod*), whose activity at the creation is alluded to through symbolic interpretation of the Bible and the *aggadah*. Remnants of a clearly Gnostic terminology and symbolism are preserved, albeit through a Jewish redaction, which connects the symbols with motifs already well known from the *aggadah*. This is especially so with regard to anything that impinges on *keneset Yisrael*, which is identified with the *Shekhinah*, with the *Kavod*, and with the *bat* ("daughter"), who comprises all paths of wisdom. There are indications in the writings of Eleazar of Worms that he too knew this terminology, precisely in connection with the symbolism of the *Shekhinah*. The theory of the *Sefirot* was not finally formulated in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and many of the book's statements were not understood, even by the early kabbalists of western Europe. The teaching of the *Bahir* is introduced as *ma'aseh merkabah*, the term "Kabbalah" not yet being used. The theory of transmigration is presented as a mystery, an idea which is self-explanatory and has no need for philosophical justification, despite the opposition of Jewish philosophers from the time of Saadiah onward.

The book *Raza Rabba* may be identified as one of the sources of the *Bahir*, but there is no doubt that there were other sources, now unknown. The earliest signs of the appearance of the Gnostic tradition, and of religious symbolism constructed upon it, are to be found in the mid-12th century and later, in the leading circle of the Provençal rabbis: *Abraham b. Isaac of Narbonne, the author of *Sefer ha-Eshkol*, his son-in-law *Abraham b. David (Rabad), the author of the "animadversions" to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, and *Jacob Nazir of Lunel. Their works did not deal specifically with the subject of mysticism, but fragments of their opinions scattered here and there show their association with kabbalistic views and with kabbalistic symbolism (*Origines de la Kabbale*, 213-63). In addition to this, according to the reliable testimony of the Spanish kabbalists, they were considered as men inspired from above, who attained "a revelation of Elijah," that is, a mystical experience of spiritual awakening, through which something novel was revealed. Since the theory of the *Sefirot* in its theosophical formulation is already contained in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, it cannot be regarded as the basic content of these revelations; these were apparently connected with a new idea of the mystical purpose of prayer, based not on *gematriot* and secret Names but on contemplation of the *Sefirot* as a means of concentrating on the *kavvanah* ("meditation") in prayer. Within this circle Jacob Nazir belonged to a special group—called *perushim* in rabbinic parlance and "nazirites" in biblical terminology—whose members did not engage in commerce, but were supported by the communities so that they could devote all their time to the Torah. From its very nature, this group was akin to the Hasidim, and there is evidence that several of them led a hasidic life. Within this group a contemplative life could develop in which mystic aspirations could easily be aroused. The rabbis mentioned above did not share one consistent system of thought: there are several different and conflicting

tendencies in their writings. The idea of the *Kavod*, in its plain Saadian meaning, was not regarded particularly as a mystery, but interpretations in the spirit of the theory of the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir* were considered to be "the great mystery." In the school of Abraham b. David, traditions of this type were transmitted orally, and mysteries relating to the profundities of the Divine were added to the new theory concerning mystical *kavvanah* during prayer.

This circle of the early kabbalists in Provence worked in a highly charged religious and cultural environment. Rabbinic culture had reached a high stage of development there, and even Maimonides considered those proficient in the *halakhah* to be great exponents of the Torah. Their minds were open to the philosophical tendencies of their age. Judah ibn *Tibbon, head of the renowned family of translators, worked in this circle, and translated for his colleagues many of the greatest philosophical books, among them works of a distinctly neoplatonic tendency. He also translated Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* from Arabic, and its profound influence derived from this circle. The early kabbalists absorbed the *Kuzari's* ideas concerning the nature of Israel, prophecy, the Tetragrammaton, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and its meaning, in the same way as they assimilated the writings of Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham b. Ḥiyya, with their tendency toward neoplatonism. Jewish versions of neoplatonic theories of the Logos and the Divine Will, of emanation and of the soul, acted as a powerful stimulus. But philosophical theories concerning the Active Intellect as a cosmic force, association with which could be attained by the prophets and the select few, also penetrated these circles. The close approximation of this theory to mysticism stands out clearly in the history of medieval Islamic and Christian mysticism, and not surprisingly it acts as an important link in the chain which connects many kabbalists with the ideas of Maimonides. The influence of the asceticism of *Hovot ha-Levavot* has already been mentioned, and it continued to play an active role in the ethics of the Kabbalah and in its theory of mystical communion. In the last 30 years of the 12th century the Kabbalah spread beyond the circle of Abraham b. David of Posquières. The confrontation between the Gnostic tradition contained in the *Bahir* and neoplatonic ideas concerning God, His emanation, and man's place in the world, was extremely fruitful, leading to the deep penetration of these ideas into earlier mystical theories. The Kabbalah, in its historical significance, can be defined as the product of the interpenetration of Jewish Gnosticism and neoplatonism.

In addition, Provence in these years was the scene of a powerful religious upheaval in the Christian world, when the Catharist sect gained control of a large part of the Languedoc, where the first centers of Kabbalah were to be found (see *Albigenses). It is not yet clear to what extent if any there was a connection between the new upsurge in Judaism in the circles of the *perushim* and the Hasidim, and the profound upheaval in Christianity which found expression in the Catharist movement. In their ideology there is practically nothing in common between the ideas of the kabbalists and those of the Cathari, except for the theory of transmigration, which kabbalists in fact took from the eastern sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. The dualistic theology of the Cathari was clearly opposed to the Jewish view; nevertheless, it remains a possibility that there were some contacts which can no longer be discerned between the different groups, united as they were by a deep and emotional religious awakening. There is some evidence that the Jews of Provence were well aware of the existence and the beliefs of the sect as early as the first decades of the 13th century (Scholem, *Origines*, 252).

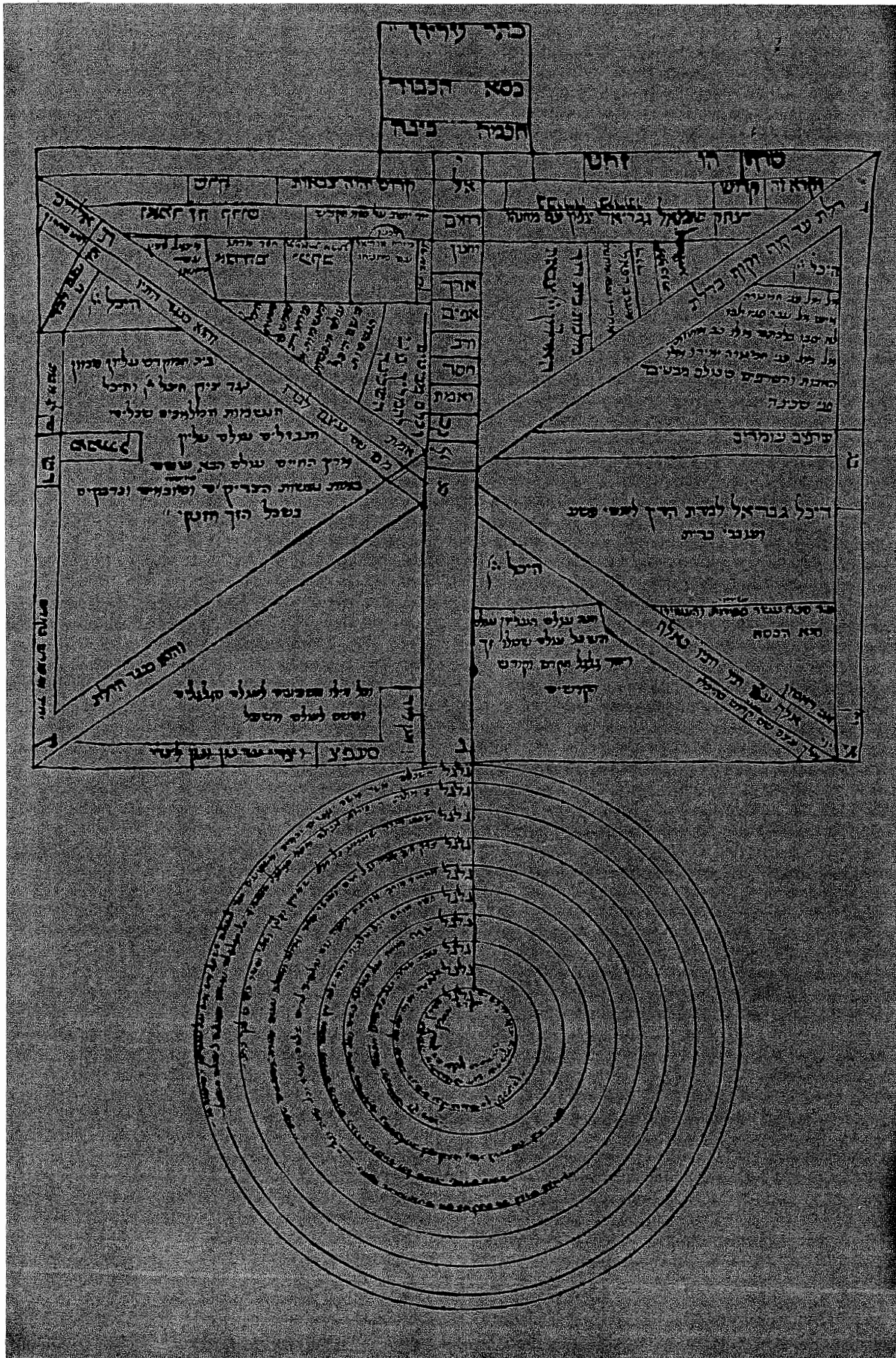


Figure 4. Representation of the ten *Sefirot*, with their corresponding angelic camps, and the ten astronomical spheres, reaching down to our Earth. From a miscellany, probably Italy, c. 1400. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. Ms. 119, fol. 5v.

Fragments of the kabbalist tradition that was familiar to Abraham b. David and Jacob Nazir are found in the writings of the kabbalists, and the clear contradictions between them and later ideas, whether on the teaching on God or on the question of *kavvanah*, testifies to their authenticity. Abraham b. David's statement in his criticism of Maimonides (*Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 3, 7) defending those who believe in God's corporeality becomes clarified when it is seen against the background of his kabbalistic views, which distinguish the "Cause of Causes" from the Creator, who is the subject of the *Shi'ur Komah* in the early *baraita*. His interpretation of the *aggadah* in *Eruvim* 18a, that Adam was at first created with two faces, also reflects kabbalistic speculation on the divine attributes—the *Sefirot*.

Abraham b. David's son, Isaac the Blind (d. c. 1235), who lived in or near Narbonne, was the first kabbalist to devote his work entirely to mysticism. He had many disciples in Provence and Catalonia, who spread kabbalistic ideas in the form they had received them from him, and he was regarded as the central figure of the Kabbalah during his lifetime. His followers in Spain have left some record of his sayings and his habits, and a few letters and treatises written at his dictation are also extant: their style is quite different from that of any of his known disciples. Generally he couched his ideas elliptically and obscurely, and he used his own peculiar terminology. Something of his opinions can be learned from the common elements in the writings of his pupils. At all events, he is the first kabbalist whose historical personality and basic ideas clearly emerge. Entrusting his writings only to a few chosen individuals, he definitely opposed the public dissemination of the Kabbalah, seeing in this a dangerous source of misunderstanding and distortion. At the close of his life he protested in a letter to Nahmanides and Jonah *Gerondi against popularization of this sort in Spain, in which several of his pupils were engaged (*Sefer Bialik* (1934), 143ff.). When the Spanish kabbalists of the 13th century speak simply of "the Hasid" they refer to Isaac the Blind. He developed a contemplative mysticism leading to communion with God through meditation on the *Sefirot* and the heavenly essences (*havayot*). The earliest instructions on detailed meditations associated with basic prayers, according to the concept of the *Sefirot* as stages in the hidden life of God, came from him. There is no doubt that he inherited some of his main ideas from his father, on whom he sometimes relied, but he had also recognized the value of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* and he built on its symbolism. His commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* (printed as an appendix to G. Scholem, *Ha-Kabbalah be-Provence*, 1963) is the first work to explain the book in the light of a systematic *Sefirot* theory in the spirit of the Kabbalah. At the head of the world of divine qualities he puts the "thought" (*ma'hashavah*), from which emerged the divine utterances, the "words" (*logoi*) by means of which the world was created. Above the "thought" is the Hidden God, who is called for the first time by the name **Ein-Sof* ("the Infinite"; see below). Man's thought ascends through mystic meditation until it reaches, and is subsumed into, Divine "Thought." Along with the theory of the *Sefirot* he developed the concept of the mysticism of language. The speech of men is connected with divine speech, and all language, whether heavenly or human, derives from one source—the Divine Name. Profound speculations on the nature of the Torah are found in a long fragment from Isaac's commentary on the beginning of the *Midrash Kohen*. The neoplatonic character of his ideas is immediately striking, and distinguishes them completely from the *Bahir*. (For an analysis of his thought, see Scholem, *Origines . . .*, 263–327.)

There were other circles in Provence who spread the

kabbalistic tradition on the basis of material which seems partly to have reached them directly from anonymous eastern sources. On the one hand they continue the neoplatonic, speculative trend of Isaac the Blind, especially in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*; and on the other hand they connect this trend with new ideas concerning the world of the Merkabah and the spiritual powers from which it is composed. There is a marked tendency to particularize and name these powers, and the theory of the *Sefirot* occupies only an incidental place among other attempts to delineate the world of emanation and the forces which constitute it. While Isaac the Blind and his disciples revealed their identities and refrained from writing pseudepigraphically, these circles concealed their identities as far as possible, both in Provence and in Spain, and produced a rich kabbalistic pseudepigrapha imitating the literary forms used in Merkabah literature and the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. One portion of this pseudepigraphic literature is neoplatonic and speculative in character, while another is angelological, demonological, and theurgic. This latter tendency in particular found a home in some Castilian communities, e.g., Burgos and Toledo. Among the early kabbalists of Toledo are mentioned the Hasid Judah ibn Ziza, Joseph ibn Mazah, and Meir b. Todros *Abulafia (Scholem, *Origines . . .*, 414). How, and in what circumstances, the Kabbalah arrived there around the year 1200 is not known, but there is evidence linking the Provençal kabbalists with the citizens of Toledo. A reliable document from Provence mentions as sources the traditions of the Provençal teachers, Abraham b. David and his father-in-law, Hasidim of Germany, and Judah ibn Ziza from Toledo (*ibid.*, 241). The pseudepigraphic literature used names from the time of Moses up to the later *geonim* and the Hasidim of Germany. Provence was undoubtedly the place of composition of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* ascribed to Rav Hamai Gaon, the *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah*, which was communicated by an angel to Moses, the *Midrash Shimon ha-Zaddik*, and other texts, while the home of most of the writings attributable to the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* could have been either Provence or Castile. More than 30 texts of this kind are known, most of them very short (see the list of them in *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, Heb. ed. pp. 255–62; *Origines . . .*, 283–91). New interpretations of the ten *Sefirot* are found side by side with notes and expositions of the "32 paths of wisdom," the Tetragrammaton, and the 42-lettered Name of God, as well as various cosmogonic speculations. Platonic and Gnostic tendencies are interwoven in them. Knowledge of the lights of the intellect, which fill the place previously occupied by the Chariot, competes with theories of the ten *Sefirot* and of the mystical names. The authors of these works had their own solemn, abstract terminology, but the terms are given differing interpretations as they recur in various places. The order of emanation varies from time to time, and it is clear that these speculations had not yet reached their final state. There were considerable differences of opinion within this circle, and each individual author seems to have been trying to define the content of the world of emanation as it was disclosed to his vision or contemplation. Even where the theory of the *Sefirot* was accepted it underwent remarkable changes. One group of texts interprets the 13 attributes of divine mercy as the sum of the powers which fill the world of emanation, some authors adding three powers to the end of the list of *Sefirot*; while in other texts the three powers are added to the top, or are considered to be intellectual lights shining within the first *Sefirah*. This view, which stimulated many speculations as the development of the Kabbalah continued, occurs in the responsa attributed to Hai Gaon on the relationship of the ten *Sefirot* to the 13 attributes.

There are clear connections leading from Saadiyah's theory of the *Kavod* and his concept of "the ether which cannot be grasped," stated in his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, to this circle, which made use of his ideas through the early translation of the *Sefer Emunot ve-De'ot*. The circle seems to have had little use for the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. The stress on the mysticism of the lights of the intellect is near in spirit, although not in detail, with later neoplatonic literature, e.g., the "Book of the Five Substances of Pseudo-Empedocles" (from the school of Ibn Masarra in Spain). For example, the supernal essences which are revealed, according to the *Sefer ha-Lyyun* and several other texts, from "the highest hidden mystery" or "the primeval darkness," are: primeval wisdom, wonderful light, the *hashmal*, the mist (*arafel*), the throne of light, the wheel (*ofan*) of greatness, the cherub, the wheels of the Chariot, the surrounding ether, the curtain, the throne of glory, the place of souls, and the outer palace of holiness. This mixture of terms from widely different fields is characteristic of the blending of sources and of a hierarchical arrangement that does not depend on the theory of the *Sefirot*, although it too is incorporated in some of the writings of this circle. A theurgic tendency also appears along with a desire to indulge in philosophical speculations on the Sacred Names. In addition to the influence of Arab neoplatonism, there are indications of some links with the Christian Platonic tradition transmitted through the *De Divisione Naturae* of John Scotus Erigena, but this question needs further research.

The Kabbalist Center of Gerona. Under the influence of the first kabbalists, their ideas spread from Provence to Spain, where they found a particular response in the rabbinic circle of Gerona, in Catalonia, between the Pyrenees Mountains and Barcelona. Here, from the beginning of the 13th century, a center of great and far-ranging importance came into being which fulfilled an essential role in the establishment of the Kabbalah in Spain and in the development of kabbalistic literature. For the first time, books were written here which, despite their emphasis on the esoteric side of Kabbalah, sought to bring its major ideas to a wider public. Sometimes allusions to these ideas are found in works which are not basically kabbalistic—e.g., works of *halakhah*, exegesis, ethics, or homiletics—but there were a number of books which were completely or largely devoted to the Kabbalah. Several letters from members of this group have survived which contain important evidence of their feelings and their participation in contemporary disputes and discussions. The main figures in this group were a mysterious individual by the (pseudonymous?) name of Ben Belimah (Scholem, *Origines* . . . , 413); Judah b. Yakar, Nahmanides' teacher and for a certain time *dayyan* in Barcelona (1215), whose commentary to the liturgy (JQR, 4 (1892), 245–56) contains kabbalistic statements; *Ezra b. Solomon and *Azriel; Moses b. Nahman (Nahmanides); *Abraham b. Isaac Gerondi, the *hazzan* of the community; Jacob b. Sheshet *Gerondi; and the poet Meshullam b. Solomon *Da Piera (whose poems were collected in *Yedi'ot ha-Makhon le-Heker ha-Shirah*, 4, 1938). In addition, their pupils should also be included, although many of them spread further afield to the Aragonese communities.

A personal and literary link between the kabbalists of Provence and those of Gerona may be seen in *Asher b. David, a nephew of Isaac the Blind. A number of his writings were very widely scattered in manuscript (collected by M. Hasidah in *Ha-Segullah* (fascicles 17–30, Jerusalem, 1933–34). In content, his writings are very similar to those of Ezra and Azriel, who were apparently among the first to write works entirely devoted to Kabbalah, composed

mainly in the first third of the 13th century. Ezra wrote a commentary to the Song of Songs (which was published under Nahmanides' name), interpreted the *aggadot* to several tractates of the Talmud wherever he was able to connect them with the Kabbalah, and summarized traditions, the greater part of which doubtless derived from the Provençal kabbalists. His younger companion, Azriel, made an independent rendering of his interpretation of the *aggadot* (ed. Tishby, 1943), wrote a commentary to the liturgy (extant in Ms.) according to the theory of the *kavvanot*, a commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* published in editions of that work under the name of Nahmanides, and two small books on the nature of God, *Be'ur Eser Sefirot* (also entitled *Sha'ar ha-Sho'el*), and *Derekh ha-Emunah ve-Derekh ha-Kefirah*. These two kabbalists also left separate "mysteries" on several subjects (e.g., "the mystery of sacrifices"), and letters on kabbalistic questions, including a long letter from Azriel to the kabbalists of Burgos (*Madda'ei ha-Yahadut*, 2 (1927), 233–40). Azriel stands out above other members of the group because of the systematic nature of his thought and the depth of his intellect. He is the only one of the group whose work is connected in style and content with the writings of the circle of the *Sefer ha-Lyyun* mentioned above. In his books, the interpenetration of neoplatonic and Gnostic elements reached their first apex. The neoplatonic element came largely from the writings of Isaac b. Solomon Israeli, some of which were undoubtedly known in Gerona (Altmann, in JJS, 7 (1956), 31–57). Jacob b. Sheshet, in his polemical work against Samuel ibn *Tibbon, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim* (ed. Vajda, 1968), combined philosophical enquiry with kabbalistic speculation. Two of his books were devoted to the latter: *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, which was later attributed to Nahmanides and published under his name, and *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, a rhymed summary of kabbalistic ideas (*Oẓar Neḥmad*, 3 (1860), 133–65).

It is doubtful if these kabbalists, who were known only to a small circle and who composed no works outside the field of Kabbalah, would have had the great influence that they did if it had not been for the stature of their colleague Nahmanides (c. 1194–1270), the highest legal and religious authority of his time in Spain. The fact that he joined the ranks of the kabbalists as a young man prepared the way for the reception of the Kabbalah in Spain, just as the personality of Abraham b. David had prepared the way in Provence. The names of these two men were a guarantee to most of their contemporaries that, despite their novelty, kabbalistic ideas did not stray from the accepted faith and the rabbinic tradition. Their undisputed conservative character protected the kabbalists from accusations of deviation from strict monotheism or even of heresy. Charges of this kind were made, provoked mainly by the wider publicity given to the earlier works of Kabbalah and to their oral propagation in a number of communities. Isaac the Blind refers to polemics between the kabbalists and their opponents in Spain, and evidence of similar arguments in Provence (between 1235 and 1245) is extant in the accusation of *Meir b. Simeon of Narbonne, a reply to which, in defense of the Kabbalah, is included in the works of Asher b. David (see *Sefer Bialik* (1934), 141–62).

From the very beginning two opposing tendencies appear among the kabbalists, the first seeking to limit the Kabbalah to closed circles as a definitely esoteric system, and the second wishing to spread its influence among the people at large. Throughout the history of the Kabbalah right down to recent times these two tendencies have been in conflict. Parallel with this, from the time of the appearance of the Kabbalah in Gerona, two attitudes

developed concerning the relationship of the bearers of rabbinic culture to the Kabbalah. The kabbalists were accepted as proponents of a conservative ideology and as public defenders of tradition and custom, but at the same time they were suspected, by a substantial number of rabbis and sages, of having non-Jewish leanings and of being innovators whose activities must be curtailed wherever possible. Most of the kabbalists themselves saw their role in terms of the preservation of tradition, and in fact their first public appearance was associated with their taking the traditionalists' side in the controversy over Maimonides' writings and the study of philosophy in the 13th century (Scholem, *Origines* . . . , 416–54). In these disputes the Kabbalah of the Gerona scholars seemed to be a symbolic interpretation of the world of Judaism and its way of life, based on a theosophy which taught the inner secrets of the revealed Godhead and on a rejection of rationalist interpretations of the Torah and the Commandments. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the system of thought elaborated by a man like Azriel did not invalidate the philosophic teachings of his time but rather added to it a new dimension, that of theosophy, as its crowning glory.

In several of his works Nahmanides gives room to the Kabbalah, particularly in his commentary to the Torah, where his many veiled and unexplained allusions to interpretations "according to the true way" were meant to arouse the curiosity of those readers who had never heard of that "way." He also used kabbalistic symbolism in some of his *piyyutim*. And his views on the fate of the soul after death and the nature of the world to come, expressed in *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* at the end of his halakhic work *Toledot Adam*, represent the ideas of his circle and are in contrast to Maimonides' views on this subject. His commentary to the Book of Job is based on the theory of transmigration (without mentioning the word *gilgul* itself) and on the views of his companion, Ezra, concerning the *Sefirah* "wisdom." Nahmanides wrote no works specifically on the Kabbalah, apart from a commentary to the first chapter of the *Sefer Yezi'rah* (KS, 6 (1930), 385–410) and a sermon on the occasion of a wedding (*He-Halutz*, 12 (1887), 111–4). Since the 14th century, several books by other authors were attributed to him. In the writings of the Gerona kabbalists there is a definite, well-established symbolic framework which is related first and foremost to the theory of the *Sefirot* and to the way in which this theory interprets scriptural verses and homilies dealing with the acts of God. This symbolism served as the main basis for the development of the Kabbalah in this group, and numerous anonymous kabbalists of this and later periods made out lists and tables, mostly brief, of the order of the *Sefirot*, and of the nomenclature in Scripture and *aggadah* which fitted them. In points of detail practically every kabbalist had his own system but there was a wide measure of agreement on fundamentals (a list of such tracts in KS, 10 (1934), 498–515).

Contacts were made between the Spanish kabbalists and the Hasidei Ashkenaz, either through individual Hasidim who visited Spain or through books which were brought there, e.g., the works of Eleazar of Worms. Abraham Axelrod of Cologne, who traveled through the Spanish communities between 1260 and 1275 approximately, wrote *Keter Shem Tov* dealing with the Tetragrammaton and the theory of the *Sefirot*. It exists in various versions, one of which was published in Jellinek's *Ginzei Hokhmat ha-Kabbalah* (1853), while another gives the author's name as Menahem, a pupil of Eleazar of Worms. This combination of the theory of the Sacred Names and speculations using the methods of *gematria* with the theory of the *Sefirot* of the Gerona kabbalists contains, at least in a third version of the

book, a powerful renewal of ecstatic tendencies, which took on the new form of "prophetic Kabbalah" (*Kelal mi-Darkhei ha-Kabbalah ha-Nevu'it*; see G. Scholem, *Kitvei Yad be-Kabbalah* (1930), 57). Other kabbalists from Castile also established contacts with one of the pupils of Eleazar of Worms who lived in Narbonne in the middle of the 13th century.

It is almost certain that an anonymous kabbalist from the Gerona circle, or one of the Provençal kabbalists, was the author of the book **Temunah* (written before 1250), which was attributed several generations later to R. Ishmael, the high priest. The style of the book is very difficult, and its contents are obscure at many points. An interpretation of the "image of God" through the shapes of the Hebrew letters, it became the basis of several other texts, composed in a similar fashion and perhaps even by the same author; e.g., interpretations of the secret 72-lettered Name of God mentioned in the mystical literature of the geonic period. The importance of the book lies in its detailed though enigmatic explanation of the theory of *shemittot* (see below), to which the Gerona kabbalists alluded without a detailed explanation. The difficult style of the *Temunah* was elucidated to some extent by an old commentary, also anonymous (published with the book itself in 1892), which was written at the end of the 13th century. *Temunah* had a distinct influence on Kabbalah up to the 16th century.

Other Currents in 13th-Century Spanish Kabbalah. The combination of theosophic-Gnostic and neoplatonic-philosophical elements, which found expression in Provence and Gerona, led to the relative, or sometimes exaggerated, dominance of one element over the other in other currents from 1230 onward. On one side there was an extreme mystical tendency, expressed in philosophical terms and creating its own symbolism which was not based on the theory or nomenclature of the *Sefirot* found among the Gerona kabbalists. Refuting some of the suppositions of the latter (e.g., the theory of transmigration), nevertheless it saw itself as the true "science of Kabbalah." Its first and most important exponent was Isaac ibn *Latif, whose books were written (perhaps in Toledo) between 1235 and 1270. "He had one foot inside [in Kabbalah], and one foot outside [in philosophy]" as Judah *Hayyat said of him (preface to *Minhat Yehudah* on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*). Becoming a kind of independent mystic, he drew his philosophical inspiration from the writings in both Arabic and Hebrew of the neoplatonists, and especially from Ibn Gabirol's *Mekor Hayyim* and the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, although at times he completely transformed their meaning. His main work, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (written in 1238), was intended to be, in a speculative mystical vein, both a continuation of and a substitute for Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. Together with most of the Gerona kabbalists he accorded the highest place to the Primeval Will, seeing in it the source of all emanation. The theory of the Divine Logos, which he took from the Arabic neoplatonic tradition, became divided into the Will—which remained completely within the Divine and was identified with the Divine Word (Logos) which brought forth all things—and into the "first created thing," the Supreme Intellect that stands at the top of the hierarchy of all beings, and was presented in symbols which in other places belong to the Logos itself. But Ibn Latif is not consistent in his use of symbolism and often contradicts himself, even on important points. From the "first created thing" emanated all the other stages, called symbolically light, fire, ether, and water. Each of these is the province of one branch of wisdom: mysticism, metaphysics, astronomy, and physics. Ibn Latif created a complete and rich system of the

universe, basing his views on a far-fetched allegorical interpretation of Scripture, although he was opposed to the extreme allegorists who regarded allegory as a substitute for the literal interpretation and not simply an addition to it. His ideas about prayer and true understanding have a distinctly mystical tinge, and in this respect exceed the theory of *kavvanah* and meditation prevalent among the kabbalists of Gerona. The influence of Ibn Gabirol is most noticeable in his *Zurat ha-Olam* (1860) which contains specific criticisms of kabbalistic theosophy. Nevertheless, Ibn Latif regards Kabbalah as superior to philosophy both in nature and efficacy, in particular because it takes hold of truth which is of a temporal nature, whereas philosophical truth is atemporal (*Rav Pe'alim* (1885), no. 39). Ibn Latif was also connected with exponents of Kabbalah whose conceptions were completely opposed to his, and he dedicated *Zeror ha-Mor* to Todros *Abulafia of Toledo, one of the leaders of the Gnostic current of Kabbalah. His books were read by kabbalists and philosophers alike, e.g., the philosopher Isaac *Albalag (Vatican Ms. 254, fol. 97b), who criticized his *Zurat ha-Olam*. According to Ibn Latif, the highest intellectual understanding reaches only the "back" of the Divine, whereas a picture of the "face" is disclosed only in supra-intellectual ecstasy, which involves experience superior even to that of prophecy (*Ginzei ha-Melekh*, chs. 37 and 41). This perception he calls "the beatitude of supreme communion." True prayer brings the human intellect into communion with the Active Intellect "like a kiss," but from there it ascends even to union with the "first created thing"; beyond this union, achieved through words, is the union through pure thought intended to reach the First Cause, i.e., the Primeval Will, and at length to stand before God Himself (*Zeror ha-Mor*, ch. 5).

The second exponent of philosophic-mystical tendencies distinct from the theosophical Kabbalah of the Gerona school and aspiring toward an ecstatic "prophetic Kabbalah" was Abraham *Abulafia (1240–after 1292). The striking image of this man derives from his outstanding personality. He came into contact with a group whose technique of letter combination and number mysticism stimulated his own ecstatic experiences. At least part of his inspiration was derived directly from the German Hasidei Ashkenaz and perhaps also through the influence of Sufi circles, whom he met with during his travels in the east in his early years. Abulafia's teacher was the *hazzan* Barukh Togarmi (in Barcelona?), who, judging by his name, came from the east. From him he learned the fundamental teachings of prophetic Kabbalah to whose dissemination he devoted his life, after he had attained illumination in Barcelona in 1271. His prophetic and perhaps also his messianic claims aroused strong opposition both in Spain and in Italy, but his books were widely read from the end of the 13th century, especially those where he expounded his system of Kabbalah as a kind of guide to the upward journey from philosophical preoccupations of the Maimonidean type to prophecy and to those mystical experiences which he believed partook of the nature of prophecy. Abulafia was also a copious borrower of kabbalistic ideas whenever he found them relevant, but those aspects which were foreign to his nature he opposed even to the point of ridicule. A passionate admirer of Maimonides, he believed that his own system was merely a continuation and elaboration of the teaching of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Unlike Maimonides, who dissociated himself from the possibility of prophecy in his time, Abulafia defended such a prospect, finding in "the way of the Names," i.e., a specific mystical technique also called "the science of combination" (*hokhmat ha-zeruf*), a means of realizing and embodying human aspirations toward prophecy.

So inspired, he himself wrote 26 prophetic books of which only one, *Sefer ha-Ot*, has survived. *Derekh ha-Sefirot* ("the way of the *Sefirot*"), he believed, is useful for beginners but is of little value compared with *Derekh ha-Shemot* ("the way of the Names"), opening up only after deep study of the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and the techniques to which it alludes. Abulafia saw his Kabbalah, therefore, as another layer added to the earlier Kabbalah, which did not contradict such major works as the *Bahir*, the *Temunah*, and the writings of Nahmanides. His promise to expound a way which would lead to what he called "prophecy," and his practical application of kabbalist principles, found a distinct echo in Kabbalah from the 14th century onward, first in Italy and later in other countries. His great manuals (*Sefer ha-Zeruf*, *Sefer Or ha-Sekhel*, *Sefer Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, and others), which have been copied right down to recent times, are textbooks of meditation, the objects of which are the Sacred Names and the letters of the alphabet and their combinations, both comprehensible and incomprehensible. It was precisely this kind of manual which had been lacking in the usual type of kabbalistic literature, which had confined itself to symbolic descriptions, and refrained from advancing in writing techniques for mystic experience. The work of Abulafia filled this need, and the fierce criticism of him which was heard here and there did not prevent their absorption and influence. One of Abulafia's pupils wrote (perhaps in Hebron) at the end of 1294 a small book on prophetic Kabbalah, *Sha'arei Zedek*, which includes an important autobiographical description of his studies with his teacher, and of his mystical experiences (Scholem, *Mysticism*, 146–55).

On the other side of this twofold development of the Kabbalah was a school of kabbalists who were more attracted to Gnostic traditions, whether genuine or only apparently so, and who concentrated on the Gnostic and mythological element rather than on the philosophical. The exponents of this trend set out to find and assemble fragments of documents and oral traditions, and added to them just as much themselves, until their books became an astonishing mixture of pseudepigrapha with the authors' own commentaries. In contrast with the Kabbalah of Gerona, the pseudepigraphic element was very strong in this branch, although it is not absolutely certain that the authors of these books themselves invented the sources which they quoted. This school, which might properly be called "the Gnostic reaction," includes the brothers *Jacob and *Isaac, sons of Jacob ha-Kohen of Soria, who traveled in Spain and Provence and met their older kabbalist predecessors: *Moses b. Simeon, their pupil and successor, rabbi of Burgos; and Todros b. Joseph Abulafia of Burgos and Toledo, one of the leaders of Castilian Jewry of his day. Their main work belongs to the second half of the 13th century. In Kabbalist circles Moses of Burgos was widely considered to be endowed with particular authority, and he was also the teacher of Isaac ibn Sahula, author of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. It is extraordinary that such a complete rationalist and devotee of philosophical enquiry as Isaac Albalag could see three members of this school as the true exponents of Kabbalah in his time, with Moses of Burgos at their head: "His name has spread throughout the country: Moses has received [*kibel*] the kabbalist tradition" (*Mad-da'ei ha-Yahadut*, 2 (1927), 168).

The speculative side is not altogether absent in this school, and some fragments of one of Isaac ha-Kohen's books (*ibid.*, 276–9) in particular show some relationship between him and Ibn Latif, but its true characteristics are quite different. He developed the details of the theory of the left, demonic, emanation, whose ten *Sefirot* are the exact counterparts of the Holy *Sefirot*. A similar demonic

emanation is already mentioned in the writings of the *Sefer ha-Lyyun* group, and in the works of Nahmanides, and it is possible that its origins stemmed from the east. In the evidence extant, this theory appeared in pseudepigraphic texts and its roots were mainly in Spain and Provence. From these traditions came the Zoharic theory of the *sitra ahra* (the "other side"). There is a strong tendency here to make long lists of beings in the world below the realm of the *Sefirot*—that are given specific names—and so establish a completely new angelology. These emanations of the second rank are presented partly as "curtains" (*pargodim*) in front of the emanations of the *Sefirot*, and as "bodies" and "garments" for the inner souls, which are the *Sefirot*. This multiplicity of personified emanations and the listing of them recall similar tendencies in the later development of several Gnostic systems, and in particular the book *Pistis Sophia*. To everything in the world below there is a corresponding force in the world above, and in this way a kind of strange mythology without precedent in other sources is created. This theme runs through all the writings of Isaac b. Jacob ha-Kohen, and through some of the work of his elder brother Jacob. The novelty of the names of these forces and their description is obvious, and some of the details of the *Sefirot* and their nomenclature occasionally assume a form different from that in the Kabbalah of Gerona. In the writings of Todros Abulafia the kabbalists who are exponents of the Gnostic trend are given the specific name of *ma'amikim* ("those who delve deeply"), in order to distinguish them from the others. The Spanish kabbalists of the 14th century made an additional distinction between the Kabbalah of the Castilian kabbalists, which belonged to the Gnostic school, and that of the Catalan kabbalists. In this circle we can observe quite clearly the growth of the magical element and the tendency to preserve theurgic traditions of which there is no trace in the Gerona school.

This new Gnostic bent did not stop the individual mystical or visionary experience. The two elements go hand in hand in the writings of Jacob ha-Kohen, who wrote the extensive *Sefer ha-Orah*, which has no link with earlier kabbalistic tradition but is based entirely on visions which "were accorded him" in heaven. The Kabbalah of these visions is completely different from the traditional portion of his other writings, and it is not taken up anywhere else in the history of the Kabbalah. It is based on a new form of the idea of the Logos which assumes here the image of Metatron. The theory of emanation also acquires another garb, and concern with the *Sefirot* makes way for speculations on "the holy spheres" (*ha-galgalim ha-kedoshim*) through which the power of the Emanator is invisibly dispersed until it reaches the sphere of Metatron, which is the central cosmic force. This very personal theosophy, nourished and inspired by vision, has no relationship with the theosophy of the Gerona kabbalists but it has some connection with the Hasidei Ashkenaz. Jacob ha-Kohen was the first Spanish kabbalist to build all his mystical teachings concerning the reasons for the Commandments and other matters on *gematriot*. Metatron, to be sure, was created, but came into being simultaneously with the emanation of the inner heavenly spheres, and the verse "Let there be light" alludes to the "formation of the light of the intellect" in the shape of Metatron. There is no doubt that Jacob ha-Kohen knew about the art of "combination" as a prerequisite for mystical perception, but had no knowledge of those mysteries derived from it through rationalist interpretation characteristic of Abraham Abulafia. *Sefer ha-Orah* has not been preserved in its entirety, but large parts of it exist in various manuscripts (Milan 62, Vatican 428, etc.). It is the most striking example of how an entirely

new Kabbalah could be created side by side with the earlier Kabbalah, and it is as if each one of them speaks on a different plane. In his *Ozar ha-Kavod* on the legends of the Talmud (1879), and in his *Sha'ar ha-Razim* on Psalm 19 (Munich Ms. 209) Todros Abulafia strove to combine the Kabbalah of Gerona with the Kabbalah of the Gnostics, but he never alluded to the revelations accorded to Jacob ha-Kohen.

THE ZOHAR. The mingling of the two trends emanating from the Gerona school and from the school of the Gnostics is to a certain extent paralleled in the main product of Spanish Kabbalah, the character of which is also determined by them. This is the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, written largely between 1280 and 1286 by *Moses b. Shem Tov de Leon, in Guadalajara, a small town northeast of Madrid. In this city there also lived two kabbalist brothers, Isaac and Meir b. Solomon ibn *Sahula, and it is in Isaac's books that the first quotations are found from the earliest stratum of the Zohar, dating from 1281 (G. Scholem, in *Tarbiz*, 3 (1932), 181–3; KS, 6 (1929), 109–18). Many kabbalists were working at this time in the small communities around Toledo, and there is evidence of mystical experience even among the unlearned. An example of this is the appearance as a prophet in Avila in 1295 of Nissim b. Abraham, an ignorant artisan, to whom an angel revealed a kabbalistic work, *Pil'ot ha-Hokhmah*, and who was opposed by Solomon b. Abraham *Adret (Responsa of Solomon b. Adret, no. 548). This was the community where Moses de Leon passed the last years of his life (d. 1305). The Zohar is the most important evidence for the stirring of a mythical spirit in medieval Judaism. The origin of the book, its literary and religious character, and the role that it has played in the history of Judaism, have been subjects of prolonged argument among scholars during the last 130 years, but most of it has not been based on historical and linguistic analysis. In an analysis of this kind we can establish a precise place for the Zohar in the development of Spanish Kabbalah, which has set its seal on the book. In so

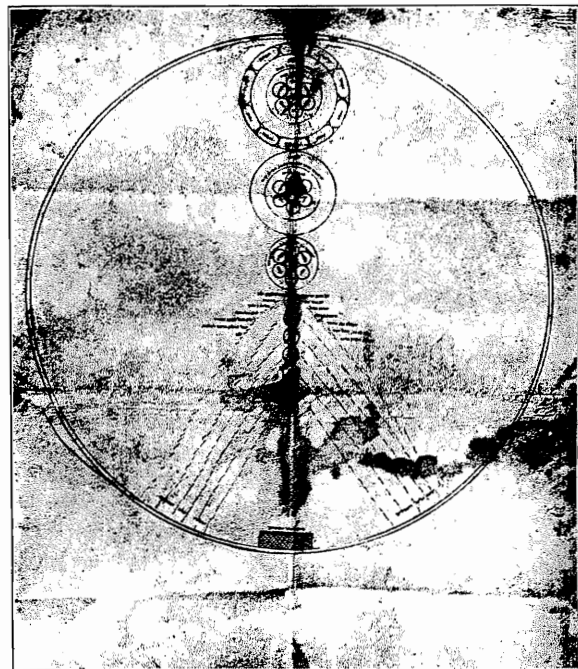


Figure 5. Manuscript page with a diagram of the cosmos, starting with the circle of the *Sefirot* and extending down to earth. Formerly Dusseldorf, Frauberger Collection. From *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung Juedischer Kunstdenkmaler*, October 1909.

doing we must resist continually recurring apologetic attempts to antedate its composition by turning its late literary sources into evidence for the earlier existence of the book, or by proclaiming ancient strata in it—of whose presence there is no proof (Belkin, Finkel, Reuben Margulies, Chavel, M. Kasher, and others).

The mingling of these two currents—the Kabbalah of Gerona and the Kabbalah of the “Gnostics” of Castile—became in the mind of Moses de Leon a creative encounter which determined the basic character of the Zohar. Instead of the brief allusions and interpretations of his predecessors he presents a broad canvas of interpretation and homiletics covering the whole world of Judaism as it appeared to him. He was far removed from systematic theology, and indeed there are fundamental problems of contemporary Jewish thought which do not arise in his work at all, such as the meaning of prophecy and the questions of predestination and providence; however, he reflects the actual religious situation, and expounds it through kabbalistic interpretation. In a pseudograph attributed to Simeon b. Yoḥai and his friends, Moses de Leon clothed his interpretation of Judaism in an archaic garb—in the form of long and short Midrashim of the Torah and the three scrolls. The explanations in the book revolve round two axes—one consisting of the mysteries of the world of the *Sefirot* that constitute the life of the Divine, which is also reflected in many symbols in the created world; and the other of the situation of the Jew and his fate both in this world and in the world of souls. The deepening and broadening of a symbolic view of Judaism was very daring in an age when the kabbalists still preserved in some measure the esoteric character of their ideas. The appearance of what purported to be an ancient Midrash which actually reflected the basic viewpoints of the Spanish kabbalists, and successfully expressed them in an impressive literary synthesis, sparked off a number of arguments among the kabbalists of the day. However, it also served to spread knowledge of the Kabbalah and ensure its acceptance. The author's viewpoint progressed from a tendency toward philosophy and allegoric interpretation to Kabbalah and its symbolic ideas. The steps in this progress can still be recognized in the differences between the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, the earliest part of the Zohar, and the main body of the book. There is little doubt that the aim of the book was to attack the literal conception of Judaism and the neglect of the performance of the *mitzvot*, and this was accomplished by emphasizing the supreme value and secret meaning of every word and Commandment of the Torah. As in most great mystical texts, inner perception and the way to “communion” are connected with the preservation of the traditional framework, whose value is increased sevenfold. The mystical viewpoint served to strengthen the tradition and indeed became a conscious conservative factor. On the other hand, the author of the Zohar concentrated frequently on speculations on the profundities of the Divine Nature, which other kabbalists did not dare to dwell upon, and his boldness was an important contributory factor in the renewed development of Kabbalah several generations later. When the Zohar appeared few kabbalists turned their attention to this original aspect. Instead they used the Zohar as a distinguished aid to strengthening their conservative aims. In his Hebrew books written in the years after 1286, after he had finished his major work in the Zohar, Moses de Leon himself concealed many of his more daring speculations (which the obscure Aramaic garb had suited very well). On the other hand he stressed in them the principles of *Sefirot* symbolism, with its value for the comprehension of the Torah and of prayer, and also the homiletical and moral element of the Zohar. His Hebrew

books expanded, here and there, themes which were first adumbrated with some variations in the Zohar. These works have largely been preserved, and some of them were copied many times, but only one has been published (*Sefer ha-Mishkal*, also called *Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah*, 1608). It is hard to say to what extent Mōses de Leon expected his work in the Zohar actually to be accepted as an ancient and authoritative Midrash, or how far he intended to create a compendium of Kabbalah in a suitable literary form which would be perfectly clear to the discerning eye. Many kabbalists in the succeeding generation used similar forms and wrote imitations of the Zohar, something which they would not have dared to do in the case of genuine Midrashim, thus showing that they did not take the framework of the book too seriously. This does not detract from (indeed it may add to) the value of the Zohar from a historical point of view, whether for its own sake or for the sake of the influence that it exerted.

Moses de Leon was certainly very closely associated with another kabbalist, who began as a disciple of Abraham Abulafia himself. This was Joseph *Gikatilla, who wrote *Ginnat Egoz* in 1274 and later a number of other works under the inspiration of his first master. However, while still young he also became associated with Gnostic circles and afterward he struck up a friendship with Moses de Leon; each came under the other's influence. Turning his attention from the mysteries of letters, vowels, and names, Gikatilla embarked on a profound study of the theosophy of the *Sefirot* system, and his books provide an independent and valuable parallel to the writings of Moses de Leon. *Sha'arei Orah*, written about 1290, already shows the influence of certain parts of the Zohar, although there is no mention of it. An important summary of, and renowned introduction to, the interpretation of *Sefirot* symbolism, this book became one of the major works of Spanish Kabbalah. It is worth noting that three different streams, the Kabbalah of Gerona, the Kabbalah of the Zohar, and the Kabbalah of Abulafia, were able to meet and be reconciled in Gikatilla's mind, a very rare occurrence in this period. His *Ginnat Egoz* is the latest source, insofar as we know, utilized by the author of the Zohar.

Two works written in the 1290s or in the earliest years of the 14th century, the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Sefer ha-Tikkunim*, comprise the latest strands in the zoharic literature. They are the work of an unknown kabbalist who was familiar with the major part of the Zohar and wrote his books as a kind of continuation of it (albeit with some change in literary style and framework). The books contain a new interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis and a tabulated explanation of the reasons for the Commandments. Elevating the importance of the Zohar as the final revelation of the mysteries, these two works connected its appearance with the beginning of the redemption: “Through the merits of the Zohar they will go forth from exile in mercy,” i.e., without the dread pains of the redemption (Zohar 3, 124b). The author exaggeratedly blends the image of the biblical Moses with Moses the revealer of the Zohar on the eve of the final redemption. It is possible that he was very close to the circle of Moses de Leon, and perhaps he was also called Moses. These books are the first of a whole line of kabbalistic works which were written in the pseudo-Aramaic style of the Zohar and as a continuation of it. Some authors also wrote in Hebrew, adding interpretations in the name of zoharic characters but reflecting their own ideas. In this category mention should be made of *Mar'ot ha-Zove'ot* (Sassoon Ms. 978) by *David b. Judah he-Ḥasid, known from his other writings as a grandson of Naḥmanides (*Ohel Dawid*, 1001-06); and *Livnat ha-Sappir* (on Gen., 1914; on Lev. British Museum

Ms. 767) by Joseph Angelino, written in 1325–27, and wrongly ascribed by several kabbalists to David b. Judah Ḥasid. This latter David was the first to write a quasi-commentary on and elaboration of the speculations in the *Iadra Rabba* of the Zohar, called *Sefer ha-Gevul* (Jerusalem Ms., and see Scholem in KS, 4 (1928), 307–10). He also wrote a long commentary, *Or Zaru'a*, on the liturgy, and several other books (*ibid.*, 302–27).

An important pseudepigraph written at the time of the appearance of the Zohar was “The Mystery of the Names, Letters, and Vowels, and the Power of the [Magical] Operations, according to the Sages of Lunel,” which is found in several manuscripts under different names (Vatican Ms. 441). Attributed to the circle of Abraham b. David, the book is actually based on the works of Gikatilla and Moses de Leon, and connects speculations on the letters, vowels, and the Sacred Names with the theory of practical Kabbalah. Its author, who gave the words of the late 13th-century kabbalists a new pseudepigraphic frame, also compiled the kabbalist anthology *Sefer ha-Ne'lam* (Paris Ms. 817), using similar source material. An obscure figure in zoharic imitation literature is Joseph “who came from the city of Shushan” (i.e., from Hamadan in Persia). Perhaps this is a completely fictitious name concealing a Spanish kabbalist who lived about 1300 or a little later and wrote a lengthy work on the Torah section of *Terumah* and the Song of Songs, which is largely written in the style of the Zohar and develops the ideas of the zoharic *Idras* concerning the *Shi'ur Komah*. According to A. Altman he is to be identified with the anonymous author of the *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot*, which was used as the source of a literary plagiarism by Isaac ibn *Farḥi in the 16th century (KS, 40 (1965), 405–12). At any rate, his extensive work is preserved (British Museum Ms. 464) and was widely disseminated, even in comparatively late times (G. Scholem, in *Sefer Yovel le-Aron Freimann* (1935), 51–62). The book is full of astonishing ideas not to be found in other kabbalistic texts, and the author introduces opinions which are quite foreign to the Zohar, although couched in its style. The third book in this category is the *Sefer ha-She'arim* or *She'elot la-Zaken* (Oxford Ms. 2396) from the first quarter of the 14th century. The old man (*zaken*) who replies to the questions of his disciples in none other than Moses himself. The bulk of the book is written in Hebrew and only a minor section in the zoharic style. Also a completely independent work, it relies a great deal on allusion without fully explaining its ideas.

The Kabbalah in the 14th Century up to the Expulsion from Spain. The 14th century was a period of intellectual development which produced an extremely rich literature. The Kabbalah spread through most of the communities of Spain and beyond, in particular to Italy and the East. Once the gates were opened wide through the books that revealed mystical ideas, all the preceding trends found their continuators and their interpreters; with this expansion all the different trends mingled with one another to a certain extent, and attempts were made to find a compromise between them.

The Kabbalah of Gerona was continued through the prolific literary activity of the disciples of Nahmanides' pupils, who were taught by Solomon b. Abraham Adret (Rashba) and *Isaac b. Todros, author of a commentary to the *maḥzor* according to Kabbalah (Paris Ms. 839). Members of this school, who did not favor the prevailing pseudepigraphic style, produced many books attempting to clarify the kabbalistic passages of Nahmanides' commentary to the Torah. An unknown author writing at the beginning of the 14th century composed **Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (1558), a compendium which expounded the

doctrine of Kabbalah in a terse and systematic fashion. This book was very widely read and its influence was felt as late as the 16th century. Although Solomon b. Abraham Adret was very cautious in his dealings with kabbalistic matters, he often alluded to them in his commentary to the *aggadot* (Vatican Ms. 295), and he also composed a long prayer in the kabbalistic way. His pupils, however, assigned a central place to the Kabbalah. To this school belong: *Baḥya b. Asher from Saragossa, whose commentary to the Torah contributed greatly to the dissemination of the Kabbalah and was the first kabbalist book to be printed in its entirety (1492); Joshua *ibn Shuaib from Tudela, author of the important *Derashot* (homilies) on the Torah (1523), the first book in this genre to assign a central place to the Kabbalah, and the real author of the *Be'ur Sodot ha-Ramban* (“Explanation of [the kabbalistic] secrets of Nahmanides' Commentary”), which was printed (1875) under the name of his pupil, Meir b. Solomon Abi Sahula; Ḥayyim b. Samuel of Lerida, author of *Zeror ha-Ḥayyim*, which contains a kabbalistic exposition of halakhic matters (Musajoff Ms.); Shem Tov b. Abraham *ibn Gaon from Soria, who began a large-scale literary work on the Kabbalah between 1315 and 1325, emigrated to Erez Israel with his friend Elhanan b. Abraham ibn Eskira, and settled in Safed. Elhanan's *Yesod Olam* (Guenzburg Ms. 607) merges the Gerona tradition with neoplatonic philosophical Kabbalah. In the school of Solomon Adret a large amount of raw material was assembled which has been preserved in *collectanea* of considerable value (Vatican Ms. 202, Parma Mss. 68 and 1221, and others). In the same way several anonymous texts have been preserved which interpret the hidden meanings in Nahmanides. The main storehouse for all the traditions of this school is *Me'irat Einaim* by *Isaac b. Samuel of Acre, who also dealt at length in other books with completely different aspects of the Kabbalah, under the joint influence of the Zohar and the school of Abraham Abulafia. In contrast to the attempts to seek a compromise between Kabbalah and philosophy, he insisted on the independence and supreme worth of kabbalist theosophy. Parts of the collection of revelations that were granted to him in various ways were assembled in *Ozar ha-Ḥayyim* (Guenzburg Ms. 775), parts of which have been frequently copied. He was associated with many contemporary kabbalists, and he was the first of this circle to write an autobiography, which, however, is now lost.

Another kabbalist who migrated to Spain and became acquainted with the Kabbalah there was *Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi, author of an extensive commentary to the *Sefer Yezi'rah* (which has been printed in editions of the book under the name of Abraham b. David). He also wrote a commentary to the *bereshit* section of the *Midrash Genesis Rabba* (KS, 4 (1928), 236–302). These books, which were composed at the beginning of the 14th century, have a spiritual affinity with the works of David b. Judah Ḥasid. They develop the theory of the *Sefirot* to the extreme, assigning to everything a precise place in the world of the *Sefirot*. Joseph b. Shalom engaged in a kabbalistic critique of philosophy, but he interpreted its principles kabbalistically in a very bold way. Like most of the kabbalists of his time he was taken with the idea of the *shemittot*, which gained much ground in this period. Among the most important versions of this theory is that of *Sod ilan ha-azilut* by Isaac b. Jacob ha-Kohen (*Kovez al Yad*, 5, 1951). Joseph b. Shalom expounded an extreme conception of the theory of transmigration of souls, turning it into a cosmic law involving a change of form which affected every part of creation from the *Sefirot* of Wisdom down to the lowest grade of inanimate objects.

Together with the influence of the Zohar and the school

of Solomon Adret the Spanish Kabbalah began to spread into Italy, particularly through the writings of Menahem *Recanati who wrote, early in the 14th century, a commentary "according to the truth" on the Torah (1523) and a work on the mystical reasons for the commandments (complete ed. 1963). But there was little independence in Italian Kabbalah, and for a long time it consisted of no more than compilations and interpretations, following the Zohar and the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, and, to an even greater extent than in Spain itself, the writings of Abraham Abulafia. One exception is the *Iggeret Purim* (KS, 10 (1934), 504, no. 52), whose author gives an unusual symbolic interpretation of the theory of the *Sefirot*. In Germany also there was little independent creativity in the Kabbalah. German kabbalists contented themselves with mingling the Zohar and the *Ma'arekhet* with the tradition of Hasidei Ashkenaz. Avigdor *Kara (d. 1439), who achieved fame there as a kabbalist (see *Sinai*, 5 (1939), 122-48), wrote *Kodesh Hillulim* on Psalm 150 (Zurich Ms. 102). In the second half of the 14th century *Menahem Ziyoni of Cologne wrote *Sefer Ziyoni* on the Torah, and Yom Tov Lipmann *Muehlhausen devoted part of his literary activity to the Kabbalah, e.g., *Sefer ha-Eshkol* (ed. Judah Even-Shemuel (Kaufmann), 1927). From the beginning of the 14th century the Kabbalah also spread to the East. In Persia Isaiiah b. Joseph of Tabriz wrote *Hayyei ha-Nefesh* (1324; Jerusalem Ms. 8° 544; part of it was published in 1891); and in Constantinople Nathan b. Moses Kilkis, who says that he studied in Spain, wrote *Even Sappir* (1368-70; Paris Ms. 727-8).

These last two books belong to the strain which attempted to combine Kabbalah and philosophy in more or less radical ways. Originating mainly among the Spanish kabbalists of the period, these attempts became quite common, and their proponents attacked the opposite tendency to emphasize the two sides' basic differences of approach. The unequivocal neoplatonic line of Ibn Latif was continued (about 1300) by *David b. Abraham ha-Lavan in his *Masoret ha-Berit*. Joseph b. Shalom, mentioned above, linked Kabbalah with Aristotelian metaphysics and with natural philosophy, showing how even abstract philosophical concepts had a mystical content. Obviously, some tended toward a more philosophical view, while others concentrated on the specifically kabbalistic side. Two of the chief exponents of these tendencies wrote in Arabic, an extremely rare occurrence in kabbalistic literature. One was Judah b. Nissim ibn *Malka from Fez, who wrote in 1365; his works have been analyzed by G. Vajda (1954), who has done a great deal of research on the relationship between Kabbalah and philosophy in this period. The other, who lived a generation earlier, was Joseph b. Abraham *ibn Waqar of Toledo. In his lengthy work entitled *al-Maqāla al-Jamī'a bayna al-Falsafa wa-al-Sharī'a* ("A Synthesis of Philosophy and Kabbalah"), he set down the views of the philosophers, the kabbalists, and the astrologers, evaluated their ideas according to their relative merits, and tried to establish a basis common to them all (Vajda, *Récherches sur la philosophie et la kabbale* (1962), 115-297). His book also includes a lexicon of *Sefirot* symbolism, which was translated into Hebrew and circulated widely. The author was deeply indebted to Nahmanides and Todros Abulafia, but he warns "that many errors have crept into" the Zohar. Ibn Waqar wrote poems on the Kabbalah (A. M. Habermann, *Shirei ha-Yihud ve-ha-Kavod* (1948), 99-122). His personal friend was *Moses Narboni, who was inclined basically toward philosophy; however, in the *Iggeret al Shi'ur Komah* and in other places in his writings, through a positive albeit somewhat reluctant approach to Kabbalah, Narboni tries to explain kabbalistic

statements as if they were in agreement with philosophy (A. Altmann (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1967), 225-88).

An attempt to weight the balance in favor of Kabbalah found expression in the criticism of the work of Judah ibn Malka attributed to Isaac of Acre (Vajda, in REJ, n.s. 15 (1956), 25-71). Samuel b. Saadiah *Mofot in Guadalajara (c. 1370) also followed Ibn Waqar in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezi'rah* called *Meshovev Netivot*, and his commentary to the Torah, *Megalleh Anukot* (to Ex., Oxford Ms. 286, and Lev. to Deut., Jerusalem, National Library, Ms. 8° 552). But the Zohar had a very strong influence on him. In the discussions of the philosophical kabbalists a great deal of attention was paid to the question of the relationship between the theosophic theory of the *Sefirot*, the philosophers' theory of the separate intelligences, and the neoplatonic idea of the cosmic soul. Attempts were made to explain the *Guide of the Perplexed* in a kabbalistic manner, or at least to clarify certain problems in it from the standpoint of the Kabbalah, using methods different from that of Abraham Abulafia; e.g., in the critique attributed to Joseph Gikatilla (1574; Vajda, in *Mélanges E. Gilson* (1959), 651-9), or in the *Tish'ah Perakim mi-Yihud* attributed to Maimonides (*Kovez al-Yad*, 5 (1950), 105-37). Following Abulafia, the urge to make a kabbalist of Maimonides was emphasized in the legend that he had a change of heart at the end of his life and turned to the Kabbalah (Scholem, in *Tarbiz*, 6 (1935), 90-98), a tale that was current from the year 1300 and appears in several versions. In this period the *Megillat Setarim* was also written, which was said to be a letter of Maimonides concerning the Kabbalah (in the anthology *Hemdah Genuzah* (1855), 45ff.).

Totally in contrast to these tendencies toward compromise were two important phenomena which were absolutely opposed to the world of philosophy. The first is connected with the growth of meditative movements leading to contemplation, whether of the inner world of the *Sefirot* and the innumerable hidden lights concealed therein, or of the inner world of the Sacred Names which themselves conceal mystic lights. As a rule this contemplation follows the methods of prophetic Kabbalah, but by changing it and bringing it into the realm of Gnostic theosophy. The 13th-century theory of the *Sefirot* is subordinated to the contemplation of the lights of the intellect, which originated in the writings of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* school, and produced a voluminous literature, wavering between pure inner contemplation and magic. There is no doubt that Isaac of Acre was very much inclined to this trend. Practically the whole of this literature is still concealed in manuscript form, no doubt because of the self-censorship of the kabbalists, who regarded it as the truly esoteric part of the Kabbalah. One characteristic example, however, did find its way into print, namely the *Berit Menuhah* (1648), which dates from the middle of the 14th century and was wrongly attributed to *Abraham b. Isaac of Granada. It deals at length with meditations on the inner lights sparkling from the various vocalizations of the Tetragrammaton. This literature represents a continuation of Abulafia's science of letter combination with the addition of the theory of *kavanah* of the theosophical Kabbalah. The book *Toledot Adam* (Jerusalem Ms., Scholem, Catalogue, 58-60) also belongs to this body of writing, and parts of it were printed under the name of *Sefer ha-Malkhut* (1930). The true *Sefer ha-Malkhut*, also a treatise on letter combinations, was written about 1400 by the kabbalist David ha-Levi from Seville (printed in the collection *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, 1839). Intended as practical manuals, these books are of little interest for kabbalistic theory or philosophy.

The second phenomenon is connected with the composition of two pseudepigraphic works: the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* (1784) on the portion of *Bereshit* and the *Sefer ha-Kanah* (1786) on the (meaning of) the Commandments. The author, who wrote between 1350 and 1390, speaks in the guise of the grandson of R. *Nehunya b. ha-Kanah, the supposed author of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. Actually, a large part of the first book consists of an anthology of earlier kabbalistic literature. The author, a considerable talmudist, adapted these sources and added a comparable amount to them. His main object was to prove, through the use of talmudic argument, that the *halakhah* has no literal meaning but mystical significance alone, and that the true literal meaning is mystical. With sweeping enthusiasm, these works go to greater lengths than the *Zohar* in their insistence that Judaism has no true meaning outside the world of the Kabbalah, thus representing the peak of kabbalistic extremism (S. A. Horodezky, *Ha-Mistorin be-Yisrael* vol. 2: *Ginzei Seter* (1952), 341–88; Baer, Spain, 1 (1961), 369–73). Clearly, in such a case there is no room for a philosophical approach. The anti-philosophical line was continued in the works of Shem Tov b. Shem Tov, who wrote two systematic books on the Kabbalah around 1400. His *Sefer ha-Emunot* (1556) demonstrates how completely the *Zohar* had become accepted, a century after its appearance, as the central work of Kabbalah. A large portion of the second book, whose title is unknown, is extant (British Museum Ms. 771). In this work the anti-philosophical tendency, which was perhaps influenced by contemporary events and by the persecution of 1391, is expressed quite clearly: there is no longer any room for compromise between mysticism and the demands of rationalistic thought. It cannot be affirmed, however, that this point of view dominated the Kabbalah in its entirety, for in the years that followed, up to the beginning of the 16th century, there were various moves toward reconciliation, especially noticeable among the Italian kabbalists.

In contrast with the clear direction followed by the pseudepigraphy of the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, there is no obvious goal in the voluminous pseudepigraphic activity of the Provençal kabbalist Moses *Botarel. He wrote a large number of books around 1400, including a long commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, filling them with fabricated quotations from the works of kabbalists and others, both historical and imaginary figures. However, his method was not at all like that of the *Zohar* and he also cultivated a conciliatory attitude toward philosophy, in complete contrast to Shem Tov b. Shem Tov. While the author of *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* and *Sefer ha-Kanah* put forward the Kabbalah as the only interpretation which could save Judaism from deteriorating and disintegrating, in other circles, imbued with a distinct talmudic and ethical spirit, it was regarded as a complementary element, through a stress on its moral and ascetic ideas. It is clear that the Kabbalah had already attained a firm status in the mind of the public, and quite obvious kabbalistic elements had begun to appear in the ethical literature of the 14th and 15th centuries. In this connection the *Sefer Menorat ha-Ma'or* by Israel *al-Nakawa of Toledo (d. 1391) is very important. It is a comprehensive work on Judaism with a clear halakhic standpoint. Wherever ethical questions are discussed in this book, which was intended for a wide public, statements are quoted from the *Zohar* (in Hebrew, under the name of *Midrash Yehi Or*) and from the other kabbalists, including specifically the *Hibbur ha-Adam im Ishto*, a treatise on marriage and sexuality written by an anonymous kabbalist at the end of the 13th century and later attributed to Nahmanides (KS, 21 (1945), 179–86).

The literature of the kabbalists themselves testifies to the

continuous existence in various circles of a strong opposition to Kabbalah and its claims—among halakhists, literalists, and philosophers. Beginning with the polemic of Meir b. Simeon of Narbonne (1250) this opposition continued to be expressed, either *en passant*, as was the case with Isaac Polkar and Menahem *Meiri, or in specific works; e.g., in the *Alilot Devarim* of Joseph b. Meshullam (?), who wrote in Italy in 1468 (*Ozar Nehmad*, 4 (1863), 179–214), and in several writings of Moses b. Samuel Ashkenazi of Candia, 1460 (in Vatican Ms. 254). Even with the expansion of the Kabbalah's influence to much wider circles these voices were not silenced, particularly not in Italy.

In Spain kabbalistic creativity diminished considerably in the 15th century. The original stimulus of the Kabbalah had already reached its fullest expression. There were many kabbalists still to be found in Spain, and the numerous manuscripts written there testify to the large numbers who were engaged in Kabbalah, but their work shows very little originality. In 1482 Joseph *Alcastiel from Jativa wrote responsa to 18 questions on various kabbalistic subjects which had been addressed to him by Judah Ḥayyat, and in them he adopts a very independent approach (*Tarbiz*, 24 (1955), 167–206). Joshua b. Samuel ibn Nahmias in his book *Migdol Yeshu'ot* (Musajoff Ms.), Shalom b. Saadih ibn Zaytun from Saragossa, and the pupils of Isaac *Canpanton, who occupied a central position in the Judaism of Castile in the middle of the 15th century, were among the chief exponents of Kabbalah. Many kabbalists had crossed to Italy even before the expulsion from Spain, e.g., Isaac Mar-Ḥayyim who wrote in 1491, en route for Erez Israel, two long letters on problems concerning the beginning of emanation (JQR, 21 (1931), 365–75; Yael Nadav, in *Tarbiz*, 26 (1956), 440–58). *Joseph ibn Shraga (d. 1508/09) who was called in his time “the kabbalist from Argenta,” and Judah Ḥayyat, the author of a long commentary, *Minhat Yehudah*, on the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elo-hut* (1558), were also among the chief transmitters of Spanish Kabbalah to Italy. The book *Ohel Mo'ed* (Cambridge Ms.) was written by an unknown kabbalist before 1500—in Italy or even still in Spain—in order to defend the Kabbalah against its detractors. *Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi and Joseph *Taitazak, too, began their kabbalistic activities while still in Spain. The activity of the migrants strengthened the Kabbalah, which acquired many adherents in Italy in the 15th century. Reuben Zarfati interpreted the theory of the *Sefirot*; Johanan *Alemano, who united Kabbalah with philosophy, wrote a commentary to the Torah in *Einei ha-Edah* (Paris Ms.), and to the Song of Songs in *Ḥeshek Shelomo*, and he also compiled a large anthology of kabbalistic miscellanies. He also composed an unnamed work on the Kabbalah (Paris Ms. 849; KS, 5 (1929), 273–7). Only the introduction of his commentary to the Song of Songs has been published (1790). *Judah b. Jehiel Messer Leon of Mantua opposed the tendencies of the later kabbalists and defended the view that kabbalistic principles agreed with Platonic ideas (S. Assaf in *Jubilee Volume for D. Yellin* (1935), 227). This emphasis on kabbalistic Platonism undoubtedly suited the spiritual temperament of the humanists of the circle of Marsilio Ficino and *Pico della Mirandola. The poet Moses *Rieti devoted part of his long poem *Mikdash Me'at* to a rhymed discourse on kabbalistic ideas, and Elijah Ḥayyim of *Gennazano wrote an introduction to the Kabbalah entitled *Iggeret Ḥamudot* (1912).

The Kabbalah after the Expulsion from Spain and the New Center in Safed. The expulsion from Spain in 1492 produced a crucial change in the history of the Kabbalah. The profound upheaval in the Jewish consciousness caused

by this catastrophe also made the Kabbalah public property. Despite the fact that the Kabbalah had spread in preceding generations, it still remained the preserve of relatively closed circles, who only occasionally emerged from their aristocratic seclusion. The aims of certain individuals like the author of the Zohar or the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, who intended quite consciously to create a work of historical and social importance, were not fully achieved until the 16th century. It was not until this period also that the eschatological mood prevalent among particular individuals in Spain was combined with the more basic stimuli of the Kabbalah. With the expulsion, messianism became part of the very core of Kabbalah. The earlier generations centered their thoughts on the return of man to the wellspring of his life, through the contemplation of the upper worlds, and on instruction in the method of his return through mystic communion to his original source. An ideal which could be realized in any place and at any time, this communion was not dependent on a messianic framework. Now it became combined with messianic and apocalyptic trends which laid greater stress on man's journey toward redemption than on his contemplated future return to the source of all existence in God. This combination of mysticism with messianic apocalyptic turned Kabbalah into a historic force of great importance. Its teachings still remained profound, complicated, and difficult for the masses to assimilate, but its aims lent themselves easily to popularization, and many kabbalists sought to extend its influence throughout the general community. The Kabbalah penetrated many areas of popular faith and custom, overcoming the unceasing opposition of some individuals. It should be noted that the highly original development of the Kabbalah after the expulsion did not start in Italy, although that country was a center of a flourishing Jewish culture, and fruitful kabbalistic activity could be found there. The real creative force came from the new center which was established in Erez Israel about 40 years after the expulsion. The religious movement which originated in Safed, and which manifested a renewal of the Kabbalah in all its intensity, is particularly important because it was the last movement in Judaism to have such a wide scope and such a decisive and continuous influence on the Diaspora as a whole, in both Europe, Asia, and North Africa. This influence was maintained even after the break-up of the Shabbatean movement, which testifies in the manner in which it had become rooted in the national consciousness.

A connection between the appearance of new aspects of the Kabbalah and its rapid dissemination, and the imminent redemption of Israel, had already been established by a few of the Spanish kabbalists, like Abulafia, the author of the *Ra'aya Meheimna*, and the author of the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*. But it was only after the expulsion that this became a dynamic and all-embracing force. A clear indication of this is the statement of an unknown kabbalist: "The decree from above that one should not discuss kabbalistic teaching in public was meant to last for only a limited time—until 1490. We then entered the period called 'the last generation,' and then the decree was rescinded, and permission given . . . And from 1540 onward the most important *mitzvah* will be for all to study it in public, both old and young, since this, and nothing else, will bring about the coming of the Messiah" (quoted in Abraham *Azulai's introduction to his *Or ha-Hammah* on the Zohar).

The exiles themselves studied the Kabbalah in its earlier forms, but they sought to respond to the interest in the Kabbalah aroused in Italy, North Africa, and Turkey by means of systematic and complete presentations, which at this time, however, did not contain any new points of view. The main exponents of the Kabbalah were Judah Hayyat,

in his extensive commentary to *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*; Abraham Saba and Joseph *Alashkar, in their commentaries to Scripture and Mishnah; Abraham Aduriel, in an anthology of earlier traditions entitled *Avnei Zikkaron* (KS, 6 (1930), 295ff.; 7 (1931), 457ff.); and particularly Meir ibn *Gabbai, in his exhaustive presentation in *Avodat ha-Kodesh* (1568), which was perhaps the finest account of kabbalistic speculation before the resurgence of the Kabbalah in Safed. There was intensive activity along traditional lines in Italy and Turkey in particular. Among those active in Italy were Elijah Menaḥem Halfan of Venice, Berakhiel b. Meshullam Cafman of Mantua (*Lev Adam*, 1538, in Kaufmann Ms. 218), Jacob Israel *Finzi of Recanati (commentary on the liturgy, Cambridge Ms.), Abraham b. Solomon Treves ha-Zarfati (b. 1470) who lived in Ferrara and had "a revelation of Elijah," and Mordecai b. Jacob Rossillo (*Sha'arei Hayyim*, Munich Ms. 49). A pantheistic view of the relationship between God and the world was quite clearly stated in *Iggeret ha-Ziyyurim* by an unknown kabbalist of the first half of the 16th century in Italy (JTS Ms.). An important center was formed in Salonika, then in Turkey. Among the leaders there were Joseph *Taitazak, apparently the author of a large book of revelations which he had composed in the last decade before the expulsion from Spain: *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, in which the speaker is God Himself (G. Scholem, in *Sefunot*, vol. 11); Hayyim b. Jacob Obadiah de *Busal (*Be'er Mayim Hayyim*, 1546); Isaac Shani (*Me'ah She'arim*, 1543); and Isaac b. Abraham Farhi, who circulated in his own name the anonymous *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot*, which had actually been written about 1300. The kabbalist philosopher David b. Judah Messer Leon left Italy to work in Salonika, but his book *Magen David* (London, Jews' College, Ms. 290) on the philosophical principles of the Kabbalah was apparently written in Mantua; this work influenced several later kabbalists, including Meir ibn Gabbai and Moses Cordovero (Schechter, in REJ, 62 (1892), 118ff.; KS, 9 (1933), 258). Solomon *Alkabez also began working in this circle before he went to Safed.

We also know of considerable kabbalistic activity in Morocco. Joseph Alashkar wrote most of his books in Tlemçen (*Zofenat Pa'neah*, 1529, Jerusalem Ms. 2° 154; and several other books in the *Katalog der Handschriften . . . E. Carmoly*, 1876), but the main center in this area was Dra (or Dar'a), whose kabbalists were renowned. There Mordecai *Buzaglo wrote the *Ma'yenot ha-Hokhmah*, which was hidden by the kabbalists (Goldschmidt Ms. Copenhagen), and a commentary on the liturgy (*Malkhei Rabbanan* (1931), 86–87). This was the environment where the *Ginnat Bitan* was written, an introduction to the theory of the *Sefirot* by Isaac b. Abraham Cohen (Gaster Ms. 720). This work should not be confused with the *Ginnat ha-Bitan* which has two commentaries attributed to the Spanish kabbalists Jacob b. Todros and Shem Tov ibn Gaon (Gaster Ms. 1398), and which is, from beginning to end (as shown by E. Gottlieb), a late 16th-century forgery based on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* and Judah Hayyat's commentary to it. The most important book produced by the Moroccan kabbalists in this period was *Ketem Paz* by Simeon ibn *Labi of Fez, the only commentary on the Zohar that was not written under the influence of the new Kabbalah of Safed. Consequently, it is frequently close to the primary meaning of the text (the part on Genesis was printed in 1795). Several kabbalists were working in Jerusalem and Damascus. Some of them were emigrants from Spain, and some from the Musta'rabim. Among the emigrants from Portugal was Judah b. Moses *Albotini (d. 1520), who wrote an introduction to prophetic Kabbalah (*Sullam ha-Aliyyah*, see Scholem, *Kitvei Yad be-Kabbalah*, 225–30; KS, 22 (1946),

161–71), and devoted many chapters of his book *Yesod Mishneh Torah* on Maimonides to the Kabbalah (M. Benayahu in *Kovez ha-Rambam* (1955), 240–74). In Damascus, in the middle of the century, Judah Halevy, a member of a Spanish family, wrote the *Sefer ha-Kavod* (Jerusalem Ms. 8° 3731). In the main, however, this was the center of activity of Joseph b. Abraham ibn Zayyah, one of the rabbis of the Musta'rabim who lived for several years in Jerusalem and in 1538 wrote there *Even ha-Shoham* (G. Scholem, *Kitvei Yad be-Kabbalah*, 89–91), in 1549 *She'erit Yosef* (Ms. of the old Vienna community, Schwarz catalogue 260), and also several other kabbalistic works. Noteworthy for their theoretical speculations on details of the *Sefirot* system and for their profound meditation on the mysticism of the infinite number of luminaries which shine in the *Sefirot*, his books represent the culmination of a certain approach, and at the same time reveal a strong leaning toward practical Kabbalah and matters concerning the *sitra ahra*.

Books written by the Ashkenazim after the expulsion from Spain were mainly of the anthology type: like the *Shoshan Sodot* of *Moses b. Jacob of Kiev (partially printed 1784, and extant in its entirety in Oxford Ms. 1656); *Sefer ha-Mikneh* of Joseph (Josselmann) of Rosheim (1546, Oxford Ms. 2240); and the great commentary to the liturgy by Naphtali Hirz Treves (1560). The writings of Eliezer b. Abraham Eilenburg on Kabbalah and philosophy show how different fields became intertwined in the mind of a German kabbalist who studied in Italy and traveled in several countries. Eilenburg edited the books of the original kabbalists together with additional material of his own, some of it autobiographical (Hirsch Ms. 109, Schwager and Fraenkel 39, 5–10, now in New York; A. Marx, in ZHB, 10 (1906), 175–8). The Kabbalah was established in Germany long before it found its way into Poland, where it penetrated only in the second half of the century through the work of Mattathias *Delacrut and Mordecai *Jaffe.

The printing of several classical works contributed a great deal to the dissemination of the Kabbalah, particularly in the middle of the 16th century. At first no opposition was roused—neither when Recanati's book was produced in Venice (1523) nor when several other books came out in Salonika and Constantinople—although these works did not receive the *haskamah* ("approval") of the rabbinic authorities. However, when the printing of the Zohar itself and the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (1558) was contemplated, the plan gave rise to bitter arguments among the Italian rabbis; a few of the leading kabbalists violently opposed it, saying that they were afraid that these things would fall into the hands of men who were both ignorant and unprepared and so be liable to lead people into error. The burning of the Talmud in Italy on the order of Pope Julius III (1553) played a part in this controversy, for there were those who feared that the widespread publication of kabbalistic works would in itself tend to stimulate missionary activity. Some kabbalists who at first were opposed to the idea later became the chief protagonists of the printing of the Zohar, e.g., Isaac de *Lattes, the author of a decision in favor of the printing of the Zohar, which appears at the beginning of the Mantua edition. At length, the protagonists prevailed, and the publication of other works of Kabbalah in Italy, Germany, Poland, and Turkey met with no further opposition (I. Tishby, in *Perakim* 1 (1967), 131–82; S. Assaf, in *Sinai*, 5 (1940), 360–8).

In addition to the traditional Kabbalah, during the first 40 years after the expulsion from Spain there arose a remarkable apocalyptic movement, whose leading exponents among the émigrés were active in Palestine and Italy. *Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi, who traveled through many

countries and settled in Jerusalem about 1515, devoted most of his energies to the propagation of a kabbalistic apocalyptic which was then causing a great stir. A few years after the expulsion a book appeared which affords striking evidence of this movement; called *Kaf ha-Ketoret* (Paris Ms. 845), it is an interpretation of the Psalms as battle-hymns for the war at the end of time, and was apparently written in Italy. At this time messianic movements also sprang up among the Marranos in Spain (Y. Baer, in *Me'assef Shenati Zion*, 5 (1933), 61–77), and emerged in Italy around the kabbalist Asher *Lemlein (1502). This too was the time of the first account of the attempt of the Spanish kabbalist *Joseph della Reina to bring about the final redemption by means of practical Kabbalah (G. Scholem, *ibid.*, 4 (1933), 124–30; J. Dan, in *Sefunot*, 6, 1962, 313–26). The story subsequently went through many adaptations and was very widely publicized. The commentator Isaac *Abrabanel also turned his attention to the propagation of apocalyptic views, whose adherents fixed the date of redemption variously at 1503, 1512, 1540, and 1541. The most serious repercussion was the agitation marking the appearance of *David Reuveni and his supporter Solomon *Molcho, whose kabbalistic expositions (*Sefer ha-Mefo'ar*, 1529) were favorably received by the Salonika kabbalists. Molcho's visions and discourses were a mixture of Kabbalah and incitement to political activity for messianic purposes among the Christians. With his martyrdom (1532) he was finally established in the Jewish community as one of the "saints" of the Kabbalah. For the apocalyptists the advent of Martin

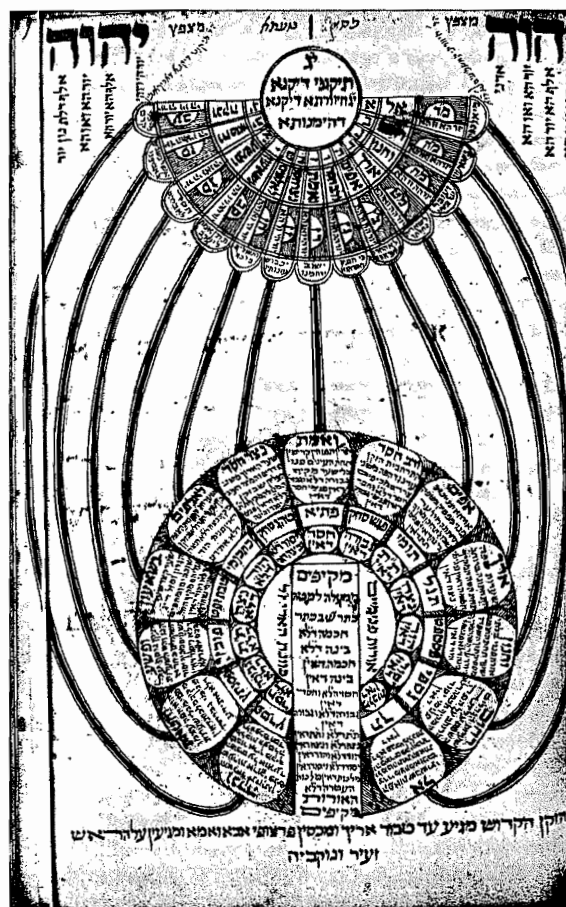


Figure 6. The 13 *middot* ("attributes") of God's mercy represented as the beard of one of the *parzufim* ("divine configurations"), according to the Zohar and the interpretation of Isaac Luria. New York, Jewish Theological Seminary.

*Luther was another portent, a sign of the break-up of the Church and the approach of the end of days.

After its failure as a propagandist movement, the apocalyptic awakening penetrated to deeper spiritual levels. Both Christian and Jewish apocalyptists began to perceive that on the eve of redemption light would be revealed through the disclosure of mysteries that had previously been hidden. The most profound expression of this new movement was that Erez Israel became the center of Kabbalah. First Jerusalem and from 1530 onward Safed were for decades the meeting places of many kabbalists from all corners of the Diaspora; they became the leaders of the religious awakening which elevated Safed to the position of spiritual center of the nation for two generations. Here the old and the new were combined: the ancient traditions together with an aspiration to reach new heights of speculation which almost completely superseded the older forms of Kabbalah, and which in addition had a profound influence on the conduct of the kabbalistic life and on popular custom. Even such great halakhic authorities as Jacob *Berab and Joseph *Caro were deeply rooted in the Kabbalah, and there is no doubt that their messianic expectations set the scene for the great controversy over the reintroduction of ordination, which Jacob Berab wanted to organize in 1538 when Safed had already been established as a center. Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Musta'rabim all contributed something to this movement, which attracted sympathizers from far afield and was also responsible for a great upsurge in the Diaspora, where communities far and wide accepted the supreme religious authority of the sages of Safed. The spread of a pietistic way of life was a practical expression of the movement and it prepared the ground for the colorful legends which quickly grew up around the major kabbalists of Safed. As with the beginning of Kabbalah in Provence, so here too profound rational speculations were combined with revelations which welled up from other sources, and they took the form (especially after the expulsion from Spain) of the revelations of *maggidim*: angels or sacred souls who spoke through the lips of the kabbalists or made them write down their revelations. Far from being merely a literary device, this was a specific spiritual experience, as indicated by the *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, attributed to Joseph Taitazak, and Joseph Caro's *Maggid Mesharim* (R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Caro, Lawyer and Mystic*, 1962). Once more like the beginning of Kabbalah in Provence and Spain, here too there were two opposing trends of a philosophic and theoretical nature on the one hand, and of a mythical and anthropomorphic kind on the other.

The earlier forms of the Kabbalah were represented by *David b. Solomon ibn Zimra (known as Radbaz, d. 1573), first in Egypt and later in Safed; in *Magen David* on the shape of the letters; *Migdal David* on the Song of Songs; *Mezudat David* on the meaning of the Commandments; and also in his poem *Keter Malkhut*, which is a kabbalistic imitation of the famous poem of the same name by Solomon ibn Gabirol (in the collection *Or Kadmon*, 1703). In contrast, a new system was propounded by Solomon b. Moses Alkabez, who emigrated to Erez Israel from Salonika, and by his pupil and brother-in-law Moses b. Jacob Cordovero (known as Remak, 1522-70). In Cordovero Safed produced the chief exponent of Kabbalah and its most important thinker. Combining intensive religious thought with the power to expound and explain it, he was the main systematic theologian of the Kabbalah. His theoretical philosophy was based on that of Alkabez and was completely different from the earlier Kabbalah, especially with regard to the theory of the *Sefirot*. It also developed greatly between his first major work, *Pardes*

Rimmonim, written in 1548, and the second, *Elimah Rabbati*, composed 19 years later; this later work followed his long commentary on the Zohar, *Or Yakar*, which interprets the book in the light of his own system. Cordovero interprets the theory of the *Sefirot* from the standpoint of an immanent dialectic acting upon the process of emanation, which he sees as a causative process. According to his view there is a formative principle subject to a specific dialectic, which determines all the stages in the revelation of the Divine (*Ein-Sof*) through emanation. The Divine, as it reveals itself when it emerges from the depths of its own being, acts like a living organism. These and other ideas give his system quite a different appearance from that adopted in Gabbai's *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, which was written (1531) shortly before the establishment of the center at Safed, although both are based on the Zohar. It would appear that Alkabez' systematic presentation was written after the *Pardes Rimmonim* (*Likkutei Hakdamot le-Hokhmat ha-Kabbalah*, Oxford Ms. 1663). Cordovero was followed by his disciples, *Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim, Abraham *Galante, Samuel *Gallico, and Mordecai *Dato, who introduced his master's Kabbalah to Italy, his birthplace and the scene of his prolific kabbalistic activity. Eleazar *Azikri and Elijah de *Vidas, both students of Cordovero, wrote in Safed the two classical works on kabbalistic ethics which were destined to have a wide public among students of Torah: *Sefer Haredim* and *Sefer Reshit Hokhmah*. Not only did they have a great influence in their own right, these books also opened the way to a whole literary genre of works on ethics and conduct in the kabbalistic manner which appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries and were widely popular. This literature did more for the mass dissemination of Kabbalah than those books dealing with Kabbalah in the narrower sense whose mystical content was comprehensible only to a few.

One book which is not dependent on Cordovero's Kabbalah, but which is saturated with the atmosphere of Safed, where the idea of transmigration held an important place, is the *Gallei Razayya* by an unknown author. Doubtfully attributed to Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim, this enormous book was written in 1552-53, and the most important section is devoted to the theory of the soul and its transmigrations. Especially striking is the attempt to explain the lives of the biblical heroes, in particular their more unscrupulous deeds and their relationships with foreign women, in terms of transmigration. The book is among the more original creations of the Kabbalah; only part of it has been printed (1812), although the whole work is extant (Oxford Ms. 1820). Its daring psychology became a precedent for the paradoxical approach of the Shabbateans in their interpretation of the sins of the biblical characters (G. Scholem, *Shabbetai Zevi*, (1967), 47-49). Curiously enough, it did not arouse any recorded opposition.

In the magnetism of his personality and the profound impression he made on all, Isaac *Luria Ashkenazi, the "Ari" (1534-72), was greater than Cordovero. The central figure of the new Kabbalah, he was the most important kabbalistic mystic after the expulsion. Although he worked in Safed during the last two or three years of his life only, he had a profound influence on the closed circle of students—many of them great scholars—who after his death propagated and interpreted various versions of his ideas and his way of life, mainly from the end of the 16th century onward. Immediately after his death a rich tapestry of legend was woven around him, in which historical fact was intermingled with fantasy (M. Benayahu, *Toledot ha-Ari*, 1967). Luria's powers as a thinker cannot be compared with those of Cordovero, with whom he studied for a short while in 1570; but his personal and historical influence went far

deeper, and in the whole history of Kabbalah only the influence of the Zohar can measure up to his. Developed from speculations of a mythical character on the Zohar, in general his system depends more than was previously thought on Cordovero, although he effected a kind of remythicization of the latter's theoretical concepts. In particular Cordovero's interpretations of the ideas in the *Idra* of the Zohar, voiced in his *Elimah Rabbati*, had a marked influence on Luria, who based the details of his system to a large extent on the *Idrot*. With Luria these ideas are bound up with his preoccupation with letter combinations as a medium for meditation. A large area of his system does not lend itself to complete intellectual penetration, and in many instances it can only be reached through personal meditation. Even in his theory of creation (see below), which from its inception is associated with the extreme mysticism of language and the Holy Names in which the divine power is concentrated, we quickly arrive at the point—the details of the idea of the *tikkun ha-parzufim* (“the restoration of the faces [of God]”)—which is beyond the scope of intellectual perception. Here we are dealing with an extreme case of Gnostic reaction in the Kabbalah, which finds its expression in the placing of innumerable stages among the degrees of emanation, and the lights which sparkle in them. This Gnostic reaction, and with it the mythical tendency in the Kabbalah, reached its highest point in Luria, while at the same time its relationship with the philosophical trends of Spanish Kabbalah and of Cordovero also was at its most tenuous.

Those passages which are comprehensible, and which are related to the origin of the process of creation, are quite dissimilar from the starting-points of the neoplatonists, but they are of great importance for the history of mysticism and their historical influence was astounding. It is precisely in these sections that we find important differences in the various versions of Lurianic Kabbalah. Some concealed particular parts of these speculations, as did Moses *Jonah with regard to the whole theory of *zimzum* (“contraction”) in his *Kanfei Yonah*, and Hayyim *Vital with the problem of *berur ha-dinim*, the progressive removal of the powers of rigor and severity from the *Ein-Sof* in the process of contraction and emanation. Some added new ideas of their own, like Israel *Sarug, in his theory of the *malbush* (“garment”) which is formed by the inner linguistic movement of the *Ein-Sof* and is the point of origin, preceding even the *zimzum*. The original aspects of Luria's work, both in general and in particular, were both profound and extreme, and despite the fact that they were rooted in earlier ideas, they gave the Kabbalah a completely new appearance. A new terminology and a new and more complex symbolism are the outstanding features of the literature of this school. There was much originality in the ideas concerning the *zimzum* which preceded the whole process of emanation and divine revelation; the dual nature of the evolution of the world through the *hitpashetut* (“egression”) and *histallekut* (“regression”) of the divine forces, which introduced a fundamental dialectical element into the theory of emanation (already apparent in Cordovero); the five *parzufim* (“configurations”) as the principal units of the inner world, which are simply configurations of the *Sefirot* in new arrangements, in the face of which the ten *Sefirot* lose their previous independence; the growth of the world out of the necessary catastrophe which overtook Adam; and the slow *tikkun* (“restoration”) of the spiritual lights which have fallen under the domination of the *kelippot* (“shells, husks”; forces of evil). The Gnostic character of these ideas, which constitute a new mythology in Judaism, cannot be doubted. Parallel to the cosmogonic drama there exists a psychological drama, just as complex,

concerning the nature of original sin and the restoration of the souls condemned to transmigrati^on because of that sin. The theory of prayer and mystical *kavvanah* (“intent”) once more becomes central to the Kabbalah, and the emphasis it receives far surpasses any previously accorded to the subject. This mysticism of prayer proved to be the most important factor in the new Kabbalah because of the steady stimulus it provided for contemplative activity. A fine balance existed in Lurianic Kabbalah between theoretical speculations and this practical activity. The messianic element is far more noticeable here than in other kabbalistic systems for the theory of *tikkun* confirmed the interpretation of the whole meaning of Judaism as an acute messianic tension. Such tension finally broke in the Shabbatean messianic movement, whose particular historical power may be explained through the combination of messianism with Kabbalah. A messianic explosion like this was unavoidable at a time when apocalyptic tendencies could easily be resuscitated in large sections of the people because of the dominance of Lurianic Kabbalah. Not that this form of Kabbalah was distinct from other streams in its tendency to practical application or its association with magic. These two elements also existed in other systems, even in that of Cordovero. The theory of *kavvanah* in prayer and in the performance of the *mitzvot* undoubtedly contained a strong magical element intended to influence the inner self. The *yihudim*, exercises in meditation based on mental concentration on the combinations of Sacred Names which Luria gave to his disciples, contained such an element of magic, as did other devices for attaining the holy spirit.

Luria's disciples saw him as the Messiah, son of Joseph, who was to prepare the way for later revelation of the Messiah, son of David (D. Tamar, in *Sefunot*, 7 (1963), 169–72), but for a whole generation after his death they kept themselves in esoteric groups and did little to spread their belief among the people (G. Scholem, in *Zion*, 5 (1940), 133–60). Only occasionally did written fragments and various anthologies or summaries of Luria's teachings penetrate beyond Erez Israel. In the meantime, in Erez Israel itself, a complete literature of “Lurianic writings” came into being, which originated in the circles of his disciples together with their own disciples. Only a very few of these works come from Luria's own writings (KS, 19 (1943), 184–99). In addition to the disciples mentioned above, Joseph *ibn Tabul, Judah Mishan, and others also took part in this activity, but not one of them became a propagandist or was active outside Erez Israel. This work began only at the end of the 16th century with the journeys of Israel Sarug to Italy and Poland (*Zion*, 5 (1940), 214–43; 9 (1954), 173), and then through a scholar who, despite his pretensions, was not one of Luria's pupils in Safed but only a disciple in the spiritual sense. Up to about 1620 the Kabbalah remained largely under the influence of the other Safed kabbalists, Cordovero in particular.

As the Kabbalah began to radiate outward from Safed to the Diaspora it was accompanied by great excitement, particularly in Turkey, Italy, and Poland. In Italy particular importance attaches to the work of Mordecai Dato, who also engaged in literary messianic propaganda around the year 1575, which many considered to be the actual year of redemption (D. Tamar, in *Sefunot*, 2 (1958), 61–88). Equally important was his pupil Menahem Azariah *Fano (d. 1623), who was regarded for many years as the most prominent kabbalist of Italy, and who produced a considerable number of works, following Cordovero first of all and then Lurianic Kabbalah in the version spread by Sarug. He and his disciples, particularly *Aaron Berechiah b. Moses of Modena (d. 1639) and Samuel b. Elisha Portaleone, made Italy into one of the most important centers of

Kabbalah. Preachers in Italy and Poland began to speak of kabbalistic matters in public, and kabbalistic phraseology became public property. Some attempts were also made to explain kabbalistic ideas without using technical language. This is seen particularly in the writings of *Judah Loew b. Bezalel (Maharal of Prague) and in the *Bei Mo'ed* of Menahem Rava of Padua (1608). The spread of the Kabbalah also brought with it a mingling of popular belief and mystic speculation, which had widespread results. The new customs of the kabbalists in Safed found their way to the wider public, especially after the appearance of *Seder ha-Yom* by Moses ibn Makhir from Safed (1599). Penitential manuals based on the practice of the Safed kabbalists and new prayers and customs became widespread. In Italy, and later in other lands too, special groups were established for their propagation. Small wonder that the movement resulted also in the revival of religious poetry, rooted in the world of the Kabbalah. Beginning in Safed too, where its main exponents were Eliezer Azikri, Israel *Najara, Abraham Maimin, and Menahem *Lonzano, this poetry spread to Italy and was exemplified in the works of Mordecai Dato, Aaron Berechiah Modena, and Joseph Jedidiah *Carmi; in the years that followed it was echoed extensively. Many poets owed a major stimulus of their creativity to Kabbalah, especially the great Yemenite poet Shalom (Salim) *Shabbazi, Moses *Zacuto, and Moses Hayyim *Luzzatto. In their works they revealed the imaginative and poetic value of kabbalistic symbols, and many of their poems found their way into prayer books, both of the community and of individuals (G. Scholem, *Lyrical Kabbalah? in Der Jude*, 6, 1921, 55–69; A. Ben-Yisrael, *Shirat ha-Hen*, 1918).

As long as Hayyim Vital, Luria's chief disciple, refused to allow his writings to be publicized—a process which did not begin in earnest until after Vital's death (1620)—knowledge of Lurianic Kabbalah came to the Diaspora at first only through the versions of Moses Jonah and Israel Sarug. Nearly all the works of Kabbalah which were devoted to the spread of these ideas through the press in the first half of the 17th century bear the imprint of Sarug. But in his book *Shefa Tal* Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz of Prague based his attempt to reconcile the Lurianic theory of *zimzum* with the Kabbalah of Cordovero on the writings of Joseph ibn Tabul. Abraham *Herrera, a pupil of Sarug who connected the teaching of his master with neoplatonic philosophy, wrote *Puerto del Cielo*, the only kabbalistic work originally written in Spanish, which came to the knowledge of many European scholars through its translations into Hebrew (1655) and Latin (1684).

At first Lurianic ideas appeared in print in an abbreviated form only, as in the *Appiryon Shelomo* of Abraham Sasson (Venice, 1608); but in 1629–31 the two bulky volumes by Joseph Solomon *Delmedigo were published, *Ta'alumot Hokhmah* and *Novelot Hokhmah*, which also included source material from the writings of Sarug and his pupils. The latter volume also contains lengthy studies of these ideas and a number of attempts to explain them philosophically. During these years manuscripts of Vital's teachings were disseminated and in 1648 there appeared in Amsterdam the *Emek ha-Melekh* of Naphtali *Bacharach, which contained an extremely detailed presentation of Lurianic doctrine based on a mixture of the two traditions of Vital and Sarug. It had an enormous influence although it also aroused protest and criticism. It was followed by the publication of other sources which sought to interpret the new teaching; e.g., *Haithalat ha-Hokhmah* from the Sarug school, published by a Polish kabbalist, Abraham Kal-manks of Lublin, who assumed authorship of the book under the title *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* (Amsterdam, 1652).

However, the books published in the field of Kabbalah, which continued to increase in number during the 17th century, only partially reflect the great tidal waves of Kabbalah which were sweeping both East and West. From Erez Israel and Egypt spread a great variety of different editions and redactions of all kinds of Lurianic teachings, which captivated those who were mystically inclined. A large amount of this output was the work of men at the center established in Jerusalem between 1630 and 1660 whose leaders, Jacob *Zemah, Nathan b. Reuben Spiro, and Meir *Poppers, labored unstintingly both in editing Vital's writings and in composing their own works. Of these, only the books of Nathan Spiro, who spent some of his later years in Italy, were actually printed (*Tuv ha-Areẓ*, 1655, *Yayin ha-Meshummar*, 1660, and *Mazzat Shimmurim*, all in Venice). The way in which the Kabbalah penetrated every aspect of life can be seen not only in the long list of homiletic works of a completely kabbalistic nature and of ethical works written under its influence (especially the *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* of Isaiah *Horowitz), but also in the interpretations of legal and halakhic details based on kabbalistic principles. *Hayyim b. Abraham ha-Kohen of Aleppo was particularly distinguished in this field and his book *Mekor Hayyim*, with its various parts, paved the way for a new type of kabbalistic literature.

The rise of the Kabbalah and its complete dominance in many circles was accompanied by some hostile reaction. It is true, of course, that the support given to the Kabbalah by men of renowned rabbinic authority prevented vituperative attacks and, in particular, open charges of heresy, but many intellectuals of a more conservative nature were suspicious of the Kabbalah and some even expressed their hostility openly in their books. Among these should be mentioned Elijah *Delmedigo in his *Behinat ha-Dat*, and Mordecai Corcos in a special work now lost. A bitter attack on the Kabbalah was launched by Moses b. Samuel Ashkenazi of Candia (c. 1460) in a number of writings preserved in Vatican Ms. 254. An anonymous work, *Ohel Mo'ed* (of the Spanish expulsion period; Jerusalem Ms.), was written in answer to the rabbis who belittled and mocked the Kabbalah. As the Kabbalah spread more widely in the community Leone (Judah Aryeh) *Modena of Venice (about 1625) wrote the classical polemical work against it, *Ari Nohem*, but he did not dare to publish it in his lifetime (ed. N. Libowitz, 1929). However, his book became widely known in manuscript and provoked many reactions. Solomon Delmedigo also criticized the Kabbalah severely in his *Iggeret Ahuz*, which was also circulated in manuscript only (published by Abraham *Geiger in *Melo Chofnajim*, Berlin, 1840).

In its continued advance, the Kabbalah reached Poland from the second half of the 16th century (see the mass of material in Dembitzer, *Kelilat Yofi*, 2 (1888), 5–10, 117–26). Public enthusiasm reached such proportions that "he who raises objections to the science of the Kabbalah" was considered "liable to excommunication" (R. Joel *Sirkes in a responsum). At first Cordovero's approach was in the forefront, but from the beginning of the 17th century Luria's Kabbalah began to dominate. Nevertheless, before 1648, the actual systematic ideas of the Kabbalah had little influence, as far as can be judged from the writings of Aryeh Loeb Priluk (commentaries to the Zohar), Abraham Kohen Rappaport of Ostrog (in his homilies at the end of the collection of responsa *Eitan ha-Ezrahi*), Nathan b. Solomon Spira of Cracow (*Sefer Megalleh Amukot*, 1637), Abraham Chajes (in *Holekh Tamim*, Cracow, 1634), and others. Here also the writings of the Sarug school were the first to be circulated; apparently the visit of Sarug himself to Poland shortly after 1600, which is convincingly documented,

also left its mark. Great stress was laid here on the war against the power of the *sitra aħra* crystallized in the *kelippot*, which was divorced from its association with the Lurianic idea of *tikkun* and treated as a basic principle in its own right. The tendency to personify these powers in various demonological forms is featured particularly in the work of Samson b. Pesah *Ostropoler, who after his death (in the *Chmielnicki massacres of 1648) was considered one of the greatest Polish kabbalists. The attempt to create a complete demonological mythology gave this particular stream of Kabbalah a unique character. To some extent it was based on writings falsely ascribed to Isaac Luria, but really composed in Poland (see REJ, 143 (1953), 37–39).

The Kabbalah in Later Times. A generation after Lurianic Kabbalah had become widely established, the messianic tension embodied within it burst out into the Shabbatean movement. Although there were, of course, various local factors involved in the extent to which people's minds were open to the announcement of the Messiah's coming, nevertheless the growing dominance of the Kabbalah in the popular consciousness of the time, and particularly among the fervently religious, must be seen as the general background which made the movement possible and fixed its mode of expression. The profound upheaval which the messianic experience brought in its wake opened the way for great changes in the world of traditional Kabbalah—or in the Kabbalah that the generations preceding Shabbateanism considered to be traditional. When large groups of people continued to hold fast to their faith in the messianic claim of *Shabbetai Zevi even after his apostasy, two factors combined to create an abnormal and audacious Shabbatean Kabbalah which was regarded as heretical by the more conservative kabbalists: (1) the idea that the beginning of redemption made it already possible to see the changes that redemption would effect in the structure of the worlds, and that the mystery of creation could be unravelled in terms of visionary revelations which had not been possible before; and (2) the need to fix the place of the Messiah in this process and to justify in this way the personal career of Shabbetai Zevi despite all its contradictions. Consequently it is clear that the whole Shabbatean Kabbalah was new, full of daring ideas which had great powers of attraction. Whatever essential originality later Kabbalah contains is derived mainly from the Kabbalah of the Shabbateans, whose principal ideas were the creation of *Nathan of Gaza (d. 1680), Shabbetai's prophet, and of Abraham Miguel *Cardozo (d. 1706). Although their books were not printed, they were frequently copied, and the influence of their ideas on those who were secret adherents of Shabbateanism is easily recognizable, even in several works that did in fact reach the press. The fact that some of the greatest rabbis were to be counted among the concealed Shabbatean faithful meant that there was a twilight area in their printed writings. This new Kabbalah showed its strength mainly in the period from 1670 to 1730.

By contrast, originality in the work of the kabbalists who remained outside the Shabbatean camp was limited. Continuers rather than original thinkers, they concentrated their efforts in two directions: (1) to continue the way that had emerged through the development of the Kabbalah from the Zohar to Isaac Luria; to examine and interpret the words of the earlier authorities; and generally to act as if nothing had happened and as if the Shabbatean explosion had never taken place; and (2) to limit the spread of the Kabbalah among the populace, because of the dangerous consequences they feared Shabbateanism had had for traditional Judaism; and to restore the Kabbalah to its former position, not as a social force but as an esoteric teaching restricted to a privileged few. Hence the predomi-

nantly conservative character of the Kabbalah from 1700 onward. Careful not to burn themselves on the hot coals of messianism, its adherents emphasized rather the aspects of meditation, of praying with *kavanah*, of theosophy, and of moral teaching in the spirit of Kabbalah. New revelations were suspect. Differences of approach began to crystallize particularly around the question of how exactly the teachings of Isaac Luria should be understood as they had been formulated in the different schools of his disciples or of their disciples. Here there was room for quite striking differences of opinion. There were even some kabbalists who, secretly influenced by Shabbateanism, drew a clear boundary between the traditional Lurianic Kabbalah and the area of new revelations and researches which remained closed to outsiders. It was as if there were no point of contact between these two areas, and they were able to remain side by side within the same domain. This was the case, for example, with Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz (one of the secret Shabbateans) in his *Sha'arei Gan Eden* (Koretz, 1803) and, in a different way, with Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (d. 1747), who tried to make a distinction between his systematic studies of Lurianic Kabbalah (in *Pithei Hokhmah* and *Addir ba-Marom*, etc.) and the studies based on the revelations granted to him through his **maggid*.

Most of those who were considered the foremost kabbalists devoted themselves to cultivating the Lurianic tradition, sometimes attempting to combine it with Cordovero's system. The enormous literary output, of which only a fraction has been printed, reflects this state of affairs. In addition to this, selections or anthologies were made, most outstanding of which was the *Yalkut Reuveni* by *Reuben Hoeshke, arranged in two parts, the first according to subject matter (Prague, 1660) and the second following the order of the Torah (Wilmsdorf, 1681). This collection of the aggadic output of the kabbalists had a wide circulation. Anthologies of this type were composed mainly by the Sephardi rabbis up to recent times, mostly with the addition of their own interpretations; e.g., the valuable *Midrash Talpiyyot* of Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari (Smyrna, 1736).

Apart from works of Kabbalah in the precise sense of involvement in, and presentation of, its ideas, a more popular Kabbalah began to spread from the end of the 17th century. Emphasizing mainly the basic ethical foundation and teaching concerning the soul, this popular Kabbalah chose a few isolated ideas from other kabbalistic teachings and embroidered them with general aggadic homilies. The influence of these books was no less than that of the works of technical Kabbalah. Literature of this kind was initiated by great preachers like Bezalel b. Solomon of Slutsk, Aaron Samuel Kaidanover (*Koidanover), and his son Zevi Hirsch, author of *Kav ha-Yashar*, and Berechiah Berakh Spira of Poland. Among the Sephardim were Hayyim ha-Kohen of Aleppo in his *Torat Hakham*, Elijah ha-Kohen ha-Itamari of Smyrna, Hayyim ibn *Attar of Morocco in *Or ha-Hayyim*, and Mordecai Moses Sasson of Baghdad. Commentaries in this vein on midrashic literature also circulated; e.g., *Nezer ha-Kodesh* by Jehiel Mikhal b. Uzziel (on Gen. R., 1719) and *Zikkukin de-Nura* by Samuel b. Moses Heida (on *Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu*, Prague, 1676). Under the influence of the Kabbalah, the *Midrashei ha-Peli'ah* were composed in Poland in the 17th century. These extremely paradoxical and mystifying sayings, often couched in an early midrashic style, can be understood only through a mixture of kabbalistic allusion and ingenuity. According to Abraham, the son of the Gaon of Vilna (in *Rav Pe'alim*, 97), a collection of this type, *Midrash Peli'ah*, was printed in Venice in the 17th century. Other such collections are known from the 19th century.

In this period there were important kabbalistic centers in Morocco where a very rich literature was produced, although most of it remained in manuscript. The Kabbalah was dominant in other North African countries and the emphasis was mainly on Lurianic Kabbalah in all its ramifications. A mixture of all the systems is evident among the kabbalists of Yemen and Kurdistan, where the Kabbalah struck very deep roots, particularly from the 17th century onward. The most prominent Yemenite kabbalists, both from Sana, were the poet Shalom b. Joseph Shabbazi (17th century), to whom has been attributed the *Midrash Hemdat Yamin* on the Torah, and Joseph Zalah (d. 1806), author of the commentary *Ez Hayyim* on the liturgy according to the Yemeni rite (*Tikhlal*, Jerusalem, 1894). The Hariri family of kabbalists was active in *Ruwandiz in Kurdistan in the 17th and 18th centuries, and most of their writings are extant in manuscript. Later centers were formed in Aleppo and Baghdad, whose kabbalists were renowned in their own lands. In all these countries, and also in Italy, religious poetry of a kabbalistic nature developed and spread widely. The main later poets were Moses Zacuto, Benjamin b. Eliezer ha-Kohen, and Moses Hayyim Luzzatto in Italy, Jacob b. Zur in Morocco (*Et le-Khol Hefez*, Alexandria, 1893), Solomon Molcho (the second) in Salonika and Jerusalem (d. 1788), and Mordecai Abadi in Aleppo.

In contrast to these regional centers, a special position was occupied by the new center established in Jerusalem in the middle of the 18th century, headed by the Yemenite kabbalist Shalom Mizrahi *Sharabi (ha-Reshash; d. 1777), the most important kabbalist throughout the Orient and North Africa. He was thought to be inspired from on high and in this respect equalled only by Isaac Luria himself. In his personality and in the yeshivah Bet El which continued his tradition for nearly 200 years in the Old City of Jerusalem (it was destroyed in an earthquake in 1927), a twofold approach crystallized: (1) a definite, almost exclusive, concentration on Lurianic Kabbalah based on the writings of Vital, particularly his *Shemonah She'arim*, and the adoption of the doctrine of *kavvanot* and mystical contemplation during prayer as being central to Kabbalah in both its theoretical and practical aspects; (2) a complete break with activity on the social level and a shift toward the esotericism of a spiritual elite, who embody the exclusive, pietist life. There are obvious points of similarity between this later form of Kabbalah and the type of Muslim mysticism (Sufism) prevailing in those lands from which Bet El drew its adherents. Sharabi himself wrote a prayer book (printed in Jerusalem in 1911) with detailed elaborations of the *kavvanot*, outnumbering even those transmitted in the *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* in the name of Luria. The training of the members of this circle, popularly known as the *Mekhavenim*, required them to spend many years on the spiritual mastering of these *kavvanot*, which every member was duty-bound to copy in their entirety. From the first two generations after Bet El was founded a number of *shetarei hitkasherut* ("bills of association") still exist, in which the signatories pledged themselves to a life of complete spiritual partnership both in this world and in the world to come. Apart from Sharabi, the leaders of the group in the first generation were Yom Tov *Algazi (1727–1802), Hayyim Joseph David *Azulai, and Hayyim della Rosa (d. 1786). As in the case of the writings of Isaac Luria, Sharabi's books also gave rise to an abundant exegetical and textual literature. (For a detailed list of the Bet El kabbalists see Frumkin, *Toledot Hakhmei Yerushalayim*, 3 (1930), 47–54, 107–21.) The supreme authority of this circle as the true center of Kabbalah was quickly established throughout all Islamic countries and its position was very strong. Many

kabbalistic legends were woven around Sharabi. The last of the chief mainstays of Bet El were Mas'ud Kořen Alhadad (d. 1927), Ben-Zion Hazan (1877–1951), and Ovadiah Hadayah (1891–1969).

Only a few chosen individuals, naturally, went to the center at Bet El. Among those leaders of Kabbalah who remained in their own countries in the East, particular mention should be made of Abraham *Azulai of Marrakesh (d. 1741), Abraham Tobiana of Algiers (d. 1793), Shalom *Buzaglo of Marrakesh (d. 1780), Joseph Sadboon of Tunis (18th century), and Jacob Abi-Hasira (d. 1880); Sasson b. Mordecai Shandookh (1747–1830) and *Joseph Hayyim b. Elijah (d. 1909) were the main kabbalists of Baghdad. Several of the Turkish and Moroccan kabbalists of the 18th century were wavering with regard to Shabbateanism, like Gedaliah *Hayon of Jerusalem, Meir *Bikayam of Smyrna, and David di Medina of Aleppo. The classic work to emerge from the kabbalists of these circles, who clung to all the minutiae of the tradition but at the same time did not sever their links with Shabbateanism, was **Hemdat Yamim*, by an anonymous author (Smyrna, 1731–32), which was enormously influential in the East.

The later development of the Kabbalah in Poland did not lead to the establishment of a center like Bet El, but a center of a slightly similar type existed between 1740 and the beginning of the 19th century in the *Klaus (*kloiyz*) at Brody. In this era the *Yoshevei ha-Klaus* ("the Sages of the Klaus") constituted an organized institution of kabbalists who worked together and were consulted as men of particular authority. At the head of this group were Hayyim b. Menahem Zanzer (d. 1783), and Moses b. Hillel Ostrer (from Ostrog; d. 1785). When the new hasidic movement developed in Podolia and became an additional and independent stage in the growth of Jewish mysticism and of the wider popularization of the kabbalistic message, the kabbalists of the Klaus remained outside it and indeed stood aloof from it. In this center, too, great emphasis was laid on profound study of Lurianic Kabbalah. The only link between the two centers was provided by *Abraham Gershon of Kutow (Kuty), the brother-in-law of *Israel b. Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov, who was at first a member of the Klaus at Brody, and who went to Erez Israel and in his later years joined the kabbalists of Bet El, or at least was close to them in spirit. Many of the kabbalistic works published in Poland in the 18th century received the official approval of the Klaus group; but even before the establishment of this center the study of Kabbalah flourished in many places in Poland, as well as in Germany and other Hapsburg lands.

At this time many kabbalists came in particular from Lithuania, like Judah Leib Pohovitzer at the end of the 17th century, and Israel *Jaffe, the author of *Or Yisrael* (1701). In the 18th century the foremost Lithuanian kabbalists were Aryeh Leib *Epstein of Grodno (d. 1775) and R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, whose approach set the pattern for most 19th-century Lithuanian kabbalists. Especially notable among the latter were Isaac Eisik (Haver) *Wildmann, author of *Pithei She'arim*, and Solomon *Eliashov (1841–1924), who wrote *Leshem Shevo ve-Ahlaham*; both works are systematic discourses on Lurianic Kabbalah. Many kabbalistic works appeared in Poland and Germany from the end of the 17th century, and just as many ethical treatises based on kabbalistic principles. Attempts at systematization occur in *Va-Yakhel Moshe* by *Moses b. Menahem Graf of Prague (Dessau 1699) and several books by *Eliezer Fischel b. Isaac of Strzyżów. Literature which based its religious fervor on the power of "revelation from above" was generally suspected, not without reason, of Shabbatean tendencies, but books of this genre did exist

within the more conservative Kabbalah, e.g., *Sefer Berit Olam* by Isaac b. Jacob Ashkenazi (vol. 1 Vilna, 1820, vol. 2 Jerusalem, 1937). The development in Poland in the 18th century was linked to a great extent with the influence of Italian kabbalists, and particularly with the *Shomer Emunim* of Joseph *Ergas and the *Mishnat Ḥasidim* and *Yosher Levav* of Immanuel Ḥai *Ricchi, which presented different approaches to an understanding of Lurianic teaching. The kabbalistic revelations of Moses David *Valle of Modena (d. 1777) remained a closed book, but copies of the writings of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto reached the Lithuanian kabbalists, and some of them were known to the early Ḥasidim, on whom they made a great impression. Ergas was followed by *Baruch b. Abraham of Kosov in his various introductions to the Kabbalah, which remained unpublished until some 100 years after his death. An orthodox systematic presentation was made by the kabbalist Jacob Meir Spielmann of Bucharest in *Tal Orot* (Lvov, 1876–83). Attempts were made once again to link Kabbalah with philosophic studies, as in the *Ma'amar Esharit ha-Tiv'it* by Naphtali Hirsch *Goslar, the early writings of Solomon *Maimon (see A. Geiger, *JZWL*, 4, 1866, 192–6), which remained in manuscript, and particularly the *Sefer ha-Berit* of Phinehas Elijah Horowitz of Vilna (Bruenn, 1897) and the *Imrei Binah* by Isaac *Satanow, one of the first *maskilim* in Berlin.

In contrast to these attempts at a deeper study of Kabbalah, the ḥasidic movement broadened the canvas and strove to make kabbalistic ideas more and more popular, often by means of a new and more literal interpretation of its principles (see *Ḥasidism). In this movement Jewish mysticism proved to be once again a living force and a social phenomenon. In the *Ḥabad branch of Ḥasidism an original form of Kabbalah was created, which had a clear psychological objective and produced a variegated literature; but in the ḥasidic camp too there were currents that went back to a study of Lurianic Kabbalah. This Kabbalah flourished anew for a century, particularly in the school of Zevi Hirsch of *Zhidachov (Zydzaczów; d. 1831) which produced a rich kabbalistic literature. The heads of this school were Isaac Eizik Jehiel of *Komarno (d. 1874), Isaac Eizik of Zhidachov (d. 1873), and Joseph Meir Weiss of *Spinka (1838–1909).

At the beginning of the nationalist ferment of the 19th century two kabbalists were active—Elijah *Gutmacher in Graetz (1796–1874) and Judah *Alkalai in Belgrade (1798–1878); the latter's Zionist writings are suffused with the spirit of Kabbalah. In Central and Western Europe the influence of the Kabbalah swiftly declined, particularly after the conflict between Jacob *Emden and Jonathan *Eybeschutz concerning the latter's association with Shabbateanism. Nathan *Adler in Frankfort gathered around himself a circle which had kabbalistic tendencies, and his pupil, Seckel Loeb *Wormser, "the Baal Shem of Michelstadt" (d. 1847), was for some time removed by the government from the rabbinate of his city, "because of his superstitious kabbalistic faith"—apparently as the result of intrigue by the *maskilim*. While Phinehas Katzenelenbogen, the rabbi of Boskovic in the middle of the 18th century, was cataloging the kabbalistic dreams and experiences of his family (Oxford Ms. 2315), and in the circle of Nathan Adler, as in the circles of the later Frankists in Offenbach, claims to prophetic dreams were made, the rabbis were withdrawing further and further from any manifestation of a mystical tendency or a leaning toward the Kabbalah. When Elhanan Hillel Wechsler (d. 1894) published his dreams concerning the holocaust which was about to befall German Jewry (1881), the leading Orthodox rabbis tried to prevent him from doing so, and his kabbalistic leanings led

to his being persecuted. The last book by a German kabbalist to be printed was *Torei Zuhav* by Hirz Abraham Scheyer of Mainz (d. 1822) published in Mainz in 1875. However, various kinds of kabbalistic literature continued to be written in Eastern Europe and the Near East up to the time of the Holocaust, and in Israel until the present. The transformation of kabbalistic ideas into the forms of modern thought may be seen in the writings of such 20th-century thinkers as R. Abraham Isaac *Kook (*Orot ha-Kodesh, Arpilei Tohar, Reish Millin*); in the Hebrew books of Hillel *Zeitlin; and in the German writings of Isaac Bernays (*Der Bibel'sche Orient*, 1821) and Oscar *Goldberg (*Die Wirklichkeit der Hebraeer*, Berlin, 1925).

The fervent assault on the Kabbalah by the Haskalah movement in the 19th century limited its deep influence in Eastern Europe to a marked degree; but it succeeded hardly at all in lessening the influence of the Kabbalah in Oriental countries, where the life of the Jewish community was deeply affected by it until recent times. An exception was the anti-kabbalistic movement in the Yemen known as *Dor De'ah* ("Doerde"). Headed by Yiḥya *Kafaḥ (Kafiḥ) of Sana (d. 1931), it caused much strife among the Jews of Yemen. Apart from the accusatory and defamatory writings from 1914 onward, there appeared in connection with this controversy the *Milḥamot ha-Shem* of Kafaḥ and the reply of the Yemeni rabbis, *Emunat ha-Shem* (Jerusalem 1931 and 1938). This voluminous defense was actually written by an 18-year-old scholar, Joseph Jacob Zubiri.

THE BASIC IDEAS OF KABBALAH

As is apparent from the preceding account, the Kabbalah is not a single system with basic principles which can be explained in a simple and straightforward fashion, but consists rather of a multiplicity of different approaches, widely separated from one another and sometimes completely contradictory. Nevertheless, from the date of the appearance of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* the Kabbalah possessed a common range of symbols and ideas which its followers accepted as a mystical tradition, although they differed from one another in their interpretation of the precise meaning of these symbols, of the philosophical implications inherent in them, and also of the speculative contexts through which it became possible to regard this common framework as a kind of mystical theology of Judaism. But even within this system two stages must be differentiated: (1) the range of symbols of the early Kabbalah up to and including the Safed period, i.e., the theory of the *Sefirot* as it crystallized in Gerona, in the various parts of the Zohar, and in the works of kabbalists up to Cordovero; and (2) the range of symbols created by Lurianic Kabbalah, which in the main dominated kabbalistic thinking since the 17th century until recent times. The Lurianic system goes beyond the doctrine of the *Sefirot*, although it makes a wide and emphatic use of its principles, and is based on the symbolism of the *parzufim*.

In addition to this, two basic tendencies can be discerned in kabbalistic teaching. One has a strongly mystical direction expressed in images and symbols whose inner proximity to the realm of myth is often very striking. The character of the other is speculative, an attempt to give a more or less defined ideational meaning to the symbols. To a large extent this outlook presents kabbalistic speculation as a continuation of philosophy, a kind of additional layer superimposed upon it through a combination of the powers of rational thought and meditative contemplation. The speculative expositions of kabbalistic teaching largely depended on the ideas of neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy, as they were known in the Middle Ages, and were couched in the terminology customary to these fields. Hence the cosmology of the Kabbalah is borrowed from

them and is not at all original, being expressed in the common medieval doctrine of the separate intellects and the spheres. Its real originality lies in the problems that transcend this cosmology. Like Jewish philosophy, the speculative Kabbalah moved between two great heritages, the Bible and talmudic Judaism on the one hand, and Greek philosophy in its different forms on the other. The original and additional feature, however, was the new religious impulse which sought to integrate itself into these traditions and to illuminate them from within.

God and Creation. All kabbalistic systems have their origin in a fundamental distinction regarding the problem of the Divine. In the abstract, it is possible to think of God either as God Himself with reference to His own nature alone or as God in His relation to His creation. However, all kabbalists agree that no religious knowledge of God, even of the most exalted kind, can be gained except through contemplation of the relationship of God to creation. God in Himself, the absolute Essence, lies beyond any speculative or even ecstatic comprehension. The attitude of the Kabbalah toward God may be defined as a mystical agnosticism, formulated in a more or less extreme way and close to the standpoint of neoplatonism. In order to express this unknowable aspect of the Divine the early kabbalists of Provence and Spain coined the term *Ein-Sof* ("Infinite"). This expression cannot be traced to a translation of a Latin or Arabic philosophical term. Rather it is a hypostatization which, in contexts dealing with the infinity of God or with His thought that "extends without end" (*le-ein sof* or *ad le-ein sof*), treats the adverbial relation as if it were a noun and uses this as a technical term. *Ein-Sof* first appears in this sense in the writings of Isaac the Blind and his disciples, particularly in the works of Azriel of Gerona, and later in the *Zohar*, the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, and writings of that period. While the kabbalists were still aware of the origin of the term they did not use it with the definite article, but treated it as a proper noun; it was only from 1300 onward that they began to speak of *ha-Ein-Sof* as well, and generally identify it with other common epithets for the Divine. This later usage, which spread through all the literature, indicates a distinct personal and theistic concept in contrast to the vacillation between an idea of this type and a neutral impersonal concept of *Ein-Sof* found in some of the earlier sources. At first it was not clear whether the term *Ein-Sof* referred to "Him who has no end" or to "that which has no end." This latter, neutral aspect was emphasized by stressing that *Ein-Sof* should not be qualified by any of the attributes or personal epithets of God found in Scripture, nor should such eulogies as *Barukh Hu* or *Yitbarakh* (found only in the later literature) be added to it. In fact, however, there were various attitudes to the nature of *Ein-Sof* from the very beginning; Azriel, for example, tended toward an impersonal interpretation of the term, while Asher b. David employed it in a distinctly personal and theistic way.

Ein-Sof is the absolute perfection in which there are no distinctions and no differentiations, and according to some even no volition. It does not reveal itself in a way that makes knowledge of its nature possible, and it is not accessible even to the innermost thought (*hirkur ha-lev*) of the contemplative. Only through the finite nature of every existing thing, through the actual existence of creation itself, is it possible to deduce the existence of *Ein-Sof* as the first infinite cause. The author of the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* put forward the extreme thesis (not without arousing the opposition of more cautious kabbalists) that the whole biblical revelation, and the Oral Law as well, contained no reference to *Ein-Sof*, and that only the mystics had received some hint of it. Hence the author of this treatise, followed

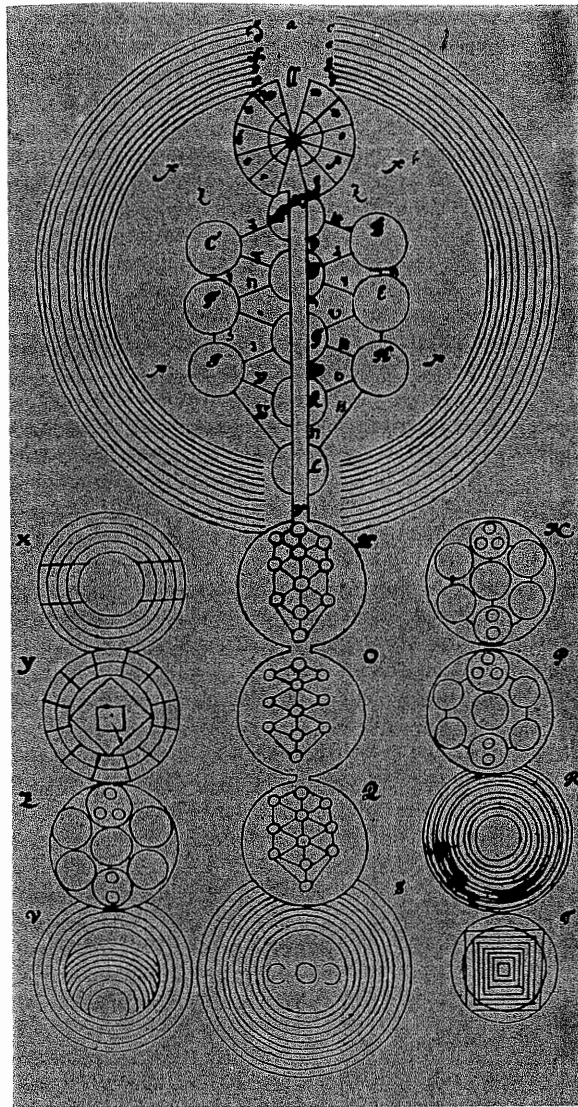


Figure 7. Chart showing the gradual development from the *Ein-Sof* ("infinite") to the development of the *Sefirot* in their various structures, according to Lurianic Kabbalah. From Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbala Denudata*, Frankfurt on the Main, 17th century. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

by several other writers, was led to the daring conclusion that only the revealed God can in reality be called "God," and not the hidden "*deus absconditus*," who cannot be an object of religious thought. When ideas of this kind returned in a later period in Shabbatean and quasi-Shabbatean Kabbalah, between 1670 and 1740, they were considered heretical.

Other terms or images signifying the domain of the hidden God that lies beyond any impulse toward creation occur in the writings of the Gerona kabbalists and in the literature of the speculative school. Examples of these terms are *Mah she-ein ha-mahashavah masseget* ("that which thought cannot attain"—sometimes used also to describe the first emanation), *ha-or ha-mit'alem* ("the concealed light"), *seter ha-ta'alumah* ("the concealment of secrecy"), *yitron* ("superfluity"—apparently a translation of the neoplatonic term *hyperousia*), *ha-ahdut ha-shavah* ("indistinguishable unity," in the sense of a unity in which all opposites are equal and in which there is no differentiation), or even simply *ha-mahut* ("the essence"). The factor common to all these terms is that *Ein-Sof* and its synonyms are above or beyond thought. A certain wavering between

the personal and the neutral approach to the concept of *Ein Sof* can also be seen in the main part of the Zohar, while in the later stratum, in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkunim*, a personal concept is paramount. *Ein Sof* is often identified with the Aristotelian "cause of all causes," and, through the kabbalistic use of neoplatonic idiom, with the "root of all roots." While all the definitions above have a common negative element, occasionally in the Zohar there is a remarkable positive designation which gives the name *Ein Sof* to the nine lights of thought that shine from the Divine Thought, thus bringing *Ein Sof* out of its concealment and down to the more humble level of emanation (the contrast between the two concepts emerges through comparison between various passages, e.g., 1, 21a, and 2, 239a with 2, 226a). In later development of Lurianic Kabbalah, however, in distinct opposition to the view of the earlier kabbalists, several differentiations were made even within *Ein Sof*. In Kabbalah, therefore, *Ein Sof* is absolute reality, and there was no question as to its spiritual and transcendental nature. This was so even though the lack of clarity in some of the expressions used by the kabbalists in speaking of the relationship of the revealed God to His creation gives the impression that the very substance of God Himself is also immanent within creation (see below on Kabbalah and pantheism). In all kabbalistic systems, light-symbolism is very commonly used with regard to *Ein Sof*, although it is emphasized that this use is merely hyperbolic, and in later Kabbalah a clear distinction was sometimes made between *Ein Sof* and "the light of *Ein Sof*." In the popular Kabbalah which finds expression in ethical writings and hasidic literature, *Ein Sof* is merely a synonym for the traditional God of religion, a linguistic usage far removed from that of the classical Kabbalah, where there is evidence of the sharp distinction between *Ein Sof* and the revealed Divine Creator. This can be seen not only in the formulations of the early kabbalists (e.g., Isaac of Acre in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*, in: KS 31 (1956), 391) but also among the later ones; Barukh Kosover (c. 1770) writes: "*Ein Sof* is not His proper name, but a word which signifies his complete concealment, and our sacred tongue has no word like these two to signify his concealment. And it is not right to say '*Ein Sof*, blessed be He' or 'may He be blessed' because He cannot be blessed by our lips" (*Ammud ha-Avodah*, 1863, 211d).

The whole problem of creation, even in its most recondite aspects, is bound up with the revelation of the hidden God and His outward movement—even though "there is nothing outside Him" (Azriel), for in the last resort "all comes from the One, and all returns to the One," according to the neoplatonic formula adopted by the early kabbalists. In kabbalistic teaching the transition of *Ein Sof* to "manifestation," or to what might be called "God the Creator," is connected with the question of the first emanation and its definition. Although there were widely differing views on the nature of the first step from concealment to manifestation, all stressed that any account of this process was not an objective description of a process in *Ein Sof*; it was no more than could be conjectured from the perspective of created beings and was expressed through their ideas, which in reality cannot be applied to God at all. Therefore, descriptions of these processes have only a symbolic or, at best, an approximate value. Nevertheless, side by side with this thesis, there is detailed speculation which frequently claims objective reality for the processes it describes. This is one of the paradoxes inherent in Kabbalah, as in other attempts to explain the world in a mystical fashion.

The decision to emerge from concealment into manifestation and creation is not in any sense a process which is a necessary consequence of the essence of *Ein Sof*; it is a free

decision which remains a constant and impenetrable mystery (Cordovero, at the beginning of *Elimah*). Therefore, in the view of most kabbalists, the question of the ultimate motivation of creation is not a legitimate one, and the assertion found in many books that God wished to reveal the measure of His goodness is there simply as an expedient that is never systematically developed. These first outward steps, as a result of which Divinity becomes accessible to the contemplative probings of the kabbalist, take place within God Himself and do not "leave the category of the Divine" (Cordovero). Here the Kabbalah departs from all rationalistic presentations of creation and assumes the character of a "theosophic" doctrine, that is, one concerned with the inner life and processes of God Himself. A distinction in the stages of such processes in the unity of the Godhead can be made only by human abstraction, but in reality they are bound together and unified in a manner beyond all human understanding. The basic differences in the various kabbalistic systems are already apparent with regard to the first step, and since such ideas were presented in obscure and figurative fashion in the classical literature, such as the *Bahir* and the Zohar, exponents of widely differing opinions were all able to look to them for authority. The first problem, which from the start elicited different answers, was whether the first step was one toward the outer world at all, or rather a step inward, a withdrawal of *Ein Sof* into the depths of itself. Early kabbalists and Cordovero adopted the former view, which led them to a theory of emanation close to the neoplatonic although not absolutely identical with it. But Lurianic Kabbalah, which took the latter position, speaks not only of a return of created things to their source in God but also of a return (*regressus*) of God into the depths of Himself preceding creation, a process identifiable with that of emanation only by means of interpreting it as a mere figure of speech. Such an interpretation did, in fact, appear before long (see the section on Lurianic Kabbalah). The concepts which occur most frequently in the description of this first step mainly concern will, thought, *Ayin* ("absolute Nothingness"), and the inner radiation of *Ein Sof* in the supernal lights called "splendors" (*zahzahot*), which are higher than any other emanation.

WILL. If *Ein Sof* is denied any attributes then it must be separated from the Divine Will, however exalted the latter is and however clearly connected with its possessor, which is *Ein Sof*. The kabbalists of Gerona frequently speak of the hidden God working through the Primal Will, which is, as it were, encompassed by Him and united with Him. This, the highest of emanations, which is either emanated from His essence, or concealed within His power, constitutes the ultimate level to which thought can penetrate. Mention is made of "the infinite Will" (*ha-razon ad ein-sof*), "infinite exaltation" (*ha-rom ad ein-sof*) or "that which thought cannot ever attain," and the reference is to that unity of action between *Ein Sof* and its first emanation, which is bound to and returns constantly to its source. In some works, e.g., Azriel's *Perush ha-Aggadot*, there is hardly any mention of *Ein Sof* at all; instead, the Primal Will appears in expressions which are generally connected with *Ein Sof* itself. Was this Will co-eternal with *Ein Sof* itself, or did it originate only at the time of its emanation, so that it is possible to think of a situation in which *Ein Sof* existed without Will, i.e., volition to create or be manifested? Several of the kabbalists of Gerona and their followers tended to believe that the Primal Will was eternal, and thus they fixed the beginning of the process of emanation at the second step or *Sefirah*, which was consequently called *reshit* ("beginning"), identified with the Divine Wisdom of God (see below). Most of the statements in the main part of the

Zohar follow this view. What is called "the infinite Will," in the sense of the unity of *Ein-Sof* with the Will and their joint manifestation in the first *Sefirah*, is given the figurative name *Attika Kaddisha* ("the Holy Ancient One") in the Zohar. Also, in those passages which speak of *Ein-Sof* and the beginning of emanation, this beginning (*reshit*) is always related to the second *Sefirah*, there being no mention that what preceded it also came into being in time and had not been eternally emanated. Therefore in some cases the first emanation is seen as only an external aspect of *Ein-Sof*: "It is called *Ein-Sof* internally and *Keter Elyon* externally" (*Tikkunei Zohar*, end of *Tikkun 22*). However, this ordering occurs only in those passages which discuss the process in detail; in those dealing with the process of emanation in general there is no differentiation between the status of the first *Sefirah* and that of the other *Sefirot*. As the Kabbalah developed in Spain the tendency prevailed to make a clear distinction between *Ein-Sof* and the first emanation, which now began to be considered neither eternal nor pre-existent. Among the kabbalists of Safed, indeed, the contrary view was considered almost heretical, since it made possible the identification of *Ein-Sof* with the first *Sefirah*. In fact this identification is actually found in several early kabbalistic sources, and the anonymous author of *Sefer ha-Shem*, mistakenly attributed to Moses de Leon (c. 1325, printed in *Heikhal ha-Shem*, Venice, 1601, 4b), criticizes the Zohar because of it, saying it is contrary to "the view of the greatest kabbalists" and an error made possible only by the false assumption that the *Ein-Sof* and first emanation are one.

The early kabbalists, particularly Azriel of Gerona and Asher b. David, considered the Divine Will as that aspect of the Divine Essence which alone was active in creation, and was implanted there by the power of *Ein-Sof*. Communion with the Supreme Will was the final aim of prayer, for it was "the source of all life," including emanation itself. Does this specific concept of the Will as the supreme Divine Power, which, according to the Gerona kabbalists and the Zohar, takes precedence even over Divine Thought and pure intellect, contain traces of the indirect influence of Solomon ibn Gabirol's central idea in *Mekor Hayyim*? A historical connection seems clearly apparent in the teachings of Isaac ibn Latif (fl. 1230-60), who apparently lived in Toledo and could have read Gabirol's book in the Arabic original. His theory is a mixture of Gabirol's ideas and those of the first generations of Spanish Kabbalah. His view of the Will can be found mainly in his *Ginzei ha-Melekh* and *Zurat ha-Olam*. "The primordial Will" (*ha-hefez ha-kadmon*) is not completely identical with God, but is a garment "clinging to the substance of the wearer on all sides." It was "the first thing to be emanated from the true pre-existent Being" in a continuing process which had no real beginning. Above matter and form, this Will unites the two in their first union, thus bringing into being what Ibn Latif calls "the first created thing" (*ha-nivra ha-rishon*). His description of the details of the processes that take place below the level of the Will differs from that of the other kabbalists; it was not accepted nor did it have any influence on the theory of emanation as it was formulated in later Kabbalah. As the tendency to all but identify *Ein-Sof* with the first *Sefirah* became less and less pronounced, so the distinction between *Ein-Sof* and the Will was emphasized to a correspondingly greater degree, although the question as to whether the Will was created or eternal continued to be surrounded by controversy, or was consciously obscured.

THOUGHT. Another concept basic to the whole problem of the first manifestation of *Ein-Sof* is that of "Thought" (*mahashavah*). In the *Sefer ha-Bahir* and the writings of Isaac the Blind no special status is accorded to the Will,

whose place is taken by "the Thought which has no end or finality," and which exists as the highest state, from which all else has emanated, without being designated as an emanation itself. Accordingly, the first source of all emanation is sometimes also called "pure Thought"—a domain impenetrable to merely human thought. According to this theory, the whole creative process depends on an intellectual rather than a volitional act, and the history of Kabbalah is marked by a struggle between these two views of creation. The essential identity of Will and Thought was insisted on by Ibn Latif alone. For most kabbalists, that Thought which thinks only itself and has no other content was demoted to a level below that of Will and became identified with the Divine Wisdom, which proceeded to contemplate not only itself but the whole plan of creation and the paradigm of all the universe. Therefore, the Gerona kabbalists and the author of the Zohar speak of "the Will of Thought," i.e., the Will which activates Thought, and not vice versa. The highest aspect of *hokhmah* ("Wisdom"), which the Gerona kabbalists speak of a great deal, is called *haskel* (from Jer. 9:23), a term denoting divine understanding, the activity of the *sekhel* ("divine intellect"), whatever the content of this might be, and not, as with *hokhmah*, its crystallization into a system of thought. The concept of *haskel* took the place of Will among those who were disinclined to accept the theory or were perplexed by it, particularly in the school of Isaac the Blind.

NOTHINGNESS. More daring is the concept of the first step in the manifestation of *Ein-Sof* as *ayin* or *afisah* ("nothing," "nothingness"). Essentially, this nothingness is the barrier confronting the human intellectual faculty when it reaches the limits of its capacity. In other words, it is a subjective statement affirming that here is a realm which no created being can intellectually comprehend, and which, therefore, can only be defined as "nothingness." This idea is associated also with its opposite concept, namely, that since in reality there is no differentiation in God's first step toward manifestation, this step cannot be defined in any qualitative manner and can thus only be described as "nothingness." *Ein-Sof* which turns toward creation manifests itself, therefore, as *ayin ha-gamur* ("complete nothingness"), or, in another version: "God Who is called *Ein-Sof* in respect of Himself is called *Ayin* in respect of His first self-revelation." This daring symbolism is associated with most mystical theories concerning an understanding of the Divine, and its particular importance is seen in the radical transformation of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* into a mystical theory stating the precise opposite of what appears to be the literal meaning of the phrase. From this point of view it makes no difference whether *Ein-Sof* itself is the true *ayin* or whether this *ayin* is the first emanation of *Ein-Sof*. From either angle, the monotheistic theory of *creatio ex nihilo* loses its original meaning and is completely reversed by the esoteric content of the formula. Since the early kabbalists allowed no interruption in the stream of emanation from the first *Sefirah* to its consolidation in the worlds familiar to medieval cosmology, *creatio ex nihilo* may be interpreted as creation from within God Himself. This view, however, remained a secret belief and was concealed behind the use of the orthodox formula; even an authoritative kabbalist like Naḥmanides was able to speak in his commentary to the Torah of *creatio ex nihilo* in its literal sense as the free creation of the primeval matter from which everything was made, while simultaneously implying, as shown by his use of the word *ayin* in his commentary to Job 28:12 and by kabbalistic allusions in his commentary to Genesis 1, that the true mystical meaning of the text is the emergence of all things from the

absolute nothingness of God. Basing their speculations on the commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* by Joseph Ashkenazi (attributed in the printed editions to Abraham b. David), kabbalists who held an undoubted theistic view tried to rescue the original significance of the formula by defining the first *Sefirah* as the first effect, which is absolutely separated from its cause, as if the transition from cause to effect involved a great leap from *Ein-Sof* to *ayin*, a view which conformed with the traditional theological picture. However, in order to escape the inner logic of the early theory, a few later kabbalists, from the 16th century onward, tried to add a new act of *creatio ex nihilo* after the emanation of the *Sefirot* or at each stage of emanation and creation. Doubts of this kind did not exist in Spanish Kabbalah, nor in the works of Cordovero, although in the *Elimah Rabbati* he found it hard to decide between a symbolic and a literal interpretation of the formula. David b. Abraham ha-Lavan in *Masoret ha-Berit* (end of 13th century) defined the *ayin* ("nothingness") as "having more being than any other being in the world, but since it is simple, and all other simple things are complex when compared with its simplicity, so in comparison it is called 'nothing'" (*Kovez al-Yad*, new series, i, 1936, 31). We also find the figurative use of the term *imkei ha-ayin* ("the depths of nothingness"), and it is said (*ibid.*) that "if all the powers returned to nothingness, the Primeval One who is the cause of all would remain in equal oneness in the depths of nothingness."

THE THREE LIGHTS. Another idea connected with the transition from the Emanator to the emanated originated in a responsum (early 13th century) attributed to Hai Gaon, and subsequently aroused a great deal of speculation (see *Origines* . . . , 367-75). There it is stated that, above all emanated powers, there exist in "the root of all roots" three hidden lights which have no beginning, "for they are the name and essence of the root of all roots and are beyond the grasp of thought." As the "primeval inner light" spreads throughout the hidden root two other lights are kindled, called *or mezuhzah* and *or zah* ("sparkling light"). It is stressed that these three lights constitute one essence and one root which is "infinitely hidden" (*ne'lam ad le-ein sof*), forming a kind of kabbalistic trinity that precedes the emanation of the ten *Sefirot*. However, it is not sufficiently clear whether the reference is to three lights between the Emanator and the first emanation, or to three lights irradiating one another within the substance of the Emanator itself—both possibilities can be supported. In the terminology of the Kabbalah these three lights are called *zahzahot* ("splendors"), and they are thought of as the roots of the three upper *Sefirot* which emanate from them (see Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, ch. 11). The need to posit this strange trinity is explained by the urge to make the ten *Sefirot* conform with the 13 attributes predicated of God. It is hardly surprising that Christians later found an allusion to their own doctrine of the trinity in this theory, although it contains none of the personal hypostases characteristic of the Christian trinity. In any case, the hypothesis of the *zahzahot* led to further complication in the theory of emanation and to the predication of roots in the essence of *Ein-Sof* to everything that was emanated. In the generation following the publication of the Zohar, David b. Judah Ḥasid, in his *Mare'ot ha-Zove'ot*, mentions ten *zahzahot* placed between *Ein-Sof* and the emanation of the *Sefirot*.

Emanation and the Concept of the Sefirot. Scholars have long been engaged in a controversy over whether or not the Kabbalah teaches emanation as the emergence of all things from within God Himself. In this controversy there is considerable conceptual confusion. Like several scholars before him, A. Frank interpreted the Kabbalah as a pure

emanatist system, which he considered identical with a clearly pantheistic approach. He therefore thought of emanation as an actual going-forth of the substance of God and not simply of the power of the Emanator. He based his interpretation on the Zohar, and especially on later Lurianic teaching, although neither of these two sources contains any reference to a direct theory of substantive emanation. In contrast to Frank, D. H. Joel set out to prove that the Zohar and early Kabbalah in general contained nothing of the theory of emanation, which Joel believed first appeared in the writings of "the modern commentators" of the 16th century, where it was the result of faulty interpretation. In his opinion there is no significant difference between "the pure theology" of Jewish medieval thinkers, and "the true Kabbalah," the very foundation of which is the idea of the free creation of primeval substance *ex nihilo* in the literal meaning of the term. There is no doubt that Joel and Frank were equally mistaken, and that both were at fault in interpreting the basic content of Lurianic Kabbalah in pantheistic terms. Inasmuch as early Kabbalah needed a theoretical foundation it was largely influenced by neoplatonism; and although it proposed a definite process of emanation—the theory of the emanation of *Sefirot*—this was a kind of activity which took place within the Divine itself. The God who manifests Himself in His *Sefirot* is the very same God of traditional religious belief, and consequently, despite all the complexities such an idea involves, the emanation of the *Sefirot* is a process within God Himself. The hidden God in the aspect of *Ein-Sof* and the God manifested in the emanation of *Sefirot* are one and the same, viewed from two different angles. There is therefore a clear distinction between the stages of emanation in the neoplatonic systems, which are not conceived as processes within the Godhead, and the kabbalistic approach. In Kabbalah, emanation as an intermediate stage between God and creation was re-assigned to the Divine, and the problem of the continuation of this process outside the Godhead gave rise to various interpretations. At first there was no need to conclude that worlds below the level of the *Sefirot*, and the corporeal world itself, were also emanated from the *Sefirot*. Perhaps intentionally, the kabbalists dealt with this point in a highly obscure fashion, frequently leaving open the way to the most diverse interpretations. God's actions outside the realm of the *Sefirot* of emanation led to the emergence of created beings separated from the *Sefirot* by an abyss, although few kabbalists maintained unambiguously that the process of emanation came to an absolute end with the final *Sefirah* and that what followed constituted a completely new beginning. The early kabbalists agreed that all creatures below the *Sefirot* had an existence of their own outside the Divine, and were distinguished from it in their independent existence since their state was that of created beings, although they had their archetypes in the *Sefirot*. Even given the belief that from the point of view of God they have their root in His being, nevertheless they are in themselves separated from His essence and possess a nature of their own. Distinctions of this kind are common to the Kabbalah and to other mystical theologies, like those of medieval Islam and Christianity, but they were generally neglected in most kabbalistic discussions of emanation, with all the consequent unclarity that this entailed. Particularly in a number of important books which do not attempt to build their doctrines on a firm theoretical foundation, such as the *Bahir*, the Zohar, and the works of Isaac b. Jacob ha-Kohen, the authors often use highly ambiguous terms and speak of "creation" even when they mean "emanation." This ambiguity can be explained in the light of the history of the Kabbalah, which was at first

concerned with the description of a religious and contemplative experience and not with questions of purely theoretical systematization. In addition, the developing Kabbalah was heir to a strong, mythically inclined Gnostic heritage of speculation on the aeons (whose nature was also subject to many theoretical interpretations). Thus, when their figurative and symbolic language was put to a logical test, sources like the above were accorded many different theological and analytical interpretations.

As the Kabbalah developed in Provence and Spain and the Gnostic tradition was confronted with neoplatonism, a host of short tracts were written in which it was attempted to give an independent description of the processes of emanation. Most of these works belong to the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* (see above). They show quite clearly that, aside from the theory of the *Sefirot*, there were other approaches to a description of the spiritual world, such as in terms of a world of powers (*koḥot*), lights, or divine intellects, which were sometimes given identical names but which were ordered each time in quite different ways. Obviously these were the first gropings toward the establishment of a definitive order in the degrees and stages of emanation. However, as they did not correspond with the symbolism that had been constructed in a more or less unified fashion from the time of Isaac the Blind up to the Zohar, they were almost completely disregarded.

Unlike these first hesitant steps, the theory of the *Sefirot* ultimately became the backbone of Spanish kabbalistic teaching and of that basic system of mystical symbolism which had such important repercussions on the kabbalists' view of the meaning of Judaism. Right from the beginning, ideas concerning emanation were closely bound up with a theory of language. On the one hand, much is written about the manifestation of the power of *Ein-Sof* through various stages of emanation which are called *Sefirot* and are no more than the various attributes of God or descriptions and epithets which can be applied to Him—that is, about a continuous process of emanation. Yet at the same time this very process was described as a kind of revelation of the various Names peculiar to God in His capacity of Creator. The God who manifests Himself is the God who expresses Himself. The God who “called” His powers to reveal themselves named them, and, it could be said, called Himself also, by appropriate names. The process by which the power of emanation manifests itself from concealment into revelation is paralleled by the manifestation of divine speech from its inner essence in thought, through sound that as yet cannot be heard, into the articulation of speech. Through the influence of the *Sefer Yezirah*, which speaks of “the ten *Sefirot* of *belimah*,” the number of the stages of emanation was fixed at ten, although in this early work the term refers only to the ideal numbers which contain the forces of creation. In kabbalistic usage, on the other hand, it signifies the ten powers that constitute the manifestations and emanations of God. Since the *Sefirot* are intermediary states between the first Emanator and all things that exist apart from God, they also represent the roots of all existence in God the Creator.

That many themes are united, or sometimes simply commingled, in this concept is demonstrated by the profusion of terms used to describe it. The term *Sefirah* is not connected with the Greek *σφαίρα* (“spheres”), but as early as the *Sefer ha-Bahir* it is related to the Hebrew *sappir* (“sapphire”), for it is the radiance of God which is like that of the sapphire. The term is not used at all in the main part of the Zohar, appearing only in the later stratum, but other kabbalists too employed a wealth of synonyms. The *Sefirot* are also called *ma'amarot* and *dibburim* (“sayings”), *shemot* (“names”), *orot* (“lights”), *koḥot* (“powers”), *ketarim*

(“crowns”; since they are “the celestial crowns of the Holy King”), *middot* in the sense of qualities, *madregot* (“stages”), *levushim* (“garments”), *marot* (“mirrors”), *neti'ot* (“shoots”), *mekorot* (“sources”), *yamim elyonim* or *yemei kedem* (“supernal or primordial days”), *sitrin* (i.e., “aspects” found mainly in the Zohar), *ha-panim ha-penimiyyot* (“the inner faces of God”). (A long list of other designations for the *Sefirot* can be found in Herrera, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, 7:4.) Terms like “the limbs of the King” or “the limbs of the *Shi'ur Komah*,” the mystical image of God, allude to the symbolism of the supernal man, also called *ha-adam ha-gadol*, or primordial man. Sometimes the term is used for one specific *Sefirah*, but often it denotes the whole world of emanation. The term *ha-adam ha-kadmon* (“primordial man”) occurs for the first time in *Sod Yedi'at ha-Mezi'ut*, a treatise from the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* circle. These different motifs of the *Sefirot*, which express themselves in this proliferation of names, tend to vary both with the specific context and with the overall inclinations of the kabbalist making use of them.

No agreed canonical definition exists. The conceptual connection between the *ma'amarim* or the *ketarim*, as the *Sefirot* were called in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and the intermediate substances between the infinite and the finite, the one and the many, of neoplatonism, originated mainly in the work of Azriel, who was determined to divest the idea of the *Sefirot* of its Gnostic character. His definitions, which appear in *Perush Eser Sefirot* and *Derekh ha-Emunah ve-Derekh ha-Kefirah*, and those of his companion Asher b. David, were largely instrumental in fixing the concept of the *Sefirot* in Spanish Kabbalah, although the tendency to portray them as Gnostic aeons did not entirely disappear. According to Azriel, things were created in a specific order, since creation was intentional, not accidental. This order, which determines all the process of creation and of generation and decay, is known as *Sefirot*, “the active power of each existing thing numerically definable.” Since all created things come into being through the agency of the *Sefirot*, the latter contain the root of all change, although they all emanate from the one principle, *Ein-Sof*, “outside of which there is nothing.” In terms of their origin in *Ein-Sof* the *Sefirot* are not differentiated, but in respect of their activity within the finite realm of creation they are. Existing alongside these Platonic definitions is the theosophic conception of the *Sefirot* as forces of the divine essence or nature, through which absolute being reveals itself; they therefore constitute the inner foundation and the root of every created being in a way which is generally not specifically defined, but not necessarily as “intermediaries” in the philosophical sense. The contrast with the neoplatonic pattern is very definitely expressed in a doctrine, common to all kabbalists of every age (even to Azriel), concerning the dynamic of these powers. Although there is a specific hierarchy in the order of the *Sefirot*, it is not ontologically determined: all are equally close to their source in the Emanator (this is already so in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*). It is possible for them to join together in mystical unions, and some of them move up and down within the framework of the hidden life of God (both Gnostic motifs), which does not fit the Platonic point of view. In other words, within a conceptual Platonic system a theosophic understanding of God came to the fore.

The nature or essence of these *Sefirot*, that is the relationship of the manifested world of the Divine to the created world and to the hidden being of the Emanator, was a widely disputed subject. Were the *Sefirot* identical with God or not, and, if not, wherein lay the difference? At first this question did not arise, and the imagery used to describe the *Sefirot* and their activity was not aimed at a precise

definition. The description of the *Sefirot* as vessels for the activity of God, the Emanator, which occurs, for example, as early as Asher b. David, does not contradict the idea that in essence they are equated with God. The term *ko'ah* ("force," "power," "potency"), which is common in kabbalistic literature, does not always indicate a precise distinction between "force" and "essence" in the Aristotelian sense. It is also used to refer to the independent existence of "potencies," hypostases which are emanated from their source, without any preceding indication of whether this emanation is an expansion of the latter's essence or only of its radiation that was previously concealed in potentiality and now is activated. In purely figurative descriptions of the world of the *Sefirot* these philosophical distinctions did not come to the forefront, but once questions of this sort were raised it was impossible to evade them.

Most of the early kabbalists were more inclined to accept the view that the *Sefirot* were actually identical with God's substance or essence. This is stated in many documents from the 13th century, and stressed later in the school of R. Solomon b. Adret, and particularly in the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, which was followed in the 16th century by David Messer Leon, Meir ibn Gabbai, and Joseph Caro. According to this view, the *Sefirot* do not constitute "intermediary beings" but are God Himself. "The Emanation is the Divinity," while *Ein-Sof* cannot be subject to religious investigation, which can conceive of God only in His external aspect. The main part of the *Zohar* also tends largely toward this opinion, expressing it emphatically in the interchangeable identity of God with His Names or His Powers: "He is They, and They are He" (*Zohar*, 3, 11b, 70a). In the latter stratum, however, in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkunim*, and subsequently in the *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* of Menahem Recanati, the *Sefirot* are seen not as the essence of God but only as vessels or tools: although they are indeed neither separated from Him nor situated outside Him like the tools of a human artisan, nevertheless they are no more than means and instruments which He uses in His work. Recanati states that most of the kabbalists of his time disagreed with this view. In the writings of Joseph Ashkenazi (Pseudo-Ravad) this theory is developed to the extreme where the *Sefirot*, being intermediaries, pray to God Himself and are actually unable to perceive the nature of their Emanator, a view which was first presented in the writings of Moses of Burgos and subsequently appeared in many kabbalistic works. Cordovero tried to reconcile these two opposing views and to accord a certain measure of truth to each one. Just as in all organic life the soul (the essence) cannot be distinguished from the body (the vessels) except *in abstracto* and in fact they cannot be separated at all when they are working together, so it may be said of God that He works, so to speak, as a living organism, and thus the *Sefirot* have two aspects, one as "essence," and the other as "vessels." Dominating this theosophic organism is a metabiological principle of measure and form called *kav ha-middah* (according to specific statements in the *Zohar* which use this term to express the nature of the activity of the first *Sefirah*). From this point of view the *Sefirot* are both identical with the essence of God and also separated from Him (see *Pardes Rimmonim*, ch. 4). In later Kabbalah this view became paramount.

The *Sefirot* emanate from *Ein-Sof* in succession—"as if one candle were lit from another without the Emanator being diminished in any way"—and in a specific order. Nevertheless, in contrast to the neoplatonic concept in which the intermediaries stand completely outside the domain of the "One," they do not thereby leave the divine domain. This influx is given the name *hamshakhah*

("drawing out"), that is to say, the entity which is emanated is drawn out from its source, like light from the sun or water from a well. According to Nahmanides (in his commentary to Num. 11:17) and his school, the second term, *azilut*, expresses the particular position of this emanation. The term is understood as deriving from *eziel* ("near by," or "with"), for even the things that are emanated remain "by Him," and act as potencies manifesting the unity of the Emanator. Nahmanides' anti-emanatist interpretation of the term *azilut* was apparently intended only for the uninitiated, for in his esoteric writings he also uses the term *hamshakhah* (in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*). Generally speaking, stress is laid on the fact that the God who expresses Himself in the emanation of the *Sefirot* is greater than the totality of the *Sefirot* through which He works and by means of which He passes from unity to plurality. The personality of God finds expression precisely through His manifestation in the *Sefirot*. It is therefore surprising that, in those circles close to Nahmanides, the nature of the Emanator which remained concealed beyond all emanation was thought to be a closely guarded tradition. Nahmanides himself refers to it as "the hidden matter at the top of the *Keter*," at the head of the first *Sefirah*, a designation which deprives it of any personal quality (commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*). As noted above, however, some of his contemporary kabbalists, like Abraham of Cologne (1260-70) in *Keter Shem Tov*, completely rejected this idea by denying an impersonal aspect to God and by identifying *Ein-Sof* with the first *Sefirah*.

Deriving *azilut* from *eziel* does not necessarily imply that the process of emanation is eternal: it simply signifies the contrast between two domains—the *olam ha-yihud* ("the world of unification") and the *olam ha-perud* ("the world of separation"). Emanation is the world of unification, not of the static unity of *Ein-Sof* but of the process which occurs in God, who is Himself unified in the dynamic unity of His powers ("like the flame linked to a burning of coal"). In contrast to this, "the world of separation" refers to the domain which results from the act of creation, whose theosophic inner nature is expressed in the emanation of the *Sefirot*. But this process of emanation of the *Sefirot* is not a temporal one, nor does it necessitate any change in God Himself; it is simply the emergence from potentiality into actuality of that which was concealed within the power of the Creator.

However, opinion differed on the question of emanation and time. Azriel taught that the first *Sefirah* was always within the potentiality of *Ein-Sof*, but that other *Sefirot* were emanated only in the intellectual sense and had a beginning in time; there were also *Sefirot* that were emanated only "now, near to the creation of the world." Others maintained that the concept of time had no application to the process of emanation, while Cordovero held that this process occurred within "non-temporal time," a dimension of time which involved as yet no differentiation into past, present, and future. A dimension of this type was also important in the thinking of the later neoplatonists, who spoke of *sempiternitas*. This supermundane concept of time was defined "as the twinkling of an eye, without any interval" between the various acts which were part of emanation (so in *Emek ha-Melekh* and *Va-Yakhel Moshe* by Moses Graf). Joseph Solomon Delmedigo in *Navelot Hokhmah*, and Jonathan Eybeschuetz in *Shem Olam*, also posited the coeternity of the *Sefirot*, but generally speaking this idea aroused a great deal of opposition. As early as the 13th century the counter-doctrine was formulated that "the essences existed but emanation came into being" (*Origines* . . . , 295). If the

essences preceded emanation then they must of necessity have existed in the will or thought of *Ein-Sof*, but they were made manifest by an act which had something of the nature of new creativity although not in the usual sense of creativity in time.

In the literature of the Kabbalah the unity of God in His *Sefirot* and the appearance of plurality within the One are expressed through a great number of images which continually recur. They are compared to a candle flickering in the midst of ten mirrors set one within the other, each of a different color. The light is reflected differently in each, although it is the same single light. The daring image of the *Sefirot* as garments is extremely common. According to the Midrash (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*), at the creation of the world God clothed Himself in ten garments, and these are identified in the Kabbalah with the *Sefirot*, although in the latter text no distinction is made between the garment and the body—"it is like the garment of the grasshopper whose clothing is part of itself," an image taken from the Midrash *Genesis Rabbah*. The garments enable man to look at the light, which without them would be blinding. By first growing used to looking at one garment man can look progressively further to the next and the next, and in this way the *Sefirot* serve as rungs on the ladder of ascent toward the perception of God (Asher b. David, *Perush Shem ha-Meforash*).

The doctrine of the *Sefirot* was the main tenet clearly dividing Kabbalah from Jewish philosophy. The subject matter of philosophy—the doctrine of divine attributes and in particular "the attributes of action" as distinct from "the essential attributes"—was transformed in Kabbalah into the theosophic conception of a Godhead that was divided into realms or "planes" which, in the eyes of the beholder at least, existed as lights, potencies, and intelligences, each of unlimited richness and profundity, whose content man could study and seek to penetrate. Each one was like "a world unto itself," although it was also reflected in the totality of all the others. As early as the beginning of the 13th century, after the appearance of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the view was propounded that there were dynamic processes not only between the *Sefirot* but also within each separate *Sefirah*. This tendency toward an increasingly more complex doctrine of the *Sefirot* was the most distinctive characteristic of the development of kabbalistic theory. The number ten provided the framework for the growth of a seemingly endless multiplicity of lights and processes. In the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun*, where this development began, we find an enumeration of the names of the intellectual lights and powers, which only partially fit the traditional symbolism of the *Sefirot* (see below) and sometimes diverge widely from it. The writings of "the Gnostic circle" in Castile expanded the framework of emanation and added potencies bearing personal names which gave a unique coloring to the world of the *Sefirot* and to all that existed outside it. This tendency was continued by the author of the *Zohar*, whose descriptions of the first acts of creation, and particularly those in the *Idra Rabba* and the *Idra Zuta* concerning the configurations of the forces of emanation (called *Attika Kaddisha*, *Arikh Anpin* and *Ze'eir Anpin*), are very different from the original simple concept of the *Sefirot*. Here is the beginning of the anatomical and physiological symbolism of the *Shi'ur Komah*—a description of the image of God based on analogy with human structure—which shook the very foundations of the *Sefirot* doctrine and introduced into it new differentiations and combinations. An additional complexity resulted when the theory of the *Sefirot* was combined with prophetic Kabbalah and "the science of combination" of the school of Abraham Abulafia. Every different combination of

letters and vowels could be seen in the radiance of that intellectual light which appears under certain circumstances in the meditations of the mystic. Whole books, like the *Berit Menuḥah* (second half of the 14th century), *Toledot Adam* (see *Kitvei Yad ba-Kabbalah*, 58–60; printed in part in Casablanca in 1930 in *Sefer ha-Miqkhat*), and *Avnei Shoham* by Joseph ibn Sayyah (*ibid.*, 89–91), reflect this view. These complexities in the doctrine of the *Sefirot* reached their most extreme expression in Cordovero's *Elimah Rabbati* and, finally, in the Lurianic theory of the *parzufim* (see below).

The *Sefirot*, both individually and collectively, subsume the archetype of every created thing outside the world of emanation. Just as they are contained within the Godhead, so they impregnate every being outside it. Thus, the limitation of their number to ten necessarily involves the supposition that each one is composed of a large number of such archetypes.

Details of the Doctrine of the Sefirot and their Symbolism.

Both theosophical and theological approaches are equally evident in kabbalistic speculation about the *Sefirot* in general and their relationship to the Emanator in particular. When it comes to the sequential development of the *Sefirot*, on the other hand, and to the individual function of each, especially from the second *Sefirah* onward, a strong Gnostic and mythic element begins to predominate. The kabbalists continuously stressed the subjective nature of their descriptions: "everything is from the perspective of those who receive" (*Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*); "all this is said only from our view, and it is all relative to our knowledge" (*Zohar* 2, 176a). However, this did not prevent them from indulging in the most detailed descriptions, as if they were speaking after all of an actual reality and objective occurrences. The progressive movement of the hidden life of God, which is expressed in a particular structural form, established the rhythm for the development of the created worlds outside the world of emanation, so that these first innermost structures recur in all the secondary domains. Hence there is basic justification for a single comprehensive symbolic system. An inner existence that defies characterization or description because it is beyond our perception can only be expressed symbolically. The words of both the Written and the Oral Law do not describe mundane matters and events alone, situated in history and concerned with the relations between Israel and its God, but also, when interpreted mystically, they speak of the interaction between the Emanator and the emanated, between the different *Sefirot* themselves, and between the *Sefirot* and the activities of men through Torah and prayer. What in the literal sense is called the story of creation is really a mystical allusion to the process which occurs within the world of emanation itself and therefore can be expressed only symbolically. General speaking, such symbolism interested the kabbalists far more than all the theoretical speculation on the nature of the *Sefirot*, and the greater part of kabbalistic literature deals with this aspect and its detailed application. Most of the commentaries to the Torah, to Psalms, and to the *aggadot*, as well as the voluminous literature on the reasons for the Commandments (*ta'amei ha-mitzvot*), are based on this approach. As noted above, however, none of this symbolism has any bearing on *Ein-Sof*, although there were nevertheless kabbalists who did attribute to the latter specific expressions in Scripture or in the *Sefer Yezirah*.

The common order of the *Sefirot* and the names most generally used for them are: (1) *Keter Elyon* ("supreme crown") or simply *Keter*; (2) *Hokhmah* ("wisdom"); (3) *Binah* ("intelligence"); (4) *Gedullah* ("greatness") or *Hesed* ("love"); (5) *Gevurah* ("power") or *Din* ("judgment"); (6)

Tiferet ("beauty") or *Rahamim* ("compassion"); (7) *Nezah* ("lasting endurance"); (8) *Hod* ("majesty"); (9) *Zaddik* ("righteous one") or *Yesod Olam* ("foundation of the world"); (10) *Malkhut* ("kingdom") or *Atarah* ("diadem"). This terminology was greatly influenced by the verse in I Chronicles 29:11, which was interpreted as applying to the order of the *Sefirot*. Although the *Sefirot* are emanated successively from above to below, each one revealing an additional stage in the divine process, they also have a formalized structure. Three such groupings are most commonly found. In their totality the *Sefirot* make up "the tree of emanation" or "the tree of the *Sefirot*," which from the 14th century onward is depicted by a detailed diagram which lists the basic symbols appropriate to each *Sefirah*. The cosmic tree grows from its root, the first *Sefirah*, and spreads out through those *Sefirot* which constitute its trunk to those which make up its main branches or crown. This image is first found in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*: "All the divine powers of the Holy One, blessed be He, rest one upon the other, and are like a tree." However, in the *Bahir* the tree starts to grow by being watered with the waters of Wisdom, and apparently it includes only those *Sefirot* from *Binah* downward. Alongside this picture we have the more common image of the *Sefirot* in the form of a man. While the tree grows with its top down, this human form has its head properly on top, and is occasionally referred to as the "reversed tree." The first *Sefirot* represent the head, and, in the Zohar, the three cavities of the brain; the fourth and the fifth, the arms; the sixth, the torso; the seventh and eighth, the legs; the ninth, the sexual organ; and the tenth refers either to the all-embracing totality of the image, or (as in the *Bahir*) to the female as companion to the male, since both together are needed to constitute a perfect man. In kabbalistic literature this symbolism of primal Man in all its details is called *Shi'ur Komah*. The most common pattern is:

	<i>Keter</i>	
<i>Binah</i>		<i>Hokhmah</i>
<i>Gevurah</i>		<i>Gedullah</i>
	<i>Tiferet</i>	
<i>Hod</i>		<i>Nezah</i>
	<i>Yesod</i>	
	<i>Malkhut</i>	

Sometimes the three *Sefirot*, *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah*, are not depicted in a triangle, but in a straight line, one below the other. On the whole, however, the overall structure is built out of triangles.

From the end of the 13th century onward a complementary *Sefirah*, called *Da'at* ("knowledge"), appears between *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, a kind of harmonizing of the two that was not considered a separate *Sefirah* but rather "the external aspect of *Keter*." This addition arose from the desire to see each group of three *Sefirot* as a unit comprising opposing attributes and as a synthesis which finally resolved them. This was not, however, the original motivation of the pattern. In the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and in several early texts of the 13th century, the *Sefirah Yesod* was thought of as the seventh, preceding *Nezah* and *Hod*, and only in Gerona was it finally assigned to the ninth place. On the model of the neoplatonic hierarchy, according to which the transition from the one to the many was accomplished through the stages of intellect, universal soul, and nature, many kabbalists, Azriel in particular, thought of the *Sefirot* as also comprising these stages (although they still remained within the domain of deity). *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah* were "the intellectual" (*ha-muskal*); *Gedullah*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet* were "the psychic" (*ha-murgash*); *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod* were "the natural" (*ha-mutba*). Apparently it was intended that these three stages should be understood as the sources of the independent realms of intellect, soul, and

nature, which were fully activated and developed only at a lower level.

Since the *Sefirot* were conceived of as the progressive manifestation of the Names of God, a set of equivalences between the latter and the names of the *Sefirot* was established:

	<i>Ehyeh</i>	
YHWH		<i>Yah</i>
(vocalized as <i>Elohim</i>)		
<i>Elohim</i>		<i>El</i>
	YHWH	
<i>Elohim Zeva'ot</i>		YHWH <i>Zeva'ot</i>
	<i>El Hai</i> or <i>Shaddai</i>	
	<i>Adonai</i>	

According to the Kabbalah these are "the ten names which must not be erased" mentioned in the Talmud, and compared with them all other names are mere epithets. The Zohar distinguishes *Shaddai* as the name particularly related to the *Sefirah Yesod*, while Joseph Gikatilla associates this *Sefirah* with *El Hai*.

The division of the *Sefirot* was also determined by other criteria. Sometimes they were divided into five and five, i.e., the five upper *Sefirot* corresponding to the five lower, an equal balance between the hidden and the revealed being maintained. On the basis of the statement in the *Pirkei de-R. Eliezer* "with ten sayings was the world created, and they were summarized in three," they were also divided into seven and three. In this case there was a differentiation between three hidden *Sefirot* and "the seven *Sefirot* of the building," which are also the seven primordial days of creation. Six of these were also equated with the six sides of space in the *Sefer Yeẓirah*. How these six were complemented by a seventh was never decisively established. Some thought that the seventh was the sacred palace which stood in the center, as in the *Sefer Yeẓirah*. Others considered it to be represented by Divine Thought, while for others it was a symbolic Sabbath. The correlation of the "Sefirot of the building" with the days of creation became extremely complex. Many kabbalists, including the author of the main part of the Zohar, could not agree on the automatic association of each *Sefirah* with one particular day, and they regarded creation, which from the mystical viewpoint was the completion of "the building" of emanation, as having been already completed by the fourth day. They were particularly perplexed by the problem of the Sabbath, which many interpreted as a symbol of *Yesod*, since it paralleled the original seventh place of this *Sefirah*, while many others saw in it an allusion to the last *Sefirah*, especially since the powers came to an end there. Just as each day performed an act specific to it, apart from the seventh, so each *Sefirah* performed its own specific activities by which it was characterized, except for the last *Sefirah*, which had no such active force, but comprised the totality of all the *Sefirot* or the specific principle that received and united the active forces without adding anything particular of its own. On the contrary it is this absence of activity and the tenth *Sefirah's* function as an all-inclusive entity which constitute its uniqueness. The division of the *Sefirot* into three lines or columns was especially important: the right hand column includes *Hokhmah*, *Gedullah*, and *Nezah*; the left hand column includes *Binah*, *Gevurah*, and *Hod*; and the central column passes from *Keter* through *Tiferet* and *Yesod* to *Malkhut*.

All of these groupings testify to the kabbalists' belief that there was a definite structure to the *Sefirot*, no matter how great the possibilities may have been. In contrast to them all is yet another arrangement which presents the *Sefirot* either as adjoining arcs of a single circle surrounding the central Emanator, or as ten concentric spheres (called "circles") with the power of emanation diminishing as it moves

further away from the center. This latter concept is related to the medieval cosmological picture of a universe of ten spheres, which could be imagined in terms of the outward gyration of these spiritual circles. The circular concept appears especially from the 14th century onward (Pseudo-Ravad to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, 1, 2). In Lurianic Kabbalah every one of these diagrammatic arrangements, circular or linear, is accorded a specific place in the plan of emanation.

When we come to deal with the symbolism of the *Sefirot* we must distinguish between the general symbolic systems appertaining to the processes of emanation as a whole and the symbolism related to each individual *Sefirah* or to a particular combination of *Sefirot*. The overall symbolic systems are based on both mathematical and organic imagery. In the system depending on mathematical concepts, which is sometimes linked with images of light and rivers, the first *Sefirah* is nothingness, zero, and the second is the manifestation of the primordial point, which at this stage has no size but contains within it the possibility of measurement and expansion. Since it is intermediate between nothingness and being, it is called *hathalat ha-yeshut* ("the beginning of being"). And since it is a central point it expands into a circle in the third *Sefirah*, or it builds around itself a "palace" which is the third *Sefirah*. When this point is represented as a source welling up from the depths of nothingness, the third *Sefirah* becomes the river that flows out from the source and divides into different streams following the structure of emanation until all its tributaries flow into "the great sea" of the last *Sefirah*. This first point is established by an act of the Divine Will, taking its first step toward creation. In the Zohar the appearance of the supernal point (which is called *reshit*, "beginning," the first word of the Bible) is preceded by a number of acts that take place between *Ein-Sof* and the first *Sefirah* or within the first *Sefirah*. As well as being nothingness (*ayin*) and the will of God, this *Sefirah* is also the primordial ether (*avir kadmon*) which surrounds *Ein-Sof* like an eternal aura. From the mystery of *Ein-Sof* a flame is kindled, and inside the flame a hidden well comes into being. The primordial point shines forth in being when the well breaks through the ether (1, 15a). It is as if all the possible symbols were assembled together within this description.

The organic symbolism equates the primordial point with the seed sown in the womb of "the supernal mother," who is *Binah*. "The palace" is the womb which is brought to fruition through the fertilization of the semen and gives birth to the children, who are the emanations. In another organic image *Binah* is compared to the roots of a tree which is watered by *Hokhmah* and branches out into seven *Sefirot*. In another symbolic pattern—very common in the 13th century and particularly in the Zohar—the first three *Sefirot* represent the progress from will to thought and thence to intellect, where the general content of wisdom or thought is more precisely individuated. The identification of the following *Sefirot* as love, justice, and mercy links this doctrine with the aggadic concept of the divine attributes. References to male and female appear not only in the symbolism of father and mother, son and daughter (*Hokhmah* and *Binah*, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*) but also in the striking use of sexual imagery which is a particular characteristic of the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah. The use of such images is especially prominent in the description of the relationships between *Tiferet* and *Yesod* on the one hand and *Malkhut* on the other. Many kabbalists did their utmost to minimize the impact of this symbolism, which afforded much scope for mythical images and daring interpretations.

A general symbolism of a different type is related to the

stages in the manifestation of the personal, individual identity of God. The first *Sefirah* contains only "He"; sometimes this "He" is hidden and no mention is made of Him because of His extreme self-concealment, as, for example, within the verb *bara* ("He created") at the beginning of the Bible. Thus *bereshit bara Elohim* (usually "in the beginning God created") is interpreted mystically to refer to the first three *Sefirot*: through the medium of *Hokhmah* (called *reshit*), the first *Sefirah*—the force hidden within the third person singular of the word *bara*—produced by an act of emanation the third *Sefirah* (*Binah*), which is also called *Elohim*. *Elohim* ("God") is thus not the subject but the object of the sentence. This daring interpretation is common to almost all 13th-century kabbalists. But as His manifestation continues, God becomes "Thou," whom man is now able to address directly, and this "Thou" is related to *Tiferet* or to the totality of the *Sefirot* in *Malkhut*. However, God reaches His complete individuation through His manifestation in *Malkhut*, where He is called "I." This conception is summed up in the common statement that through the process of emanation "Nothingness changes into I" (*Ayin le-Ani*). The three letters or elements which make up *Ayin* ("Nothingness")—*alef*, *yod*, *nun*—are also contained in *Ani*, that is in both the beginning and the end of the process, but like the forces which they denote they are combined in a different way. In a similar fashion the name YHWH denotes just one *Sefirah* (*Tiferet*) but also contains within it all the fundamental stages of emanation: the spike at the top of the *yod* represents the source of all in *Ayin*, the *yod* itself is *Hokhmah*, the first *heh* is *Binah*, the *vav* is *Tiferet* or, because of the numerical value of the letter *vav*, the totality of the six *Sefirot* and the final *heh* is *Malkhut*. Since the latter comprises the other *Sefirot* and has no independent power, it cannot be assigned a letter of its own but only that *heh*, which has already appeared at the beginning of the emanation of the structure of the *Sefirot* and whose manifestation has reached its final development at the end of the process. The other names of God in the Bible are also interpreted in a similar fashion, their letters alluding to an inner progress in the process of emanation.

Emanation in its totality is the "Celestial Chariot" and individual components are "parts of the Chariot" which are interpreted in particular in the commentaries on the

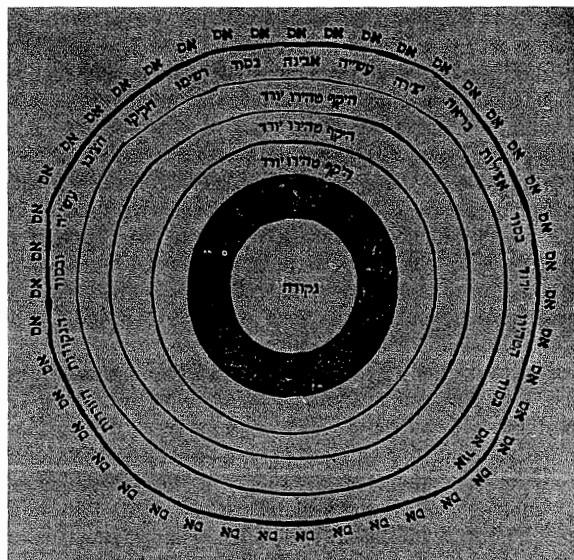


Figure 8. Representation of the *hitnozezut* ("flaring up") of the *nekudah* ("primordial point") after the light of *Ein-Sof* was withdrawn from it in the act of *zimzum*. From Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz, *Shefa Tal*, Hanau, 1612. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

Chariot by Jacob Kohen of Soria, Moses de Leon, and Joseph Gikatilla. Biblical figures are also connected with this. "The patriarchs are the Chariot" (*Genesis Rabbah*), for Abraham represents the attribute of abundant love (*Hesed*), Isaac the attribute of strict justice (*Din*), and Jacob the attribute of mercy (*Rahamim*), which is a combination of the other two. These three, together with King David, the founder of the kingship (*Malkhut*) of Israel, constitute the "four legs of the Throne" in the Chariot. And when Moses and Aaron are added, as representing the sources of prophecy in *Nezah* and *Hod*, and then Joseph—according to the talmudic picture of him as Joseph the righteous, keeper of the covenant, who resists the temptations of the sexual instinct—we have the seven *Sefirot* portraying the heroes of the Bible, who are called the "seven shepherds" or guests (*ushpizin*). This kind of symbolism conveys the moral content of the *Sefirot* as specific ethical attributes. The righteous, each of whom is inspired by a characteristic moral quality, embody the rule of the divine attributes in the world.

In addition to this ethical symbolism we find several cosmological systems. The four elements, the four winds, and even the four metals (gold, silver, copper, and lead) are indications of *Gedullah*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, and *Malkhut*; the sun and the moon of *Tiferet* or *Yesod* and *Malkhut*. The moon, which receives its light from the sun and has no light of its own, and which waxes and wanes according to a fixed cycle, occupies an important place in the very rich symbolism of the last *Sefirah*. However, the most important of these symbols are the *Keneset Yisrael* ("the community of Israel") and the *Shekhinah* ("the Divine Presence"). The Kingdom of Heaven, which is realized in time in the historical *Keneset Yisrael*, represents therefore the latter's meta-historical aspect as well. The supernal *Keneset Yisrael* is the mother (*matrona*), the bride, and also the daughter of the "king," and they appear in countless midrashic parables on the relationship between God and the Jewish people. In her capacity as bride (*kallah*) she is also, by a mystical etymology, "the consummation of all" (*kelulah mi ha-kol*). She is the receptive aspect of "the holy union" of "king" and "queen." Other of her features are to be seen in the symbols of her as freedom, the Torah, and the trees in the Garden of Eden. The *Sefirah Binah* is the "supernal Jubilee," in which everything emerges into freedom and returns to its source, and therefore *Binah* is also called *Teshuvah* ("return"). But the last *Sefirah* is the *shemittah*, the seventh year when the earth rests and is renewed. The Written Law is woven from the name YHWH, and alludes to an emanation which already has some manifestation but has yet to be fully articulated. The Oral Law, which gives a detailed interpretation of the ways of the Written Law and of its application to life, is embodied in *Keneset Yisrael*, both in heaven and on earth. And similarly with regard to the trees: the Tree of Life is the *Sefirah Yesod* (though later on it is mainly *Tiferet*), while the Tree of Knowledge is a symbol of *Malkhut*, or of the Oral Law. In the early *aggadah* the *Shekhinah* is a synonym for God, indicating His presence, His "dwelling" in the world, or in any specified place. In the Kabbalah, on the other hand, from the *Sefer ha-Bahir* onward, it becomes the last attribute through which the Creator acts in the lower world. It is "the end of thought," whose progressive unfolding demonstrates God's hidden life. From its source at "the beginning of thought" in *Hokhmah* ("wisdom"), the thought of creation pursues its task through all the worlds, following the laws of the process of the *Sefirot* themselves. The emphasis placed on the female principle in the symbolism of the last *Sefirah* heightens the mythical language of these descriptions. Appearing from above as "the end of thought," the last

Sefirah is for man the door or gate through which he can begin the ascent up the ladder of perception of the Divine Mystery.

The symbols mentioned so far form only part of a rich symbolism which drew on material from every sphere. Often there are differences in the details of its presentation, and there was a certain amount of freedom in the way given symbols were connected to a given *Sefirah*, but as far as basic motifs were concerned there was a great degree of agreement. Yet works explaining the attributes of the *Sefirot* were written from the time of the Gerona kabbalists onward, and the differences between them should not be minimized. Even in the Zohar itself there are many variations within a more or less firmly established framework. Such differences can also be seen between the symbolism of Moses de Leon and that of Joseph Gikatilla. The best sources for an understanding of this symbolism are: *Sha'arei Orah* and *Sha'arei Zedek* by Gikatilla; *Shekel ha-Kodesh* by Moses de Leon; *Sefer ha-Shem* written by another, unidentified Moses; *Sod Ilan ha-Azilut* by R. Isaac (*Kovez al-Yad*, 68, 5, 1951, 65-102); *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, chs. 3-7; *Sefer ha-Shorashim* by Joseph ibn Wakkar (translation of the section on symbolism from his Arabic work; found separately in many Mss.); *Sha'ar Arkhei ha-Kinuyim* in *Pardes Rimmonim* by Cordovero, ch. 22; *Sefat Emet* by Menahem Azariah Fano (Lobatschov 1898); *Arkhei ha-Kinuyim* by Jehiel Heilprin (Dyhrenfurth 1806); *Kehillat Ya'akov* by Jacob Zevi Jolles (Lemberg 1870) and the second part entitled *Yashresh Ya'akov* (Brooklyn, about 1961). The attributes of the *Sefirot* according to Lurianic Kabbalah are described in detail in *Me'orot Natan* by Meir Poppers (text) and Nathan Nata Mannheim (notes) (Frankfort 1709); *Regal Yesharah* by Zevi Elimelech Spira (Lemberg 1858); *Emet le-Ya'akov* by Jacob Shealtiel Niño (Leghorn 1843); and *Or Einayim* by Eliezer Zevi Safrin (Part 1 Premysl 1882, Part 2 Lemberg 1886).

From the 13th century onward we find the idea that each *Sefirah* comprises all others successively in an infinite reflection of the *Sefirot* within themselves. This formal method of describing the rich dynamic that exists within each *Sefirah* was also expressed in other ways. So, for example, we read of the 620 "pillars of light" in *Keter*, of the 32 "ways" in *Hokhmah*, of the 50 "gates" of *Binah*, of the 72 "bridges" in *Hesed*, and so on (in the *Tefillat ha-Yihud* ascribed to R. Nehunya b. ha-Kanah), and of forces which are called by magical names whose meaning cannot be communicated but which denote the various concentrations of power that can be differentiated in emanation. As early as Moses of Burgos and Joseph Gikatilla it is stressed that from each *Sefirah* are suspended worlds of its own that do not form part of the hierarchical order of the worlds that follow the world of emanation. In other words, the total power of each *Sefirah* cannot be expressed simply with reference to the known creation. There are aspects that have other purposes: hidden worlds of love, of justice, and so on. In the Zohar descriptions of this type occur only in relation to the world of *Keter* (*Arikk Anpin*, lit. "the long face," properly "the long-suffering God") and the world of *Tiferet* (*Ze'eir Anpin*, lit. "the short face," properly "the impatient One") and take the form of a description of the anatomy of the "the white head," written with an extreme tendency to anthropomorphism. Parts of this "head" symbolize the ways in which God acts: the brow refers to His acts of grace, the eye to His providence, the ear to His acceptance of prayer, the beard to the 13 facets of mercy, and so on. An allegorization of the theological concepts in the doctrine of the attributes, a symbolism which views its own imagery as an accurate allusion to that which is beyond all imagining, and an

attempt to reconcile the apparently incompatible doctrines of the *Sefirot* and the earlier *Shi'ur Komah*—all meet in these symbols of the *Idrot* of the Zohar. The author never states openly that his descriptions entail a positing of “*Sefirot* within *Sefirot*” (which are mentioned in the main part of the Zohar and also in the Hebrew writings of Moses de Leon, but only incidentally and without any detail). Apparently he saw no need to offer any speculative theory to justify his use of corporeal images, so difficult to probe rationally in any detail. His world was symbolic rather than conceptual. However, the kabbalists from the beginning of the 14th century did give such “revelations” a theoretical interpretation, starting with the *Sefer ha-Ge'ul* (based on the *Idra Rabba* in the Zohar) by David b. Judah he-Ḥasid and ending with Cordovero's *Elimah Rabbati* and his commentary to the Zohar. A similar doctrine is also evident in the writings of Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi. In their meditations on these internal reflections of the *Sefirot* within one another some kabbalists, such as Joseph ibn Sayyah, went as far as to describe in detail the play of lights inside the *Sefirot* to the fourth “degree,” as, for example, the “*Tiferet* which is in *Gedullah* which is in *Binah* which is in *Keter*.” Cordovero too went further along this path than most kabbalists.

In Cordovero's teachings this theory of *Sefirot* within *Sefirot* is connected with another—that of the *behinot*, the infinite number of aspects which can be differentiated within each *Sefirah* and whose main purpose is to explain how each *Sefirah* is connected with both the preceding and the following ones. According to Cordovero, there are, in the main, six of these aspects in each *Sefirah*: (1) its concealed aspect before its manifestation in the *Sefirah* which emanates it; (2) the aspect in which it is manifested and apparent in the emanating *Sefirah*; (3) the aspect in which it materializes in its correct spiritual location, that is to say, as an independent *Sefirah* in its own right; (4) the aspect which enables the *Sefirah* above it to instill within it the power to emanate further *Sefirot*; (5) the aspect by which it gains the power to emanate the *Sefirot* hidden within it to their manifested existence within its own essence; and (6) the aspect by which the following *Sefirah* is emanated to its own place, at which point the cycle begins again. This complete array of *behinot* is seen as causal relationship, each *behinah* causing the awakening and the manifestation of the following *behinah* (*Pardes Rimmonim*, ch. 5, 5). But there are many other “aspects” in the *Sefirot* as well and their discovery depends on the perspective of their investigator. Each *Sefirah* “descends into itself,” and the process of this descent is infinite in its internal reflections. At the same time, however, it is also finite, in that it begets or brings into being from within itself another *Sefirah*. This concept necessitates the premise that the roots of emanation have a concealed “aspect” in *Ein-Sof* itself, and Cordovero interprets the three *zahzahot* mentioned above as the three hidden *behinot* of *Keter* in *Ein-Sof*. He is thus forced to demolish the natural boundary between *Ein-Sof* and the first *Sefirah*, despite his clear desire to establish such a natural division. He therefore postulates that the *behinot* of *Keter* within *Keter* within *Keter* and so on, although they potentially continue *ad infinitum*, do not in fact reach an identity with the essence of the Emanator, so that the propinquity of *Ein-Sof* and *Keter* remains asymptotic. All this, of course, is stated from the point of view of created beings for even the supernal awakening of “aspects” of the Will within the Will within the Will and so on does not reveal *Ein-Sof*, and it is this differential which comprises the leap from the essence of the Emanator to that of the emanated. On the other hand, the differential gap closes when it is regarded from the point of view of the

Emanator Himself. Cordovero's doctrine of the *behinot* shows how closely he approached a clearly dialectic mode of thought within the framework of kabbalistic ideas. With Cordovero the *Sefirot* are more than emanations which manifest the attributes of the Emanator, though they are this too. They actually become the structural elements of all beings, even of the self-manifesting God Himself. The implied contradiction between the processes of emanation and structuralism was never fully resolved by Cordovero himself, and it appears even in the systematic presentation of his ideas in *Shefa Tal* by Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz. In such works as *Elimah Rabbati* and *Shefa Tal* zoharic Kabbalah undergoes an extremely profound speculative transformation in which as far as possible theosophy dispenses with its mythical foundations. Nevertheless, it is evident that this speculative trend does not turn Kabbalah into philosophy, and that the acknowledgment of a hidden life within the deity—the process of the emanation of the *Sefirot*—depends finally on mystical intuition, for by it alone can this domain be understood. In the Zohar this intuition is called “fleeting vision [of the eternal]” (*istakluta le-fum sha'ata*; 2, 74b; Z. H. 38c), and this is the element that the prophet and the kabbalist have in common (1, 97a and b).

In addition to the process of emanation which takes place between the *Sefirot*, there are two symbolic modes of expressing the way in which each *Sefirah* radiates upon the others:

(1) Reflected light. This is based on the premise that, in addition to the direct light which spreads from one *Sefirah* to the next, there is a light which is reflected back from the lower *Sefirot* to the upper. Thus the *Sefirah* can be seen as both a medium for the transference of the light from above to below, and as a mirror serving to reflect the light back to its source. This reflected light can re-ascend from any *Sefirah*, particularly from the last one, back up to the first, and it acts on its return path as an additional stimulus that causes the differentiation of still further *behinot* in each *Sefirah*. Reflected light, according to Cordovero (*Pardes* 15), fulfills a great task in the consolidation of the potencies and *behinot* of judgment (*din*) in each *Sefirah*, for it functions through a process of restrictive contraction rather than free expansion. Only marginally based on early Kabbalah—e.g., the statements in the Zohar on the relationships among the first three *Sefirot*—this doctrine was developed by Solomon Alkabez and Cordovero alone and it formed an important factor in their dialectical reasoning.

(2) Channels. This is based on the premise that specific *Sefirot* stand in particular relationships of radiation with other *Sefirot* (though not necessarily with all of them). The face of one *Sefirah* turns toward another and consequently there develops between them a “channel” (*zinnor*) of influence which is not identical with actual emanation. Such channels are paths of reciprocal influence between different *Sefirot*. This process is not a one-way influx from cause to effect; it also operates from effect to cause, dialectically turning the effect into a cause.

It is not clear to what extent there is any identity between the symbols of reflected light and channels nor, if there is none at all, what their relationship is. Any interruption in the return influx from below to above is called a “breaking of the channels” (*shevirat ha-zinnorot*; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*), an idea which serves to explain the relations between the lower and upper worlds on the occasion of sin and divine disapproval. These channels are alluded to by the Gerona kabbalists, Gikatilla, Joseph of Hamadan (if this is the real name of the author of *Shushan ha-Birah*, a commentary to Song of Songs and to the *parashah Terumah* in British Museum Ms. Margoliouth 464), as well as other

kabbalists of the 14th and 15th centuries, and the doctrine is presented in detail in chapter 7 of *Pardes Rimmonim*.

Earlier Worlds, Lower Worlds, and Cosmic Cycles (the Doctrine of the Shemittot). The emergence of God from the depths of Himself into creation, which constitutes the foundation of the doctrine of the *Sefirot*, was not always understood as a single, uninterrupted, straightforward process. In other views of the process of emanation and creation, a vital role was played by the midrashic legend concerning the worlds which were created and destroyed before the creation of our present world. An important variation of this idea lies at the root of a doctrine of the *Idrot* in the *Zohar*, in which the *Midrash* and other similar *aggadot* are connected with a description of how God entered into the form of the *Adam Kadmon* or Primeval Man, or into the different configurations of this form. Here we have a motif whose origin is in no way consistent with the classical formulation of the *Sefirot* doctrine, as can be easily seen from its reversed treatment of the male-female principle. Unlike in classical tradition, the male principle is considered here to be the principle of *din* or strict judgment which needs softening and "sweetening" by the female principle. A creation dominated solely by the forces of judgment could not survive. The exact nature of such earlier, unsuccessful creations, however—called in the *Zohar* "the Kings of Edom" or "the Primeval Kings" (*malkhei Edom* or *malkin Kadma'in*)—is not made plain. It was only when the form of Primeval Man was fashioned perfectly, with a harmonious balance between the male and the female forces, that creation was able to sustain itself. This balance is called in the *Zohar* *matkela* ("the scales"), and only through its power did our world come into being. The biblical list of the kings of Edom (Gen. 35:31ff.) was interpreted in the light of this doctrine, for Edom was understood to represent the principle of judgment.

The author of the *Zohar* also expressed this doctrine in other ways. The worlds which preceded ours and were destroyed were like the sparks that scatter and die away when the forger strikes the iron with his hammer. This doctrine, in a completely new version, acquired a central place in Lurianic Kabbalah, while still other kabbalists tried to divest it of its literal meaning because of its theological difficulties. Cordovero's interpretation related it to the emanation of the *Sefirot* themselves, and to the dialectical process within each *Sefirah*—an interpretation quite out of keeping with the original idea. Other kabbalists of the *Zohar* period, such as Isaac ha-Kohen of Soria, expressed similar ideas, which they connected with the development of a "left-sided" emanation, that is, of an emanation of the forces of evil. The common element in all these doctrines is the supposition that during the first steps toward emanation certain abortive developments took place that had no direct effect on the actual creation of the present worlds, although remnants of these destroyed worlds did not entirely disappear and something of them still hovers disruptively among us.

Spanish Kabbalah concentrated its thinking on the emanation and structure of the *Sefirot*, a subject which is not dealt with at all in the writings of the philosophers. As regards the continuity of this process below the level of the last *Sefirah*, the kabbalists were in the main deeply influenced by medieval philosophical cosmology. Most kabbalists agreed that there was no essential break in the continuity of the influx of emanation which led to the development of additional areas of creation as well, such as the world of the intellect, the world of the spheres, and the lower world. But they maintained that whatever preceded these secondary stages was part of the divine domain, which they symbolically portrayed as a series of events in the

world of emanation, whereas from this point on, the outward movement departed from the realm of the Godhead and was thought of as a creation distinct from the divine unity. This fundamental distinction between "the world of unity" of the *Sefirot* and "the world of separate intelligences" that was below them was made as early as the beginning of the 13th century. When the philosophers spoke of "separate intelligences," however, which they identify with the angels, they thought of them as immaterial beings representing pure form, whereas in kabbalistic language the term refers rather to a separation from the sefirotic unity of the divine domain.

As the Kabbalah developed, the world of the Merkabah (see above) described in the *heikhalot* literature became quite clearly distinguished from the world of the divine above it. The former was now often called "the domain of the Throne," and a rich angelology developed around it which was only partly identical with the earlier angelology of the Merkabah literature. In the main body of the *Zohar* there are detailed descriptions of the inhabitants of the seven "palaces" which spread out below the *Sefirah Malkhut* and are the products of its emanative influx, and which have little in common with the *heikhalot* of earlier literature. No fixed hierarchical order had been established in earlier Kabbalah for the world of the angels, and the writings of various 13th- and 14th-century kabbalists contain quite different angelological systems. Such systems occupy an important place in the works of Isaac ha-Kohen, his brother Jacob, and their pupil Moses of Burgos, all of whom spoke in detail of secondary emanations which served as garments for the *Sefirot* and were situated even higher than the most prominent angels in the traditional angelology, such as Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and so on. Other systems occur in the *Tikkunei Zohar*, in the *Sod Darkhei ha-Nekuddot ve-ha-Otiyyot* attributed to the school of Abraham b. David of Posquières, in the books of David b. Judah ha-Hasid, and in the *Sefer Toledot Adam*. Sometimes a distinction was made between the Merkabah as a symbol of the world of the *Sefirot* themselves, and the *merkevat ha-mishneh*, or "second chariot," which represented the domain that came after the *Sefirah Malkhut*, and was itself divided into ten *Sefirot* of its own. Everything below the last *Sefirah* is subject to time and is called *beriah* ("creation") since it is outside (*le-var*) the Godhead.

The general scheme of a world of the Godhead and the *Sefirot*, and of the intelligences and the spheres, did not prevent many kabbalists, such as the author of the *Zohar* and Gikatilla, from supposing the existence of a very large number of secondary worlds within each one of these primary worlds. This expansion of an originally narrower cosmological framework is analogous to similar motifs in Indian thought, although there is no need to try to establish a direct historical link between the two. Every stage in the process of creation is crystallized in a specific world where the creative power of the Creator achieves the perfect expression of one of its many aspects. At the same time, we can trace the development of a unified doctrine of a series of worlds from above to below forming one basic vector along which creation passes from its primeval point to its finalization in the material world (see G. Scholem, *Tarbiz*, 2-3, 1931-32). The outcome of this development, in which Jewish, Aristotelean, and neoplatonic principles were all mingled together, was a new doctrine of four basic worlds, called *olam ha-azilut* (the world of emanation—the ten *Sefirot*), *olam ha-beriah* (the world of creation—the Throne and the Chariot), *olam ha-yezirah* (the world of formation—sometimes the world of the angels centered around Metatron), and *olam ha-asiyyah* (the world of making—which sometimes includes both the whole system of the

spheres and the terrestrial world, and sometimes the terrestrial world only). This arrangement, although without the nomenclature of "worlds," is already mentioned in the later strata of the Zohar, particularly in the *Tikkunei Zohar*. It appears in the form of four actual worlds in the *Massekhet *Azilut*, from the beginning of the 14th century. Isaac of Acre also made frequent use of this arrangement and gave it, for the first time, the abbreviated name *abiya* (*azilut, beri'ah, yezirah, asiyyah*). However, the doctrine was not fully developed until the 16th century when the kabbalists of Safed went into the details even of the worlds of *beri'ah* and *yezirah*, particularly Cordovero and the school of Isaac Luria. In the *Tikkunei Zohar* the world of *asiyyah* was understood as the domain of the material world and of evil spirits, while according to the *Massekhet Azilut* it included the whole range of creation from the angels (known as *ofannim*) through the ten spheres to the world of matter. According to Lurianic Kabbalah, all the worlds, including the world of *asiyyah*, were originally spiritual, but through the "breaking of the vessels" the world of *asiyyah*, after its descent from its earlier position, was commingled with the *kelippot* or impure "husks," which in principle should have remained completely separate, thus producing a world of matter that contained nothing spiritual. The ten *Sefirot* are active in all four worlds according to their adaptation to each one, so that it is possible to speak of the *Sefirot* of the world of *beri'ah*, the *Sefirot* of the world of *yezirah* and so on. Some concomitant of the *Sefirot* may be seen in the lower world also. Even the image of *Adam Kadmon* is reflected in each of these worlds (*adam di-veriyah, adam de-azilut*, etc., as in the writings of Moses de Leon, in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkumim*). Even the terrestrial world of nature may be called *adam gadol* ("the great man"; macroanthropos). In another kabbalistic view dating to the period of the expulsion from Spain, nature is defined as *zel Shaddai*, that is, the shadow of the Divine Name.

Beginning in the 13th century, and especially from the 15th and 16th centuries, the kabbalists tried to make pictorial representations of the structure of creation as it progressed from *Ein-Sof* downward. Such diagrams were generally called *ilanot* ("trees"), and the obvious differences between them reflect divergences among the various doctrines and schemes of symbolism. Drawings of this kind are found in a large number of manuscripts. A detailed pictorial representation of the Lurianic system, called *ilan ha-gadol* ("the great tree"), which was made by Meir Poppers, has been published, first in the form of a long scroll (Warsaw 1864) and later as a book (Warsaw 1893).

These speculations were accorded a unique form in the doctrine of the *shemittot* or cosmic cycles which was based on a fixed periodicity in creation. Although dependent on aggadic motifs, this doctrine displays some relationship with similar non-Jewish systems, whose influence on Jewish authors can be traced in Muslim countries and in Spain, particularly in the writings of Abraham bar Hiyya. In his *Megillat ha-Megalleh*, he speaks of unnamed "philosophers" who believed in a long, even infinite series of cyclical creations. Some of them, he said, maintained that the world would last for 49,000 years, that each of the seven planets would rule for 7,000 years, and that God would then destroy the world and restore it to chaos in the 50th millenium, only to subsequently recreate it once again. These were astrological ideas drawn from Arabic and Greek sources, which could easily be assimilated to certain views expressed in the *aggadah*, such as the statement of Rav Katina (Sanh. 97a) that the world would last for 6,000 years and be destroyed in the seventh millenium, in which a

parallel is drawn between the days of creation and those of the world, seen as a great cosmic week, at the end of which it "rests" and is destroyed. The earlier kabbalists related these ideas to their own doctrine of emanation. Their new teaching concerning the cycles of creation, which was widely referred to and even summarized in the Kabbalah of Gerona, was fully articulated, although in a highly cryptic style, in the *Sefer ha-Temunah*, which was written about 1250. The main point of this doctrine is that it is the *Sefirot* and not the stars that determine the progress and span of the world. The first three *Sefirot* remain concealed and do not activate "worlds" outside themselves—or at least not worlds that we can recognize as such. From the *Sefirah Binah*, also called "the mother of the worlds," the seven apprehendable and outgoing *Sefirot* are emanated. Each one of these *Sefirot* has a special role in one creation-cycle, which comes under its dominion and is influenced by its specific nature. Each such cosmic cycle, bound to one of the *Sefirot*, is called a *shemittah* or sabbatical year—a term taken from Deuteronomy 15—and has an active life of 6,000 years. In the seventh millenium, which is the *shemittah* period, the Sabbath-day of the cycle, the sefirotic forces cease to function and the world returns to chaos. Subsequently, the world is renewed through the power of the following *Sefirah*, and is active for a new cycle. At the end of all the *shemittot* there is the "great jubilee," when not only all the lower worlds but the seven supporting *Sefirot* themselves are reabsorbed into *Binah*. The basic unit of world history is therefore the 50,000-year jubilee, which is subdivided as described above. The details of this doctrine in the *Sefer Temunah* are complicated by the fact that, according to the author, the *Sefirah Yesod*, which is also called *Shabbat*, does not activate a manifest *shemittah* of its own. Rather, its *shemittah* remains concealed and works through the power of the other cosmic cycles. Nor is there explicit mention here of any new cycle of creation after the jubilee. According to the kabbalists of Gerona, the laws in the Torah concerning the sabbatical and the jubilee years refer to this mystery of recurrent creation.

An even more radical doctrine came into being in the 13th century, according to which the world-process lasts for no less than 18,000 jubilees (Bahya b. Asher, on the Torah portion *Be-Ha'alotekha*). Moreover, the actual chronology of these calculations is not to be taken literally, because the *Sefer ha-Temunah* teaches that in the seventh millenium there sets in a gradual and progressive retardation in the movement of the stars and the spheres, so that the measurements of time change and become longer in geometrical progression. Fifty thousand "years" therefore becomes a much longer period. Hence other kabbalists, and Isaac of Acre in particular, arrived at truly astronomical figures for the total duration of the world. Some kabbalists taught that after each "great jubilee" a new creation would begin *ex nihilo*, a view which passed from Bahya b. Asher to Isaac Abrabanel, and from him to his son Judah, who mentioned it in his famous Italian work, *Dialoghi di Amore*. These views were also accepted much later by the author of *Gallei Razaya* (1552), and even by Manasseh Ben Israel. No kabbalist posited an infinite number of jubilees. In contrast to such enormous vistas, others maintained that we do not know what will follow the jubilee and that investigation of the subject is forbidden.

There were also divergent views on the question of which *shemittah* in the jubilee period we are living in now. Generally speaking, the accepted position was that of the *Sefer ha-Temunah*, namely, that we are now in the *shemittah* of judgment, dominated by the *Sefirah Gevurah*, and the principle of strict justice. Consequently, this must have been preceded by the *shemittah* of *Hesed* or lovingkindness,

which is described as a kind of "golden age," akin to that of Greek mythology. According to another view (for example, that of the *Livnat ha-Sappir* by Joseph Angelino), we are in the last *shemittah* of the present jubilee period. Each *shemittah* experiences a revelation of the Torah, which is simply the complete articulation of the Divine Name or Tetragrammaton, but comprehension of it, that is, the combination of its letters, differs in every *shemittah*. Therefore, in the previous *shemittah* the Torah was read completely differently and did not contain the prohibitions which are the product of the power of judgment; similarly, it will be read differently in the *shemittot* to come. The *Sefer ha-Temunah* and other sources contain descriptions of the final *shemittot* which are of a distinctly utopian character. In their view, some souls from the previous *shemittah* still exist in our own, which is governed by a universal law of transmigration that includes the animal kingdom as well. As the power of judgment is mitigated in subsequent *shemittot*, so laws and customs will be relaxed also. This doctrine allowed tremendous play to the power of the imagination, which was particularly exploited by Isaac of Acre. It should be noted that in itself the premise that one and the same Torah could be revealed in a different form in each *shemittah* did not at the time arouse any open opposition, and was even extended by some who maintained that the Torah was read differently in each of the millions of worlds involved in the complex of creation—a view first expressed in Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Zedek* (see *Tarbiz*, 39, 1970, 382–3). One of the most extreme manifestations of this belief was the theory that in the present *shemittah* one of the letters of the alphabet is missing and will be revealed only in the future, thus the reading of the Torah will obviously be absolutely transformed.

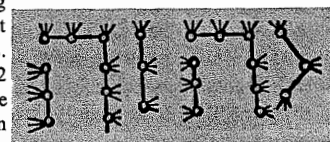
The influence of the *Sefer ha-Temunah* and the doctrine of the *shemittot* was extremely strong and it still had its champions as late as the 17th century. However, the author of the *Zohar* ignored it completely, apparently out of some fundamental disagreement, although he too held that there was a great jubilee lasting 50,000 years in the world. As the *Zohar* became increasingly recognized as the authoritative and chief source for later Kabbalah, this silence on the subject strengthened opposition to the doctrine. Joseph ibn Zayyah, Cordovero, and Isaac Luria rejected it as a mistaken or unnecessary hypothesis, at least in the version found in the *Sefer ha-Temunah*, and as a result of their influence it more or less disappeared from later kabbalistic literature. However, Mordecai Jaffe, a contemporary of Isaac Luria, was still teaching at the end of the 16th century that sequences of *shemittot* existed, even within the limits of historical time. The *shemittah* of *Din* ("judgment") began precisely at the time of the giving of the Torah, while everything that preceded it still belonged to the end of the *shemittah* of *Hesed* ("lovingkindness"). Its visionary utopianism and its mystical theory concerning the changing manifestations of the essence of the Torah were without doubt among the main reasons why the doctrine of *shemittot* was accepted so widely in kabbalistic circles. The disciples of Shabbetai Zevi made much of it, stressing its inherently antinomian implications.

The Problem of Evil. The question of the origin and nature of evil was one of the principal motivating forces behind kabbalistic speculation. In the importance attached to it lies one of the basic differences between kabbalistic doctrine and Jewish philosophy, which gave little original thought to the problem of evil. Various kabbalistic solutions were proffered. The *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* reveals the influence of the conventional neoplatonist position that evil has no objective reality and is merely

relative. Man is unable to receive all the influx from the *Sefirot*, and it is this inadequacy which is the origin of evil, which has therefore only a negative reality. The determining factor is the estrangement of created things from their source of emanation, a separation which leads to manifestations of what appears to us to be the power of evil. But the latter has no metaphysical reality, and it is doubtful whether the author of the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* and his disciples believed in the existence of a separate domain of evil outside the structure of the *Sefirot*. On the other hand, we already find in the *Sefer ha-Bahir* a categorization of the *Sefirah Gevurah*, as "the left hand of the Holy One blessed be He," and as "an attribute whose name is evil" and which has many offshoots in the forces of judgment, the constricting and limiting powers in the universe. As early as Isaac the Blind this led to the conclusion that there must of necessity be a positive root of evil and death, which was balanced within the unity of the Godhead by the root of goodness and life. During the process of differentiation of these forces below the *Sefirot*, however, evil became substantiated as a separate manifestation. Hence the doctrine gradually developed which saw the source of evil in the superabundant growth of the power of judgment, which was made possible by the substantification and separation of the attribute of judgment from its customary union with the attribute of lovingkindness. Pure judgment, untempered by any mitigating admixture, produced from within itself the *sitra ahra* ("the other side"), just as a vessel which is filled to overflowing spills its superfluous liquid on the ground. This *sitra ahra*, the domain of dark emanations and demonic powers, is henceforth no longer an organic part of the World of Holiness and the *Sefirot*. Though it emerged from one of the attributes of God, it cannot be an essential part of Him. This view became dominant in the Kabbalah through the writings of the Gerona kabbalists and the *Zohar*.

According to the "Gnostics" of Castile and, in a different version, the *Zohar* also, there exists a complete hierarchy of the "emanation of the left," which is the power of uncleanness that is active in creation. However, this objective reality lasts only as long as it continues to receive fresh strength from the *Sefirah Gevurah*, which is in the holy order of the *Sefirot*, and in particular, only as long as man revives and fortifies it through his own sinful deeds. According to the *Zohar*, this *sitra ahra* has ten *Sefirot* of its own, and a similar view, albeit with several variations and the addition of certain mythical elements, is expressed in the writings of Isaac ha-Kohen and in *Ammud ha-Semoli* by his pupil, Moses of Burgos. Isaac ha-Kohen taught that the

Figure 9. The tetragrammaton written magically, with each letter containing several circles of light ("eyes") sending out rays. The four letters contain 72 such rays, representing the 72-lettered Name. From Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, Cracow, 1592. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.



first worlds that were destroyed were three dark emanations, which perished because of the overly concentrated power of strict judgment that they contained. The force of evil in this world, he argues, does not come from the *Sefirah Gevurah* but is a continuation of the *Sefirah Binah* that was substantiated in the destructive potencies corresponding to the seven constructive *Sefirot* of creation. These two forces

battle with one another from the beginning of creation itself.

In the Zohar too it is implied that the evil in the universe originated from the leftovers of worlds that were destroyed. The power of evil is compared to the bark (*kelippah*) of the tree of emanation, a symbol which originated with Azriel of Gerona (see Altmann, JJS, 9, 1958, 73–81) and became quite common from the Zohar onward. Some kabbalists called the totality of the emanation of the left “the outer tree” (*ha-ilan ha-hizon*). Another association, found in the Gerona kabbalists, and following them in the Zohar as well, is with “the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge.” The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were bound together in perfect harmony until Adam came and separated them, thereby giving substance to evil, which had been contained within the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and was now materialized in the evil instinct (*yezer ha-ra*). It was Adam therefore who activated the potential evil concealed within the Tree of Knowledge by separating the two trees and also by separating the Tree of Knowledge from its fruit, which was now detached from its source. This event is called metaphorically “the cutting of the shoots” (*kizuz ha-neti'ot*) and is the archetype of all the great sins mentioned in the Bible, whose common denominator was the introduction of division into the divine unity. The essence of Adam's sin was that it introduced “separation above and below” into what should have been united, a separation of which every sin is fundamentally a repetition—apart, that is, from sins involving magic and sorcery, which according to the kabbalists join together what should have remained separate. In actual fact, this view too tends to stress the separation of the power of judgment contained within the Tree of Knowledge from the power of loving-kindness contained within the Tree of Life. The latter pours out its influence unstintingly, while the former is a restrictive force with a tendency to become autonomous. This it can do either as the result of man's actions or of a metaphysical process in the upper worlds.

Both these views appear concurrently in kabbalistic literature without any clear distinction being drawn between them. The cosmic evil stemming from the inner dialectic of the emanating process is not differentiated here from the moral evil produced by human action. The Zohar tries to bridge these two realms by positing that the disposition toward moral corruption, toward evil in the guise of human temptation, derives from the cosmic evil which is in the domain of the *sitra ahra* (3, 163a). The basic difference between the Zohar and the writings of the Gnostics in Castile was that the latter indulged in exaggerated personifications of the powers in this domain, resorting on occasion to earlier demonological beliefs and calling the potencies of “the emanation of the left” by proper names, whereas the author of the Zohar generally kept to more impersonal categories, with the exception of the figures of *Samael—the kabbalistic equivalent of Satan—and his mate *Lilith, to whom he assigned a central role in the realm of evil. Another departure from this rule is his detailed description of the “palaces of impurity” with their guardians in his commentary on Exodus 38–40 (2, 262–9), which follows a parallel description of the “palaces of holiness.”

In the symbolism of the Zohar concerning the *sitra ahra*, a number of different themes confront and occasionally even conflict with one another. The *kelippot* (“shells” or “husks” of evil) are sometimes understood neoplatonically as the last links of the chain of emanation where all turns to darkness, as “the end of days” in the language of the Zohar. At other times they are defined simply as intermediaries between the upper and lower worlds, in which light

they are not necessarily seen as evil. Indeed, every mediating principle is a “shell” from the perspective of that which is above it but a “mind” from the point of view of that which is below (Zohar, 1, 19b). In other descriptions the domain of evil is delineated as the natural waste product of an organic process and is compared to bad blood, a bitter branch on the tree of emanation, foul waters (2, 167b), the dross which remains after gold has been refined (*hitukhei ha-zahav*), or the dregs from good wine. Such descriptions of the *sitra ahra* in the Zohar are particularly rich in mythical images. The identification of evil with physical matter, though it occurs occasionally in the Zohar and in other kabbalistic books, never became an official doctrine of either. The equivocation of medieval philosophy between the Aristotelian and Platonic-emanatist concepts of matter is equally strongly felt in the Kabbalah, although the problem of how matter is emanated is referred to only infrequently. Generally speaking, the question of the nature of matter is not central in the Kabbalah, where the major interest was rather the question of how the Divine was reflected in matter. Occasional discussions of the nature of matter from a neoplatonic viewpoint can already be found in the literature of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* circle. Cordovero, in his *Sefer Elimah*, explains the emanation of matter from spirit by means of a dialectic treatment of the concept of form that was common in medieval philosophy.

According to the Zohar there is a spark of holiness even in the domain of “the other side,” whether from an emanation of the last *Sefirah* or as an indirect result of man's sin, for just as the fulfillment of a commandment strengthens the side of holiness, so a sinful act revitalizes the *sitra ahra*. The realms of good and evil are to an extent commingled, and man's mission is to separate them. In contrast to this view which acknowledges the metaphysical existence of evil, an alternative approach has found its basic expression in Gikatilla, who defined evil as an entity which was not in its rightful place: “every act of God, when it is in the place accorded to it at creation, is good; but if it turns and leaves its place, it is evil.” These two views—that of the Zohar, which accords evil actual existence as the fire of God's anger and justice, and that of Gikatilla, which attributes to it only a potential existence that nothing can activate save the deeds of men—occur throughout kabbalistic literature without any victory of one over the other. Even in the different versions of Lurianic doctrine the two are perpetually in conflict. (On the problem of evil in Lurianic Kabbalah, see below.)

A new and final development in regard to the problem of evil occurred in the doctrine of the Shabbateans, as formulated particularly in the writings of Nathan of Gaza. According to him, there were from the very beginning two lights in *Ein-Sof*: “the light which contained thought” and “the light which did not contain thought.” The first had in it from the very beginning the thought of creating worlds, while in the latter there was no such thought, its whole essence striving toward remaining concealed and resting within itself without emerging from the mystery of *Ein-Sof*. The first light was entirely active and the second light entirely passive and immersed in the depths of itself. When the thought of creation arose in the first light, it contracted to make room for this creation, but the thought-less light which had no share in creation remained in its place. Since it had no other purpose but to rest in itself, it passively resisted the structure of emanation which the light containing thought had built in the vacuum created by its own contraction. This resistance turned the light without thought into the ultimate source of evil in the work of creation. The idea of a dualism between matter and form as being at the root of good and evil here assumes a most

original pattern: the root of evil is a principle within *Ein-Sof* itself, which holds itself aloof from creation and seeks to prevent the forms of the light which contains thought from being actualized, not because it is evil by nature but only because its whole desire is that nothing should exist apart from *Ein-Sof*. It refuses to receive within itself the light that contains thought, and consequently it strives to frustrate and destroy whatever is constructed by that light. Evil is therefore the outcome of a dialectic between two aspects of the light of *Ein-Sof* itself. Its activity arises from its opposition to change. The approximation of this idea to the neoplatonic view of matter as the basis of evil is obvious. The struggle between the two lights is renewed at every stage of creation, nor will it come to an end until the time of final redemption, when the light that contains thought will penetrate through and through the light without thought and delineate therein its holy forms. The *sitra ahra* of the Zohar is no more than the totality of the structure which the light without thought is forced to produce as a result of this struggle. As the process of creation goes on, the struggle becomes sharper, because the light of thought wants by its very nature to penetrate all the space that has been vacated by its contraction and to leave nothing untouched in that formless, primordial realm that Nathan calls *golem* (the formless *hyle*). The premise that the principles of both good and evil exist together in the supreme mind of God and that there is no other possible logical solution to the problem of evil in a monotheistic system was shared by Leibnitz, who approached the problem similarly some 50 years later in his *Théodicée*.

Although there is no doubt that most kabbalists held that evil did have a real existence at various levels, even though it functioned through negation, they were divided in their views concerning the eschatological problem of how it would finally be terminated both in the world and in man. Would the power of evil be totally destroyed in the time to come? Would it perhaps survive, but without any possibility of influencing the redeemed world once good and evil, which had become intermingled, had now been finally separated? Or would evil perhaps be transformed into good once more? The view that in the future world, whenever that would be, all things would return to their original, holy state, had eminent advocates from the days of the Gerona kabbalists onward. Nahmanides spoke of "the return of all things to their true essence"—a concept drawn perhaps from Christian eschatology and the doctrine of *apokatastis*—and he meant by this the reascent of every created being to its source in emanation which would no longer leave room for the continued existence of the kingdom of evil in creation or of the power of the evil instinct in man. It would appear, indeed, that this return was connected in his view with the great jubilee, according to the doctrine of the *shemittot*. Such a position accepted the reality of evil within the different *shemittot*, in each *shemittah* according to its specific nature.

Generally speaking, kabbalistic arguments about the ultimate fate of evil limited themselves to the time of the redemption and the final day of judgment. The dominant view was that the power of evil would be destroyed and disappear, since there would be no longer any justification for its continued existence. However, others held that the evil domain would survive as the place of eternal punishment for the wicked. A certain vacillation between these two beliefs is found in both the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah. On the whole, the Zohar emphasizes that the power of the *kelippot* will be terminated and "broken" in the time to come, and in a number of places it states quite plainly that the *sitra ahra* "will pass from the world" and the light of holiness will shine "without hindrance."

Gikatilla states, on the other hand, that in the time to come "God will take the attribute of misfortune [i.e., the power of evil] to a place where it will not be able to be malignant" (*Sha'arei Orah*, ch. 4). Those who upheld the doctrine that evil would once more become good claimed that Samael himself would repent and be transformed into an angel of holiness, which would automatically cause the disappearance of the kingdom of the *sitra ahra*. This view is expressed in the book *Kafha-Ketoret* (1500), and particularly in the *Asarah Ma'amarot* of Menahem Azariah Fano, but is opposed in the writings of Vital, who took a less liberal position. A powerful symbolic statement of Samael's future return to sanctity, and one particularly common from the 17th century onward, was the view that his name would be changed, the letter *mem*, signifying death (*mavet*), dropping out to leave Sa'el, one of the 72 holy Names of God.

The Doctrine of Creation in Lurianic Kabbalah. The one factor common to all kabbalistic doctrines of emanation and creation before Isaac Luria was their belief in an inner, uni-directional development that led from the stirring of *Ein-Sof* toward creation by means of more or less continuous stages. This process was prone to assume more complex forms and to go beyond the general doctrine of the ten *Sefirot*, to delve into the inner dynamic of the *Sefirot* themselves, or to describe the world of emanation through other symbolic systems, such as that of the mutually evolving, mutually conjoining Names of God. But the basic theme always remained the same: the progressive manifestation of *Ein-Sof* as articulated through the processes of emanation and creation. Even the classic formulation of this doctrine in the books of Cordovero, with all its dialectic complexity, does not diverge from this basic line. In contrast to this, we find a crucial turning-point in Lurianic cosmogony, whose extremely dramatic conception introduced far-reaching changes in the structure of kabbalistic thought. The details of this system are extremely complex even where they are clearly expounded, as for example, with regard to the principal acts of the creation-drama, to say nothing of its many obscurities that mystical meditation alone can perhaps comprehend. Lurianic doctrine created an enormous chasm between *Ein-Sof* and the world of emanation, which in previous kabbalistic teachings had been closely bound together, and then proceeded to fill it with divine acts of which the earlier Kabbalah had known nothing, although they can often be better understood against the background of older motifs. The principal accounts of the stages of creation found in the different versions of Lurianic doctrine given in the writings of his disciples and their pupils (on these sources, see the article on Luria) are basically similar, but they vary in emphasis and in the speculative interpretations they give to the significance of the main acts of creation. It may indeed be said that with Isaac Luria a new period of kabbalistic speculation was inaugurated which must be distinguished from earlier Kabbalah in all respects.

This new Kabbalah was based on three main doctrines, which determined its character: *zimzum*: "the breaking of the vessels"; and *tikkun*.

ZIMZUM ("contraction"). The basic source of this doctrine is found in an early fragment from the circle of the *Sefer ha-Iyyun* (a preface to a commentary on "the 32 paths of wisdom" in the Florence Ms.) which speaks of an act of divine contraction that preceded emanations: "How did He produce and create this world? Like a man who gathers in and contracts (*mezamzem*) his breath [Shem Tov b. Shem Tov has, "and contracts Himself"], so that the smaller might contain the larger, so He contracted His light into a hand's breadth, according to His own measure, and the world was left in darkness, and in that darkness He cut

boulders and hewed rocks." Here the reference is to the creation of *Keter*, which was thought to evolve from an act of contraction that left room for that darkness which alone was *Keter*. This was also in fact Nahmanides' view in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah*, but not until Luria was the idea elevated to a basic cosmological principle.

The main originality of this Lurianic doctrine lay in the notion that the first act of *Ein-Sof* was not one of revelation and emanation, but, on the contrary, was one of concealment and limitation. The symbols employed here indicate an extremely naturalistic point of departure for understanding the beginning of creation and their very audacity made them highly problematic. Not surprisingly, therefore, important points of Luria's doctrine, which was preserved in its original wording in Luria's own literary remains and in Joseph ibn Tabul's version, were either obliterated (as in Vital's *Ez Hayyim*) or completely suppressed (as in *Kanfei Yonah* by R. Moses Jonah). The starting point of this theory is the idea that the very essence of *Ein-Sof* leaves no space whatsoever for creation, for it is impossible to imagine an area which is not already God, since this would constitute a limitation of His infinity. (This problem was not a source of concern to either the Zohar or Cordovero.) Consequently, an act of creation is possible only through "the entry of God into Himself," that is, through an act of *zimzum* whereby He contracts Himself and so makes it possible for something which is not *Ein-Sof* to exist. Some part of the Godhead, therefore, retreats and leaves room, so to speak, for the creative processes to come into play. Such a retreat must precede any emanation.

Unlike the midrashic use of the word (*mezamzem*), which speaks of God contracting Himself into the Holy of Holies in the abode of the cherubs, kabbalistic contraction has quite the reverse significance: it is not the concentration of God's power in a place, but its removal from a place. The place from which He retreats is merely "a point" in comparison with His infinity, but it comprises from our point of view all levels of existence, both spiritual and corporeal. This place is primordial space, and it is called *tehiru*, a term taken from the Zohar (I, 15a). Luria also answers the question of how this *zimzum* actually took place. Before *zimzum* all the forces of God were stored within His infinite Self and equitably balanced without any separation between them. Hence, even the forces of *Din* ("judgment") were stored there but were not distinguishable as such. When the primal intention to create came into being, *Ein-Sof* gathered together the roots of *Din*, which had been previously concealed within him, into one place, from which the power of mercy had departed. In this way the power of *Din* became concentrated. *Zimzum* therefore was an act of judgment and self-limitation, and the process thus initiated was intended to continue by means of a progressive extraction and catharsis of the power of *Din* that was left in primordial space, where it was intermingled in a confused fashion with the remnants of the light of *Ein-Sof* that had remained behind even after *zimzum*, like the drops of oil that remain in a vessel after it has been emptied. This residue was called *reshimu*. Into this inchoate mixture, which is the hylic aspect of the future universe, there descends from the primordial, space-encompassing *Ein-Sof* a *yod*, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, which contains a "cosmic measure" or *kav ha-middah*, that is, the power of formation and organization. This power may be seen as belonging to the attribute of mercy (*Rahamim*).

Creation, therefore, is conceived of as a double activity of the emanating *Ein-Sof* following on *zimzum*: the Emanator acts both as a receptive substratum in the light of the *reshimu*, and as a form-giving force which descends from the essence of *Ein-Sof* to bring order and structure to

the original confusion. Thus, both the subject and object of the process of creation have their origin in God but were differentiated from each other in the *zimzum*. This process is expressed in the creation of "vessels" (*kelim*) in which the divine essence that remained in primordial space is precipitated out: at first this takes place still hylically, in the vessel called "primordial air" (*avir kadmon*), but subsequently it assumes a clearer form in the vessel called "primordial man" (*Adam Kadmon*) that is created by a raising and lowering of the "cosmic measure," which serves as a permanent connection between *Ein-Sof* and the primordial space of *zimzum*.

This version of the doctrine of *zimzum* was obscured to a great extent by Vital, although occasional allusions to it remain scattered here and there in his works. At the beginning of his *Ez Hayyim*, however, there is a much simpler account. Without mentioning either the gathering out of the roots of *Din* or the *reshimu*, he describes a process whereby as a result of the act of divine contraction an empty vacuum was formed in the midst of *Ein-Sof*, into which emanated a ray of light that filled this space with ten *Sefirot*. Since the *zimzum* took place equally on all sides, the resulting vacuum was circular or spherical in shape. The light which entered it in a straight line after the *zimzum* has, therefore, two aspects from the start: it arranges itself both in concentric circles and in a unilinear structure, which is the form of "the primordial man that preceded every first thing." The form of a circle and of a man are henceforth the two directions in which every created thing develops. Just as the first movement in creation was in reality composed of two movements—the ascent of *Ein-Sof* into the depths of itself and its partial descent into the space of *zimzum*—so this double rhythm is a necessarily recurring feature of every stage in the universal process. This process works through the double beat of the alternately expanding movement of *Ein-Sof* and its desire to return to itself, *hitpashtut* ("egression") and *histalkut* ("regression"), as the kabbalists call it. Every movement of regression toward the source has something of a new *zimzum* about it. This double-facedness in the process of emanation is typical of the dialectical tendency of Lurianic Kabbalah. Every stage in the development of the emanating light has not only a circular and linear aspect but also the modes of both an "inner light" within the vessels that are produced and a "surrounding light," as well as the modes of *azmut ve-kelim* ("substance and vessels"), and "direct light and reflected light," that are taken from the teachings of Cordovero. Luria's special interest in the structure of the spiritual worlds and their emergence through dialectical processes is also expressed in the distinction he makes between the structural "totality" (*kelalut*) of the forces of emanation and the structural "individuality" (*peratut*) of each, that is, the isolated articulation in itself of each such power that is active in a given overall structure.

Our earliest sources for the doctrine of *zimzum* clearly show that Luria did not differentiate between the substance of *Ein-Sof* and its light, in both of which *zimzum* occurred. Such a distinction was made only when problems arose concerning the harmonization of this doctrine with the idea of God's immutability. This desire for consistency had two consequences: (1) a differentiation between the substance of *Ein-Sof* and its light (i.e., its will), which made it possible to argue that the *zimzum* occurred only in the latter and not in its "possessor"; and (2) the insistence that the concept of *zimzum* was not to be taken literally, being only figurative and based on a human perspective. These two beliefs were particularly stressed in the school of Israel Sarug, whose teachings on the subject were based on a combination of Ibn Tabul's redaction of Lurianic doctrine with that of

Moses Jonah in his *Kanfei Yonah*, which makes no mention of *zimzum* but speaks only of an emanation of one primal point comprising all the *Sefirot* without going into the details of how the latter came into being. To this Sarug added original ideas of his own which had a great influence on later Kabbalah; a summary of them can be found in his book *Limmudei Azilut*. According to him, the *zimzum* was preceded by processes of a more internal nature within *Ein-Sof* itself. In the beginning *Ein-Sof* took pleasure in its own autarchic self-sufficiency, and this "pleasure" produced a kind of "shaking" which was the movement of *Ein-Sof* within itself. Next, this movement "from itself to itself" aroused the root of *Din*, which was still indistinguishably combined with *Rahamim*. As a result of this "shaking," "primordial points" were "engraved" in the power of *Din*, thus becoming the first forms to leave their markings in the essence of *Ein-Sof*. The contours of this "engraving" were those of the primordial space, that was to come into being as the end-product of this process. As the light of *Ein-Sof* outside this "engraving" acted upon the points within it, the latter were activated from their potential state and the primordial Torah, the ideal world woven in the substance of *Ein-Sof* itself, was born. This Torah, the linguistic movement of *Ein-Sof* within itself, is called a *malbush* ("garment"), though in fact it is inseparable from the divine substance and is woven within it "like the grasshopper whose clothing is part of itself," to use the language of the Midrash. Sarug described the structure of this "garment" in great detail. Its length was made up of the alphabets of the *Sefer Yezirah* and had 231 "gates" (i.e., possible combinations of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the progression אב, ג, ד, ה, ו, ז, ח, ט, י, etc.), which form the architecture of divine thought. Its breadth was composed of an elaboration of the Tetragrammaton according to the numerical value of the four possible spellings of the fully written names of its letters, viz., the "name" 45 (י, ד, ה, א, י, א, ה, א), the "name" 52 (ו, ה, ה, ו, ה, ה), the "name" 72 (ו, ה, ה, ו, ה, ה), and the "name" 63 (ו, ה, ה, ו, ה, ה), which were the "threads" of the "weave" that were originally situated in the hem of the garment. This primordial Torah contained potentially all that could possibly be revealed through the Torah to be given on earth. In effect, it was a kabbalistic version of the Platonic world of ideas. The size of this garment was twice the area necessary for the creation of all the worlds. After it had been woven, it was folded in two: half of it ascended and its letters stood behind the letters of the other half. The "names" 45 and 52 were arranged behind the "names" 72 and 63, and consequently the last *yod* of the "name" 63 was left without a partner in the folded garment. This folding constituted a contraction (*zimzum*) of the garment to half its area, and with the removal of half of it from its previous place, something was created in *Ein-Sof* that no longer partook of its substance. All that remained in this primordial square was the unmatched *yod*, which now assumed the dynamic task of transferring the light of *Ein-Sof*, which spread in circles, to the area produced by the act of *zimzum*, as in the version of Ibn Tabul. The empty area created by the folding of the garment is not an actual vacuum but is merely deprived of the garment or of the light of its substance. Yet the hidden law of the whole of creation that is inscribed within the "engraving" of *Ein-Sof* is henceforward active and expresses itself throughout all subsequent processes through the power invested in this one intruding *yod*. Made manifest in the vacated space are both the residue (*reshimu*) of the remaining light of its essence and some of the light of *Ein-Sof* itself, which acts as the soul that sustains all and without which all would return to *Ein-Sof* as before. This soul too contracts to a point, which is none

other than the *anima mundi* of the philosophers. Moreover, the various movements of the *zimzum*, and the ascents and descents of this *yod*, produce still other points in space that constitute the primordial "world of points" (*olam ha-nekudot*), which at this stage still has no definite structure and in which the divine lights exist in an atomized state. According to Sarug, not one but many contractions occur in the place of the *reshimu*, and even more so thereafter. Elsewhere he states that there are two kinds of *reshimu*, one of the divine substance and one of the folded garment, and that only the second is articulated in the world of the points. Only upon the return of the *yod*, which ascends to *Ein-Sof* and re-descends from it, is that supernal light created in the primordial space which is known as the *tehiru* or primal matter of every being.

The dialectical confusion apparent in Sarug's presentations bears witness to the uncertainty and excitement caused by the new idea of the *zimzum*. The importance of the power of *Din* in those acts which led to its embodiment in primal matter is obliterated to a much greater extent in Sarug's presentation than in that of Ibn Tabul, though it does not disappear altogether. The contradiction inherent in the opposing conceptions of the vacated primordial space, now as a square and now a sphere created by the activity of the emanating *yod*, posed an additional problem in Sarug's work that was not found elsewhere and that had no consistent solution. In any case, extreme naturalistic descriptions in these accounts were qualified by the stress laid on their symbolic character.

One of the most interesting of the further speculative attempts to explain the theories of *zimzum*, which continued to be made for more than 200 years, is the daring interpretation of Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz in his *Shefa Tal*. Horowitz tried to revise the doctrine of *zimzum* once again and to regard it as merely a symbolic account of the emanation of the *Sefirah Keter*. Following Sarug's presentation, although without mentioning the *malbush* ("garment"), he attempted to equate the different stages in *zimzum* with what he considered to be the parallel stages in the emanation of *Keter* in Cordovero's teachings. The emergence of the *tehiru* was no longer produced by the *zimzum* itself but by the emanation of the light of *Ein-Sof* from within the essence of *Ein-Sof* itself. Only within this emanated *tehiru* did a contraction take place of the light of *Ein-Sof*, a residue of which mingled with some of the emanated substance to form the *reshimu*. Thus, the soul came into being as a supernal point in the *Sefirah Keter*. This transformation of the *zimzum* into a second divine act following an original act of emanation made the doctrine once more compatible with Cordovero, who had also acknowledged the existence of a *zimzum* within the chain of emanations, in which the power of the Creator became inevitably restricted in a progressive manner. Thus, Horowitz' interpretation removed the paradoxical thrust which was inherent in the doctrine of *zimzum* from its very conception.

From the 17th century onward kabbalistic opinion was divided on the doctrine of *zimzum*. Was it to be taken literally? Or was it to be understood symbolically as an occurrence in the depths of the Divine, which the human mind could only describe in figurative language? The question was a bone of contention in the many arguments that took place between the kabbalists and the more philosophically inclined who found kabbalistic speculation distasteful, for all that the concept of *zimzum* was in fact very close to ideas that later developed in modern idealist philosophies, such as those of Schelling and Whitehead. As a result of the exposition of the doctrine given by the author of *Emek ha-Melekh*, many kabbalists were inclined to take

the *zimzum* literally, a view that became especially popular among the Shabbateans, whose entire creed made a non-literal interpretation impossible. This position was clearly expressed in the writings of Nathan of Gaza and Nehemiah Hayon. It was Hayon's determined defense of the literalist interpretation, in fact, that prompted Joseph Ergas to stress even more keenly Abraham Herrera's view that the *zimzum* doctrine was symbolic. This dispute, which was also bound up with the anthropomorphic doctrine of the Shabbateans in general, broke out in 1714 and was summed up by Ergas in his *Shomer Emunim* (1736), which is our main source for that fundamental reinterpretation that restored Lurianic doctrine to its Cordoveroan starting-point. By then the Shabbatean side of the argument was no longer a factor, so that the literalist position was defended again, even in the camp of the orthodox kabbalists, whose chief spokesman was Immanuel Hai Ricchi in his *Yosher Levav* (1737). Ergas' system, on the other hand, was expanded in the *Amud ha-Avodah* by Baruch Kosover (written about 1763, but not printed until 1854). Ergas greatly influenced Hasidic literature, especially the Habad teachings of Shneur Zalman of Lyady and his pupil Aaron ha-Levi of Staroselye, who devoted a profound dialectical discussion to the subject in his *Avodat ha-Levi*. In his *Tanya* Shneur Zalman maintained that the Gaon of Vilna mistakenly took *zimzum* literally, but it is an open question if he was justified in interpreting the Gaon's teachings in this way. Aaron ha-Levi's system is based on the premise of a double *zimzum*. The first *zimzum*, also called *beki'ah* ("piercing"), is a contraction in the substance of *Ein-Sof* which renders possible the appearance of the Infinite in general and which is completely beyond our understanding. It leads to a revelation of the light of *Ein-Sof*, but it is so unfathomable that there is not the slightest mention of it in Hayyim Vital's *Ez Hayyim*. It is only after this *beki'ah*, which is conceived of as a "leap" from absolute *Ein-Sof* to relative *Ein-Sof*, that the second contraction occurs, whereby the Infinite light of *Ein-Sof* is made to appear finite. In fact, however, the finite has no existence at all and is made possible only through the emission of a line or a ray from the Infinite. The cathartic concept of *zimzum* mentioned above was developed independently in the writings of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, who believed the crux of *zimzum* to lie in the fact that the Creator "overcomes, as it were, His innate law of goodness in creation, so that His creatures should not be made perfect, even seen from their own point of view, let alone seen from that of God." The metaphysical root of evil is inherent in the very privation that the act of *zimzum* involves, and the whole development of created beings depends on their being given an opportunity to perfect themselves according to their merits and to separate the power of evil from the power of good.

In sum, we can say that those kabbalists who wrote with one eye on the philosophers tended to stress the non-literal nature of *zimzum*, whereas those kabbalists who had little use for Aristotelian philosophy to begin with presented the doctrine literally and unadorned. Nor should we overlook the close connection in the view of many kabbalists between *zimzum* and the existence of the hylic matter which served as the basis for creation as a whole. Even Hayyim Vital himself defined the Infinite as the Nothing, which became manifest in *Keter* only through *zimzum*, the hylic matter in the whole of creation (*Ez Hayyim*, ch. 42, para. 1). Others connected the existence of the *hyle* with the *reshimu*, the primordial space, or the primordial air which was made manifest through *zimzum*. A special discussion of the subject occurs in Eliakim b. Abraham Hart's *Zuf Novelot* (London, 1799), summarizing the far longer elaboration in *Novelot Hokhmah* by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1631).

THE BREAKING OF THE VESSELS. The point in *Ein-Sof* that was vacated in the act of *zimzum* was subsequently filled with a proliferation of worlds and ontological events, each one of which tends in Lurianic Kabbalah to become the subject of a description whose complexity verges on the extreme. Moreover, these descriptions themselves vary widely in the different redactions of Ibn Tabul, Moses Jonah, and Hayyim Vital, and highly contradictory versions of them can even be found in several of Vital's own works. Israel Sarug's attempts to make a unified whole out of this confusion only added still further to it. Nevertheless, in each of these many presentations the same broad outlines appear. Isaac Luria's main preoccupation, it would appear, was to trace the further development of the vessels that received the light of emanation which shone into the primordial space after the act of *zimzum*. In the actual emergence of these vessels a part was played both by the lights that were located in the *tehiru* after the *zimzum* and by the new lights that entered with the ray. The purpose of this process was the selecting out of the forces of *Din* that had collected, a catharsis that could have been attained either by eliminating these forces from the system entirely or else by integrating them within it by first "softening" and purifying them—two conflicting approaches which we frequently encounter side by side. In either case, however, in order to further those processes that were a necessary prelude to the complex hierarchy of creation, a progressive differentiation was called for in the vessels themselves, without which the emanating streams would have been unable to regulate themselves and function properly. To this end, the various conjunctions of the first emanating lights as they collided with each other resulted in the creation of the vessels, which "crystallized out," as it were, from certain modes that these lights contained.

All the Lurianic redactions agree that the ray of light that comes from *Ein-Sof* in order to organize the *reshimu* and the forces of *Din* that have filled the primordial space functions in two opposing fashions which inform all the developments in this space from beginning to end. These are the two aspects of "circle and line" (*iggul ve-yosher*). Practically speaking, a point can expand evenly in one of two ways, circularly or linearly, and herein is expressed a basic duality that runs through the process of creation. The more harmonious of the two forms, which partakes of the perfection of *Ein-Sof*, is the circle; the latter conforms naturally to the spherical space of the *zimzum*, while the straight ray of light goes forth to seek its ultimate structure in the form of man, who represents the ideal aspect of *yosher* ("straightness"). Thus, while the circle is the natural form, the line is the willed form that is directed toward the figure of man. Moreover, because the line of light comes directly from *Ein-Sof*, it is of a higher degree than the circle, whose shape is a reflection of the *zimzum*. The former, according to Isaac Luria, comprehends the principle of the *ru'ah*, the latter the principle of the *nefesh* or natural perfection. Essentially, this doctrine is a restatement of the Pythagorean geometrical symbolism that dominated natural philosophy until the 17th century. Every act of emanation, therefore, contains these two aspects, and should one be missing various disruptions or unexpected developments will take place. All purposeful, teleological movements are basically those of the line, while to the circle belong all processes dominated by natural, immanent necessity.

The first form that emanation assumes after the *zimzum* is that of the *Adam Kadmon* ("primordial man"), which in the Lurianic system stands for a realm above the four worlds of *azilut*, *beri'ah*, *yezirah*, and *asiyyah* with which pre-Lurianic Kabbalah began. Isaac Luria did, it is true, seek to support this belief with a number of citations from

the Zohar and the *Tikkunim*, but in fact it represented a completely new departure. Though he and his disciples maintained that many of the processes that take place in the *Adam Kadmon* are mysteries beyond human knowledge, they nevertheless discussed in great detail the manner in which the forces of emanation were organized after the *zimzum* in this form. Throughout their treatment of this figure and of the supernal lights that radiated from it, the double dialectical movement mentioned above remains dominant. Thus, the ten *Sefirot* first took shape in the *Adam Kadmon* in the form of concentric circles, of which the outermost, the circle of *Keter*, remained in close contact with the surrounding *Ein-Sof*. This was the *nefesh* of the *Adam Kadmon*. Next the ten *Sefirot* rearranged themselves as a line, in the form of a man and his limbs, though of course this must be understood in the purely spiritual sense of the incorporeal supernal lights. This was the *ru'ah* of the *Adam Kadmon*. The higher aspects of the *nefesh*, known as *neshamah*, *hayyah*, and *yehidah*, are also rooted in the upper *Sefirot* in their linear configurations. All of these lights possess vessels which are still so subtle and "pure" that they can hardly be considered vessels at all. The promotion of the *Adam Kadmon* to the rank of the first being to emerge after the *zimzum* accounts for the strong anthropomorphic coloring that accompanies all descriptions of the process of emanation in the Lurianic system. The *Adam Kadmon* serves as a kind of intermediary link between *Ein-Sof*, the light of whose substance continues to be active in him, and the hierarchy of worlds still to come. In comparison with the latter, indeed, the *Adam Kadmon* himself could well be, and sometimes was, called *Ein-Sof*.

From the head of the *Adam Kadmon* tremendous lights shone forth and aligned themselves in rich and complex patterns. Some assumed the form of letters while others took on still other aspects of the Torah or the Holy Tongue, such as the cantillations (*te'amim*), the vowel points, or the scribal affixes (*tagim*), which too are components of Holy Writ. Thus, two essentially different symbolisms—that of light, and that of language and writing—are here joined. Every constellation of light has its particular linguistic expression, though the latter is not directed toward the lower worlds but rather inward toward its own hidden being. These lights combine to form "names" whose concealed potencies become active and are made manifest through concealed "configurations" (*millu'im*) where each letter is fully written out by name in the alphabet. This primordial world from the lights of *Adam Kadmon's* forehead, which issued from the spot where the phylactery-of-the-head is laid. The lights issuing from the *Adam Kadmon's* ears, nose, and mouth, however, expanded linearly only, nor did their *Sefirot* have special vessels, since they were at first joined together in a common vessel in accord with the "collectivity" that was their structural nature. Vital called this sphere *olam ha-akudim*, meaning a world where the *Sefirot* were not yet differentiated (lit. bound together). The function assigned to these lights in the drama of creation was never clearly defined. The lights of the eyes, on the other hand, were differentiated into every *Sefirah*. In theory these lights should have issued from the navel, but the place of their appearance was deflected by a medium acting within the *Adam Kadmon* and referred to as *parsa* (apparently a reference to the diaphragm). This displacement is described as the result of another *zimzum* within the lights themselves. Having changed their path, these lights issued from the eyes both linearly and circularly, and each of their *Sefirot* commanded a vessel of its own. Vital calls these separated lights "the world of dots" (*olam ha-nikuddim*), but in other Lurianic writings they are grouped together with the light of the *tehiru* and

referred to as "the world of points" (*olam ha-nekuddot*) or "the world of chaos," (*olam ha-tohu*)—the latter because at this stage the lights of the *Sefirot* had not yet attained a stable structural arrangement. All the lights of these *Sefirot* were given vessels, themselves made of thicker light, in which to arrange themselves and function.

At this point, however, there occurred what is known in Lurianic Kabbalah as "the breaking of the vessels" or "the death of the kings." The vessels assigned to the upper three *Sefirot* managed to contain the light that flowed into them, but the light struck the six *Sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Yesod* all at once and so was too strong to be held by the individual vessels; one after another they broke, the pieces scattering and falling. The vessel of the last *Sefirah*, *Malkhut*, also cracked but not to the same degree. Some of the light that had been in the vessels retraced its path to its source, but the rest was hurled down with the vessels themselves, and from their shards the *kelippot*, the dark forces of the *sitra ahra*, took on substance. These shards are also the source of gross matter. The irresistible pressure of the light in the vessels also caused every rank of worlds to descend from the place that had been assigned to it. The entire world process as we now know it, therefore, is at variance with its originally intended order and position. Nothing, neither the lights nor the vessels, remained in its proper place, and this development—called after a phrase borrowed from the *Idrot* of the Zohar, "the death of the primordial kings"—was nothing less than a cosmic catastrophe. At the same time, the breaking of the vessels, which corresponds to the destruction of the first, unsuccessful worlds in earlier Kabbalah, was not understood in Lurianic writings to be an anarchic or chaotic process; rather, it too took place in accord with certain clear internal laws that were elaborated extensively. Similarly, the emergence of the *kelippot* as the root of evil was described as a process following fixed rules and involving only the shards of those vessels that had been struck by the first sparks of light. These lights remained "captured" among the *kelippot*, which are nourished by them; they, in fact, provide the life-force for the entire world of *kelippot*, which in one degree or another interpenetrated the whole hierarchy of worlds once the vessels had been broken. The broken vessels too, of course, were subjected to the process of *tikkun* or restoration which began immediately after the disaster, but their "dross" was unaffected, and from this waste matter, which can be compared to the necessary by-products of any organic process, the *kelippot*, in their strict sense as the powers of evil, emerged. The catastrophic aspects of the breaking of the vessels were especially stressed in the simplified versions of the story that appeared in popular kabbalistic literature which described the entire process in highly mythical imagery.

Widely differing explanations for the breaking of the vessels were offered in Lurianic writings. Some commentators were content to attribute it to the weak and atomized inner structure of "the world of points," whose isolated, unorganized parts were too unstable to prevent the occurrence. Another explanation was that since the first emanations of the points were all circular rather than partly linear, an inevitable imbalance was created. In some texts it is stated that only the "branches" of the points went forth from *Adam Kadmon* while the "roots" remained within him, and that the former lacked the power by themselves to withstand the pressure of the light. All of these explanations are based on the premise that the unsound structure of the world of points was at fault, and view the breaking of the vessels as a mishap in the existence of the life-process of the Godhead. (See Tishby, *Torat ha-ra ve-ha-kelippah be-kabbalat ha-Ari*, 39–45.) Other explanations which seem to derive from Isaac Luria himself actually seek to justify this



Figure 10. Diagram of *hitnozezut* ("flaring up") of the *Sefirot* in the primordial space, called *tehiru*, after the act of *zimzum*. From Naphtali Bacharach, *Emek ha-Melekh*, Amsterdam, 1648. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

unsound structure by viewing it as a reaction to the roots of *Din* and the *kelippot* that were from the start present in the emanation. According to this view, the main design of the emanative process was to bring about a catharsis of these harsh elements and of the waste matter in the divine system. The presence of the roots of the *kelippot* in the emanation was the true inner reason for the breaking of the vessels. This cathartic explanation is frequently associated with the teleological view that the vessels were broken in order to pave the way for reward and punishment in the lower worlds that were due to emerge as the last phase of the creation. Differently stressed versions of such explications can be found in Moses Jonah, Vital, and Ibn Tabul. The cathartic and teleological explanations represent basically different approaches and well illustrate the tension in Lurianic Kabbalah between mythic and theological modes of thought. Later kabbalists ruled that the teleological explanation was indeed the literally correct one but that the cathartic explanation represented the mystical truth (Meir Bikayam, *Me'orei Or*, 1752, 15c). In the Lurianic school of Israel Sarug an additional, organic analogy was offered: the world of points was like a sown field whose seeds could not bear fruit until they had first split open and rotted.

TIKKUN. The breaking of the vessels marks a dramatic turning-point in the relations between the *Adam Kadmon* and all that develops beneath him. All the subsequent processes of creation come about to restore this primal fault. In its imaginative boldness, the belief that such an event could take place within a realm that, according to all opinions, was still part of the self-manifesting Godhead can

be compared only to the doctrine of the *zimzum* itself. Indeed, it was even suggested that the *zimzum* too represented a kind of primordial "breakage" within *Ein-Sof*. The laws by which the process of cosmic restoration and reintegration (*tikkun*) works itself out constitute the largest part of Lurianic Kabbalah, for they touch on all the realms of creation, including the "anthropological" and "psychological" ones. The details of the doctrine of *tikkun* are extremely complex and seem to have been intentionally designed as a challenge to mystical contemplation. The most crucial element in this doctrine is the concept that the chief medium of *tikkun*, that is, of the restoration of the universe to its original design in the mind of its Creator, is the light that issued from *Adam Kadmon's* forehead to reorganize the disorderly confusion that resulted from the breaking of the vessels. The main support of these lights comes from the linear *Sefirot* of "the world of points," which did not undergo any breakage and henceforward have the task of encouraging the formation of balanced and stable structures in the future realms of creation. These new structures are called *parzufim*, that is, configurations or *gestalten*, and each comprises an organic pattern of hierarchies of *Sefirot* with its own dynamic laws.

These *parzufim* (literally, "faces" or "physiognomies") now take the place of the *Sefirot* as the principal manifestations of *Adam Kadmon*. In each of them newly emanated forces are bonded together with others that were damaged in the breaking of the vessels; thus, each *parzuf* represents a specific stage in the process of catharsis and reconstruction. The *Sefirah Keter* is now re-formed as the

אלה הם עשר
ספירות של עיגול
קדוש המיוחד
מטיבם בעיגול
וסתשמים גם כן
באלכסון נקודת
המרכז המצעי
ובהם החתיל אחר
כך אין סוף לקבץ
הנקודה האמצעית
בכל עשר חלקיו
מקורבים יחד ולא
חיתה ניכרת כל א'
וזהו כפרטיות
ואחר כך שלח א"ס
חיו"ר הנזכרת
לחוציה חלק
הפרטים של העשר
ספירות כל אחד
ואחד כפרטיותו
ומהם נעשו אחר
כך עשר כפריות
של עולם התווה
כמו שאבאר א"ה
כמי' בשער שיבוא
באחר זה :

parzuf of *Arieh Anpin* (literally, "the long-faced one," i.e., "the indulgent one" or "forbearing one," a phrase borrowed from the Zohar, where it appears as an Aramaic translation of the biblical *erekh-appayin*, "long-suffering"), or *Attika* ("the ancient one"), which are sometimes treated as two separate aspects of the same *parzuf*. The *Sefirot Hokhmah* and *Binah* now become the *parzufim* of *Abba* and *Imma* ("father and mother"), which function in a dual capacity: they exist as a medium for the reindividuation and redifferentiation of all the emanated beings into transmitters and receivers of influx, and they also serve as the supreme archetype for that procreative "coupling" (*zivvug*) which, in its metaphorical aspect of "face-to-face contemplation" (*histakkelut panim-be-fanim*), is the common root of all intellectual and erotic unions. This "coupling" is aroused by the reascent of the 288 sparks that had been in the broken vessels and returned to the bowels of *Binah*, where they play the role of animating and quickening forces within a structure whose function is primarily receptive. Without such assisting forces, which are referred to as "female waters" (*mayim nukbin*), there can be neither "coupling" nor unification even in the world of *azilut*. From the union of *Abba* and *Imma* a new *parzuf* is born, known as *Ze'ir Anpin* (literally, "the short-faced one," i.e., "the impatient" or "unindulgent one"), which is comprised of the six lower *Sefirot*, from *Gevurah* to *Yesod*. Here we have the center for the cathartic processes that take place in all the *parzufim* in order to mitigate the harsh powers of *Din*; their ultimate success depends on a long, almost endless series of developments. The self-manifestation of *Ein-Sof* in the created worlds takes place largely through this *parzuf*, which undergoes an embryonic development in the depths of *Imma*, followed by "birth," "suckling," and the progressive emergence of the formative powers known as "immaturity" (*katnut*) and "maturity" (*gadlut*). The latter in turn are reinvigorated through a second "conception" by means of new powers that join them from other *parzufim*. The structural unity of *Ze'ir Anpin* is assured by the workings of a principle called *zelem* ("image," after the verse in Gen. 1:27), which involves the activity of certain lights that help serve as a constituent element in all the *parzufim* but are especially centered in *Ze'ir Anpin*. The last and tenth *Sefirah*, *Malkhut*, is also converted into a *parzuf*, which is named *Nukba de-Ze'ir*, "the female of *Ze'ir*," and represents the latter's complementary feminine aspect. The main source of this boldly anthropomorphic symbolism is in the *Idrot* of the Zohar, but in its development in the Lurianic Kabbalah it took a radical turn. Isaac Luria himself undoubtedly viewed the *parzufim* as power centers through which the creative dynamism of the Godhead was able to function and assume form. The various names, configurations, and sub-configurations that accompany these symbolic descriptions were probably intended to mute this almost provocatively conspicuous anthropomorphism to some extent. Over and above the five *parzufim* just mentioned, whose inner dialectic is extensively explained in Hayyim Vital's *Ez Hayyim*, there are still other, secondary *parzufim* that constitute the articulation of certain powers in the *Ze'ir Anpin* and its feminine *Nukba*, such as *Yisrael Sava*, *Tevunah*, *Rahel*, and *Leah*. Indeed, in Isaac Luria's richly associative thought, practically every biblical personage was immediately transformed into a metaphysical figure from which sprang new hypostases and *parzufim*. An outstanding example of this tendency can be found in chapter 32 of the *Ez Hayyim*, where all that happened to the "generation of the desert" is construed as representing processes in the *parzufim* of the three upper *Sefirot* of the *Ze'ir Anpin* and its female counterpart.

The five principal *parzufim* of *Abba*, *Imma*, *Arieh Anpin*,

Ze'ir Anpin, and *Nukba de-Ze'ir* constitute the figure of the *Adam Kadmon* as it evolves in the first stages of *tikkun*, which is quite different from the figure of *Adam Kadmon* that existed before the breaking of the vessels. These *parzufim* also comprise "the world of balance" (*olam ha-matkela*), which is identical with the world of *azilut* of earlier Kabbalah. From this world, though not its substance, an influx of spiritual light descends downward to the lower worlds of *beri'ah*, *yezirah*, and *asiyyah*. At the bottom of each world is a "curtain" which serves to filter out the sefirotic substance that properly corresponds to the nature of that world and to let all else pass on through a secondary reflex which in turn becomes the substance of a subsequent stage. The basic structure of the world of *azilut* repeats itself with certain modifications in the three lower worlds. The *tikkun*, however, has not yet been completed. As a result of the breaking of the vessels, none of the worlds is located in its proper place. Each one of them stands a rank lower than it should be, the original place of the world beneath it. In consequence, the world of *asiyyah*, which in essence is also a spiritual world (like the Ideal Nature of the neoplatonists), has descended and commingled with the lowest part of the realm of the *kelippot* and with the physical matter that is dominant there.

The main concern of Lurianic Kabbalah, as has been mentioned, is with the details of the process of *tikkun* and the developments that take place in the *parzufim* of the different worlds, in the "adam of *azilut*," the "adam of *beri'ah*," etc. (Over three-quarters of the *Ez Hayyim* is devoted to this subject.) The crucial point in the various Lurianic discussions of these developments is that although the *tikkun* of the broken vessels has almost been completed by the supernal lights and the processes stemming from their activity, certain concluding actions have been reserved for man. These are the ultimate aim of creation, and the completion of *tikkun*, which is synonymous with the redemption, depends on man's performing them. Herein lies the close connection between the doctrine of *tikkun* and the religious and contemplative activity of man, which must struggle with and overcome not only the historic exile of the Jewish people but also the mystic exile of the *Shekhinah*, which was caused by the breaking of the vessels.

The object of this human activity, which is designed to complete the world of *tikkun*, is the restoration of the world of *asiyyah* to its spiritual place, its complete separation from the world of the *kelippot*, and the achievement of a permanent, blissful state of communion between every creature and God which the *kelippot* will be unable to disrupt or prevent. Of crucial importance here is the Lurianic distinction between the inward and outward aspects of the supernal lights and the worlds of creation themselves: the *tikkun* of the outward aspects of the worlds is not up to man at all, whose mission is solely concerned with certain aspects of inwardness. In the Lurianic system the hierarchical rank of the inward is always lower than that of the outward, but precisely because of this it is within reach of the truly spiritual, inward individual, to some extent at least. Should the latter perform his task properly, the "female waters" that enable the supernal couplings to take place will be aroused, and the work of outward *tikkun* will be completed by the supernal lights that have remained concealed in the *parzuf* of *Attika* and are due to reveal themselves only at some future time. At the very least, human activity in accordance with the Torah can prepare the way for the *tikkun* of the lower worlds.

The Gnostic character of this cosmogony cannot be denied, though the detailed manner in which it is worked out is drawn entirely from internal Jewish sources. Typically Gnostic, for example, are the depiction of the

creation as a cosmic drama centered around a profoundly fateful crisis within the inner workings of the Godhead itself, and the search for a path of cosmic restoration, of a purging of the evil from the good, wherein man is assigned a central role. The fact that such an unrecognized Gnostic theology was able to dominate the mainstream of Jewish religious thought for a period of at least two centuries must surely be considered one of the greatest paradoxes in the entire history of Judaism. At the same time, side by side with this Gnostic outlook, we find a most astonishing tendency to a mode of contemplative thought that can be called "dialectic" in the strictest sense of the term as used by Hegel. This tendency is especially prominent in attempts to present formal explanations of such doctrines as that of the *zimzum*, the breaking of the vessels, or the formation of the *parzufim*.

In addition to the Lurianic texts mentioned above, the basic tenets of Lurianic Kabbalah are systematically and originally presented in the following works: *Ma'amar Adam de-Azilut* by Moses Praeger, in his *Va-Yakhel Moshe* (Dessau, 1699); Joseph Solomon Delmedigo's *Novelot Hokhmah* (Basle, actually Hanau, 1631); *Kelah* [138] *Pithei Hokhmah* by Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Koretz, 1785); Jacob Meir Spielmann's *Tal Orot* (Lvov, 1876-83); Isaac Eisik Haver's (see Wildman) *Pithei She'arim* (1888); Solomon Eliashov's *Leshem Shevo ve-Ahlamah* (1912-48); and Judah Leib Ashlag's *Talmud Eser ha-Sefirot* (1955-67). Well-known expositions of Lurianic Kabbalah by Abraham Herrera and Joseph Ergas were greatly influenced by their tendency to reconcile or at least to correlate the Lurianic system with the teachings of Cordovero, as can be seen in Ergas' allegorization of the Lurianic doctrine of *zimzum*.

The Kabbalah and Pantheism. The question of whether, and to what degree, the Kabbalah leads to pantheistic conclusions has occupied many of its investigators from the appearance in 1699 of J. G. Wachter's study attempting to show that the pantheistic system of Spinoza derived from kabbalistic sources, particularly from the writings of Abraham Herrera. Much depends here, of course, on the definition of a concept which has been employed in widely different meanings. A teaching can be considered pantheistic when it insists that "God is everything" and that "everything is God," yet we must distinguish between occasional formulas which have this kind of pantheistic coloring and the exact place assigned them within the framework of a systematic theology. Such formulas are found extensively in Christian and Muslim mysticism as well, yet their actual content does not always conform to their outward pantheistic appearance. This is equally true of many similar utterances in kabbalistic literature, especially those which occur in expositions of kabbalistic thought deliberately intended for popular consumption, as in a great deal of hasidic writing. On the other hand, the opposite phenomenon may occur as well, and here and there we find explicitly theistic formulas that belie their inner pantheistic or near-pantheistic content. All depends on the internal context of a given system of thought. Apparent theistic tendencies can serve to conceal actually pantheistic views, while general formulas can more often than not be variously interpreted and do not therefore prove a great deal. Examples of this are Azriel's pronouncement that "nothing is outside" *Ein-Sof*, Meir ibn Gabbai's declaration that "everything is in Him and He is in everything," or the recurring insistence in the Zohar that God "is everything" and that everything is unified in Him, "as is known to the mystics" (2, 85b). Such statements can also be found in orthodox theistic systems of thought, where they serve to underline the belief that nothing could exist without a first, divine cause and that the latter, since it

is the cause of all, includes and comprehends within itself whatever it has caused. In this respect God can be said to be present and immanent in all that He has caused, and were He to discontinue His presence all caused existence would thereby be annihilated. The neoplatonic principle that every effect is included in its cause greatly influenced such formulations in the Kabbalah without casting them in a necessarily pantheistic mold.

Strictly speaking, however, the problem of pantheism does occur in connection with a number of specific questions that greatly preoccupied kabbalistic speculation and to which pantheistic doctrines were at least able to offer unambiguous answers. Such questions were: (1) Is there a unity of substance between the Emanator and the emanated? Does the actual substance of God go forth into all or only the radiated potency of that substance? (2) If there is a unity of substance between *Ein-Sof* and the *Sefirot*, is there also such a unity between *Ein-Sof* and created beings? (3) Is God the soul of the world or identical with the world? (4) Does God exist in created beings (or, in the language of the philosophers, is He immanent in them), or even in them alone? Wherever we find positive answers to these questions there is good reason to assume that we are dealing with pantheism, and wherever we do not, we can assume the converse.

The majority of kabbalists from Isaac the Blind on rejected the notion that God's substance manifests itself in the world of emanation and insisted, as did most medieval neoplatonists, that God's power alone, as opposed to his substance, goes forth in the emanative process. Some of the earliest kabbalists, however, in particular the author of the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, did believe the emanated *Sefirot* to be of one substance with the emanating *Ein-Sof*. Only in the realms below the *Sefirot*, they held, was the divine potency alone active as the cause of beings that were separate from the Godhead. On the whole, we find that this school of thought had clearly theistic tendencies. Isaac b. Samuel Mar Hayyim (1491) distinguished between an "emanation of essence," which is the beaming forth of the *Sefirot* within the substance of *Ein-Sof*, and an "emanation of influx," which is the potency of the Emanator as it manifests itself in accordance with the receptive capacity of the given medium. Those kabbalists who identified *Ein-Sof* with the *Sefirah Keter* were obliged to consider the *Sefirot* as consubstantial with *Ein-Sof*. Yet those who held this view also explicitly denied that there could be any oneness of substance between God and the separate intellects, much less between God and other created beings. Such, for instance, was the opinion of Joseph Gikatilla in his commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Even he, however, did not restrain himself from declaring that "He fills all and He is all." Many other kabbalists, on the other hand, denied the consubstantiality of God with the emanated world, in which they professed to see only His emanating potency. In carrying on the thought of Cordovero (see below), the disciples of his school emphasized the separate substance of the emanated as opposed to the substance of the Emanator whose "garment" the former was.

The author of the Zohar was not especially concerned with this problem and was content to dispose of it with conceptually vague formulations which were open to conflicting interpretations, but in Moses de Leon's Hebrew works there is a more discernible tendency to stress the unity of all beings in a continuous chain of being. There are no qualitative jumps in the links of this chain, and God's true essence is "above and below, in heaven and on earth, and there is no existence besides Him" (*Sefer ha-Rimmon*). In the theophany at Mount Sinai God revealed all the worlds to the children of Israel, who saw that there was

nothing in them that was not His manifest glory and essence. Implied here is the suggestion that every being has a secondary existence of its own apart from the Godhead but that this disappears before the penetrating gaze of the mystic which uncovers the unity of essence behind it. The pantheistic tendencies in this line of thought are cloaked in theistic figures of speech, a device characteristic of a number of kabbalists. On the one hand such writers describe *Ein-Sof* in personalistic terms and stress its absolute transcendence over everything, even the *Sefirot*, which have no apprehension of it, while on the other hand they make much of its "clothing itself" in the latter, and through them in the lower worlds as well. There is also a certain ambiguity in their double interpretation of the *creatio ex nihilo*, sometimes insisting that it be taken literally, which would of course rule out any pantheistic approach, and sometimes explaining it symbolically, rejecting a simple literalism in order to leave the door open to the possibility that all being has its place, at least partially, in the divine reality. The true nothingness from which all was created manifests itself in the transition from *Ein-Sof* to the first *Sefirah*, nor is there in reality any jump or discontinuity in the structure of being. The creation from nothingness is a manifestation of the divine wisdom where human thought reaches its limit, or of that nothingness which is the first emanation, *Keter*. In those systems where *Ein-Sof* was identified with the *Keter*, it was *Ein-Sof* itself that became the Divine Nothingness in which all has its source. Such views left room for the belief that God, who is one with *Ein-Sof*, comprehends much more than what proceeds from Him in the emanative and creative processes but that He encompasses the latter within Himself as well. All is comprehended within the Godhead but not everything is identical with it. In the early 19th century the term "pantheism" was coined to distinguish such a view from pure pantheism. There is no doubt that the term could apply to a number of well-known kabbalists, who were able to argue—with some measure of justice—that a similar position is already implied in the statement in the Midrash (Gen. R. 68) that "The Holy One blessed be He is the place of the world but the world is not His place." The pantheist view offered a clear compromise between pure theism and pure pantheism and left room for a personalistic depiction of the Godhead.

It is evident, therefore, that while not a single kabbalist school of thought ever claimed that God has no existence apart from created beings, the position most commonly held was that He was nevertheless to be found within them in variously definable ways. Hence, too, the neoplatonic assertion frequently encountered in kabbalistic literature that God is "the soul of souls," a claim which is not entirely free of pantheistic nuances although it lends itself to other interpretations as well. This phrase was already favored by the Zohar, but it must be observed that "soul" (*neshamah*) in its precise sense often does not imply in such writings an actual inherence in or existence contingent on the body but rather a higher mode of being. The *neshamah* proper does not descend to the lower worlds at all but radiates downward to the mode that we call man's "soul." Such, for instance, was the opinion of Isaac Luria. Other kabbalists, on the other hand, especially Moses de Leon, considered the human soul "a part of God above" (Job 31:2), not just in a figurative sense, as it was generally understood to be, but quite literally. Thus, their thought was based on the assumption that there is something in the soul consubstantial with God. It was this same assumption that led Moses de Leon in his *Mishkan ha-Edut* (see *Midrash Talpiot* (1860), 113c) to challenge the view that the punishment of the souls of the damned in hell is eternal, for how is it possible that

God should inflict such suffering on Himself? This opinion is also indirectly hinted at in the Zohar, where it is stated that that highest part of the soul (*nefesh*) that is called *neshamah* is incapable of sinning and departs from the sinner at the moment that a sin is committed. Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz was in agreement with this view and conceded only a quantitative distinction between the soul and the substance of God, a position that, because of its pantheistic implications, was challenged, especially by Manasseh Ben Israel in his *Nishmat Hayyim* (1652).

In contrast to the main part of the Zohar, its later strata (the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkunim*) have a markedly theistic flavor. Here too, however, it is especially stressed that if God stands apart from the world He is also within it ("He is outside as much as He is inside"), and that He "fills all and causes all" without this immanence precluding a personalistic and theistic view of Him. Such formulations in the Zohar became extremely popular among later kabbalists and in the writings of Hasidism, where they were used to bridge theistic and pantheistic opinions abounding in these texts. Kabbalistic works written between 1300 and 1500 tended on the whole to obscure the problem, as can be seen in the writings of the disciples of Solomon b. Adret and in the *Sefer ha-Peliah*. Similarly, popular kabbalistic texts written at the time of the expulsion from Spain show a marked preference for decidedly theistic formulations (Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi, Judah Hayyat, Abraham b. Solomon Arduziel), which in rare cases only conceal a different content between the lines.

A detailed discussion of the problematics of pantheism can be found in the writings of Cordovero, whose own pantheistic outlook was more carefully worked out than that of any other kabbalist, especially in his *Sefer Elimah* and *Shi'ur Komah*. His presentation of the question is extremely subtle and has nothing in common with that "Spinozist" approach which, in its more vulgar sense, a number of authors have sought to attribute to him. Cordovero understood full well that the salient point of the whole theory of emanation was the transition from *Ein-Sof* to the *Sefirah Keter* and he devoted great effort to its solution. The *Sefirot*, he argues, owe the source of their existence to *Ein-Sof*, but this existence is "hidden" in the same sense that the spark of fire is hidden in the rock until it is struck with metal. Moreover, this aspect of their existence is incomparably more rarified than their existence once they have been emanated to their respective places, for in their emanated existence they assume a totally new guise. Even in their ultimate, "hidden" mode of existence, however, when they are comprehended in the substance of *Ein-Sof* and united with it perfectly, they are nevertheless not truly identical with this substance, which apprehends them while remaining unapprehended by them. This being the case, should it be said that the first change in their ontological status takes place in their hidden existence or not until their manifest one? Cordovero avoided giving an unequivocal answer to this question, while at the same time developing the theory that even the highest aspects of the *Keter*, which he called "the *Keter* of the *Keter*," "the *Keter* of the *Keter* of the *Keter*," and so forth, approach the substance of *Ein-Sof* asymptotically until the human intellect can no longer distinguish them. Nevertheless they retain an identity distinct from it, so that there is a kind of leap between *Ein-Sof* and their hidden existence within it that continually approaches to infinity. The existence of these inward stages is considered by Cordovero to represent an entirely new departure within the Godhead, and the coming into being of this hidden existence, or "Will of Wills" as he calls it, is what constitutes the act of creation from nothingness in its literal sense. The initial awakening of the Divine Will in this

chain of wills (*re'utin*) is, he argues, the one occasion on which true creation from nothingness takes place, a view whose paradoxical nature testifies to the manner in which he felt torn between the theistic and the pantheistic approach. From the divine point of view God comprehends all, inasmuch as He encompasses the "wills" both by virtue of being their cause and of embracing them in His essence, but from the human point of view all of these subsequent stages comprise a secondary reality existing separately from *Ein-Sof* and contingent on it, so that they cannot possibly share a true identity with the substance of the Emanator. Even at the highest levels this substance clothes itself in "vessels" which are by their very nature secondary and preceded by a state of privation (*he'eder*).

In all of these processes, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the substance of the Emanator, which clothes itself in vessels, and the substance of the emanated. Though this distinction is somewhat obscured in the *Pardes Rimmonim*, it is emphasized in the *Sefer Elimah*, where Cordovero asserts that while in the act of emanation the divine substance goes forth into vessels, these vessels (*kelim*) or garments (*levushim*) assume an increasingly less refined existence as the process continues downward. And yet behind these infinite garments there is not a single link in the chain where the substance of *Ein-Sof* does not remain present and immanent. Even from the viewpoint of the human condition it is potentially possible to contemplatively "undress" these garments and reveal "the processions of the substance" (*tahalukhei ha-ezem*) which clothe themselves in them. Such a moment of revelation is the supreme happiness to which the mystic can attain in his lifetime. Yet again, this immanence of *Ein-Sof* in everything is not identical with the specific existence of the vessels: "The products of causation as they descend do not share one substance with their cause but rather . . . are diminished from their cause as they descend until the lowest [level of] existence." Only as they reascend toward their cause are they reunified with it, until they reach the Supreme Cause of all, which is the *Keter*, where there is no longer any distinction between the agent and the products of its action, for they adhere to it as far as is in any way possible and are truly united to *Ein-Sof*, "where there is no cause or caused but everything is cause" (*Elimah*, 18c). The single most definitive statement in Cordovero's treatment of the problem can be classed as pantheistic: "God is all that exists, but not all that exists is God" (*Elimah*, 24d). To be sure, this reascent toward first causes must be taken as applying to the culminating process of all creation in its return to the bosom of the Emanator rather than to the mystical experience of the individual. Moreover, in many passages Cordovero further dilutes the concept by warning against misunderstanding: the caused beings themselves will not be reabsorbed into the substance of *Ein-Sof* but only their "spirituality" once their separate garments have been cast off. What has been forever sundered from the Godhead cannot be redeified.

Lurianic Kabbalah tended on the whole to avoid even the pantheistic formulations of Cordovero and to adopt an openly theistic position. The doctrine of the *zimzum*, by stressing the discontinuity between *Ein-Sof* and the world of emanation, heightened this proclivity even more. Granting even that something of the divine substance goes forth into the *Adam Kadmon* and even into the *parzufim* that emanate from him, clothing itself in them, this process comes to a definite end with the emanated *Sefirot* in the first world of *azilut*. Beneath them stretches a "curtain" which prevents the divine substance from finding garments for itself in the worlds of *beri'ah*, *yezirah*, and *asiyyah* as well. Of course it is possible to speak of a radiation of *Ein-Sof* into all the

worlds, *asiyyah* included, but not of its substance being immanent in them. On the other hand, though such theistic arguments dominate most of the writings of Hayyim Vital and Ibn Tabul, even here there are occasional statements that are closer to Cordovero's position. Indeed, the doctrine that every higher principle "clothes itself" in a lower one, which in the final analysis is a doctrine of divine immanence, was sometimes carried to extremes. Above all the kabbalist was expected to understand "how all the worlds share a single mode of being as garments of *Ein-Sof*, so that *Ein-Sof* clothes itself in them and surrounds [*sovev*] them and nothing goes beyond it. Everything can be seen under one aspect and all the worlds are bound to the Emanator," although caution decrees that "it would be inadvisable to reveal more of this matter" (*Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, Hakdamah 4). Others, such as Ibn Tabul, emphasized that only God's "inner light" (*ha-or ha-penimi*) was filtered out by the "curtains," whereas His "comprehensive light" (*ha-or ha-mekif*) was not curtailed off at all. Inasmuch as the latter comprises the main part of the divine substance that goes forth into the world of emanation, a door was here opened once again for a return to the pantheistic views of Cordovero.

Whether the light of *Ein-Sof* that goes forth into the vacuum of the *zimzum* and clothes itself in vessels can be considered part of the Godhead even though it does not partake of the latter's substance remained an open question which most Lurianic kabbalists emphatically answered in the affirmative. The Lurianists held that without question the world of *azilut* with its inner dynamic processes belonged to the Godhead. Nevertheless, many of them denied that there was a unity of substance between the manifestations of the Godhead in *azilut* and the substantive properties of *Ein-Sof*. Even the highest circle of the *Sefirot* of the *Adam Kadmon*, they argued, was closer to the lowliest worm than to *Ein-Sof*. Such analogies bear witness to a continual equivocation between two inherently conflicting points of view. One radical solution to this ambivalence was the strict theistic doctrine of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, who insisted that *azilut* could be called a "world" (*olam*) in the figurative sense only, because in it the Godhead manifested itself directly, whereas all the other worlds were created by a free act of God from literal nothingness. No statement to the effect that these lower worlds had evolved or developed out of the world of *azilut* was to be taken literally, for at most it could mean that they had been patterned after *azilut*. "We must not think that there can be any bond [*hitkashrut*] between what is created and the Creator." It would appear that Luzzatto had an especially firm grasp of the built-in contradiction between the doctrine of emanation and that of a paradigmatic creation, in the clash between which lay the crux of the problem of pantheism in the Kabbalah. Generally speaking, most kabbalistic texts that were written for the benefit of a wider audience, such as Hayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah*, were theistic on the surface, sometimes concealing beneath it the germs of a different, essentially pantheistic interpretation. These germs, such as the Lurianic doctrines of the creative ray, the residue or *reshimu*, the primordial space of the *zimzum*, the unity of the chain of being, and so forth, nourished pantheistic tendencies which subsequently came to the fore once more in a number of the classic texts of Hasidism.

Man and His Soul (Psychology and Anthropology of the Kabbalah). Over and above disagreements on specific details that tend to reflect different stages in the Kabbalah's historical development, there exists a basic consensus among kabbalists on man's essential nature. The fundamental doctrine of a hidden life of the Godhead which through

a dynamism of its own determines the life of creation as a whole had inevitable implications as regards the human condition, in which the same theosophic process, though with certain significant differences, was thought to repeat itself. At opposite poles, both man and God encompass within their being the entire cosmos. However, whereas God contains all by virtue of being its Creator and Initiator in whom everything is rooted and all potency is hidden, man's role is to complete this process by being the agent through whom all the powers of creation are fully activated and made manifest. What exists seminally in God unfolds and develops in man. The key formulations of this outlook can already be found in the Kabbalah of Gerona and in the Zohar. Man is the perfecting agent in the structure of the cosmos; like all the other created beings, only even more so, he is composed of all ten *Sefirot* and "of all spiritual things," that is, of the supernal principles that constitute the attributes of the Godhead. If the forces of the *Sefirot* are reflected in him, he is also the "transformer" who through his own life and deeds amplifies these forces to their highest level of manifestation and redirects them to their original source. To use the neoplatonic formula, the process of creation involves the departure of all from the One and its return to the One, and the crucial turning-point in this cycle takes place within man, at the moment he begins to develop an awareness of his own true essence and yearns to retrace the path from the multiplicity of his nature to the Oneness from which he originated. The essential correspondence or parallelism between the inward aspects of man, God, and creation introduces a mutual interplay among them that was frequently dramatized in the Kabbalah by means of anthropomorphic symbols, though the latter are nearly always accompanied by warnings that they are only to be understood "as if." If the *Sefirot* in which God reveals Himself assume the form of man, making him a microcosm in himself—a doctrine which found universal acceptance among the kabbalists—then man on earth is obviously capable of exerting an influence upon the macrocosm and upon primordial man above. Indeed it is this which bestows on him the enormous importance that the kabbalists went to great lengths to describe. Because he and he alone has been granted the gift of free will, it lies in his power to either advance or disrupt through his actions the unity of what takes place in the upper and lower worlds. His essence is unfathomably profound; he is "a face within a face, an existence within an existence, and a form within a form" (Ezra of Gerona). Even man's physical structure corresponds to that of the *Sefirot*, so that we find Ezra of Gerona's description of the last *Sefirah* as "the form [*temunah*] that includes all forms" applied in the Zohar to man himself, who is called "the likeness [*deyokna*] that includes all likenesses." Such speculations about man's essence were most pithily expressed in various statements about Adam before his fall. Though his original harmony was disrupted by his sin, his principal mission remained to bring about a *tikkun* or restoration of this world and to connect the lower with the upper, thereby "crowning" creation by setting the Creator upon His throne and perfecting His reign over all His handiwork.

Man's essence has a spiritual nature for which his body serves only as an outer cloak. One widespread belief was that prior to Adam's sin his body too was spiritual, a kind of ethereal garment which became corporealized only after his fall. (In support of this view, the statement in Gen. 3:21 that God made "garments of skin," *kotnot 'or*, for Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden, was taken as meaning that previously they had worn "garments of light," *kotnot 'or*.) Had it not been for Adam's sin, the supreme divine will would have continued to work unfragmentedly

in Adam and Eve and all their descendants, and all of creation would have functioned in perfect harmony, transmitting the divine influx downward from above and upward from below, so that there would have been no separation between the Creator and His creation that adhered to Him. This uninterrupted communion, which is the goal of creation, was broken off at the time of Adam's sin when his lower will was parted from the divine will by his own free volition. It was then that his individuality, whose origin lay in his separation from God with its attendant proliferation of multiplicity, was born. What had been intended to be nothing more than a series of periodic fluctuations within a single harmonic system now turned into an opposition of extremes that found their expression in the fierce polarization of good and evil. It is the concrete destiny of the human race, and of the Jew as the principal bearer of this mission and the recipient of God's revelation through the Torah, to overcome this polarization from within the human condition created by the first sin.

It is at this point that the problem of man in the world and the problem of evil in the world are interlaced. The sin which gave evil an active existence lies in mankind's failure to achieve his primal purpose, a failure which occurred again and again in history. It is the function of good in the world, whose tools are the Torah and its commandments, to bridge the abyss of separation that was formed by man's sin and to restore all existence to its original harmony and unity. The final goal, in other words, is the reunification of the divine and the human wills. It is likely that this kabbalistic doctrine of the corruption of the world through man's first sin originated as a result of direct contact with Christian beliefs, although it is also possible that these Christian ideas were derived from the same sources from which homologous *aggadot* in the Midrash took their inspiration. There can be no doubt that the kabbalists accepted the doctrine that the entire creation was fundamentally flawed by man's sin, after which the *sitra ahra* or "other side" achieved a dominion over man which will not be finally abolished until the ultimate redemption in which all things will revert to their original state. The crucial Christian element, however, is lacking here, for unlike the Christian dogma of original sin, the Kabbalah does not reject the idea that every man has the power to overcome this state of corruption, to the extent that he too is affected by it, by means of his own powers and with the help of divine aid prior to and independently of the final redemption. Speculations of this sort concerning the essence of sin as a disruption of the primordial order of things, the effects of which as it were reach up to and include the world of the *Sefirot* themselves, and concerning the means to achieve a *tikkun* whereby creation will be restored to its former grandeur, assumed a central place in the kabbalistic doctrine of man. This teaching developed out of purely religious motifs that only incidentally became motivated in the course of time with certain psychological motifs as well. Judah Halevi's metaphor in the *Kuzari* of Israel constituting the heart of the nations was taken over by the author of the Zohar and the kabbalists of Gerona, who spoke of the Jewish people as being "the heart of the cosmic tree" [*lev ha-ilan*], a symbol borrowed from the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. Within this basic context, a fuller understanding of Israel's mission depends on the kabbalistic teachings on the structure of man's soul.

The kabbalists adopted the psychological doctrines of neoplatonism and tried to adapt them to the language of Jewish tradition. The Zohar occasionally mentions the three faculties or dispositions of a unified human soul as they are spoken of in the philosophy of Aristotle, but

generally the Zohar refers to three essentially different parts of the soul that form a sequence from lower to higher and are designated by the Hebrew terms *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah*. True, here too a unity was posited among these parts, but for the most part it remained problematic. The *nefesh* or first element is to be found in every man, for it enters him at the moment of birth and is the source of his animal vitality (*hiyyut*) and of the totality of his psycho-physical functions. Whatever is necessary for the well-being of these functions is already contained in it and it is equally the property of all human beings. The two other parts of the soul, on the other hand, are postnatal increments that are found only in the man who has awakened spiritually and made a special effort to develop his intellectual powers and religious sensibilities. The *ru'ah* or *anima* is aroused at an unspecified time when a man succeeds in rising above his purely vitalistic side. But it is the highest of the three parts of the soul, the *neshamah* or *spiritus*, which is the most important of all. It is aroused in a man when he occupies himself with the Torah and its commandments, and it opens his higher powers of apprehension, especially his ability to mystically apprehend the Godhead and the secrets of the universe. Thus, it is the intuitive power that connects mankind with its Creator. It is only in the most general terms, however, that this tripartite division was adopted by all the various kabbalistic schools of thought. The terminology indeed remains the same, but the meanings and interpretations assigned to it differ widely in detail.

The fundamental division of the soul into three parts and the use of the terms *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah* (*naran* in the kabbalistic acronym) to describe them came from such Jewish neoplatonists as Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham bar Hiyya, but in the course of the Kabbalah's development in the 13th century the philosophical content of these categories became considerably blurred and yielded to occultistic associations under whose influence the strictly defined concepts of neoplatonic psychology took on fantastic and mythic dimensions. This process can be clearly traced in the classic texts of early Kabbalah. Already for the kabbalists of Gerona, though they still retained the original identification of the *neshamah* with the rational soul of the philosophers, the rational faculty of the soul was merged with the intuitive and mystic. Only the *neshamah*, they held, which was like a divine spark in man, was emanated directly from the Godhead itself rather than evolved from the separate intellects like the *ru'ah* or from the four elements like the *nefesh*. There is still an echo here of the philosophical division of the soul into its animal or vital, vegetative, and rational faculties and of the association of the soul's origin with the world of the intellects, and particularly of the active intellect, as in the philosophy of Isaac Israeli. Within this system man's *nefesh* is still a common denominator between him and the animal world, while only the rational *neshamah*, whose origin is in the world of the *Sefirot*, and more precisely in the *Sefirah Binah*, truly deserves to be called the human soul, for it is a divine spark, one that was created from nothingness, to be sure, but from a nothingness that belongs nonetheless to the realm of the Godhead itself. Some of the kabbalists of Gerona even held that the source of the *neshamah* was in the *Sefirah* of Divine Wisdom or *Hokhmah*, a difference of opinion which bore on the question of the heights to which man's mystical cognition could attain.

The different strata of the Zohar reflect the varying psychological doctrines toward which its author leaned at different times. In the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* there is still a clear debt to the psychology of the school of Maimonides with its doctrine of the "acquired intellect" which is activated in man through his pursuit of the Torah and its

commandments and which alone has the power to bestow on him immortality of the soul. Together with this, however, we find the characteristic Aristotelian division of the soul, though minus the identification with the *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah*, and in connection with a number of functions that are peculiar to Moses de Leon alone. Thus, for instance, we find a distinction between the "speaking soul" (*ha-nefesh ha-medabberet*) and the "rational soul" (*ha-nefesh ha-sikhilit*), the latter alone possessing the supernal power which can bring man to perfection and which is identical with the true soul or *neshamah*. In effect the faculty called *nefesh* embraces all three forces, the animal, the vegetative, and the cognitive (*medabber*), which comprise the psycho-physical totality of man. The *neshamah*, in contrast, is a power concerned exclusively with mystical cognition, while the *ru'ah* represents an intermediate stage that involves the ethical power to distinguish between good and evil. The *neshamah* itself, on the other hand, by virtue of being "a part of God above," is capable of performing good only. It is impossible to speak here of a consistent approach: purely religious motifs alternate freely with philosophical ones, a confusion that extends to the relationship between intellectual awareness and the *neshamah* itself. In some instances the author, who expresses his views through the mouths of various rabbinic sages, even abandons the tripartite division of the soul entirely in favor of a twofold distinction between the vital soul (*ha-nefesh ha-hayyah*) and the *neshamah*. In the main corpus of the Zohar these divergent opinions are consolidated into a unified position of sorts in which religious motifs predominate over traditional philosophical and psychological ones. Here a fundamental contradiction emerges between the belief that the soul is universally the same for all mankind and another, double standard according to which the soul of the Jew and the soul of the gentile are dissimilar. The kabbalists of Gerona knew only of the former doctrine, that is, of the soul that is universally shared by all the descendants of Adam, and it is in the main body of the Zohar that we read for the first time of a twofold though corresponding division of souls into non-Jewish and Jewish. The first group has its source in the "other side" or *sitra ahra*, the second in the "holy side" or *sitra di-kedusha*. Interest in the Zohar is almost entirely confined to the psychic structure of the Jew. In the later Kabbalah, particularly in the works of Hayyim Vital, this duality between the "divine soul" (*ha-nefesh ah-elohut*) and the "natural soul" (*ha-nefesh ha-tiv'it*) is given enormous emphasis.

An important problem for the Kabbalah was the different sources of the different parts of the soul in the different worlds of emanation. According to the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* even the highest *neshamah* emanates only from the Throne of Glory, that is, from a realm beneath that of the *Sefirot* though above that of the intellects. It is thus considered to be something created, though a creation of the highest order. In the main corpus of the Zohar this view is abandoned and each part of the soul is assigned a root in the world of the *Sefirot*: the *nefesh* originates in the *Sefirah Malkhut*, the *ru'ah* in the *Sefirah Tiferet*, and the *neshamah* in the *Sefirah Binah*. The descent of the supernal *neshamah* is brought about by the "holy union" of the "king" (*melekh*) and the "queen" (*matronita*), who are synonymous with the *Sefirot Tiferet* (or *Yesod*) and *Malkhut*. In its root every soul is a composite of male and female, and only in the course of their descent do the souls separate into masculine souls and feminine souls. The symbolism used to describe the descent of the souls from the world of emanation has a strongly mythical flavor. Especially prominent are the symbols of the tree of souls on which

each soul blooms, and of the river which carries the souls downward from their supernal source. In both symbolisms the *Sefirah Yesod* is considered to be a halfway station through which all the souls must pass before entering the "treasure-house of souls" (*ozar ha-neshamot*), which is located in the celestial paradise (*gan-eden shel ma'lah*), where they live in bliss until they are called to descend still further and assume a human form. Many differences in detail exist among the various accounts of this process, but all the kabbalists agree as to the preexistence of the soul, especially in the latter's more strictly defined sense. Undisputed too is the belief that the soul originates on a plane higher than that of the angels, a doctrine that is referred to repeatedly in discussions of the human condition, for if man is capable of plunging to indescribable depths of depravity, he also has the capacity, when he fulfills his true destiny, of rising even above the angelic realm. No angel has that potential power to restore the worlds to a state of *tikkun* which has been granted to man.

In addition to the three parts of the soul that were collectively referred to by the acronym *naran*, kabbalists after the Zohar came to speak of two more additional, higher parts of the soul which they called *hayyah* and *yehidah* and which were considered to represent the sublimest levels of intuitive apprehension and to be within the grasp only of a few chosen individuals. In Lurianic Kabbalah these five parts of the soul (*naran-hai* in acronym) became associated with the five *parzufim* of *Adam Kadmon* in each of the worlds of *azilut*, *beri'ah*, *yezirah*, and *asiyyah*, so that a tremendous multiplicity of potential soul-ranks was created in accordance with the particular world of emanation and *parzuf* from which a given soul stemmed. The soul having its source in the *yehidah* of the *Sefirah Keter* of the world of *azilut* was believed to be that of the Messiah. Unlike the masses of souls which are subject to the general laws of transmigration, such high-ranking souls were thought to remain concealed among the supernal lights until their time arrived and not to enter the cycle of reincarnation at all.

From the Zohar and through the works of the disciples of Isaac Luria mention is made of an aspect of man that is referred to in the Kabbalah as the *zelem* (the "image," on the basis of Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness") and which is not identical with any of the parts of the soul referred to above. The *zelem* is the principle of individuality with which every single human being is endowed, the spiritual configuration or essence that is unique to him and to him alone. Two notions are combined in this concept, one relating to the idea of human individuation and the other to man's ethereal garment or ethereal body which serves as an intermediary between his material body and his soul. Because of their spiritual nature, the *neshamah* and *nefesh* are unable to form a direct bond with the body, and it is the *zelem* which serves as the "catalyst" between them. It is also the garment with which the souls clothe themselves in the celestial paradise before descending to the lower world and which they don once again after their reascent following physical death; during their sojourn on earth it is hidden within man's psycho-physical system and is discernible only to the intellectual eye of the kabbalist. The source of this belief is undoubtedly the similar doctrine held by the later neoplatonists concerning the ethereal body that exists in every man and that reveals itself to the mystical experience of those endowed with the gift of vision. Unlike the soul, the *zelem* grows and develops in accordance with the biological processes of its possessor. The kabbalists made use of a play on words to draw a parallel between a man's *zelem* and his shadow (*zel*). The Zohar apparently considers the shadow

to be a projection of the inner *zelem*; a belief that brought with it various popular magical superstitions that were widespread in Europe during the Middle Ages. Supposedly the *zelem* was the repository of the years a man lived and it departed with the approach of his death. According to another view, the *zelem* was woven as a garment for the soul from a man's good deeds and served as a kind of supernal appearance that protected and clothed him after his death. An ancient belief concerning such an ethereal body, whose source lies in Persian religion and which reached the author of the Zohar through later legends to become associated in his mind with various occultist ideas, was that the *zelem* was actually a man's true self. In Lurianic Kabbalah the *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah* were each assigned a *zelem* of their own which made it possible for them to function in the human body. Without the *zelem* the soul would burn the body up with its fierce radiance.

Moses de Leon, in his Hebrew writings, connects Maimonides' teaching that man's mission in this world is the full realization of his intellectual power with the doctrines of the Kabbalah. In his *Ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah* (1290), De Leon writes: "The purpose of the soul in entering the body is to exhibit its powers and abilities in the world . . . And when it descends to this world, it receives power and influx to guide this vile world and to undergo a *tikkun* above and below, for it is of high rank, [being] composed of all things, and were it not composed in a mystic manner of what is above and below, it would not be complete . . . And when it is in this world, it perfects itself and completes itself from this lower world . . . And then it is in a state of perfection, which was not the case in the beginning before its descent."

According to an even earlier belief, which is already present in the *heikhalot* literature, all the souls are initially woven into a curtain (*pargod*) that hangs before the Throne of Glory, and this symbol of "the curtain of souls" was both adopted and adapted by a number of classic kabbalistic texts. The entire past history and future destiny of each single soul is recorded in this curtain. The *pargod* is not just a mystical fabric composed of spiritual ether which contains or is capable of receiving a record of each man's life and works; it is in addition the abode of all those souls that have returned from below to their native land. The souls of the wicked will find no place in it.

The kabbalistic doctrine of man and his soul dealt at great length with such eschatological problems as the fate of the soul after death, and its ascent up a river of fire, which resembles a kind of purgatory, to the terrestrial paradise and from there to the still sublimer pleasures of the celestial paradise and the realm referred to by the early kabbalists as "eternal life" (*zeror ha-hayyim*), which is sometimes synonymous with the celestial paradise and sometimes taken to refer to one of the *Sefirot* themselves, to which the soul returns to partake of the life of the Godhead. Human life on earth, therefore, must be seen in the broad context of the soul's life before birth and after death; hence the great interest of the Kabbalah in descriptions of heaven and hell such as those that we find in extensive and imaginative detail in the works of the kabbalists of Gerona or the Zohar, which inaugurated a long and influential tradition that flourished especially in the more popularly oriented literature of the Kabbalah until recent generations. Much use was made here of beliefs that were already to be found in the *aggadah*, particularly in a number of small, late Midrashim, and which were reinterpreted in the light of kabbalistic symbolism and embellished with further details. Many obvious parallels exist between such material and similar eschatological motifs in Christianity and Islam. None of these teachings was ever given a definitive or

authoritative form, thus enabling them to preserve a great deal of imaginative freedom in which folkloristic and mystic elements came together. The kabbalists of the 13th century in particular, among them the author of the *Zohar*, were attracted to such speculations and devoted considerable attention to such questions as the garments of the souls in paradise, the nature of their perceptions, the expansion of their consciousness in the apprehension of the divine, and the unification of the highest level of the *neshamah* with God.

Generally speaking, however, the kabbalists were wary about speaking of an actual mystic union of the soul with God and preferred to talk in terms of a spiritual communion (*devekut*) and no more. In his commentary on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Jacob b. Jacob Kohen (1270) speaks of mystic union without defining its nature. Moses de Leon mentions a supreme but temporary condition in which the soul finds itself standing before God in a state of contemplation and ultimate bliss without any garment between it and Him, though as a rule it must don a garment of ether or light even in the celestial paradise. Descriptions of the soul's union with God in terms of a divine nuptial are rare in the Kabbalah, though there are occasional examples, such as commentaries on the Song of Songs interpreting it as a conjugal dialogue between God and the soul. Even here, however, the love that is described is that between a father and daughter rather than of an erotic nature nor is anything said about the dissolution of the soul in the substance of God but merely about its temporary rapture in His presence. Only in the writings and poetry of the kabbalists of Safed is there an obviously strong erotic overtone. Whether later schools of kabbalistic thought tended to the extreme mystical position, such as that found in Habad Hasidism, which holds that the soul loses its selfhood entirely in God, remains open to question. The author of the *Zohar* (2, 253a) writes of the souls passing before God in the "room of love" from which the new souls depart to descend, but not in terms of conjugal imagery. On the contrary, the outcome of this divine "reception" is that God makes the soul swear to fulfill its earthly mission and attain to the "knowledge of the mysteries of the faith" which will purify it for its return to its homeland. By means of its awakening through the Torah and its commandments it gains new strength and helps complete the mystical figure of the *Keneset Yisrael* or Community of Israel, which is one with the *Shekhinah*. Only a few rare souls, such as those of Enoch and Elijah, ever achieve a permanent communion (*devekut*) with God; among the other biblical heroes of righteousness there are infinite degrees and differences of rank. Nor does a single fate await the different parts of the soul after death. The *nefesh* remains for a while in the grave, brooding over the body; the *ru'ah* ascends to the terrestrial paradise in accordance with its merits; and the *neshamah* flies directly back to its native home. Punishment and retribution are the lot of the *nefesh* and *ru'ah* alone. According to Moses de Leon, once in a cosmic jubilee the soul ascends from its communion with the *Shekhinah* to the hidden, celestial paradise in the world of the divine mind, that is, to the *Sefirah Hokhmah*.

The teachings of the Kabbalah concerning the soul are inextricably connected with the doctrine of transmigration, a basic kabbalistic principle that frequently came into conflict with other beliefs, such as that in the reward and punishment that are meted out to man in heaven and hell. (For further details, see *Gilgul*.) In the course of the development of the Kabbalah the idea of transmigration was radically expanded from that of a punishment restricted to certain sins to that of a general law encompassing all the

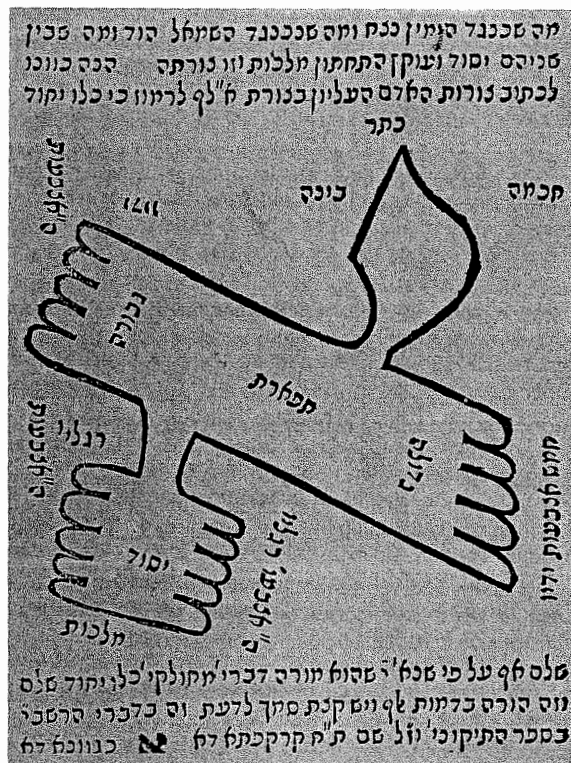


Figure 11. The letter *alef*, representing the harmonic unity of the ten *Sefirot* contained in it. From Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, Cracow, 1592. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

souls of Israel, and, in a later stage, the souls of all human beings and even, in its most radical form, of all creation from the angels to unsentient things. Thus, transmigration ceased to be considered merely a punishment and came also to be viewed as an opportunity for the soul to fulfill its mission and make up for its failures in previous transmigrations.

In comparison with the *Zohar*, the teachings of the Lurianic Kabbalah in regard to man's psychic structure are far more complex, concerning both the source of soul and man's inner make-up. In the works of Hayyim Vital there is also a discrepancy between his presentation of the subject in books meant for popular consumption, such as his *Sha'arei Kedushah*, and in his more esoteric writings. In the former work Vital distinguishes clearly between three "quarries" (*maḥzevīm*): the quarry of the *Sefirot*, which is all divinity, the quarry of the souls, and the quarry of the angels, who are not themselves divine. His explanation of the coming-into-being of the souls through the emanative process in his *Ez Hayyim*, on the other hand, is far more complex and largely parallels his outline of the development of the lights that manifest the divine existence in the worlds of *aẓilut* and *berī'ah*. Just as the supernal lights in the *parzufim* of *aẓilut* develop through conjunctions and "couplings" (*zivvugim*) of the *parzufim*, so are the souls born through corresponding processes. Within the *Sefirah Malkhut* of each *parzuf* are concealed souls in a potential state that ascend to the highest modes of that *parzuf* and are actualized as a result of the "unions" of the *Sefirot*. At the outset these souls exist only in the state of "female waters" (*mayim nukbin*); that is, they are passive potencies that possess the power of active arousal but still lack harmony and form, for their supernal source lies in those 288 sparks of light that fell into the *kelippot* at the time of the breaking of the vessels. Only through additional "couplings" of the

parzuf of *Ze'ir Anpin* with its female counterpart or *nukba* do they receive the actual structure of souls. With each new arousal of the "female waters" in these *parzufim*, new opportunities arise for the creation of souls. Such a process occurs in all four worlds of emanation, the possible variations in modes of souls being practically infinite. Each of these souls recapitulates in miniature the structure of the worlds through which it passed in the process of being created, so that when it descends to enter a body in this world it will be able to work toward the latter's *tikkun* and uplifting and, to some extent, toward the uplifting of the higher worlds as well. On the other hand, a number of Lurianic texts stress the view that in substance the souls as such remain above and do not enter into bodies at all but rather radiate sparks of themselves that can be called souls (*neshamot*) by analogy only. The true soul hovers over a man, whether from near or afar, and maintains an immediate magic tie with its spark below. Popular expositions of these doctrines were always much simpler than their original elucidations, which tended to have a strong Gnostic flavor.

The soul of Adam was composed of all the worlds and was destined to uplift and reintegrate all the sparks of holiness that were left in the *kelippot*. Its garment was of spiritual ether and it contained within it all of the souls of the human race in perfect condition. It had 613 limbs, one for each of the commandments in the Torah, the spiritual aspect of which it was Adam's mission to uplift. Each of these limbs formed a complete *parzuf* in itself known as a "great root" (*shoresh gadol*), which in turn contained 613 or, according to other versions, up to 600,000 "small roots." Each "small root," which was also referred to as a "great soul" (*neshamah gedolah*), concealed within it 600,000 sparks or individual souls. These sparks too were apt to fission still further, but there remained a special affinity and power of attraction between all the sparks that descended from a common root. Each of these sparks formed a complete structure or *komah* in itself. Had Adam fulfilled his mission through the spiritual works of which he was capable, which called for contemplative action and deep meditation, the living chain between God and creation would have been closed and the power of evil, the *kelippah*, would have undergone that complete separation from holiness that, according to Luria, was the aim of the entire creative process. Thus, Adam had within him the fully developed powers of the *Adam Kadmon* in all his *parzufim* and the depth of his fall when he sinned was equal to the great height of his cosmic rank beforehand (see below). Instead of uplifting everything, however, he caused it to fall even further. The world of *asiyyah*, which had previously stood firmly on its own base, was now immersed in the realm of the *kelippot* and subjected to their domination. Where the *Adam Kadmon* had stood a satanic creature now rose up, the *Adam Belyya'al* who gained power over man. As a result of the admixture of the world of *asiyyah* with the *kelippah*, Adam assumed a material body and all his psycho-physical functions were corporealized. Moreover, his soul shattered and its unity was smashed to pieces. In it were elements of high rank known as "upper light" (*zihara ila'ah*) which refused to participate in Adam's sin and departed for above; these will not return to this world again until the time of the redemption. Other souls remained in Adam even after his spiritual stature was diminished from cosmic to mundane dimensions; these were the holy souls that did not fall into the clutches of the *kelippot*, and among them were the souls of Cain and Abel, which entered their bodies through direct hereditary transmission rather than through the process of transmigration. The bulk of the souls that were in Adam, however, fell from him and were

subjugated by the *kelippot*; it is these souls that must achieve their *tikkun* through the cycle of transmigration, stage after stage. In a manner of speaking, Adam's fall when he sinned was a repetition of the catastrophe of the breaking of the vessels. The Lurianic Kabbalah went to great lengths to play up the dramatic elements in Adam's sin and its consequences. The inner history of the Jewish people and the entire world was identified with the recurrent reincarnations through which the heroes of the Bible struggled to achieve *tikkun*. Among these heroes were both "original souls" (*neshamot mekoriyot*), which embraced a great and powerful psychic collectivity and were capable of great powers of *tikkun* whereby the whole world stood to benefit, and other, private souls which could achieve a *tikkun* only for themselves. Souls descending from a single "root" comprised "families" who had special relations of affinity and were especially able to help each other. Now and then, though only very rarely, some of the upper souls that had not even been contained in the soul of Adam might descend to earth in order to take part in some great mission of *tikkun*. A complete innovation in Lurianic Kabbalah was the stress laid on the high rank of the souls of Cain and Abel, and particularly of the former. These two sons of Adam were taken to symbolize the forces of *gevurot* and *hasadim*, that is, the restrictive and outgoing powers of creation. Though the outgoing power of *hesed* is at present greater than the restrictive power of *gevurah* and *din*, this order will be reversed in the state of *tikkun*. Paradoxically, therefore, many of the great figures of Jewish history are represented as stemming from the root of Cain, and as the messianic time approaches, according to Isaac Luria, the number of such souls will increase. Hayyim Vital himself believed that he was of the root of Cain.

The nature of Adam's sin itself was never authoritatively defined in kabbalistic literature and highly differing views of it can be found. The problem of the first sin is closely connected with the problem of evil discussed above. According to the Spanish Kabbalah, the crux of the sin lay in "the cutting of the shoots" (*kizuz ha-netiyyot*), that is, in the separation of one of the *Sefirot* from the others and the making of it an object of a special cult. The *Sefirah* that Adam set apart was *Malkhut*, which he "isolated from the rest." In the *Ma'arekhet Elohut*, nearly all the major sins mentioned in the Bible are defined as different phases of "the cutting of shoots," or as repetitions of Adam's sin which prevented the realization of the unity between the Creator and His creation. Such were the drunkenness of Noah, the building of the Tower of Babel, Moses' sin in the desert, and above all the sin of the golden calf, which destroyed everything that had been accomplished in the great *tikkun* that took place during the theophany at Mount Sinai. In the final analysis, even the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people were the results of misinformed meditations that brought division into the emanated worlds. Such sins wreaked havoc above and below, or, in the symbolism of the Zohar, caused division between the "king" (*melekh*) and the "queen" (*matronita*) or *Shekhinah*. The exile of the *Shekhinah* from her husband was the main metaphysical outcome of these sins. The good deeds of the biblical heroes, on the other hand, especially those of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, came to set this fundamental fault in creation aright and to serve as a paradigm for those who came after. It is noteworthy that the author of the Zohar himself was reticent in his remarks on the nature of Adam's sin. The author of the *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* was less circumspect. Adam's sin, he held, took place above all in the divine mind itself, that is, in the first or second *Sefirah*, from which it caused God's departure; indeed, it was Adam's sin alone that caused God to become

transcendent (*Tikkun* 69). As far as the effect of the first sin is concerned, we find two conflicting lines of thought: (1) Whereas previously good and evil had been mixed together, the sin separated evil out as a distinct reality in its own right (as in Meir ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-Kodesh*); (2) Good and evil were originally separate, but the sin caused them to become mixed together (such was Gikatilla's position, and in general, that of the Lurianic Kabbalah). In the tradition of earlier teachings, such as those in the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* and the *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, Lurianic Kabbalah also occasionally explained the first sin as a "technical" mishap, though one with grave consequences, in the procedure of *tikkun*. This occurred because Adam was in a hurry to complete the *tikkun* before its appointed time, which was to have been on the first Sabbath of creation, starting late on the afternoon of the sixth day. The tendency in such explanations is to emphasize that essentially the greatest biblical sinners meant to do good but erred in their choice of means.

The principal instrument for repairing the primal fault, both in the metaphysical aspect of completing the *tikkun* of the broken vessels and in relation to Adam's sin which disrupted the channels of communication between the lower and upper worlds, is human engagement in holiness through Torah and prayer. This activity consists of deeds, which restore the world in its outward aspects, and of mystical meditations, which affect it inwardly. Both have profound mystical dimensions. In the act of revelation God spoke and continues to speak to man, while in the act of prayer it is man who speaks to God. This dialogue is based on the inner structure of the worlds, on which each human action has an effect of which man himself is not always aware. The actions of the man who is conscious of their significance, however, have the greatest effect and help speed the ultimate *tikkun*. Because the world became corporealized as a result of the first sin, the great majority of the commandments in the Torah acquired a material meaning, because every instrument must be adjusted to the end it is meant to serve. Yet this does not detract from the inward spiritual dimension that each commandment possesses, whose collective purpose is the restoration and perfection of the true stature of man in all 613 of the limbs of his soul. (For further details, see *Reasons for *Commandments*.) The same Torah which prescribes a practical way of life for human beings in the light of revelation simultaneously provides an esoteric guide for the mystic in his struggle to commune with God. Evident in such an approach is the conservative character of the Kabbalah as a factor working to defend and deepen Jewish values. Observance of the Torah was sanctified as the way to abolish division in the world, and every man was called upon to play his part in this task in accordance with the rank of his soul and the role that was allotted him. The spiritual light that shines in every commandment connects the individual with the root of his soul and with the supernal lights in general. Thus, a mission was entrusted to the collective body of the souls of Israel which could not easily be carried out and involved many descents and reascents before all obstacles could be overcome, but which in the final analysis had a clear and urgent purpose: the *tikkun* and redemption of the world.

Exile and Redemption. It therefore follows that the historical exile of the Jewish people also has its spiritual causation in various disturbances and faults in the cosmic harmony for which it serves as a concrete and concentrated symbol. The situation of the spiritual worlds at the time of the exile was completely different from that ideal state in which they were supposed to exist according to the divine plan and in which they will find themselves at the time of

redemption. In one form or another this belief recurs throughout the development of the Kabbalah. The kabbalists of Gerona held that for as long as the exile continues the *Sefirot* do not function normally; as they are withdrawn toward the source of their original emanation, Israel lacks the power to adhere to them truly by means of the Divine Spirit, which has also departed for above. Only through individual effort can the mystic, and he alone, still attain to a state of *devekut*. In some texts we are told that only the five lower *Sefirot* continue to lead an emanated existence below, whereas the upper *Sefirot* remain above. When the Jewish people still lived in its own land, on the other hand, the divine influx descended from above to below and reascended from below to above all the way to the highest *Keter*. The letters of the Tetragrammaton, which contain all the emanated worlds, are never united for the duration of the exile, especially the final *vav* and *he*, which are the *Sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, and which were already parted at the time of Adam's first sin, when the exile in its cosmic sense began. Since then there has been no constant unity between the "king" and "queen," and this will be restored only in the future when the queen, who is the *Shekhinah* and the *Sefirah Malkhut*, reascends to be rejoined with the *Sefirah Tiferet*. Similarly, only in messianic times will man return to that paradisaical state in which "he did of his own nature that which it was right to do, nor was his will divided against itself" (Nahmanides on Deut. 30:6). It was in these same Spanish circles that there first arose the belief in the mystical nature of the Messiah, who was supposedly a harmony of all the levels of creation from the most rarified to the most gross, so that he possessed "a divine power, and an angelic power, and a human power, and a vegetative power, and an animal power" (Azriel in his Epistle to Burgos). The Messiah will be created through the special activity of *Malkhut*, and this origin will serve to elevate his powers of apprehension above those of the angels. The Zohar too takes the position that the crux of the redemption works itself out in the continuing conjunction of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, and that redemption of Israel is one with the redemption of God Himself from His mystic exile. The source of this belief is talmudic and can be found in both the Palestinian Talmud, *Sukkah* 4, 3 and in the *Midrash Va-Yikra Rabbah*, sect. 9, 3: "The salvation of the Holy One blessed be He is the salvation of Israel." At the time of the redemption "all the worlds will be in a single conjunction [*be-zivvug ehad*]," and in the year of the grand jubilee *Malkhut* will be joined not only with *Tiferet* but with *Binah* as well. In the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkunei Zohar* we find the idea that whereas during the period of the exile the world is in thrall to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, in which the realms of good and evil struggle between themselves so that there are both holiness and impurity, permitted acts and forbidden acts, sacred and profane, in the time of the redemption dominion will pass to the Tree of Life and all will be as before Adam's sin. The utopian motifs in the messianic idea are given their ultimate expression in these works and in those composed under their influence. The future abolition of the commandments mentioned in the Talmud (*Nid.* 61b) was taken by the kabbalists to refer to the complete spiritualization of the commandments that would take place under the dominion of the Tree of Life. The details of this vision tended to vary greatly according to the homiletic powers of the particular kabbalist who embraced it.

In Lurianic Kabbalah too the exile of Israel is connected with Adam's sin, the outcome of which was the scattering of the holy sparks, both of the *Shekhinah* and of Adam's soul. When the sparks became diffused even further in Adam's descendants, the mission of gathering them and raising

them up, that is, of preparing the way for redemption, was awarded to Israel. The exile is not, therefore, merely a punishment and a trial but is a mission as well. The Messiah will not come until the good in the universe has been completely winnowed out from the evil, for in Vital's words "the ingathering of the exiles itself means the gathering of all the sparks that were in exile." The exile may be compared to a garden that has been abandoned by its gardener so that weeds have sprung all over it (*Ez Hayyim*, ch. 42, para. 4). The *tikkun* progresses in predetermined stages from one generation to the next and all the transmigrations of souls serve this purpose. As the exile draws to an end, the *tikkun* of the human structure of the *Sefirot* reaches the "feet" (*akevayim*); thus, the souls that go forth in "the footsteps of the Messiah" are unusually obdurate and resistant to *tikkun*, from whence stem the special ordeals that will occur on the eve of the redemption.

Opinions varied as to whether the Messiah's soul too entered the cycle of transmigration: some kabbalists held that his soul had also been incarnated in Adam and in David (according to other views, in Moses as well), while others contended (a view first found in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*) that it was not subject to the law of transmigration. According to the Lurianic Kabbalah, each of the *parzufim* of the *Adam Kadmon* had a female counterpart (*nukba*) except for the *parzuf* of *Arieh Anpin*, which was instrumental in creating the world through a process of autogeny (*zivvug minnei u-vei*), that is, of "coupling" with itself. At the time of the redemption, however, it will be able to "couple" through the pairing of its *Yesod* with its *nukba* (the waxing *Sefirah Malkhut*), and the offspring of this act will be the most hidden root of the soul of the Messiah Son of David, which is its *yehidah*. The descent of this soul depends on the state of *tikkun* prevailing in the different worlds, for in every generation there is one righteous man who has the disposition to receive it if only the age is worthy. The soul of the Messiah Son of Joseph, on the other hand, who is the harbinger of the Messiah Son of David, is part of the regular cycle of transmigration. The redemption will not come all at once but will rather manifest itself in stages, some of which will be inwardly hidden in the spiritual worlds and others of which will be more apparent. The final redemption will come only when not a single spark of holiness is left among the *kelippot*. In the writings of Luria's school different views can be found on whether the Messiah himself has an active role to play in the process of redemption through his unique ability to raise up certain last sparks that are beyond the power of anyone else. This question assumed particular importance in the development of the Shabbatean movement. In the course of the redemption certain hitherto concealed lights from the *parzuf* of *Attika* will manifest themselves and alter the structure of creation. In the final analysis, national and even nationalistic motifs blend with cosmic ones in the Lurianic Kabbalah to form a single great myth of exile and redemption.

The Torah and Its Significance. The role of the Torah in the Kabbalah as an instrument and a way of life in the service of a universal *tikkun* has already been discussed. The central position of the Torah in the Kabbalah, however, goes far beyond such definitions. The kabbalistic attitude to the Pentateuch, and in a somewhat lesser degree to the Bible as a whole, was a natural corollary of the overall kabbalistic belief in the symbolic character of all earthly phenomena. There was literally nothing, the kabbalists held, which in addition to its exterior aspect did not also possess an interior aspect in which there existed a hidden, inner reality on various levels. The kabbalists applied this view of the "transparency" of all things to the Torah as well, but

inasmuch as the latter was the unique product of divine revelation, they also considered it the one object which could be apprehended by man in its absolute state in a world where all other things were relative. Regarded from this point of view in its quality as the direct word of God and thus unparalleled by any other book in the world, the Torah became for the kabbalists the object of an original mystical way of meditation. This is not to say that they sought to deny the concrete, historical events on which it was based, but simply that what interested them most was something quite different, namely, the conducting of a profound inquiry into its absolute nature and character. Only rarely did they discuss the relationship among the three parts of the Bible, the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, and for the most part their attention was concentrated almost exclusively on the Torah in its strict sense of the Five Books of Moses. The Zohar (3, 35a) actually attempts in one place to assert the absolute superiority of these books and their students over the Prophets and the Hagiographa and their students, yet only in the context of commenting on the talmudic statement that "the sage is preferable to the prophet." In his *Ginnat Egoz* (1612, 34dff.), Joseph Gikatilla also sought to attach a kabbalistic interpretation to the tripartite division of the Bible. On the whole, however, where kabbalistic commentaries do exist on the Prophets and the later writings (and especially on the Book of Psalms), their approach to these texts is essentially no different from that of the commentaries on the Torah.

The classic formulations of this approach appear as early as the 13th century, nor do later and bolder restatements of them, even in the Lurianic school, add anything fundamentally new. A large part of the literature of the Kabbalah consists of commentaries on the Pentateuch, the Five Scrolls, and the Book of Psalms, and the Zohar itself was largely written as a commentary on the Pentateuch, Ruth, and the Song of Songs. Books such as the commentaries on the Pentateuch by Menahem Recanati, Baḥya b. Asher, and Menahem Ziyoni became classic kabbalistic texts. Noteworthy too is the fact that there are practically no kabbalistic commentaries to speak of on entire books of the Prophets or on the Book of Job and the Book of Daniel. Only a few, isolated exegeses of fragments of these texts tend to recur regularly in connection with certain mystical interpretations. The only known kabbalistic commentary ever to have been composed on the entire Bible is the 16th-century *Minḥat Yehudah*, written in Morocco, large sections of which have been preserved in various manuscripts. Outside the Pentateuch, the Song of Songs alone was made the subject of a large number of kabbalistic commentaries, beginning with Ezra of Gerona's and continuing down to several written in recent generations.

The main basis of the Kabbalistic attitude toward the Torah is, as was mentioned above, the fundamental kabbalistic belief in the correspondence between creation and revelation. The divine emanation can be described both in terms of symbols drawn from the doctrine of *Sefirot* and of the emanated, supernal lights, and of symbols drawn from the sphere of language and composed of letters and names. In the latter case, the process of creation can be symbolized as the word of God, the development of the fundamentals of divine speech, and as such it is not essentially different from the divine processes articulated in the Torah, the inwardness of which reveals the same supreme laws that determine the hierarchy of creation. In essence, the Torah contains in a concentrated form all that was allowed to develop more expansively in the creation itself. Strictly speaking, the Torah does not so much mean anything specific, though it in fact means many different

things on many different levels, as it articulates a universe of being. God reveals Himself in it as Himself rather than as a medium of communication in the limited human sense. This limited, human meaning of the Torah is only its most external aspect. The true essence of the Torah, on the other hand, is defined in the Kabbalah according to three basic principles: the Torah is the complete mystical name of God; the Torah is a living organism; and the divine speech is infinitely significant, and no finite human speech can ever exhaust it.

THE TORAH AS THE MYSTICAL NAME OF GOD. Underlying this principle is an originally magical belief which was transformed into a mystical one. Such a magical belief in the structure of the Torah can already be found in the *Midrash Tehillim* (on Ps. 3): "Had the chapters of the Torah been given in their correct order, anyone who read them would have been enabled to raise the dead and work miracles; therefore, the Torah's [true] order has been hidden and is known [only] to God." The magical uses of the Torah are discussed in the book *Shimmushei Torah*, which dates at the very latest from the geonic period, and in which it is related that together with the accepted reading of the Torah, Moses received yet another reading composed of Holy Names possessing magical significance. To read the Torah "according to the names" (Nahmanides' introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch) does not, therefore, have any concrete human meaning but rather one that is completely esoteric: far from having to do with historical narrations and commandments, the Torah thus read is solely concerned with concentrations of the divine power in various combinations of the letters of God's Holy Names. From the magical belief that the Torah was composed of God's Holy Names, it was but a short step to the mystical belief that the entire Torah was in fact nothing else than the Great Name of God Himself. In it God expressed His own being insofar as this being pertained to creation and insofar as it was able to manifest itself through creation. Thus, the divine energy chose to articulate itself in the form of the letters of the Torah as they express themselves in God's Name. On the one hand this Name comprises the divine potency; on the other hand it comprehends within it the totality of the concealed laws of creation. Obviously, such an assumption about the Torah did not refer to the physical text written on parchment but rather to the Torah in its pre-existential state in which it served as an instrument of the creation. In this sense, the creation of the Torah itself was simply a recapitulation of the process by which the *Sefirot* and the individual aspects of the Divine Names were emanated from the substance of *Ein-Sof*. Nor is the Torah separate from this substance, for it represents the inner life of God. In its earliest and most hidden existence it is called "the primordial Torah," which is occasionally identified with the *Sefirah Hokhmah*. Thereafter it develops in two manifestations, that of the Written Torah and that of the Oral Torah, which exist mystically in the *Sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, while on earth they exist concretely and are geared to the needs of man.

The relationship between the Torah as the all-comprehensive Name of God and the Ineffable Name or Tetragrammaton was defined by Joseph Gikatilla in his *Sha'arei Orah*: "The entire Torah is like a commentary on the [Ineffable] Name of God." In what way is it essentially an explication of the Ineffable Name? In that it is a single "fabric" woven out of the epithets of God in which the Ineffable Name unfolds. Thus, the Torah is a structure the whole of which is built on one fundamental principle, namely, the Ineffable Name. It can be compared to the mystic body of the Godhead, and God Himself is the soul

of its letters. This view evolved among the kabbalists of Gerona, and can be found in the *Zohar* and in contemporary works.

THE TORAH AS A LIVING ORGANISM. The weaving of the Torah from the Ineffable Name suggests the analogy that the Torah is a living texture, a live body in the formulation of both Azriel of Gerona and the *Zohar*. The Torah "is like an entire building; just as one man has many organs with different functions, so among the different chapters of the Torah some seem important in their outward appearance and some unimportant," yet in actual fact all are bound together in a single organic pattern. Just as man's unified nature is divided up among the various organs of his body, so the living cell of God's Name, which is the subject of revelation, grows into the earthly Torah that men possess. Down to the last, seemingly insignificant detail of the masoretic text, the Torah has been passed on with the understanding that it is a living structure from which not even one letter can be excised without seriously harming the entire body. The Torah is like a human body that has a head, torso, heart, mouth, and so forth, or else it can be compared to the Tree of Life, which has a root, trunk, branches, leaves, bark, and pith, though none is distinct from another in essence and all form a single great unity. (According to Philo of Alexandria, a similar conception of the Torah as a living organism inspired the sect of Therapeutes, as it did to a certain extent his own biblical commentaries, without there of course being any demonstrable historical filiation between such sources and the Kabbalah.) This organic approach was well able to explain the apparent stylistic discrepancies in the Bible, which was part narrative (and sometimes even seemingly superfluous narrative), part law and commandment, part poetry, and part even raw statistic. Behind all these different styles stood the mystic unity of the great Name of God. Such outward appearances were simply the garments of the hidden inwardness that clothed itself in them, and "Woe is he who looks only at the garments!" Connected with this is the view that the Torah is revealed in a different form in each of the worlds of creation, starting with its primordial manifestation as a garment for *Ein-Sof* and ending with the Torah as it is read on earth—a view that was especially promulgated by the school of Israel Sarug (see above). There is a "Torah of *azilut*," a "Torah of *beriah*," and so forth, each one reflecting the particular function of the mystical structure of a given phase of creation. In each of these phases there is a relativization of the Torah's absolute essence, which is in itself unaffected by these changes, great though they be. Similarly, as was explained above, the single Torah appears in different forms in the different *shemmitot* or cosmic cycles of creation.

THE INFINITE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIVINE SPEECH. A direct consequence of this belief was the principle that the content of the Torah possessed infinite meaning, which revealed itself differently at different levels and according to the capacity of its contemplator. The unfathomable profundity of the divine speech could not possibly be exhausted at any one level alone, an axiom that applied as well to the concrete, historical Torah revealed by God in the theophany at Mount Sinai. From the outset this Torah possessed the two aspects mentioned above, a literal reading formed by its letters that combined to make words of the Hebrew language, and a mystical reading composed of the divine Names of God. But this was not all. "Many lights shine forth from each word and each letter," a view that was summed up in the well-known statement (itself an epigrammatic rendering of a passage in the *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*) that "the Torah has 70 faces." The conventional four categories by which the Torah was said

to be interpretable, the literal (*peshat*), the allegorical (*remez*), the hermeneutical or homiletical (*derash*), and the mystical (*sod*), served only as a general framework for a multiplicity of individual readings, a thesis which from the 16th century on was expressed in the widespread belief that the number of possible readings of the Torah was equal to the number of the 600,000 children of Israel who were present at Mount Sinai—in other words, that each single Jew approached the Torah by a path that he alone could follow. These four categories were first collectively given the acronym *pardes* (literally, “garden”) by Moses de Leon. Basically, this “garden of the Torah” was understood as follows. The *peshat* or literal meaning did not embrace only the historical and factual content of the Torah but also the authoritative Oral Law of rabbinic tradition. The *derash* or hermeneutical meaning was the path of ethical and aggadic commentary. The *remez* or allegorical meaning comprised the body of philosophical truths that the Torah contained. The *sod* or mystical meaning was the totality of possible kabbalistic commentaries which interpreted the words of the Torah as references to events in the world of the *Sefirot* or to the relationship to this world of the biblical heroes. The *peshat*, therefore, which was taken to include the corpus of talmudic law as well, was only the Torah’s outermost aspect, the “husk” that first met the eye of the reader. The other layers revealed themselves only to that more penetrating and latitudinous power of insight which was able to discover in the Torah general truths that were in no way dependent on their immediate literal context. Only on the level of *sod* did the Torah become a body of mystical symbols which unveiled the hidden life-processes of the Godhead and their connections with human life. This fourfold exegetical division was apparently influenced by the earlier yet similar categories of Christian tradition. Literal, aggadic, and philosophical-allegorical commentaries had previously been known to Jewish tradition as well, and Joseph ibn Aknin’s long commentary on the Song of Songs, for example, which was composed early in the 13th century, combined all three of these approaches. Bahya b. Asher was the first biblical commentator (1291) to introduce a kabbalistic aspect into his textual explications as well, though he did not use the acronym *pardes* and referred to the philosophical reading of the Torah as “the way of the intellect.” Explication on the level of *sod*, of course, had limitless possibilities, a classic illustration of which is Nathan Spira’s *Megalleh Amukkot* (1637), in which Moses’ prayer to God in Deuteronomy 3:23ff. is explained in 252 different ways. In the main corpus of the Zohar, where use of the term “Kabbalah” is studiously avoided, such mystical interpretations are referred to as “mysteries of the faith” (*raza de-meheimnuta*), that is, exegesis based on esoteric beliefs. The author of the Zohar, whose belief in the primacy of kabbalistic interpretation was extreme, actually expressed the opinion (3, 152a) that had the Torah simply been intended as a series of literal narratives, he and his contemporaries would have been able to compose a better book! Occasionally kabbalistic interpretations would deliberately choose to stress certain words or verses that seemed insignificant on the surface and to attribute to them profound symbolic importance, as can be seen in the Zohar’s commentary on the list of the kings of Edom in Genesis 36 or on the deeds Benaiah the son of Jehoiada related in II Samuel 23.

Since the Torah was considered to be essentially composed of letters that were nothing less than configurations of the divine light, and since it was agreed that it assumed different forms in the celestial and terrestrial worlds, the question arose of how it would appear in paradise or in a future age. Certainly its present reading had

been affected by the corporealization of its letters that took place at the time of Adam’s sin. The answer given to this conundrum by the kabbalists of Safed was that the Torah contained the same letters prior to Adam’s sin but in a different sequence that corresponded to the condition of the worlds at that time. Thus, it did not include the same prohibitions or laws that we read in it now, for it was adjusted in its entirety to Adam’s state before his fall. Similarly, in future ages the Torah will cast off its garments and will again appear in a purely spiritual form whose letters will assume new spiritual meanings. In its primordial existence, the Torah already contained all the combinational possibilities that might manifest themselves in it in accordance with men’s deeds and the needs of the world. Had it not been for Adam’s sin, its letters would have combined to form a completely different narrative. In messianic times to come, therefore, God will reveal new combinations of letters that will yield an entirely new content. Indeed, this is the “new Torah” alluded to in the Midrash in its commentary on Isaiah 51:4, “For instruction shall go forth from Me.” Such beliefs continued to be widespread even in Hasidic literature.

The most radical form that this view took was associated with the talmudic *aggadah* according to which prior to the creation of the world the whole of the Torah was written in black fire on white fire. As early as the beginning of the 13th century the daring notion was expressed that in reality the white fire comprised the true text of the Torah, whereas the text that appeared in black fire was merely the mystical Oral Law. Hence it follows that the true Written Law has become entirely invisible to human perception and is presently concealed in the white parchment of the Torah scroll, the black letters of which are nothing more than a commentary on this vanished text. In the time of the Messiah the letters of this “white Torah” will be revealed. This belief is referred to in a number of the classic texts of Hasidism as well.

The Mystic Way. DEVEKUT. Life in the framework of Judaism, through the study of Torah and prayer, offered the kabbalist a way of both active and passive integration in the great divine hierarchy of creation. Within this hierarchy, the task of the Kabbalah is to help guide the soul back to its native home in the Godhead. For each single *Sefirah* there is a corresponding ethical attribute in human behavior, and he who achieves this on earth is integrated into the mystic life and the harmonic world of the *Sefirot*. Cordovero’s *Tomer Devorah* is dedicated to this subject. The kabbalists unanimously agreed on the supreme rank attainable by the soul at the end of its mystic path, namely, that of *devekut*, mystical cleaving to God. In turn, there might be different ranks of *devekut* itself, such as “equanimity” (*hishtavvut*, the indifference of the soul to praise or blame), “solitude” (*hitbodedut*, being alone with God), “the holy spirit,” and “prophecy.” Such is the ladder of *devekut* according to Isaac of Acre. In contrast, a running debate surrounded the question of what was the highest quality preparatory to such *devekut*, the love of God or the fear of God. This argument recurs throughout the literature of the Kabbalah with inconclusive results, and continued into the later *musar* literature that was composed under kabbalistic influence. Many kabbalists considered the worship of God in “pure, sublime fear,” which was quite another thing from the fear of punishment, to be an even higher attainment than the worship of Him in love. In the Zohar this “fear” is employed as one of the epithets of the highest *Sefirah*, thus giving it supreme status. Elijah de Vidas, on the other hand, in his *Reshit Hokhmah*, defended the primacy of love. In effect, both of these virtues lead to *devekut*.

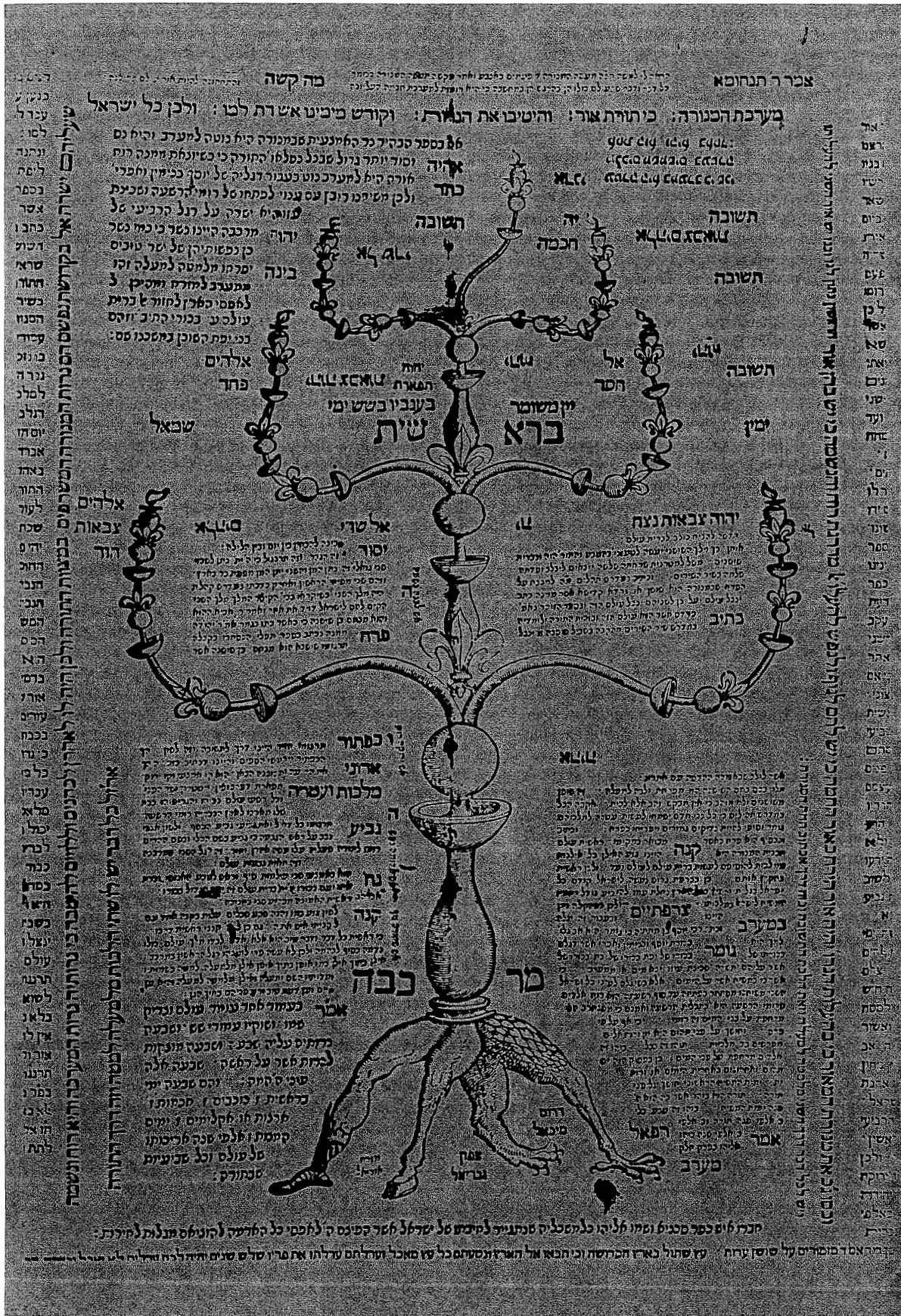


Figure 12. Detail in the form of a menorah containing the Sefirot world, from the broadsheet, *Or Nerot ha-Menorah*, by the Christian kabbalist, Guillaume Postel, Venice, 1548. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana.

The early Kabbalah of Provence already sought to define *devekut* both as a process by which man cleaves to his Creator and as an ultimate goal of the mystic way. According to Isaac the Blind: "The principal task of the mystics [*ha-maskilim*] and of they who contemplate on His Name is [expressed in the commandment] 'And ye shall cleave unto Him' [Deut. 13:5]. And this is a central principle of the Torah, and of prayer, and of [reciting] the blessings, to harmonize one's thought with one's faith as though it cleaved to [the worlds] above, to conjoin God in His letters, and to link [*likhol*] the ten *Sefirot* in Him as a flame is joined to a coal, articulating his epithets aloud and conjoining Him mentally in His true structure." In a more general sense, Nahmanides, in his commentary on Deuteronomy 11:22, defines *devekut* as the state of mind in which "You constantly remember God and His love, nor do you remove your thought from Him . . . to the point that when [such a person] speaks with someone else, his heart is not with them at all but is still before God. And indeed it may be true of those who attain this rank, that their soul is granted immortal life [*zerurah bi-zeror ha-hayyim*] even in their lifetime, for they are themselves a dwelling place for the *Shekhinah*." Whoever cleaves in this way to his Creator becomes eligible to receive the holy spirit (Nahmanides, *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*). Inasmuch as human thought derives from the rational soul in the world of *azilut* it has the ability to return to its source there, "And when it reaches its source, it cleaves to the celestial light from which it derives and the two become one" (Meir ibn Gabbai). In his commentary on Job 36:7, Nahmanides refers to *devekut* as the spiritual level that characterizes the true *hasid*, and in fact Bahya ibn Pakuda's definition of *hasidut* in his *Hovot ha-Levavot* (8, 10) is very similar to Azriel of Gerona's definition of *devekut* in his *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanah*, for both speak in almost identical terms of the effacement of the human will in the divine will or of the encounter and conformity of the two wills together. On the other hand, kabbalistic descriptions of *devekut* also tend to resemble the common definitions of prophecy and its various levels. In his Epistle to Burgos, Azriel of Gerona speaks of the way to prophecy as being also the way to *devekut*, while in his *Perush ha-Aggadot* (ed. Tishby, 40), he virtually equates the two.

Devekut results in a sense of beatitude and intimate union, yet it does not entirely eliminate the distance between the creature and its Creator, a distinction that most kabbalists, like most Hasidim, were careful not to obscure by claiming that there could be a complete unification of the soul and God. In the thought of Isaac of Acre, the concept of *devekut* takes on a semi-contemplative, semi-ecstatic character. (See E. Gottlieb, *Papers of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1969, Vol. 2, 327-34.) Here and there ecstatic nuances can be found in the conceptions of *devekut* of other kabbalists. (See Y. Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar* 2, 247-68; G. Scholem, *Review of Religion* 14, (1950), 115-39.)

PRAYER, KAVVANAH, AND MEDITATION. The main path traveled by the mystic was of course associated in the kabbalistic consciousness with the practical observance of the commandments, yet the two were not intrinsically connected, for essentially the mystic way involved the ascent of the soul to a state of ecstatic rapture through a process of concentrated thought and meditation. Above all, in the Kabbalah it is prayer that serves as the principal realm for this ascent. Prayer is unlike the practical commandments, each of which demands a certain well-defined action, the performance of which does not leave much room for meditation and mystical immersion. True, every commandment has its mystical aspect whose observance cre-

ates a bond between the world of man and the world of the *Sefirot*, but the full force of spirituality can express itself far better in prayer. The mystical intention or *kavvanah* that accompanies every commandment is in effect a concentration of thought upon the kabbalistic significance of the action at the time that it is performed; prayer, on the other hand, stands independent of any outward action and can easily be transformed into a comprehensive exercise in inward meditation. The tradition of mystical prayer accompanied by a system of meditative *kavvanot* that focused on each prayer's kabbalistic content developed as a central feature of the Kabbalah from its first appearance among the Hasidei Ashkenaz and the kabbalists of Provence and on through the Lurianic Kabbalah and the latter's last vestiges in modern times. The greatest kabbalists were all great masters of prayer, nor would it be easy to imagine the Kabbalah's speculative development without such permanent roots in the experience of mystical prayer. In its kabbalistic guise, the concept of *kavvanah* was given new content far beyond that bestowed on it in earlier rabbinic and halakhic literature. (See Enelow, *Jewish Studies in Honor of Kaufmann Kohler* (Berlin, 1913), 82-107; G. Scholem, *M.G.W.J.* 78, 1934, 492-518.)

Kabbalistic doctrine sought a way out of the dilemma, which the kabbalists themselves were aware of, that was posed by the theologically unacceptable notion that prayer could somehow change or influence the will of God. The Kabbalah regarded prayer as the ascent of man to the upper worlds, a spiritual peregrination among the supernal realms that sought to integrate itself into their hierarchical structure and to contribute its share toward restoring what had been flawed there. Its field of activity in kabbalistic thought is entirely in the inward worlds and in the connections between them. Using the traditional liturgical text in a symbolic way, prayer repeats the hidden processes of the universe which, as was explained above, can themselves be regarded as essentially linguistic in nature. The ontological hierarchy of the spiritual worlds reveals itself to the kabbalist in the time of prayer as one of the many Names of God. This unveiling of a divine "Name" through the power of the "word" is what constitutes the mystical activity of the individual in prayer, who meditates or focuses his *kavvanah* upon the particular name that belongs to the spiritual realm through which his prayer is passing. In early Kabbalah, it is the name of the appropriate *Sefirah* on which the mystic concentrates when reciting the prayers and into which he is, as it were, absorbed, but in later Kabbalah, and especially in the Lurianic school, this is replaced by one of the mystical Names of God. Thus, while prayer has an aspect of "inward magic" by which it is empowered to help order and restore the upper worlds, it has no outwardly magical efficacy. Such "inward magic" is distinguished from sorcery in that its meditations or *kavvanot* are not meant to be pronounced. The Divine Names are not called upon, as they are in ordinary operational magic, but are aroused through meditative activity directed toward them. The individual in prayer pauses over each word and fully gauges the *kavvanah* that belongs to it. The actual text of the prayer, therefore, serves as a kind of a banister onto which the kabbalist holds as he makes his not unshakable ascent, groping his way by the words. The *kavvanot*, in other words, transform the words of the prayer into holy names that serve as landmarks on the upward climb.

The practical application of mystical *meditation in the Kabbalah, therefore, is connected mainly, if not exclusively, with the moment of prayer. In terms of Jewish tradition, the principal innovation in this approach lay in the fact that it shifted the emphasis from group prayer to individual mystical prayer without in any way destroying the basic

liturgical framework itself. Indeed, in their effort to preserve this framework, the first generations of kabbalists largely refrained from composing original prayers of their own that would reflect their beliefs directly. Only from the 16th century onward and especially under the influence of the Lurianic school, were large numbers of kabbalistic prayers added to the old. The short meditations of the early kabbalists were now replaced by increasingly lengthy and involved *kavvanot* whose execution led to a considerable lengthening of the service. The system of *kavvanot* reached its maximum development in the school of the Yemenite kabbalist Shalom Sharabi, where prayer required an entire congregation of mystical meditators who were capable of great psychical exertion. Several such groups are actually known to have existed. According to Azriel of Gerona, he who meditates mystically in his prayer "drives away all obstacles and impediments and reduces every word to its 'nothingness'." To achieve this goal is in a sense to open a reservoir whose waters, which are the divine influx, pour down on the praying individual. Because he has properly prepared himself for these supernal forces, however, he is not overwhelmed and drowned by them. Having completed his upward ascent, he now descends once again with the aid of fixed *kavvanot*, and in this manner unites the upper and the lower worlds. An excellent example of this circle of ascent and descent can be found in the *kavvanot* to the *Shema*.

In contrast to the contemplative character of prayer in the Kabbalah of Gerona and the Zohar, Lurianic Kabbalah emphasized its more active side. Every prayer was now directed not only toward the symbolic ascent of him who prays, but also toward the uprising of the sparks of light that belonged to his soul. "From the day the world was created until the end of time, no one prayer resembles another." Despite the fact that there is a common collectivity to all the *kavvanot*, each one has its completely individual nature, and every moment of prayer is different and demands its own *kavvanah*. In this way, the personal element in prayer came to be highly stressed. Not even all the *kavvanot* listed in the writings devoted to them exhausted the totality of possibilities, just as a musical score cannot possibly contain the personal interpretation that the musician brings to it in the act of performance. In answer to the question in the Talmud, "From whence can it be known that God Himself prays?" the Kabbalah replied that through mystical prayer man was drawn upward or absorbed into the hidden, dynamic life of the Godhead, so that in the act of his praying God prayed too. On the other hand, the theory can also be found in kabbalistic literature that prayer is like an arrow shot upward by its reciter with the bow of *kavvanah*. In yet another analogy from the Lurianic school, which had a great impact on ḥasidic literature, the process of *kavvanah* is defined in terms of the drawing downward of the spiritual divine light into the letters and words of the prayer book, so that this light can then reascend to the highest rank (*Ḥesed le-Avraham*, 2, par. 44). In the opinion of the Zohar (2, 215b), the individual passes through four phases in his prayer: he accomplishes the *tikkun* of himself, the *tikkun* of this lower world, the *tikkun* of the upper world, and, finally, the *tikkun* of the Divine Name. Similarly, the morning service as a whole was interpreted as representing a symbolic progression, at the end of which the reciter was ready to risk all for God, whether by yielding to a near-ecstatic rapture or by wrestling with the *sitra aħra* in order to rescue the imprisoned holiness from its grasp. In Lurianic prayer a special place was reserved for *yihudim* ("acts of unification"), which were meditations on one of the letter combinations of the Tetragrammaton, or on configurations of such names with different vocalizations,

such as Isaac Luria was in the habit of giving to his disciples, to each "in accordance with the root of his soul." As employed in such individual *yihudim*, the *kavvanot* were detached from the regular liturgy and became independent instruments for uplifting the soul. They also were sometimes used as a method of communing with other souls, particularly with the souls of departed *zaddikim*.

A wide kabbalistic literature was devoted to the path of prayer and to mystical interpretations of the traditional liturgy. Such interpretations were less commentaries in the ordinary sense than systematic handbooks for mystical meditation in prayer. Among the best known of these are Azriel of Gerona's *Perush ha-Tefillot* (extant in many Mss.); Menahem Recanati's *Perush ha-Tefillot* (1544); David b. Judah he-Ḥasid's *Or Zaru'a* (see Marmorstein in M.G.W.J. 71 (1927), 39ff.) and a commentary by an anonymous author (c.1300), the long introduction to which has been published (*Kovez Madda'i le-Zekher Moshe Shor*, 1945, 113-26). Among such books written in the 16th century were Meir ibn Gabbai's *Tola'at Ya'akov* (1560); Jacob Israel Finzi's *Perush ha-Tefillot* (in Cambridge Ms.); and Moses Cordovero's *Tefillah le-Moshe* (1892). The rise of Lurianic Kabbalah led to an enormous outpouring of books of *kavvanot* and mystical prayers. The most detailed among them are Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* and *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, and Emmanuel Ḥai Ricchi's summary *Mishnat Ḥasidim* (1727). As early as Vital's circle the practice developed of compiling special prayer books with the corresponding *kavvanot*, and many copies of these circulated in manuscript under the title *Siddur ha-Ari* ("The Prayer Book of Isaac Luria"). A number of such prayer books were published, among them *Sha'arei Raḥamim* (Salonika, 1741); *Ḥesed le-Avraham* (Smyrna, 1764); Aryeh Loeb Epstein's *Mishnat Gur Aryeh* (Koenigsberg, 1765); the *Siddur ha-Ari* of the kabbalists of the Brody *klaus* (Zolkiew, 1781); and the kabbalistic prayer books of Asher Margoliot (Lvov, 1788), Shabbetai Rashkover (1794), and Jacob Koppel Lipshitz, whose *Kol Ya'akov* (1804) is full of Shabbatean influence. The acme of such books was the prayer book of Shalom Sharabi, the bulk of which was published in Jerusalem in a long series of volumes beginning in 1910. To this day there are groups in Jerusalem who pray according to Sharabi's *kavvanot*, although the spiritual practice of this can take many years to master. Other guides to prayer from this period are Isaiah Horowitz's *Siddur ha-Shelah* (Amsterdam, 1717); Solomon Rocca's *Kavvanat Shelomo* (Venice, 1670); Moses Albaz's *Heikhal ha-Kodesh* (Amsterdam, 1653); and Ḥayyim Vital's son Samuel's *Ḥemdat Yisrael* (1901). In his *Sha'ar Ru'ah ha-Kodesh* (with commentary, 1874), Ḥayyim Vital discusses the *yihudim*. Numerous kabbalist prayer books were compiled for various specific occasions, a genre that began with Nathan Hannover's *Sha'arei Ziyon* (1662).

ECSTASY. Beside the mystical meditation of prayer, a number of other mystical "disciplines" developed in Kabbalah. (On the ecstatic ascents of the Merkabah mystics, see above.) From the beginning of the geonic period there is a text called *Sefer ha-Malbush* describing a half-magical, half-mystical practice of "putting on the Name" (*levishat ha-Shem*), whose history apparently goes back even further. Of central importance in this context is the "prophetic Kabbalah" of Abraham Abulafia, in which an earlier tradition of systematic instruction based on "the science of combination," *ḥokhmat ha-zeruf* (a play on the double meaning of the word in *zeruf ha-otiot*, "the combination of letters," and *zeruf ha-levavot*, "the purification of hearts"), was refashioned. This mystical discipline made use of the letters of the alphabet, and especially of the Tetragrammaton and the other Names of God, for the

purpose of training in meditation. By immersing himself in various combinations of letters and names, the kabbalist emptied his mind of all natural forms that might prevent his concentrating on divine matters. In this way he freed his soul of its natural restraints and opened it to the divine influx, with whose aid he might even attain to prophecy. The disciplines of *kavvanah* and letter combination became linked together toward the end of the 13th century and from then on mutually influenced each other. The Lurianic *kavvanot* were especially heavily influenced by *hokhmat ha-zeruf*. The doctrine of the *Sefirot* was also absorbed by these disciplines, though Abulafia himself regarded it as a less advanced and less valuable system than "the science of combination" as the latter was expounded in his books.

In the further course of the development of the Kabbalah, many kabbalists continued to regard such disciplines as the most esoteric side of Kabbalah and were reluctant to discuss them in their books. Abulafia himself described quite explicitly, and in a seemingly objective manner, just what were the obstacles and dangers, as well as the rewards, that such mystical experience could bring. He drew a clear parallel between "the science of combination" and music, which too could conduct the soul to a state of the highest rapture by the combination of sounds. The techniques of "prophetic Kabbalah" that were used to aid the ascent of the soul, such as breathing exercises, the repetition of Divine Names, and meditations on colors, bear a marked resemblance to those of both Indian Yoga and Muslim Sufism. The subject sees flashes of light and feels as though he were divinely "anointed." In certain stages he lives through a personal identification with an inner spiritual mentor or *guru* who is revealed to him and who is really Metatron, the prince of God's countenance, or in some cases, the subject's own true self. The climactic stage of this spiritual education is the power of prophecy. At this point Abulafia's Kabbalah coincides with the discipline of *kavvanot* developed by the kabbalists of Gerona, which was also intended to train its practitioner so that "whoever has mastered it ascends to the level of prophecy."

Here and there mention is made in the Kabbalah of various other occult phenomena, but on the whole there is a clear-cut tendency to avoid discussing such things, just as most kabbalists refrained from recording their personal experiences in the autobiographical form that was extremely common in the mystical literature of both Christianity and Islam. Descriptions exist of the mystical sensation of the subtle ether or "aura," called also "the ether of the *zelem*," by which man is surrounded, of mystical visions of the primordial letters in the heavens (Zohar, 2, 130b), and of invisible holy books that could be read only with the inward senses (K.S. 4, 319). In a number of places prophecy is defined as the experience wherein a man "sees the form of his own self standing before him and relating the future to him" (MTJM, 142). One anonymous disciple of Abulafia actually composed a memoir about his experiences with *hokhmat ha-zeruf* (MTJM, 147-55). Generally speaking, however, the autobiographical confession was strictly disapproved of by most kabbalists. In the Zohar, a description of mystical ecstasy occurs only once, and that in a highly circumspect account of the experience of the high priest in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (3, 67a, and in the Zohar *Hadash*, 19a). Even in those writings that essentially continue the tradition of Abulafia, there is little of the latter's ecstatic extravagance, and ecstasy itself is moderated into *devekut*. Not until the golden period of the hasidic movement in the late 18th century, particularly in the circle of the Maggid of Mezhibezh, are descriptions of ecstatic abandon once again encountered in the literature of

Judaism. Several books or sections of books that dealt openly and at length with the procedure to be followed for the attainment of ecstasy and the holy spirit, such as Judah Albotini's *Sulam ha-Aliyah* (c. 1500) and the last part of Hayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah*, called *Ma'amar Hitbodedut*, "On Solitary Meditation" (Ginzburg Ms. 691, British Museum 749), were suppressed in their day and preserved only in manuscript. The only such book to have been actually published was the *Berit Menuḥah* (Amsterdam, 1648), the work of an anonymous 14th-century author that has been mistakenly attributed to Abraham of Granada. This book, which contains lengthy descriptions of visions of the supernal lights attained by meditating on various vocalizations of the Tetragrammaton with the aid of a symbolic system unparalleled elsewhere in the Kabbalah, borders on the frontier between "speculative Kabbalah" (*kabbalah iyyunit*), whose primary interest was in the inner spiritual guidance of the individual, and "practical Kabbalah" (*kabbalah ma'asit*), which was concerned above all with magical activity.

Practical Kabbalah. The disciplines discussed in the preceding section, though they deal with practical instructions for the spiritual life, do not belong to the realm of "practical Kabbalah" in the kabbalistic sense of the term, which refers rather to a different set of preoccupations. For the most part, the realm of practical Kabbalah is that of purely motivated or "white" magic, especially as practiced through the medium of the sacred, esoteric Names of God and the angels, the manipulation of which may affect the physical no less than the spiritual world. Such magical operations are not considered impossible in the Kabbalah, or even categorically forbidden, though numerous kabbalistic writings do stress the prohibitions against them. In any case, only the most perfectly virtuous individuals are permitted to perform them, and even then never for their private advantage, but only in times of emergency and public need. Whoever else seeks to perform such acts does so at his own grave physical and spiritual peril. Such warnings were generally observed in the breach, however, as is demonstrated by the extensive literature of practical Kabbalah that has survived. In actual practice, moreover, the boundary between physical magic and the purely inward "magic" of letter combination and *kavvanot* was not always clear-cut and could easily be crossed in either direction. Many early scholarly investigators of the Kabbalah did not often distinguish clearly between the two concepts and frequently used the term "practical Kabbalah" to refer to the Lurianic school as opposed to Cordovero and the Zohar. This confusion can be traced as far back as Pico della Mirandola, who considered the Kabbalah of Abulafia to belong to the "practical" variety. Abulafia himself, however, was well aware of the distinction and in many of his books he fiercely attacked the "masters of names" (*ba'alei shemot*) who defiled themselves with magical practices. The anonymous author of a text once attributed to Maimonides (*Megillat Setarim*, published in *Hemdah Genuzah* I (1856), 45-52), who himself belonged to the Abulafian school, differentiates between three kinds of Kabbalah, "rabbinic Kabbalah," "prophetic Kabbalah," and "practical Kabbalah." The latter is identified with theurgy, the magical use of Sacred Names, which is not at all the same thing as the meditation on such names. Before the term "practical Kabbalah" came into use, the concept was expressed in Hebrew by the phrase *hokhmat ha-shim-mush*, which was a translation of the technical Greek term (*praxis*) used to denote magical activity. The Spanish kabbalists made a clear distinction between traditions that had come down to them from "masters of the doctrine of the *Sefirot*" (*ba'alei ha-sefirot*) and those that derived from

magicians or "masters of the names." Also known to them were certain magical practices that were referred to as "great theurgy" (*shimmusha rabba*) and "little theurgy" (*shimmusha zutta*; see Tarbiz, 16 (1945), 196–209). Unlike Abulafia, however, Gikatilla, Isaac ha-Kohen, and Moses de Leon all mention such "masters of the name" and their expositions without holding them up to reproach. From the 15th century on the semantic division into "speculative" and "practical" Kabbalah became prevalent, though it was not necessarily meant to be prejudicial to the latter. On the whole, however, general summaries of kabbalistic doctrine rarely referred to its "practical" side except accidentally, such as in Cordovero's angelology *Derishot be-Inyanei ha-Mal'akhim* (at the end of R. Margalio's *Malakhei Elyon*, 1945).

Historically speaking, most of the contents of practical Kabbalah considerably predate those of speculative Kabbalah and are not dependent on them. In effect, what came to be considered practical Kabbalah constituted an agglomeration of all the magical practices that developed in Judaism from the talmudic period down through the Middle Ages. The doctrine of the *Sefirot* hardly ever played a decisive role in these practices, despite occasional attempts from the late 13th century on to integrate the two. The bulk of such magical material to have been preserved is found in the writings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, which for the most part were removed from the theological influences of Kabbalism, both in texts that were especially written on the subject, such as Eliezer of Worms' *Sefer ha-Shem*, and in collected anthologies. Most earlier theurgical and magical works, such as the *Harba de-Moshe* or the *Sefer ha-Razim* (see above), were eventually assimilated into practical Kabbalah. Various ideas and practices connected with the figure of the *golem* also took their place in practical Kabbalah through a combination of features drawn from the *Sefer Yeẓirah* and a number of magical traditions. The ostensible lines drawn by the kabbalists to set the boundaries of permissible magic were frequently overstepped and obscured, with the consequent appearance in practical Kabbalah of a good deal of "black" magic—that is, magic that was meant to harm others or that employed "the unholy names" (*shemot ha-tum'ah*, Sanh. 91a) of various dark, demonic powers, and magic used for personal gain. The open disavowal of practical Kabbalah by most kabbalists, to the extent that it was not simply an empty formality, was for the most part in reaction to practices like these. Such black magic embraced a wide realm of *demonology and various forms of sorcery that were designed to disrupt the natural order of things and to create illicit connections between things that were meant to be kept separate. Activity of this sort was considered a rebellion of man against God and a hubristic attempt to set himself up in God's place. According to the Zohar (1, 36b), the source of such practices was "the leaves of the Tree of Knowledge," and they had existed among men since the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Alongside this view, there continued the ancient tradition, first found in the Book of Enoch, that the rebellious angels who had fallen from heaven were the original instructors of the magic arts to mankind. To this day, the Zohar relates (3, 208a, 212a–b), the sorcerers journey to "the mountains of darkness," which are the abode of the rebel angels Aza and Azael, to study under their auspices. The biblical archetype of the sorcerer is Balaam. Such black magic is called in the Kabbalah "apocryphal science" (*hokhmah ḥizonah*) or "the science of the Orientals" (*hokhmah benei kedem*, on the basis of I Kings 5:10), and though a theoretical knowledge of it is permitted—several kabbalistic books in fact treat of it at length—its practice is strictly forbidden. The sorcerer draws

forth the spirit of impurity from the *kelippot* and mixes the clean and the unclean together. In the *Tikkunei Zohar* the manipulation of such forces is considered justifiable under certain circumstances, inasmuch as the *sitra aḥra* must be fought with its own weapons.

The opposition of the speculative kabbalists to black magic was unable to prevent a conglomeration of all kinds of magical prescriptions in the literature of practical Kabbalah. Often the white-magical practices of amulets and protective charms can be found side by side with the invocation of demons, incantations, and formulas for private gain (e.g., magical shortcuts, the discovery of hidden treasure, impregnability in the face of one's enemies, etc.), and even sexual magic and necromancy. The international character of magical tradition is evident in such collections, into which many originally non-Jewish elements entered, such as Arab demonology and German and Slavic witchcraft. It was this indiscriminate mixture that was responsible for the rather gross image of practical Kabbalah that existed in the Jewish popular mind and eventually reached the Christian world too, where the theoretical kabbalistic distinction between forbidden and permitted magical practices was of course overlooked completely. The widespread medieval conception of the Jew as a powerful sorcerer was nourished to no small extent by the practical kabbalistic sources that fostered this confusion. As early as the geonic period the title *ba'al shem* or "master of the name" signified a master of practical Kabbalah who was an expert at issuing amulets for various purposes, invoking angels or devils, and exorcising evil spirits (see *Dibbuk) who had entered a human body. On the whole such figures were clearly identified with white magic in the popular mind, as opposed to sorcerers, witches, and wizards.

Among earlier kabbalistic works that are especially rich in material taken from practical Kabbalah are the Zohar, the writings of Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi and Menahem Ziyoni, and the *Berit Menuḥah*, while in the post-Lurianic period the *Emek ha-Melekh* is outstanding in this respect. Magical prayers attributed to some of the leading *tannaim* and *amoraim* were already composed long before the development of speculative Kabbalah, and indeed magical material that has been preserved from the geonic age contains many similarities to magical Greek papyri that have been discovered in Egypt. Contemporaneous with such sources are various magical reworkings of the *shemoneh esreh* prayer, such as the *Tefillat Eliyahu* (Cambridge Ms. 505), which was already known to Isaac the Blind, or the maledictory version of the same prayer, quoted from the archives of Menahem Recanati in the complete manuscript of *Shoshan Sodot*. Almost all such compositions have been preserved in manuscript only, except for occasional borrowings from them in more popular anthologies. Among the most important known manuscripts of practical Kabbalah with its characteristic mixture of elements are Sassoon Ms. 290; British Museum Ms. 752; Cincinnati Ms. 35; and Schocken Ms. 102. Literature of this sort was extremely widespread, however, and hundreds of additional manuscripts also exist. Noteworthy also are the anonymous *Sefer ha-Heshek* (*Festschrift fuer Aron Freimann* (1935), 51–54) and *Shulhan ha-Sekhel* (in Sassoon Ms.), and Joseph ibn Zayyah's *She'erit Yosef* (1549, formerly in the Jewish Library of Vienna). In none of these books, however, is there any serious attempt at a systematic exposition of the subject. In many popular anthologies, which were widely circulated, both practical Kabbalah and folk medicine were combined together.

Other prominent works of practical Kabbalah include

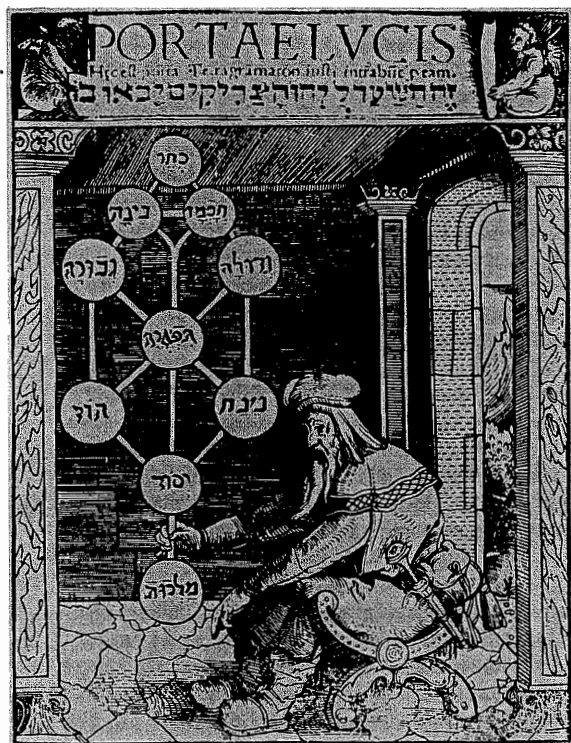


Figure 13. Title page of *Portae Lucis*, a Latin translation by Paulus Ricius of J. Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, Augsburg, 1516. Pictured is a man holding a tree with the ten *Sefirot*, Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

Joel Ba'al Shem's *Toledot Adam* (1720) and *Mif'alot Elohim* (1727); *Derekh ha-Yashar* (Cracow, 1646); *Zevi Chotsh's Derekh Yesharah* (Fuerth, 1697); *Ta'alumot Hokhmah* (Venice, 1667); Zechariah Plongian's *Sefer ha-Zekhirah* (Hamburg, 1709); Abraham Hammawi's anthologies *He'ah Nafshenu* (1870), *Devek me-Ah* (1874), *Abi'ah Hidot* (1877), *Lidrosh Elohim* (1879), and *Nifla'im Ma'asekha* (1881); and Hayyim Palache's *Refu'ah ve-Hayyim* (1874). A great deal of valuable material from the realm of practical Kabbalah can be found in *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft fuer juedische Volkskunde* (1898–1929), and *Jahrbuecher fuer juedische Volkskunde*, 1–2 (1923–24). Hayyim Vital too compiled an anthology of practical Kabbalah mixed with alchemical material (Ms. in the Musayof Collection, Jerusalem). His son Samuel composed an alphabetical lexicon of practical Kabbalah called *Ta'alumot Hokhmah*, which has been lost. Moses Zacuto's comprehensive lexicon *Shorshei ha-Shemot*, on the other hand, has been preserved in many manuscript copies (selections from it were published in French by M. Schwab, 1899). Clear proof exists of several books on the subject of practical Kabbalah written by some outstanding kabbalists, but these have not been preserved. Among the great masters of practical Kabbalah in the eyes of kabbalistic tradition itself were figures like Judah Hasid, Joseph Gikatilla, Isaac of Acre, Joseph della Reyna, Samson of Ostropol, and Joel Ba'al Shem Tov.

To the realm of practical Kabbalah also belong the many traditions concerning the existence of a special archangelic alphabet, the earliest of which was "the alphabet of Metatron." Other such alphabets or *kolmosin* ("[angelic] pens") were attributed to Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, etc. Several of these alphabets that have come down to us resemble cuneiform writing, while some clearly derive from early Hebrew or Samaritan script. In kabbalistic literature they are known as "eye writing" (*ketav einayim*), because their letters are always composed of lines and small circles that resemble eyes. Under exceptional circumstances, as

when writing the Tetragrammaton or the Divine Names Shaddai and Elohim, these alphabets were occasionally used even in a text otherwise written in ordinary Hebrew characters. Such magical letters, which were mainly used in amulets, are the descendants of the magical characters that are found in theurgic Greek and Aramaic from the first centuries C.E. In all likelihood their originators imitated cuneiform writing that could still be seen in their surroundings, but which had become indecipherable and had therefore assumed magical properties in their eyes.

The well-known medieval book, *Clavicula Salomonis* ("Solomon's Key"), was not originally Jewish at all, and it was only in the 17th century that a Hebrew edition was brought out, a *mélange* of Jewish, Christian, and Arab elements in which the kabbalistic component was practically nil. By the same token, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin* (London, 1898), which purported to be an English translation of a Hebrew work written in the 15th century by a certain "Abraham the Jew of Worms" and was widely regarded in European occultist circles as being a classical text of practical Kabbalah, was not in fact written by a Jew, although its anonymous 16th-century author had an uncommon command of Hebrew. The book was originally written in German and the Hebrew manuscript of it found in Oxford (Neubauer 2051) is simply a translation. Indeed, the book circulated in various editions in several languages. It shows the partial influence of Jewish ideas but does not have any strict parallel in kabbalistic literature.

The relationship of the Kabbalah to other "occult sciences" such as astrology, alchemy, physiognomy, and chiromancy was slight. Astrology and alchemy play at most a marginal role in kabbalistic thought. At the same time, practical Kabbalah did manifest an interest in the magical induction of the pneumatic powers of the stars through the agency of specific charms. This use of astrological talismans, which clearly derived from Arabic and Latin sources, is first encountered in the *Sefer ha-Levanah* (London, 1912), cited by Nahmanides. Another text of astrological magic is the Hebrew translation of the *Picatrix*, *Takhlit he-Hakham* (Arabic original and German translation, 1933 and 1962). This genre of magical book is also referred to in the *Zohar* (1, 99b), and several tracts on the subject have been preserved in manuscripts of practical Kabbalah. A number of kabbalistic works dealing with the preparation of magical rings combine astrological motifs with others taken from "the science of combination." A book in this vein that claims to have been divinely revealed has been preserved in Sassoon Ms. 290. The *Sefer ha-Tamar*, which has been attributed to Abu Aflah (ed. G. Scholem, 1927), was preserved in practical kabbalistic circles but did not derive from them, having its source rather in Arabic astrological magic. Interestingly, kabbalistic attitudes toward astrological magic were highly ambivalent, and some leading kabbalists, such as Cordovero, actually approved of it.

Alchemy too had relatively little influence on the Kabbalah (G. Scholem, in: *MGWJ*, 69 (1925), 13–30, 95–110; *ibid.*, 70 (1926), 202–9). Indeed, there was a basic symbolic divergence between the two from the start, for while the alchemist considered gold to be the symbol of perfection, for the kabbalists gold, which symbolized *Din*, had a lower rank than silver, which symbolized *Hesed*. Nevertheless, efforts were made to harmonize the two systems and allusions to this can already be found in the *Zohar*. Joseph Taitazak, who lived at the time of the Spanish expulsion, declared the identity of alchemy with the divine wisdom of the Kabbalah (*Zefunot* 11 (1971), 86–87). In 17th-century Italy a kabbalistic alchemical text called *Esh Mezaref* was composed in Hebrew, but the original has been lost; some parts have been preserved in the Latin

in Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata* (Eng. London, 1714, and in a new edition, 1894). Hayyim Vital spent two years of his youth studying alchemy exclusively and composed a book on alchemical practices which he publicly repented of in old age. No kabbalistic reworkings of physiognomy are known, but there are several treatments of *chiromancy, especially in the Zohar and in traditions of the Lurianic school. Some kabbalists believed that the lines of the hand and the forehead contained clues to a man's previous reincarnations.

The practice of practical Kabbalah raised certain problems concerning occult phenomena (see also preceding section). A number of these come under the category of *giluy eynayim*, whereby a man might be granted a vision of something that, generally speaking, only the rare mystic was permitted to see. Such visions included a glimpse of the "sapphiric ether" (*ha-avir ha-sappiri*) that surrounds all men and in which their movements are recorded, "the book in which all one's deeds are expressly written down" (especially in the works of Menahem Azariah Fano). The concept of the *zelem* was often associated with this ether, according to Lurianic sources, as was that of the angelic "eye-writing," and invisible letters that spelled out the secret nature of each man's thoughts and deeds which hovered over every head and might be perceived by initiates. Sometimes, especially during the performance of certain commandments such as circumcision, the initiate might also be granted a vision of the Tetragrammaton in the form of fiery letters that "appear and disappear in the twinkling of an eye." A *mohel* who was also a kabbalist could tell by the hue of this fire what the fortune of the newborn child would be (*Emek ha-Melekh*, 175b). The *aggadah* about the rays of light that shone from Moses' forehead (*Midrash Shemot Rabba*, 47) fathered the kabbalistic notion of a special halo that circled above the head of every righteous man (*Sefer Hasidim*, par. 370). This belief became widespread, although the halo was sometimes considered to appear only shortly before the *zaddik's* death. Visions of angels were explained in a similar fashion: the angel's form was imprinted in an invisible ether that was not the same as ordinary air, and could be seen by a select few, not because they were prophets but because God had opened their eyes as a reward for having purified their corporeal bodies (Cordovero in his *Derushei Mal'akhim*). Sorcerers who saw demons constituted an analogous phenomenon. Automatic writing is mentioned in a number of sources. Thus, Joseph b. Todros Abulafia, for example, composed a kabbalistic tract under the influence of "the writing name" (*Kerem Hemed*, 8, 105). Such "names" that facilitated the process of writing are referred to in a number of practical kabbalistic manuscripts. In describing a "revelation" that was granted to him, Joseph Taitazak speaks of "the mystic secret of writing with no hand." The anthology *Shoshan Sodot* (Oxford Ms., par. 147) mentions the practice of automatic writing, "making marks [*hakikah*] by the pen," as a method of answering vexing or difficult questions. A number of other spiritualistic phenomena, both spontaneous and deliberately induced, are also mentioned in various sources, among them the "levitating table," which was particularly widespread in Germany from the 16th century on. According to one eyewitness report, the ceremony was accompanied by a recital of Divine Names taken from practical Kabbalah and the singing of psalms and hymns (Wagenseil, *Sota*, 1674, 530). An acquaintance of Wagenseil's told him (*ibid.*, 1196) of how he had seen some yeshivah students from Wuerzburg who had studied in Fuerth lift such a table with the aid of Divine Names. Specific instructions for table levitation have been preserved in a number of kabbalistic manuscripts (e.g., Jerusalem

1070 8°, p. 220). The use of divining rods is also known in such literature, from the 15th century on at the latest (Y. Perles, *Festschrift fuer H. Graetz* (1887), 32-34; see also Eliahu Kohen ha-Itamari, *Midrash Talpiot*, under *devarim nifla'im*).

Certain magical names or *shemot* were prescribed for certain special activities. The *shem ha-garsi* was invoked in the study of Talmud or any rabbinic text (*girsā*); the *shem ha-doresh* was invoked by the preacher (*darshan*). There was a "name of the sword" (*shem ha-herav*), a "name of ogdoad" (*shem ha-sheminiyut*), and a "name of the wing" (*shem ha-kanaf*). Some of these invocations were borrowed from non-Jewish sources, as for example, the name "Parakletos Jesus b. Pandera" that a preacher recommended for use in synagogue (*Hebr. Bibl.*, 6 (1863), 121; G. Scholem, *Kitvei Yad be-Kabbalah* (1930), 63).

THE WIDER INFLUENCES OF AND RESEARCH ON THE KABBALAH

The Influence of the Kabbalah on Judaism. Though it has been evaluated differently by different observers, the influence of the Kabbalah has been great, for it has been one of the most powerful forces ever to affect the inner development of Judaism, both horizontally and in depth. Jewish historians of the 19th century, while conceding the Kabbalah's significant role, considered it to have been overwhelmingly negative and even catastrophic, but the appraisal of 20th-century Jewish historiography has been far more positive, no doubt due in part to profound changes in the course of Jewish history itself since the beginnings of the Zionist revival. There has been a new readiness in recent decades to acknowledge the wealth of rich symbolism and imagery that the kabbalistic imagination added to Jewish life, as well as to recognize the contributing role of the Kabbalah in strengthening the inner life of collective Jewry and the individual Jew. This reappraisal has made itself felt especially in the last two generations, both in literature and historical studies. Indeed, at times it has assumed panegyric proportions, as in the works of S. A. Horodezky, which have done little to further a fruitful discussion of the religious motives that found their expression in the Kabbalah with results that were sometimes problematic.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this exposition, the Kabbalah represented a theological attempt, open to only a relative few, whose object was to find room for an essentially mystical world-outlook within the framework of traditional Judaism without altering the latter's fundamental principles and behavioral norms. To what extent if at all this attempt was successful remains open to debate, but there can be no doubt that it achieved one very important result, namely, that for the three-hundred-year period roughly from 1500 to 1800 (at the most conservative estimate) the Kabbalah was widely considered to be the true Jewish theology, compared with which all other approaches were able at best to lead an isolated and attenuated existence. In the course of this period an open polemical attack on the Kabbalah was practically unheard of, and characteristically, when such an attack appeared, it was almost always in the guise of a rebuke addressed to the later kabbalists for having misrepresented and corporealized the pure philosophy of their predecessors, rather than an open criticism of the Kabbalah itself. Examples of this tactic, which was dictated by necessity, can be found in the anonymous polemic written in Posen in the middle of the 16th century (see P. Bloch, *MGWJ* 47, 1903, 153ff., 263ff.) and in Jacob Francis of Mantua's anti-kabbalistic poems from the middle of the 17th century. When Mordecai Corcos, on the other hand, wished to publish a book openly

opposed to the Kabbalah itself in Venice in 1672, he was prevented from doing so by the Italian rabbinical authorities.

In the area of *halakhah*, which determined the framework of Jewish life in accordance with the laws of the Torah, the influence of the Kabbalah was limited though by no means unimportant. As early as the 13th century there began a tendency to interpret the *halakhah* in kabbalistic terms without actually seeking to effect halakhic rulings or discussions by this means. In the main such kabbalistic interpretations touched on the mystical reasons for the commandments. At times there was an undeniable tension between the kabbalists and the strict halakhists, which in some cases expressed itself partly in kabbalistic outbursts rooted both in the natural feeling of superiority, which, whether justified or not, is frequently found in mystics and spiritualists (as in the case of Abraham Abulafia), and partly in the lack of a certain religious intensity, that kabbalists believed characterized the outlook of some leading halakhists. The attacks on cut-and-dried legalism that can be found in Bahya ibn Paquda's *Hovot ha-Levavot* and in the *Sefer Hasidim* clearly reflect an attitude that did not exist only in the imagination of the mystics and was responsible for the fierce polemical assaults of the authors of the *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Sefer ha-Peliah* against the "talmudists," that is, the halakhists. Popular witticisms directed against such scholars, such as the ironic reading of the word *hamor* ("donkey") as an acronym for the phrase *hakham mufla ve-rav rabanan* ("a great scholar and a rabbi of rabbis"; see Judah Barzilai's *Perush Sefer Yezi'rah*, 161), have their echoes in the *Ra'aya Meheimna* (3, 275b), whose author does not shrink from the pejorative expression *hamor de-maitin* ("mishnaic donkey"), and in the mystical homily 127b, in a passage belonging to the *Tikkunei Zohar* that refers to the Mishnah in a double-entendre as "the burial place of Moses." Other similar discourses, such as the exegesis (*ibid.*) relating the verse in Exodus 1:4, "And they made their lives bitter with hard service," to talmudic studies, or the angry descriptions of rabbinic scholars in the *Sefer ha-Peliah*, reveal a good deal of resentment. On the other hand, there is no historical basis for the picture drawn by Graetz of an openly anti-talmudic campaign waged by the kabbalists, who in reality insisted in their own writings on a scrupulous observance of halakhic law, albeit of course from a mystical perspective. At the same time, however, true antinomian tendencies could easily spring from the Kabbalah when it joined forces with messianism, as happened in the case of the Shabbatean movement.

A trend toward actually ruling on moot halakhic questions by treating them according to kabbalistic principles first appears in the mid-14th century, in the *Sefer ha-Peliah* and especially in discussions of the commandments in the *Sefer ha-Kanah*. Dating from the same period or shortly after are a number of similarly minded rabbinic responsa that have been attributed to Joseph Gikatilla (first published in the *Festschrift* for Jacob Freimann (1937) 163–70). Yet this school of thought remained in the minority, and most kabbalists, to the extent that they were also leading authorities on the *halakhah*, such as David b. Zimra, Joseph Caro, Solomon Luria, Mordecai Jaffe, and Hayyim Joseph Azulai, deliberately refrained from adopting halakhic positions that conflicted with talmudic law. The accepted rule among them was that decisions were only to be made on the basis of the Zohar when no clear talmudic guideline could be found (*Beit Yosef le-Orah Hayyim*, par. 141). The entire question of whether halakhic rulings could ever be made on the basis of the Zohar or other kabbalistic texts led to considerable controversy. No less accomplished a kabbalist than David b. Zimra

declared that, apart from the Zohar itself, it was forbidden to cite a kabbalistic work in opposition to even an isolated halakhic authority. A differing view was expressed by Benjamin Aaron Selnik, a disciple of Moses Isserles, in his volume of responsa, *Mas'at Binyamin* (1633): "If all the [halakhic] writers since the closing of the Talmud were placed in one pan of the scales, and the author of the Zohar in the other, the latter would outweigh them all." The laws and regulations that could be gleaned from the Zohar were collected by Issachar Baer b. Pethahiah of Kremnitz in his *Yesh Sakhav* (Prague, 1609). Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1629) assembled a large amount of material dealing with the attitudes of the halakhic authorities to various kabbalistic innovations (*Mazrefle-Hokhmah* (1865), 66–82). The tremendous growth of new customs influenced by Lurianic Kabbalah led a number of kabbalists to seek to elevate Isaac Luria himself to a halakhically authoritative status. Even Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, who generally accepted as authoritative the halakhic opinions of Joseph Caro, wrote that Isaac Luria's interpretations of *halakhah* took precedence over Caro's Shulhan Arukh (*Shiyurei Berakhah* on *Orah Hayyim*). The tendency to refer to kabbalistic sources in the course of halakhic discussions was much more prominent in the post-Lurianic period among the Sephardim than among the Ashkenazim. The influence of the Kabbalah was particularly felt in connection with observances involving prayer, the Sabbath, and holidays, and was much less pronounced in more purely legal matters. It was common practice to comment on halakhic fine points from a kabbalistic perspective without actually claiming for the latter any halakhic authority. Outstanding examples of this are the *Mekor Hayyim* (1878–79) of Hayyim ha-Kohen of Aleppo, a disciple of Hayyim Vital, and Jacob Hayyim b. Isaac Baruch's *Kaf ha-Hayyim* (1912–29), a compilation of all the kabbalistic matter connected with the *Orah Hayyim* of the Shulhan Arukh.

In the realm of *aggadah*, the Kabbalah was unrestricted, and many kabbalists made use of this opportunity not only to compose far-reaching interpretations of the early *aggadot* of the Midrash, in which they saw the key to many of their mystic doctrines, but also to create a rich new body of aggadic legend bearing a strongly mythic character. In general, they were more at home in aggadic expression than in systematic exposition, and it is to this "kabbalization" of the *aggadah* that much of the enormous attraction of the Zohar must be credited. As for the fresh aggadic material created by the kabbalists themselves, it largely consisted of a mystical dramatization of the epos of creation and of the interaction of upper and lower worlds in the lives of the biblical heroes. The latter are portrayed as acting against a broad cosmic background, drawing sustenance from supernatural powers and affecting them in turn by their deeds. The classic anthology of nearly 500 years of this kabbalistic *aggadah* is Reuben Hoeshke of Prague's *Yalkut Re'uvei*, a first edition of which (Prague, 1660) was organized topically, while its second, enlarged version (Wilmersdorf, 1681), which was modeled after the early midrashic anthology, *Yalkut Shimoni*, was arranged as a commentary on the Torah. Another comprehensive collection of both exoteric and esoteric *aggadot* on the period from the first week of creation to Adam's sin is Nahum Breiner's *Yalkut Nahmani* (1937).

The main influence of Kabbalah on Jewish life must be sought in the three areas of prayer, custom, and ethics. Here the Kabbalah had practically unlimited freedom to exert its influence, which expressed itself in the creation of a broad body of literature that was directed at every Jewish home. From the middle of the 17th century onward,

kabbalistic motifs entered the everyday prayer book and inspired special liturgies intended for a variety of specific occasions and rituals, many of which were in essence kabbalistic creations. This development began in Italy with books by Aaron Berechiah Modena and Moses Zacuto, and above all, with the appearance of Nathan Hannover's *Sha'arei Ziyyon* (Prague, 1662), one of the most influential and widely circulated of all kabbalistic works. In this volume the Lurianic doctrines of man's mission on earth, his connections with the powers of the upper worlds, the transmigrations of his soul, and his striving to achieve *tikkun* were woven into prayers that could be appreciated and understood by everyone, or that at least could arouse everyone's imagination and emotions. Such liturgies reached the furthest corners of the Diaspora and continued to be popular among Jews in Muslim countries long after they were excised from the prayer book by the Jewish communities of Central Europe as a consequence of the decline of the Kabbalah there in the 19th century. Sizable anthologies of highly emotional prayers composed under kabbalistic inspiration were published mainly in Leghorn, Venice, Constantinople, and Salonika. Especially important in this realm were the activities of Judah Samuel Ashkenazi, Abraham Anakawa, and above all, Abraham Hammawi (or Hamoj), who published a series of such books in Leghorn for the Jews of North Africa (*Bet Oved*, *Bet El*, *Bet ha-Kaporet*, *Bet ha-Behirot*, *Bet Av*, *Bet Din*, *Bet ha-Sho'evah*, *Bet Menuhah*). The liturgical anthology *Ozar ha-Tefillot* (1914) reflects the last lingering kabbalistic influences on the prayers of Eastern European Jewry.

Popular customs and popular faith were also highly affected by the spread of the Kabbalah. Many kabbalistic concepts were absorbed at the level of folk beliefs, such as the doctrine of man's first sin as the cause of a disruption in the upper worlds, the belief in transmigration of souls, the kabbalistic teachings about the Messiah, or the demonology of the later Kabbalah. Throughout the Diaspora, the number of folk customs whose origins were kabbalistic was enormous; many were taken directly from the Zohar, and many others from Lurianic tradition, the observances of which were compiled in the middle of the 17th century by Jacob Zemaḥ in his *Shulḥan Arukh ha-Ari* and *Naggid u-Mezavveh*. A more recent guide to Lurianic customs was the compilation *Ta'amei ha-Minhagim* (1911-12). Such customs came on the whole to fulfill four mystical functions: the establishment of a harmony between the restrictive forces of *Din* and the outgoing forces of *Raḥamim*; to bring about or to symbolize the mystical "sacred marriage" (*ha-zivvug ha-kadosh*) between God and His *Shekhinah*; the redemption of the *Shekhinah* from its exile amid the forces of the *sitra aḥra*; the protection of oneself against the forces of the *sitra aḥra* and the battle to overcome them. Human action on earth assists or arouses events in the upper worlds, an interplay that has both its symbolic and its magical side. Indeed, in this conception of religious ceremony as a vehicle for the workings of divine forces, a very real danger existed that an essentially mystical perspective might be transformed in practice into an essentially magical one. Undeniably, the social effects of the Kabbalah on popular Jewish custom and ceremony were characterized by this ambivalence. Alongside the tendency to greater religious inwardness and insight was the tendency to a complete demonization of all life. The conspicuous growth of this latter trend at the expense of the former was undoubtedly one of the factors which, by reducing Kabbalah to the level of popular superstition, ultimately helped eliminate it as a serious historical force. (See G. Scholem, *The Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (1965), 118-57.)

Among kabbalistic customs that became particularly widespread were the holding of midnight vigils for the exile of the *Shekhinah*, the treating of the eve of the new moon as "a little Day of Atonement," and the holding of dusk-to-dawn vigils, which were dedicated to both ordinary and mystical study, on the nights of Pentecost, Hoshanah Rabba, and the seventh day of Passover. All such ceremonies and their accompanying liturgies and texts were referred to as *tikkunim* (e.g., "the *tikkun* of midnight" for the exile of the *Shekhinah*, etc.). A special atmosphere of solemn celebration surrounded the Sabbath, which was thoroughly pervaded with kabbalistic ideas about man's role in the unification of the upper worlds. Under the symbolic aspect of "the marriage of King and Queen," the Sabbath was enriched by a wealth of new customs that originated in Safed, such as the singing of the mystical hymn *Lekhah Dodi* and the recital of the Song of Songs and Chapter 31 of Proverbs ("A woman of valor who can find?"), all of which were intended as meditations on the *Shekhinah* in her aspect as God's mystical bride. Mystical and demonic motifs became particularly intertwined in the area of sexual life, to which an entire literature was devoted, starting with the *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, later mistakenly ascribed to Nahmanides (see G. Scholem, in: KS 21 (1944), 179-86; and Monford Harris, in: HUCA 33 (1962), 197-220) and continuing up to Nahman of Bratslav's *Tikkun ha-Kelali*. Connected with these motifs were also a number of common burial customs, such as the circling of corpses and the forbidding of sons to attend their fathers' funerals. Similar ideas were behind the fast days in the months of Tevet and Shevat for "the *tikkun* of the *shovevim*," that is, of the demonic offspring of nocturnal emission.

This penetration of kabbalistic customs and beliefs, which left no corner of Jewish life untouched, is especially well documented in two highly influential books: Isaiah Horowitz's *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* (1648), which was accorded a particularly prominent place among Ashkenazi Jewry, and the anonymous *Ḥemdat Yamim* (1731), which was written by a moderate Shabbatean in the early 18th century. The latter book was circulated at first in Poland as well, but once its Shabbatean character came under attack its influence became largely restricted to the Sephardi world, where it fostered an entire literature of breviaries and study texts for special occasions. Despite the bulkiness of such works, their expressive power and rich contents made them classics of their kind. Noteworthy among more recent examples of this literature is Mordecai Moses Sassoon of Baghdad's *Davar be-Itto* (1862-94). A custom that became particularly widespread among the Sephardim was that of reciting the Zohar aloud, paying no attention to its contents, simply as "salutary for the soul."

Most of the popular ethical works of *musar* literature, especially the more prominent of them, bear the stamp of kabbalistic influences from the 1570s until the beginning of the 19th century, and even until the latter's end in the Sephardi world. The pioneer works in this respect were Eliezer Azikri's *Sefer Ḥaredim* (Venice, 1601), and Elijah de Vidas' *Reshit Ḥokhmah* (Venice, 1579), a comprehensive and exhaustive volume on all ethical aspects of Jewish life which served as a link between the motifs of medieval aggadic and *musar* literature and the new world of popular Kabbalah. Contemporaneous homiletic literature, much of which was also devoted to ethical instruction, also contains strong kabbalistic elements, which were further reinforced by the spread of Lurianic beliefs. The Lurianic doctrines of *tikkun*, the transmigration of souls, and the struggle with the *sitra aḥra* were subjected to especially intensive popular treatment. Such exhortative works as Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah* (Constantinople, 1734), Zevi Hirsch

Koidanover's *Kav ha-Yashar* (Frankfort, 1705), Elijah ha-Kohen's *Shevet Musar* (Constantinople, 1712), and many others down to the *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* of Hayyim of Volozhin, a disciple of the Gaon of Vilna, manifest indebtedness to kabbalistic sources on every page. Even the crowning masterpiece of this type of ethical literature, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's *Mesillat Yesharim* (Amsterdam, 1740), was basically inspired by a conception of the ethical education of the Jew as a stage on the way to mystical communion with God, despite its restricted use of kabbalistic citations and symbols. Similar works of ethical exhortation composed in Poland in the middle of the 18th century are highly charged with attitudes and ideas that clearly served as a prelude to the beginnings of Hasidism. Examples of such books are Moses b. Jacob of Satanov's *Mishmeret ha-Kodesh* (Zolkiew, 1746), the *Bet Perez* (Zolkiew, 1759) of Perez b. Moses who was a kabbalist of the Brody Klaus, and Simḥah of Zalozic's *Lev Simḥah* and *Neti'ah shel Simḥah* (Zolkiew, 1757 and 1763). In the 20th century the deep influence of kabbalistic *musar* literature can still be felt in the works of R. Abraham Kook. Similarly, in the mid-19th century, we find R. Judah Alkalai of Belgrade, one of the earliest heralds of Zionism, still totally immersed in the ethical world of the Kabbalah (see his collected writings in Hebrew, Jerusalem, 1944).

The Christian Kabbalah. From the late 15th century onward, in certain Christian circles of a mystical and theosophical persuasion a movement began to evolve with the object of harmonizing kabbalistic doctrines with Christianity, and, above all, of demonstrating that the true hidden meaning of the teachings of the Kabbalah points in a Christian direction. Naturally, such views did not meet with a friendly reception from the kabbalists themselves, who expressed nothing but derision for the misunderstandings and distortions of kabbalistic doctrine of which Christian Kabbalah was full; but the latter undeniably succeeded in arousing lively interest and debate among spiritualistic circles in the West until at least the middle of the 18th century. Historically, Christian Kabbalah sprang from two sources. The first was the christological speculations of a number of Jewish converts who are known to us from the end of the 13th century until the period of the Spanish expulsion (G. Scholem, in *Essays Presented to Leo Baeck* (1954), 158–93), such as *Abner of Burgos (Yizḥak Baer, *Tarbiz* 27 (1958), 152–63), and Paul de Heredia, who pseudonymously composed several texts of Christian Kabbalah entitled *Iggeret ha-Sodot* and *Galei Rezaya* in the name of Judah ha-Nasi and other *tannaim*. Another such tract put out by Jewish converts in Spain toward the end of the 15th century, and written in imitation of the styles of the *aggadah* and the *Zohar*, circulated widely in Italy. Such compositions had little effect on serious Christian spiritualists, nor was their clearly tendentious missionary purpose calculated to win readers. Another matter entirely, however, was the Christian speculation about the Kabbalah that first developed around the Platonic Academy endowed by the Medicis in Florence and was pursued in close connection with the new horizons opened up by the Renaissance in general. These Florentine circles believed that they had discovered in the Kabbalah an original divine revelation to mankind that had been lost and would now be restored, and with the aid of which it was possible not only to understand the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, and the Orphics, all of whom they greatly admired, but also the secrets of the Catholic faith. The founder of this Christian school of Kabbalah was the renowned Florentine prodigy Giovanni *Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), who had long passages of kabbalistic literature translated for him into Latin by the very learned convert Samuel b. Nissim Abulfaraj,

later Raymond Moncada, also known as Flavius *Mithridates, Pico began his kabbalistic studies in 1486, and when he displayed his 900 famous theses for public debate in Rome he included among them 47 propositions taken directly from kabbalistic sources, the majority from Recanati's commentary on the Torah, and 72 more propositions that represented his own conclusions from his kabbalistic research. These theses, especially the daring claim that "no science can better convince us of the divinity of Jesus Christ than magic and the Kabbalah," first brought the Kabbalah to the attention of many Christians. The ecclesiastical authorities fiercely rejected this and other of Pico's propositions, and there ensued the first real debate on the subject of the Kabbalah ever to take place in humanistic and clerical circles. Pico himself believed that he could prove the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation on the basis of kabbalistic axioms. The sudden discovery of an esoteric Jewish tradition that had hitherto been completely unknown caused a sensation in the Christian intellectual world, and Pico's subsequent writings on the Kabbalah helped to further increase the interest of Christian Platonists in these newly uncovered sources, particularly in Italy, Germany, and France. Under Pico's influence the great Christian Hebraist Johannes *Reuchlin (1455–1522) also took up the study of Kabbalah and published two Latin books on the subject, the first ever to be written by a non-Jew, *De Verbo Mirifico* ("On the Miracle-working Name," 1494) and *De Arte Cabalistica* ("On the Science of the Kabbalah," 1517). The years between these two dates also witnessed the appearance of a number of works by the learned convert Paul Ricius, the private physician of Emperor Maximilian, who took Pico's and Reuchlin's conclusions and added to them through an original synthesis of kabbalistic and Christian sources. Reuchlin's own main contribution was his association of the dogma of the Incarnation with a series of bold speculations on the kabbalistic doctrine of the Divine Names of God. Human history, Reuchlin argued, could be divided into three periods. In the first or natural period, God revealed Himself to the patriarchs through the three-lettered name of Shaddai (שׁדׁי). In the period of the Torah He revealed Himself to Moses through the four-lettered name of the Tetragrammaton. But in the period of grace and redemption He revealed Himself through five letters, namely, the Tetragrammaton with the addition of the letter *shin*, signifying the Logos, thus spelling Yehoshua or Jesus. In the name of Jesus, which is the true Miraculous Name, the formerly forbidden name of God now became pronounceable. In Reuchlin's schematic arrangement, which was able to draw for support on the common abbreviation for Jesus in medieval manuscripts, JHS, Jewish beliefs in three world ages (Chaos, Torah, Messiah) blended with the tripartite Christian division of the millennialist school of Joachim of Fiore into a reign of the Father, a reign of the Son, and a reign of the Holy Ghost.

Pico's and Reuchlin's writings, which placed the Kabbalah in the context of some of the leading intellectual developments of the time, attracted wide attention. They led on the one hand to considerable interest in the doctrine of Divine Names and in practical Kabbalah, and on the other hand to further speculative attempts to achieve a synthesis between kabbalistic motifs and Christian theology. The place of honor accorded to practical Kabbalah in Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim's great compendium *De Occulta Philosophia* (1531), which was a widely read summary of all the occult sciences of the day, was largely responsible for the mistaken association of the Kabbalah in the Christian world with numerology and witchcraft. Several Christian kabbalists of the mid-16th century made a considerable effort to master the sources of the Kabbalah

more deeply, both in Hebrew and in Latin translations prepared for them, thus widening the basis for their attempts to discover common ground between the Kabbalah and Christianity. Among the most prominent of these figures were Cardinal *Egidio da Viterbo (1465–1532), whose *Scechina* (ed. F. Secret, 1959) and “On the Hebrew Letters” were influenced by ideas in the Zohar and the *Sefer ha-Temunah*, and the Franciscan Francesco *Giorgio of Venice (1460–1540), the author of two large and at the time widely read books, *De Harmonia Mundi* (1525) and *Problemata* (1536), in which the Kabbalah assumed a central place and manuscript material from the Zohar was used extensively for the first time in a Christian work. The admiration of these Christian authors for the Kabbalah aroused an angry reaction in some quarters, which accused them of disseminating the view that any Jewish kabbalist could boast of being a better Christian than an orthodox Catholic. A more original mystical thinker who was also better acquainted with the Jewish sources was the renowned Frenchman Guillaume *Postel (1510–1581), one of the outstanding personalities of the Renaissance. Postel translated the Zohar and the *Sefer Yeẓirah* into Latin even before they had been printed in the original, and accompanied his translation with a lengthy theosophic exposition of his own views. In 1548 he published a kabbalistic commentary in Latin translation on the mystical significance of the *menorah*, and later a Hebrew edition as well. These authors had many connections in Jewish circles.

During this period, Christian Kabbalah was primarily concerned with the development of certain religious and philosophical ideas for their own sake rather than with the desire to evangelize among Jews, though this latter activity was occasionally stressed to justify a pursuit that was otherwise suspect in many eyes. One of the most dedicated of such Christian kabbalists was Johann Albrecht *Widmanstetter (Widmanstadius; 1506–1557), whose enthusiasm for the Kabbalah led him to collect many kabbalistic manuscripts that are extant in Munich. Many of his contemporaries, however, remained content to speculate in the realm of Christian Kabbalah without any first-hand knowledge of the sources. Indeed, in the course of time the knowledge of Jewish sources diminished among the Christian kabbalists, and consequently the Jewish element in their books became progressively slighter, its place being taken by esoteric Christian speculations whose connections with Jewish motifs were remote. The Lurianic revival in Safed had no effect on these circles. Their commitment to missionary work increased, yet the number of Jewish converts to Christianity from kabbalistic motives, or of those who claimed such motives retrospectively, remained disproportionately small among the numbers of converts in general. There is no clear evidence in the writings of such Christian theosophists to indicate whether or not they believed the Jewish kabbalists to be hidden or unconscious Christians at heart. In any event, Christian Kabbalah occupied an honored place both in the 16th century, primarily in Italy and France, and in the 17th century, when its center moved to Germany and England.

In the 17th century Christian Kabbalah received two great impetuses, one being the theosophical writings of Jacob Boehme, and the other Christian *Knorr von Rosenroth's vast kabbalistic compendium *Kabbala Denudata* (1677–84), which for the first time made available to interested Christian readers, most of whom were undoubtedly mystically inclined themselves, not only important sections of the Zohar but sizable excerpts from Lurianic Kabbalah as well. In this work and in the writings of the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher the parallel is drawn for the first time between the kabbalistic doctrine of *Adam Kadmon*

and the concept of Jesus as primordial man in Christian theology. This analogy is pressed particularly in the essay entitled *Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae* which appears at the end of the *Kabbala Denudata* (Fr. trans., Paris, 1899), and from which the very term Christian Kabbalah was taken over by many writers. Its anonymous author was in fact the well-known Dutch theosophist, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, all of whose works are shot through with kabbalistic ideas. It was Van Helmont who served as the link between the Kabbalah and the Cambridge Platonists led by Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, who made use of kabbalistic motifs for their own original speculative purposes, more especially. Somewhat earlier, students (as well as opponents) of Jacob Boehme had discovered the inner affinity between his own theosophical system and that of the Kabbalah, though there would seem to be no historical connection between them, and in certain circles, particularly in Germany, Holland, and England, Christian Kabbalah henceforward assumed a Boehmian guise. In 1673 a large chart was erected in front of a Protestant church in Teinach (southern Germany), which had as its purpose the presentation of a kind of visual summary of this school of Christian Kabbalah. Several different interpretations were given to it. As early as the late 16th century a pronounced trend had emerged toward the permeation of Christian Kabbalah with alchemical symbolism, thus giving it an oddly original character in its final stages of development in the 17th and 18th centuries. This mélange of elements typifies the works of Heinrich Khunrat, *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (1609), Blaise de *Vigenère, *Traité du Feu* (1617), Abraham von Frankenberg, Robert Fludd (1574–1637), and Thomas Vaughan (1622–1666), and reaches its apogee in Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum* (1735) and the many books of F. C. Oetinger (1702–1782), whose influence is discernible in the works of such great figures of German idealist philosophy as Hegel and Schelling. In yet another form this mixture reappears in the theosophical systems of the Freemasons in the second half of the 18th century. A late phase of Christian Kabbalah is represented by Martines de Pasqually (1727–1774) in his *Traité de la réintégration des êtres*, which greatly influenced theosophical currents in France. The author's disciple was the well-known mystic Louis Claude de St. Martin. Pasqually himself was suspected during his lifetime of being a secret Jew, and modern scholarship has in fact established that he was of Marrano ancestry. The sources of his intellectual indebtedness, however, have still to be clarified. The crowning and final achievement of Christian Kabbalah was Franz Josef Molitor's (1779–1861) comprehensive *Philosophie der Geschichte oder Ueber die Tradition*, which combined profound speculation in a Christian kabbalistic vein with highly suggestive research into the ideas of the Kabbalah itself. Molitor too still clung to a fundamentally christological view of the Kabbalah, whose historical evolution he completely failed to understand, yet at the same time he revealed an essential grasp of kabbalistic doctrine and an insight into the world of the Kabbalah far superior to that of most Jewish scholars of his time.

Scholarship and the Kabbalah. As implied above, the beginnings of scholarly investigation of the Kabbalah were bound up with the interests of Christian Kabbalah and its missionary zeal. A number of Christian kabbalists were led to study the literature of the Kabbalah first hand, one of the first being Reuchlin, who resorted primarily to the works of Gikatilla and to a large collection of early kabbalistic writings that has been preserved in Halberstamm Ms. 444 (in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York). Though a significant number of kabbalistic works had been translated by the middle of the 16th century, only a few of

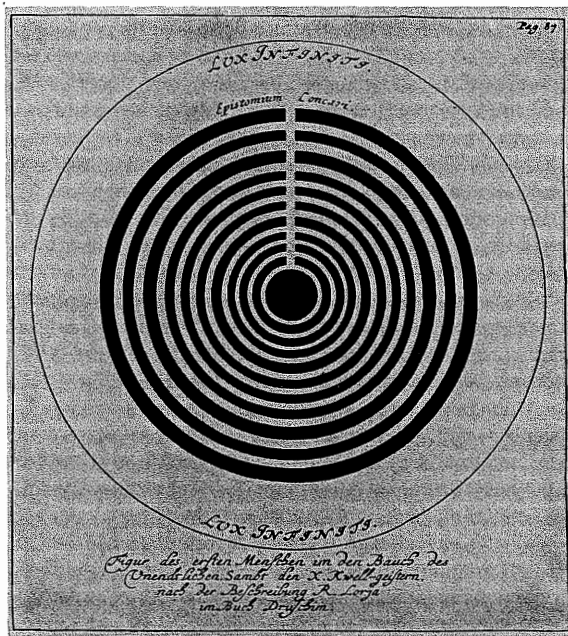


Figure 14. Diagram of the Adam Kadmon ("primordial man") in the womb of the Ein-Sof ("infinite"). From Johann Georg Wachter. *Der Spinozismus im Juedenthumb*, Amsterdam, 1699. Jerusalem, J.N.U.L.

these translations, such as one of Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orah* (1516), had been published, while the majority remained in manuscript where they did little to stimulate further research. In addition, the theological presuppositions of the Christian kabbalists ruled out any historical, to say nothing of critical, perspective on their part. A crucial turning-point was the publication of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*, despite its many erroneous translations which were further compounded in the retranslation of some of its parts into English and French (see MGWJ 75 (1932), 444–8). The appearance of this book aroused the interest of several scholars who had not previously had any attachment to Christian Kabbalah. Completely at variance with the latter's premises was Johann Georg Wachter's study of Spinozistic tendencies in Judaism, *Der Spinozismus im Juedenthumb* [sic!] (Amsterdam, 1699), which was the first work to interpret the theology of the Kabbalah pantheistically and to argue that the kabbalists were not disguised Christians but rather disguised atheists. Wachter's book greatly influenced discussions on the subject throughout the 18th century. Early in the 18th century J. P. Buddeus proposed the theory of a close connection between the early Gnostics and the Kabbalah in his "Introduction to the History of the Philosophy of the Jews" (in Latin, Halle, 1720), which was largely devoted to the Kabbalah. J. K. Schramm too, in his "Introduction to the Dialectics of the Kabbalists" (Braunschweig, 1703) sought to discuss the subject in scientific and philosophical terms, while G. Sommer's *Specimen Theologiae Soharicae* (Gotha, 1734) presented an anthology of all the passages from the Zohar that were in the author's opinion close to Christian doctrine. A particularly valuable though now totally forgotten book was Hermann von der Hardt's *Aenigmata Judaeorum Religiosissima* (Helmstadt, 1705), which dealt with practical Kabbalah. J. P. Kleuker published a study in 1786 in which he argued the case for a decisive Persian influence on the kabbalistic doctrine of emanation. Common to all these early scholars was the belief that the Kabbalah was in essence not Jewish at all, but rather Christian, Greek, or Persian.

Scholarly investigation of the Kabbalah by Jews also first

served a tendentious purpose, namely, to polemicize against what was felt to be the Kabbalah's undue influence on Jewish life. The first critical work to be written in this vein was Jacob Emden's highly influential *Mitpahat Sefarim* (Altona, 1768), which grew out of the author's battle with Shabbateanism and was intended to weaken the authority of the Zohar by proving that many of its passages were late interpolations. In the 19th century also most Jewish scholarship on the Kabbalah bore a polemical character primarily aimed against kabbalistic influences as they appeared in Hasidism. For the most part such scholars too considered the Kabbalah to have been an essentially foreign presence in Jewish life. At the time, indeed, Kabbalah was still a kind of stepdaughter in the field of Jewish scholarship whose actual literary sources were studied by only a few. Even from this limited perspective, however, important contributions to the investigation of the Kabbalah were made by Samuel David Luzzatto, Adolphe Franck, H. D. Joel, Senior Sachs, Aaron Jellinek, Isaac Miseses, Graetz, Ignatz Stern, and M. Steinschneider. The works of the single Jewish scholar of this period to devote in-depth studies to the Zohar and other important kabbalistic texts, Eliakim Milsahagi (Samiler), remained almost completely unpublished and were eventually forgotten and largely lost. All that has been preserved of them is his analysis of the Zohar (Jerusalem Ms. 4° 121), and the *Sefer Raziel*. Works on the Kabbalah during the Haskalah period are almost all practically worthless, such as the many tracts and books of Solomon Rubin. Exceptions are David Kahana's studies of Lurianic Kabbalah, which despite their polemic tendentiousness have some historical value. The only two scholars of the age to approach the Kabbalah out of a fundamental sympathy and even affinity for its teachings were the Christian P. J. Molitor and the Jew Elijah Benamozegh. The many books written on the subject in the 19th and 20th centuries by various theosophists and mystics lacked any basic knowledge of the sources and very rarely contributed to the field, while at times they even hindered the development of a historical approach. Similarly, the activities of French and English occultists contributed nothing and only served to create considerable confusion between the teachings of the Kabbalah and their own totally unrelated inventions. To this category of supreme charlatanism belong the many and widely read books of Eliphaz Levi (actually Alphonse Louis Constant; 1810–1875), Papus (Gérard Encausse; 1868–1916), and Frater Perdurabo (Aleister Crowley; 1875–1946), all of whom had an infinitesimal knowledge of Kabbalah that did not prevent them from drawing freely on their imaginations instead. The comprehensive works of A. E. Waite, S. Karppe, and P. Vulliaud, on the other hand, were mere compilations made from secondhand sources.

The profoundly altered approach to Jewish history that followed in the wake of the Zionist revival and the movement for national rebirth led, particularly after World War I, to a renewal of interest in the Kabbalah as a vital expression of Jewish existence. A new attempt was made to understand, independently of all polemic or apologetic positions, the genesis, development, historical role, and social and intellectual influence of the Kabbalah within the total context of the internal and external forces that have determined the shape of Jewish history. The pioneers of this new approach were S. A. Horodezky, Ernst Mueller, and G. Scholem. In the years following 1925 an international center for kabbalistic research came to reside in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Among the foremost representatives of the school of historical criticism that developed there were G. Scholem, Y. Tishby, E. Gottlieb, and J. Ben-Shlomo. Elsewhere important contributions to kabbal-

istic scholarship were made too, particularly by G. Vajda, A. Altmann, and François Secret. With the development of new perspectives in recent years, scholarly investigation of the Kabbalah is only now emerging from its infancy. Ahead of it lies a great deal of room for fruitful expansion that will yet take in kabbalistic literature in the whole of its richness and its many implications with regard to the life of the Jewish people.

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KABBALAH (Heb. קַבָּלָה; "received (doctrine)," "tradition"). Today the term Kabbalah is used for the mystic and esoteric doctrine of Judaism (see previous entry). The mystical connotation is unknown in the Talmud. In the Talmud the word occurs, however, in two other and entirely different senses. The first refers to the prophets and the Hagiographa as distinct from, and in contrast to, the Pentateuch. The other, especially in its verbal form *mekubbelani* ("I have received a kabbalah"), is used to indicate oral traditions handed down either from teacher to disciple, or as part of a family tradition.

The Talmud points out that the proof that Nisan is the first month of the year in the civil calendar (see *New Year) is derived from "the words of kabbalah," the reference being to Zechariah 1:7 (RH 7a), and that the Fast of Gedaliah was instituted in the kabbalah (*ibid.* 19a). Similarly, it points out that "the words of the Torah cannot be derived from words of kabbalah," the "words of kabbalah" being respectively from the Books of Kings and Amos (BK 2b., Hag. 10b), and in a passage of the Midrash a man protests that he is being sentenced to flogging on the

strength of a verse from the kabbalah (Ezra 10:3), which has not the same force as a law in the Pentateuch (Gen. R. 7:2). Mishnah *Ta'anit* 2:1, however, quotes a verse from the Book of Jonah (3:10) and continues "and in the words of kabbalah it says," quoting Joel 2:13. It has been suggested that in this passage the word should here be read as "kevalah" ("protest") instead of "kabbalah."

In the sense of "oral tradition," the verbal form of the word is frequently found for a tradition going back to the earliest times: "I have a kabbalah from R. Me'asha, who received it from his father, who received it from the *zugot, who received it from the prophets" (Pe'ah 2:6); "So I have a kabbalah from Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai, who heard it from his teacher, who heard it from his teacher" (Hag. 3b). It is also used for traditions from the outstanding early authorities Shemaiah and Avtalyon (Pes. 66a) or from Shammai the Elder (Git. 57a). Family traditions are quoted as a kabbalah "from my father's house" (Ber. 10a, 34b), "from my ancestors" (Shab. 119b), and to emphasize a continuous tradition "from the house of my father's father" (BM 59b; BB 110a; Sanh. 89a). From the Middle Ages the word kabbalah has been used for the certificate of competence issued by a rabbi for a *shoḥet*.

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KABBALAT SHABBAT (Heb. קַבָּלַת שַׁבָּת; "Reception of the Sabbath"), term designating the inauguration of the Sabbath in general and, in a more specifically liturgical sense, that part of the Friday evening service which precedes the regular evening prayer and solemnly welcomes the Sabbath. The inauguration begins considerably before nightfall "so as to add from the weekday to the holy day" (Yoma 81b). Much care is traditionally lavished on preparing for the Sabbath. All housework that is forbidden on the Sabbath, e.g. cooking, is completed beforehand (cf. Shab. 2:7; Shab. 119a). Before the Sabbath, some people used to read the weekly Torah section, twice in the original Hebrew texts and once in the Aramaic (Targum) version. It is customary to bathe before the beginning of the Sabbath and to put on festive clothes. The Talmud (Shab. 119a) tells that R. Hanina used to put on his Sabbath clothes and stand at sunset of Sabbath eve and exclaim: "Come and let us go forth to welcome the Queen Sabbath" and R. Yannai used to don his festive robes at that time and exclaim, "Come, O bride! Come, O bride!" These stories served as the main motif for the Sabbath hymn **Lekkah Dodi* of Solomon b. Moses ha-Levi *Alkabez and formed the basis of the custom of the kabbalists of Safed, who welcomed the Sabbath by going into the fields on Fridays at sunset to



Figure 1. *Kabbalat Shabbat* in a religious nursery school in Jerusalem, 1970. Courtesy Mrs. S. Bazak, Jerusalem.

