

ספר הזהר

The ספר הזוהר
Z O H A R

Pritzker Edition

VOLUME ELEVEN

Translation and Commentary by

Joel Hecker

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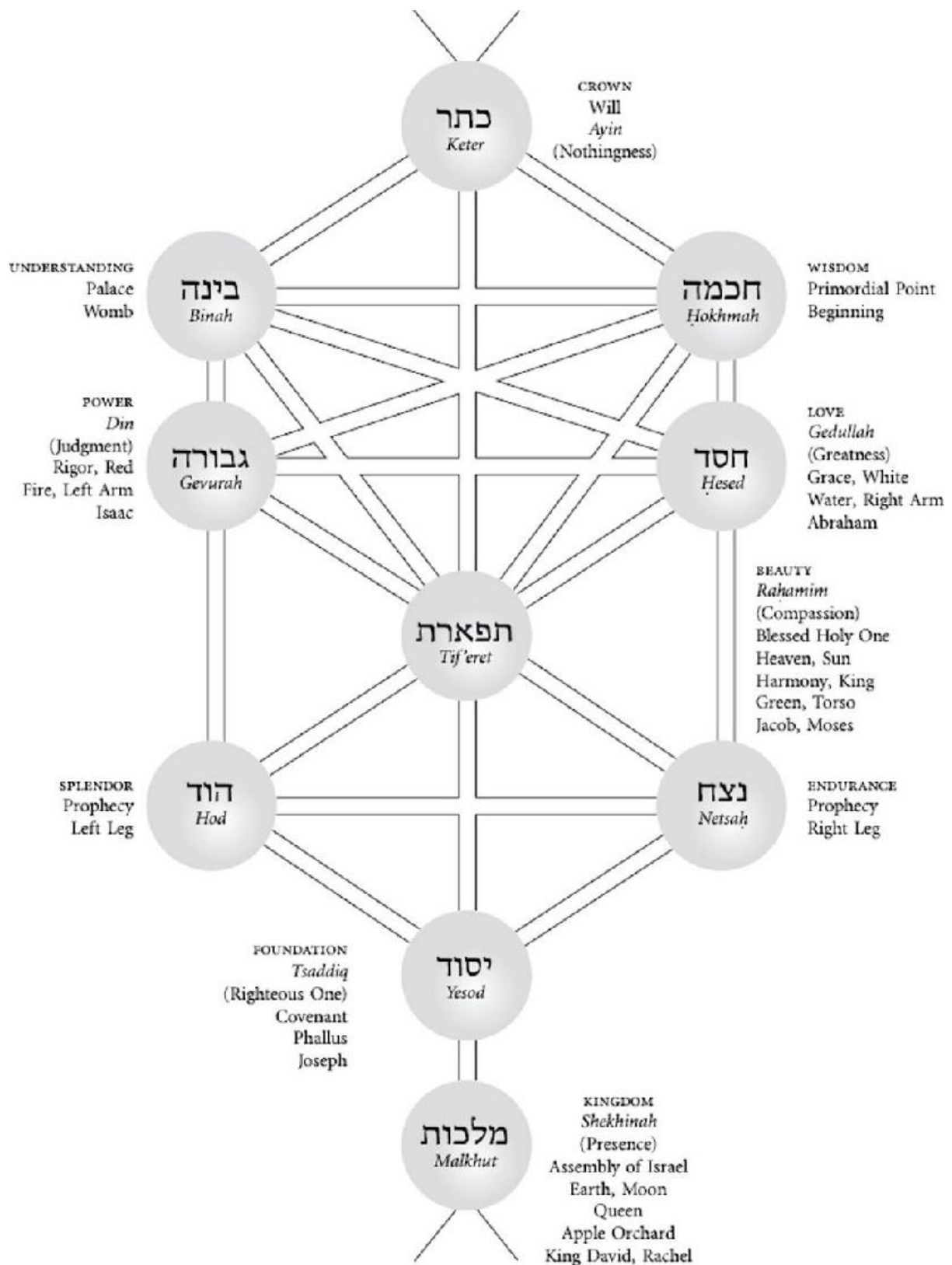
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The Ten Sefirot

Preface

This eleventh volume in the series is the first to present a variety of Zoharic texts, reflecting the range of genres within the Zoharic library. Many of these sections first appeared in print in the publication that was titled *Zohar Ḥadash*, or *New Zohar*; this title is misleading, however, in that the volume comprises some of the earliest Zoharic material.¹

The first chapter, *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Song of Songs, is quite short. Despite its name, it does not actively interpret the Song of Songs, aside from the opening treatment of the mystical import of the kiss, and its second homily that interprets the large letter *shin* at the beginning of that biblical book. Most likely, it was originally an introduction to a larger work, either lost or intended but never realized. Like *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on the Torah (see Preface to Volume 10), *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Song of Songs is populated by rabbis who are not among Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai's group in the Main Body of the *Zohar* (see Volumes 1-9). Unlike *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on the Torah, almost all of this fragment appears in Aramaic; and much of it is written with the standard theosophic symbolism that one finds in the epic layer of the *Zohar*. However, the last quarter of this work is an extended non-sefirotic interpretation of Ecclesiastes 12, drawing upon the classic style and content of its midrashic commentators.

Chapter Two, *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth, encompasses a wide range of Zoharic interests. Here, too, the text is written mostly in Aramaic, its broad array of

rabbinic figures is typical of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, and—as is characteristic of that Zoharic stratum—the focus is on aspects of the soul, its origin, and its fate. Much of the interpretive style is non-kabbalistic, although proto-kabbalistic and full-blown sefirotic imagery are also in abundance.

While the text interprets a substantial portion of the Book of Ruth, interspersed throughout are many other issues, including: near-death journeys to the afterlife; the chambers of hell; commentaries on the *Shema*, Grace after Meals, and other sections of the traditional liturgy, including several medieval liturgical innovations. Among them are the Zoharic prescription to repeat the final three words of the *Shema* (apparently referring to the last three words rather than the ultimately prevailing practice of repeating the last two words and the first word of the succeeding blessing); and the recital of the *Qaddish* prayer on behalf of the deceased. Other highlights include the story of the ten martyrs; reference to a threefold method of interpreting the Torah (although later traditions altered the text to conform to the well-known fourfold method, called PaRDeS); and the kabbalistic meaning of rules for dining. Since the ancient rabbis view Ruth as the first convert to Judaism, the *Zohar's* kabbalists use her story as a vehicle to think about Gentiles and, often, to polemicize against them.

Midrash ha-Ne'lam on Ruth was known by the editors of the first printed editions of the *Zohar*, but (aside from small passages scattered throughout the Cremona printing of 1558) was not included in them. Similarly, major kabbalists in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries did not always consider it to be part of the Zoharic corpus. It was first published as an independent work in Thiengen in 1559 under the titles *Yesod Shirim* and *Tappuḥei Zahav*, not gaining the name *Midrash ha-Ne'lam al Rut* until it was republished in Venice in 1565. Ultimately, it was incorporated into the 1658 printing of *Zohar Ḥadash*. Both

before and after that printing, the work carried other titles, such as *Midrash Rut* and *Sefer Midrash Rut he-Ḥadash*.

The third chapter, *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Lamentations, is notable for its pathos-filled debate between the inhabitants of Israel and the inhabitants of Babylon—a poignant competition in which each side argues that it has suffered more as a result of the destruction of the Temple. The inhabitants of Israel prevail, and then they express their anguish in their abandonment—as if having been orphaned by their Divine Father and Mother above. Ultimately, this serves as a Jewish reframing of the notion of a Holy Family, and as a subtle polemic against Christianity. *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* appear here as Father and Mother, with Israel as the Holy Child—in contrast to the Christian triad of God the Father, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus. The hybrid qualities of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on the Torah appear here as well: many different rabbis are cited; the work is written in Aramaic; it lacks allegorical interpretation; and it makes some use of Zoharic theosophic symbolism. Like *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Song of Songs, it has an extended line-by-line interpretation of Ecclesiastes 12; and like *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth, it has a discussion of the ten martyrs, as might be expected in the context of laments.

The last four chapters here (as well as the entirety of Volume 12) have been given the overarching title “Zoharic Compositions,” as a means of recognizing their place within the Zoharic corpus, even as they often diverge widely from the style of the Main Body of the *Zohar*. This volume’s fourth chapter, *Zohar* on Song of Songs, represents the Zoharic authorship in its most mature phase. The entire work is masterful in its exegetical craft, and soaring in its rhetoric. The literary framework (for much of the work) is an exchange of mystical homilies between Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai and the prophet Elijah, running a sustained commentary on Song of Songs 1:1–11. For many of the first

homilies, each of those two speakers demonstrates a thematic consistency: Rabbi Shim'on's teachings are about ascent (of the *sefirot*, or of the individual soul), while Elijah's deal with the ruptures caused by the presence of the demonic Other Side, human transgression, and the ways in which evil is overcome and harmony restored. Much of the latter part of this large work transposes the romance of the Song onto the exalted plane of masculine and feminine letters that are the fundamentals of reality. An overarching theme for both speakers is the restoration of linguistic and divine harmony. In the sixteenth century, Moses Cordovero considered this to be among the *Zohar's* most profound sections: "The commentaries on the *parashot* were composed casually, as [the companions] would interpret the Torah during breaks in their study of Jewish law, [whereas other compositions, including] *Shir ha-Shirim*... entailed a full-fledged commitment to compose the work."

It is hard to overstate the pervasive influence of the Song of Songs on the *Zohar* as a whole; the Song's imagery, romance, and themes of pursuit of the concealed, desired one suffuse the Zoharic corpus. One important practical ramification arising from this section/chapter is the *Zohar's* prohibition against wearing tefillin during the intermediate days of the festivals, which had broad influence on subsequent halakhic rulings.²

As for the remaining three sections (*Matnitin*, *Tosefta*, and *Sitrei Torah*), this volume marks the first time that they have been published in any language as discrete textual units, rather than dispersed within the *Zohar*. These Zoharic compositions are recognized for their independence; and their collection in this volume celebrates the richness of Zoharic works that are part of a varied corpus. In the early transmission of Zoharic texts, and continuing in the manuscript and printing traditions, these sections' titles have sometimes been used

interchangeably, while at other times they have been used generically to designate passages that later came to be included in the Main Body of the *Zohar*.³

Chapters Five and Six, *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*, respectively, have different names but are identical in style, imagery, and tone. These striking, frequently compact passages often feature oracular voices that are hortatory, calling upon sleeping humanity to awaken from their spiritual slumber in order to learn the truths of Torah and God's being. The style is terse, dramatic, and at times rhythmic, suggesting that some passages may have been chanted to induce mystical consciousness. A number of them provide brief summations of the entire sefirotic structure—but are so dense and enigmatic that they appear to differ from the relative consistency of the kabbalistic system that one finds elsewhere in the *Zohar*. While their terse descriptions of major Zoharic themes have led some to consider them early compositions—subsequently elaborated upon in the *Zohar* itself—it appears more likely that the authors wrote them later (and with many of what we now call Zoharic texts in mind). Their use of neologisms further heightens their sense of mystery and allure. Melila Hellner-Eshed has written that these passages “share conceptual, literary, stylistic, and linguistic features that bestow upon them their special character: heightened, ornate, and terse language; short, pathos-laden sentences; dramatic repetition; and frightening, threatening rhetoric.”⁴

The final chapter is *Sitrei Torah*, a collection of passages that are mostly connected to the book of Genesis. A central focus of these passages is the power of the demonic Other Side. Collation and analysis of the manuscripts reveals that those elements within some passages that are labeled *Sitrei Torah* in the printed editions and that share the allegorical style and interest in

the soul akin to *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* are in fact later additions—and so are not included in this translation.

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The years that it took to write this translation and commentary were incredibly blessed, and quite often blissful; not only because of the magnificence and holiness of the task, but because of the many scholars and friends who helped me with the labor—by reading sections of the translation, answering specific questions, and engaging in extended discussions of matters large and small. They include: Avruhm Addison, Adam Afterman, Shifra Asulin, David Azriel, Steve Bachrach, Tom Baker, Jonatan Benarroch, Ra'anana Boustan, Alexandra Cuffel, Dov Daniel, Joseph Davis, Jeffrey Dekro, Ronel Elul, Marc Michael Epstein, Michael Fishbane, Eugene Fleischman-Sotirescu, Judah Galinsky, Gilad Gevaryahu, Dovid Halpern, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Moshe Idel, Menahem Kallus, Tamar Kamionkowski, Ephraim Kanarfogel, Israel Knohl, Avraham Leder, Sarra Lev, Yehuda Liebes, Kelilah Miller, Ronit Meroz, Shlomo Naeh, Sara Offenberg, Jordan Penkower, Nick Renner, Biti Roi, Yosef Rosen, Chaim Saiman, Naomi Sarig, Jeff Shapiro, Tzvi Sinensky, Elsie Stern, Nachum Stollman, Steven Weiner, Josh Weinberger, Ari Weintraub, Yehudit Weiss, Matthew Weitzman, Nathan Wolski, and Oded Yisraeli. Special thanks to my Lower Merion *Zohar havrayya* and students at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, whose engaged study of many of the chapters helped clarify difficulties, and who brought errors to my attention. Lastly, I extend appreciation to the man who answered the phone at the McShane Bell Foundry in Glen Burnie, Maryland, who provided me with technical information on bells and their components.

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critical Aramaic text upon which this translation is based. Far beyond this task, Jonatan has highlighted the most interesting variants; he has also suggested parallels and related works stemming from his own immersion in Zoharic kabbalah. He has been a frequent companion on the path, helping me think through the significance of our joint project.

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My father, Harvey Hecker, of blessed memory, would have taken great delight in seeing this book come to publication, but his recent passing means that my mother, Sheila Hecker, has had to assume the cheerleading responsibilities of them both. My boys, Raz, Shai, and Hanina have watched this project from a distance but with growing respect for its significance. I thank them for their

endurance when I have been preoccupied with this project, and more importantly, for the light and laughs they bring to my life.

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Lastly, I thank the Almighty, the blessed Holy One, Mystery that both fills and encompasses all reality, Who has provided me with glimpses of glory through the *Zohar, Book of Radiance*.

J.H.

1. *Zohar Hadash* was first printed in Salonika in 1597. It was so called because it contained material (with minor exceptions) that had not appeared in the first printed editions of the *Zohar* (Mantua 1558-60 and Cremona 1558).

2. On the significance of the Song of Songs in Jewish mysticism, see M *Yadayim* 3:5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:1:11; *Tanḥuma, Tetsaveh* 5; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta*, (Buber), 9; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Schechter), 53; Rashi on Song of Songs 1:1; Abraham ibn Ezra, Introduction to Commentary on *Shir ha-Shirim; Bahir* 117 (174); Joshua ibn Shu'eib, *Derashot Yehoshu'a ibn Shu'eib*, 42a; Isaac ibn Sahula, *Peirush al Shir ha-Shirim*, 408; *Zohar* 2:18b, 98b (both *MhN*), 143b-145b; *ZḤ* 47d (*MhN, Rut*); Amado Levy-Valens, *La Poétique du Zohar*, 92-108; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim be-Sefer ha-Zohar ve-Riq'ah*.

3. See below, [pp. 535, n. 1](#); [542, n. 15](#); [623, n. 1](#).

[4.](#) Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 211.

MIDRASH HA-NE'LAM

מדרש הנעלם על שיר השירים

Midrash ha-Ne'lam al Shir ha-Shirim

MIDRASH HA-NE'LAM ON SONG OF SONGS

Rabbi Reḥumai opened,¹ “The רוּחַ (*ru’ah*), *spirit*, of YHVH will alight upon him, *ru’ah* of wisdom and understanding, *ru’ah* of counsel and power, *ru’ah* of knowledge and awe of YHVH (Isaiah 11:2). Here are four רוּחוֹת (*ruḥot*), spirits, and none has attained them other than King Messiah alone. But, look, it is written *From four ruḥot come, O ru’ah* (Ezekiel 37:9)—it is not written *four*! Actually, *from four ruḥot*—this is a complete *ru’ah*.”²

He said to him, “How does this happen?”³

He replied, “This is the one borne of love in a kiss. How? Love’s kiss occurs solely with the mouth. *Ru’ah* joins with *ru’ah*, each comprising two *ruḥot*: his *ru’ah* and his friend’s *ru’ah*—both present in four *ruḥot*. All the more so with a man and woman: when joined, four *ruḥot* together. The son who proceeds from them—*ru’ah* coming *from four ruḥot*. This is as is said, *From four ruḥot come, O ru’ah*—this is a complete *ru’ah*.”⁴

Rabbi Berekhiah recounted, “I was sitting at the gate of the great city of Rome, when I saw a man coming. I approached him and brought him home. I examined him in Scripture, Mishnah, Tosefta, and Haggadah—and found nothing in him. I upbraided him, but he didn’t respond at all. Then he threw himself down behind the door and dozed off. I sneered, ‘He and the dog can dine together.’⁵

“For this is what Rabbi Manyumi, the elder from Gush Halva, said: ‘What is the meaning of *The dogs are* עֲזֵי נֶפֶשׁ (*azzei nefesh*), *impudent, incapable of understanding* (Isaiah 56:11)? These are the ignoramuses who are עֲזֵי פָנִים (*azzei fanim*), brazenfaced, like a dog. Brazenfaced like a dog—what does this mean? That they are *incapable of understanding*, for the blessed Holy One does not cause His holiness to dwell in their midst.’ Hence they are called impudent, and that is why he and the dog should eat together.⁶

“When he awoke, he rose and drew near me at the table. He lowered his head, saying nothing. I looked—and saw laughter in his eyes. He said to me, ‘Surely you have strayed from the path of your Master, for He set the table even before Adam arrived, before commanding or examining him. If you persist in proceeding on this path, your sons will not survive you!’ Immediately, he retracted, saying, ‘Your sons will live and will survive you!’⁷

“I asked him, ‘Why did you retract your words? Why the remorse?’

“He replied, ‘It is forbidden to curse oneself, all the more so another. For a curse from a sage, even if conditional, will be fulfilled.’⁸

“I said, ‘This is certainly so, as is written: *With whomever you find your gods, that person shall not live* (Genesis 31:32), and it was upheld. But you—I examined you—your curse is worthless!’⁹

“He opened, saying, ‘*Now, if You would only bear their sin! And if not, wipe me out, please, from Your book that You have written!*’ (Exodus 32:32). This curse was stated conditionally: the blessed Holy One absolved them of their sins on Moses’ account, but as a result of that [conditional curse] he was blotted out from a supreme *parashah* of the Torah, the commandment to construct the Dwelling. This is the *parashah* of *You shall command* (Exodus 27:20), in which Moses’ name should have been written in each and every

word, in each and every commandment. But he was blotted out from the entire *parashah*, unmentioned. An instance of 'A sage's curse, even if conditional, is fulfilled.'¹⁰

"Upon recognizing his stature, I got up and seated him at the head of the table. I said to him, 'But it was after *You shall command* that Moses uttered those words!'¹¹

"He replied, 'There is no early and late in the Torah.'¹²

"I asked him questions about Scripture, Mishnah, Tosefta, and Aggadah, and he was expert in them all. I asked, 'Why did you not respond to me at the beginning when I examined you?'

"He replied, 'Exhaustion prevented me. I had not slept for two days, but now sleep has come to my eyes. [That is why] I had not answered.'

"After eating and drinking, he opened, saying, 'שִׁיר (*Shir*), *Song, of songs* (Song of Songs 1:1). Large ש (*shin*), second-to-last letter of the alphabet. ב (*Bet*) of בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bereshit*), *In the beginning* (Genesis 1:1), is large—second from the beginning of the alphabet. What is the explanation?¹³

"*Shin* is mystery of the upper chariot, and thus it has three columns. For the patriarchs [60d] are the chariot, and all of Song of Songs is mystery of the upper chariot—thus it begins with *shin*. *Bet* is the house of the world, formation of the world.¹⁴

"In this vein, standing at the beginnings of books—there are four. In accord with the style of their makeup and their distinctive mysteries, these opening letters are inscribed. These letters are great, towering over all other letters. That letter—mystery and secret of each book.¹⁵

"They are: א of Chronicles; ב (*bet*) of בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bereshit*), Genesis; מ (*mem*) of מִשְׁלֵי (*Mishlei*), Proverbs; and ש (*shin*) of שִׁיר (*shir*), Song, of Songs. These four letters, heads of books, great letters—one who knows them knows the mystery of the entire book. For Song of Songs is inscribed with that

letter, and that letter teaches the mystery of the whole book.¹⁶

“א (Alef)—its configuration in the image and secret of אדם (Adam), Man, in two ways. Head above all, engraved, for primal point is crowned, ruling over all in its engraving, crowned to spread out below. ו (Vav)—mystery and image of Adam in his perfection. He and His destined partner ד (dalet) below, cleaving to His side—this is the perfection of Adam.¹⁷

“A different facet: vav is in the middle of the form of Adam and [two yods] joined to it on two sides, modeled like arms, from this side and that.¹⁸

“This is א (alef)—form and secret of Adam. Hence alef is inscribed at the beginning of the book of Chronicles. For this book comes only to perfect Adam in his sides and rungs, through his descendants—Adam, entirely complete.¹⁹

“ב (Bet)—ביתא (beita), house, of the entire world. Surrounded on three sides, and above, and below—all creations comprised within it as one. Three sides of the entire world, but the north side remains unformed, for it is the wicked domain where all evil of the world dwells. This is as is said: *From the north evil will open up* (Jeremiah 1:14). Since ב is the house and structure of the entire world it is inscribed in large form at the beginning of the Torah, as an illustration of the entire book.²⁰

“This book is fashioned like the work of creation, through the secret of the Name of Forty-Two [Letters], which is contained within the work of creation. As a result, the book starts with ב (bet) and the book ends with ם (final mem), for the entire book is exalted through the mystery of forty-two letters.²¹

“מ (Mem)—Opening of the mystery of the perfect Female, *Woman of valor* (Proverbs 31:10), crowned with Her crown. Of this, the entire book of משלי (Mishlei), Proverbs, is nothing but praise for this woman of valor, to settle men’s minds, and [a warning] to guard against the evil woman. This is as is said: *To protect you from the*

woman of evil (Proverbs 6:24), and to draw you near this woman of valor through noble worship. Consequently, large מ (mem) at the beginning of the book, the whole book proceeding with this mystery.²²

“ו (shin)—unified in the mystery of the supernal chariot. For the patriarchs are the supernal chariot: Abraham and Isaac, united—this one in that one; contained—this one in that one. Jacob enters in the middle, harmonizing the two sides. Thus are they all unified in the mystery of the upper world.²³

“Consequently, this praise is in the mystery of the heavenly chariot, bonds with the King who possesses peace—this is why it is magnified. As a result, it is joined to the start of the book to show that the entire book proceeds and is adorned with this mystery. Through this mystery this letter exhibits the exaltation of the entire book.’²⁴

“At that moment, I rose and kissed him, beseeching him for forgiveness. And he forgave me.

“He opened, saying, ‘*Do not let your mouth make your flesh sin, and do not say before the angel that it was a mistake. Why should God rage over your voice and ruin your handiwork?*’ (Ecclesiastes 5:5). How much must a man be cautious in this world! The companions asked me about this verse, for it should have been written *Do not let your mouth make your soul sin*, as is said: *Should a soul sin errantly* (Leviticus 4:2). [61a] We do not find a verse saying *Should flesh sin errantly*, but rather ‘his soul,’ and this is fitting!²⁵

“Well, here is the explanation: It is forbidden for a man to speak lewdly, even with his wife, for this will induce an erection, leading toward other evil thoughts. Then he will thresh on his threshing floor and sow foreign oats. This is as is written: *Do not let your mouth make your flesh sin*. This alludes to sacred flesh, as is written: *I shall place My covenant in your flesh* (Genesis 17:13).²⁶

“*Do not say before the angel* (Ecclesiastes 5:5), who walks on one’s right side—do not speak words that are unseemly, rather let all your words be genteel and measured. Why? Because *it was a mistake* (ibid.), and he will be liable for a sacrifice offered for mistakes.^{[27](#)}

“Further, in this situation, *Why should God rage over your voice* (ibid.)? For a heavenly bird will convey that voice and present it before the blessed Holy One.^{[28](#)}

“To *ruin your handiwork*—for sin of the flesh. What is the explanation? It is because one who bears the holy covenant cannot be inducted by those rulers of Hell as long as he protected it. But if he did not guard it, they strip him of it, destroying and ravaging it—this was the man’s handiwork! Then they usher him into Hell, for there is no basis for them to be dissuaded.^{[29](#)}

“Now, my son, be more cautious with the honor of your fellow than that of your own body!”^{[30](#)}

Rabbi Joshua opened, saying, “*Even the bird has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may set her fledglings, by Your altars, YHVH of Hosts, my King and my God* (Psalms 84:4). *Even the bird*—we learned there that the blessed Holy One fashioned holy regions and districts on earth, more lofty than all other places of settlement.^{[31](#)}

“Everything is modeled after the human, for the blessed Holy One sifted that seed like one who sifts and scatters wheat: straw to one side, stubble to the other, until the wheat is refined in its place.^{[32](#)}

“Similarly, the blessed Holy One took snow from beneath His throne of Glory. The snow was warmed up in diverse ways, and then He cast it into the waters of the Female.^{[33](#)}

“It follows that a woman does not conceive until she discharges waters, and into those waters a man infuses

snow—seed that congeals more readily than the woman’s discharge, just like snow compared to water.³⁴

“After the blessed Holy One hurled it into the waters, He sifted it and scattered it. First, He generated a navel, a single point, refined from snow—that navel is Point of Zion. From there, four filaments stretched out to the four directions of the world: east, west, north, and south.³⁵

“From the filament that stretched from the eastern side, the core was formed, beginning in the east, concluding in the west. The core is the Land of Israel, inscribed with His letters—יְדֵי אֲדֹנָי (ADNY), Lord—Lord and Master of the entire world.³⁶

“From the filament that stretched from the south—most refined of all the snow and its power—right arm was fashioned. This is choicest delight—Garden of Eden, into which Primal Adam was placed—for the felicity of souls. Hidden and concealed, right side of the world.³⁷

“From the filament that stretched from the north, left arm was fashioned and created. This is Hell—from snow’s dross—for the torment of souls of the wicked.³⁸

“The head was readied in the heavens, but the world was headless until the Temple was constructed; once the Dwelling was erected, the head was erected.³⁹

“Mouth of the entire world—lodged in the head—is Sinai. The mouth was inscribed within waters, from the most refined snow. The thighs and all other limbs—apportioned to the other parts of the land.⁴⁰

“Just as a woman has contractions and pangs during childbirth, so too when the blessed Holy One sought to bring the earth out into the atmosphere of the world, the waters rose and fell—*they went up the mountains, went down the valleys* (Psalms 104:8). What did the blessed Holy One do? From the earth He extracted peals of thunder and earthquakes, and the waters surged. This is as is written: *From Your blast they fled, from the sound of [61b] Your thunder they scattered* (ibid., 7). The land emerged, but it

remained inert and soiled like an emerging infant—inert like a corpse and soiled from birth.⁴¹

“Just as they blow onto the infant until he awakes, placing a fire and candle nearby to warm him, and a mirror for illumination, thus did the blessed Holy One for the world when it emerged from the water. All this contained in one verse, as is written: *Your thunder’s sound under the wheel—lightning lit up the world. The earth shuddered* (Psalms 77:19).⁴²

“Afterward, the mouth and navel were sealed until Israel arrived, when the mouth was opened in the head in the heavens. This alludes to Sinai, where the Torah was given, and speech perfected.

“When Israel entered the land, the open was sealed, and the sealed, opened. The mouth was sealed, for speech had ceased—opposite of a human. Opening of navel—the Temple. From there the fetus eats what his mother eats, drinks what his mother drinks—and the entire world is nourished from the drippings of the Land of Israel.⁴³

“Thus, some locations in the world are superior to others. Garden of Eden—right arm of the entire world. Bearing within it regions and locations, one superior to the next—there is the place of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁴⁴

“In one of those chambers there is a concealed niche, hidden away from all. None know of that place other than one bird who turns up three times daily, chirping and singing among the trees of the Garden. Through that bird, souls learn their distinguishing characteristics when they praise and exalt, when they delve in wisdom to understand.⁴⁵

“Then that bird enters its chamber—hidden away, concealed, unknown. *Swallow* (Psalms 84:4)—holy soul, soaring upward, liberated.⁴⁶

“Another teaching: דרור (*deror*), *swallow*, [*has found*] *a nest for herself* (ibid.)—Jubilee, as is written: *proclaim* דרור

(*deror*), *freedom* (Leviticus 25:10). *Swallow [has found] a nest for herself*—in celestial *Hokhmah*. Bird and Freedom—this one above, that one below.⁴⁷

“*Where she may set her fledglings* (ibid.). Who? Jubilee—Fiftieth Year—who sends off six fledglings and this bird. Desire of these fledglings for two altars—inner altar and outer altar—taking from the inner altar and providing to the outer altar.⁴⁸

“*My king and my God* (ibid.). *My king*—outer altar. *My God*—inner altar. Constant desire of outer altar for inner altar, never ceasing from singing songs and praises, as is written: *Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s* (Song of Songs 1:1).⁴⁹

“As long as the flame is kindled upon the wick, and the wick is fitting, the light shines and glistens, and all are illuminated by it. But as long as the wick is missing, and the oil is lacking from the wick, the light disappears, and none are aware of that light at all. As long as Israel was primed and aligned like a wick, that celestial light was kindled upon them, singing song, never subsiding. The model of light upon the wick, never subsiding, corresponds to one above. That song—exemplar of all songs, holy of holies. If the wick is lacking, then the light is lacking (as it were), and it vanishes—then, none are aware of it.⁵⁰

“King Solomon declared, ‘*Recall your Creator!*’ (Ecclesiastes 12:1)—improve yourself, align yourself with commandments and virtuous actions *in the days of your youth* (ibid.), when that flame glows upon the wick.⁵¹

“Another teaching regarding that light when the wick is prepared: he said regarding that light, ‘*Recall your Creator*—arouse before the blessed Holy One in song and arouse love!’⁵²

“*Before the days of evil come* (ibid.)—when the moon is diminished, wickedness rules, and Her days, days without delight. Before *the sun darkens* (ibid., 2)—alluding to the

river that flows from Eden, as is written: *A river flows from Eden* (Genesis 2:10). Of this one is written *a river becomes parched and dry* (Job 14:11).⁵³

“*The light* (Ecclesiastes 12:2)—created by the blessed Holy One, in which He enwrapped Himself: His right hand. This is as is written: [61c] *He has withdrawn His right hand* (Lamentations 2:3).⁵⁴

“*The moon* (Ecclesiastes 12:2)—sea, filled by that river, as is written: *Waters vanish from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dry* (Job 14:11).⁵⁵

“*The stars* (Ecclesiastes 12:2)—twelve constellations known to Her.⁵⁶

“*The clouds come back* (ibid.)—archons of the nations of the world.⁵⁷

“*After the rain* (ibid.)—after the weeping of the ministering angels, as is written: *angels of peace weep bitterly* (Isaiah 33:7).⁵⁸

“*On the day that the guards of the house will quake* (Ecclesiastes 12:3)—guards of the walls, as is written: *Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set guards* (Isaiah 62:6). *The stalwart men are bent* (Ecclesiastes 12:3)—*Sixty warriors surrounding her* (Song of Songs 3:7). *The maids who grind grow idle* (Ecclesiastes 12:3)—those who eat the sacrificial offerings. *For they are now few* (ibid.)—wings of the creatures. *Those who look from the casements go dark* (ibid.)—these are the *eyes of YHVH, ranging over the whole earth* (Zechariah 4:10), and they are *seven eyes of YHVH* (ibid.).⁵⁹

“*The double doors close in the market* (ibid., 4)—the gates are all locked, except for the Gates of Tears, unlocked. *As the קול (qol), sound, of the mill quiets* (ibid.)—collapsed canopy of David, razed to the dust. קולה (Qolah), Her voice—constantly singing a song of love in the past—subdued. *All the songstresses are bowed* (ibid.)—angels

divided for the watches of the song, some singing by day, other watches singing by night.⁶⁰

*“Of the very height they are afraid (ibid., 5)—height upon height keeps guard (Ecclesiastes 5:7), each one guarding the other, each one receiving from the other, in pleasantness and holiness. But with the destruction of the Temple a curse went forth, and Hard Judgment appeared before Him. Then, one height feared another height and its judgment.*⁶¹

*“Terror is in the road (ibid.)—it is written: He is the one who makes a path through the sea (Isaiah 43:16). He descended on that very path, and dew from the head of the blessed Holy One came, and the fullness of joy, fullness of goodness, and fullness of desire proceeded on that path. But with the destruction of the Temple, rupture upon rupture on that same path—and all fury, fear, judgment, and force on that path, too.*⁶²

*“השקד (Ha-shaqed), The almond tree, blossoms (Ecclesiastes 12:5), as is said: וישקד YHVH (va-yishqod), has been eager, to bring the evil upon us (Daniel 9:14), and it is written a branch of שקד (shaqed), almond (Jeremiah 1:11). The almond blossoms for twenty-one days—from the seventeenth of Tammuz until the Ninth of Av. From the day that the almond blossom sprouts, it does not produce fruit until the twenty-first day.*⁶³

“The locust tree ויסתבל (ve-yistabbel), is burdened (Ecclesiastes 12:5)—הסבל (ha-sevel), burden, laid upon the shoulders of the House of David. The caper-fruit falls apart (ibid.)—alluding to worship in the Temple below. People cry out but they are not answered. What is the explanation? When man sets out for his eternal abode (ibid.)—the Glory flies ever upward. Yet they are shrieking and no one pays them any heed, for He has flown to His heavenly domain, and departed. This is why curse, evil, death, and horrors rise up in the world, with mourners and criers daily, as is

written: *For death has climbed through our windows* (Jeremiah 9:20).⁶⁴

“Until the silver cord is snapped (Ecclesiastes 12:6)—thread of grace, stretching from above to below. *The golden bowl is smashed* (ibid.)—for it had settled into the thread. When the thread snapped, the bowl fell. *The pitcher is broken against the well* (ibid.)—Torah was forgotten in exile and the water-drawer, the archon Yofi’el, did not draw from the spring of Torah, leaving people confounded. *The jug smashed at the pit* (ibid.)—the destroying angel was granted permission to wreak carnage daily.⁶⁵

“The dust will return to the earth, as it was (ibid., 7)—all souls will be consumed, and the world will be consumed, and the dust, from which everything came into being, shall return as it once was, and the world will be waste as it had been.⁶⁶

“Spirit will return to God who gave it (ibid.), and the world will be renewed as it once was. At that very time is written *Many of those who sleep in ground of dust will awake* (Daniel 12:2).⁶⁷

Rabbi Azariah and Rabbi Marinos [61d] approached, kissing him on the head. They assigned to him the verse *A discerning heart will get knowledge, and the ear of the wise will seek knowledge* (Proverbs 18:15).⁶⁸

מדרש הנעלם על רות

Midrash ha-Ne'lam al Rut

MIDRASH HA-NE'LAM ON RUTH

In the days when the judges judged... (Ruth 1:1).¹

The rabbis explained the verse *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy* (Job 38:7). Who are the *morning stars*? Holy angels ruling by day. Who are the *sons of God*? Angels ruling by night.²

Come and see: Everything that the blessed Holy One created, He created only for His glory, as is said: *Everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made* (Isaiah 43:7). The blessed Holy One created man in the world and instilled His name יהוה (YHVH) within him. ו (vav), called רוּחַ (ruah), spirit; ה (he), called נֶפֶשׁ (nefesh), soul. יָהּ (Yod he)—ה (he), called נִשְׁמָתָא (nishmeta), highest soul; י (yod)—נִשְׁמָתָא דְנִשְׁמָתָא (nishmeta de-nishmeta), soul of soul. He called them יָהּ (yod he)—Father and Mother; וָהּ (vav he)—Son and Daughter.³

Following the pattern for creating spirit and soul of holiness, thus did He create spirit and soul of the left side. Following the pattern of wine on its dregs, so do intellectual spirit and soul rest above animal spirit and soul. Why is it called 'animal'? Because it comes from the left side along with the serpent—male and female. Of this Solomon—in his wisdom—said *Who knows the spirit of the sons of men that ascends on high, and the spirit of a beast that descends into earth?* (Ecclesiastes 3:21).⁴

To the side of impurity the blessed Holy One does not bestow His name, as is said: *I am YHVH, that is my name; I will not yield My glory to another, nor My praise to idols* (Isaiah 42:8). אָנִי (*Ani*), *I*—alludes to what is said: *I will chastise you, even I* (Leviticus 26:28). YHVH—alludes to attribute of mercy. What is the meaning of *I will not yield... to another*? This is as is written: *For you shall not bow to another god* (Exodus 34:14), for it comes from the side of filth and impurity.⁵

Rabbi opened, speaking of the mystery of YHVH: “י (Yod)—called Elimelech in this array; ה (he)—called Naomi in this array. Why is she called נְעֻמִי (*Na’omi*), Naomi? As it is said: *May the נְעֻמַּי (no’am), kindness, of YHVH, our God be upon us. The work of our hands, establish for us...* (Psalms 90:17). וְהָ (Vav he), in this array—signified by Ruth and her husband.⁶

“רוּת (*Rut*), Ruth—inversion of her name [75b] is תּוֹר (tor), turtledove, as is said: וְתוֹר (ve-tor), *and a turtledove*, וְגֹזַל (ve-goza), *and a young pigeon* (Genesis 15:9). Naomi is called *nishmeta*, as is written: יֹנָתִי (*yonati*), *My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your form, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your form beautiful* (Song of Songs 2:14).”⁷

Rabbi opened, saying, “What is the meaning of the verse *The work of our hands, establish for us* (Psalms 90:17)?”

He replied, “This signifies a person’s virtuous action. Virtuous acts—YHVH rests upon him. If not, YHVH departs from him, as is said: *Wisdom of women builds Her house, and Folly with her own hands destroys it* (Proverbs 14:1). *Wisdom of women*—these are *nishmeta*, and נַפְשָׁא (*nafsha*), soul. *Folly*—*nafsha* on the left, called Orpah.”⁸

He said, “What is the meaning of *let me see your form* (Song of Songs 2:14)? When a person is fashioned from a drop—originating in a fleshly body, within the placenta of his mother—just as he grows physically, the blessed Holy One infuses him, bit by bit, with spirit and soul. A lamp

rests upon his head at night, as is said: *When His lamp shone over my head* (Job 29:3). And a column of light during the day, as is said: *The column of cloud moved to lead them on the way, and by night in a column of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and by night* (Exodus 14:19, 13:21). And it is written: *For a mitzvah is a lamp and Torah is light* (Proverbs 6:23). It teaches him the entire Torah and instructs him in all its commandments.⁹

“He is cautioned, ‘Behold! This is the tortuous path called Night. Into that place enter all souls, as is said: *Small and great alike are there, and the slave is free of his master* (Job 3:19).’ They show him—with the column of fire above his head—numerous bears, lions, and scourging angels residing there. The dog abides there too, of which David said *Save my soul from the sword; my only one, from the grip of the dog* (Psalms 22:21). This place is Darkness, and angels of destruction are called ‘nights.’ Of this is said *from terror in the nights* (Song of Songs 3:7).¹⁰

“They continue, ‘If you are worthy to perform the commandments, [75c] an angel will be fashioned for you from each and every one. Every time you come to this place, with the benefit of commandments, they will proclaim: *Build up, build up a highway! Clear a road! Remove all obstacles from the road of My people!* (Isaiah 57:14), and they will not rule over you.¹¹

“Following this pattern for the daytime: If you have attained Torah, each and every letter will be an angel, advocating for you in this place. As for the Torah—called a path—walk in this path, so that they will have no sway over you. Of this is said *to lead them on the way* (Exodus 13:21). Afterward, they show her the Garden of Eden and the singular portion allotted to each righteous person. Then they adjure her to fulfill the entire Torah.¹²

“Then they say to him, ‘*YHVH said to Abram: “Go you forth... and I will make of you a great nation... I will bless*

those who bless you... (Genesis 12:1-3)." *YHVH said to אַבְרָם (Avram), Abram—this is nishmeta: אָב (av), progenitor, to רוּחַ (ruah), spirit, and רָם (ram), superior, to the body. From your land (ibid., 1)—this is Garden of Eden. From your birthplace (ibid.)—this is womb of a flesh-and-blood woman. From the house (ibid.)—this is Shekhinah. Your father (ibid.)—this is blessed Holy One, because your father can refer only to the blessed Holy One, and one's mother can be only Assembly of Israel. To the land that I will show you (ibid.)—this is the lowly world.'* And they bestow upon him seven blessings said above, from *I will make of you a great nation (ibid., 2), until [through you will be blessed] all families of the earth, and through your seed (ibid., 3; 28:14).*¹³

"Of one who is worthy—becoming righteous, knowing the name of the blessed Holy One—what do they say to him when he leaves the world? *You shall not fear from the terror of night... though a thousand fall at your side... On their palms they will lift you up, lest your strike your foot against a stone (Psalms 91:5, 7, 12). A stone—of the tortuous path, as they say: your foot... On lion and viper you tread... until for he knows My name (ibid., 12-14).*¹⁴

"If, however, one does not attain Torah and good deeds, when he departs this world he enters the path of darkness, of which we have spoken. All who dwell there tremble, saying: *'Could this be Naomi? (Ruth 1:19). The one who went into this place replete with all kinds of goodness, brimming with Torah? She who had a column of cloud shining for her in this place, guiding her by day, and a column of fire leading her, as she ventured into this place by night? The one who was accompanied by her husband, נִשְׁמָתָא לְנִשְׁמָתָא (nishmeta le-nishmeta), soul of soul?'*¹⁵

"She replied, saying: *Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for Shaddai has dealt very bitterly with me (ibid., 20). For He delivered me into this foul body! I left full (ibid., 21)—for this place, but YHVH has brought me back empty (ibid.).*¹⁶

“At that moment, she said, ‘*Turn back, my daughters...*’ (ibid., 11), as is said: *But Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, ‘Turn back, my daughters...*’ (ibid., 8, 11). Ruth—holy נפשטה (nafsheta), soul—replied, as is said: *Ruth replied, ‘Do not press me to desert you, to resist following you; for wherever you go, I will go; whatever your shelter, I will share it; your people shall be my people, and your God my God* (ibid., 16).¹⁷

“Orpah—nafsheta from the left side—approaches the body, mourning for it, as is said: *But the flesh upon him will ache, and his soul will mourn for him* (Job 14:22). All the while that she mourns for it, the body says to נפש הבהמית (nefesh ha-behemit), the animal soul: ‘As a result of the food and drink that you have given me, the נשמה (neshamah), highest soul, suffers mightily—bereft of Torah and commandments. Take what you have given me.’”¹⁸

Rabbi said, “*Happy is one who considers דל (dal), the poor...* (Psalms 41:2). What is the meaning of דל (dal)? A neglected man. He says: ‘Why don’t you give to me? Am I more wicked than all other people in the world?’ Then he proceeds to wage war. What does Scripture say? It is as is written: *But if he holds fast to My refuge, that he may make peace with Me. Let him make peace with Me* (Isaiah 27:5). [75d] *My refuge*—this refers to the indigent, and the blessed Holy One says: ‘One must not judge a person during his time of distress.’”¹⁹

Rabbi Tanḥum said, “To the blessed Holy One, Job spoke this verse because of his suffering. What did he say? *Would that I knew how to find Him... I would lay out my case before him* (Job 23:3-4), until ultimately, Job hurled accusations heavenward. And is this all? Already in a number of places he denied the resurrection of the dead, spoke insolently, and cast stones at images of the king!”²⁰

In fact, Rabbi Nehorai explained: “At that time, the Accuser asserted before the blessed Holy One, ‘Regarding

Job—of whom You said that he is a man who is blameless and upright, revering God and shunning evil—behold, he has denied the resurrection of the dead, hurled accusations, cast stones at images of the king!’ The blessed Holy One replied: ‘Job spoke thoughtlessly when he said those things.’²¹

“When Job was quarreling with the blessed Holy One, what did he say to Him? *‘Is it good for you to oppress... (Job 10:3). Is this good—that you oppress me! My father and mother fashioned my body and You, a crofter with them, instilled a soul within me. And You said to the Accuser: “Lay your hand upon all that he has, but spare his soul.” Is this good for You—Your oppression of me—to spurn Your own hands’ labor! (ibid.)’*”²² [75c]²³

This is like another teaching of Rabbi Nehorai: “What is the meaning of the verse *But if he holds fast to My refuge, that he may make peace with Me. Let him make peace with Me (Isaiah 27:5)?* Who has disputes with the blessed Holy One? Is not peace His? Does He not make peace in His heights!”²⁴

“The answer is that the poor man, finding himself in straits, contends with heaven. One who takes hold of the poor man’s hand—helping him charitably—it is he who fashions peace between the indigent and the blessed Holy One. Then, the impoverished one returns, petitioning for forgiveness from the blessed Holy One. Who precipitated this peace? That one—[75d] who held the hand of the poor one, the one of whom it is said *But if he holds fast to My refuge*. For the blessed Holy One does not pass judgment upon one who is in distress.”²⁵

“The same holds for Job. When he came to the blessed Holy One, arguing with Him, what did he say? *Once have I spoken and I will not answer; twice, and will not go on (Job 40:5)*, muzzling himself before the Judge.”²⁶

Rabbi Pedat said, “*For you have not spoken rightly to Me as did my servant Job (Job 42:7,8). For you have not*

spoken rightly is not how it is written, but rather אֵלַי (*elai*), *to Me, you have not spoken rightly*. He stood up to legitimize the judgment, seeking atonement for his accusations earlier. But they did not beseech on their own behalf, for their mistaken pronouncements.”²⁷

Rabbi Yehoshu’a of Sikhnin said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: “Whoever suspects worthy men deserves to be afflicted with scaly affliction. This is as is written: *by which we have done foolishly and by which we have sinned* (Numbers 12:11); and as is written: *Let her not be, pray, like one dead* (ibid., 12). Job’s companions suspected him baselessly, and they did not petition for their souls until Job sought mercy for them. The blessed Holy One informed them that their suspicions were spurious, and consequently: *Job my servant will pray on your behalf* (Job 42:8).”²⁸

Rabbi Yose son of Kisma said, “*To him only shall I show favor and not treat you with* נבלה (*nevalah*), *disgrace* (ibid.). What is נבלה (*nevalah*), *disgrace*? This is צרעת (*tsara’at*), as is written: *Had her father spat in her face...* (Numbers 12:14). The translation of this is ‘He would surely disgrace her upon her face.’²⁹

“Come and see: When the blessed Holy One revealed Himself to Job, what is written? *And YHVH answered Job from the whirlwind* (Job 38:1). Rabbi Yose son of Halafta said, “He responded in kind to Job’s plaint—*He crushes me with a whirlwind* (Job 9:17). Job said, ‘Master of the universe! Perhaps a whirlwind has passed before You, causing you to confuse איוב (*Iyyov*), Job, with אויב (*oyev*), enemy’ *You consider me your* אויב (*oyev*), *enemy* (Job 13:24). This is why He answered him from the whirlwind.”³⁰

The rabbis taught: “From that צערא (*tse’ara*), anguish, from Satan who had השעיר (*his’ir*), blasted, Job’s body. From where do we know that he is called סערה (*se’arah*), whirlwind? Since it is written רוח סערה (*ruah se’arah*), blast from a *whirlwind, fulfilling His word* (Psalms 148:8)—and

no permission is granted to do anything without the command of the blessed Holy One.”³¹

Rabbi Bun says: “It is written with a ש (sin), and it is written with a ס (samekh). It is written with a ש (sin), as in the verse *For He crushes me with a שַׁעְרָה* (se’arah), *whirlwind* (Job 9:17), and it is written with a ס (samekh), as in the verse *from the סַעְרָה* (se’arah), *whirlwind* (Job 38:1). It is written with a ש (sin): *with a שַׁעְרָה* (se’arah), *whirlwind* (Job 9:17), and there it is written *לְשַׁעִירִים* (la-se’irim), *to the demons, after whom they go whoring* (Leviticus 17:7).”³²

As to being written as *בַּשַּׁעְרָה* (bi-s’arah), *with a whirlwind*, Rabbi Reḥumai said, “Sometimes it is male and sometimes it is female. [76a] This is as is written: *Esau returned that day on his way שַׁעִירָה* (se’irah), *to Se’ir* (Genesis 33:16). With a ס (samekh), as is written: *from the סַעְרָה* (se’arah), *whirlwind*. What is the explanation? *שַׁמְסַעִיר* (She-mas’ir), Because it rages against, a person’s body.”³³

And yet it is written *Elijah ascended בַּסַּעְרָה* (ba-s’arah), *in a whirlwind to heaven* (2 Kings 2:11)! Rabbi Neḥemiah and Rabbi Yudai said, “When the blessed Holy One raised Elijah heavenward, the Angel of Death confronted him. The blessed Holy One said to him, ‘It was for this reason that I created the heavens—so that Elijah could ascend there!’ The Angel of Death replied, ‘Master of the Universe, this will give all other creatures a pretext!’ The blessed Holy One said to him, ‘This one is unlike all the other creatures; he can eliminate you from the world—you do not know his power!’ He said to Him, ‘Master of the Universe, grant me permission and I will go down to him.’ He replied, ‘Go down.’ He descended immediately. When Elijah saw him, he brought him to his knees, requesting permission to blot him out. Permission was denied. He crimped him beneath him—and rose up to heaven, as is written: *Elijah ascended by means of a whirlwind to heaven* (ibid.).”³⁴

“When the blessed Holy One revealed Himself to Job, it was from the selfsame whirlwind that He revealed Himself

to him. This is as is written: מִן הַסְעָרָה (*min ha-se'arah*), *from the whirlwind* (Job 38:1)—נ, bent *nun*, not straight. The blessed Holy One buckled him over like a snake, slithering on its belly. Then He spoke to him. What did He say to Job? *Where were you when I founded earth?* (Job 38:4). He shut up at once, unable to contest His rebuke. This teaches that the blessed Holy One's actions are done in truth."³⁵

Rabbi Alexandrai opened, saying: "*When the morning stars sang together* (Job 38:7). Stars on high rule by night, except those which rule in the morning. All of them sing, glorifying the One who said *When the morning stars sang together*—excluding the night stars—even though their rule is fleeting."³⁶

And all the sons of God shouted for joy (ibid.). Why ויריעו (*va-yari'u*), *shouted?* Rabbi Alexandrai said, "When the morning light rises, those sons of God מריעים בתרועה (*meri'im bitru'ah*), blow a blast, dispatching all those angels and stars who officiate at night, other angels governing in their stead, ruling by day."³⁷

Rabbi Hisdai said, "There is one star in the vault that the blessed Holy One extracts from its place—Silon is its name. It ushers all other stars in and out, serving all night. When the morning stars govern, it is hidden away, stowed in its place."³⁸

Rabbi Shmuel said, "It is written: *Who shakes the earth from her place, and her pillars tremble* (Job 9:6). When the blessed Holy One wants to shake the entire world and cause its pillars to tremble, He does so from its place, exclusively. Where is its place? The point of Zion."

Rabbi Reḥumai says: "From Zion the world was founded, as is written: *A psalm of Asaph. El, Elohim YHVH, spoke and called forth the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting* (Psalms 50:1). And it is written: *From Zion, perfection of beauty, God shone forth* (ibid., 2)."³⁹

Rabbi Simlai said, “When the blessed Holy One created the world, He infused light within light, clothing this one in that one, creating the heavens, as is written: *wrapped in light as a garment, spreading the heavens like a curtain* (ibid. 104:2). This light is called Light of His Garment—Primordial Light, in which the blessed Holy One garbed Himself. That light spread in splendor and glory, creating the world.”[40](#)

Rabbi Ḥidqa said, “When the blessed Holy One took snow from beneath His throne of glory and threw it into the waters, He used the hollow of His hand as a measure.”

Rabbi Yudai said, “It was the measure of a span that He took, casting it into the waters, as is written: [*weighed*] *in a measure the dust of the earth* (Isaiah 40:12); and also: *For to the snow He says, ‘Be earth!’* (Job 37:6).”[41](#)

Beneath the waters, a single place congealed first in the midst of the depth, and from that place formed a single stone, plunged into the midst. [76b] That spot is the [center] point of the world, and from there the whole world spread out in all directions. Rabbi Ḥidqa said, “Similar to the creation of the human being.”[42](#)

When land solidified beneath the water, what is written in Scripture? *Let the waters under heaven be gathered to one place and let the dry land be seen!* (Genesis 1:9). When the waters saw the dry land, they rose, stacking up to submerge it as before, until the blessed Holy One castigated them and they fled, as is written: *From your rebuke they fled* (Psalms 104:7).[43](#)

And yet, even though they fled, they did not subside. What is the reason? The explanation is that they had covered the land at the outset, even though now they were fleeing from it. What did the blessed Holy One do? He took something like a potsherd and engraved upon it His name of seventy-two names, casting it into the waters. At once, they stood still, subsiding.[44](#)

Where did they abate? At Zion. This can be inferred from Scripture: *From Zion, perfection of beauty* (Psalms 50:2)—name of the blessed Holy One. Thus, when the land quakes, it quakes from only this place, focal point of the world.⁴⁵

Rabbi Pedat says: “One who swears truthfully with the name of the blessed Holy One—this clod upon which His name is sealed soars joyously upward and abides; moreover, the world abides. One who swears falsely—that seal rises, vanishing, seeing that it is in vain. Then the world trembles, intent on reverting to chaos. For the world endures only on account of His name, sealed with truth. Of this is written: לֹא תִשָּׂא (Lo tissa), *You shall not raise, the name of YHVH* וְלֹא שָׂוִי (la-shav), *falsely* (Exodus 20:7).”⁴⁶

Rabbi Hizkiyah son of Rabbi Yehudah says: “The place of the entire world is a single point. Similarly, *Blessed be the glory of YHVH from His place* (Ezekiel 3:12)—from *His place* He is blessed. And, where is *His place*? It is said: It is one point upon which everything stands, and the Glory is blessed only from *His place*.”⁴⁷

What is the meaning of *and [makes] her pillars tremble* (Job 9:6)? Rabbi Peraḥiah says: “These are supporting columns—endurance of the world depends on them. How many are they? Seven, as is written: *She has hewn her seven pillars* (Proverbs 9:1). The foundation of these pillars is a single Righteous One, as is written: *The Righteous One is the foundation of the world* (ibid. 10:25). It is not written *pillar* but rather *foundation*—foundation upon which everything rests.⁴⁸

“Corresponding to it are seven heavens and seven stars running to and fro. Seven lands, seven days, seven depths—all dependent upon this utterance, as is written: *Who builds His chambers in the heavens, and His vault He founds upon the earth; who summons the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth—YHVH is His name*

(Amos 9:6). *Who builds His chambers in the heavens*—seven *sefirot*, great chambers, columns engraved with His great name, all suspended from a single utterance—these are the supernal heavens.⁴⁹

“Seven holy lands couple with them with no separation, as is written: *There was evening, there was morning: one day* (Genesis 1:5), *second day* (ibid., 8), *third day* (ibid., 13), *fourth day* (ibid., 19), *fifth day* (ibid., 23), *the sixth day* (ibid., 31). Until the seventh day, as is written: *Six days YHVH made* (Exodus 20:11).⁵⁰

“Corresponding to them—seven engraved columns, suspended from the heavens. These are the twelve tribes, dangling from the attribute of Jacob, who is called שמים (*shamayim*), Heavens. This is as is written: *Oh, תשמע (tishma), hear, in שמים (shamayim), the heavens, Your dwelling place* (1 Kings 8:39); and as is written: *שמע (Shema), Hear, O Israel* (Deuteronomy 6:4).”⁵¹

Rabbi Reḥumai says, “The seven celestial ones constitute the name of the blessed Holy One. *And His vault He founds upon the earth* (Amos 9:6). What is ואגודתו (*va-aguddato*), *and His vault*? These are the seven chambers below them that stand upon the world, governing it. *Upon the earth*—Lower Earth. *He founds*—Upper Earth, called *Binah*, suspended from *Hokhmah*. What is it? תבל (*Tevel*), as is said *He established תבל (tevel), the world, with חכמתו (Hokhmato), His Wisdom* (Jeremiah 10:12).⁵²

“*Who summons the waters of the sea* (Amos 9:6)—one sea, but they are seven!”⁵³

Rabbi Kruspedai asked, “Is there not but one sea in the world?”⁵⁴

Rabbi Reḥumai explained: [76c] “It is also written *seas*, as Scripture says: *The gathering of waters He called seas* (Genesis 1:10). All of them flowing into the Great Sea. They are seven, all converging into it, one below the other, until the very depth. Ultimately, the Great Sea is seven, one upon the other, all suspended from a single utterance.”⁵⁵

Rabbi Simlai said, “When does the world quake? When the blessed Holy One casts a glance, gazing upon it, as is written: *YHVH looks down from heaven upon humankind to see...* (Psalms 14:2).”⁵⁶

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yitshak arose at day’s first light to set out on the way. Before departing, Rabbi Nehorai cast his eyes upward and, seeing the morning stars, perceived that they were quivering. He said to Rabbi Yitshak, “Look at how those stars shudder, in awe of their Master! Soon will be the time for them to sing, now that the sons of God preside over them.”⁵⁷

“When the other troops have concluded their night-time praise, the sons of God blow a blast, and all the legions who rule by night withdraw to their stations. Then—stars who rule by day, trembling fearfully in the morning, their song soaring. Now their time draws near to give homage to their Master, at this very moment, when they hear the תרועה (*teru’ah*), blast, as is written: *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God יריעו (yari’u), shouted for joy* (Job 38:7).”⁵⁸

They set out, proceeding on their way as daylight broke. When the sun came forth, visible to all, Rabbi Yitshak said to Rabbi Nehorai, “I was stunned, looking at the sun! When it first emerges it appears red, then later reverts to white! Why?”⁵⁹

“In fact, I remember a teaching that Rabbi Yose son of Shalom said in the name of Rabbi Yitshak son of Yehudah: ‘When the sun emerges, it smashes through, like a mighty hero bursting through the vault’s thirteen window-panes. Among all the celestial bodies and constellations, none is called “mighty” like the sun.’

“What acts of might does it perform? When the day comes to a close and evening arrives, all apertures and windows of the vault are shut. When day breaks and the sun bursts forth, it is crowned and engraved with letters of

the mystery of the Holy Name. Thus forcefully empowered, it struck all those vaults, smashing through all those windows—igniting its flames—bursting them open and breaking through.⁶⁰

“From where do we know that it is called גבור (gibbor), mighty? It is as is written: *Rejoicing like a גבור (gibbor), mighty one, to run his course* (Psalms 19:6). And it is written: *like the sun rising בגבורתו (bi-gvurato), in its might* (Judges 5:31). Like a mighty one triumphant in battle is ruddy, and when he rests, he regains his former color, so too is the case with the sun: when it emerges, its flames ignite—red on account of its forcefulness. Afterward, it returns to its original color.”⁶¹ They ambled on. Upon arriving at a field, Rabbi Isaac asked, “Could the master recite sublime teachings?”⁶²

He opened, saying: “*Hear, O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one* (Deuteronomy 6:4). Regarding this verse: it made sense when the sons declared it to Jacob, or when Moses said it to Israel; but now, when everyone recites *Hear, O Israel*, to which Israel is it proclaimed?⁶³

“Actually, it has been taught that our forefather Jacob did not die, and the blessed Holy One sealed him upon His throne of glory, to be a constant witness that his children unify His name twice daily. When they unify the name of the blessed Holy One, they proclaim: ‘*Hear, O Israel—testify on our behalf that we are unifying the name of the blessed Holy One fittingly.*’⁶⁴

“Then Jacob is taken aloft upon four wings spread out to the four directions of the world, and he is brought up before the supernal Holy One, who blesses him with seven blessings. He opens, saying, ‘Happy the father who has sired such offspring in the world! Happy those children who crown their father in this way!’ At that moment all heavenly troops proclaim: ‘Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever!’⁶⁵

“Then Jacob is crowned with thirteen rivers of pure balsam, abiding enduringly—like a city encircled by a שור (shur), wall—over his sons, before the blessed Holy One, never abandoning them to the rule of hard judgment. None of the nations of the world [76d] will be able to annihilate them, as is written: *Fear not, My servant Jacob; [שורון] (Yeshurun), Jeshurun, whom I have chosen*] (Isaiah 44:2).”⁶⁶

Rabbi opened, saying: “Like the pattern of twelve tribes below—sons of Jacob—so there is transcendent Jacob, in the heavens, with twelve transcendent tribes. Just as Israel unifies the name of the blessed Holy One below, so do holy angels above unify it. Everything modeled after the supernal array.”⁶⁷

Rabbi opened, saying: “*Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham* (Isaiah 29:22). Did Jacob redeem Abraham? Jacob had not even come into the world! Ah, but come and see: When Abraham was cast into the Chaldean furnace, the blessed Holy One gathered His retinue and declared, ‘Spare Abraham on account of his rank.’ They replied to the blessed Holy One, ‘But Ishmael will issue from him!’⁶⁸

“The blessed Holy One said, ‘But Isaac will issue from him.’⁶⁹

“They replied, ‘But Esau will issue from him!’⁷⁰

“The blessed Holy One said, ‘Well, Jacob will issue from him.’

“They said, ‘Surely for Jacob’s merit he will be saved.’ Of this is written [*Jacob,*] *who redeemed Abraham*—in his merit Abraham was redeemed.”⁷¹

Rabbi said, “When they bound Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—casting them into the blazing, fiery furnace—Hananiah said, ‘*YHVH is with me, I will not fear. What can a man do to me?*’ (Psalms 118:6).’ Mishael said, ‘*Do not fear, My servant Jacob ...; do not be dismayed, O Israel—for I am*

with you, declares YHVH (Jeremiah 30:10-11).’ Azariah said, ‘Hear, O Israel... (Deuteronomy 6:4).’⁷²

“The blessed Holy One said, *‘This one will say, “I am YHVH’s” (Isaiah 44:5). The one who said YHVH is with me, I will not fear—this is Hananiah. Another will call himself by the name of Jacob (ibid.)—this is Michael, who said Do not fear, My servant Jacob. [Another shall] adopt the name of Israel (ibid.)—this is Azariah, who said Hear, O Israel.’ No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale (Isaiah 29:22).*⁷³

“Why wasn’t Daniel with them? The truth is that he was accustomed to be called Belteshazzar, after the name of [Nebuchadnezzar’s] god, as is said: *Belteshazzar (Daniel 4:5)—‘Great sage.’* When the blessed Holy One instructed regarding idols: *You shall burn them with fire (Deuteronomy 7:5)*, he fled, and so was not in their company.⁷⁴

“What inspired Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah to allow themselves to be cast into the fire? Well, they said that the frogs leapt into the flames, polluting the Egyptians at the blessed Holy One’s command, all the more so [should we do] likewise for the sake of our Master’s glory.”⁷⁵

Rabbi Nehorai said, “Let us diverge from the path and ascend the mountain; we’ll ply Torah and forsake sleep.”⁷⁶

While they were sitting, delving together in Torah, they heard a voice, saying: “Exalted ones, arise! Slumbering ones below—stupor in their sockets—wake up! Beware, the blessed Holy One is going to shake up the world! The supporting columns upon which the world stands are trembling! Sound of weeping of a fawn, crying over a lion—a scene everlastingly impressed upon the holy throne.”⁷⁷

Rabbi Nehorai said to Rabbi Yitshak, “Did you hear something?”

He said, “I did; and of this I say *I heard and my bowels quaked; [לקול (le-qol), at the sound, my lips quivered]*

(Habakkuk 3:16).”

Rabbi Nehorai said to Rabbi Yitshak, “Surely, the blessed Holy One seeks to judge His world; and before exercising judgment, this קלא (qala), voice, arouses—heralding ceaselessly to the world. Certainly, most noble ones are about to depart from the world. Now, everything was clear to me except the report of the sound of weeping of a fawn, crying over a lion—I don’t know what this means!”⁷⁸

Rabbi Neḥemiah said, “At that moment they did not know, but in a few short days, it was revealed to the world. What was it? It was the weeping of Rabbi Yishma’el son of Elisha, the High Priest, crying over the head of Rabban Shim’on son of Gamliel. That wailing will not desist from the King’s throne until the blessed Holy One exacts vengeance upon the other nations.”⁷⁹

Rabbi Reḥumai said, “Come and see: When the blessed Holy One judges the world, whom [77a] does He judge first? He judges the most eminent of the generation first—and then executes judgment upon the world. From where do we know this? From this verse: ויהי בימי שפוט השופטים (Va-yhi bi-yimei shefot ha-shofetim), *In the days of the judging of the judges, there was a famine in the land* (Ruth 1:1).”⁸⁰

Rabbi Yose son of Yehudah said, “[We learn it] from here: *to enact justice upon His servant and justice upon His people Israel* (1 Kings 8:59). *Justice upon His servant* first, and afterward *justice upon His people Israel*.”

And וישא (ish), a man, of Bethlehem in Judah went (Ruth 1:1).⁸¹

permission has been granted to the Destroying Angel, he does not defer to anyone. And a man who has infringed upon him—he has permission to do him harm. When

Rabbi Yehudah and the rabbis said, “When judgment comes to town, one should disappear, since once

Elimelech saw that judgment had come into the world, he absconded immediately to evade judgment. Nonetheless, he was unable to flee from it.”⁸²

Rabbi Yehoshu’a asked, “What is written of the Shunammite? *She replied, ‘Among my own people I dwell’* (2 Kings 4:13). From here we learn that one should blend in among the populace, and avoid being singled out.”⁸³

“What is written at the beginning? *And a man went* (Ruth 1:1)—anonymously—for he wanted to hide, and veil his identity so that none would recognize him. Who identified him? Attribute of Judgment who exclaimed, ‘*The man’s name was Elimelech* (ibid., 2), a man well-known, too prominent to be concealed—unseemly to hide! Is this not Elimelech, leader of the community? Is this not Elimelech, who averted his eyes from his people’s deeds?’”⁸⁴

Rabbi Peraḥiah said, “At that time, the blessed Holy One was judging the world and the heavenly court was in session. The blessed Holy One sheltered him, saying: ‘*And a man went*’—anonymously. Attribute of Judgment stood up and identified him: ‘*The man’s name was Elimelech!*’ Instantly, a decree was issued against him and his sons. What is written? *And Elimelech died... [and then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died]* (ibid., 3, 5).”⁸⁵

Rabbi Yehudah said, “What did Elimelech perceive? Well, since he saw that the generation disparaged their leaders, he said to himself, ‘Surely I should forsake this place, and not get seized in their midst. But Elimelech was the most eminent of the generation, and was in a position to chastise them, yet he left, fleeing. Consequently, he was identified by name, and he was punished.’”⁸⁶

It came to pass in the days when the judges were judged... (ibid., 1). Rabbi Yehoshu’a said, “וַיְהִי בַיָּמֵי (va-yhi bi-yme), *It came to pass in the days*, is always an expression of sorrow. Elimelech was comparable to a king. Once he assessed the situation, he slipped away from Israel, sojourning among the nations, calculating that he would

not be judged among them. Attribute of Judgment arose, cited him, and he was seized.”⁸⁷

In the days when the judges judged (Ruth 1:1).

Rabbi Hilkiyah son of Eli'ezer opened the verse *From afar, YHVH appeared to me...*

(Jeremiah 31:3). “When the blessed Holy One speaks with the prophets, He is revealed to them only from afar. Consequently, they see the likeness of things—like a person standing at a distance. Moses is the exception. As Rabbi El'azar said in the name of Rabbi Hanina: ‘All prophets prophesied only through an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine; Moses, through an *ispaqlarya* that shines. Other prophets, from a distance; Moses, from close up, as is said: *Not so my servant Moses; [in all My house he is trusted]* (Numbers 12:7), trusted in the house of the King—intimate of the King.’⁸⁸

“Now, if you say that all of the prophets prophesied from afar, that implies that love of the Omnipresent does not reach them! And yet, it is written: *With eternal love I have loved you, therefore I have drawn you with grace* (Jeremiah 31:3).”⁸⁹

Rabbi said, “There is distant drawn near, and near distanced. Distant drawn near, as is written: *From afar She brings her food* (Proverbs 31:14). Near distanced, as is written: *From afar YHVH appeared to me* (Jeremiah 31:3). The latter is close—for prophets. The former is distant—for kingship.” Rabbi El'azar says the opposite: “[The latter is] close—for kingship. [The former is] distant—from prophets, since prophets see heavenly images in a shape akin to a body.” Rabbi [77b] Hilkiyah said, “When the prophets had visions, it was through a polished glass, as is known.”⁹⁰

Rabbi Bun lived all his days in Caesarea, until the day he noticed that the people had become corrupt—poor people

It came to pass in the days (Ruth 1:1).

moved on.⁹¹

One day, feeling low, he stopped in Kfar Sikhnin. While sleeping, he heard the voice of someone learning—studying in the singsong of Torah—saying, *“If a bird’s nest happens to be before you on the way, in any tree or on the ground—fledglings or eggs—and the mother crouching over the fledglings or over the eggs, you shall not take the mother together with the children* (Deuteronomy 22:6).⁹²

*“Nest—*alluding to *Teshuvah* (Repentance).⁹³

*“On the way—*alluding to Rachel, as is said: *The way of the righteous is like gleaming light, shining ever brighter until full day* (Proverbs 4:18). *The righteous—*two sons, Joseph and Benjamin—and She is called Moon, traveling all night, shining for them. *Until full day—*this is Jacob.⁹⁴

*“בכל עץ (be-khol ets), In all trees. כל (kol), All—*alluding to *Tsaddiq Hei ha-olamim* (Righteous One, Life of the Worlds).⁹⁵

“Ets, Tree—Shekhinah, as is said: *A tree of life is she to those who grasp her* (Proverbs 3:18).

*“On the ground—*Lower Earth.

*“Fledglings—*twelve supernal tribes.⁹⁶

*“Or eggs—*Israel below, like a garment for the body.⁹⁷

“And the mother crouching over the fledglings.... Surely send off the mother (Deuteronomy 22:6-7), as is said: *For your crimes, your mother was sent away* (Isaiah 50:1).⁹⁸

“And the offspring you may take for yourself (Deuteronomy 22:7).” Rabbi Bun inclined his ears, listening to the voice as it exclaimed: “This is a sign of compassion? Whoever says this has spoken folly! Someone with pity would have left the mother and children, and continued on his way!⁹⁹

passing by with no one paying attention. He said to himself, “Surely judgment will show up here.” He arose and

“As for the Mother banished from Her nest, what does She say? Woe, that I have destroyed my house, set my palace ablaze, exiled my children among the nations! For this the blessed Holy One has compassion, for this alone is the Merciful One’s concern.¹⁰⁰

“On account of this, *Shekhinah* wails over Her children. This is evident from Scripture: שלח תשלח (*shalle’ah teshallah*) *send, you shall send*—two sendings! Implying that if she returns to her fledglings out of love for her children, *send*—even multiple times, until she finally goes. Then, he can tear away the fledglings, and snatch the offspring, hidden as a covey, to claim his reward. This proves that the Merciful One is concerned only with this.¹⁰¹

“והארכת (*Ve-ha’arakhta*), *And you will prolong, your days* (ibid.). שיאריך (*Sheya’arikh*), *Prolonging, patience from six days called banim (offspring)—YHVH, YHVH! A compassionate and gracious God, ארך אפים (erekh appayim), long-suffering...* (Exodus 34:7).¹⁰²

Rabbi Hidqa said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Qisma, citing Rabbi Shemu’el: “When the blessed Holy One created the world, He created it with three clusters—חכמה (*Hokhmah*), *Wisdom*, תבונה (*Tevunah*), *Understanding*, and דעת (*Da’at*), *Knowledge*. This is as is written: *YHVH by wisdom founded the earth; He established the heavens by understanding; by His knowledge the depths were burst* (Proverbs 3:19–20).¹⁰³

“They are all clusters within man. Cluster of faith bursts out from them, spreading out into other creatures, each one bearing discernment in its own degree.¹⁰⁴

“This bird—when she flies away from her nestlings, sent away from her offspring—shrieks as she goes forth, not knowing where her shrieking reaches. She wanders on, vowing self-immolation. But the blessed Holy One, of whom is written *His compassion is over all His creatures* (Psalms 145:9)—even upon the tiniest gnat in the world—His compassion extends to all. The angel appointed over birds

arouses the blessed Holy One, and the blessed Holy One is aroused toward His children.”[105](#)

Then the voice proceeded, saying: “*Like a sparrow wandering from her nest is a man wandering from his place* (Proverbs 27:8). Then, He is awakened regarding all those roaming aimlessly from place to place—one locale to another—broken-hearted, energies depleted. Then His mercy is aroused toward all worlds, and He has compassion upon them, forgiving the debts of those wandering from their homes, extending pity upon them and upon the entire world.[106](#)

“The blessed Holy One said, ‘Let the bird dwell outside and she will arouse compassion upon the entire world.’ Who induces Him to be merciful toward the world, awakening compassion for them? That person who sends off the bird, causing her sorrow in two ways. Thus the blessed Holy One is aroused and filled with mercy [77c] upon all those in distress, and upon all those dislodged from their abodes. Consequently, what is written regarding this person’s reward? *So that it may go well with you, and you will prolong your days* (Deuteronomy 22:7).”[107](#)

Rabbi Bun jumped to his feet in delight. He said, “Blessed is the Merciful One for enabling me to hear this voice! If I have come into the world just to hear this, it is enough for me!”[108](#)

The voice resumed again as before. It opened, saying: “*How many are Your works, O YHVH! All of them You made in wisdom...* (Psalms 104:24). The whole world comes about only through wisdom, and it pervades the human being entirely.

“Other creatures—a tracing of wisdom, vestige from the human. Even though this holds for all creatures, none are as nimble imitating human actions as the bird. As a human builds a house to dwell in, so does a bird build a structure for habitation. As a bird provides nourishment for

its offspring, so does a human provide food for his children. As a human treats illnesses [with herbs], so does a bird use herbs to treat illness. As a human is an artisan, fashioning boats for the sea, so does a bird take its offspring, training it, and floating with it on the sea. As a human praises and exalts the heavenly King, so does the bird chirp, praising the Master of All.¹⁰⁹

“Thus, *so that* טב” (*iytav*), *it will benefit you* (Deuteronomy 22:7). It is not written אטיב (*eitiv*), *I will benefit you*, but rather טב” (*iytav*), *it will benefit you*—your dispatching of the bird arouses mercy upon the world, to benefit you.”¹¹⁰

Rabbi Bun got up and followed the voice, discovering that it came from Rabbi Yannai the Elder, one of the companions. He approached him, kissed him upon the head, and said, “As you have comforted me, so should the blessed Holy One comfort you.” They sat together as one.¹¹¹

The Old Man opened, saying: “*In the days of the judging of the judges there was a famine in the land...* (Ruth 1:1). When the blessed Holy One judges the world, whom does He judge first? Those who judge the world. They judge the world—and who judges them? The blessed Holy One. It is because of corruption of justice that famine comes into the world.¹¹²

“In every era, famine always comes on account of the transgressions of the people’s leaders. This is like the teaching of Rabbi Yudai: ‘*Much food from the furrows of the ראשי (rashim), leaders, and some are swept away without justice* (Proverbs 13:23). When there is sufficient food in the world, *furrows of the ראשי (rashim), poor, are sown and eaten to satiety*. When there is no food in the world, *some are swept away without justice.*’ There is one who abides in tranquility and is swept away without justice.

For what crime? For the crime of corruption of justice and fairness—for perverting them.¹¹³

“You might infer that when the chiefs transgress *without justice*—for not establishing justice in the world—the blessed Holy One will kill the poor on account of them, but this is not so! The truth is that the poor are vessels of the blessed Holy One, they are His intimates. When famine comes to the world, they cry out to Him, and the blessed Holy One hears them. He investigates the world’s condition and exacts retribution from those who foisted this sorrow upon the destitute. Then they are *swept* out of the world before their time. This is as is written: *When he cries, cries out to Me... I will listen, for I am compassionate* (Exodus 22:22, 26); and it is written: *My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you by the sword...* (ibid., 23).¹¹⁴

“Actually, at that very time, *some are swept away*—plucked up from the world before their time. *For lack of justice*—because they did not bring justice to light; because of his supplication; and because they corrupted the rule of law. This is as was taught by Rabbi Yudan: ‘Any judge who is not exacting in judgment will be given exacting judgment from above, and he will be removed from the world before his time. This is as is written: *Some are swept away without justice.*’

“There is one who renders judgment according to the letter of the law and is rewarded for it by the blessed Holy One. Another renders judgment according to the letter of the law and is seized; for example, one who calculates casuistically to benefit the villain. This is as is taught in a *baraita*: ‘A court may administer flogging and penalties in order to make a fence for the Torah, or because the times call for it.’ If the judge recuses himself to avoid punishing him, or examines the case punctiliously to find a loophole to exculpate him from true justice—and that would have been the actual decision—when the blessed Holy One judges the world, that judge will be seized on account of this case and

will be expelled from the world before his time. And if this does not occur, of this one Scripture says *He has no offspring or progeny among his people* (Job 18:19). When he himself is not snatched away, his progeny will be seized.¹¹⁵

“There is also one who does not render judgment according to the letter of the law and receives reward. As with Abba, who saw a man fraternizing with a married woman—hugging and kissing her. He hauled them off to the flogging station and they were killed. Not that they were subject to the death penalty, but in order to erect a fence around the Torah. This is done so that a judge should not say to himself: ‘I’ll exculpate them according to the Torah’s law, and that will fulfill my obligation.’”¹¹⁶

“In fact, a judge who does not erect a fence for the Torah has no fence for himself in this world or in the world to come. His fence: *offspring or progeny* (ibid.), *ruler or helper* (Deuteronomy 32:36)—in this world. [77d] In the world to come, he is stripped of his good deeds—one’s hedge for the world to come. This is like the teaching of Rabbi Nuri: ‘Erect a fence for the Torah, to prolong your life in this world and in the world to come.’”¹¹⁷

And a man went (Ruth 1:1). “Wherever it says וְאִישׁ (*ish*), *a man*, it always signifies a righteous person, great in his generation, able to stand up for himself and for others. Similarly, in a pejorative sense: וְאִישׁ (*ish*), *a man, skilled in hunting*, וְאִישׁ (*ish*), *a man, of the field* (Genesis 25:27)—a wicked man, prodigious in villainy, a murderer who crushes people without trepidation.”¹¹⁸

“A righteous man, great in his generation, able to stand up for himself and for others—but when the famine came, he fled at once. *From Bethlehem in Judah* (ibid.)—from the place of the Great Sanhedrin, fount of Torah, as is said:

Who will give me water to drink from the cistern that is by the gate of Bethlehem? (2 Samuel 23:15).[119](#)

“This one uprooted himself from the flowing Torah of Bethlehem in Judah, *to sojourn in the fields of Moab*—for this reason they were punished. But you, Rabbi, have exiled yourself to this place where the companions cause flowing Torah to gush.”[120](#)

[Rabbi Bun] replied, “Blessed is the Merciful One who sent me here to hear your words.”[121](#)

Rabbi Bun set out one day on the path and encountered a child. He said to him, “Rabbi, should I accompany you on your way and serve you on this journey?”

He replied, “Come.” He went behind him.

While traveling, he happened upon Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba and Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Yose. They said to him, “You are by yourself, with no one goading behind you.”[122](#)

He answered, “There is a child following me.”

Rabbi Ḥiyya said, “You have incited harm upon yourself, as you have no one with whom to engage in words of Torah!”[123](#)

They sat down in a field under a tree.[124](#)

Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, saying: “*The way of the righteous is like gleaming light, shining ever brighter until full day* (Proverbs 4:18). One who sets out on a journey must have company with whom to share words of Torah—this is the practice of the righteous.”[125](#)

“הולך ואור (*Holekh va-or*), *He walks with light—he walks accompanied by words of Torah.*”[126](#)

“עד נכון היום (*Ad nekhon ha-yom*), *Until the fullness of day—until Shekhinah is arrayed together with him, not budging from his side. This is as we have learned: ‘Wherever there are words of Torah, Shekhinah can be found, as is said: In every place that I cause my name to be invoked... (Exodus 20:21).’*”[127](#)

Rabbi Yehudah opened, saying: “*It will be healing for your flesh [and a balm to your bones]* (Proverbs 3:8). Torah is medicinal for a person—body and bones—in this world and in the world that is coming, as Rabbi Nehorai taught in the name of Rabbi Neḥemiah: ‘What is a daily tonic for people in this world? Recital of the *Shema* as required.’¹²⁸

“Rabbi Nehorai said further: The recital of *Shema* contains 248 words corresponding to 248 limbs in a man’s body. One who recites *Shema* as required—each and every one of his limbs takes a word for itself, and is healed by it. This is the meaning of *It will be healing for your flesh.*”¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the child arrived, wearied from the journey, and he sat before them. He heard these teachings and rose to his feet, saying: “But in the *Shema*, there are only 245 words!”¹³⁰

Rabbi Ḥiyya replied, “Sit down, my son, sit.” He continued, “My son, have you heard something about this?”

He said to him, “This I have learned from my father: the *Shema* contains 245 words, three words short of the number of limbs in a man’s body. How is this resolved? The rabbis established that the prayer leader should repeat three words. What are they? ‘*I am YHVH your God,*’ completing the 248 words for the congregation, and so that the interruption before the word ‘truth’ is no more than three, and no less than three.”¹³¹

In the meantime, Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Pinḥas came and sat among them. He said to them, “What topic are you discussing?”

They said to him, “The words of *Shema*; and here is what this child said...”

He replied, “Certainly so! And thus said Rabbi Yoḥanan son of Nuri in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Durmaskit, citing Rabbi Akiva: ‘Early pious ones established the recital of *Shema* to correspond to the Ten Commandments, as well as to the number of limbs in a person’s body. Since three were lacking from the correspondence to human limbs,

they instituted that the prayer leader should repeat [the last words], completing them. What are they? ‘*YHVH your God is truth.*’”¹³²

“In the statutory prayer, they instituted three introductory blessings and three [78a] closing ones. In the recital of the *Shema*: three names at the beginning, *YHVH Eloheinu YHVH*, and three names at the end, *YHVH eloheikhem emet* (*YHVH your God is truth*). Whoever recites the *Shema* in this fashion, as is well known, will not suffer harm on that day.”¹³³

“But, whoever recites the *Shema* without the congregation does not perfect his limbs, because he is lacking the three words that the prayer leader repeats. What is his remedy? He should contemplate the fifteen *vavs* of *אמת ויציב* (*Emet ve-yatsiv*), “True and firm.””¹³⁴

“Nonetheless, to one following this practice Father assigned the verse *A crooked thing cannot be made straight [nor can the lack be counted]*... (Ecclesiastes 1:15). Those three words of *Shema* that the prayer leader repeats—they cannot be counted toward the sum of 248, as is the case for the congregation.”¹³⁵

He said to the child, “Expound your verse!”¹³⁶

[48a]¹³⁷ The child opened, saying, “*My people! What have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Witness me!* (Micah 6:3). The blessed Holy One, out of His affection for Israel, called them *My people*. *מה עשיתי לך* (*Meh asiti lekha*), *What have I done to you?*—*למה עשיתי לך* (*lammah asiti lekha*), why did I make you? Simply, for you to go to synagogues and study halls, to testify that I am One, as is written: *YHVH is One* (Deuteronomy 6:4).¹³⁸

“Attest that I am One—rising upon the Name of Forty-Two Words—in the paragraph of *Shema* that spans *You shall love* (ibid., 5) to *It shall be* (ibid. 11:13), establishing Me as One over you. This name follows the pattern of the Name of Forty-Two Names.”¹³⁹

“So too with the Name of Seventy-Two Words in the paragraph of *Shema* that begins with *It shall be* and ends with *and you shall set* (ibid. 11:18). Similarly with the Name of Fifty Words—like the number of gates of understanding. As well as with the Name of Seventy-Two, from *And [YHVH] spoke* (Numbers 15:37).¹⁴⁰

“These four paragraphs, along with the twelve upper words in the recital of *Shema*, comprise 248, just like the 248 limbs.¹⁴¹

“Whoever recites *Shema* fittingly—each and every word overflows onto each and every one of his limbs. And if a person does not recite *Shema* in the morning and evening, each and every one of his limbs will be permeated with evil spirit and diverse forms of execrable diseases that are found in the world.”¹⁴²

The child continued, saying: “Three words are lacking from *Shema*—from the sum of 248 words—how shall they be completed?” He said, “I have heard from Father: with ‘*YHVH your God* (Numbers 15:41) is truth.”¹⁴³

The Old Man—the child’s father—opened, saying: “*There was a small city, and few people within it.... And there was found within it a poor, wise child...* (Ecclesiastes 9:14-15).¹⁴⁴

“Come and see: *There was a small city*—this is Noah’s ark. *And few people within it*—alluding to his wife, his sons, their wives, animals, fowl, and livestock. *And a great king came against it and went round it*—alluding to the Evil Impulse. *And there was found within it a poor, wise man*—alluding to Noah. *Who saved it with his wisdom.*”¹⁴⁵

[80c]¹⁴⁶ Rabbi Ḥisdai opened: “*There was a small city, and few people within it. A small city.* This is what Rabbi Yose said in the name of Rabbi Yitṣḥak: this alludes to the body. *Few people within it*—alluding to the limbs. *A great king came against it*—alluding to the Evil Impulse. *And there was found within it a poor, wise man*—alluding to the

Good Impulse, beggared—none heeded him. *Wise*—enlightening the one who gives him an ear, saving him from the punishment of Hell. *Who might have saved it with his wisdom*—alluding to the human soul, exhorting the avoidance of sin before one’s Creator. *But nobody thought of that poor man*—none remembered him, and humanity reverted to sinning with [80d] the Evil Impulse.”[147](#)

Rabbi Bun said, “That child who had been sitting with us—what did he say about this verse? Well, this is how he opened: *עִיר קְטָנָה (Ir qetanah), A small city—Assembly of Israel, called Holy City—Holy City of the blessed Holy One.* This is as is said: *We have אֶחָוֶת קְטָנָה (ahot qetanah), a small sister* (Song of Songs 8:8); and as is said: *הַקְטָנָה (ha-qetanah), the small one, was Rachel* (Genesis 29:16). *Few people within it*—alluding to the patriarchs.[148](#)

“Adam appeared—*Shekhinah* descended with him, dwelling within him. Adam sinned—She disappeared. Noah arrived and brought Her down to the world. The generation of the flood transgressed—She vanished from the world. Abraham came and conveyed Her down. Men of Sodom arrived—She evanesced.[149](#)

“*A great king came against it and went round it—Ploni.*[150](#)

“*There was found within it a poor, wise man*—this is Jacob. Destitute when the people of Israel sinned—divine overflow was withheld from him, and *Matronita* abandoned him.[151](#)

“*Who might have saved it with his wisdom*—this is Moses.[152](#)

“What is signified by *and went round it*? That Ploni plotted to induce Israel to sin while in exile, to prolong *Matronita*’s exile.[153](#)

“Another teaching: *A small city—Zion. Few people within it*—alluding to the six days of creation. *A great king came against it and went round it*—this alludes to Ploni.

And there was found within it a poor, wise man—this is David, as is said: *poor and riding on an ass* (Zechariah 9:9); and it is written: *The righteous one is lost* (Isaiah 57:1). So as long as divine overflow does not descend upon Him, He *is lost*. Of Him is said *A river is dried up and parched* (ibid. 19:5).[154](#)

“Ass—this is Samael. *Wise man*—Solomon, of whom it is said *who saved it with his wisdom*, becoming its redeemer, called Messiah son of David. This is salvation from above.[155](#)

“Another teaching: *A small city*—Noah’s ark. *Few people within it*—Noah, Noah’s wife, and his sons. *A great king came against it*—the evil impulse, surrounding it. *And there was found within it a poor, wise man*—Noah. *Saved it with his wisdom*—alluding to Abraham, for it is on account of Abraham, destined to come, that the ark was saved, and Noah and his sons redeemed.[156](#)

“Another teaching. *A small city*—Jerusalem—at this time, small and desolate. *Few people within it*—few are the Jews in it. *A great king came against it and went round it*—a king from the descendants of Esau, of whom is said in Daniel *arms of iron* (Daniel 2:33). [*Like iron*] *that smashes, so will it crush and smash all these...* *And in the time of those kings... it will crush all those kingdoms* (ibid., 40, 44). When he goes around Jerusalem, *a poor, wise man will be found there* (Ecclesiastes 9:15)—the first Messiah. *He saved the city with his wisdom*—final Messiah.[157](#)

“Another teaching regarding what we said about Solomon: He designed a lantern, beaming brilliance. *He saved the city with his wisdom*—by fashioning handles for Torah. This is as we have learned: Before Solomon appeared, Torah was like a cauldron without handles— whoever tried to touch it was seared. Once Solomon arrived and prepared handles for it, people were saved by his counsel. He instilled redemption into that city, as it were. How? *With his wisdom*.[158](#)

“All this through the configuration configured and efforts expended on Her behalf by that *poor man*—David. For there is no [81a] one who exerted himself on Her behalf as King David.¹⁵⁹

“We have learned: It was fitting for King David to have existed on earth for a hundred years. For if only he would have lived for one hundred years, he would have fabricated a potent rectification for the lamp, so that it would never disappear—nor would the Temple have been destroyed. How much degradation for lack of those years!¹⁶⁰

“*But* אדם לא (Adam lo), Adam did not, remember that *poor man* (ibid.)—אדם הראשון (Adam ha-rishon), Primal Adam, who gave him only seventy of his own years. Adam did not remember him when Samael came riding on a camel and encircled (ibid., 14) him, inducing him to sin. He *did not remember that man* (ibid., 15)—impoverished by that sin, serpent encircling Eve, Samael encircling Adam.¹⁶¹

“Now, Samael did not have the power to turn Adam, until the serpent came and overturned Eve’s heart, and Eve persuaded him—both sinning. Of this he said, *The woman whom You gave to be beside me—she gave me of the tree, and I ate* (Genesis 3:12). Samael did not have permission to prevail over Adam’s heart until Eve came and induced him to eat—for this, woman was punished.¹⁶²

“This is as is said: Wherever they were exiled, *Shekhinah* was exiled with them. Exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them. Exiled to Edom, *Shekhinah* was with them. It did not say this of any of the male attributes.¹⁶³

“Adam did give [David] of his own years—those seventy years—but he had not recalled him at first. For if only he had remembered him, he would have apportioned one hundred years, as fitting, to strengthen him in the world, and to enhance the configuration of the lamp. But he called him to mind for a mere seventy years, nothing more.¹⁶⁴

“Thirty of those years he was in the wilderness; some with flocks, and some fleeing his father-in-law. At that time

—*The poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heeded* (Ecclesiastes 9:16) by King Saul. Thus, all that remained for him was forty-less-one, since one year he was eluding his own son. Consequently, fixing the lamp diminished until just one step remained between him and death.¹⁶⁵

“All this because Adam forgot him at the beginning, not supplementing him with those thirty years below to complete the hundred. Further, thirty years—of those seventy years below—were defective since his wisdom is *despised, and his words are not heeded*.

“This is why King Solomon praised himself so grandly, describing himself as *wise* (Ecclesiastes 9:15). ‘If it goes thus,’ he said, ‘as it did before, then *it is an extraordinary thing that falls to me* (ibid., 13)! It is extraordinary that I praise myself—I do so because nobody else will proclaim it!’”¹⁶⁶

The companions came and kissed him. They assigned to him the verse *All your children will be taught by YHVH, and great will be the peace of your children* (Isaiah 54:13).

[78a] Rabbi Bun was goading one day after Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai. As they mounted the rock at a mountain summit, they saw a certain bird that had strayed from its fledglings. Others came, tearing at them with their talons, and moved on. He said to him, assigning this verse to the scene: “*Like a sparrow wandering from her nest is a man wandering from his place* (Proverbs 27:8).”¹⁶⁷

As they continued on their journey, they saw a serpent kill a man and move on. Then they saw a lion ripping off an ear and eating it. Rabbi Shim'on said, “What satisfaction is there for this serpent—who strikes for no reason?”¹⁶⁸

He opened, saying, “*In a whirlwind he crushes me and multiplies my wounds for naught* (Job 9:17). *In a שַׁעֲרָה (se'arah), whirlwind*—alluding to Satan. For the nature of the serpent is to strike and kill without cause, gaining no

satisfaction from it. *He crushes me*—here it is written יְשׁוּפְנִי (yeshufeni), *he crushes me*, and there it is written *he* יְשׁוּפֶךָ (yeshufkha), *will crush your head* (Genesis 3:15)! Since *in a whirlwind he crushes me, he multiplies my wounds for naught*. For it is his nature to ravage without cause, to tear to shreds, for nothing.¹⁶⁹

“If you say that he acts without sanction, behold it is written: רוּחַ סַעְרָה (ruah se’arah), *whirlwind gale, fulfilling His word* (Psalms 148:8); and also: ‘*Does the snake bite without a whisper?*’ (Ecclesiastes 10:11)—a snake does not bite a person until it is whispered to from above.” Rabbi Shim’on said further: “Sometimes a person is whispered about above, but he is unknown to the serpent—so he kills another. Happy is the one unknown to him, not inscribed before him!”¹⁷⁰

“What is written regarding Elimelech? *The man’s name was Elimelech* (Ruth 1:2). Once inscribed before him, the prosecutor persecuted him to the point of execution, as is written: *And Elimelech died* (ibid., 3). Once [Satan was] permitted to begin with him, he was authorized regarding the sons—all of them according to the punishment rendered to a judge. For a judge should not say that he alone will be punished—indeed he, and his children, and his entire household will be seized on account of ‘a judge’s transgression.’¹⁷¹

“A judge is obligated to probe—zealously—the actions of his town, and should not say, ‘My job is to adjudicate between a man and his fellow, nothing more.’ In fact, all the deeds of his town rest upon his head; and if he blinkers his eyes from the town’s affairs, he will be snagged for their sins.¹⁷²

“Elimelech could have arisen and defended his generation—he was a righteous man! When the blessed Holy One was aroused to execute judgment upon the world, He observed the leaders of the people and sought to shield Elimelech. At first, what was written? *And a man went*

(ibid., 1), generically, without specifying who he was. At once the prosecutor jumped up, declaring: ‘*The man’s name is Elimelech* (ibid., 2), he is inscribed and well known—he and his entire household!’¹⁷³

“From here we learn that there is no judge—in any generation—who is not recognized and identified above. And, when judgment is aroused upon the world, he is judged first.”

His two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion (Ruth 1:2).¹⁷⁴

(*maḥal*), forgave, him after some time, since he מוזה בידו (*moḥeh be-yado*), protested, to his father, swaying his judgment. כליון (*Khilion*), *Chilion*—so called because he was נכלה (*nikhleḥ*), wiped out, of existence.”¹⁷⁵

Rabbi Yose son of Qisma said, “As with them, so with their wives. ערפה, *Orpah*—judged in accord with her name—stiff-necked, for she disdained a portion [78b] with Israel. This is as is said: *To me they have turned their* ערף (*oref*), *back, and not their face* (Jeremiah 2:27)—for she turned her עורף (*oref*), back, on her mother-in-law.¹⁷⁶

“רות (*Rut*), Ruth, on account of the name תור (*tor*), turtledove. Just as the latter is fit for the altar, so was Ruth fit to join the congregation. For the law had already been established: ‘An Ammonite (Deuteronomy 23:4), but not an Ammonitess; a Moabite (ibid.), but not a Moabites.’¹⁷⁷

“רות (*Rut*), Ruth—forebear of a son who רוה (*rivvah*), satiated, the blessed Holy One with songs and praises.¹⁷⁸

“Ruth, wife of Mahlon, came into the congregation. Mahlon, forgiven by the blessed Holy One, allowing him entry into Israel—that his name could be mentioned. Orpah, wife of Chilion—Chilion’s name was not remembered in Israel.¹⁷⁹

Rabbi Pedat and Rabbi Peraḥiah said, “מחלון (*Maḥlon*), *Mahlon*—so called because the blessed Holy One מחל

“Corresponding to this: Naomi—נשמה (*neshamah*), holy soul. Elimelech—נשמתא לנשמתא (*nishmeta le-nishmeta*), soul of soul. Mahlon—רוח השכלית (*ruah ha-sikhlit*), intellectual spirit. Ruth—נפש השכלית (*nefesh ha-sikhlit*), intellectual soul. Chilion—הבהמיות רוח (*ruah ha-behemi'ut*), animal spirit.¹⁸⁰

“Of this Solomon said *Who knows if רוח (ruah), the spirit, of man ascends on high and רוח (ruah), the spirit, of a beast descends into earth?* (Ecclesiastes 3:21). *Ruah of man—Mahlon. Bestial ruah—Chilion, from the left side. Bestial nefesh—Orpah, stiff-necked, from the left side. Thus Chilion—his name was not remembered in Israel.*”¹⁸¹

And they took for themselves Moabite women (Ruth 1:4).¹⁸²

Rabbi Reḥumai said, “They were the daughters of Eglon, King of Moab.” And the

grounds for Eglon’s merit? Rabbi Reḥumai explained, “When Ehud came and said to him, ‘*I have a message from Elohim for you,*’ immediately *he rose from his seat* (Judges 3:20). The blessed Holy One said to him, ‘You rose from your seat in My honor; by your life, you will be the forebear of one who will sit upon my throne!’ This is as is said: *Solomon sat upon the throne of YHVH* (1 Chronicles 29:23).”¹⁸³

Rabbi Bun said, “If I had been there when the law of ‘*a Moabite* (Deuteronomy 23:4), but not a Moabite’ was instituted, I would have argued against it—and would have proposed ‘*a Moabite, but not a Moabite.*’ Of whom was it written *and the people began to go whoring with the daughters of Moab. And they invited the people to the sacrifices for their gods.... ‘Look, these are the ones who led the Israelites by Balaam’s word... and there was a scourge against the community of YHVH’* (Numbers 25:1-2, 31:16)? They caused all this—and yet the men are forbidden while the women are permitted!”¹⁸⁴

But then immediately, he said, “I recant. Just as Moses and Eleazar accepted them, as is written: *but every young woman who has not known lying with a man, let live* (ibid. 31:18). On what basis? The daughters of Moab were under coercion in that incident. This is as Rabbi Hīlqiyah taught in the name of Rabbi Asia son of Gurion: the men came, bringing them against their will; and whoever did not comply, they would kill. Ultimately, they were there en masse. Certainly, it is the men who should be forbidden and the women permitted!¹⁸⁵

“Further, *because they did not greet you with food and water... and because they hired* (Deuteronomy 23:5)—the men were at the heart of the matter.”¹⁸⁶

Rabbi Hīsdai said, “We have learned that the Wadi of Shittim boosts promiscuity in women, and yet you have said that they were there under duress! Further, Rabbi Oshaiah said, ‘What is the meaning of the verse *A spring shall issue from the House of YHVH and shall water Wadi of Shittim* (Joel 4:18)? It is nothing less than that at that time, the blessed Holy One is destined to heal the entire world; and because Wadi of Shittim increases lewdness, *A spring shall issue from the House of YHVH* to heal that wadi. If so, this demonstrates that the women came on their own for the debauchery.”¹⁸⁷

Rabbi Menasia said, “Pity and peace! It is self-evident that they would not venture out in public voluntarily if their husbands and fathers were there. The fact is, the men loosed them, coerced them, at the urging of Balaam.”¹⁸⁸

Rabbi Yose son of Qisma, “I would be astonished if this scroll came only to trace the lineage of David back to Ruth the Moabite, and nothing more! If so, what need have I for all this? Better to just write the lineage from Boaz’s marriage to Ruth; then it could say *This is the lineage of Peretz... until and Jesse engendered David* (Ruth 4:18, 22). But, actually, all of this is necessary because this righteous woman came to convert and to be enveloped beneath the

wings of *Shekhinah*—teaching about her humility and modesty.”¹⁸⁹

Rabbi El’azar son of Rabbi Yose said, “It comes to teach that the lineage of David is like *silver smelted in an earthen crucible* (Psalms 12:7). For the silver of Obed is clarified silver, smelted time and again.¹⁹⁰

“If you say, ‘If so, why did they come from such mothers, with this kind of background?’ Well, the explanation is that it is silver purified of its dross, and that the lineage of David is refined from this side and that. This is as is written: *You shall love YHVH your God with all your heart...* (Deuteronomy 6:5), with both your impulses. With the good impulse and the evil impulse—everything as one, as necessary—and the lineage of David, necessarily so.”¹⁹¹
[78c]

Rabbi opened, saying, “Primal Adam—נשמתא לנשמתא (*nishmeta le-nishmeta*), soul of soul. Eve—נשמתא (*nishmeta*), soul. Cain and Abel: Abel, from the same species as Adam and Eve—called spirit of holiness. Cain, spirit of the left, is called כלאים (*kil’ayim*), different kinds. An unnecessary עירבוביא (*irbuvya*), motley mixture; another side—not the species of Adam and Eve. Of this is written *Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together* (Deuteronomy 22:10).¹⁹²

“Further, do not insert the holy covenant in a different domain—*You shall have no other gods beside Me* (Exodus 20:3).¹⁹³

“*Adam*—patterned after heavenly paradigm. *Other gods*—donkey and ass, male and female. Thus, of one who inserts holy covenant in a different domain, it is written *They betrayed YHVH because they bore alien children* (Hosea 5:7). And the blessed Holy One is jealous only for this—the holy covenant.¹⁹⁴

“The blessed Holy One created man with ך (yod), ה (he), ן (vav), ה (he) within—His holy name, soul of soul—this is called *Adam*. Radiances shine through nine luminaries,

suspended from ך (yod). One light without division. Thus, body of man is called garment of Adam.¹⁹⁵

“ה (He)—called soul. Coupling with ך (yod), it spreads out to numerous radiances, and it is one. ך (Yod) ה (he), with no separation. Of this is written *God created the human in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.... and He called their name אדם (Adam) (Genesis 1:27; 5:2).*¹⁹⁶

“ו (Vav)—called spirit, and also called Son of יה (yod he). ה (He)—called נפשא (nafsha), soul, and also called Daughter. Father and Mother, Son and Daughter—great mystery of יוד (yod vav dalet), אה (he alef), ואו (vav alef vav), אה (he alef)—called Adam. His radiance, scattering to forty-five radiances—numerical value of אדם (Adam), forty-five. The name יוד (yod), אה (he), ואו (vav), אה (he)—*male and female He created them.... and He called their name אדם (Adam).*¹⁹⁷

“Afterward, He created the body, as is written: *YHVH Elohim formed Adam, dust from the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7).* What is the difference between Adam and Adam? YHVH is called Adam and the body is called Adam—what’s the difference between this one and that one? The explanation is that where it is written *God created Adam in His image*—it signifies YHVH. Where it is not called *in His image*—it signifies the body.¹⁹⁸

“After saying *YHVH Elohim יצר (yiytser), formed, Adam, עשאו (asa’o), He made him, as is written: YHVH Elohim יעש (ya’as), made, coats of skin for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them (Genesis 3:21).* כתנות אור (Kotnot or), *Coats of light*—after the supernal paradigm. After they sinned, כתנות עור (kotnot or), *coats of skin.*¹⁹⁹

“Of this is written *Everyone who is called by My name, בראתי (berativ), whom I created, for My glory, יצרתיו (yetsartiv), whom I formed, and אף עשיתיו (af asitiv), indeed, I have made him (Isaiah 43:7).* בראתי (Berativ), *Whom I created*—this is יוד (yod), אה (he), ואו (vav), אה (he). יצרתיו (Yetsartiv), *Whom I formed*—this signifies *coats of light.* אף עשיתיו (Af asitiv), *Indeed, I*

have made him—this signifies *coats of skin*, because אַף (*af*), *anger*, caused this. To whom shall be ascribed this evil? Evil impulse, the serpent who provoked the decree of death upon Adam and Eve, and upon all humanity.²⁰⁰

“Just as there is a name of holiness, so is there a name of impurity that is repulsive. Of this: *You shall have no other gods beside Me* (Exodus 20:3).²⁰¹

“Whoever mars one of his limbs below, it is as if he has damaged one above. On account of this, sword comes to the world, and death comes to the world. Of this is written *and I will make your wives widows...* (Exodus 22:23), pertaining to one who inserts holy covenant in a different domain. Of this: *a garment of different kinds, sha’atnez shall not be donned by you* (Leviticus 19:19). Similarly, *Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together* (Deuteronomy 22:10), and it says, *Cursed be he who lies with any beast* (ibid. 27:21). What is a beast? A Gentile woman, deriving from the other beast above, from impurity.²⁰²

“Of this is said *See, I have set before you today life and good and death and evil* (ibid. 30:15). *Life and good*—this is YHVH. *Death and evil*—this is the name of Samael, soul of soul from the left side. [78d] נִשְׁמָה (*Neshamah*), Highest soul, of the left side, רוּחַ (*ruah*), spirit, and נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*), soul, of the left side in a Jewish body are called *Adam*, while all other nations are not called *Adam*. What does Scripture say? *Choose life* (ibid., 19).²⁰³

“Consequently, there are Jewish demons. And the verse that says *You shall have no other gods beside Me* (Exodus 20:3) applies only to Ishmael and Esau. The *other gods* of Ishmael and Esau—from where did they originate? From the dregs of Jewish demons. Of this: *For from the stock of a snake there sprouts an asp* (Isaiah 14:29). Thus, if Evil Impulse urges you, ‘Sin—lie down with a beast—do it!’ do not trust him.²⁰⁴

“Thus, there are demons that are Jewish, Muslim, and Christian, but the grandest of them are among the

descendants of Esau and Ishmael. From where does this stature originate? From their bodies for they are our brothers, bodily, though not in terms of נשמה (*neshamah*), highest soul, nor spirit, nor נפש (*nefesh*), soul, nor soul of soul.[205](#)

“Let me open a wide portal for you: All Israel bow down to the blessed Holy One, while the god of Esau’s people bows down to them! How do we know this? An allusion in Scripture: *elohim came to Balaam in a night-dream* (Numbers 22:20)—his god bowed down to him, coming to his house, and speaking with Balaam in his dream. Why all this? To honor the body—their primary concern.[206](#)

“Now, any Gentile who repents—abandoning idolatry—the blessed Holy One will infuse him with holy spirit and holy נשמה (*nafsha*), soul. Consequently, he will have a portion in the world that is coming—not with Israel, however, but a portion of his own.[207](#)

“Why this distinction? On account of the lees in his body, originating in impurity. Holy spirit and holy *nefesh* rest upon those lees, exerting great pressure, bringing them to this body. This is like a person who lives in the midst of trash—once he dies, his dregs disappear.[208](#)

“This explains why they have taught that a Gentile’s body is impure during his lifetime, and pure after his death. Why? Because his soul will be vanquished and his body will return to the dust, as before. The Jew is pure in his lifetime and impure at death because his *neshamah* ascends to a lofty place, while the bestial soul remains in the body. Thus, this one is designated impure in death, while the Gentile is pure![209](#)

“To what may this be compared? To two trees—one holy, one impure. What makes one holy and the other impure? The one that yields fruit is holy, and the one that does not yield fruit is impure (that one will provide shade for idol worship)—nonetheless, each one is planted in the ground. One tree draws water, and the other also draws

water—nonetheless, one tree yields fruit and the other tree does not yield fruit.²¹⁰

“Similar to this is Israel and the descendants of Esau—two trees planted in the earth—holy spirit and debased spirit. These are the trees, in the same soil since, physically, they are our brothers. One has water and yields fruit—this is holy Torah of Israel, compared to water, as is said: *Ho, everyone who is thirsty, go to water* (Isaiah 55:1), and there is no water other than Torah.²¹¹

“Of a Jewish body, Scripture says *a tree yielding fruit that has its seed within it... upon the earth...* (Genesis 1:11-12). He will inherit the Garden of Eden and will inherit a holy, celestial body, and his *neshamah* will revel in the light of *Shekhinah*.²¹²

“Now, you said that there is no fruit from the Tree of Impurity. If so, why does the verse say *a tree yielding fruit of its own kind* (ibid.)? Look carefully at the fruit of this tree that provides shade for idol worship—it is reputed to yield inedible fruit that the wind drives off. Of this is said *Not so the wicked, but like chaff...* (Psalms 1:4). This Tree of Impurity draws water, but does not yield fruit, as we have taught—*Like chaff that the wind drives away* (ibid.)—this is their Torah.”²¹³

Rabbi Hoshaya said, “Come and see the example of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—seed of David [79a] follows this pattern. Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—good from the paternal side, evil from the maternal side, but nonetheless, not deriving from their impudence.”²¹⁴

When Rabbi Eli’ezer heard this, he came and kissed him on the head.

Rabbi Hisdai said, “Ruth was among the most modest of them. She entered under the wings of *Shekhinah*, and royalty proceeded from her. Kings necessarily issue from seed of David so that they will be both merciful and cruel. Merciful from the paternal side, brutal from the maternal

side—this one and that one, necessarily unified as one. Consequently, seed of David is vengeful and raging as a snake, while merciful to Israel.”²¹⁵

Rabbi Ḥalafta said, “Scent of the lily—the one emerging from the midst of thorns. Ruth emerged—from seed of the nations—like a lily, wafting fine fragrance before the blessed Holy One.”

Rabbi Pedat asked the son of Rabbi Yose of Sokho, “Since Ruth had converted, why was she not called by another name?”²¹⁶

He replied, “This is what I heard: She had another name, and when she married Mahlon they renamed her Ruth. From that point, she ascended with this name. For when she married Mahlon she converted, not afterward.”²¹⁷

He said to him, “But it says afterward: *Your God shall be my God; where you lodge, I will lodge...* (Ruth 1:16). Naomi exhorted her with many cautions, as we have learned, and she accepted them all. But if she had converted earlier, what need did she have for all this now?”²¹⁸

He said, “God forbid that she married Mahlon while still a Gentile! In truth, when she was taken as a wife she converted, but her compliance—and Orpah’s—was considered contingent due to the presumption of her husband’s intimidation. When their husbands died, Orpah reverted to her defectiveness, as is written: *See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods* (ibid., 15). And it is written: *Ruth clung to her* (ibid., 14), as she had at first. When her husband died, she cleaved to the Torah—of her own will.”²¹⁹

He said to him, “Did you hear what her name was originally?”

He replied, “Her name was Gilit. When she married Mahlon, he called her Ruth. ערפָה, Orpah—הרפָה (*Haraphah*),

Weak One, was her name, and she reverted to her defectiveness, to her name, and to her gods. This is as is written: *Well, now, your sister-in-law has returned to her people* (ibid., 15). *To her people*—to be addressed by her original name. *To her gods*—to worship idols.”[220](#)

Rabbi Reḥumai and Rabbi Qisma son of Geiri were together in Ono, from Sabbath to Sabbath. One day they were sitting [and studying], while Rabbi Reḥumai was sitting and teaching, with an assembly before him.[221](#)

He opened, saying, “*Therefore* באורים (*ba-urim*), *with lights, honor* YHVH (Isaiah 24:15). What is the meaning of באורים (*ba-urim*), *with lights*? These are the אורים ותומים (*urim ve-tumim*), Urim and Thummim.[222](#)

“באורים (*Ba-urim*), *With fires*—with two fires, in Zion and Jerusalem. This is as is written: *Declares* YHVH, *whose fire is in Zion, His furnace in Jerusalem* (ibid. 31:9). But people are unaware of them.[223](#)

“*In Zion* alone, you might have thought. Actually, just as Zion and Jerusalem go together, so too do these two go together, like male and female. Male fire is weak, female fire is strong—one corresponding to Zion, and one corresponding to Jerusalem.[224](#)

“No one in the world knows the secret of these two fires. They are called evil impulse and good impulse; and the blessed Holy One gave them to humanity for guidance. Scripture says: *Therefore, with fires honor* YHVH (Isaiah 24:15)—with these, one honors his Master.[225](#)

“There is a gate beneath Zion, a cavity two thousand cubits below the earth—origin of fire, small and weak. This gate is called Hidden. From there it proceeds—spreading until Jerusalem, site of the Temple Mount—until it reaches the place where every male stands to see the face of the Lord, YHVH *Tseva’ot*.[226](#)

“What is the explanation? There, beneath the Temple Mount—which is within the courtyard—there is [79b] a

subterranean fire measuring 365 cubits by 365 cubits. Above, however, the fire does not burn like a powerful furnace. Below, fire follows the model of foreskin—shrouding covenant, beneath.[227](#)

“Every male inscribed with the covenant stands over it, *before the Lord* *YHVH* (Exodus 23:17). Because of this, *Therefore* באוריִם (*ba-urim*), *with fires, honor* *YHVH* (Isaiah 24:9)—with the fire of Zion and the fire of Jerusalem.[228](#)

“Gate of the Powerful Furnace, called Foreskin. When the males stand above it, they submerge that fire to the great depth—fire of Hell.[229](#)

“Seven names for the evil impulse: Evil, Impure, Satan, Enemy, Stumbling Block, Uncircumcised, Hidden One. Of this is said *all your males shall appear* (Exodus 23:17). Seven names for Geihinnom: Pit, Destruction, Dumah, Slimy Mud, Sheol, Talmavet, Netherworld. Seven openings to Geihinnom corresponding to its seven names. Seven compartments, one upon the other—all compartments prepared for the wicked to be judged. Their bodies waste in the grave, and their souls incinerated, fire consuming them.[230](#)

“First compartment—Pit. Uppermost compartment with numerous classes of violent angels. Like the בור (*bor*), pit, with no water but with snakes and scorpions, similarly with this compartment—called בור (*bor*), Pit. Within, innumerable bands of violent angels like those fiery serpents, for whom no charm can be whispered.[231](#)

“Three appointed angels preside over Geihinnom, subject to the rule of Dumah—Destroyer, Wrath, Rage. All others, posted below them. All those compartments—filled with darting to and fro, and the souls of the wicked are judged there.[232](#)

“All those cohorts of violent angels cause a tumult in Geihinnom, their voices heard up to the vault. Voices of the

wicked in their midst screaming and wailing, ‘Woe, woe!’—but none takes pity upon them.

“Of all these—the three angels along with the other groups of angels of destruction who cause Geihinnom to tremble—Scripture says: קול (qol), *Sound, of tumult from the city*, קול (qol), *thunder, from the Temple*; קול (qol), *voice, of YHVH dealing retribution to His enemies* (Isaiah 66:6), corresponding to these three ravaging angels who govern all the days of the week.²³³

“From the time of the evening prayer, all night long, they judge those who *do their deeds in darkness...* (Isaiah 29:15)—lasciviously lusting in their beds. Of them Scripture says *they do their deeds in darkness...* and *Woe to those who plot iniquity, plowing evil on their beds...* (Micah 2:1). Once begun, they conclude for them all in the daytime. But the beginning of judgment for the wicked in Geihinnom—when night glooms. Thus, they are called nights, as is said: *from terror of the nights* (Song of Songs 3:8). Rabbi Alexandrai said, ‘From the fear of Geihinnom.’²³⁴

“For this reason, they instituted *Yet He is compassionate* (Psalms 78:38) for the evening prayer through the week—since from the moment that it gets dark, the wicked are judged in Geihinnom by three: מִשְׁחִית (mashhit), Destroyer, אַף (af), Wrath, and חַיְמָה (heimah), Rage. All of them included here: *Yet He is compassionate*. As is written: יִשְׁחִית (yashhit), *destroy*, לְהַשִּׁיב אָפוֹ (le-hashiv apo), *returning His wrath*, כָּל חַמָּתוֹ (kol hamato), *all His rage* (ibid.).²³⁵

Thus, they instituted *Yet He is compassionate* during the weekdays and not on Shabbat—since once Shabbat enters, Judgment withdraws from the world, the wicked in Geihinnom have respite, and violent angels do not govern them from the moment the day is sanctified.²³⁶

“For this reason, one does not recite *Yet He is compassionate*, so that violent angels will not be roused. For this reason, it is forbidden—out of respect for the King

who protects the wicked on Shabbat—to demonstrate that judgment has vanished, and violent ones have no license to injure.²³⁷

“This can be compared to a watchman’s beating a criminal. The king comes to protect him, setting [the criminal] before him. Once he is standing before the king, if another threatened with a whip, would that not be an affront to the king! Similarly, the king is Shabbat. He plucks sinners from Geihinnom, placing them before him, protecting them. Then all the guards retreat from the presence of the King. If one were to pick up a lash in the king’s presence and threaten them, would this not be a disgrace to the King? Similarly, one does not [79c] recite ‘Who guards His people Israel.’²³⁸

“Judged in this compartment: those who *pluck saltwort*, שִׁיחַ עֲלֵי (alei siaḥ), *leaves of wormwood* (Job 30:4)—who interrupt words bestowed upon the tablets with שִׁיחַה עֲלֵי (alei siḥah), leaves of idle chatter; and those who treat sages disrespectfully. (This is not the place for one who scorns a תַּלְמִיד חָכָם [talmid ḥakham], disciple of the learned—he is judged in Slimy Mud.)²³⁹

“Judged in this first compartment: one who scorns a sage’s disciple or a sage, even if he honors him publicly; one who curses the deaf, or the like; one who passes behind a synagogue when the congregation is praying; and one who praises his fellow before the latter’s adversary, to ill effect. All these and similar cases are judged in the first compartment.²⁴⁰

“The second compartment is called Destruction, likened to green fire. Nothing but darkness there, no compassion at all. Judged there: those who disparage the biers of scholars; one who shames his fellow, discouraging others from learning from him; one who hectors, but not for the sake of heaven; one who accrues honor from the disgrace of his fellow; one who foresees that his fellow will stumble

on a halakhic matter and does not forewarn him before he stumbles, leading to his or others' joy; one who has a synagogue in his town, but does not step foot there to pray; one who is unpleasant to his fellow—a local colleague—in halakhic matters; one who eats from a meal that is insufficient for the hosts; one who raises his hand to strike his fellow even though the latter had not struck him; and one who jokingly derides his friend, to induce shame. All these are judged there, in that compartment, as well as all those like them.²⁴¹

“The third compartment is called Dumah. Judged there: all those with swelled egos because of their halakhic erudition, publicly swaggering, but not for the sake of heaven; those who gossip; those who are arrogant with halakhah; one who judges his fellow negatively; one who lends to his fellow with interest; one who reveals aspects of the Torah that are contrary to the *halakhah*; one who does not respond ‘amen’ following another’s blessing; one who turns his prayer into ‘bits and pieces’—like one who chatters in the midst of his prayer, returns [to his prayer], jabbbers some more, and goes back [to the prayer], then interrupts—this is called ‘bits and pieces’; one who ridicules his fellow, or gibes at an elder who has forgotten his learning; and one who sees something vexing for his friend and does not inform him privately. All these are judged there, as well as all those like them.²⁴²

“The fourth compartment is called Slimy Mud. Judged there: the haughty; all those who respond harshly to the poor and indigent; one who sees a poor person in straits and does not lend him money until the latter implores for help; one who oppresses by withholding wages of the hired laborer; one who emits seed wastefully; one who fornicates with a Gentile woman or a menstruant; one who takes collateral from a poor person and does not return it when the latter has nothing else; one who perverts justice; and

one who accepts bribes. All these are judged in this compartment.²⁴³

“The fifth compartment is called Sheol. Judged there: Heretics, informers, those who reject the Torah, and those who deny the resurrection of the dead. Of them is said *As a cloud fades and vanishes, so whoever descends to Sheol rises no more* (Job 7:9). Of the other sinners is written *YHVH deals death and grants life, brings down to Sheol and raises up* (1 Samuel 2:6).²⁴⁴

“The sixth compartment is called Tsalmavet. Judged there are all those who had intercourse with a Gentile woman or a menstruant.²⁴⁵

“The seventh compartment is called Netherworld. One who descends there never rises again. Of them is said *You will trample the wicked...* (Malachi 3:21).²⁴⁶

In all of these compartments consuming fire blazes night and day for the souls of the wicked. There is one who is called ‘wicked’ and is judged in Geihinnom for twelve months, but a completely wicked person who has not repented is judged in Geihinnom for eternity. The rabbis say that a wicked person is judged in Geihinnom for six months, and a completely wicked person, twelve months. This applies when they have pondered repentance and died. However, if he did not mull over repentance, nor did he repent for the sin, of them [79d] the verse says *They will go out and stare at the corpses of the people who rebel against Me...* (Isaiah 66:24).²⁴⁷

Rabbi Reḥumai said, “When the blessed Holy One banished Adam from Garden of Eden, he was terrified of the compartment called Netherworld—it had no limits. Of this is said *Land of gloom, thickest murk; צלמות (Tsalmavet), Death’s Shadow, and disorder, where it shines thickest murk* (Job 10:22).²⁴⁸

“What did he do? He repented, entering the waters of Gihon, right up to his neck. The blessed Holy One took pity

upon him, raising him to the place called *Adamah*—one of the seven lands. There he fathered Abel and Cain.²⁴⁹

“When Cain murdered Abel, the blessed Holy One decreed that he would be a *restless wanderer upon* הארץ (*ha-arets*), *the earth* (Genesis 4:12). What is written? *Behold, You have banished me today from the face of Adamah ... I shall be a restless wanderer upon Arets* (ibid., 14). The blessed Holy One accepted his penance, and lifted him up to *Arqa*.²⁵⁰

“When Seth was born, the blessed Holy One raised Adam above all the other lands to *Tevel*, to a particular place in Hebron. There was his burial place as well as for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives.”²⁵¹

Rabbi Kisma said, “The Cave of Machpelah is near the opening of the Garden of Eden. When Eve died, Adam came and buried her there. He inhaled fragrances of the Garden of Eden, mingled with the site’s redolence. He wished to dig deeper, but a heavenly voice boomed, ‘That’s enough!’ He stopped immediately, ceased digging, and was buried there. Who prepared him for burial? His son Seth, who bore *his likeness* and *image* (ibid. 5:3).”²⁵²

Rabbi Reḥumai said, “The blessed Holy One tended to him when he was born and tended to him when he died. Nobody knew his whereabouts until Abraham our forefather, peace be upon him, appeared and saw him. He inhaled the aroma of spices wafting from Garden of Eden. He heard the voices of the ministering angels saying, ‘Adam is buried here, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be readied for this place.’ He saw the flickering lamp and departed. Instantly, he longed for the place.”²⁵³

Rav Huna said, “Before Abraham arrived, others attempted to be buried there; but the ministering angels guarded the place. People saw the lamp burning there, but none could enter until Abraham came, entered, and purchased the site.”

Rabbi Neḥemiah opened, “*YHVH Elohim planted a garden in Eden, to the east...* (Genesis 2:8). When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created Him from the Temple, taking the Temple’s dust to create him. Once He created him and he stood up on his feet, all the creatures came to prostrate themselves before him.^{[254](#)}

“What did the blessed Holy One do? He transported him from there and placed him in the Garden of Eden. He fashioned ten canopies for him—like the quintessential ten canopies the blessed Holy One is destined to make for the righteous in the Garden of Eden, in the time to come. The ministering angels were descending and ascending, rejoicing before him, and the blessed Holy One bestowed supernal wisdom upon him.^{[255](#)}

“When Samael descended from heavenly heights, he beheld Adam’s status and the ministering angels serving him in his canopy—and it was loathsome in his eyes. What did he do? He mounted a serpent as if it were a camel and rode upon it. He descended, seducing [Adam] until he transgressed his Maker’s command.”^{[256](#)}

“What caused him to sin? Rabbi Alexandrai said, ‘A spirit of debauchery entered him.’ Rabbi Hizkiyah said, ‘A spirit of impurity—it was thus that he violated his Maker’s command.’^{[257](#)}

“Once he transgressed, the blessed Holy One revealed Himself to him, banishing him from the Garden of Eden. Against [Adam] He mandated ten decrees; against Eve, ten decrees; against the serpent, ten decrees; and against the earth, ten decrees less one—the forty-less-one lashes that the court imposes upon a sinner. Ultimately, he repented—and the blessed Holy One accepted him at once.^{[258](#)}

“This is as Rabbi Yehudah son of Shalom said, ‘What is the meaning of this verse *Hear my prayer, O YHVH; to my cry hearken, to my tears be not deaf! For I am a sojourner with You...* (Psalms 39:13)? King David uttered this, as Rabbi

Bun son of Hama said: “David said that the blessed Holy One is near [80a] to all who call unto Him.””²⁵⁹

He opened, asking about this verse, “How do we know this? It is as is written: *YHVH is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him in truth* (Psalms 145:18). All who call to the blessed Holy One in truth—He draws them close, receiving them. For the blessed Holy One desires the heart, and a person’s heartfelt devotion is more important to Him than the entire world’s sacrifices and offerings. Once a person directs his mind toward repentance, there is no gate among all the heavens that remains unopened.²⁶⁰

“A person’s sacrifice is contingent upon the heart and intention, as is written: *He shall confess that concerning which he has sinned* (Leviticus 5:5), and it is written: *confess over it* (ibid. 16:21)—all dependent upon the heart.”²⁶¹

Hear my prayer, O YHVH; to my cry give ear; to my tears be not deaf! (Psalms 39:13). Rabbi Nehunia son of Qaneh said to the sages, “My children! By your lives, there is nothing as close to the Omnipresent as a person’s heart—more pleasing to Him than all the sacrifices and offerings of the entire world!

“One who fasts, aligning his heart and intention, offers a perfect sacrifice. For it is pleasing to the blessed Holy One when a person sacrifices his fat, blood, and body, offering the heat and aroma of his breath. His heart and will are called Altar of Atonement.²⁶²

“A sacrificial offering is apportioned to numerous sides, numerous divisions. An individual’s fast is apportioned to numerous sides, numerous divisions; but from the entirety, the blessed Holy One takes only the heart and devotion.²⁶³

“There are three sovereigns within the body: mind, heart, and liver. Mind absorbs from everything and provides to heart. Heart absorbs from all and it gives to liver. Liver provides to all, as is said: *All the streams flow*

into the sea, yet the sea is not full (Ecclesiastes 1:7). This structure is analogous to the sea, and the blessed Holy One accepts it.[264](#)

“Nothing in the entire world endures before Him, other than a person’s repentance and prayer.” Rabbi Yehudah said, “Three types of repentance here in this verse: prayer, cry, and tears. All in this verse: prayer—*Hear my prayer, O YHVH*; cry—*to my cry give ear*; tears—*to my tears be not deaf!* (Psalms 39:13). All three are esteemed before the blessed Holy One; but among them, none as esteemed as tears—for along with tears go the heart, will, and the entire body. Through twelve gates, tears enter before the blessed Holy One.[265](#)

“*Prayer*—connected with hearing, as is written: *Hear my prayer, O YHVH*. *Cry*—as is written of it: *to my cry give ear*. *Tears*—unlike these, indeed superior to them all, as is written: *to my tears be not deaf!* What is the difference between them?[266](#)

“The rabbis of Caesarea and Rabbi El’azar son of Yose disputed the matter. [He said,] ‘*Prayer*—Sometimes a person supplicates in prayer and the blessed Holy One hears, yet declines to fulfill his request, remaining silent, largely indifferent. That is the case of *prayer*.[267](#)

“*Cry*—superior to *prayer*, for this one wails with heartfelt devotion before his Master. Since he directs his intention more fervently, it is written: *give ear*, like one inclining his ear toward a particular word. Nonetheless, He is silent, unmoved by his request.[268](#)

“But *tears* come with intention, heart, and the entire body; and therefore of this case is written *to my tears be not deaf!*’

“But the rabbis say, ‘Not all tears enter before the King. Tears of rage, and tears seeking judgment of one’s fellow, do not gain access to the King. But those of prayer, repentance, and agonized pleas all burst through heavens, open gates, and enter before the King.’[269](#)

“This is as we have learned: ‘On the day the Temple was destroyed, all gates were locked, but the gates of tears were not locked.’ What is written regarding Hezekiah? *I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears* (Isaiah 38:5). Actual seeing, on account of tears.²⁷⁰

“Of the time to come, what is written? *YHVH Elohim will wipe away tears from all faces* (ibid. 25:8). There are tears of virtue and tears of ill will. Of virtue—from the good impulse. Of ill will—from the evil impulse. Of tears of suffering and tears of prayer is written *With weeping they will come; with supplications I will conduct them...* (Jeremiah 31:9).²⁷¹ [80b]

Rabbi Kruspedai fell ill; and Rabbi Yoḥanan son of Qisma, and the rabbis, came to visit him. It was the Sabbath. They saw him cry, then smile, and then he fell asleep. They said, “It is the Sabbath, so it is forbidden to move him—no further exertion is required.” They left him.²⁷²

Rabbi Yoḥanan rose, teaching: “*And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons* (Ruth 1:3). Elimelech died and her two sons remained; she was consoled by them. Elimelech’s two sons survived to fulfill his post—he was נשמתא לנשמתא (*nishmeta le-nishmeta*), soul of soul. What is written afterward? *Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died* (ibid., 5)—holy spirit and animal spirit. Rupture upon rupture! *Nishmeta le-nishmeta*, which is *yod*, and intellectual spirit, which is *vav*, will not die; but one who plunges from great stature is called dead.²⁷³

“Similarly, in this case. When Rabbi Eli’ezer went to sleep, the rabbis remained, providing consolation. Rabbi Yoḥanan son of Nuri, and his companions, died—and now our companion Rabbi Kruspedai, as well! Rupture upon rupture!”²⁷⁴

While they sat, Rabbi Hilqi’ah was near him. He noticed that tears had returned to his cheeks, and a smile to his

lips. He called to Rabbi Yoḥanan and the companions: “I saw tears on his cheeks and a smile on his lips!”

They exclaimed, “He’s certainly not dead!”

They sat, not permitting anyone to come close to him. In the morning, he opened his eyes and asked for water to drink. Rabbi Yoḥanan drew close to him. He said to them, “Come back to me tomorrow, and I will tell you what I saw. For now I have to arrange everything that I have seen; I was ordered to recount it to the companions. Of the night that I was there, I will tell you—but I cannot fathom it! Tell the members of my household not to approach me, nor should anyone remain here.”²⁷⁵

They all left, but Rabbi Yoḥanan remained, not approaching him all that night. When daylight shone, they saw that he was talking and weeping, but they understood nothing.

He rose, then sat down, then called for Rabbi Yoḥanan.

He said to him, “What did you see in that other world?”

“I have come from another world. I entered there, but I was denied permission to reveal any of it, other than to you and your companions.” Then he described to them what he had seen.

He said to Rabbi Yoḥanan, “Arrange your words and go to the throne that they have prepared for you, for twelve of the companions are coming on your account. Happy are those companions whose teaching endures in their hands!”²⁷⁶

“I saw that it was the very place where King Messiah resided. A herald proclaims every day, ‘Happy are those engaged with Torah, those who render others worthy, and those who waive the right of retribution!’”²⁷⁷

“Did you see when I was crying and smiling? Permission had been granted to the Angel of Death and he was coming; but I saw *Shekhinah* by my side and She would not let him. So I was taken to *beit din*, where I saw numerous troops and legions, all occupied with judgments of this

world. At their head, Sandalfon, Master of the Countenance, braiding bands for his Master. A single canopy spread over him, all heavenly forces under his rule. But I was refused permission to approach and see him.²⁷⁸

“I saw courts with throngs of officers attending, among them humanity’s defenders, prosecutors among them, too. They seized me, leading me before them. And I saw many of the companions there.

“They asked the Angel of Death, ‘What defense could he have before you?’

“He replied, ‘Since I was denied permission to take him, I have brought him here for judgment.’

“Three witnesses arose, proclaiming three times, ‘We have found indemnification!’ And they testified on my behalf [80c] that I always waived the right of retribution. They were occupied with my judgment the whole time you saw me sleeping, assessing my days and years, deeming them whole. Since I always relinquished justified retribution, they abandoned the case, unable to render a verdict until it was referred for judgment elsewhere—its location unknown to me.²⁷⁹

“The verdict was issued to release me, and to give me time to complete my study in this world—for I had not yet completed it. But the Angel of Death did not discharge me until they delivered to him Rabbi Kruspedai the Elder—who preceded me—in my stead. Then he turned me loose.²⁸⁰

“When you saw tears on my cheeks and a smile on my lips: the tears I cried because of the Angel of Death; I smiled from joy in *Shekhinah*. My sleeping for another interval—to instruct me in what I am to reveal to you. [I was not taken] by the Angel of Death, but the soul of Rabbi Oshaya was left with me, and I will travel there with him at that time.”²⁸¹

The companions were astonished, and proclaimed of him: “עברי בעמק הבכא (*ovrei be-emeq ha-bakha*), *who pass through the Valley of Weeping, making him a spring; also, מודה*

(moreh), the teacher, will cloak him with blessings (Psalms 84:7). *They pass through the Valley of Weeping*—this is Rabbi Kruspedai, who traversed it. For the Angel of Death—he is the *Valley of Weeping*—the one who causes everyone to weep. *Making him a spring*—he was ordained to complete [his study], to become a fountain of Torah. Therefore, *also, the teacher will cloak him with blessings*—if Torah brings him life, all the more so one who reviews a tradition and teaches it.”[282](#)

Rabbi Yoḥanan proclaimed of him: “*Light dawns in darkness for the upright; gracious, compassionate, and just* (Psalms 112:4). *Light dawns in darkness*—what is *darkness*? Angel of Death—who besmirches faces in the world, as is said: *with darkness over the abyss* (Genesis 1:2). The blessed Holy One shines in this *darkness* for the *upright one*—Rabbi Kruspedai—powerful light, beacon of Torah. And who did this? The blessed Holy One, who is called *gracious, compassionate, and just*.”[283](#)

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law... for she had heard, while still in Moab, that YHVH had remembered His people and given them food (Ruth 1:8, 6).[284](#)

Rabbi Berekhiah said in the name of Rabbi Isaac, “Come and see: One who averts his eyes from the poor during years of dearth—they will see the world’s relief, but he

will not. Elimelech was a wealthy man, but when he saw the famine, he turned aside from charitable giving and fled to the fields of Moab.”[285](#)

Rabbi Berekhiah said to them, “But is it not in fact the practice of the righteous to flee from famine? Were not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob greater than Elimelech—and richer as well—and yet one went to Egypt because of famine, and the other to the land of the Philistines!”[286](#)

Rabbi Berekhiah said in the name of Rabbi Isaac, “The blessed Holy One induced those righteous ones to leave from the midst of evil ones, and to publicize to all their character. Hence, He brought famine. But it was not so with Elimelech, for he dwelt with them. When famine came, the poor approached him, but he avoided them and fled. Further, he perceived that judgment fell upon the entire world, and yet he went off among the nations!”²⁸⁷

[81a]²⁸⁸ Rabbi Reḥumai said, “There were three years of famine in the days of King David. What was the reason? To inform him that the event derived from judgment, as is written: *There was a famine in the days of David... David sought out* (2 Samuel 21:1), continuing until the verdict was completed. Once judgment was fulfilled, then immediately: *God granted the plea of the land...* (ibid., 14).²⁸⁹

“For Rabbi Ḥiyya taught: ‘The entire world drinks only from the drippings of the land of Israel. When notice is taken of the world, [the land of Israel] is noted first, because there is none drawing for her or defending her at the start.’²⁹⁰

“Elimelech was righteous, and he could have protected the people of the land; but he fled, hiding among the other nations. For this, he was punished—he died. His sons went and married foreign women—aliens—and they were punished.”²⁹¹

When humankind began to increase on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful, and they took themselves wives, whomever they chose.

YHVH said, “My spirit shall not abide in the human forever, for he too is but flesh]. Let his days be a hundred and twenty years.” The fallen ones were on earth in those days—and afterward as well—when the sons of God came

in to the daughters of humankind, who bore them children. These are the heroes of old, men of renown (Genesis 6:1-4).

Rabbi Ḥananiah opened: “*The sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful, and they took themselves wives, whomever they chose* (Genesis 6:2). *The sons of God saw*—Uzza and Aza’el: two angels who castigated their Master, and the blessed Holy One cast them down from a heavenly site above. When they descended, they materialized in the air, becoming like men.²⁹²

[81b] “Among all the angels, none mingled among human beings so well as those called אִשִּׁים (*ishim*), heavenly men, and those called בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (*benei elohim*), sons of God. Once the blessed Holy One cast them down, they materialized with all the physical elements with which humans clothe themselves. Other angels—upon descent, though destined to return to their stations—concretize in the air, then strip off materiality and return to their places.”²⁹³

Kisma son of Rabbi Yannai said, “It is written: *He makes His angels spirits, His ministers flaming fire* (Psalms 104:4). Some angels are fashioned of wind, and some fashioned of fire, but each one gives to his fellow because harmony prevails among them. Consequently those who descend, descend from these two foundations. When they descend, they are more fully cloaked in the air of this world—materializing.²⁹⁴

“Those who blend into this world, with the elements of this world, are unable to bolt and return to their stations—restrained here. As they linger here for seven days—day by day—they cannot return. Of this is written *The sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind...* (Genesis 6:2).²⁹⁵

“What is the meaning of *were beautiful* (ibid.)? Their beauty shone like heavenly light.

“Once they sired offspring, the blessed Holy One took them and stowed them in the Mountains of Darkness, called *Ancient Mountains* (Numbers 23:7). He bound them in iron chains—chains sunk down to the great abyss. There, they instructed humanity in magical arts.²⁹⁶

“Balaam acquired his sorcerer’s skill there, learning it from the denizens of those mountains. This is as is written: *From Aram, Balak led me... from Ancient Mountains* (ibid.). There were crowned all the world’s experts.²⁹⁷

“Since they had been critics of their Master from the outset, continuing until today to scorn their Master—using sorcery to subvert the celestial family—if not for those shackles sunken in the abyss, binding them in a mighty brace, they would sully the world, and the world would be unable to withstand it.²⁹⁸

“There, among those dark mountains, they suckle from the north—for it is from that side that all of these species are reinforced.”²⁹⁹

Rabbi Neḥemiah said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, “Na’amah was around at that time, and everyone was seduced by her.”³⁰⁰

Rabbi Shalom says, “She was the mother of demons. When the sons of God saw the daughters of humankind, they strayed after them, because the daughters of humankind were strolling naked. They had intercourse with them and had children from them. This is as is written: *and afterward as well—when the sons of God...* אֲנֹשֵׁי שֵׁם (*anshei shem*), *men of renown* (Genesis 6:4).³⁰¹

“Who are the אֲנֹשֵׁי שֵׁם (*anshei shem*), *men of the name...?* These are the *fallen ones* (ibid.), who taught the world names for each and every thing, consummating their sorcery.”³⁰²

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yose said, “*Men of the name*—actually! As is said: *Sixty warriors surrounding her* (Song of Songs 3:7).”³⁰³

Rabbi Isaac said, “But it is written: *of the heroes of Israel!*”[304](#)

No female witch shall you let live (Exodus 22:17). Rabbi Azariah asked Rabbi Yose, of Kefar Ono, “Why is witchcraft more common among women than among men—as is written: *No female witch shall you let live* (Exodus 22:17)? It is not written *male witch!*”[305](#)

He replied, “It is written: *No רעה (ra’ah), evil, will befall you* (Psalms 91:10)—side of the female, certainly! *Nor נגז (nega), affliction, draw near your tent* (ibid.)—the male. From the female, all kinds of sorcery and evil depths come into the world, as is written: *I find woman more bitter than death* (Ecclesiastes 7:26).”[306](#)

“What is the meaning of *fetters her hands* (ibid.)? Rabbi Yannai and Rabbi Yehoshu’a [disputed the matter]. One said, ‘One who touches a woman or receives money from her, hand to hand, shall not escape the punishment of Geihinnom [81c], as is said: *Hand to hand, evil will not go unpunished* (Proverbs 11:21); and as is written: *fetters her hands—actually!*’[307](#)

“The other said, ‘From females come all forms of magic and witchcraft, and all evil thoughts. If not for *her hands are fettered*, and her being restricted, women would murder and bring death to the entire world—always, everywhere.’[308](#)

“The female gains strength only from the power of the male. Since she originates in his depths, she knows how to adjure a man to consummate her desire. How? With a name, and with profound words—with the name of impurity. Thus, the act depends upon her, words upon the male—both aroused from the female. Therefore, all kinds of sorcery are found among the female, not the male.”[309](#)

It has been taught: ‘One who passes between two women—if they are menstruants, he will be afflicted with epilepsy,

not desisting unless they take some action on his behalf—blood disease or murder lies in wait for him. If they are not menstruants, the evil eye governs his body or his property.³¹⁰

This is like what happened to Rabbi Naḥum son of Rabbi Simlai. One time when he was in Caesarea, he passed between two women. They gazed upon him and he was endangered immediately, in his body and property. How did this happen? Because of the evil eye resting upon them, bearing potential for harm.

What is the remedy? He should recite the following: ‘Go away, go away! Be silent, be silent! Untie the knot—not tied for you, not tied for me!’ Then he should begin with *EI* and conclude with *EI*. It is written: *EI brings them out from Egypt, like the wild ox’s antlers for him. For there is no augury against Jacob, no divination against Israel* (Numbers 23:22). Concluding with *EI*: *Now be it said to Jacob and to Israel what has been performed by EI* (ibid., 23). Then he should go on his way, and not look back.³¹¹

Rav Huna was on pilgrimage from Babylon to the land of Israel. When he went up there, he happened upon a town and noticed a woman following behind him. She threw water on his shoulders and took dust from beneath his feet. He turned his head around and said to her, “Go ahead and take, my daughter. This has no effect on me! But I decree against you that your mind be scattered!” Then he said, “Not on my account, but rather to prevent you from murdering other people.” And so it was. Her mind was addled—a complete blank—and she died. Of this is written *No evil will befall you, nor affliction draw near your tent* (Psalms 91:10).³¹²

Rabbi Ḥiyya taught, “*He who is good before God will escape her, and a sinner will be trapped by her* (Ecclesiastes 7:26). Escape from whom? From the woman

of whom is written *For she is all snares, and nets her heart...* (ibid.).”[313](#)

Come and see: When there is famine in town, one should not show oneself, nor walk unaccompanied in the city, for the Angel of Death is there and he has permission to harm. Of this is written *Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do you display yourselves?’* (Genesis 42:1). Similarly, when there is plague in town, one should confine oneself and not be seen in the market. Once permission has been given to attack, whoever offends him will be struck, and he is culpable for his own soul.[314](#)

Come and see: For ten years, Naomi dwelt in the fields of Moab. Eventually, [she returned to Israel] *for in the fields of Moab she had heard* (Ruth 1:6). Why were Mahlon and Chilion punished? Because they married Moabite women.[315](#)

For no women in the world are engaged with divination and witchcraft like the Moabites. How do we know this? As is written: *Israel clung to Baal Peor...* (Numbers 25:3), *and the people ate and bowed down to their gods* (ibid., 2). As soon as they had a nibble produced by their sorcery, they bowed down before their idols at once.[316](#)

And they clung—Rabbi Hiyya said, “Like the clinging of bracelets, so were they joined to Baal Peor.”[317](#)

“On account of women’s magic—how do we know this? It is as is written: *Look, these are the ones who led the Israelites by Balaam’s word* (ibid. 31:16)—he taught them how to utter words. For there was no sorcery or magic in the world like theirs, but reciting formulae [81d] to consummate their sorcery—that was unknown to them. Therefore, *by Balaam’s word*, they executed and completed their sorcery, trapping them.”

Rabbi Yoḥanan said, “But Ruth was worthy.”[318](#)

Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, 'Go, return, each of you to her mother's home (Ruth 1:8).[319](#)

יְעֹשֶׂה (ya'aseh), May [YHVH] treat; but if not, יַעַשׂ (ya'as), May [YHVH] treat, lacking הֵ (he).[320](#)

It is written: יְעֹשֶׂה (ya'aseh), *May He treat.* If you are worthy to enter beneath the wings of the *Shekhinah*,

It has been far more grievous for me מִכֶּם (mi-kem), from you (ibid., 13). It should say עֲלֵיכֶם (aleikhem), for you, as is said: I grieve עֲלֵיךָ (aleikha), for you (2 Samuel 1:26). What is the meaning of מִכֶּם (mi-kem), from you? Rabbi Kronia said in the name of Rav Bizna, "The anguish in my heart is from you, for you caused my sons to die"—like someone roaring on account of another.'[321](#)

And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye (Ruth 1:14). עֹרְפָה, Orpah—הַרְפָּה, Harafah was her name! So, why was she called Orpah? Because she turned her עֹרֶף (oref), back, on her mother-in-law. She journeyed to her place, to the fields of Moab, where she was promiscuous and dishonored. [So she went] to the land of the Philistines, where everyone pounded her like הַרִיפּוֹת (harifot), groats.

Harafah—she behaved רָפָה (rafah), in a degraded fashion, and from her licentiousness gave birth to six sons, all falling at the hand of David and his men.[322](#)

יִשְׁבִּי בְנוֹב, Ishbi of Nob, of the offspring of Harafah (2 Samuel 21:16). But, why is he located in Nob? Is it not next to Jerusalem, in the land of Israel, whereas he was in the land of the Philistines! Here is the explanation offered by Rabbi Pinḥas: "It comes to teach עֲלֵי עֹסְקֵי נוֹב (she-ba al isqei nov), that he came regarding the events at Nob.[323](#)

"For [David] had prompted the affair at Nob—city of priests; and the blessed Holy One deals strictly with the righteous, even to a hairbreadth.

The blessed Holy One said, ‘David, You caused such a stir in Nob, city of priests—by your life, judgment will fall either upon you or your seed, and only one shall remain!’”³²⁴

Rabbi Ḥiyya taught, “*But one son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub escaped...* (1 Samuel 22:20). For none of Ahimelech’s kin survived—from his father’s entire household—other than Abiathar alone. On account of this sin, Saul and his son died, as well as thousands and myriads from Israel. It was decreed, too, that David should die.

“When he arrived in the land of the Philistines, that very same Harafah saw him—and said to her son, ‘This is the one who killed your brother!’ At that moment, the time had come for Attribute of Judgment to take vengeance upon David regarding the events at Nob, summoning Ishbi to kill him. At once, יִשְׁבִי בְנוֹב, *Ishbi be-Nob* (2 Samuel 21:16)—נוֹב עַל עִסְקֵי שְׁבָא (she-ba al isqei nov), who came regarding the events at Nob.”³²⁵

Rabbi Yoḥanan said, “This is what David said: ‘Blessed Holy One, let my seed be enduring before you. I stand prepared to accept the judgment upon myself.’ What happened? Ishbi took him and bore down on him with his staff. [David] said, ‘This is beneath my dignity.’ He took him and tossed him up in the air, rapier point propped so that David would be killed. This is as is written: *and he was girded with new gear—he meant to strike down David* (ibid.). Just then, [David] uttered the Ineffable Name and he was suspended in mid-air. His horse bolted, headed to Jerusalem.”³²⁶

“Abishai went and asked the Sanhedrin, ‘What is the law pertaining to riding a king’s horse?’ They permitted him. He found David, suspended in mid-air, and said to him, ‘Retract your prayer!’”³²⁷

“He replied, ‘How can I give back to YHVH for all he requited to me? (Psalms 116:12). For this is what I have received from the court of Samuel of Ramah...’ He returned immediately to his prayer and accepted judgment upon his seed, as is written: *Abishai son of Zeruah came to his aid and struck down the Philistine ...* (2 Samuel 21:17).³²⁸

“What is written? *Now when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose and killed off all who were of royal stock* (2 Kings 11:1)—from the house of David. It is written: וַתֵּאָבֵד (va-te’abbed), *she killed off*, but it is also written: וַתְּדַבֵּר (va-tedabber), *she spoke* (2 Chronicles 22:10)! What is the meaning of *she spoke*? She predicted that David’s seed was destined to be eliminated.³²⁹

“*She killed off* (2 Kings 11:1)—*But Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram... Joash ...* (2 Kings 11:2). This teaches that the blessed Holy One judges measure for measure.³³⁰

“Of all this, what is written? Even though this edict had been decreed and permission granted to Attribute of Judgment, it is written: *This same day at Nob he shall stand* (Isaiah 10:32). [82a] Attribute of Judgment still stands at Nob, demanding justice before the blessed Holy One. If the blessed Holy One deals strictly with the righteous, all the more so with the wicked.”³³¹

So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her gods’ (Ruth 1:15).³³²

Rabbi Naḥum said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, “At first it says *returned*, teaching that she had been a convert at the outset. It is also written *and to her gods*—for she had one God with Naomi. But now—to her original stench, backsliding to her idolatry.³³³

“*But Ruth clung unto her* (ibid., 14). Just as she had accepted [its yoke] during her husband’s lifetime, so did she cling to her faith afterward. Come and see: How

exemplary is Ruth! Even without fear of her husband, she clung to her faith. Nonetheless, Naomi reinitiated her as before, admonishing her with cautions, and she acceded to them all.”

Rabbi Brokah said, “It is written: *Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, placing them on her shoulder, and he gave her the child* (Genesis 21:14). Since it is written *to Hagar*, what is the meaning of *placing... on her shoulder*? Well, it teaches that he cautioned her about the yoke of faith, and to remind her of her original state with him. Here it is written $\square\psi$ (*sam*), *placing... on her shoulder*, and it is written: *There $\square\psi$ (*sam*), *He placed, for them statute and law* (Exodus 15:25). As below it signifies the yoke of *Shekhinah*, so too here, yoke of *Shekhinah*.³³⁴*

“What did she do? Once she reflected upon her exit from Abraham’s domain, she returned to her degradation. What is written? *And she went* $\text{וַתֵּת} (va-teta)$, *and she strayed* (Genesis, *ibid.*)—after the idol worship and filthy fetishes of her father’s house. It is also written: *They are vanity, work of* $\text{תַּעֲתוּעִים} (ta’tu’im)$, *delusion* (Jeremiah 10:15, 51:18).”³³⁵

Rabbi H̄idka and Rabbi Shim’on son of Yose were walking on the way. Rabbi Shim’on said to Rabbi H̄idka, “Now, we have learned: ‘A Gentile who is engaged in Torah is like a high priest.’ Like a high priest! How could they equate him with a high priest? Behold, it is written: *He established a testimony in Jacob, and ordained a teaching in Israel* (Psalms 78:5)! The blessed Holy One bestowed it upon Israel so that they might receive reward in the world that is coming. Gentiles, who did not accept it, do not receive reward for it. This is as is taught by Rabbi Akiva: the people Israel, since they stood at Mount Sinai, receive reward for it. Yet you have said that a Gentile who is occupied with Torah is like a high priest!”³³⁶

He replied, “Like a high priest—thus we have learned! For Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *She is more precious than rubies; nothing desired can compare with her* (Proverbs 3:15, 8:11)? Even a bastard scholar is greater than an ignorant high priest, even though he enters within, within.’ Since he does not study Torah, his service is not service, and he does not receive reward for it. Of him is said *Surely, without knowledge a soul is not good* (Proverbs 19:2). A high priest who does not comprehend the essence of worship, his worship is no worship.^{[337](#)}

“And Rabbi Yuda said, ‘From where do we know that a high priest must be a scholar? As is written: *For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and people seek rulings from his mouth* (Malachi 2:7). But if he is an ignoramus, he receives no reward for it.’ Similarly for a Gentile who is occupied with Torah—since he is a Gentile—his service is not service and he does not receive reward for it. The reward of an ignorant high priest and a Gentile are equivalent because they do not receive reward for their efforts.”^{[338](#)}

He opened, “*Command Aaron and his sons, saying...* (Leviticus 6:2). *Aaron and his sons* are commanded—other descendants are not commanded? Well, the explanation is that any priest who does not know the essence of worship like Aaron and his sons is not commanded. And if he serves, his worship is invalid, for what would his intention be—he is oblivious!^{[339](#)}

“This is what Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Rabbi Yitṣḥak said: ‘Priests, Levites, and Israelites can all impede a sacrifice, but most vital for the offering is the priest. For he must contemplate the Holy Name, arranging its supernal rungs, uniting it in consummate union—so both upper and lower ones are arrayed according to their respective aspirations and intentions.’^{[340](#)}

“And thus said Rabbi Ḥiyya in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: What is the meaning of this verse: *a fire offering, an aroma pleasing to YHVH* (Leviticus 1:9)? Parallel to those three rungs.³⁴¹

“*Fire offering*: Levites, for they are appointed for song—raising voice—coming from the side of *fire offering*. And they contemplate pattern, melody, and joyous song.³⁴²

“As a result, as long as he ascends the platform [82b] while still hale, and the blaze of fire within him is strong enough to lift his voice in pleasing melody, he is fit for service. When the flame of youth flags, and the coals of his pyre dim, then his potency is weakened, and his voice broken. Of this is written *From the age of fifty years he* [the Levite] *shall retire from the legion of service and serve no more* (Numbers 8:25)—his worship is invalid. From here on—*He shall serve his brothers... but service he shall not perform* (ibid., 26).³⁴³

“Heavenly watches, too, come to play music before their Master—called אִשִּׁים (*ishim*), fires. And I heard the following in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: ‘These cadres—some appointed for outer gates, and some for inner ones, within. These inner ones intone in song, soaring, and entering five rungs with this song, up to fifty years—corresponding to the fifty gates of the Jubilee year.³⁴⁴

“‘Upon attaining this height, a blast of blazing fire takes them, smashing their power. Once their vigor is shattered, they are cast out, plummeting from those rungs. They stand outside, appointed to gates there. They take their portion from the smoke of the sacrificial fire, as opposed to those who take from within. For each and every day, others are inaugurated, appointed for singing.’³⁴⁵

“*Aroma*—corresponding to Israel. For when they pour forth their prayer, it is as precious before the blessed Holy One as the aroma of spices in the Garden of Eden.³⁴⁶

“*Pleasing*—providing balm on high. [Corresponding to] the priest who contemplates the pattern and aspiration of the Holy Name, forging a union of inscribed letters. All rungs shine, flare, and sparkle in celestial glow, from supernal, hidden depth.³⁴⁷

“Consequently, the priest must be enlightened with wisdom, distinguished in insight, distinguished with resplendence of Torah, most scrupulous and discerning of all. But, if he is an ignoramus, his worship is not worship. Of him is written *Fools have no standing in your sight* (Psalms 5:6).³⁴⁸

“Come and see: Slime of a Gentile, even if he has converted, is hard to slough. Such slime lasts for three generations—all the more so for one who has remained a Gentile. The best among them: Ruth—and no blemish was found in her at all. This is intellectual soul. Orpah, bestial soul, returned at once to her stench and degradation.”³⁴⁹

Rabbi H̄idka came and kissed him, saying, “Few indeed are those among them whose slime has been removed.”

Rabbi Nehemiah said, “It is written: *He [Solomon] set out a throne for the king’s mother* (1 Kings 2:19)—this refers to Ruth the Moabite, who merited to see King Solomon on his throne.³⁵⁰

“Just as her heart was complete, so did the blessed Holy One complete her days and years. This is as is written: *may you have שלמה (sheleimah), full recompense* (Ruth 2:12)—*full*, actually! It is written and read שלמה (sheleimah), *full*, to teach that she witnessed King שלמה (shlomoh), Solomon, on his throne. This one saw her reward in this world and the world to come.³⁵¹

“*And she left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law* (ibid. 1:7). After נשמה (neshamah), holy soul, intellectual soul, and bestial soul left the body, what did *neshamah* say? *Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, ‘Turn back, my daughters...’* (ibid., 8, 11).

But Ruth replied, 'Do not urge me to leave you (ibid., 16)—Orpah had returned to her people and to her gods' (ibid., 15). This is the way that one examines a convert to ensure that they will endure beneath the wings of Shekhinah—like Ruth with a perfect heart."[352](#) [82c]

Rabbi Alexandrai opened, "A certain woman, the wife of one of the sons of the prophets, cried out to Elisha... (2 Kings 4:1). On this we have learned: This is the wife of Obadiah—appointed by Ahab, king of Israel. When Obadiah went to Elijah, Elisha recognized him."[353](#)

"You might say that Elisha had not yet begun to minister to him! In truth, he had already begun to serve him, but 'that which is early and that which is late' [applies here]. Of this is written *he feared YHVH greatly* (1 Kings 18:3; 2 Kings 4:1)—certainly Elisha knew him![354](#)

"*She cried out to Elisha* (2 Kings 4:1). When Obadiah had passed away and King Yehoram was coming to take his two children, what did she do? She wailed, sobbing on the way to the cemetery. She stood before his grave and cried out, 'Fearer of *Elohim*, they are perpetrating such-and-such against the orphans!'[355](#)

"They told Obadiah, 'Your wife is standing in the road, shrieking and weeping.'[356](#)

"What did he do? He went off to Hezekiah. The latter responded, 'I have had enough of this world!'[357](#)

"He sought out the patriarchs and reported, 'This is my plight.' They told him, 'We've already heard her howling at Elisha the prophet.'

"By then she had returned, ululating and wailing at his grave, saying, 'Fearer of God,' as before. They told Obadiah, 'Your wife is weeping and wailing...'

"He said to her, 'Woe, poor woman, go to Elisha!'[358](#)

"This concludes what we learned.

“Come and see: How can they converse with each other in the grave? Aren’t their souls located elsewhere! *The secret of YHVH is for those who revere Him* (Psalms 25:14).”[359](#)

Rabbi Bun chanced upon him, and commented, “If a difficulty remains, one word is worth two, while silence is worth none.”[360](#)

He opened, saying, “[*With*] my soul I desire You in the night; [*with*] my spirit within me I seek You at dawn (Isaiah 26:9). “[*With*] my soul I desire You—two clusters has the blessed Holy One infused within the human, to serve him in this world, and these are נפש ורוחא (*nafsha ve-ruha*), soul and spirit. נפש (*Nefesh*), Soul, sustaining the body with commandments, and arousing it. רוח (*Ruah*), Spirit—arousing him with Torah, which guides him in this world. If these have descended upon him, even greater abundance will alight upon him from above, according to his desserts.”[361](#)

“With these two—a person travels through the world—serving him. For the *nefesh* will not endure in the body without arousal of *ruah* settled upon it.”[362](#)

“When a person comes to serve and worship his Master with these two, he is awakened from above with holy arousal, which settles upon him, surrounding him on all sides. Then he is aroused by supernal wisdom, so that he can dwell in the palace of the King.”[363](#)

“The arousal that rests upon him comes from a supernal place. What is its name? *Neshamah*. It stimulates man to repent. A powerful, supernal force, the power of repentance—mother to *ruah*, and *ruah* is son to her.”[364](#)

“Above *nishmeta* comes strength from a heavenly lover. What is its name? נשמתא לנשמתא (*Nishmeta le-nishmeta*), Soul of soul—called father to *ruah*. From there, fear is aroused in a person. These are Father and Mother, Son and Daughter. Father—י (yod); ה (he)—Mother; ו (vav)—Son; וה (he)—Daughter. This is the consummate Name.”[365](#)

“Just as there is *ruha* and *nafsha* on the left for the evil impulse, so on the right, there is *ruha* and *nafsha* for the good

impulse. Of this is said *See, I have set before you life and good and death and evil* (Deuteronomy 30:15). *Life and good*—of holiness. *Death and evil*—from the left side, of the evil impulse. This is hinted at in *from the tree of knowledge of good and evil* (Genesis 2:16). From the *good*—*you may eat* (ibid.); [82d] but from the *evil*—do not eat. One with understanding will understand.^{[366](#)}

“Of upper א (he), which is *nishmeta*, Mother, and of lower א (he), Daughter, this verse is invoked: *Wisdom of women builds her house* (Proverbs 14:1). *And Folly with her own hands destroys it* (ibid.)—bestial soul of the evil impulse. *With her own hands destroys it*—the body. רוח דקודשא (Ruah de-qudsha), A holy spirit, did the blessed Holy One bestow upon the human for service in this world, and *neshamah* for arousal for divine service.^{[367](#)}

“When a person in this world sleeps in his bed, his spirit roaming and ranging, he yearns to ascend nightly. But how many archons stand at each and every vault!^{[368](#)}

“For Rabbi Nehuniah son of Kanah said, ‘Son of Proud Ones described to me: “When I ascended to the first vault, I saw angels, seraphim, all appearing like torches—wheels of fire circling round them; their eyebrows like fiery coals; their teeth and eyes, sparks of fire; their garments, flashing fire.”^{[369](#)}

“Above them all, a single officer—*Yahdumi* is his name. When I saw him, they said, “Who permitted one born of woman among us in this place!” I uttered the letters of the name when I saw that they sought to scorch me with their breath. They froze.^{[370](#)}

“That great prince who is appointed over them asked me, “Who are you?”

“I told him my name.

“He said to me, “Oh, friend! All who dwell in the world pass through my hands each and every night when they lie down in their beds and submit their spirits to the Master of

the Universe. At once those spirits spring from them, rising before Him. All those spirits are present before me, but I am denied permission to grant entry to any besides those who are inscribed before me—those who performed commandments that day. Yet, still we petition on their behalf and search after them.

“I lifted up my eyes and saw 365 palaces, like the number of days of the sun. All on the eastern side with four gates to each and every palace. [How many] officers and ministers are appointed over them, all with a single visage! They are called Ministers of the East.

“The same can be found on the southern side, except that on that side there was one gate far higher than all the others. I asked him about that gate, and he replied, “Woe, friend! Through this gate pass all those who suffer, all those who weep because of the oppression of the nations of the world, and all penitents—all entering through this gate.”[371](#)

“Above this gate a huge gate loomed before me, with ten gates around it. I inquired about it. He replied, “This gate—I have no authority over it, and it is opened only on the New Moon, Sabbaths, and festivals. At those times—at the onset of the Sabbath, New Moon, or festival, a voice blasts through all those heavens, proclaiming: *Open the gates, so that a righteous nation, keeping faith, may enter* (Isaiah 26:2). This is so because all spirits that are in the Garden of Eden during all days of the week abide there, ambling about.”[372](#)

“At the same time, in the same firmament that is above the earthly Garden of Eden, four windows are opened, inscribed with the four letters of the Ineffable Name, unique among heavenly treasures. All those spirits are garbed in precious garments in that Garden of Eden—in the very image that they had had in that world where they endured in a garment of flesh, [formed] from a putrid drop. When the windows are opened, they all strip off their

garments, soaring upward, through those windows, rising to this place.³⁷³

“Six winged ones—with many archons among them—open this gate. In all those ten, spirits enter with delight, flying upward. Similarly, through expanse after expanse in this fashion.³⁷⁴ [83a]

“When those spirits ascend, other spirits descend, added among the living in this world. These ascend and those descend. From the very place that those descended, others are stationed—and the place is never empty.³⁷⁵

“When Sabbath departs—when the Jews recite *May the kindness of YHVH our God be upon us...* (Psalms 90:17)—those spirits that descended on the Sabbath ascend. These ascend and those descend. These ascend to their place. On this matter, it is eternally thus.”³⁷⁶

Rabbi Alexandrai said, “When a person passes from this world, the *neshamah* and the *nefesh* journey as one, as is said: *And they went, the two of them, until they reached Bethlehem* (Ruth 1:19).³⁷⁷

“When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city hummed with excitement because of them. [The women] asked, ‘*Could this be Naomi?*’ (ibid.). For she had gone to that place filled with all kinds of bounty, brimming with Torah! A pillar of cloud above her head by day, and she was shown the Garden of Eden. A lamp over her head at night, and she was shown the place where the wicked are judged, as is said: *When His lamp shone over my head* (Job 29:3).³⁷⁸

“At that moment, the *neshamah* said, ‘*Do not call me Na’omi, she replied. “Call me Mara, for Shaddai has dealt very bitterly with me. I left full, but YHVH brought me back empty”* (Ruth 1:20–21). In this place, I was filled with all forms of abundance, but now *YHVH brought me back empty* to this world.’³⁷⁹

“How can you call me Naomi, when YHVH has dealt harshly with me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!” (ibid., 21). For He has injected the evil impulse into me—the bestial *ruah* and bestial *nefesh*, of which is said *Wisdom of women builds Her house, and Folly with her own hands destroys it* (Proverbs 14:1). *Wisdom of women*—*Neshamah* and *nefesh* of holiness. *Folly*—bestial *nefesh* of the evil impulse, destroying the body through her folly. This is the one that remains in the body, as is said: *But the flesh upon him will ache, and his nefesh will mourn for him* (Job 14:22), for the two participated jointly.³⁸⁰

“A parable. To what may this be compared? To a king who appointed two sentries for his garden: one, lame; the other, blind. He said to them, ‘Take heed that you do not eat from the fruit of this garden, for I know all the fruit in it!’

“What did they do? The lame one said to the blind one, ‘We both want to eat from the fruit of the tree.’ The blind one said, ‘I cannot see.’ The lame one said, ‘And I cannot walk.’ What did they do? The lame one rode upon the blind one, and they ate.

“The king came and saw that that they had eaten from the fruit of the tree. He said to them, ‘Who ate this fruit? The blind one said, ‘I can’t see.’ The lame one said, ‘Look, I can’t walk.’

“What did the king do? [He said to them,] ‘In the same way that you ate from the fruit, so shall be done to you!’ What did he do? The king said to his servants, ‘Since the lame one rode upon the blind one, strike them with lashes right here.’ Thus, the bestial *nefesh* from the evil impulse [will be judged] with the body.”³⁸¹

Rabbi Azariah and Rabbi Hizkiyah were traveling on pilgrimage for the festival, a certain donkey-driver goading behind them. Rabbi Azariah said to Rabbi Hizkiyah, “Have you learned anything about the verse *I went down to the*

nut grove to see the new green by the brook (Song of Songs 6:11)? Words of Torah are compared to a nut. How?"[382](#)

He replied, "As a nut has a shell and a kernel within, so do words of Torah have מעשה (*ma'aseh*), ritual action; מדרש (*midrash*), homily; אגדה (*aggadah*), legend—all of them—this within that; that within this."[383](#)

He replied, "This is what I have heard concerning this: When King Solomon revealed the Song of Songs, the slime that the primal serpent injected into Adam and Eve ceased from the world. For when offspring of Adam and Eve came [83b] into the world, they issued from that slime."[384](#)

"So have we heard from our masters, and they heard it extending back to the mouth of Elijah, who said thus: 'What is the meaning of the verse *And Adam knew Eve his woman, and she conceived and bore Cain; and she said, 'I have got me a man with YHVH'* (Gen. 4:1)? וְהָאָדָם (*Ve-ha-adam*), *And the man*—Primal Adam. When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected slime into her. Cain emerged from the side of that serpent—as it is the way of the serpent to slay and kill, so too did Cain immediately become a murderer."[385](#)

"This is as is said: *For from the stock of a snake there sprouts an asp, its offspring a fiery, flying serpent* (Isaiah 14:29). *For from the stock of a snake*—Primal Serpent. *Sprouts an asp*—Cain, who slithered out from its stock and essence. *Its offspring a fiery, flying serpent*—for he became a murderer, like this fiery serpent, over whose wound no spell can be whispered. מעופף (*Me'ofef*), *Flying*—doubled, for the serpent's species was already replicated."[386](#)

"And if you should say 'He emerged from that slime? But it is said: *And Adam knew Eve his woman, and she conceived and bore Cain; and she said, 'I have got me a man with YHVH'* (Genesis 4:1)—actually! He came from Adam—and not from that slime!"[387](#)

"Well, that serpent injected slime into Eve—and that slime, which absorbed into her, rattled about in her womb.

For there was no body to contain it, to usher that spirit into the world. When Adam came upon her, the slime was aroused by that seed, which provided substance for the evil body. The slime was in her womb—contained within it—and he emerged into the world, with a ruddier complexion than all the rest of humanity who followed him.[388](#)

“Moreover, the very seed that Adam injected to form a body was itself from the side of wickedness! The evil spirit was strengthened, materializing in the world. When she saw him, she said, ‘*I have got me a man* אֵת יְהוָה (et YHVH), *with YHVH.*’[389](#)

“When he brought a sacrifice, it too came from that side of evil, as is written: מִקֵּץ יָמִים (mi-qets yamim), *at the end of days* (Genesis 4:3), and it is not written מִקֵּץ יָמִין (mi-qets yamin), *the end of the right* (Daniel 12:13).[390](#)

“שֵׁת (Shet), Seth—foundation of the world, through the righteous and the pious who descended from him afterward.[391](#)

“תּוֹש (Shin tav)—consummation of the alphabet. From him onward, letters returned to the inverted sequence—קֶשֶׁר (tav shin resh qof).[392](#)

“With the denouement of the righteous and pious ones, until Noah arrived—the generation of the deluge who were all wiped out—when all of them had been wiped out, and Noah and his sons alighted from the ark, it is written: *from these, the whole earth spread out* (Genesis 9:19). Then the letters of the alphabet began to proceed in reverse sequence: קֶשֶׁר (tav shin resh qof). Then it is written *from these, the whole earth spread out.*[393](#)

“The entire world continued with the serpent’s slime until the people of Israel stood on Mount Sinai, and the letters returned to the proper sequence. But some remained inverted—one here and one there. Befouled, the letters were transformed into a different body; restored, the letters return to a different array.[394](#)

“Thus the world continued according to the mysteries of the alphabet, until Solomon arrived. When Solomon came, the letters stood in their posts. Then is written: *Solomon’s wisdom surpassed...* (1 Kings 5:10), and the moon abode in perfection. With this, Song of Songs was revealed in the world! Then he said, *‘I descended to the nut garden* (Song of Songs 6:11). As with a nut whose kernel is encountered only at the end, so too the world: until the shells were completed, the world subsisted in the kernel; and the moon, in completion.”[395](#)

The donkey driver said, “What do you say about, and how have you established the verse, as is written: *And they went, the two of them, until they reached* בית לחם (*beit lehem*), *Bethlehem* (Ruth 1:19)? לחם (*Lehem*), *Bread—Torah*, as is written: *Go, eat your bread with joy* (Ecclesiastes 9:7). *When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city hummed with excitement because of them. [The women] asked, ‘Could this be Naomi?’* (Ruth 1:19)—one, and no more!”[396](#)

Rabbi Azariah said, “Happy are you, O Israel, that even the empty among you are filled with Torah and good deeds!”[397](#)

The two of them dismounted. They said to him, “Have you heard something about this verse?”[398](#)

He said, “So have I heard: When the blessed Holy One desired to give the Torah to Israel, the tablets were written front and back, as is said: *on the one side and on the other* [83c] *they were written* (Exodus 32:15). One tablet, front and back; and the other tablet, right and left. This is as is said: *And the tablets, God’s doing they were; and the script, God’s script it was, engraved on the tablets* (Exodus 32:16).[399](#)

“Twice—why does it say twice והמכתב מכתב (*ve-ha-mikhtav mikhtav*), *and the script... script?* Before Israel fashioned the calf, the blessed Holy One desired to give two Torahs to Israel—through Moses—inscribed on the tablets: *And the*

tablets, God's doing they were... והלוחות (VH luhot), *And the tablets*—following the paradigm וה (VH)—one tablet. והמכתב (VH mikhtav), *and the script*—וה (VH).[400](#)

“מעשה אלהים (YH) יה—יה (YH), *And the tablets*—והלוחות (Ve-ha-luhot), *And the tablets*—יה (YH). מעשה אלהים (Ma'aseh elohim), *Elohim's doing, they were*—heavenly Binah.[401](#)

“VH—two arms.[402](#)

“וה מכתב (VH mikhtav), VH script—Jacob and Rachel, who are called sun and moon, are called two breasts, and are called one.[403](#)

“Of this is said *God's script it was*, הרות (harut), *engraved, on the tablets*. What is the meaning of harut? Rather, the word should be read *heirut, freedom*—from the Angel of Death, from the subjugation of kingdoms, and from all evil diseases of the world.[404](#)

“When they fashioned the calf, the letters flew off from two sides—front and back. I shall open for you a straight path that you might understand: Elimelech and Naomi, Mahlon and Ruth according to this array—two [tablets]. Elimelech and Naomi—one tablet, right and left. Mahlon and Ruth—front and back, another tablet. When the people of Israel produced the calf, Elimelech and Mahlon disappeared, but Naomi and Ruth remained—two women.[405](#)

“The two continued on, for they *had heard that YHVH had taken note of His people and given them bread* (Ruth 1:6)—for He gave the Torah another time. *And they went, the two of them, until they reached* בית לחם (beit lehem), *House of Bread* (ibid., 19).[406](#)

“*The whole city hummed with excitement because of them* (ibid.). *Whole*—Righteous One. *The city*—Zion, city of David.[407](#)

“*They said, 'Could this be Naomi?'* (ibid.). For when the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, it is written: *And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightning flashes...* (Exodus 20:15). Then, Torah wailed, saying, *'Do not call me Naomi... I went away full...'* (Ruth 1:20-21)—of total joy, all

worldly goodness, and freedom from subjugation of foreign kingdoms—and so she asked, *‘How can you call me Naomi?’* (Ruth 1:21).[408](#)

“This is the secret of what the blessed Holy One said to Israel: *‘and you will see My back, but My face will not be seen* (Exodus 33:23). When I wanted to give the Torah to Israel—right and left, front and back—they rejected it, fashioning the calf. Now that they desire, I do not.”[409](#)

He said, “This is what I have heard: When the blessed Holy One wanted to give the Torah to Israel, He took the Written Torah and the Oral Torah to the other nations, but they did not want to receive them, until He brought them down for Israel on Mt. Sinai.[410](#)

“The ministering angels asked, ‘To whom does the blessed Holy One wish to give these two Torahs?’ He replied, ‘To Israel.’ The blessed Holy One said, ‘Even though I want to give them to Israel, their guarantors are [83d] infants and sucklings, and on their account these two Torahs will be aroused. This is as is written: *From the mouths of babes and sucklings You have founded strength* (Psalms 8:3).[411](#)

“It derives from there? In truth, it derives from here: *Whom will he teach knowledge? To whom will he explain a message? Those weaned from milk, taken from the breast?* (Isaiah 28:9).

“*Whom will he teach knowledge?*—Written Torah.

“*To whom will he explain a message?*—Oral Torah.

“*Those weaned from milk, taken from the breast*—on their account, Torah descended for Israel upon Mount Sinai.[412](#)

“Alternatively, *And they went, the two of them, until they reached Bethlehem* (Ruth 1:19). Where did they go? To the other nations, until they arrived at Mount Sinai, for Israel stood at Mount Sinai. When the Written Torah and the Oral Torah descended, immediately *the whole city hummed with excitement because of them*. [The women] said, *‘Could this be Naomi?’* The whole world trembled. Then is said *all the people saw the thunderings and the*

lightning flashes and they said, הזאת נעמי (ha-zot Na'omi), 'This is Naomi!—נעימו (ne'imu), sweetness of Torah!'[413](#)

“Until they arrived at Marah, as is written: *They came מרתה (Maratah), to Marah* (Exodus 15:23); and as is written: *There did He set him a statute and law, and there He did test him* (Exodus 15:25). Of this, Torah said *Call me מרא (Mara), Bitter.*”[414](#)

They carried him on their shoulders for three parasangs. They applied to him the verse *Like a pomegranate, the curve of your cheek* (Song of Songs 6:7). “Even empty ones of Israel are filled with Torah like a pomegranate!”[415](#)

He said to them, “Thus they were crowned with Torah, crowned with supernal, engraved names. When they made the calf, becoming defiled, while Moses was bringing the Torah—written upon heavenly stone tablets, filled with all goodness: freedom from the Angel of Death, freedom from the subjugation of kingdoms, and from all evil diseases of the world—when Moses saw the calf, the letters flew off, all soaring upward.”[416](#)

“Then Torah wailed, saying, ‘*I went away full—full of abundant goodness for Israel. Now I have returned, empty, useless, of no benefit to them.*’ Then supernal beings shrieked, saying, ‘*Woe to them for straying from me* (Hosea 7:13)! Woe to them for not abiding in faith with their Master!’”

Rabbi Alexandrai continued his line of thought. For he said, “The soul and the body are partners together, traveling together in this world.”[417](#)

“*Until they reached בית להם (beit lehem), Bethlehem* (Ruth 1:19). Why is it so named? Because the court, accuser, and contention are there. Of this, *the whole city hummed with excitement because of them* (ibid.). All the dead trembled on their account, because of the disputations, and because of the judgments from the fracas.”[418](#)

“For we have learned: The angel appointed over the cemetery enters the grave when one dies. He stands over the deceased, gazing, and says, ‘Woe to this poor person! Woe to the hands and feet that engaged in vanities of the world!’[419](#)

“The body says, ‘I cannot see!’ The body claims, ‘The soul leads me!’ The soul says, ‘And I don’t know how to walk!’ The two of them are like the parable of the lame one and the blind one. What does he do? He inserts the soul into the body and judges him for three [days], one after the other. After three days, he is judged—based on his mouth, his hands, and his feet.[420](#)

“After that, the body [84a] bursts open, and maggots and worms rise up on it. The soul mourns over it, as is written: *But the flesh upon him will ache, and his soul will mourn for him* (Job 14:22). She says, ‘*I went away full* (Ruth 1:21), to that world, and *YHVH brought me back empty* (ibid.), to this world, without deeds and without Torah.’[421](#)

“Alternatively, the soul can be compared to *Shekhinah* and the body to Israel. It was Israel who sinned, so why was *Shekhinah* exiled there with them? She did not sin! Well, it is because anyone who is lavished with wealth and great honor, given all they desire—they would transgress. Of this is said *Jeshurun fattened and kicked—you fattened, you thickened, grew gross—and abandoned the God who had made him, and despised the Rock of his rescue* (Deuteronomy 32:15)—for this She was exiled with them.[422](#)

“Just as maggots and worms assail the body, so too when Israel behaves wickedly, the nations of the children of Ishmael and Esau—called ‘maggot’ and ‘worm’—rule over them. Then the body bursts—they kill the people of Israel. Of this: *But his flesh upon him will ache, and his soul [will mourn] for him* (Job 14:22). What does this mean? *His flesh*—upon them will ache. *And his soul will mourn*—for Israel. Then she pines for the heavenly *neshamah*, called

Naomi.⁴²³ *“And they went, the two of them, until they reached Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19)—until the blessed Holy One gave the Torah to Israel. The whole city hummed with excitement because of them (ibid.)—And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightning flashes... (Exodus 20:15). After the people of Israel made the calf, she wails, saying, Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara... I went away full... (Ruth 1:20-21).⁴²⁴*

“Happy is the one whose learning is in his hands when he goes to his eternal rest—for even in his grave, his lips are astir. And they are *roses* (Song of Songs 5:13)—do not read שושנים (*shoshanim*), [*his lips are like*] *roses*, but rather ששונים (*she-shonim*), [*his lips*] *reciting*, for his Torah shields him. This is as is written: *When you lie down, she will protect you* (Proverbs 6:22).⁴²⁵

“This is like the case of Rabbi Ḥisda when he departed for his eternity. Rabbi Yose, his son, went and spent the night at his grave. He heard from within the tomb the delight of teeming bands who had gathered, saying, ‘Let us attend the joyous festival of Rabbi Ḥisda’s Torah.’ Even ministering angels assembled to unite with him!

“He heard them saying, ‘Why do the living come to our place of delight here, let them study Torah in that world!’ [Rabbi Ḥisda] said to him, ‘My son, leave here and keep up your learning! Happy is the one who arrives here with his learning in his hands, for even the ministering angels cannot approach him. Go tell Rabbi Ḥaggai to complete his studies, for on such-and-such a day he is to come here.’⁴²⁶

“While speaking with him, Rabbi Ḥisda was taken up to the celestial academy. Rabbi Yose, his son, got up, and went to recount it to the Companions.⁴²⁷

“Rabbi Yudai said to him, ‘If you were not Rabbi Yose, you would have deserved punishment there!’⁴²⁸

“He replied, ‘It was out of anguish for my father that I went and heard all this.’

“Rabbi Yonatan applied to Rabbi Hisda *You will lie down and your sleep will be sweet* (Proverbs 3:24), as well as this other verse: *Sweet is the worker’s sleep, whether he eats little or much* (Ecclesiastes 5:11).”

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband’s side, a man of חַיִּיל גִּבּוֹר (gibbor hayil), powerful might, of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz (Ruth 2:1).⁴²⁹

seed will be—happy is the one who is blessed with building in this world, so that he does not go on alone in that world. [84b] If not, he shall proceed hand to hand, and it is written: *Hand to hand, the evil one will not go unpunished* (Proverbs 11:21). *The secret of YHVH* is for those who revere Him (Psalms 25:14).⁴³⁰

Rabbi Nahman says, “This is as is said: *Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband’s side, a man of חַיִּיל גִּבּוֹר (gibbor hayil), powerful might, of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz; and it is written: The man is kin to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen* (Ruth 2:20).⁴³¹

Rabbi Rehumai asked, “If so, what is the meaning of *the evil one will not go unpunished?*”⁴³²

He replied, “This refers to the guardsman who whips sinners until he is given a surety; and if he is not given one, the guardsman’s flogging proceeds uninterrupted.”⁴³³

He said to him, “This is not the explanation. And there will be none until the arrival and revelation of the one who resuscitated a person—then you shall know this.”⁴³⁴

Rabbi Zemira’ah went out to the fields of Ono. He saw, inside enclosed crevices, clustered flames ascending. He inclined his ear and heard voices. A certain Arab said to

Rabbi Rehumai opened, “גִּבּוֹר (gibbor), *Mighty, in the land his seed will be, the generation of the upright will be blessed* (Psalms 112:2). *Mighty in the land his*

seed will be—happy is the one who is blessed with building in this world, so that he does not go on alone in that world.

him, "Come with me, and I will show you strange things—hidden from humanity!"⁴³⁵

He went with him behind a boulder and saw other crevices with flames leaping upward. They heard other voices. He said to him, "Incline your ear here." [84c] He inclined his ear and heard voices moaning, "Woe, woe!" He said, "Certainly this must be one of the locations of Hell." The Arab went on, but he remained.

Then he bent over in a different spot and saw a man howling. He was taken and placed in the depth of a compartment, concealed from view forever more.

He slept, and saw the man in a dream. He asked him, "Who are you?"⁴³⁶

He replied, "He is a sinful Jew—there is no baseness or transgression in the world that he did not commit."⁴³⁷

He asked him (in the dream), "What is your name?"

He replied, "I don't know, for sinners in Hell cannot remember their names."⁴³⁸

He said to him, "Do you know the name of your place?"

He replied, "Upper Galilee. I was a butcher there. On account of the many crimes I committed, the man is punished three times a day and twice at night."⁴³⁹

[Rabbi Zemira'ah] picked himself up and went to the Upper Galilee. He heard the voice of a child reciting *If you seek it like silver, search for it like treasure, then will you understand fear of YHVH* (Proverbs 2:4-5). He went to a different house of study and heard the voice of a different child, reciting *Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be hidden...* (Zephaniah 2:3). He proceeded, continuing his investigation of the man.⁴⁴⁰

They said, "Let such-and-such befall that evil man, who left no earthly crimes or transgressions undone! Let such-and-such befall him and the child he nurtured!"

He asked, "He left a child in the world?"

They replied, "Yes, he left a son behind; and he is wicked like his father, for he is a child who goes off to the

slaughterhouse.”[441](#)

He sought him out, took him, and studied Torah with him—until he had taught him Scripture, prayer, and *Shema*. Afterward, he taught him Mishnah, Talmud, laws, legends—until he became exceedingly wise: this is Rabbi Naḥum דפקולי (*ha-Pekuli*), the cotton dealer.[442](#)

Why did they call him *ha-Pekuli*? This is as is said: פליליה פקו (*paqu peliliyyah*), *removes from judgment* (Isaiah 28:7), for he אפיק (*aphiq*), extricated, his father from judgment in that world. Many of this generation’s greatest sages descended from him and are called *Pekuli*.[443](#)

He came to him in a dream, saying, “Rabbi, as you have consoled me, so shall the blessed Holy One console you. For from the day that my son knew one verse, they eased my punishment. When he was able to recite the *Shema*, my judgment by day and by night was lightened to a single occurrence. On the day that he recited [Torah] in the home of the rabbi, I was acquitted entirely.”[444](#)

“On the day that he grew wiser and was called Rabbi, my throne was prepared among the righteous in the Garden of Eden—for every day that his speech renews Torah, he is crowned with the heavenly crown that adorns the righteous. On account of you, Rabbi, I have merited all this honor. Happy is the one who leaves a son who learns Torah in this world!”[445](#)

Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba said, “It occurred in the same fashion for Rabbi Akiva.”[446](#)

One day, Rabbi Natan asked Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina, “Did Elijah have a son?”

He replied, “He is of a different nature altogether, as is written: *Do not touch My anointed ones; do not harm My prophets* (1 Chronicles 16:22). What is the meaning of תרעו אל (*al tare’u*), *do not harm*? Don’t ever imagine yourselves רעים (*rei’im*), friends, or companions. The blessed Holy One chose them, separating them from Israel for His worship,

and He brought them into His palace. Of one who is an angel in heaven, you would raise suspicions!"⁴⁴⁷

Rabbi Yoḥanan says, "He was from the tribe of Gad."⁴⁴⁸

Rabbi Nehorai said, "Elijah was of a different nature, as is written: *Who has gone up to heaven and come down?* (Proverbs 30:4)."⁴⁴⁹

Who has gone up to heaven—Rabbi El'azar said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on, "*Who has gone up to heaven and come down?* Elijah. *And come down*—beforehand. Thus, he was of a different nature."⁴⁵⁰

This poses a quandary for Rabbi El'azar; for Rabbi El'azar also stated, "Elijah—he is Phineas." If [you identify the two] on account of his being zealous for the blessed Holy One, this one was zealous and that one was zealous! But this is not the case, for Rabbi Eli'ezer said, "It is written: *I have been zealous, zealous indeed* (1 Kings 19:10)—'[I was zealous] in Shittim and I am zealous here!' The blessed Holy One said to him, 'For how long will you be zealous on behalf of My name?'"⁴⁵¹

Rabbi Yehudah son of Shalom said, "*Who has gone up to heaven?* Elijah, as is written: [84d] *Elijah ascended in a whirlwind to heaven* (2 Kings 2:11). וַיָּרֵד (*Va-yered*), *And come down*—Jonah, as is written: *Jonah יָרַד (yarad), went down, into the hold of the ship...* (Jonah 1:5), [and] *To the base of the mountains יָרַדְתִּי (yaradeti), I went down* (ibid. 2:7).⁴⁵²

"*Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of his hands* (Proverbs 30:4)? Moses.⁴⁵³

"*Who has bound the waters in a garment* (ibid.)? Elisha, who healed the waters in Jericho. *In a garment*—with the power of Elijah's garment.⁴⁵⁴

"*Who has established all the ends of earth* (ibid.)? Abraham. This is as is written: *These are the generations of heaven and earth בְּהִבְרֵאֵם (be-hibbare'am), when they were created* (Genesis 2:4)—בְּאַבְרָהָם (*be-Avraham*), *by Abraham*.⁴⁵⁵

"*What is the name* (Proverbs 30:4) of the master who drew all these to his service? *YHVH Tseva'ot* is His name. *What*

is his son's name (ibid.)? Israel, as is written: *My son, My firstborn, is Israel* (Exodus 4:22).⁴⁵⁶

Rabbi Nahman says, "All of these are speaking of the blessed Holy One."⁴⁵⁷

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yudai happened upon each other under a tree in a field, and sat down. Soon, they saw a youth approaching, meandering in the field. Rabbi Yudai said, "Either that fellow is lost in the field, or he's a bandit, or he is frightened of us."⁴⁵⁸

Rabbi Nehorai said, "Who are you?"

He replied, "Since I did not inquire of your welfare, you could not know who I might be. I am Jewish; and I am lost in this field—for all night I have been fleeing those who took me captive. I slipped away, but have been wandering in this field. I did not greet you for I thought, 'They might be Gentiles,' and it is written: *There is no peace—said YHVH—for the wicked* (Isaiah 48:22). Thus, I did not make myself known to you until I saw the wings of commandment, and I was delighted! So now—peace unto you, rabbis!"⁴⁵⁹

They sat beneath the tree. Rabbi Yudai said, "Let us engage in worship of our Master, and let us open."

Rabbi Yudai opened, saying, "*You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates* (Deuteronomy 6:9). It is written: מזוזה (*mezuzat*), *doorpost*. Why?⁴⁶⁰

"Well, happy are Israel who are always ensconced within commandments—when they sit down, when they rise, and when they go on the way—as is written: *when you sit in your house and when you go on the way and when you lie down and when you rise* (ibid., 7). Israel should always be crowned with Torah and commandments, so that they might cleave constantly to the blessed Holy One, as is said: *You, cleaving to YHVH your God* (Deuteronomy 4:4). Whoever cleaves to his Master can never be harmed.⁴⁶¹

“Not only this! Two ministering angels accompany him, one on his right and one on his left, as is written: *For His angels He will command for you, to guard you on all your ways* (Psalms 91:11). Not only this! If one is always ensconced in a commandment, the blessed Holy One, as it were, becomes his guard, as is said: *YHVH is your guard, YHVH is your shade at your right hand* (Psalms 121:5).⁴⁶²

“What does the blessed Holy One do? He takes the angel walking on his right and positions him in front, and He stands in the latter’s place; [He takes the one] on the left and that angel goes behind the person; and the blessed Holy One is on the right and the left. Thus one is protected on all sides—who could harm him!

“Therefore one must never—even for a moment—be lacking a commandment. In one’s house, the blessed Holy One guards him on the outside while he is within. We have learned: Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Yose said, ‘A doorway that bears a mezuzah: no demon—neither accuser nor evil spirit—can approach, because the blessed Holy One watches the doorway. Even when the destroying angel has permission to harm, he lifts his gaze and sees the name of the Omnipresent poised over the doorway, as it were—and He *will not allow the Destroyer to enter your houses to strike* (Exodus 12:23). Therefore, one should always be [enveloped] by a mezuzah.”⁴⁶³

Rabbi Nehorai opened regarding the passage on tzitzit, expounding, “*They shall make for themselves a tassel on the wing of their garments for their generations* (Numbers 15:38). Why is it written here *for their generations*, and regarding Sabbath it is written *for their generations* (Exodus 31:16)? For it is written: *celebrating the Sabbath* לדרתם (*le-dorotam*), *for their generations* (ibid.), written defectively.⁴⁶⁴

“For we have learned: The recital of *Shema* was established, and the creation of humanity can be found in the passage of *Shema*. Excluding the passage regarding

tzitzit, which is missing there [in the mezuzah scroll]. How is it completed? Well, when one is enwrapped [85a] with tzitzit and he emerges at his doorway, then his dwelling is completed.⁴⁶⁵

“Then the blessed Holy One rejoices, the Destroying Angel slinks away, and the person is saved from all harm and any destroyer. Thus לדורתם (*le-dorotam*), *for their generations*—so that דירתם (*diratam*), *their dwelling place*, shall be complete. Then, when he departs from the opening of his dwelling with the commandment, the Destroying Angel slinks away and the person is saved from all harm.⁴⁶⁶

“From where do we know this? From its written form—מזוזת (*mezuzot*), *doorposts*. Its letters demonstrate: זז מות (*zaz mavet*), *Death slinks off, for he is not given permission to attack, and he slinks away from the opening.*⁴⁶⁷

“Regarding the Sabbath, the word is written [defectively] as לדרתם (*le-dorotam*)—what is the reason? Once the day has been sanctified, Jewish dwellings must have a lamp lit and the table set—dwellings arrayed like the dwelling of the groom to receive the bride. Who is she? Sabbath is the bride. She should be brought only into a home that is prepared for her glory, as is fitting. Of this is written *preparing the Sabbath* (Exodus 31:16), and then לדרתם (*le-dorotam*), *for their dwellings* (ibid.), to bring the holy Bride into their dwellings, so that She can be in their midst.⁴⁶⁸

“When the day is sanctified and the Bride comes but does not find one’s dwelling prepared, table set, and lamp lit, the Bride says, ‘This dwelling is not of Israel! It is written: *Between me and the Children of Israel* (ibid., 17)—this one is not of Israel, and his dwelling has no part in holiness.’ Thus, a Jewish dwelling needs a sign of holiness. This is why it is written לדרתם (*le-dorotam*), *for their dwellings*, regarding the Sabbath and tzitzit.”⁴⁶⁹

Rabbi Nehorai said, “I attest regarding one who leaves the gate of his home enwrapped in the commandment, with

tefillin upon his head: when he emerges from between the two doorposts *Shekhinah* appears above him, along with the two angels who are designated for him—one on his right and one on his left—all escort him to the synagogue and bless him. A single accuser, stationed at one's doorway, follows behind them—and is forced to respond, saying 'Amen.'⁴⁷⁰

“זכור (*Zakhor*), *Remember [the Sabbath day]* (ibid. 20:8), and *Keep [the Sabbath day]* (Deuteronomy 5:12) are the essence of the entire Torah. *Remember* signifies the passage regarding mezuzah. And if you say that mezuzah refers to the Female, this is certainly so! But this passage (the passage of *remember*) is contained within the Female. And *keep* signifies tzitzit.⁴⁷¹

“When one leaves the gates of his home, he emerges with tefillin—above, in the principle of *remember*. And tzitzit along with them, signifying *keep*. At the gate of his home, the principle of *remember*, and then the tzitzit complete him entirely. “It has been taught: *Remember* and *Keep* were uttered as one. But mezuzah—comprising both, principles of male and female as one.⁴⁷²

“Tefillin above, from the principle of *remember*; tefillin of the arm, from *keep*—each contained in the other. [The term] ‘making’ is written only regarding tzitzit, signifying *keep*. All proceeding as one.”⁴⁷³

The youth came forward, saying, “In a place with chiefs like these, who can speak!”⁴⁷⁴

He opened, saying, “*Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a man גבור חיל (gibbor hayil), of substance, of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz* (Ruth 2:1). This scroll should have begun with none other than this verse!⁴⁷⁵

“We have learned: When the blessed Holy One wanted to create the world, He spread out the world before Him, but it could not endure until He created *Teshuvah*.⁴⁷⁶

“He created the world and established it upon a single pillar. What is it? *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25). As it were, the world was established [on his account].⁴⁷⁷

“What did He do? He created *teshuvah*. Once He created *teshuvah*, light sparked from it—and that light brightened, shining from one end of the world to the other. It was with this that He created the world. The blessed Holy One foresaw, seeing the wicked yet to come into this world, and He treasured it away. And for whom did He treasure it away? For the righteous in the time to come.⁴⁷⁸

“If you say, since He was going to treasure it away in the future, why did He create it? Well, the explanation is that when the blessed Holy One created this light, He created it only for the sake of creating His world. When he looked and saw that the wicked would come in the future, He treasured it away. For whom did he treasure it away? For the righteous in the time to come.

“Even today—even though the blessed Holy One has hidden it away—the world is sustained by it. By that one, you suppose! Actually, I would say on account of another light that emerges [85b] from it—and it is like a ray emanating from a great light, and on its account the world endures. This is Foundation of the World, as is said: *righteous one is the foundation of the world*.⁴⁷⁹

“From there, seed of David—peace be upon him—was planted and then emitted, as is said: *Seed* עֵבֶרְדֵּנוּ (*ya'avdennu*), *shall serve Him; it will be told of YHVH to the generation [to come]* (Psalms 22:31). All of David's seed issued from this Righteous One. Similarly, *Everything YHVH made for His sake* (Proverbs 16:4).⁴⁸⁰

“It is written: *Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side* (Ruth 2:1). This is where this scroll should have begun! Regarding the creation of the world (as we discussed above), there had been another, but it did not endure.”⁴⁸¹

Rabbi Nehorai said to him, “Open your mouth, for these are new-ancient words, from the day that the world was created!” Then he asked him, “What is your name?”⁴⁸²

He replied, “I shall tell you afterward.”⁴⁸³

Rabbi Yudai said, “The *Shekhinah* is with us. Since we first saw you, I have been thrilled by you. Speak, my son, speak!”

He said to them, “Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz—three of them in the image of sashed, exalted, enduring rungs. And the progeny of Ruth, from the midst of these images, was planted in the world.⁴⁸⁴

“Who is נַעֲמַן (*no'am*), kindness? *Teshuvah*. To gaze on נַעֲמַן (*no'am*), kindness of YHVH (Psalms 27:4)—*Teshuvah* and the World that is Coming. And to contemplate His palace (ibid.)—another world, below.⁴⁸⁵

“Ruth—in the image of the lower world, saturating the blessed Holy One with songs and praises perpetually. רוּת (*Rut*), Ruth, like the name תּוֹר (*tor*), turtledove. As the turtledove has a unique song among all others, so Assembly of Israel has a song of praise unique among all other calls—praise of תּוֹר (*tur*), awakening.⁴⁸⁶

“The turtledove emits two calls as one: one high and one low—all as one. Assembly of Israel, too, arouses above and arouses below—all at once and with a single voice. This is as is written: *O Elohim, do not be silent! Do not be mute or quiet, O EI!* (Psalms 83:2). *Do not be mute* from arousing above, and *do not be quiet* from arousing below—all as one.⁴⁸⁷

“*Boaz*—in the supernal array of Righteous One, guarding the covenant. He overpowered his impulse and was called [*a man of*] *powerful might* (Ruth 2:1), actually—he was a righteous one.⁴⁸⁸

“And do not say that one who draws close to Assembly of Israel is Righteous One, for it is written: *there is [another] redeemer closer than I* (ibid. 3:12). And who is

that? Actually, there is a *redeemer closer than I*—primal Good of the entire Torah. *God saw the light, that it was good* (Genesis 1:4)—this one is *closer*, for it precedes that Good that is called Righteous One. This is as is written: *Say of the righteous one that he is good* (Isaiah 3:10). Of this: *If he will act as a redeemer, good will redeem* (Ruth 3:13), for he is *closer than I*. He initiated, for he preceded, arousing to embrace at the outset. Thus, He is *closer*.[489](#)

“As for Naomi, known to her husband [was a man] (Ruth 2:1).

“It should not be stated in reference to him, for we have learned: the King who possesses Peace—who is His Peace? Righteous One.[490](#)

“The explanation is that World that is Coming receives delight exclusively and is created exclusively from supernal Thought, poised above it. Here, too, Righteous One stands in precisely the same pattern as Thought. And what is his name? Elimelech, in the paradigm of ruling over Supernal King—World that is Coming. Similarly, Righteous One is *known to* and knows of him to provide delight, and to stand in relation to lower King according to that paradigm [85c]—actually![491](#)

“This one is called *Bo’az*—strength within him to absorb all delight of the body and all beauty of the body, infusing it there. What did he infuse? All seed of David, all royal adornments, and commandments of the Torah. Thus, strength within him, not weakness. Living eternally, to be *Bo’az*—taking all desires, all delights, and all beauty of the body, and bestowing them upon her.[492](#)

“Now Ruth begins to enter the world, bit by bit, until she is bonded with Boaz. Thus, the entire basis for this scroll derives from Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth.[493](#) “It is written: *Enoch walked with God and he was no more, for God took him* (Genesis 5:24) from the midst of the world of mortals. Enoch was extended, bit by bit, until he became what he became—and he settled into his post, fittingly: Metatron

the Great, Angel of the Presence. Before him heavenly rulers and attendants tremble, approaching him to acquire governance, and to extract from him powers and holy crowns.⁴⁹⁴

“Here too, according to the same paradigm, the blessed Holy One draws Ruth after Him, extracting her from among the nations, drawing her toward Him, causing troops and holy camps to issue forth from Her.⁴⁹⁵

“The blessed Holy One established Enoch’s role—when He took him from the land—to cleave to Him, and appearing with a crown of supernal spirit. He called him נוער (*na’ar*), Youth; and on his account, each נערה (*na’arah*), *maiden* (Deuteronomy 22:15, 16, 20, 23-27), is written נוער (*na’ara*).⁴⁹⁶

“Standing with him, from above and below: together with him—upper spirit; below, with that coalescence, and the latter is embraced from the side of Enoch which takes from below. Consequently, his rule is from two sides: adhering above and adhering below.⁴⁹⁷

“*Train the youth, according to his way; even when he is old he will not swerve from it* (Proverbs 22:6). חנוך לנוער (*Ḥanokh la-na’ar*), *Enoch into Youth*—this is Metatron, conveyed by the blessed Holy One from below, and governing through him over lower ones. *According to his way*—according to his conduct below.⁴⁹⁸

“*Even when he is old*—as is written: *I have been* נוער (*na’ar*), *Youth; I have also been old* (Psalms 37:25). We have learned: ‘This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World.’ Of this is written *even when he is old he will not swerve from it*—he will not swerve from that path, in order to continue drawing downward.⁴⁹⁹

“Up to here, I have heard from Rabbi El’azar son of Rabbi Shim’on, who explained it all in this fashion. Now it can all be understood.”

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yudai wept, saying, “If one sees a lion’s tail, one trembles; all the more so, one who

sees the lion itself!" They rose and kissed him.⁵⁰⁰

He said to them, "My name is Rabbi Yeisa the Younger."⁵⁰¹

They replied, "This must be true, since Rabbi Yeisa said that he was always nestled in the fragrant dust of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai!"⁵⁰²

Rabbi Nehorai opened, expounding: "*Your palate is like fine wine—flowing to my beloved smoothly* (Song of Songs 7:10). *Your palate*—scholars, for they are like fine wine. Just as fine wine stands in one place and its aroma travels afar, so it is with scholars: they are in one place and their Torah travels everywhere. Even when they are in the grave, their lips murmur their Torah, as is written: *stirring the lips of sleepers* (ibid.). All the more so in a place where the pillars of the world stand; all the more so, for even ministering angels cannot stand before them!"⁵⁰³

"Once there was a plague in Lydda. Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai came to the place. They asked him, 'What shall we do?' He got up and toured the town, and he saw people dying. He exclaimed, 'All this in the town when I am here! I decree its annulment!'

"They heard a voice saying, 'Neither here nor on camel basket saddles, for Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai is here; the blessed Holy One decrees—and he annuls!'"⁵⁰⁴

Rabbi Hanina was there; and he related it to Rabbi Me'ir, who spoke his praises: "Who could rise above him? Is he not greater than Moses!"⁵⁰⁵

He opened, saying, "*Moses said to Aaron, 'Take the fire-pan and place fire upon it from the altar and put in incense...'* (Numbers 17:11). And it is written: *And Aaron took...* (ibid., 12) and *the plague had begun...* (ibid.). And it is also written *He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was halted* (Numbers 17:13). Moses had to expend all this effort, but for Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai—the blessed Holy One decrees, while he abolishes death."⁵⁰⁶

Rabbi Yeisa said to him, “Since I have been aroused by these words of wisdom, [let me restate that] Ruth was fit!”[507](#)

Rabbi Yudai responded, “Even though she was fit, her suitability was not apparent until she clung to that righteous one. Come and see: Ruth was most fit among all the nations. What did Boaz say to her? *Don't go to another field, but stick here close to* נַעֲרוֹתַי (*na'arotai*), *my maidens* (Ruth 2:8). What did she report? *He even told me, 'Stay close by my* נַעֲרִים (*na'arim*), *youths'* (ibid., 21). Once her mother-in-law saw this, she told her, “That’s incorrect. *It is best, daughter, that you go out with* נַעֲרוֹתַי (*na'arotav*), *his maidens* (ibid., 22), and not with the youths.”[508](#)

Rabbi Yeisa said, “God forbid that such slander be spoken against this righteous woman! She was fit, for this is what Rabbi Shim'on has said: ‘It is written: *Listen, my daughter. Don't go to glean in another field* (ibid., 8). What was written previously? *Ruth said, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain'* (ibid., 2). This teaches that holy spirit sparkled within her. *Let me go to the field*—which field did she scrutinize with great faith? Which field was it? The *field blessed by YHVH* (Genesis 27:27), the Field of Apples.’[509](#)

“What is the meaning of ויקר מקרה (*va-yiqer miqreha*), *as it happened* (Ruth 2:3)? Regarding Balaam, it is written: אלהים ויקר (*Va-yiqqar Elohim*), *God happened upon Balaam* (Numbers 23:4)—a term of defilement and impurity. Here it was changed, saying *Va-yiqer miqreha, as it happened*, terms of honor. This is as is written: *How יקר (yaqar), glorious, is your faithful care, O Elohim* (Psalms 36:8).[510](#)

“Which glory did she encounter? *Parcel of land* (Genesis 33:19)—a parcel of the field of the righteous. She had gone there, entering into a particular section, learning its way, becoming expert in it from those reapers. Who are they? Scholars, called ‘reapers of the field.’[511](#)

“Meanwhile, *presently, Boaz arrived* (Ruth 2:4). Look, righteous one arrived, laden with blessings and bountiful sanctifications. *And he greeted the reapers* (ibid.)—who were these reapers? Heavenly court, Great Sanhedrin above. *‘YHVH be with you!’* (ibid.). Now he bestows blessings from holy ones. And they responded, *‘YHVH bless you’* (ibid.), granting him power to draw from Source of Life, from the midst of World that is Coming.⁵¹²

“*Whose maiden is that?* (ibid., 5)—longingly, he inquired after her, out of love.⁵¹³

“This is what the Holy Lamp, Rabbi Shim’on, said: ‘This scroll alludes to Written Torah, Oral Torah, and the World that is Coming. She arouses the mystery of Written Torah so the righteous can bond with Oral Torah. Thus it was ordained that this scroll be read on Shavu’ot, occasion of the giving of the Torah.’⁵¹⁴

“*Listen, my daughter. Don’t go to glean in another field* (ibid., 8). These are holy chariots selected for us by holy Jacob—flocks unmingled with others, as is written: *He set his own herds apart and did not put them with Laban’s flock* (Genesis 30:40). Of this: *Don’t go to glean in another field*, and don’t be aroused by another kingdom or other chariots. *And don’t go away from here* (Ruth 2:8) with these crowns of yours—don’t ever leave. *From here*—don’t leave your husband, don’t ever leave him.⁵¹⁵

“*Stay כה (khoh), here, close to my maidens* (ibid.). She has many names, and *khoh* is one of them. *Khoh*—as is written: *Your devoted ones יברכו כה (yevarekhu khoh), will bless here* (Psalms 145:10). *Stay khoh*—with these chariots, maidens selected for you [86a] to cleave to.⁵¹⁶

“Just then, *he measured out six [measures of] barley, and he put it on her* (Ruth 3:15). He took קו המדה (Qav ha-Middah), Ray of Measurement, and measured. He measured out six sides that were appropriate for Her to bond with their unity. He provided Her with presents and gifts—for without these, She would be unable to enter World that is

Coming. This is as is said: *These six [measures of] barley he gave me, saying, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty'* (ibid., 17). These six [measures of] barley—six sides presided over by World that is Coming.⁵¹⁷

“שעורים (Se'orim), [measures of] barley, as is written: *Lift up your heads, שעורים (se'orim), O [measures of] barley* (Psalms 24:7). *He put it on her*—he placed them upon Her to guide Her and bless Her. Thus She is the כלה (kallah), bride—כלולה (kelulah), comprised, of all six sides.⁵¹⁸

“Consequently, when World that is Coming saw Her with all these six sides, she exclaimed, יהי (yehi), *Let there be. The one who noticed you is ברוך (barukh), blessed* (Ruth 2:19). Who is Barukh? Solomon, King who possesses peace. Of this: *King Solomon ברוך (Barukh), Blessed* (1 Kings 2:45). Be blessed with this name henceforth, since You have been blessed by all these six sides. Then She—World that is Coming—gave Her additional blessings over and above those She had. This is as is written: *she took out and gave her extra מִשְׁבְּעָה (mi-shiv'ah), from the seven* (Ruth 2:18)—surfeit of sanctifications and blessings.⁵¹⁹

“*He even told me, 'Stick close by my youths'* (Ruth 2:21). Her desire: to cleave perpetually to the youths—holy cherubim. For all Her longing was for them. This teaching is a holy mystery.⁵²⁰

“You might say she spoke falsely, for he had said *with my maidens* (ibid., 8), and not *with the youths* (ibid., 21)! But the explanation is, the name Koh is named so only when aligned over two cherubim to receive blessings through the mystery of twenty-five letters of unification. They are אחד (Shema Israel YHVH Eloheinu YHVH ehad), *Hear, O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one* (Deuteronomy 6:4). Twenty-five letters of unification through the alignment of cherubim—once they are arranged with them, then She is called Koh, and then it says *stick close to Koh* (Ruth 2:8). Together with all this, *with my maidens*—all are necessary—abandoning neither males nor females.⁵²¹

“And also don’t go away from this (ibid.). Rav Yeiva Sava said, ‘This teaches that he showed her cherubim. It says in the Book of Adam that even though the Temple was destroyed, She should never stray from one particular cherub. Like the supernal configuration—once the Temple was destroyed, only one cherub was seen—she too should follow this array. This is as is written: and also don’t go away from this—never abandon one of these! This is why she said to the youths—these two cherubim—stick to them (ibid., 21), actually! So too with the female chariots, as is said: Let your eyes be on the field they are reaping, and follow after them (ibid., 9).[522](#)

“This verse is ripe for interpretation. In truth, your eyes—these are the eyes of YHVH, ranging over the whole earth (Zechariah 4:10)—on the field they are reaping. Since they range over the whole earth, follow after them—to understand.[523](#)

“For I have ordered the youths not to interfere with you (Ruth 2:9)—for the youths’ desire to suckle from Her never abates, as is written: that you may draw from her bosom, and take delight in her glory’s gleam (Isaiah 66:11). When She follows after the eyes to survey all activities of the world, these cherubim neither approach Her, nor do they arouse to suckle from Her.[524](#)

“If you are thirsty, go to the vessels (Ruth 2:9). If you are thirsty—when You yearn to suckle from the mystery of the upper world, do so when aroused by the cherubim; for She can be aroused only toward the upper realm by the cherubim. On account of them, She drinks the heavenly potion, as is written: and you shall drink מאשר (me-asher), from that, which the youths have drawn (ibid.)—these are the cherubim.[525](#)

“To the jars (ibid.)—supernal founts, replete from the beginning. And you shall drink—when cherubim below arouse. From that which the youths have drawn—from supernal cherubim, called Great Faces.[526](#)

“Up to here is lore of hidden words [86b] and supernal holiness—concealed matters in this scroll. Everything according to the supernal image and hidden secrets.”

They rose and kissed him. They exclaimed, “Happy is the generation that merits all this—to learn holy words, words of supernal wisdom—from the Holy Lamp! Of this is written *Happy is the person who finds wisdom, the person who attains understanding* (Proverbs 3:13).”⁵²⁷

They asked him, “Of this other verse, have you heard the essence of its wisdom? For we know only how to expound upon it homiletically.”⁵²⁸

He replied, “Which one?”

They said, “It is written: *Boaz said to her at mealtime, ‘Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel in the vinegar’* (Ruth 2:14).” He replied, “I have heard something.”

He opened, saying, “*Hear the word of YHVH, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you—who ban you—have said: ‘Because of my name, YHVH will be glorified.’ But we will see your joy, while they will be put to shame* (Isaiah 66:5). This verse was established by Rabbi El’azar: *Hear the word of YHVH*. What is added by *you who tremble at His word?*⁵²⁹

“The explanation is that *word of YHVH* is always rung of Faith, except in those instances where it is written *Hear the word of YHVH*. That term emanates from the rung called *word of YHVH*, rung hovering above. *Hear the word of YHVH*—a term that issues from it, such as *Hear the word of YHVH, O nations* (Jeremiah 31:10), a term issuing from that rung.⁵³⁰

“*Who tremble at His word*—that rung, actually! *Who tremble?* Israel, always trembling on account of that *word*. םרדד (Hareidim), *Trembling*—numerous tremblings among the nations. *Trembling*—numerous tremblings in order to perfect it, that *word*.⁵³¹

“Your brothers who hate you have said—descendants of Esau and descendants of Ishmael. Who ban you—who bans whom? Really, they are banned by you, for you neither eat with them, nor drink with them, nor are you familiar with them. Thus, they are under your ban![532](#)

“Another teaching: Who ban you—in your exile, as is written: ‘Go away! Impure!’ They shouted at them (Lamentations 4:15). Since they say, ‘For my sake YHVH will manifest His presence!’ (Isaiah 66:5). Because of us—because of our souls—YHVH will manifest His presence. All His glory is due to us! While [Israel] arouses, daily awaiting the delight of redemption by the blessed Holy One, they have no faith at all, saying so that we may see your joy (ibid.)—at the time that this delight of yours descends. But they will be put to shame (ibid.)—like one ascribing his own corruption to another.[533](#)

“In a threshing chamber, there was a certain wealthy man coming from the side of wine’s lees. He is one and they are two, but they are as one with all crowns and names of holy faith. All of this can be found in its evil inversion, the ones who stand perpetually at the door of the king’s dwelling, outside the mystery of faith. Word of YHVH is called Name of Goodness. This is as is written: טוב שם (tov shem), Name of Goodness (Ecclesiastes 7:1)—YHVH is Goodness.[534](#)

“On the evil side—two—male and female, joined as one. Their names, evil inversions: אלהים אחרים (Elohim Aherim), Other Gods; אל אחר (El Aher), Other God; שם רע (Shem Ra), Evil Name. The female is so called when bonded with the male; and he bonds with her, never separating.[535](#)

“They are appointed over the other nations, but not because of their names—even though She wanders and is distant from Him, while with them in exile. And they are unaware that it is through Holy Name that they are strengthened, for She nourishes and fortifies Evil Name with the transgressions of Israel. This is as is said: They

made me guardian of the vineyards (Song of Songs 1:6). Even when Holy One of Faith governs, She provides a portion—bone to the dog. From here the wicked are nourished.⁵³⁶

“What is written? *Boaz said to her at mealtime* (Ruth 2:14)—when She is consummated from the midst of lower ones and upper ones. From those below—through sacrifices, burnt offerings, prayers, and the longing of will soaring upward from lower ones. From those above—through preparations of food, delight, and desire by chariots and cherubim. That is *mealtime*.⁵³⁷

“Then desire of Righteous One is exclusively for Her, and She is arrayed upon Her chariots. What did He say to Her? *Come over here* (ibid.) [86c]—with royal ornaments from Supernal King. *Partake of the meal* (ibid.)—You shall receive food, will, and holy nourishment to distribute to Your holy legions, above and below.⁵³⁸

Notwithstanding all this, *dip your morsel in the vinegar* (ibid.). On high there is a dipping in vinegar of the left side, to suckle the demonic side and to feed the other nations, so that they can be nourished from it. *He handed her roasted grain* (ibid.)—food that issued from fire of the left side to provide food and nutriment for all, even for the dogs—all those that issue from and spread out from that Other Side, side of impurity. Then *she ate and was sated and had some left over* (ibid.). *She ate and was sated*—from that holy food. *And had some left over*—from that other slop, coming in dribs and drabs—leftovers after satiation. *And had some left over*—He prepared scraps for Her as food for the Other Side.”⁵³⁹

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yudai rejoiced, saying, “If we had come into the world only to hear these words, it would suffice!”

What is the meaning of *his heart was glad*? Rabbi Hizkiyah said, “This teaches that he recited Grace after Meals—he

blessed the place called Heart.”[541](#)

*Boaz ate and drank, ויטב לבו (va-
yiytav libo), and his heart was glad*
(Ruth 3:7).[540](#)

Rabbi Nehemiah opened, “*When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall*

*bless YHVH your God (Deuteronomy 8:10). When you have eaten and are satisfied—*whoever eats and drinks without reciting Grace after Meals is called a destroyer and a thief, as is said: *He who robs his father and mother and says, ‘It is no crime,’ is partner to a destroyer* (Proverbs 28:24). For we have learned: ‘Whoever derives enjoyment from this world without reciting a blessing, it is as if he robs the blessed Holy One and Assembly of Israel, as is said: *He who robs his father and mother and says, “It is no crime,” is partner* לאיש משחית (le-ish mashhit), *to a destroyer.*”[542](#)

Rabbi Yehudah said, “*He is partner* to Jeroboam son of Nebat שחית (she-hishhit), who corrupted, Israel before their Father in heaven.”[543](#)

Rabbi Yudai said, “Great is Grace after Meals, for it adds power above.”[544](#)

Rabbi Hanina said, “Great is Grace after Meals, for it adds blessing to human handiwork.”[545](#)

Rabbi Bun and Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Hanina journeyed on the way to redeem hostages. They happened upon a certain place, where they slept in a particular inn. At midnight, they rose to study Torah. The woman of the house rose and kindled a lamp for them. As they sat down, she sat behind them to hear words of Torah. Rabbi Bun noticed the woman of the house behind him—the innkeeper—and took note of her.[546](#)

One of them opened, saying, “*YHVH’s lamp is the human soul, searching all the inward chambers* (Proverbs 20:27). *YHVH’s lamp is the human soul—*actually! As a lamp shines through gloom, so does the human soul illuminate the

body.” He said further, “Through three things does a woman acquire merit: laws of menstrual impurity, [separating a portion of] dough, and kindling the lamps—all these we have learned.”[547](#)

Meanwhile, he turned his head and saw that the woman was weeping. Her father rose and sat among them.

Rabbi [Bun] asked him, “Why is your daughter crying?”

He replied, “Because her husband has not succeeded to learn Torah. He is a youth, eighteen years old, and he doesn’t even know Grace after Meals! Nor have I been able to teach him.”

He said, “If so, why not exchange him for another? And, why did you give him to your daughter?”[548](#)

He replied, “I didn’t know him at all, until one day I saw that he leaped from a roof down to the ground, just to hear a single *Qaddish*. I vowed to myself that I would betroth my daughter to him. I came out of the synagogue, gave him my daughter, and I didn’t worry about anything else, nor did I examine further. And now, it turns out, that he doesn’t know a single word of Torah, nor does he wish to learn anything!”[549](#)

Rabbi Bun said to him, “Perhaps he will merit to have a son who will teach him Torah in abundance.”[550](#) [86d]

Meanwhile, the youth had risen from his bed and leaped toward them, sitting in their midst. Rabbi Bun gazed upon him. He said, “I can see from his face that a mighty beacon of Torah shall beam from this young man!”[551](#)

The youth opened, saying, “*I am young in days, and you are aged; therefore I was fearful and dared not declare my own opinion* (Job 32:6). Then he opened, speaking about Grace after Meals. He said, “Since you’ve asserted that I don’t even know the Grace after Meals, let me tell you some well-known teachings pertaining to the Grace after Meals.”[552](#)

“First: The table should be set in keeping with one’s means. But one who has limited food and sets the table

amply nevertheless is praiseworthy, for he is sitting to eat before the King, as is written: *you shall eat before YHVH* (Deuteronomy 14:23).[553](#)

“Second: Laving hands before eating. One who eats without laving his hands is like one who has eaten impure food.[554](#)

“Third: When laving hands, the right laves the left and the left serves the right. One must lave the hand up to the joint, as enacted by the rabbis.[555](#)

“Fourth: After laving, the hands should be raised when reciting the blessing, linking arms as one when the hands are raised.[556](#)

“Fifth: One must recite the blessing for this laving.[557](#)

“Sixth: One should give of one’s bread to the poor.[558](#)

“Seventh: Recite the blessing ‘הַמּוֹצֵיאַ (ha-motsi), who brings forth [bread from the earth],’ carefully enunciating the הַ (he). It is forbidden to eat without a blessing.[559](#)

“Eighth: “Eating at one’s table, one should be neither a gorging nor a glutton, but rather like one eating before a king.[560](#)

“Ninth: Words of Torah must be spoken at the table. For one dining alone—with no one to discuss Torah—reciting blessings will suffice.[561](#)

“Tenth: Final waters is an obligation, not a requirement. The blessing that one recites—since one’s hands are filthy on account of the food—is ‘on the rinsing of hands.’[562](#)

“All ten of these are required before Grace after Meals, and each and every one has a rationale from the celestial academy. Now I shall review them.

“First: The table should be set for one’s food in honor of the King who provides food to sustain the body. This is as we have learned: ‘Providing human sustenance is as difficult for the blessed Holy One as splitting the Red Sea.’ Why so difficult? Well, the explanation is that food comes only from Judgment, but the blessed Holy One passes over

judgment and feeds the wicked—both those who are worthy and those who are not. The blessed Holy One feeds all, from the horns of wild oxen to the eggs of lice. [563](#)

“*Shekhinah* comes first and looks upon each and every one of the people of Israel, as is said: *This is the table that is before YHVH* (Ezekiel 41:22). *Before YHVH*—actually! And it is written: *and you shall eat before YHVH* (Deuteronomy 14:23). Therefore, during the week, one’s table should be set and not set, but on the Sabbath it requires something extra—modification for enhancement. [564](#)

“Second: Laving one’s hands before the meal. What is the explanation? It is because eating calls for cleanliness just like the ministering angels above. For this is as Rav Hamnuna Sava said, ‘What is the meaning of *Man ate the bread of the mighty* (Psalms 78:25)? Bread eaten by the ministering angels. What is adduced from this? As the ministering angels eat in holiness, purity, and cleanliness, so should the Jewish people eat in holiness and cleanliness. This is as is written: *You shall sanctify yourselves* (Leviticus 11:44)—first waters. *And be holy* (ibid.)—final waters. *For holy* (ibid.)—fine oil. *Am I, YHVH* (ibid. 20:7)—Grace after Meals.’ [565](#)

“Further, whoever eats without laving his hands, Attribute of Suffering will rest upon him and will constitute his meal [87a]—impurity. As for *Shekhinah*, what does She say? *Do not eat לחם רע עין* (*lehem ra ayin*), *bread from Evil Eye, nor desire its delicacies* (Proverbs 23:6). What is רע עין (*ra ayin*), *Evil Eye*? יצר הרע (*Yetser ha-ra*), *Evil impulse*. Thus whoever eats without laving his hands, that food becomes *bread from Evil Eye*. [566](#)

“This follows Rav Hamnuna Sava’s teaching: Two attributes stand before a person’s table—one, Attribute of Goodness; the other, Attribute of Evil. If a person sanctifies his hands and recites the blessing, Attribute of Goodness declares: ‘This is the table of the blessed Holy One!’ and rests its hands upon his head and says, ‘You are my servant

—servant of the Omnipresent.’ This is as is said: *He said to me, “You are My servant; Israel, in whom I glory”* (Isaiah 49:3). But if one does not lave his hands before eating, Attribute of Evil says, ‘That one’s mine!’ It rests upon him at once, rendering him impure, and his food is called *Bread from Evil Eye*.⁵⁶⁷

“It once happened that a man had invited a poor person over to eat. The latter saw that his host had not laved his hands before eating. The poor man arose from the table and departed. The other called him, saying, ‘Come back to your place and eat!’ He replied, ‘God forbid that I should eat with you, for of you is written *Do not eat bread from one with an evil eye...* Not only that, your food is impure! It is written: *do not become impure with them, ונטמתם (venitmetem), becoming impure, through them* (Leviticus 11:43). Without an א (*alef*), referring to one upon whom the spirit of Evil Eye has come to rest—he absorbs stopped-up impurity, with no recourse at all. The case came before the rabbis, and they awarded one hundred *zuzim* to the indigent.”⁵⁶⁸

Rabbi Ḥaggai wept and exclaimed, “Happy are you, O Israel, engaged with Torah and commandments! As for the poor man who subdued his belly and constrained himself, concerned only for the glory of his Master—what wonderful reward awaits one who learns Torah!”

“Third: One should lave one’s right hand with the left. The reason is that the right is more praiseworthy than the left in all matters, so it should lave the right, ministering to it. For a person’s right hand follows the supernal pattern: superior to the left. The Torah was given with the right; and it is written: *The right hand of YHVH is raised up; the right hand of YHVH performs valiantly* (Psalms 118:16). Consequently, *when Moses would raise his hand, Israel prevailed* (Exodus 17:11).⁵⁶⁹

“Sanctifying one’s hands requires that the left sanctify the right. When a priest ascends the platform, who laves his hands? One inevitably responds ‘The Levite’—because

he derives from the left side, he serves the priest ascending the platform. Then the right is configured fittingly, sanctified from the midst of the left. Here, too, the right can be sanctified only from the left.[570](#)

“יָד (Yad), Hand, must be laved—anything called yad. Fourteen phalanges called *yad*, and this is the meaning of For יָד (yad), *hand, upon Yah’s throne* (ibid., 16). This has been established by Rav Hamnuna Sava with the alphabet technique—using first and last letters—called אַתְּ בַּשׁ (at bash), from הָ (he) onward. All fourteen phalanges in the secret of the alphabet from הָ (he) onward—called ‘yad phalanges.’ Fourteen serve fourteen, so that everything of the right is in the left, and of the left in the right. Thus, hand-laving contains one in the other.[571](#)

“Fourth: One should raise one’s hands when reciting the blessing after laving, sanctifying the hands. This is as is written: *Lift up your hands in sanctity and bless YHWH* (Psalms 134:2). Why? Well, it is because fingers are an image of the supernal realm. There are five fingers: four fingers, joined as one, have three phalanges each—mystery of the celestial chariot. For the holy chariot is four, with twelve sections.[572](#)

“Similarly, the Ineffable Name of four letters—numbering twelve letters. Thus the Ineffable Name, with its letters, corresponds to twelve phalanges—each and every phalanx called a letter.[573](#)

“An extra digit [87b] beyond these, with two phalanges. These two phalanges—two hidden letters and two hidden, heavenly rungs—praise of them all. Twelve are calculated in the sum, but these are not, for they are praise of them all. They are the key for all above for that Hidden One, unrevealed. These phalanges, all stretching upward toward that Hidden One—after being sanctified—because all are blessed by it.[574](#)

“Now, since the fingers have been sanctified, one should extend them upward to arouse the celestial, holy

phalanges—hidden ones. Thus, on the right arm there are five fingers and their fourteen phalanges, yielding nineteen, plus two elevated phalanges. Behold, twenty-one on the right arm—corresponding to אֶהְיֶה (*Ehyeh*), *I will be* (Exodus 3:14), whose sum is twenty-one. And on the left arm, twenty-one, corresponding to *Ehyeh*. Of this: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*), *I will be who I will be* (Exodus 3:14). אֶהְיֶה רֹאשׁ (*Ehyeh rosh Ehyeh*), *I will be, head, I will be*. Of this is said: רֹאשֵׁיכֶם שְׁבֹטֵיכֶם (*rosheikhem shivteikhem*), *your heads, your tribes* (Deuteronomy 29:9). *Your heads*—right hand. *Your tribes*—left hand.⁵⁷⁵

“Fifth: One should recite the blessing, as we have said, to arouse blessings from above with the image of fingers.

“Sixth: One should give of one’s food to the poor, as is fitting. It is a superlative performance of the commandment if he is given to eat from the finest delicacies that he most enjoys—for the food he provides is from *YHVH*. For the food he provides comforts this poor person and gladdens him.⁵⁷⁶

“Seventh: One should recite the blessing of *ha-motsi* over bread. For this is what was stated by Rav Hamnuna Sava: There are seven lands—they are all chambers below. Of them all, none is favored by the blessed Holy One besides *Tevel*. Of them all, none has the seven species other than *Tevel*. [To them all,] the blessed Holy One provides all herbs and fruit of the land, other than these seven species—bread for human consumption. As a consequence, one is required to enunciate precisely—for bread is given by His hand, not by the hands of angels; He produces it, none other. Thus, *ha-motsi*, not *motsi*.⁵⁷⁷

“Eighth: One should be neither a glutton nor a gorer, but rather like one who is eating before a king. For blessing does not rest in the belly of a habitual glutton, but rather in one who is not prone to be a glutton. Like Esau, as is written: *Let me gulp down some of this red red stuff* (Genesis 25:30)—style of a gulper. What is the explanation? It is because the wicked serpent dwells within his belly and

remains unsated. Not only this, he too is called wicked, as is written: *The belly of the wicked will be in want* (Proverbs 13:25). One who is sated without gorging is superior—dining like one sitting before a king.⁵⁷⁸

“Ninth: Words of Torah should be spoken at the table. For we have learned that if one’s table lacks words of Torah, he is like one who has eaten sacrifices to the dead. This is idolatry, as is written: *Surely all tables are full of filthy vomit, without the Omnipresent* (Isaiah 28:8).⁵⁷⁹

“Such a place is called *filthy vomit* because the blessed Holy One distributes portions every day and every night, nourishment to celestial ones and worldly ones. At nighttime, to those angels appointed over their stations, ruling at night. They eat at night, as is written: *She rises while it is night and provides food for her household and a portion for her maidens* (Proverbs 31:15). At daytime, to those angels appointed over their stations, ruling during the day—the blessed Holy One distributes food to them during the day. Once He has distributed to them, He distributes food to all inhabitants of the world. All those angels above—while they are eating their food—all praise and laud their Master. So too, following the behavior of those eating their food, Israel below are required to comport themselves in this same manner—actually—to be part of their cohort.⁵⁸⁰

“Tenth: Final waters. Obligatory to disperse evil slime and to dispense a portion from this one—keeping the prosecutor out of range. This is as we have learned: Attribute of Goodness takes devotion, intention, [87c] and Grace after Meals. Attribute of Evil takes his slime with the final waters—in this fashion he deserts him and refrains from persecuting him. Each takes his respective portion.⁵⁸¹

“Of this is written *Boaz ate and drank, and he gladdened* לָבוּ (*libo*), *his heart* (Ruth 3:7)—for he had recited the blessing after his meal. Behold, he directed it toward

that place called לב (*lev*), Heart—Heart that desires people’s heartfelt longing.⁵⁸²

“Final waters is a חובה (*hovah*), obligation; and it is received by one called חובה (*Hovah*), Sin—and these waters ease his mind. For these are two rungs: one called Merit and one called Sin. All matters of this realm open toward Merit, and all matters of that realm open toward Sin, arousing Sin. Consequently, final waters is the portion of Sin, who relishes it. Wondrous mystery!⁵⁸³ “Cup of blessing has ten requirements, as aroused by the rabbis.⁵⁸⁴

“Grace after Meals with three requires a cup, but without three no cup is required. What is the reason? Cup of blessing receives blessing only from three or more, but not less than three. With three, the rabbis instructed that one should say ‘Let us bless Him of whose bounty we have eaten.’ But it does not specify who is being blessed! Even though there are three, there is no reference to whose bounty ‘we have eaten,’ nor a name—it says only ‘we have eaten,’ without specifying a recipient!⁵⁸⁵

“For this reason the rabbis remarked that he should have the cup of blessing poised before him, eyes gazing upon it, since it is written: *The eyes of YHVH your God are upon it* (Deuteronomy 11:12). Cup of Blessing takes blessings and nourishment from the midst of the three patriarchs. When She descends, all the worlds eat of that food that She has absorbed. This is why one gazes upon it and says, ‘Let us bless Him of whose bounty we have eaten.’ Let us have common conviction to bless, since we have eaten of His food—the very food that She took to nourish the world.⁵⁸⁶

“Then they respond toward the supernal realm, ‘ברוך (*Barukh*), Blessed, is He of whose bounty we have eaten.’ Here an allusion is uttered to that known rung from which all food emanates—נברך (*nevarekh*), Let Us Bless.’ From where do we know this? As is written: *And King שלמה ברוך (Shelomo Barukh), Solomon Blessed* (1 Kings 2:45)—King who

possesses שלום (*shalom*), peace. Thus they utter an allusion to that place that he did not divulge.[587](#)

“Why? It is because upper world, *Binah*, from the outset pours forth blessings to two cherubs below Her—right and left. Thus, two are marked, leaving a trace of the supernal rung. Once they have joined as one with the twelve tribes, the one who blesses—in the middle between them—takes all from the two sides, and he blesses henceforth, alluding to place and rung.[588](#)

“When these two converge harmoniously as one, alluding toward the upper world, they say, ‘and by whose goodness, we live.’ ‘And by whose goodness,’ and not ‘from whose goodness’—lower world, issuing from Attribute of Goodness itself. For this one is called ‘His goodness,’ as is written: ונהרו (*ve-naharu*), *and they will flow, toward YHVH and His goodness* (Hosea 3:5). *Toward YHVH—lower world. Toward His goodness—Tree of Life.* ונהרו (*ve-naharu*), *Flowing, toward the goodness of YHVH* (Jeremiah 31:12)—through it, all worlds are nourished ואתנהירו (*ve-itnehiru*), and illuminated.[589](#)

“With ten—all in one accord, from the supernal top until the end of all rungs—the one who blesses utters and registers, ‘Let us bless our God.’ Similarly from there onward.[590](#)

“Once he has recited the blessing ‘Who nourishes’ for food—indicating that it emanates from the midst of the upper world, source of all—he turns back to [87d] ‘On the land,’ mystery of the lower world. Why? Because all blessings must first be directed toward the upper world, source of all, and then toward the holy, lower world.[591](#)

“Similarly with *Qaddish*, for sanctification and blessing are directed first toward the upper world, and then toward the lower world. ‘May His Great Name be magnified and sanctified’—that great name, supreme over all. Source of Life from which flow all blessings and all sanctifications—World that is Coming. Then, drawn from it—‘in the world

that He created according to His Will’—lower world. This is the paradigm for all blessings, other than those blessings in prayer in which one bows down—for there, one commences from below upward.[592](#)

“Blessing for the land—lower world, combined with circumcision and Torah. Circumcision—Tree of Life. Torah—central column. Life and food—emerging from World that is Coming—food for that tree.[593](#)

“Women, slaves, and minors are obligated in Grace after Meals, but they do not recite the blessing, for we have learned: ‘Woe to a man whose wife and children recite a blessing on his behalf.’[594](#)

“Rabbi Abba said, ‘Women are obligated in the public reading of the *Megillah*, but may not perform the public reading. They are, however, obligated to hear from the one who reads and blesses. Similarly, in Grace after Meals, women are obligated to hear from the one reciting the blessing, and a woman is required to sit and hear the blessing from her husband. Her husband is obligated to wait for her at the table so that she can hear the blessing from him.[595](#)

“If there is no man present, someone is called to recite the blessing for her. If many women are present, the one reciting the blessing for them does not utter the Divine Name. For we have learned: ‘Women may not be included,’ and since they cannot be included for a *zimmin*, the one reciting the blessing for them cannot bless with the Divine Name. For the obligation of Grace after Meals is primarily upon men, not women, but they are obligated to hear Grace after Meals. And they are obligated to hear the reader’s public reading of the *Megillah*.[596](#)

“[The blessing] ‘Building of Jerusalem’ is in the Grace after Meals because up to this point we have blessed above, but it is also fitting to bless below. One blesses concerning the Temple, for it is from there that food issues

for the entire world, and all the rest of humanity is nourished from there alone.⁵⁹⁷

“Everything is comprised within Grace after Meals—from the last blessing to the *zimmun*. One who recites Grace after Meals causes joy above and joy below. Joy must be accompanied by blessing and devotion, bringing joy to the Attribute of Goodness, as is written: *a good-hearted person has a continuous feast* (Proverbs 15:15).”⁵⁹⁸

The companions came and kissed him; and they prepared another wedding feast, inviting all the people of the town—and they appointed him head over them all.⁵⁹⁹

He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain (Ruth 3:7).⁶⁰⁰

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yehudai came to Tiberias, where they heard Rabbi Shim'on expound upon this

verse: *Boaz ate and drank...* (ibid.). “*His heart was glad* (ibid.)—consuming heavenly life—this life gladdened his heart. After rejoicing, at once *He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain*. These are the celestial precious stones and magnificent jewels surrounding the holy throne, as is said: *Your belly is a heap of wheat edged with lilies* (Song of Songs 7:3).⁶⁰¹

“What is the meaning of the verse *Then she came* [88a] *stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down* (Ruth 3:7)? Lying down by his legs—not opposite him, or next to him. From here we learn that until midnight he did not know. And the blessed Holy One does not enter the Garden of Eden with the righteous until after midnight.⁶⁰²

“At the beginning of night, all souls ascend—perfecting Heap of Wheat. When night is split, a voice arouses, calling out, aroused from the north side. The flame reaches the one called גבר (gever), rooster, crowing forcefully—this is called ‘crow of the rooster.’ Who is this? גבריאל (Gavriel), Gabriel. The flame strikes his wings and he cries out. Then

upper and lower abide under the aegis of Judgment of the left. Then it is written: *At midnight, the man trembled and twisted away—and behold! There was a woman lying at his feet!* (Ruth 3:8).[603](#)

“*At midnight.* We have learned: There are three watches of the night; and during each watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion. At each and every watch, known angels are appointed over the night.[604](#)

“The three watches: during the first watch, the guardians are the angels who sing at the beginning of the night. What do they sing? *The earth and her fullness are YHVH’s, the world and those who dwell in her. For upon seas He founded her.... Who shall ascend the mount of YHVH...? The clean of hands and the pure of heart...* (Psalms 24:1-4). For all human souls depart, longing to rise.[605](#)

“When they rise to the locale of the first-watch angels, there are 365 palaces there—like the number of days of the year—heavenly princes appointed over them. [If they are worthy], celestial portals are opened for those souls. But if not, they are ejected and they go forth, wandering round the world. They encounter evil spirits dispensing diverse reports—some false, some true.[606](#)

“If they are worthy to enter, all is fitting, and a doorway is opened. They enter, ascending to the domain of the angels of the second watch. Other angels are there, Mourners of Zion, who lament the destruction of the Temple.[607](#)

“At the moment that the rooster crows—when the flame from the northern side is aroused—the flame’s flaring descends to this world, licking at the wings of the earthly rooster. He crows loudly, proclaiming, ‘Arise to wail for the Temple, all masters of peace!’[608](#)

“All those who have not seen the weeping, and all those who have—all gather to weep over the Temple. Who has seen the tumult of all the heavenly forces, all the holy chariots wailing and crying in the 370 firmaments?[609](#)

“Then, at that precise moment, *At midnight, the man trembled and twisted away* (Ruth 3:8). *The man*—the blessed Holy One split them, bellowing a mournful wail for the Temple, as is written: *YHVH roars from on high, and from His holy habitation He utters His voice...* (Jeremiah 25:30). *And twisted away*—as is said: *their paths twist* (Job 6:18). Then he kicks all the firmaments, and all the troops and chariots weep and mourn at that hour. What do they say? *God, nations have come into Your estate.... They have given Your servants’ corpses...* (Psalms 79:1-2), and *By the rivers of Babylon...* (Psalms 137:1).⁶¹⁰

“*And twisted away. Why? Because Behold! There was a woman lying at his feet!*—lying in the dust crushed by His feet—this is Assembly of Israel. Then, at that moment, she was aroused toward him and he asked her, *saying, ‘My daughter, who are you* (Ruth 3:9) in exile? *Who are you at this moment?’*⁶¹¹

“*And she replied, ‘I am רות (Rut), Ruth, your handmaid* (ibid.)—*מרוות (meravvat),* brimming, with sorrow, overflowing with pain over my children in exile, and over the holy palaces, for I have been exiled from My sanctuary. And it is not enough that I have been banished, but they abuse and curse Me every day on account of them, and I have no voice in exile to respond!’⁶¹² [88b]

“*He exclaimed, ‘Blessed are you to YHVH, my daughter! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to הבחורים (ha-bahurim), younger men, whether poor or rich’* (ibid., 10). The blessed Holy One said to Her, ‘My daughter, I remember when David was excommunicated from Jerusalem and he fled to Bahurim. Shimei came out from among the Benjaminites toward the anointed one, blaspheming and cursing him—but he was silent. Never had there been blasphemy like that, but he felt no need to respond, remaining silent.’⁶¹³

“‘Even now in exile you have treated me with abundant goodness and faithfulness. Abundant goodness—the last

kindness was greater than the first in Bahurim. And you did not doubt even after the scorn and blasphemy of the other nations, those who come from Bahurim. Neither to a lowly one like Vespasian who was not of royal birth—nor rich, like King Nebuchadnezzar, who was the son of a king, *head of gold* (Daniel 2:38).[614](#)

“What is written of Solomon’s wisdom regarding Shimei? *Thus said Shimei as he cursed, ‘Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, you depraved person!’* (2 Samuel 16:7). ‘Get out, get out—twice: get out of Jerusalem and get out of your house. Solomon replied in a different fashion: *Build yourself a house in Jerusalem... For on the very day that you go out...* (1 Kings 2:36–37).[615](#)

“Of this the blessed Holy One said ‘*Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, for You have been steadfast by Me and ignored the blasphemy and scorn of the other nations. But, stay for the night* (Ruth 3:13). *Stay for the night*—stay now in exile and guide Your children there with Torah and good deeds. If their good deeds aid Your redemption, You will be redeemed. If not, [*then in the morning...*] *I will redeem you myself, by YHVH’s life! Lie down until morning* (ibid.). For morning and the light of redemption will come.’[616](#)

“Alternatively, *stay for the night... Lie down until morning*—when the night splits She is aroused toward Him. Then the blessed Holy One enters the Garden of Eden to delight with the righteous in Torah until day’s light shines.[617](#)

“Then the redeemer will come. When? At the time that Israel prays, joining Redemption to Prayer, then Israel dwells in the Holy Land. Everything joined one to the other, even in a state of exile.[618](#)

“*Now the redeemer whom Boaz had mentioned passed by* (ibid. 4:1). This is the *close redeemer* (ibid. 3:12)—much

closer to the redemption—the World that is Coming, and the supernal right.⁶¹⁹

“He called, ‘Come over and sit down here, פלוני אלמוני (Ploni almoni), so-and-so!’ And he came over and sat down (ibid. 4:1). Why is he called Ploni Almoni? Since it is written He has withdrawn His right hand (Lamentations 2:3). Why? The reason is that until the end of the right, She lies down on the earth; thus, he is Almoni, anonymous. Ploni—concealed—treasured away from the day the world was created.⁶²⁰

“I cannot redeem for myself, lest I impair my own estate (Ruth 4:6). Ploni Almoni—from here we learn that there are two messiahs, a close redeemer and a distant redeemer. Close redeemer—from the right side. The other redeemer—Messiah son of Joseph. Who is he? Joseph, called Righteous One, messiah who comes first.⁶²¹

“I cannot redeem for myself, since regarding the right—which is behind—it is written: Save with Your right hand and answer me (Psalms 60:7). Until that saving, I cannot redeem for myself.⁶²²

“Redeem for yourself my redemption (Ruth 4:6). For Son of Joseph will arrive and redeem first, and afterward the hidden right will be aroused—hidden for the righteous. For these two Righteous Ones—Righteous One and Righteous One. Of this we have learned that it is hidden away for the righteous. Through this light they will arise, bonding in hidden desire, producing greenery and fruit in the world. Then, The right hand of YHVH is raised up (Psalms 118:16).⁶²³

“So when the redeemer said to Boaz, ‘Acquire for yourself,’ he took off his sandal (Ruth 4:8). A man [would take off] (ibid., 7)—this refers to Moses, speaking euphemistically of arousal of the covenant. When the right was aroused toward Righteous One, he took off his sandal at once—arousal [88c] toward the lower world. Then he was aroused to produce fruit in the world with the force of the closer

redeemer, arousing him toward the world, saying, *Acquire for yourself*. This concludes the mysteries of this matter.”[624](#)

Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yehudai came and kissed him on his head and hands, exclaiming, “Certainly the light of Sinai stands here in his presence, too! He is the lamp of light!”[625](#)

לפנים (Le-fanim), *Of old, this was done in Israel regarding redemption or substitute: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to his fellow. This was testimony in Israel* (Ruth 4:7).[626](#)

“The rabbis explained this verse, saying, ‘לפנים (Le-fanim), *Of old, You founded the earth* (Psalms 102:26). When the blessed Holy One created His world, He created it based exclusively upon the Torah. The Torah

existed two thousand years before the creation of the world, as is said: *I was with Him as an artisan, I was a delight day after day* (Proverbs 8:30).’[627](#)

“This is as we have learned: When the blessed Holy One created His world, He stabilized the Torah—gazing upon it, recounting it, and probing it—as is said: *Then He saw it and recounted it; He stabilized it and probed it, too* (Job 28:27). He created the world with it, concealing it afterward until He created Primal Adam, and taught it to him, as is written: *He said to Adam...* (ibid., 28).[628](#)

“At that moment all the letters arose before Him. This one said, ‘The blessed Holy One should create the world with me!’ And that one said, ‘Let Him create it with me!’ The letters all presented themselves before Him—in reverse order, ת, שׁ, ך (tav, shin, resh).[629](#)

“ת (tav) said to the blessed Holy One, ‘Master of the Universe, may it be Your will to create the world through me, for I am the culmination of all created beings.

Furthermore, Your name is אמת (*emet*), Truth, sealed through me.’[630](#)

“He replied, ‘No, you are not worthy that My world be created through you. For through you, righteous children of Mine are destined to die, as is written: *make a mark upon the foreheads of the people...* (Ezekiel 9:4).’ She departed at once, forlorn.[631](#)

“ש (*Shin*) stood before the blessed Holy One: ‘Master of the Universe, may it be Your will that Your world be created through me, for Your Name שדי (*Shaddai*) begins with me.’[632](#)

“He replied, ‘I will not create My world through you.’

“Then ק (*qof*) and ר (*resh*) came, joined together. He said, ‘I will not create My world with them.’[633](#)

“And thus did they all present themselves before Him, up until the letter כ (*kaf*). When כ descended from הכתר (*hakeret*), the crown, the crown trembled—along with 80,000 quivering myriads of precious stones, embedded in the crown. The blessed Holy One asked them, ‘Why are you shaking?’[634](#)

“They replied, ‘Master of the Universe, all of our beauty and all our glory come from כ alone, and now she has descended from us.’

“She asked Him, ‘Master of the Universe, may it be Your will to create Your world through me, for I am the letter of כבודך (*kevodekha*), Your glory.’

“The blessed Holy One castigated Her, saying, ‘*Kaf, Kaf*, return to your abode, so that My crown will not remain disgraced. I will not create My world through You, for through You ליכשל כמה אלפים מישראל (*likashel kamah alafim mi-yisrael*), many thousands of Jews will stumble.’ She retreated at once, bereft.[635](#)

“And so it went for them all, until ב (*bet*) came before Him and asked, ‘Master of the Universe, may it be Your will that your world be created through me. For I am the letter of ברכה (*berakhah*), blessing; and through me, Your children—

the people of Israel—are destined to come into the world, saying “Blessed are you, *YHVH*,...”⁶³⁶

“He replied, ‘Through you, certainly, I will create my world, for you are fit for this purpose.’

“The letter א (*alef*) rose but did not come before Him. The blessed Holy One said to her, ‘*Alef, Alef*, why do you not make an entrance like the rest of the letters who came before Me?’

“She replied, ‘Master of the Universe, I saw that all the letters who came before You left dispirited. You have already granted permission to ב for Your world to be created through her, and it is unseemly for the King of Glory to revoke a gift that He has bestowed upon someone! Consequently, I stayed in my place.’

“The blessed Holy One said to her, ‘If so, you shall be first of all the letters. Through you I will be elevated to be called by My name אהד (*ehad*), One.’⁶³⁷

“So He perused the Torah and created the world.”

“Here you have stated that the blessed Holy One created His world through ב alone, but you also say that the Holy One created His world through the entire Torah!”

“Well, the explanation is that the blessed Holy One fashioned ב into a kind of secret wardrobe of treasures. All the letters come and display their power there—all the letters [88d] enduring there. Thus it was the Torah—actually!—that the blessed Holy One scrutinized to create His world.”⁶³⁸

Rav Huna said, “Come and see: the blessed Holy One does not withhold reward due to any creature. Even though the letters proceeded before Him in reverse order—ת, ש, ר (*tav, shin, resh*)—and He rejected them, giving this honor to ב, when He came to create His world He linked them to ב, as is written: ברשית (*bereshit—bet, resh, alef, shin, yod, tav*). Thus you have ת, ש, ר—the letters that came forward—combined with ב. ב took all the letters with her; and the blessed Holy One created His world through them.⁶³⁹

“All the letters are called *of old* (Ruth 4:7). Why? Because they were created two thousand years before the creation of the world. And through the Torah—called *of old*—the blessed Holy One created His world, as is written: *Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens—Your handiwork* (Psalms 102:26).⁶⁴⁰

Rabbi Ḥanina said, “From among those things that came to mind before the blessed Holy One created His world, Israel arose in His mind as worthy to receive the Torah—all its letters becoming crowns upon his head. Since he arose in His mind, the blessed Holy One stood up, as it were, and engraved the Torah upon him—all the letters, crowns upon his head.⁶⁴¹

“[The world] was established upon him, as is written: *Now this was done of old upon Israel* (Ruth 4:7). *This* refers to none other than Torah, which predated Israel. *Of old*—the letters ן ׁ (Y, H). Everything engraved and inscribed upon Israel.⁶⁴²

“*On the testimony* (ibid.)—this is the Jerusalem Talmud, as is written: *Form the testimony; seal Torah within My disciples* (Isaiah 8:16). In the land of Israel they are called *My disciples*—residing there, not outside the Land. And it is written: *for instruction and testimony* (ibid., 20). *Exchange* (Ruth 4:7)—the Babylonian Talmud, for they changed the language and custom. Everything was in the presence of the blessed Holy One before He created the universe.⁶⁴³

“*To firm up any transaction* (ibid.)—covenant of circumcision, fulfillment of the entire Torah.⁶⁴⁴

“*One man would take off his sandal* (ibid.)—commandment of *ḥalitsah* (release). *And hand it to his fellow* (ibid.)—commandment of *yibbum* (levirate marriage). From here Rabbi Akiva derived that the commandment of *ḥalitsah* takes precedence over the commandment of *yibbum*. *Such was the practice in Israel* (ibid.), for Rabbi Akiva said that from the time that the Temple was destroyed, the chief

councilors were cut down, opinions confounded, and the heart unsettled, in thrall to appearances.”[645](#)

Rabbi Yudai said, “Commandment of *yibbum* is praiseworthy, and one who fulfills it becomes partner to the blessed Holy One. One who fulfills the commandment of *yibbum* with proper intent is greater than the prophet Ezekiel, as is written: *suddenly a sound while I was prophesying, a noise* (Ezekiel 37:7)—his prophecy raucous, not tranquil.”

Rabbi Ḥidqā said, “Great is the commandment of *yibbum*, for one who fulfills the commandment of *yibbum* with proper intent becomes a partner with the blessed Holy One. This is as is written: *so that the name of the deceased may not disappear* (Ruth 4:10); and it is written: *all flesh shall not be cut off* (Genesis 9:11).”[646](#)

Rabbi Ḥanina, consistent with his reasoning, said, “*Hand it to his fellow* (Ruth 4:7)—this is the commandment of *yibbum*.” What is the meaning of *hand it to his fellow*? Rabbi Ḥanina said, “This can be compared to a man astray in the desert, a place frequented by bandits and wild beasts. When bandits saw him disoriented, they pounced upon him and beat him, looting all his treasure and earnings.”[647](#)

“His friend heard about it and armed himself. He set out and freed the man from their clutches—he had been stripped of everything. What did he do? He built a house for him and consigned it to him. He prepared new garments for him and delivered them. The man came and donned the garments, dwelt in the house, and began to profit as before. This is the meaning of *hand it to his fellow*—actually!”[648](#)

“*Such was the practice in Israel*—but not among the other nations, because He did not give them this commandment. Of them is written *Let them perish from the earth and from under these heavens* (Jeremiah 10:11). For He provides no revival for them, neither in this world nor in

the World that is Coming, as is written: *The dead will not live; spirits of the dead will never rise...* (Isaiah 26:14).[649](#)

“All the people at the gate and the elders responded, ‘[We are] witnesses. May YHVH make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and like Leah, the two who built up the House of Israel! Do [something] mighty in Ephrathah, and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!’ (Ruth 4:11).[650](#)

“From here we learn that [89a] seven blessings are recited for a virgin only, for she is called ‘bride.’ But for a widower and a widow, as in the case of Boaz and Ruth—widower and widow—they were blessed with the semblance of seven blessings. For

preeminence of a virgin over a woman-once-espoused is expressed in blessings and presents: one is called ‘bride’ and the other is not, as is written: *As a youth espouses a maiden...* (Isaiah 62:5).[651](#)

“A semblance of the seven blessings were bestowed upon Boaz—through which words? As is written: *All the people at the gate responded* (Ruth 4:11)—one. *May YHVH make the woman who is coming into your house* (ibid.)—two. *Like Rachel, and like Leah, the two who built up the House of Israel* (ibid.)—five. *Do [something] mighty in Ephrathah* (ibid.)—six. *Perpetuate your name in Bethlehem* (ibid.)—seven.[652](#)

“In honor of the widower and widow, the blessing ‘Who creates the fruit of the vine’ is recited as for the virgin, with this blessing in the middle. In conclusion, one recites the blessing ‘Who created jubilation and happiness, groom and bride...’ in their honor, for it includes ten faithful ones corresponding to the ten utterances with which the world was created.”[653](#)

Rabbi Yehudah said, “There are seven. ‘Jubilation and happiness’—one. Two—‘Groom.’ ‘And bride’—three. ‘Love

and companionship’—five. ‘Peace and fellowship’—seven.”[654](#)

Rabbi Hanina explained that each one stands on its own: “‘Jubilation’—one; ‘happiness’—two; ‘groom’—three; ‘bride’—four; adding ‘rejoicing, exultation’—six; ‘love’—seven; ‘companionship’—eight; ‘peace and fellowship’—ten. For these ten correspond to the ten utterances with which the world was created.

“Within this blessing are the five voices through which the Torah was given. A bride inherits them all through her blessings, for she is fitting—but a widow is unfit.”[655](#)

All the people at the gate (Ruth 4:11)—this refers to the Great Sanhedrin, who were present, as is written: *Who will give me water to drink from the cistern which is by the gate of Bethlehem?* (2 Samuel 23:15). *And the elders*—sages and community leaders. Everyone blessed them with this blessing, for he was the foremost communal leader of the generation. Who was he? Ibzan of Bethlehem.[656](#) *And he was given to them, and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, “A son is born to Naomi!”* (Ruth 4:17). The rabbis explained this verse by way of another. We have learned, as is written: *If you should indeed take your neighbor’s garment in pledge...* (Exodus 22:25)—this verse speaks of one’s soul in this world, and of one’s body after passing on to one’s eternal rest. Regarding the soul in this world, it teaches that when a human soul departs—each and every night—the blessed Holy One takes it as a pledge, returning it the next day to one’s bosom.[657](#)

Consequently, one delivers one’s soul as a pledge to his Maker by means of a verse evoking compassion, such as *Into Your hand I entrust my spirit...* (Psalms 31:6). Since it is a pledge—despite being culpable for numerous sins—the blessed Holy One restores it to one’s bosom.[658](#)

Similarly, one must conduct oneself in accord with His attributes, as is written: *and you shall walk in His ways*

(Deuteronomy 28:9).[659](#) [89b]

When a person's time has come, as a result of transgressions against his Master, he destroys what was his, and He seizes his soul.[660](#)

Therefore it is written: *You shall not take a widow's garment as pledge* (ibid. 24:17). Why? Since his pledge is in the hand of the Omnipresent, it does not need to be given as a pledge again, as is written: *You will not arise twice in distress* (Nahum 1:9).[661](#)

All souls are in the hands of the blessed Holy One: if they merit, they enter the precinct of the righteous in the Garden of Eden; if they do not merit, they go to Hell.[662](#)

Rabbi Neḥuniah son of Yose said, "A place is set aside in Hell for the souls of the wicked; and from there they go forth, roaming in the world. Achieving no rest, they return to Hell. They come afterward [to the Garden of Eden]—but are shoved out of the Gates of Life, and they return to the world. Who are they? Those who have blemished the covenant by not engaging in procreation. Ultimately, the blessed Holy One comes and builds them, transplanting them in the world.[663](#)

"This can be compared to one who plants a tree. When he sees that it fails to thrive, he uproots it and transplants it in a different place. This can occur multiple times, as is written: *Truly, God does all these things two or three times to a man* (Job 33:29).[664](#)

"*For four, I will not return him* (Amos 2:6). Four portals in the heavens, with officers at each and every door. The first are merciful—they uproot them and transplant them in a different place. If he repents, the first ones—merciful ones—say to him, 'Leave this doorway and we will aid your flight.' So it goes with the second group and the third: if he repents and profits as at first, then the first, second, and third groups all become merciful, escorting him out. But if he arrives at the fourth opening, he will not escape, as is said: *For three transgressions of Israel; for four, I will not*

(ibid.). These are the ones who have blemished the covenant.⁶⁶⁵

“What is the explanation? We have learned: Rabbi Yose said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, ‘Since he has diminished the image, he is banished from the World that is Coming, his good deeds dwindling before the Omnipresent.’ Of them is written *They will go out and stare at the corpses of the people who rebel against Me, for their worm will not die* (Isaiah 66:24). For whoever causes a defect in his covenant is, as it were, like one who causes a defect in another place.”⁶⁶⁶

Rabbi Yose opened, “*Happy is the man who fills his quiver with them...* (Psalms 127:5)—speaking of one engaged in procreation. What is the meaning of *they will not be put to shame when they contend with enemies in the gate* (ibid.)? Well, the explanation is that when a person leaves this world and his soul is ready to enter its fitting niche, diverse damaging angels stand on this side and that, and diverse angels of peace stand on this side and that. If he is meritorious, angels of peace greet him first, saying, ‘Peace to you in your arrival!’ If he is not meritorious, angels of destruction rise and greet him first, saying, *Woe to the wicked! Evil! For what his hands have perpetrated will be requited to him* (Isaiah 3:11).⁶⁶⁷

“*Woe to the wicked! Evil!* Who is this? One who did not attempt to leave behind a son in this world, for whoever leaves a child in this world and teaches him Torah and good deeds, cannot be ruled by angels of destruction or Hell. This is as is written: *they will not be put to shame when they contend with enemies in the gate* (Psalms 127:5)—angels of destruction, with no dominion over him.⁶⁶⁸

“Let a man not say that his Torah learning and deeds will protect him, so that he may abstain from procreation. Rather, even though he does possess Torah and good deeds, he will not enter the precinct of the blessed Holy

One, nor will he have a portion in the World that is Coming.⁶⁶⁹

“This is like the case of one of our companions, ejected from the thirteen gates of that world. If not for the plea of Rabbi Yehudah the Pious, he would have been banished from two worlds! For none possessed Torah and good deeds like Hezekiah, king of Judah, and yet it is written: *Thus says YHVH: Set your house in order, for you are going to die; you will not live* (Isaiah 38:1)—you will die in this world, and you will not live in the World that is Coming.”⁶⁷⁰ [89c]

Rabbi Yoḥanan expounded, “*In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not hold back your hand...* (Ecclesiastes 11:6). A man must be occupied with procreating in his youth and in his old age, never abstaining. Even if he is aged, he may not excuse himself. What is the reason? Because you cannot know which one will be fit before God, this one or that.”

Rabbi Yoḥanan became grizzled in years, his vision retreated, and he was overcome by weakness. He rose and said, “I am dead to the World that is Coming, for I had children but they have died!”⁶⁷¹

[His students] said to him, “Our master, we drink of your waters—how many descendants you leave behind who strengthen you for the World that is Coming!”⁶⁷²

He was not comforted until the blessed Holy One illumined the vision of a certain elder who rose, saying, “Concerning you, Rabbi Yoḥanan—elderly and overcome by infirmity—and of Rabbi Hizkiyah, who is impotent, Scripture says: *Thus says YHVH: As for the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who have chosen what I desire and grasp My covenant—I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters* (Isaiah 56:4–5).” Rabbi Yoḥanan’s mind was eased. He said to the man, “Put your mind to rest—as you have put my mind to rest.”⁶⁷³

Rabbi Beroka said, “It is written: *That soul shall be cut off from before Me* (Leviticus 22:3). If that soul is cut off, what of the body? If this is the case, how many graves will be empty! How many markers for naught! For if the blessed Holy One rebuilds that soul in this world afterward as before, the body left behind perishes, the grave empty! If so, how many bones forsaken, how many graves wasted!⁶⁷⁴

“Ah, the explanation is that the blessed Holy One discards His handiwork only from this earth and these heavens. [Those bodies] descend to be rebuilt in a different form, in lower realms, in the domain called נְשִׁיָּה (Neshiyyah), Oblivion—corralled there for generations upon generations.⁶⁷⁵

“Seven lands below—*Erets, Adamah, Arka, Gei, Neshiyyah, Tsiyyah,* and *Tevel*. *Tevel*—our domain. *Neshiyyah*, Oblivion—why the domain of *Neshiyyah*? Well, the reason is that since they אַנְשֵׁי (anshei), were oblivious, to the covenant by not spreading through the world, they are אֲנֻשִׁים (anshei), forgotten, into *Neshiyyah*, Oblivion. Never is there a grave in vain, nor marker empty!⁶⁷⁶

“In the domain of *Neshiyyah*—only those called ‘worthless bodies,’ having descended there for worthlessness. They do not engender there, as there are no נְשִׁים (nashei), women, among them, so they just sow and eat—*anshei*, forgetting, all they do.⁶⁷⁷

“Souls—before being rebuilt in this world—are barred from numerous gates, roaming and wandering in this world until redemption. These are called שְׁכִינֹת (shekheinot), dwellers, as is written: *and they called him ‘dwellers’* (Ruth 4:17). Then this body is built to endure in His land, *Tevel*.”⁶⁷⁸

Rabbi Yudai was in the presence of Rabbi Azariah son of Simai. He asked him, “Righteous ones who stumble upon a sin from the Torah that invokes excision, ponder repentance, and die—does their death atone for them?”⁶⁷⁹

He replied, “Yes, and sometimes they are punished in this world, procuring atonement.”

He saw Rabbi Yudai’s face turn sallow. He said to him, “Say what you would say! The Torah does not receive impurity, as is written: *Is not My word like fire, says YHVH?* (Jeremiah 23:29). Thoughts in your heart?”⁶⁸⁰

“*The secret of YHVH is for those who revere Him* (Psalms 25:14). Ten elders martyred by the empire on account of the sale of Joseph!”⁶⁸¹

He said to him, “Phinehas is Elijah.”⁶⁸²

He replied, “But Rabbi Akiva [89d] did not have ancestral merit!”⁶⁸³

He said, “*Of the descendants of Issachar, men who knew how to interpret the signs of the times* (1 Chronicles 12:33).”⁶⁸⁴

He opened, saying, “*When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, ‘You are to come to me, for שכרתיך (sakhor sekhartikha), I have surely hired you* (Genesis 30:16). שכר (s’khar), *Reward—afterward. יש שכר (Yesh s’khar), There is reward. Yesh, There is now; afterward, lambs for the kingdom of heaven. Their bodies will remain in their places in this world, everything ultimately restored to primal form. It is written: Each according to his blessing, he blessed them* (Genesis 49:28).”⁶⁸⁵

Rabbi Yudai fell prostrate, and slept. In his dream, they showed him *Do not let your mouth incriminate your flesh* (Ecclesiastes 5:5). “You have entered—seal it.” From that day on, he did not mention it. He said, “*How precious is your love, O God, and the children of humankind shelter in the shadow of Your wings* (Psalms 36:8), and their children should not speak of them—kindness of God in everything.”⁶⁸⁶

Rabbi Azariah said, “This is certainly so, as is written: *Do not touch my anointed ones* (1 Chronicles 16:22); and it is written: *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing*

and the spirit of all human flesh (Job 12:10). Concerning His concealed, hidden matters one may not speak at all, for of One who has the spirits and souls of the righteous in His hands—of hidden matters He has fashioned—one should not encroach.[687](#)

“A son is born to Naomi! (Ruth 4:17). What did she find? Lost object she had lost. From here we learn that a wandering soul, [inserted into] a tiny body, may not shine nor expand, displaying its power. This is as is written: *He will return to the days of his youth* (Job 33:25).[688](#)

“When this body was built, at once *and the dwellers, called for him—name* (Ruth 4:17). Indeed, for everyone of whom it is written *name*, as is written: *so that the name of the deceased may not disappear* (ibid., 10)—this is the soul. Here, *and השכנות (ha-shekheivot), the dwellers, called for him—name* (ibid., 17). Those *dwellers* called for that body where *name* was to be built. They called for that soul to be perfected within that body, for sometimes a soul is there in readiness; but sometimes it is not, on account of roaming and wandering in the world. In that case, they beckon it to this body.[689](#)

“When will is aroused, to where does the soul travel? To the graves of the patriarchs and the graves of pious ones. Ultimately, Boaz was aroused, and other souls coaxed it, until it arrived, consummated in the designated place.[690](#)

“But it is written: *If he sets his heart upon him, his spirit and soul he will gather to him* (Job 34:14)! Ah, this one is different, since he is a *closer redeemer* (Ruth 3:12)—he is of greater benefit, the redeemer named *closer*. The soul is poised [90a] to appear there, instantly upon being roused by him. But this one—since he is distant—must be summoned, on account of the thought’s distance. When thought is close, this is not necessary; rather [the soul] comes as a result of that arousal to be built there. Of this:

And they called (Ruth 4:17) that body *name*—for that soul to be built there.”[691](#)

Rabbi Simai said, “In many places, the blessed Holy One acted graciously with those souls who find no rest, preventing their demise. This excludes those of whom is written *I shall make that soul perish* (Leviticus 23:30). What happens to that one?”[692](#)

Rabbi Simai and Rabbi Yose dispute the matter. One says that the blessed Holy One sends it down to subterranean *Erets*, while the other says to *Avadon*. Whoever descends there is lost irrevocably, and of them is written *I shall make that soul perish*.”[693](#)

Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon said, “Happy is the one who strives to know about that world, the location of souls. Whoever is conscious of it and strives to learn about it—his wisdom is immeasurable!”

Rabbi Peraḥiah said, “As long as a body does not rest in its place, the same is true of its soul.” He endeavored constantly to comprehend the world of souls.[694](#)

One day he was passing through a field when he came across a corpse beneath a withered tree. He took a closer look and discerned that he was Jewish, with mitsvah-windings on his person, a book of legends next to him. He remarked, “This must have been a scholar.” He took care of the burial and covered him up; went off to town, prepared shrouds and a grave. He assembled people [for the funeral], wept over the man, tending to him, depleting all of his own resources.[695](#)

Once the corpse was concealed and buried, the soul entered the heavenly academy. They said to him, “There is nothing for you here now, in the place of the Sublime Rock! Go compensate the generosity of the one who completed you!”

One day, Rabbi Peraḥiah was at the Lydda city-gate, grieving over his stressful circumstances. A certain man

approached him and said to him, “Rabbi, would you like to go to such-and-such a place with me? I will give you silver vessels in return for engaging in Torah, together as one, on the way.”[696](#)

He replied, “Let’s go.”

He said to him, “Rabbi, what is the meaning of *For the living know that they will die, and the dead know nothing* (Ecclesiastes 9:5)?”[697](#)

[He replied,] “*The living*—the righteous. *The dead*—the wicked.”[698](#)

“By your life, Rabbi! Even in this world the wicked are aware of their impending agony, and they know about the esteem of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked!”

He responded, “If so, what is the meaning of *and the dead know nothing*?”

He explained, [90b] “Scripture is referring to this world. The righteous—called *living*—see and comprehend that they will die, and they are prepared to give account. For there is justice and there is a judge, as is said: *let the living take it to heart* (ibid. 7:2). But the wicked—called *dead*—know nothing of the affairs of that world. They are called *dead* since this world is not for the living—theirs is the World that is Coming.”[699](#)

“That is the world of souls and spirits, while this is the world of the body. That is the world where spirits of men dwell. They resemble their previous appearances, recognizing one another; they also know what lies in store for this world; and they strive to understand the glory of their Master there by means of the garment of that world.”[700](#)

When they arrived at a particular field, he said to him, “Let’s tarry here.” He groaned.[701](#)

He asked him, “Why do you groan so?”

He replied, “For a lost object—lost in this place.”

He assured him, “The blessed Holy One will summon it for you.”

They came across a cavern. The man said, “Rabbi, let us go in here; I know it—it’s familiar to me.” They entered, climbing down rungs until they arrived at an orchard. There they saw trees, all different from one another, and from all other trees of the world—and one tree, distinct from all other trees. They clambered up and heard the sound of teeming legions, intoning, “*Come, let us bow down and kneel; let us bend the knee before YHVH our Maker* (Psalms 95:6).”[702](#)

Rabbi Peraḥiah was astonished, exclaiming, “What is this?”

“Silence!” he replied.

Rabbi Peraḥiah recounted, “By God! When I went with him to the middle of that orchard, I saw two paths, with companies on this side and that. I asked him, ‘What is this?’

“He replied, ‘Here diverge the paths of souls: those going to the Garden of Eden, and those going to Hell. For one going to the Garden of Eden, these accompany him, completing him consummately. For one going to Hell, these bring him there for judgment.’”[703](#)

“We traversed the orchard and arrived at walls, towers, and gates. Upon our arrival at one gate—Eastern Gate—the man exclaimed, *Open for me the gates of righteousness!* (Psalms 118:19).”[704](#)

“They asked him, ‘On what grounds?’

“He replied, ‘I have come as an emissary of the Master of the Universe.’

“They all burst out, ‘Who permitted one born of woman to this place!’”[705](#)

“He answered them, ‘This is Rabbi Peraḥiah.’

“They asked, ‘Is this the one who rendered you whole in that world?’

“He replied, ‘Yes.’

“They opened the gates for him and instructed, ‘Strip him, for one is not permitted to enter here with a body from

that world.’ They stripped him at once, and clothed him in vapors of the inner garden.⁷⁰⁶

“Entering, he viewed the firmament stretched over the Garden, the firmament that had detached from the one arched over the rest of humanity. This firmament is bounded by a border of the full spectrum of colors. Four paned windows open within it onto the four directions of the world, with one in the middle.⁷⁰⁷

“One window, on the east side, has four openings embroidered within it, in the mystery of the four letters יהוה (YHVH), totaling twelve—three letters for each and every one. Three times a day, these panes and letters bond—all bonding with the Holy Name.⁷⁰⁸

“One archon appointed over that side, named Ye’azri’el. Four keys in his hand, to open four gates located above that firmament. None are aware of them, other than on New Moons and Sabbaths—for then souls combine with bodies in the grave, bowing down, prostrate in front of those gates before the Master of All. This is as is said: *From new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to bow down before Me* (Isaiah 66:23). *All—including those souls that dwell with the body, called all flesh.*⁷⁰⁹

“Another window, on the southern side. Six panes within it, [90c] for entry for those who recite *Shema* daily with devotion and intention.”⁷¹⁰

Rabbi Peraḥiah exclaimed, “By God! When I looked through that split window, an archon named Ana’el approached—the one appointed over the gate on the south side. He said to me, ‘Stand at your station and look upon this window, for permission to enter it or gaze upon it is granted only to those who recite *Shema* properly. As for each one who recites *Shema* properly, sixty angels enter before him, crowning him with holy diadems, proclaiming, “This is the crown of so-and-so, who recites *Shema* as prescribed!’”⁷¹¹

“I beseeched him, imploring, ‘Master, what is required for the proper recitation of *Shema*?’

“He replied, ‘O pious one! Supernal secret here! In the *Shema* are four paragraphs.[712](#)

“‘First paragraph, for unification, consists of two unifications in twelve words: six words in the upper unity, and six words in the other unity.[713](#)

“‘Second paragraph—*You shall love* (Deuteronomy 6:5)—forty-two words in the mystery of the Name of Forty-Two Letters.[714](#)

“‘Third paragraph—*It shall be, if you indeed heed* (ibid. 11:13)—right contained in left, and left contained in right. Mystery and secret of the holy chariot, until *You shall set* (ibid., 18). This is the paragraph that rules over all—mystery of seventy-two words in the mystery of seventy-two names of the holy chariot.[715](#)

“‘Fourth paragraph—*You shall set*—fifty words corresponding to fifty gates of Understanding.[716](#)

“‘Paragraph of tzitzit—comprised of them all. Totality of the paragraphs amounts to the numerical value of a man.’[717](#)

“In all other sections—whether treating commandments of the Torah or other places in the Torah—Male is alone and Female is alone. But here, site of unification for the blessed Holy One, Male and Female are gathered as one, ascending in one measure. Male is completed through Her, in contrast to all other places in the Torah. This is the eminence of supernal faith, to know that *YHVH is God* (Deuteronomy 4:35). Male made whole by Female, each completed in the other, Male built up through Female. This is consummate unification: no perfection without Male and Female as one.[718](#)

“Come and see: Whoever completes the unification as prescribed, directing intention to these paragraphs every day, becomes worthy of these panes and windows, becoming whole there. None will hold him back, as long as

he recites it properly, directing intention to these supernal mysteries.[719](#)

“He took hold of my right hand and said to me, ‘O pious one! Come see the glory of those who unite the holy name fittingly, reading *Shema* in this way.’

“I entered a chamber, and in that chamber were 365 chambers, like the days of the year. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rule in that palace—Primal Adam among them. I saw many bands of souls—garbed in embroidery of the Tree of Life and diverse colors of the celestial glory—entering the chamber. Yofi’el, supreme angel over all, esteemed angel of the Torah, was among them.[720](#)

“He opened, calling out, ‘Awake, holy ones of the world! Behold, your holy children are uniting the Holy Name, concentrating intention upon the paragraphs of *Shema*.’

“I observed Primal Adam overseeing them. When a person’s recitation of *Shema* enters, [90d] it soars first into this chamber. Primal Adam sniffs it, and if one letter of *Shema* is missing, he rejects it. In such a case, the person’s structure is defective—normally comprised of 248 [limbs] when supplemented by those words repeated by the prayer leader. But if he discerns that it is fitting, he accepts it—and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob take it from him, kissing it. Who has seen such delight! Who has glimpsed such excitement among all those righteous ones in the Garden of Eden who come with this joy![721](#)

“Then, when he reaches that world, who has witnessed his joy, when the patriarchs seat him in their midst twice daily! Every day, dew alights upon him from the head of the King.[722](#)

“Through that dew, they comprehend and eat the food eaten by celestial angels. They learn what is, what will be, and what will come to be, until the time when the blessed Holy One resurrects the bodies decaying in this world—the blessed Holy One establishing them in a perfected structure, fittingly.[723](#)

“In the window on the southern side was inscribed *ש* (*shin*): *ו* (*vav*) on this side, *ו* (*vav*) on another side, and *ו* (*vav*) on another side. I asked that man, inquiring, ‘What is the meaning of these letters?’⁷²⁴

“He replied, ‘I don’t know.’

“Eventually that angel came and explained to me, ‘O pious one! These letters are the markers of the paragraphs of *Shema*. Happy is the portion of the one who says them daily with intention of the heart!’⁷²⁵

“Another window on the northern side—placed within it are two panes, five letters flaming and sparkling in their midst. Two letters on this side and two letters on that, with one above, suspended above them, according to the mystery of the holy name that is called *אלהים* (*Elohim*).⁷²⁶

“In the window and panes dwell two archons (of that firmament): *Tsurtaq* and *Gazri’el*, appointed over that unopened side.⁷²⁷

“One chamber there, embroidered with numerous colors, countless designs. Abiding there are all those who sanctify the name of their Master daily with an utterance. They bless Him, chanting, ‘Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever!’—sanctifying him afterward with the threefold sanctification.⁷²⁸

“That chamber is called Threefold, as is said: *Temple of YHVH, Temple of YHVH, Temple of YHVH* (Jeremiah 7:4)—that chamber is Threefold. I asked him, ‘What is this?’⁷²⁹

“The man replied, ‘This is for the ones who refrain—every day—from eating over their blood, since a person’s soul in that world departs from him each and every night. In the morning it is restored to him, resting in his nose, neither entering nor settling in his viscera until he blesses the blessed Holy One and prays over his blood. Then it settles in its place. Of this is written *Desist from a human, whose breath is in his nostrils* (Isaiah 2:22).⁷³⁰

“‘What is the meaning of *whose breath is in his nostrils*? In the morning the soul descends, and the blessed

Holy One says to her, “Go, dwell within his nostrils, on condition that he utters his prayers. If he blesses fittingly—dwell within him.” But if not—she flies off, soaring upward, and this person ends up as one deficient in holiness of soul. Since his soul is lacking, *of what account is he?* (ibid.). He is worth nothing, as if he had never existed.⁷³¹

“Consequently, it is forbidden to bless one’s fellow before blessing one’s Master at the beginning of prayer. [91a] The cantor chants, “Bless *YHVH*, who is blessed” and he responds, “Blessed be *YHVH* who is blessed forever and ever.” Once he has blessed his Master, prayer begins from that point, and the *qedushot* can dwell. Happy are those who bless and sanctify their Master every day with devotion of the heart!’⁷³²

“It was then that I learned that one is not permitted to pray with a quorum of ten until they have first praised the blessed Holy One. Once they have praised him, then they can offer their prayers.⁷³³

“The man said, ‘Rabbi, that blessing serves only to configure praise for our Master—who returns our souls, designated with five names. The blessing has five words—[ועד] ברוך יהוה המבורך לעולם [barukh *YHVH* ha-mvorakh [*le-olam va’ed*]], “Blessed be *YHVH*, who is blessed [forever and ever].” Upon this blessing, prayer dwells; and the *qedushah* dwells only upon blessing, invigorating our Master in all. This blessing and the *qedushah*—only with ten.’⁷³⁴

“I asked him, ‘Why is this chamber on the northern side?’

“He replied, ‘In this chamber, all wicked dimensions are suppressed—[91b] prevented from ruling in this world.’⁷³⁵

“This window is called Window of Brilliance; and none are permitted to gaze upon it besides those who dwell there. All of them look and gaze—they are able to see. All of them go about in garments resembling their forms from this world.’⁷³⁶

“I saw there many of the companions, but I was not permitted to approach them. They all recognized each other, eating the meals of powerful celestials.⁷³⁷

“This firmament journeys daily to the four sides of the world; and as it travels, it sprinkles dew of life into the garden. Then all the righteous ones there come to bathe in that dew, shining like the radiance of the sky. Then they enter the presence of the messiah, the patriarchs, and Primal Adam; but I was not privy to those encounters.

“The window on the western side is distinct from all other windows in its colors and lights. It is bounded by four letters of the holy name that shine and sparkle upon that window, sometimes revealed, sometimes concealed.

“He showed me, in one place, bands of righteous ones on rungs above them all...⁷³⁸

[46d]⁷³⁹ “Come and see: When they were created, they were garbed in a holy, supernal form of luminosity in the Upper Garden of Eden, and in another holy form in the Lower Garden of Eden. They were also given a supernal heavenly inheritance and a celestial portion. After this has been given to them, an angel says to them, ‘Time has come for you to depart—the blessed Holy One has said that you must leave.’⁷⁴⁰

“Astonished, they pleaded, ‘Whereto?’

“Two angels say to them, ‘The blessed Holy One said, *“Go you forth from your land, from your birthplace, from the house of your father, to a land that I will show you”* (Genesis 12:1).’” *From your land*—Lower Garden of Eden. *From the house of your father*—Upper Garden of Eden. *To a land that I will show you*—a dark, base land.

“They show him the entire Garden of Eden, and they show him palaces and houses, supernal chambers—numerous, beautiful palaces, multifarious houses, diverse chambers, abundant rungs—the portion that each and every righteous person receives.⁷⁴¹

“He says, ‘What are these palaces?’

“Two angels reply, ‘Forty-two palaces, embroidered from numerous splendid colors. Whoever recites the *Shema* with the Name of Forty-Two Names fittingly, inherits them.’[742](#)

“They bring him into seventy rungs—within them seventy-two windows, embroidered from copious colors. He asks, ‘For whom are these?’

“They reply, ‘Whoever recites *Shema* with the Name of Seventy-Two Words fittingly, inherits this.’[743](#)

“They bring him farther, showing him fifty more dwellings, embroidered from multifarious colors. He inquires, ‘For whom are these?’

“They reply, ‘Whoever recites *Shema* with the Name of Fifty Words fittingly, inherits this.’[744](#)

“They take him farther and show him seventy-two other dwellings, embroidered with profuse colors. He asks, ‘For whom are these?’

They reply, “For each person who recites *Shema* with the Name of Seventy-Two Words of the fourth section.”[745](#)

“He asks them, ‘How can I earn this?’[746](#)

“They replied, ‘*By painful toil will you eat of it* (Genesis 3:17).’

“He asks them, ‘And what is the *painful toil*?’

“They replied, ‘*We will do and we will listen* (Exodus 24:7)—doing through virtuous actions, listening through the Torah.’[747](#)

“Then they pluck him out of the Garden of Eden, traveling with him to Hell, a pillar of cloud above his head accompanying him by day, a pillar of fire by night. They say to him, ‘Come and see: This place is darkness, by day and by night.’ They show him all the compartments of Hell, *the flame of the whirling sword* (Genesis 3:24), and they show him *the dogs that are ravenous for souls—insatiable* (Isaiah 56:11).[748](#)

“He asks them, ‘What are these?’

“They respond, ‘Forty-two chambers of gloom. Countless men here with chains round their necks, hands and feet bound. And they wail, “Woe, woe! Woe unto us, for we followed the vanities of this world and did not go to the synagogues. Nor did we recite the Name of Forty-Two Names, for we had not learned it. Woe unto us! Woe unto our souls!” Chief Warden of prisoners is appointed over them.’[749](#)

“They bring him in farther, showing him seventy-two tenebrous windows, where the chains around the necks [of the wicked] are affixed. They bring him in farther and show him fifty gates, all of them gashed, with the legs of sinners inserted into the gaps. They shriek, crying, ‘Woe to our legs that tramped after the vanities of the world and did not lead us to the synagogue! Nor did we learn the Name of Fifty Words in the *Shema!*’[750](#)

“They take him farther to seventy-two compartments, where the hands [of the wicked] are bound to chinks in house-doorposts. They howl, “Woe unto us! Woe unto our hands that did not tie tefillin to head and hands!”[751](#)

“They take him farther, showing him all the compartments of Hell, and they proclaim, ‘All humanity shall enter here, even those who are exempt.’ This is as is written: *Small and great alike are there, and the slave is free of his master* (Job 3:19). [None is free,] other than one who knows the name of the blessed Holy One fittingly, as is written: *I will raise him high, for he knows My name. He calls Me, and I answer him* (Psalms 91:14-15).[752](#) [47a]

“Come and see: Whoever performs good deeds (positive commandments), each and every commandment that he performed soars upward and stands before the blessed Holy One. It declares, ‘I am from so-and-so, who fashioned me!’ The blessed Holy One bestows an angel upon him, to assist him in the gloomiest part of Hell; it is called Night, and is located there.[753](#)

“For each word of Torah that he heard—each and every word—the blessed Holy One grants him an angel to assist him, one for each and every word. Of this: *Let not this book of Torah depart from your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will succeed* (Joshua 1:8). And if you do this that the blessed Holy One has commanded you, occupying yourself with Torah day and night, and carefully acting upon everything written in it, you need not fear this place. This is as is written: *I charge you: be strong and resolute; do not be terrified or dismayed...* (ibid., 9). The blessed Holy One will be with you when you are delving in Torah day and night, and the blessed Holy One will be with you when you carefully perform all that is written in it. The blessed Holy One will be with you when you leave the world and enter this place.^{[754](#)}

“But if you do not occupy yourself with Torah, and do not dedicate yourself and perform the Torah’s commandments, the blessed Holy One will abandon you, and He will not command His angels for you, to guard you in all your ways. This is as is written: *If you walk with Me contrarily... I Myself will walk with you contrarily* (Leviticus 26:21, 24).^{[755](#)}

“After he was shown all this, and told all about it, one of the two angels—Good Impulse—says to him, ‘The blessed Holy One said to me that I should go with you, Evil Impulse and I. Swear to me that you will fulfill the entire Torah—to learn, to teach, to observe, and to perform.’ He swears to him. Afterward he says, *Go you forth, from your land, from your birthplace* (Genesis 12:1), to a lowly body, as I have instructed you.^{[756](#)}

“At the point that he emerges from his mother’s womb, an angel seizes him by the neck—causing him to forget the Torah—and marks him on the mouth with his finger: ‘Do not forget the oath that you have sworn to me.’^{[757](#)}

“And if a person performs and fulfills the oath, he is given all that they had shown him, and if he earns more, they give him more. This is as we have learned: ‘Learn much Torah and you will be given great reward.’⁷⁵⁸

“But if not, come and see: Within man is יהוה (YHVH). YH—World that is Coming; VH—this world. YH—garbed in celestial form from supernal Garden of Eden. VH—garbed in a form from lower Eden. Arrayed according to this paradigm: ך (Y)—Elimelech; ה (H)—Naomi; ן (V)—Mahlon; ה (H)—Ruth.⁷⁵⁹

“If this man follows righteous paths and fulfills the oath that he swore, he is given all the benefits that he was shown and everything that he accrued in that world. But if not, what does the holy name say? ‘*Naked I issued from my mother’s womb, and naked will I return there* (Job 1:21).’ What does this mean? *Naked* of the holy name YHVH, as we have said.⁷⁶⁰

“Come and see: When a person comes into the world, the blessed Holy One places His name within him. Another name comes from a Jewish demon, ‘Mundane,’ and another name, ‘Darkness.’ This is as is written: *See, I have set before you life and good and death and evil* (Deuteronomy 30:15). *Life*—alluding to the blessed Holy One’s name YHVH. *And Good*—alluding to the Jewish demon who gave him riches in this world. *And Death and Evil*—alluding to the two wicked, impure prosecutors from the side of Samael and Serpent, archons of Ishmael and Esau.⁷⁶¹

“If one fulfills the oath that he had sworn, good; but if he does not, *Yod* and *Vav* abandon him, leaving *He* and *He*. Then, what does Upper *He* proclaim? *Turn back, turn back from your evil ways* (Ezekiel 33:11)—these are the wicked to whom we referred.⁷⁶²

“If they repent, good. If not, upper *He* flies off with *Vav* and *Yod*, becoming *HVY*. And what does She say? *הוי (HVY), Alas, sinful nation...* (Isaiah 1:4). If they repent, since Lower *He* remains, good. But if not, *הויה (HVYH)* is produced.

This is as is written: [47b] *He has withdrawn His right hand in the face of the enemy* (Lamentations 2:3)—the wicked became united against them.⁷⁶³

“Then the wicked become masters over them and impurity ascends—from the side of the archon of Esau over Elimelech and Naomi, and by the archon of Ishmael over Mahlon and Ruth. Then they cry, *O YHVH our God! Lords other than You possessed us* (Isaiah 26:13).

“At that moment, *there was a famine in the land* (Ruth 1:1). *The land—body*. At that point, if a person delves in Torah, good. If not, Samael arrives riding on a serpent toward Elimelech. *He saw that he could not prevail against him, and he touched the socket of his thigh* (Genesis 32:26)—he came to [Elimelech’s] wife Naomi to turn her and induce her to sin, to become vile.⁷⁶⁴

“If one avoids her, good, as Job said, *‘You talk as one of the churlish women would talk. Shall we accept only good from God, and evil we shall not accept?’* (Job 2:10). The advice given to you by the Impure One we shall not follow; and if sinful urging arises, as she exhorted, leading one to steal or perform any transgression, afterward they will hang him from a tree.’ This is as is written: *and then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died* (Ruth 1:5), leaving ה (he) and ה (he) as widows.⁷⁶⁵

“*Naomi said* (ibid., 8). What did she say? ‘וַיֹּאמֶר (vay, vay, vah), Woe, woe, ahh!’ But nonetheless, Naomi says, *‘Turn back, my daughters* (ibid., 11). Turn back, turn back in repentance. *Have I any more sons in my womb who might be husbands for you?* (ibid.)’—’ (yod) and ו (vav) having departed. Orpah, from the side of impurity, turned back to her people and her gods. But Ruth cleaved to Naomi, as is written: *wherever you go, I will go* (ibid., 16).⁷⁶⁶

“If they turn back in repentance, Elimelech will appear and Mahlon will appear; and if they all turn back, the holy, supernal name appears. But if not, they will die. This is as is written: *She left from the place where she had been*

living, accompanied by her two daughters (ibid., 7)—they leave the body.⁷⁶⁷

“Then she proceeds to the sentinels of the Garden of Eden, to enter there, but they shove her out, and she wanders in the place of darkness. *The whole city hummed with excitement because of her. [The women] asked, ‘Could this be Naomi?’* (ibid., 19). Then she said, *‘I went away full and YHVH brought me back empty* (ibid., 21)—[empty of] the holy name that was within me. This is as is written: *YHVH testified against me* (ibid.)—the holy name YHVH testifies against me regarding all the sins I have committed. At once the serpent comes and takes her as a maidservant. Then she says, *How has the faithful city become a harlot? She who was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her—but now murderers!* (Isaiah 1:21).’⁷⁶⁸

“ו (v) and י (y) remained poor and downtrodden, *poor and riding on an ass* (Zechariah 9:9). Of the downtrodden it is said: *Happy is one who considers the downtrodden; on the day of evil YHVH will deliver him* (Psalms 41:2). If he leaves a son who follows in the path of the blessed Holy One and is occupied with Torah, He will save him from evil, and they will be scattered to the four corners of the earth.⁷⁶⁹

“It is written: *Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham* (Isaiah 29:22). Jacob was not yet in the world, and yet you say *who redeemed Abraham!*⁷⁷⁰

“Ah, but come and see: Before they hurled Abraham into the blazing furnace, he had been previously arraigned on high. The blessed Holy One ordered, ‘My throne! Go rescue Abraham from the Chaldean furnace, for he had acted thus for my honor!’ The angels replied, ‘But Master of the Universe, a man will issue from him, Ishmael, who shall act toward them as he will.’⁷⁷¹

“He said to them, ‘Isaac, too, will issue from him, and he will stretch out his neck upon the altar.’⁷⁷²

“They replied, ‘But Esau, who will issue from him, will destroy the Temple!’⁷⁷³

“He said, ‘Ah, but Jacob will issue from him, and he is the perfect throne.’⁷⁷⁴

“They replied, ‘Well, certainly on the merit of Jacob he should be saved.’ This is as is written: *Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham.*⁷⁷⁵

“When they bound Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to cast them into the blazing, fiery furnace, Hananiah opened, saying, ‘*YHVH is with me, I will not fear. What can a man do to me? YHVH is with me among my helpers, and I will see the defeat of my enemies (Psalms 118:6-7).*’⁷⁷⁶

“Mishael opened, saying, ‘*Thus says YHVH [47c] to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham: No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale. For when he sees his children, the work of My hands...* (Isaiah 29:22-23). Then he was judged above.’⁷⁷⁷

“The blessed Holy One said, ‘*This one will say, “I am YHVH’s” (ibid. 44:5).*’ This refers to Hananiah, who said, *YHVH is with me among my helpers, and I will see the defeat of my enemies (Psalms 118:7). Another will call himself by the name of Jacob (Isaiah 44:5)*—this is Mishael, who said, *Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob...* (Isaiah 29:22). *And adopt the name of Israel (ibid. 44:5)*—this is Azariah, who said, ‘*Hear, O Israel...* (Deuteronomy 6:4).⁷⁷⁸

“Come and see: When Mishael said, ‘*Thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham,*’ they mocked him. The blessed Holy One said, ‘My throne! Their mockery—rescue these upon that rung, just as you rescued Abraham: *No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale (Isaiah 29:22).* At once, all those who had bound the others were slain by fire-flash.⁷⁷⁹

“Why wasn’t Daniel with them? He said to himself, ‘Look, they have turned me into an idol, and the king has said that my name was like that of his god.’ This is as is

written: *whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god* (Daniel 4:5). It is also written *The graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire* (Deuteronomy 7:25). So he hid from them.⁷⁸⁰

“Is it possible for someone to escape the king’s ruling? The explanation is that angels concealed him.

“What inspired Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to allow themselves to be cast into the fire? Well, come and see: One day, David had gone down to luxuriate by the river, and he said, ‘*Guard my life, for I am pious* (Psalms 86:2).’⁷⁸¹

“They asked him, ‘You, pious?!’⁷⁸²

“He replied, ‘Am I not pious? For my hands are soiled by blood, fetus, and placenta in order to deem the pure, pure; and the impure, impure. And I rise joyously at the three watches, as is said: *At midnight I rise to praise you* (ibid. 119:62). I sleep like a horse, the duration of a single breath, and I rise at midnight to occupy myself with Torah. At the third watch, I play music with the angels for the blessed Holy One, as is written: *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy* (Job 38:7).’ Who are they? Holy angels who chant with me at night, as is written: *in the night His song is with me* (Psalms 42:9).⁷⁸³

“The frogs boasted, ‘We surpassed you, for the sake of the blessed Holy One!’

“David replied, ‘And how have you bested me?’

They responded, ‘We incinerated ourselves in the blaze of the Egyptian ovens!’⁷⁸⁴

“When Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were bound, they thought to themselves, ‘Let us act like the frogs.’⁷⁸⁵

“We have learned in a *baraita*: The night has three watches; and during each and every watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion. Come and see: the three watches consist of twelve hours, divided into four for each watch.

Over each and every watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion, lamenting ‘Woe, I have destroyed My House...!’⁷⁸⁶

“Come and see: Just as there are watches in the heavens, so are there watches on earth. How are they marked? The second watch consists of dogs howling, as is written: *The leech has two daughters—‘Give!’ and ‘Give!’* (Proverbs 30:15). *The dogs are greedy; they never know satiety* (Isaiah 56:11).⁷⁸⁷

“During the first watch, the donkey brays, as is written: *Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together* (Deuteronomy 22:10). It was in this manner that Balaam abused his donkey, and he would prophesy through his ‘wife.’ This is as is written: *There did not arise again in Israel a prophet like Moses* (Deuteronomy 34:10)—but among the nations of the world, one arose.⁷⁸⁸

“You would mention the vilest of the vile in the same breath as the purest! Well, the intent is Moses in purity, and Balaam in impurity. Of this one, he would have intercourse with his ass.⁷⁸⁹

*“If a bird’s nest happens to be before you... (Deuteronomy 22:6). Come and see: nest alludes to body. On the way (ibid.)—pursuing virtuous ways. In any tree (ibid.) [47d]—alluding to Torah, as is said: A tree of life is she to those who grasp her (Proverbs 3:18). Or on the land (Deuteronomy 22:6)—alluding to Israel, called Land, who are taught Torah. Fledglings (ibid.)—youths delving in Torah. Or eggs (ibid.)—young ones learning alef beit, the alphabet.*⁷⁹⁰

*“The mother crouching (ibid.)—mother always refers to Torah, as is written: Do not forsake your mother’s teaching (Proverbs 1:8). If you want to take the offspring, surely send off the mother (Deuteronomy 22:7), and afterward the offspring you may take for yourself... and you will prolong your days (ibid.).*⁷⁹¹

“Alternatively, כִּי יִקְרָא (ki yiqqare), *If one proceeds contrarily* (ibid., 6)—this is as is said: *If you walk with Me קְרִי (qeri), contrarily... I Myself will walk with you contrarily* (Leviticus 26:21, 24). *I will go on smiting you sevenfold for your sins* (ibid., 21). What is the meaning of seven? *Shekhinah*. *On the way*—alluding to the burial of Rachel, for she stands at the crossroads. He sends Her good tidings and He sends Her comfort, but She refuses to be consoled, as is written: *refusing to be comforted* (Jeremiah 31:15). Since they had walked with Him contrarily, He exiled them; and *Shekhinah* went into exile along with them.⁷⁹²

“*In any tree*—alluding to Jericho. *Or on the land*—Jerusalem. *Fledglings*—supernal angels; *or eggs*—lower angels; large faces and small faces.⁷⁹³

“*The mother crouching over the fledglings or over the eggs. You shall not take the mother together with the offspring. Send off the mother*—this is as is written: *For your crimes, your mother was sent away* (Isaiah 50:1). *The offspring you may take for yourself, so that it will benefit you, and you will prolong your days*—for She roams and wanders from Her fledgling and from Her nest. אֲרִיכוֹ דְאֲנָפִין (Arikhu de-anpin), Lengthened faces—celestial six days, with compassion for the world. This is as is written: *YHVH, YHVH!...* אֲרֵךְ אַפַּיִם (erekh appayim), *long faces* (Exodus 34:6). Fury אֲרִיךְ (arikh), is distanced, from the faces that had withdrawn on account of Israel’s sins. This is as is written: *You will see My back, but My face will not be seen* (Exodus 33:23).⁷⁹⁴

“Another teaching. *My love has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies* (Song of Songs 6:2). Come and see: All songs are holy, but Song of Songs is holy of holies. Assembly of Israel exalts the blessed Holy One, singing, *My lover*, as is written: *My lover is radiant and ruddy* (Song of Songs 5:10).⁷⁹⁵

“Come and see: When the night is split, a single flame is aroused and flares beneath the wings of the rooster, and he crows. At that moment, the blessed Holy One descends to His garden—upper Garden of Eden, belonging to the blessed Holy One. Then the celestial rooster is aroused and crows, ‘Arise, all those with slumber in their sockets! The time has come for the doe to bond with her mate!’⁷⁹⁶

“Happy are all those who rise at midnight to delve in Torah, for the blessed Holy One and all the righteous listen to his voice. This is as is written: *You who dwell in the gardens, companions listen for your voice; let me hear!* (Song of Songs 8:13). At that moment, a single filament of love pours down upon one who studies Torah.⁷⁹⁷

“Then, *He has gone down to his garden*. To whom does He descend? *To the beds of spices*. And who are the *beds of spices*? This is as is written: *choice spices* (Exodus 30:23). Who are they? The righteous. *To graze in the gardens*—in the supernal Garden of Eden and lower Garden of Eden, called This World and World that is Coming.⁷⁹⁸

“*To gather roses*—who are these *roses*? The righteous who delve in Torah, lips astir with Torah. This is as is written: שושנים (*shoshanim*), *roses*; do not read שושנים (*shoshanim*), [*lips like*] *roses*, but rather ששונים (*she-shonim*), [*lips*] *reciting*, for even in the grave they are astir with Torah.”⁷⁹⁹

He said to him, “Does He indeed cause the untimely deaths of those who are occupied with Torah? They are righteous ones, who have not sinned!”⁸⁰⁰

“Come and see: When Jeroboam was a child, he was righteous without sin. The blessed Holy One said to the Angel of Death, ‘Go fetch Jeroboam son of Nebat.’⁸⁰¹

“At once the ministering angels protested, *YHVH, our Lord, how majestic* [48a] *is Your Name throughout the earth* (Psalms 8:2). Through Your name he has attained his majesty, and he is righteous. Through his merit, divine overflow proceeds to us!’

“He said to them, ‘If it is your will that I should leave him be, I’ll leave him be.’

“Later he took a wayward turn, producing two golden calves, sinning and inducing Israel to sin. The blessed Holy One said to them, ‘All the divine overflow that he furnished for you has turned to slime! You would have been better off had you brought him here when he was righteous! Then Metatron would have taught him Torah.’[802](#)

“At that point they all opened, chanting: *Just are you, YHVH; and upright are Your laws* (Psalms 119:137). Of this, the blessed Holy One *has gone down to his garden to gather roses.*”[803](#)

מדרש הנעלם על איכה

Midrash ha-Ne'lam al Eikhah

MIDRASH HA-NE'LAM ON LAMENTATIONS

The residents of Babylon¹ sent a missive to the residents of the Holy Land: “Eulogizing the destruction of the House of our God befits us since we have been scattered among the nations, like idol-worshippers. We should be the ones to begin the lament, and to expound the alphabetic acrostic sent by the Master of the Universe, bemoaning the destruction of His House.”²

The residents of the land of Israel sent a missive in reply: “It befits you to be scattered among the nations and to be outside the Holy Land. It befits you to weep for yourselves, for the very fiber of your being, for you abandoned light for darkness, like a slave leaving the house of his master. As for us, we should be the ones to weep and lament. To us the blessed Holy One sent a book of lamentations, for we are the children of *Matronita*, and we are the members of Her household. We know the glory of the Master of the Universe, thus it befits us to weep and interpret those acrostics. We are orphans, without Father or Mother! We cast our eyes upon the walls of our Mother’s house, but it is destroyed, and we can’t find Her—She who used to suckle us from Her soothing bosom, every day in those ancient days. She used to console us and speak to our hearts, like a mother to her son, as is said: *Like a man comforted by his mother...* (Isaiah 66:13).³

“Now, our eyes dart about in every direction. The site of our Mother’s dwelling is in upheaval—destroyed. O, let

us bang our heads against the walls of Her house and Her dwelling. Who will comfort us? Who will speak to our hearts and protect us before the King?⁴

“When we used to sin before our Father and the lash would shoot up to strike us, She would stand in front of us and receive the flogging from the King, protecting us. This is as is said: *But he was crushed for our sins, wounded for our iniquities* (Isaiah 53:5). But now, we have no Mother! Woe unto us! Woe unto you, afterward! It befits us to weep, it befits us to wail. It befits us to explain these words of bitterness, to teach those experts in [91b] ululation the language of lamentation.⁵

“Every day we approach Mother’s bed, but we do not find Her there. We ask after Her—no one heeds us. We ask after Her bed—overturned. We ask after Her throne—collapsed. We ask Her palaces—they swear they know nothing of Her whereabouts. We ask the dust—no footprints there.⁶

“We ask the rooftop, and the rooftop replies that She had been sitting there weeping and wailing. But She had trudged on, sobbing, shrieking grievously for us from rooftop to rooftop. This is as is written: *What has happened to you now, that you have gone, all of you, up on the roofs?* (Isaiah 22:1). We ask of the pathways and boulevards, and they all reply that they heard an agonizing sound of weeping, weeping for Her children, but they know not where She disappeared.⁷

“It befits us to weep, it befits us to mourn. O, let us kiss the dust of Her feet! O, let us kiss Her dwelling place! O, let us kiss the walls of Her palace, sobbing bitterly! We shall be the ones who begin the wailing—we see this every day! O, let us weep constantly, and never forget the bitterness of our tears!”⁸

They opened, saying, “אֵיכָה (Eikhah), *Alas! She sits alone, the city once full of people* (Lamentations 1:1). It is written *For*

*it was a day of din and tumult and confusion to אדני יהוה (Adonai YHVH), My Lord God, of Hosts in the Valley of Vision, מקרקר קיר (meqarqar qir), of battering down the wall, and of crying to the mountain (Isaiah 22:5). For it was a day—the blessed Holy One has one Day, His most beloved, embracing all other days. Six days enveloped within it, and it is the sum of them all. But with the surge of transgression, He withdrew upward to the realm of the World of Life.*⁹

“Then from beneath the skirts of the dwelling arose Day of Bitterness, Day of Weeping, Day of Anguish—Day called *tumult and confusion*. He penetrated the dwelling, destroying and defiling it. Master of the dwelling departed, fleeing, banished from His abode to a mountain outside—a demolished mountain—while the dwelling was sacked and crushed.¹⁰

“Afterward, that celestial Day that had departed alighted, inquiring after His dwelling, but it was ruined. He entered, seeking the Master of the dwelling, *Matronita*, love of His soul; but She had been expelled, Her entire building ravaged. Then He began to bellow, roar after roar, like the squawking [91c] of a rooster after his mate. This is as is written: מקרקר (meqarqar), *squawking*, yawping like a rooster. קיר (Qir)—Sovereign.¹¹

“ושוע (Ve-sho’a), *And crying, to the mountain* (ibid.)—He calls out, howling toward the mountain where *Matronita* had fled. He calls out, wailing, baying mournfully, איכה (Eikhah), *Where?* (Lamentations 1:1). Where is the love of my soul? Where is my turtledove, my perfect one? Where is my only one, who unites with Me in oneness? Where is She who raises up כה (k h), twenty-five, letters of unification daily, and is therefore named כה (Koh)? My sister, my daughter, my mother—where have You gone? In which direction did You turn?¹²

“We, who hear this wailing of our Master every day, we should be the ones to weep! We should be the ones to

eulogize! We should be the ones to open *How does she sit alone...* (Lamentations 1:1)!”

Rabbi Levitas the visionary opened, “*Enmity I will set between you and the woman, between your seed and hers* (Genesis 3:15)—abundant hatred from the day that the world was created, on account of the incitement of the serpent. From the moment it was cursed, driven out from the gate of the King, it lies in ambush constantly amid the fences in the world, amid those fences of the Torah, biting all who trample those fences underfoot. Woe to one who is caught! Woe to one who is bitten! Woe for the persistence of the vile enmity, for the snake’s wicked hatred for Her, the one called *woman of valor* (Proverbs 31:10). Malevolent animus it nursed for Her from the day the world was created until it ravaged Her, pulverizing Her until She lay in the dust.¹³

“This is as is written: אִיכָה יָשְׁבָה בְּדַד הָעִיר רַבְּתֵי עַם הָיְתָה (Eikhah yashevah vadad ha-ir rabbati am haytah), *How does she sit alone, the city once full of people has become...* (Lamentations 1:1). Look at the first letters of each and every word, and you will discover the heinous malevolence—fostered and sustained—leading to the destruction of the Temple. אִיבָה רָעָה (Eivah ra’ah), *Malign hatred—in the first letters—for that woman of valor, to sack the Temple, causing Her to lie in the dust.* This is as is written: הָיְתָה לְמַסּ כְּאַלְמָנָה רַבְּתֵי בְּגוֹיִם שָׂרָתִי בַּמְּדִינוֹת (ke-almanah rabbati va-goyim sarati bamedinot haytah la-mas), *like a widow; the greatest among nations, noblest among states, has become a vassal* (ibid.). First letters in inverse order read לָהּ בְּשִׁבְרֶךָ (lah be-shivrekh), ‘To Her in Your brokenness.’ Smashed Temple, ruined Assembly of Israel—venal hatred bonded to ‘Your brokenness.’ אִיכָה (Eikhah), *Alas—for She has been fused to that wicked enmity, namely the serpent.*¹⁴

“Bitter sound of weeping in the heavens. These cry out אִיכָה (eikhah), *How*, and on that side they call אִיבָה (eivah),

enmity. This is as is written: *And enmity I will set between you and the woman*, between this side and that side, manifest in the destruction of the Temple. All this inscribed in the first verse to show how that wicked *Eivah* endured, cleaving to *Koh* from the day the world was created.”¹⁵

Alas! She sits alone. Rabbi Harkinas opened, saying, “*He drove out the man and stationed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life* (Genesis 3:24). *He drove out*—this is Assembly of Israel at the destruction of the Temple, banished through divorce, forcibly sent away from the King’s throne, which had collapsed. *He drove out* אַח (Et)—Throne of the King. Woe, that She was banished! Woe that She collapsed!”¹⁶

“הָאָדָם (Ha-Adam), *The man*—He who rules upon the Throne, of whom is written *And upon the image of a throne, an image like the appearance of אָדָם (adam), a man, upon it above* (Ezekiel 1:26). Throne fell, and everything fell.”¹⁷

“וַיִּשְׁכֵּן (Va-yashken), *And He stationed* (Genesis 3:24)—He who banished this one stationed and established a different post, inverted. When the Temple was destroyed, Supernal Glory flew upward, diminishing the image from its prior state. He extricated and separated Himself from Throne. She settled, as it were, in the Garden of Eden with cherubim below, separated [91d] from Supernal Glory. He posted *flame of the whirling sword* in place of the Master, to guard and be irrigated by the path flowing from Tree of Life.”¹⁸

“King Solomon screamed, saying, *At three things the earth trembles... a slave becoming a king... and a slave-girl supplanting her mistress* (Proverbs 30:21-23)—Slave-girl inside, Mistress outside. *Alone* (Lamentations 1:1)—what is the meaning of *alone*? *Alone shall he sit; outside the camp is his dwelling* (Leviticus 13:46).”¹⁹

Alas! She sits alone
(Lamentations 1:1).

him in the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it (Genesis 2:15). How did He take him? Rabbi Ḥaninai said, “He took him with words, as is written: *Take Aaron* (Leviticus 8:2).” The rabbis said, “He took him with the wind, as is said: *See here, YHVH is about to take your master from over you* (2 Kings 2:5).”²⁰

And placed him in the Garden of Eden—so that he would have the repose to know and understand wisdom and Torah. For Rabbi Ḥaninai said, “The blessed Holy One taught Torah to Primal Adam, as is said: *Then He saw it and recounted it; He stabilized it and probed it, too* (Job 28:27). And afterward it says, *He said to Adam...* (ibid., 28).²¹

“The ministering angels were lauding him until Samael viewed it from the heavens and became jealous of him. He swooped down from the heavens in the shadow form of a serpent—only the shadow of a serpent was visible, while he was the force and power above it.²²

“The serpent sidled up to the woman, for her mind is more easily swayed than a man’s. From here we learn that a woman is only beguiled by another female. *He said to the woman, אַף (af), Wrath, God said* (Genesis 3:1), starting immediately with *wrath*. From here we learn that one can deduce a person’s identity from one’s opening words. The serpent began with *af*, signaling its identity.²³

He adopted this sign to see if she would be receptive or not. He lured her with words until she opened with the letter מ (mem), saying מִכֹּל (mi-kol), *from every, tree of the Garden we may surely eat* (ibid., 2). Immediately, the serpent grabbed the letter, affixing it to his left arm. Then

Rabbi Ḥaninai and the rabbis opened the verse concerning Primal Adam: *YHVH Elohim took the human and placed*

he waited for her to utter ו (vav) and ת (tav) so that מות (mavet), death, would be prepared for them.²⁴

“He continued to tempt her until ותרא האשה (va-teire ha-ishah), and the woman saw (ibid., 6), with a protracted, powerful cantillation note. This teaches that the letters ו (vav) and ת (tav) flew off, avoiding a bond with the letter מ (mem). Meanwhile, מ rose and fell, evading a bond with them.²⁵

“Ultimately she was seduced, delivering ו (vav) and ת (tav) four times. They surrounded מ (mem) on four sides, as is written: ותקח (va-tiqqah), and she took, of its fruit, ותאכל (va-tokhal), and ate, ותתן (va-titten), and gave, as well to her husband... ותפקחנה (va-tippaqahnah), and [the eyes of the two] were opened (ibid., 6-7)—four repetitions of ו and ת. This demonstrates how they enclosed the letter מ on four sides, with מ in the middle. Death on all sides, as is written: For מות (mavet), death, has climbed through our windows (Jeremiah 9:20). This is Samael, one of the celestial windows. Of this: What man alive will never see death? (Psalms 89:49).²⁶

“At once he ruled over her, infusing her with slime. The blessed Holy One descended to observe, and straightaway the man and his wife hid (Genesis 3:8).²⁷

“Come and see: before they sinned, the Shekhinah was a crown upon their heads. On their account, She dwelt upon the entire world. Once they sinned, Her strength was sapped, as it were, and She vanished. Then the blessed Holy One began to lament, saying, ‘איכה (Eikhah), Alas (ibid., 9), what shall become of Her? Her sovereignty has been seized!’²⁸

“Similarly, here with the destruction of the Temple, Her rule was seized and the blessed Holy One began to eulogize, ‘Alas (Lamentations 1:1), what shall become of Her?’ [92a]

Alas! (Lamentations 1:1)

Rabbi Pinhas opened,
“*Thus says YHVH: A voice*

is heard on a height—wailing, bitter weeping... (Jeremiah 31:15). When the Temple was destroyed and set ablaze, a voice went forth. The voice aroused at the graves of the ancient patriarchs, intoning, ‘Ancient fathers! You who are asleep, slumbering, you are unaware of the catastrophe in the world! Your children that you reared with difficulty, ushering them into great faith in the blessed Holy One, have died—have been slaughtered. They have gone off into exile among their enemies, hands trussed behind their backs. They have perished from starvation, their houses torched. Where is your mercy? Where is your faithfulness? Arise, and arouse on their behalf!’²⁹

“At once, the patriarchs and matriarchs awakened and set off toward Moses. They beseeched him, ‘Moses, faithful shepherd, where are the sheep? Where have you left them?’ At once, Moses awakened and went off with them to Joshua. He said to him, ‘Those children of our patriarchs, the children of Israel regarding whom the blessed Holy One charged me, and that I entrusted in your hands—where are they?’

“Joshua replied, saying, ‘My master Moses, I left them in the land of Israel. I apportioned the land to them by lottery as you instructed me. I left them, each man with his inheritance, according to his lot.’³⁰

“At once, they all set off to the land of Israel and found it ruined and desolate—not a sound could be heard. They entered the Temple and found it burnt down. They began eulogizing until the bitter sound of weeping could be heard in the heavenly heights, with all the celestial angels joining in and weeping on high.

“The blessed Holy One was aroused and descended toward them. He found them sobbing grievously in the dust of the Temple. He said to them, ‘You who are beloved ones

of my soul, why are you here? *What are My beloved ones doing in My house?* (Jeremiah 11:15).'³¹

"Old Man Abraham rose first, saying before Him, 'Master of the Universe! You know that I walked before You on the truthful path. Ten times You tested me, and I was steadfast through them all. My children! Where are they? I do not hear their voices in the land, yet You swore to me that you would sustain them there!'³²

"The blessed Holy One replied, 'Woe, Abraham, beloved of My soul! *Holy flesh they have caused to pass away from you* (ibid.)! They have forsaken the covenant of their flesh—that I bestowed upon you—and worshiped idolatry. This intensified My anger against them, but on your account I was forbearing numerous times. Still, they did not repent before Me.'³³

"Upon hearing this, Abraham said, 'For the sanctification of Your name, may all their sins be extinguished among the nations, until You find it desirable to return them to You.' Thus did they all respond, and they departed.³⁴

"Rachel remained and she raised her voice in grievous, bitter weeping. The blessed Holy One asked Her, 'Rachel, why are you weeping?'³⁵

"She replied, 'Should I not cry? Where are my children? What sins have they committed before You?'

"He said to her, 'They brought My rival before Me, and installed it in My house!'³⁶

"She retorted at once, 'Did I not surpass this? I myself brought my rival into my house!'

"For it is taught in a *baraita*, 'It is written: *Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kin* (Genesis 29:12). He said to her, "Marry me!" She told him, "I would, but I have a sister, older than me, and I am anxious about my father, for he is a cheat.' At once, *Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kin*—in deceit. Straightaway he gave her secret tokens. When Leah entered that night, Rachel said to

herself, 'Now my sister will be humiliated.' She proceeded to convey the tokens to her.³⁷

"On account of this, she said to the blessed Holy One, 'Did I not act surpassingly? For I myself brought my rival into my house! And You—of whom is written *A compassionate and gracious God, long-suffering* (Exodus 34:6)—You should overlook their transgressions.'³⁸

"But regardless of what He said to her, she would not be comforted, as is written: *A voice is heard in Ramah—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for [her children, refusing to be comforted for her children]* (Jeremiah 31:15). She refused to be comforted—why? כִּי אֵינֶנּוּ (*Ki einennu*), *For he is no more* (ibid.) as He had been in those former days, dwelling among them, having withdrawn above. Since *he is no more* among her children, she refused to be comforted until the blessed Holy One vowed to her, saying, [92b] '*Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears* (ibid., 16).'³⁹

"As did Rachel, so did *Shekhinah* above, as in the Targum, 'A voice from the heights of heaven'—*Shekhinah* can be heard weeping over Her children. When She was crying, sixty myriads of celestial camps were aroused toward Her, all breaking out in wailing on Her account.⁴⁰

"At that moment, the sound pierced through to the firmament of *Aravot*, and 200,000 worlds trembled. They had been hidden away from the day the world was created until that sound was heard in the heights of heaven. Which one is it? *An expanse like awesome ice* (Ezekiel 1:22), above the creatures.⁴¹

"Once Mother was revealed to Her Daughter, saying, '*Restrain your voice,*' *Shekhinah* departed from there, wending off into exile with all Her legions. They were compelled to disperse themselves every which way, so that all would be in exile. And She sat alone."⁴²

Rabbi Neḥuniah said, “איכה (*Eikhah*), *Alas!* (Lamentations 1:1). Who said this? Supernal, inward spirit, World that is Coming. This word is spiritual, with no partners at all—not tongue, nor teeth, nor lips. Mother asked about Daughter—this is קרקורא דקיר (*qirqura de-qir*), howling about the wall—Lord, Master, and Sovereign.⁴³

“*Sits* (ibid.)—not standing. At first She stood with all Her legions erect, too; but now She sits, in desolation. *Alone*, as is said: *Alone shall he sit; outside the camp is his dwelling* (Leviticus 13:46)—like one tainted through defilement. And like *a slave-girl supplanting her mistress* (Proverbs 30:23)—that impure one, dwelt in Her place.”⁴⁴

The residents of Babylon sent a missive to the residents of the Holy Land: “It is fitting that you cry, and it befits you to eulogize and mourn when you see Mother’s sanctuaries destroyed, the place of Her bed upended in mourning. She is absent, having flown away from you, leaving you unaware of Her whereabouts.”⁴⁵

“You might say that She is with us in exile, dwelling among us. If so, we should rejoice, for indeed the prophet Ezekiel saw Her here with all Her legions. But actually for this we must weep and eulogize, like jackals and desert ostriches. She has been banished from Her chambers and we are in exile. She comes to us in bitterness and sees us daily in all our afflictions, with all the statutes and decrees they impose upon us constantly. But She cannot remove these scourges from us, nor all the ordeals that we suffer.”⁴⁶

The residents of the Holy Land sent a missive in reply: “It is true—our Mother has fled, having been banished from Her sanctuary, and She has descended among you in bitterness, audibly groaning. Like a woman gone mad, or like a man unable to save himself. It befits you to mourn.”⁴⁷

“But it befits us to weep and eulogize with wailing and grief, for we see the sanctuary in ruins daily, desert foxes

running in and out, and ostriches screeching within. We see it, and weep. But while we lie prostrate, we hear the pleasant sound of Her footsteps during the three night watches, as She appears to look in on Her sanctuaries, reduced to char. She lurches from chamber to chamber, place to place, shrieking and wailing, crying over us and our souls. We are quickened by the mournful sounds of Her crying and sobbing. Our spirits pursued Her, leaping toward Her—but suddenly She flew off, rushing away. We neither heard nor knew anything of Her destination. We remained stunned and torpid, dispirited and dazed. And so we scream out: *Eikhah*.[48](#)

“We have learned: Each and every night, a voice—embittered with the pain of Zion—can be heard from the vault of the firmament to the lower realm, and from below, to the firmament. This is as is written: *YHVH roars from on high, and from His holy habitation He utters His voice...* (Jeremiah 25:30).[49](#)

“At the beginning of the night, She is immersed in tears, and She roars from the vault of the firmament above. Then She descends [92c] below to the outer altar—and sees Her abode destroyed, repulsively defiled, no [pure] spot to be found. She howls and wails, shrieking in a doleful voice, saying, ‘My altar, My altar! My source of nourishment that made Me replete with abundant libations, numerous pure and holy sacrificial offerings. All the holy angelic personages, nobles, and archons were teeming and rejoicing because of you—eating delicacies and allotting portions in the vault of heaven.’[50](#)

“‘But now they have supplied you with the corpses of holy saints, my children slaughtered upon you. They have saturated you with their blood!’[51](#)

“All the angelic personages fell from their stations at the sound of their screams. Now they sit outside, howling and sobbing—these are the holy Erelim formerly crowned

with the letter of the holy name, in which they rejoiced and subsisted. At the sound of the weeping, this letter flew off—soaring to the highest heights—and they were left like a woman sobbing and howling. This is as is written: *Behold, אַרְאִלִּים (erelim), the Erelim, cried* (Isaiah 33:7)—without ך (yod).⁵²

“‘My altar, My altar! After you sated Me with the corpses of the children, holy saints who martyred their souls upon you, you have been hidden away. Where shall I find you? Where is your fire?’ She continues wailing and sobbing and weeping in a bitter voice.⁵³

“Six thousand holy warriors, on all four sides of the universe—those who used to eat the sacrifices daily—descend toward Her, sobbing and weeping on account of the altar of offerings. There were more, but they were culled. Even those who stand outside, of another spirit, those who used to be sated with those lambs and suet at the beginning of the night, screech, wail, and sob over the altar, ‘Woe for the donkey who has lost its trough, its source of abundance.’ Who has witnessed the howling below like that howling of the holy dignitaries for the sake of *Matronita*, either from below upward, or from above below?⁵⁴

“In the middle of the night, She enters Point of Zion, site of the holy of holies, and sees how it has been razed and defiled—the place of Her habitation and Her bed. Her wailing and sobbing rises from below on high, and from on high down below. She looks upon the domain of the cherubim, shrieking grievously. Raising Her voice, She cries, ‘My bed, My bed, place of My dwelling!’⁵⁵

“Of this place is written [*On*] *my bed at night* (Song of Songs 3:1). *My bed*—bed of *Matronita*. Wailing through Her weeping, She says, ‘My bed, site of My Temple, place of precious jewels, location of the curtain and cover where sixty thousand myriads of gems were affixed, columns upon

columns, rows upon rows, each beholding the other. Columns of pomegranates overlaid upon you on all four sides; the world was sustained on your account. Through you, I was Master of the Universe.⁵⁶

“My Husband used to visit Me, lying down between My arms. Anything I would request—all of my wishes—He would grant at that time. When He would come to Me, leaving His domain, He would delight in my breasts.⁵⁷

“My bed, My bed! Don’t you remember how I used to frequent you in ardent delight? The youths, young ones, would precede Me, beating their wings in joy to welcome Me! The dust itself used to rise from its place! Look at how the Ark of the Torah that used to be here has forgotten Me! Food for the entire world used to flow from here, yielding light and blessings for all. I seek My Husband, but He is not here. I have searched everywhere!⁵⁸

“At that time, when My Husband would come, numerous saintly youths encircled him, and all those maidens prepared to greet Him. I could hear from afar the sound of the bells’ clappers jingling between His feet, so that I could hear Him even before He drew near to Me. All of My maidens would exalt and laud before Him. Afterward, each one would go off to his own domain, and we would be alone, embracing in love’s kisses.⁵⁹

“O, My Husband, My Husband! Now is the time that I would watch for You, but I look in every direction, and You are not there. Where have You gone now? Where shall I inquire after You? This is your place—it is the time for You to come to Me. Look, I am ready here! Have you forgotten Me?

“Don’t You remember our days of lovemaking when I would lie [92d] in your bosom, engraved with Your image, and My image engraved upon You? Like a seal that leaves an impression from script’s etching, so did I leave My image upon You, so that You would delight in an image of Me when I was still in the midst of my forces.’⁶⁰

“Groaning through Her tears, She wails, ‘My husband, My husband! Light of My eyes, gone dark! Don’t You remember how You would extend Your left arm beneath My head, and I would revel in the bounty of consummation, while Your right embraced me with kisses of delight? You vowed to Me that You would never abandon My love—swearing to Me *Should I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither* (Psalms 137:5)—but You have forgotten Me![61](#)

“‘Don’t You remember how I stood before You at Mount Sinai, with sixty myriad perfect ones who accepted Your yoke upon them? I was crowned by them, for Your sake—more than by all the other nations—and we followed after You, after all Your desires. But that maidservant murdered thousands and myriads, and I could not protect them. They all perished in the desert, and we left them there. But I brought Your children, young shoots, to abide before You in this land; and I distinguished them so that they might stand before You in accord with Your will.[62](#)

“‘O My husband! Recall with how many holy children I stood before You in every generation, and in the days of David, and of Solomon his son. Don’t You recollect all the good deeds that they performed? Is it fitting for You to remember sins, but not merits? How did this become reversed for You?[63](#)

“‘I seek You, but You are gone! I seek My children, but they are nowhere! I seek the holiness of this place, but it has been defiled! The whole world was complete on account of this place. Even the dogs did not bark back then—everything was harmonious.’ She groans and wails, along with all the supernal legions above, and the dogs barking below.[64](#)

“At the onset of the third watch, She sets out—coming to stand at the site of the incense altar, moaning and wailing. She ascends on high and finds a single cherub remaining from the two cherubim that She had—since from

that time She had only one. And that lad, the remaining youth, suckles from Her while She weeps and wails.⁶⁵

“Then the blessed Holy One appears to Her, comforts Her, and speaks with Her. Of this is written *Thus says YHVH: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears; for there is hope for your future...* (Jeremiah 31:16–17). Of this we have learned: ‘A child sucks from its mother’s breast, and a woman converses with her husband.’⁶⁶

“Alas! She sits alone
(Lamentations 1:1).

“The rabbis interpreted the verse *Recall your Creator in the days of your youth, before the*

days of evil come, and the years arrive when you will say, “I have no delight in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). This verse was applied to the people of Israel when they were in the Holy Land. *Recall your Creator*—recall all those gracious acts, all those signs and miracles that the blessed Holy One enacted for you in those ancient days, when you were still youthful in faith. This is as is written: *When Israel was a youth, I loved him* (Hosea 11:1).⁶⁷

“*In the days of your youth*—when He desired you more than all other nations on earth. *Before the days of evil come*—days of old age, days in which other nations will rule over you and scatter you among all peoples.⁶⁸

“*In the days of* בחורתיך (*beḥurotekha*), *your youth*—days of the year that have been refined for you, providing celestial protection for you. They are four months of the year: Adar, Nisan, Iyyar, Sivan. These are the days that the blessed Holy One בחר (*baḥar*), chose, the people of Israel, performing miracles for them—and when Assembly of Israel is crowned by Her Husband, drawn near to Him.⁶⁹

“*Before the days of evil come*—days of old age, days of evil—actually! These are Tammuz, Av, Tevet, שבט (*Shevat*), Shevat (though the latter is not so apparent). Its

mnemonic: ושבט (ve-sheivet), *a rod, for the back of the senseless* (Proverbs 10:13).⁷⁰

“*And the years arrive*—years of exile when Israel wanders, overburdened, roaming—yielding no חפץ (heifets), *delight*. This is as we have learned: A time will come during the days of exile when one will have no חפץ (heifets), object, to sell in the market. Then the last coin from the purse will be no more.⁷¹

“*Before [93a] the sun darkens, and the light and the moon and the stars, and the clouds come back after the rain* (Ecclesiastes 12:2)—this is brilliance of the face of *Shekhinah*, above and below. Below—who is that? Masters of Mishnah in the land of Israel, iron hammers who smash rocks and uproot towering mountains.⁷²

“*The light*—this is the Jerusalem Talmud, shining the light of Torah. Once it ceased, people remained, as it were, in darkness. This is as is written: *In dark places He has made me dwell like those long dead* (Lamentations 3:6)—this is the Babylonian Talmud, for inhabitants of the world wander about there in darkness.⁷³

“*The moon*—*baraitot*, like those *baraitot* that would shine the light of concealed wisdom.⁷⁴

“*The stars*—these are the enlightened ones in the land of Israel, all those *tanna'im* and *amora'im* on whose account the whole world is sustained. For when they were all assembled together, one would say to his fellow, ‘From these words streaming from your mouth, I can foresee that today or tomorrow such-and-such will occur.’⁷⁵

“*Before the sun darkens*—light of the brilliance of the face of *Shekhinah*, shining upon Her every day. From that light, the world was sustained and Israel dwelt securely in the land.⁷⁶

“*The light*—light that the blessed Holy One created in the act of creation that shone from one end of the world to the other, and then was hidden away. The blessed Holy One emitted—shot forth—a single ray from it, from the right

side of the blessed Holy One, grasping the moon. But at that time it was written: *He has withdrawn His right hand* (Lamentations 2:3).⁷⁷

*“The moon—*as is written: *Justice lodged in her* (Isaiah 1:21).⁷⁸

*“The stars—*ministering angels who used to attend to Her, well known as Her retinue, removed from their posts. These are called ‘angels of peace.’ *And the clouds come back after the rain—*as is written: *angels of peace weep bitterly* (ibid., 33:7).⁷⁹

“On the day that the keepers of the house will quake (Ecclesiastes 12:3)—three courts that used to teach Torah in the Chamber of Hewn Stone.⁸⁰

“And the men of caliber are bent (ibid.)—Great Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin.⁸¹

“And the maids who grind grow idle (ibid.)—these are the priests and the Levites: all the watches stationed in Jerusalem.⁸²

“And those who look from the casements go dark (ibid.)—these are the prophets and seers, who could see with the spirit of prophecy.⁸³

“The double doors close in the market (ibid., 4)—for the people are screaming, and there is no one to serve there, for all the gates were locked from the day that the Temple was destroyed and the service in the House of our God was abolished.⁸⁴

“As the sound of the mill quiets (ibid.)—these are the incense grinders, who used to call aloud every day during their grinding.⁸⁵

Alternatively, *the sound of the mill—*voice of *Shekhinah* screaming every day *Turn back, O wayward children* (Jeremiah 3:22), but none pay attention to Her.

“All the songstresses are bowed (Ecclesiastes 12:4)—these are the ones who used to ascend to the platform every day, singing the melody of song. *All—*to include the celestial angels on high, divided up into watches

corresponding to the watches below. These ones were *bowed*—as it were, even those above were bowed. *Of the very height they are afraid* (Ecclesiastes 12:5)—and even though they originated in the heights, so much as a dwarf frightened them.⁸⁶

“*Bowed* (ibid., 4)—these are the *songstresses*, for 80,000 Levites had their hands bound behind them. When they arrived at the rivers of Babylon, they hung their lyres from the trees there. They were asked to play music, but they responded, *How can we sing a song of YHVH?* (Psalms 137:4). They gnawed off their thumbs, preventing them from playing, and they were massacred.⁸⁷

“*Terror is in the road* (Ecclesiastes 12:5)—they plodded on, millstones round their necks, [hands] tightly bound, severing their thumbs on the way. Jeremiah gathered them in his prayer shawl, kissing them, and weeping over them, saying ‘Didn’t I tell you to *Give honor to YHVH Elohim before He brings darkness* (Jeremiah 13:16)? Of this is written *For the mountains I take up weeping and wailing* (Jeremiah 9:9).⁸⁸

“*And the almond blossoms* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). From the day that the tree blooms with blossoms until the day it produces fruit are twenty-one days, corresponding to the period from the seventeenth of Tammuz until the ninth of Av—twenty-one days. This is as is written: [93b] *I see a branch of an almond tree* (Jeremiah 1:11).⁸⁹

“*And the grasshopper is laden* (Ecclesiastes 12:5)—for a heavy burden has been placed upon the shoulders of the seed of David.⁹⁰

“*And the caper-fruit falls apart* (ibid.)—service in the house of our God has been abolished.⁹¹

“*But man is going to his everlasting house*—this refers to the Glory that has withdrawn above, while people scream out, no one attending to them.⁹²

“*Until the silver cord is snapped* (Ecclesiastes 12:6)—the place where the priests מקטיר קטורת (*maqtir qetoret*), burn

incense, on the inner altar.⁹³

*“The golden bowl crashes (ibid.)—this is the holy of holies, abode of the golden cherubim.*⁹⁴

*“The pitcher is shattered against the well (ibid.)—this signifies the Kingdom of the House of David, shattered.*⁹⁵

“The dust will return to the earth, as it was (ibid., 7)—the Temple will be destroyed, reduced to dust.

*“Spirit will return to God who gave it (ibid.)—this signifies Shekhinah, and the disappearance of the spirit of prophecy from the world.”*⁹⁶

Rabbi Yudai opened, *“On the day שיזעו שומרי הבית (she-yazu’u shomerei ha-bayit), that the keepers of the house will quake (ibid., 3)—these are the tanna’im and amora’im who used to protect the world while in the land of Israel, ואזדעזעון (ve-izdaze’un), now convulsed, from their posts.*⁹⁷

*“להחיל (Ve-hit’avvetu anshei he-ḥayil), And the men of caliber are bent (ibid.), as is said: If you know there are men of caliber among them (Genesis 47:6). [This refers to] the sin of the sons of Jacob—men of caliber—who suffered a perversion of judgment, as is said: האל יעות (ha-el ye’avvet), God will pervert justice (Job 8:3). They received a perversion of judgment, these men of caliber. For this is the way of the serpent—after slaying a person, it returns and bites him again, mercilessly. This is perversion of judgment!”*⁹⁸

The residents of the land of Israel sent them a missive: “It befits you to weep, like one who weeps from afar. But mourning and sobbing, and eulogizing with wailing and bitterness—that does not suit you. For you bathed your feet and did not want them sullied as before. This is as is written: *I have bathed my feet, shall I sully them?* (Song of Songs 5:3).⁹⁹

“But we who dwell amid the serpent’s decrees—his lying in ambush for us, slaying and biting daily—we see

with our own eyes the perversion of judgment at work in our midst. Of those men of caliber—in their days he was silent, not pressing for judgment, for he was terrified of them and could not prevail over them. But once they passed on to that world in repentance, he arose before the blessed Holy One, clamoring for justice.¹⁰⁰

“He scrutinized the verse *One who kidnaps a man and sells him and he is found in his hands, will surely be put to death* (Exodus 21:16).¹⁰¹

“The blessed Holy One responded to the serpent, ‘But Joseph was not a man.’¹⁰²

“‘And he is found in his hands.’¹⁰³

“‘Look, he was not found in their hands!’¹⁰⁴

“The serpent replied, ‘*Should a person be found stealing a living person of his brothers, of Israel, and garner profit from him and sell him, that thief shall die* (Deuteronomy 24:7).’¹⁰⁵

“For eight hundred years he stood there, demanding judgment. And we have learned that one who is convicted on two counts is sentenced to the more severe penalty. Woe to one who receives punishment for his sins, for death atones for sins! And [woe to one who] returns to receive another punishment! Woe for the perversion of the men of caliber, while Samael and the serpent were steadfast!¹⁰⁶

“Consequently, for us it is fitting to weep and wail, for the holy city remains bereft of all its previous bounty.

“At that moment, Samael alighted and confounded the world. He infused this spirit into the innards of that wicked one, the Roman emperor, and called for retribution against the valiant ones of the world. Woe unto that generation! Woe unto the world! Such a miscarriage of justice has not occurred since the day the world was created.¹⁰⁷

“Alas! Your sons—pillars of the world, enduring columns upon which the world stands; You were their crown every day. How they were abused in the hands of the serpent! How were holy spirits corrupted to don foreign,

alien garments to be ripped apart in abject humiliation! Woe for this event! Woe for this depravity![108](#)

“Who was watching in the Garden of Eden when judgment was rendered above? When ten resplendent jewels, light of the entire garden, in the midst of all the trees, discarded their garments and departed! All the trees of the garden screamed, saying, ‘Woe, men of caliber have been abused!’ and the sentries at the gates of Eden trembled. Those cherubim [93c] ascended and descended, blocking any passage through which those lights might leave when they shed the luminosity of their garments. Celestial beings and lower angels screamed before them; guardians of the walls above quaked among all the legions of the heavens, weeping and wailing.[109](#)

“Who beheld Mother screeching and ululating? She descended to the cherubim, guardians of the garden’s gates, and they trembled. Mother flew off, accompanied by one cherub.[110](#)

“Then Flame of the Whirling Sword—razor-sharp—pierced through the gates, and the ten luminaries fled. Celestial beings and terrestrial beings screamed, ‘Woe unto the world! Woe unto the generation!’[111](#)

“It befits us to lament, like jackals! When Mother descended and did not find them in the garden, and all the other luminaries and lamps were screaming and wailing, She began to weep and ululate. If those cherubim, guardians of the gates were weeping and wailing, breaking out in lament, is it not all the more fitting for us to weep over all this—and for the miscarriage of justice?”[112](#)

They opened, saying, “*They sent a message to Joseph, saying... ‘We beseech you, forgive, pray, the crime and the offense of your brothers for evil they have caused you. And so now, forgive, pray, the crime of the servants of your father’s God.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him* (Genesis 50:16-17). They transgressed against him but he

pardoned all, expiating their sin. Once he forgave them, who can incite regarding their offense? This is the meaning of *the men of caliber were degraded* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). [93d] Gross miscarriage of justice—foisted upon those men of caliber. Woe unto us! Who will have compassion upon us? Who will speak to our hearts? Who will comfort us?[113](#)

“What a huge distortion of justice! On account of Mother’s banishment, Her flight, drifting away—this made perversion of justice possible. Left alone was the one who prosecuted us, with no one to fend him off nor to offer a defense on our behalf. On account of this, all Mother’s adornments were handed over to this one. For if Mother had been there, She would have gone beyond the letter of the law on their behalf. For this She weeps.[114](#)

“For this She wails over Her children, for they were slaughtered in vain, and She was absent from their trials. The serpent executed his wishes against them, as is written: *For your crimes, your mother was sent away* (Isaiah 50:1). *Sent away*—so that She would not be available for your trials. *Alas! She sits alone* (Lamentations 1:1). At that time, She should have been taking up the case of Her children, and on Her account the decree would have been nullified.[115](#)

“When those ten jewels left the Garden of Eden to don foreign garments, all the garments, save one, were handed over to the serpent. This is as is written: *Reuben returned to the pit* (Genesis 37:29). Since he had counseled to put [Joseph] in the pit, he was associated with the pit, and was saved. [This is related to] the capture of Rabbi Eli’ezer.[116](#)

ZOHARIC COMPOSITIONS

הזהר על שיר השירים

Zohar al Shir ha-Shirim

ZOHAR ON SONG OF SONGS¹

He opened, saying, “*Song of Songs of Solomon* (Song of Songs 1:1). Happy is the generation that has sublime wisdom dwelling within, a time when the blessed Holy One wished to reveal on earth matters that were not revealed to celestial angels. What were they? Mysteries of wisdom of the sublime, engraved Name. For holy names were not transmitted to them, but were handed over to wise ones on earth. And they responded in praise: *YHVH, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name throughout the earth, You who have set Your splendor above the heavens!* (Psalms 8:2).²

“*How majestic is Your name throughout the earth—*hewn-out mysteries of holy names, revealed on earth. Praise for this—*above the heavens*, for all those legions acclaim and extol this event. Something not revealed to them was revealed on earth.

“Behold! Here are mysteries of the upper chariot, of four engraved names. Behold! Mystery of mysteries, celestial chariot of names: אדוני (*Adonai*), צבאות (*Tseva’ot*), יהוה (*YHVH*), אהיה (*Ehyeh*). Mystery of four names, engravings of four radiances. Each זוהרא (*zohara*), radiance, embraced within the other; each yearning to penetrate the other, and to be contained, one within the other.³

“These four radiances are distinguished by four known names. One, called Radiance Dark-and-Not-Dark. When gazed upon, its darkness lifts at once. Gazing upon it

further, it sparks, then flares in luminosity and transcendent beauty. Its light, constricted within—until another radiance strikes it, boring into this light, perforating it. Then it is filled up by that radiance, sparkling in all directions.⁴

“Radiance engraved with seventy-two sparks—seventy-two engraved names of the *Sanhedrin*’s seventy members, plus two witnesses. Similarly, this radiance is comprised of two names and crowned with this name: *Adonai*. Then it is שר (sar), Prince, of all worlds, and all forces and legions of upper and lower realms offer praise—glorifying it, uttering song, exalting above. When this radiance is consummated it is שיר (shir), Song: Adon, Sar, Master. Yod, perfection, completed by all. שיר (Shir), Song, of Rungs. Chief and Master, appointed over all troops and legions—rungs below.⁵

“Second radiance: radiance in which all colors are collected. Radiance dazzling the eyes, unable to gaze upon it. It is designated Living Radiance. Since it is living, it takes all supernal, concealed radiances, casting sparkling radiances below, producing fruits and greenery, after its kind. Living Radiance—designated Life of the Worlds—totality of upper and lower realms. Emitting shimmering radiances and generating verdure of its kind, this radiance is designated *Tseva’ot*.⁶

“Its constant desire: extolling continuously, uttering the first radiance called שיר (Shir), Song. When combined as one, in a single bond of desire, with no separation, the totality is called השירים (ha-shirim), *Songs*. Even by itself, this radiance—Totality of All—is designated Totality of Multitudes, Totality of All Radiances, upper and lower. We call it All—Totality of All. It is Life, and of this is written *the Tree of Life was in the midst of the garden* (Genesis 2:9). All life dependent upon it—life and radiances bursting forth from it in all directions.⁷

“This Song we have mentioned is called Well [62a]—Life penetrating it. Radiance designated Life flows into it, and of this is written *A well of living waters* (Song of Songs 4:15). It is also written: *the well that was dug out by שרים* (*sarim*), *princes* (Numbers 21:18)—השרים (*ha-sharim*), singing, since these exalted, radiant, concealed nobles thronged into this radiance. They *dug it out* using it alone.⁸

“Third radiance: radiance comprising three radiances, mystery of three letters. The patriarchs cleaved to this radiance. This is the one that darts to and fro; no one can hold fast to its sparkling. Of this is written *and the creatures darting to and fro* (Ezekiel 1:14).⁹

“Inheriting a legacy, a heritage from concealed radiances—undisclosed, in the mystery of the holy name of three letters that depend upon them—יהו (*YHV*). Fourth letter gleans and gathers. Thus, it is arranged according to the perfect order.¹⁰

“This radiance itself is the *darting to and fro* in the mystery of letter ו (*vav*), poised in the middle between upper and lower: ה (*he*) from this side above, ה (*he*) from that side below, and the creatures comprising ו (*vav*) in the middle. Thus, *darting to and fro*. *Darting to*: toward upper ה (*he*), ascending toward Her with perfect desire. *And fro*: toward lower ה (*he*), bestowing as much as was gleaned from above.¹¹

“This radiance is like the eyeball, in a hidden way. Its radiance *darts to and fro*; its desire is to ascend upward, immediately returning. Mystery of אשׁר (*asher*), *which is* (Song of Songs 1:1), stationed here and there.¹²

“Fourth radiance: hidden radiance that cannot be seen at all. For it is from this hidden radiance that all other radiances emerged, spread, and blended—one within the other. This radiance is not revealed at all, but it abides within the understanding of the heart. For the heart knows and contemplates it—though it is not seen at all—since all radiances issued from it.¹³

“Lowest radiance yearns to render praise, to rise up within these other radiances, to be encompassed by them; to ascend and see that sublime beauty. Of this King David said: *One thing do I ask of YHVH, it is this that I seek: ...to gaze on the beauty of YHVH, and to behold His palace* (Psalms 27:4). This is the mystery of לשלמה (li-shlomoh), *Solomon’s* (Song of Songs 1:1), for the King who possesses שלמה (shelama), peace.¹⁴

“It is written: *I gazed, and behold a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl above it. There are seven lamps on it; seven and seven ducts channeling to the lamps above it* (Zechariah 4:2). Mystery of pure lampstands was revealed to Zechariah: one configured, one shining. *I gazed, and behold a lampstand*—lampstand configured with praise of colors engraved with the name *Adonai*. With this name it illuminates those below, nourishing and sustaining them, fittingly.¹⁵

“*All of gold*—mystery of the tribunal named *Elohim*, judging the entire world. For it is established and nourished with Judgment, and it is created with this name. Subsisting entirely within mystery of the left. כלה (Kullah), *All*—when completed by the right side that secures it with the mystery of the name YHVH, then She is כלה (kallah), bride, under the canopy, for all the worlds abide in love and delight, in the love of a single bond. Then: וגולה (ve-gullah), *with a bowl, above it*.¹⁶

“It is written: גולה (gullah), *its bowl*. This is fount of *Tsaddiq*, transformed into *a river, whose streams gladden City of God* (Psalms 46:5). It generates fruit and greenery by the name called *Tseva’ot*—bounded by twelve borders, spanning the world’s four directions.¹⁷

“*There are seven lamps above it*—mystery of the sublime name, engraved in the mystery of seventy names ascribed to the blessed Holy One. These are seven pillars upon which the world stands. *Seven and seven*—seven

established below corresponding to those above, all joined to the *lamps above it. Seven and seven* [62b] *ducts channeling*—seven days and seven days, seven upper ones and seven lower ones, conjoined as one.¹⁸

“Further, *seven and seven*—all transcendent: one contained within its fellow. They are seven, each one contained within its companion. Now, you might say, ‘Six would have been better, so that each one can be combined within the other, because in this case one remains! With which shall it be combined?’ The answer is that when they all ascend, totaling twelve, the one positioned above them all, completing the number thirteen, is encompassed by the one standing above it. This last one is the lofty point from which all emerge.¹⁹

“Further, they are two rungs and each one is called *seven*. One is the World that is Coming, which is seven. It is designated seven, as is written: *He built it seven years* (1 Kings 6:38). And one is *Tsaddiq* (Righteous One), who is called *seven*. He is seven, as is written: *Seven times a righteous one falls and gets up* (Proverbs 24:16). These two—like two *ducts channeling to the lamps*—one from one end, and one from the other end. Even though they are included in the number of lamps, these two have greater prominence, for they are the *seven and seven* that flow into the lamps shining upon that lampstand.²⁰

“That lampstand—illuminated by their power, ascending upward. Ascending, it rises rung by rung, crown to crown—all united above. This is the mystery of *Song of Songs of Solomon* (Song of Songs 1:1).”²¹

Song of Songs (Song of Songs 1:1).

possesses peace. This place requires delight, as neither rage nor judgment abides there. For the World that is

Uttered by Elijah with permission from on high. “*Song*—praise of praises to the King who

Coming is entirely delight, providing delight to all, sending joy and delight to all rungs. Just as there is a need for arousal of delight, arousing from this world upward, so is it necessary to arouse delight and joy from the realm of the Moon toward the upper realm. Thus, worlds are sustained as one paradigm, arousal flowing only from realm below to realm above.²²

“שיר (Shir), Song—its portent, תתרו (taturu), 1006, in engraved letters of the holy name. Trembling in all worlds, רתותא (retuta), quaking, in all openings of the great abyss, until this extension of spirit enters into the first gate on the side of the Master of Eyes, furnished with 500 palace keys. He abides within the engraving of the Holy Name of Twelve Letters—used for flight by nineteen troops of flaming fire.²³

“Master of Eyes gathers fiery bones and flaming limbs, entering into the palace called Zevul Palace where all praises are refined so that they may ascend upward. Of this is written *I have now built for You* בית זבול (beit zevul), *a stately House* (1 Kings 8:13).²⁴

“It is a palace with 1006 rungs, soaring with exaltation of praises. In the midst of them all is one rung, innermost of all, where love coming from this praise is most refined—distilled from the lower point. Once refined from within their midst, it ascends upward in the mystery of שיר (Shir), Song, and is called שיר השירים (Shir ha-shirim), Song of Songs, rising above all those praises, more refined than them all.²⁵

“It is written: *The House, in its being built, was built only of* אבן שלמה מסע (even shelemah massa), *stone complete for its journey, so no hammer, ax, or any iron tool was heard in the House while it was being built* (1 Kings 6:7). *The House, in its being built*—when male and female were joined as one, then *even shelemah, stone complete*: perfected, as it needed to be. It was not complete until prepared *for its* מסע (massa), *journey*, as the blessed Holy One נסר (nasar), sawed, her

away, adorned her, dressed her, and brought her toward Adam. At that point, *built*, most complete of all.²⁶

“Once they were joined together, all other spirits and demonic species faded away from there and could not approach the Temple, as is written: *No hammer, ax, or any iron tool [62c] was heard in the House while it was being built.* They all receded into the maw of the great abyss. As soon as the Temple was built below and the sanctuary inaugurated in its proper place, Song of Songs was revealed, as required to join Temple to Temple.²⁷

“When Moses was in the wilderness on account of the sins of Israel, his coupling was a joining at the back. Once Male and Female were joined as one—then *The House, in its being built. In its being built*—bit by bit. When Israel crossed the Jordan after Moses had been gathered in, the blessed Holy One sawed Her away and established Her in the Dwelling at Shiloh, prior to Her perfection in the Eternal Temple. Then She was joined with King Solomon, and worlds were face-to-face.²⁸

“Then, *built only of stone complete for its journey. Journey*—for it was not fixed in one place, but rather uprooted and planted. Only then was it *built*, fittingly.

“Subsequently, all demonic species and evil spirits vanished from the world with no sovereignty at all, as is written: *no hammer, ax.* At that moment, when they had all disappeared from the world, the Female remained with Her Husband, face-to-face—Song of Songs was revealed. This is *Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s*, with no admixture at all. *Solomon’s*—face-to-face. אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלֹמֹה (*Asher li-shlomo*), *Which is Solomon’s*, for She was uprooted and planted in the place of the One who possesses שְׁלָמָה (*shelama*), peace, entirely.”²⁹

Rabbi Shim’on rejoiced. Elijah said to him, “Rabbi, say your words and I will follow you—between us this matter will be clarified! Permission has been granted from the Most Ancient of All that these mysteries be revealed from below and above. You below, and I above. By your life,

Rabbi! Your stature is superior—for all of your words shall be written above before the Ancient of Days, whereas my words will not be written above; only in this world shall my words be written, by your hand. Your words shall be written above, and my words written below. Happy are you righteous ones in this world, and happy are you in the world that is coming!”[30](#)

Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, “*Song of Songs of Solomon*. It is written: *He walks along and weeps, the bearer of the seed bag. He will surely come in with glad song bearing his sheaves* (Psalms 126:6). How many times has the blessed Holy One rebuked Israel to return to Him in repentance, to walk the upright path in order to be raised up in their midst? Indeed, when Israel are righteous, the blessed Holy One ascends with them, as it were, above all the nations of the world. When Israel are righteous and walk on the straight path, the blessed Holy One raises them above all the people of the world, and they all acknowledge and extol Him. Not only they! Even the celestial, supernal ones all offer praise on account of Israel. More than that, He is exalted in His glory because of Israel, actually! More than that! Israel actually even soars in the glory of the blessed Holy One, above and below.[31](#)

“Come and see. When Israel are righteous, the supernal Throne of Glory ascends in teeming delight, in an abundance of love, higher and higher. Then all the worlds are joined in jubilation and are blessed from the depth of the rivers. All worlds are saturated, blessed, and sanctified with a profusion of blessings, brimming with sanctities. Then the blessed Holy One rejoices with them in total rapture.[32](#)

“When Israel are not righteous, however, everything is reversed. Nonetheless, the love of the blessed Holy One is not withheld from them. His throne rests upon them like a mother over her children, unconstrained from beseeching

compassion on their behalf. With this voice Her plea ascends above, because He wishes someone would offer a defense for His children.³³

“How do we know this? From Moses, who attained his grandeur through elucidating Israel’s merits, as is written: *Moses did not know that the skin of his face glowed* (Exodus 34:29). When did he ascend to this glory? When Israel sinned [62d] and he pleaded their merits. Similarly, it is written *He walks along and weeps*—for the sins of Israel.³⁴

“Who is *the bearer of the seed bag*? This is the mystery of the Throne of Glory, who elevates the flux of holy seed, producing fruit and greenery in this world. When She ascends by virtue of the voice of Israel, even though they are not worthy, nonetheless the blessed Holy One fills Her up, saturating Her with the flow of the Deep River, and She is consummated from all sides. Then *he will surely come in with glad song*, from that perfection, from blessings and sanctifications completing Her. At first *he walks along and weeps*, because of the sins of Israel. When he repents, *he will surely come in with glad song*.³⁵

“When Solomon built the Temple and the lower world was in perfect accord with the upper world, Israel was entirely righteous, ascending numerous, lofty rungs. Then, Throne of Glory rose in rapture with abundant delight, with profuse exaltation. Then, *Song of Songs of Solomon*, ascending in bliss, descending in bliss, joining in bliss—all worlds in bliss.

“*Song*—for the blessed Holy One. *Of Songs*—for upper and lower realms. *Which is Solomon’s*—joining of all worlds in rapture, to the King who possesses peace completely.”³⁶

Uttered by Elijah: “*Song of songs*. It is written: *YHVH will open for you his goodly treasure, the heavens* (Deuteronomy 28:12). When the blessed Holy One created the world, He created sublime שִׁתִּין (*shitin*), channels—founts

conducting rain of blessing and transcendent sanctifications from above. These drew first from the Fount of Life, from the supernal place from which they emerged.³⁷

“In the beginning, before the world was created, a single desire called Hidden Thought arose and was revealed. Everything was set within that Hidden Thought, everything that existed, and that would come to exist. From that Thought arose the desire to create the world, and a subtle flow comprising hiddenness of Thought issued forth, inaudible, unrevealed. It can be perceived with wisdom that has been conferred—and not conferred—to the wise of heart, because it has not been revealed beyond.³⁸

“From this flow five founts emerged, plus one that was sealed, and one absorbing all. These springs existed when the world was created, as is written: בראשית (Be-reshit), *With beginning, ___ created* אלהים (Elohim), God (Genesis 1:1). בראשית (Be-reshit)—ברא (bara shit), created a hollow. This hollow is a fount collecting all founts, nourishing worlds. *The heavens* (ibid.)—those six lofty springs, above all, conveying into this hollow.³⁹

“From the day the world was created until the Temple was built, they were sealed, entirely closed. If you say, ‘But Abraham was in the world’—behold it is written: *And there was a famine in the land* (ibid. 12:10). Of Isaac: *And there was a famine in the land besides the former famine* (ibid. 26:1). Similarly with Jacob, it is written: *And there was famine in all the lands* (ibid. 41:54). Of Moses, it is written in several places: *Who will feed us?* (Numbers 11:4,18); *the people thirsted for water there* (Exodus 17:3); *there was no water for the community* (ibid. 20:2). Of Joshua, despite their having entered the land, it is written: *the manna ceased... and they ate of the produce of the land* (Joshua 5:12). In the days of the Judges, it is written: *In the days when the judges judged, there was a famine in the land*

(Ruth 1:1). Of David, it is written: *There was a famine during the reign of David* (2 Samuel 21:1).⁴⁰

“How can this all be explained? The explanation is that those channels had not opened, and the world was nourished only from a squeezed-out ooze, with no opening at all—aside from the resin exuded from a tree, dripping below, or from a rock. When Solomon came and the Temple was built, all the worlds were in a single balance, above and below. Then the hollow that receives and gathers from all lofty channels opened up. When did it open up? [63a] When those lofty channels opened up. Once that hollow opened up, blessings flowed to the world.⁴¹

“When did it open? When a crooked one that sat at its feet was removed. When that one was banished, שִׁית (shit), hollow, became שִׁיר (shir), *Song*, and *goodly treasure* (Deuteronomy 28:12) opened up.⁴²

“By whose strength? *The heavens* (ibid.). These are the rest of the שִׁיתִין (shitin), channels—that is, הַשִּׁירִים (ha-shirim), *Songs*—for they all opened up and were perfected to bestow nourishment for all the worlds. Then it is written: *Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree* (1 Kings 5:5); and it is written: *They ate and drank and rejoiced* (ibid. 4:20)—for this שִׁית (shit), hollow, and the שִׁיתִין (shitin), hollows, had opened.⁴³

“All sublime delicacies descended into all worlds, all rejoicing—ascending to the upper world to glean blessings and delicacies for the worlds. Then ardor was aroused from among them toward supernal King, all becoming one, with no division. In this way, praise transcending all praises ascends toward the King who possesses peace, fashioning total delight above and below.⁴⁴

“It is written: שִׁיר (shir), *A song, to you is silent praise, [God in Zion; and to You a vow will be paid]* (Psalms 65:1-2). King David knew by the holy spirit that this *song* was destined to be revealed in the world, and he said: *Song*—

destined to be revealed. *To you it is silent*—hidden, for permission to reveal this homage is lacking. But this adulation and *praise* pertains to *God in Zion*—when the Temple is built, for it mirrors the supernal Temple. Then, *a vow will be paid.*⁴⁵

Rabbi Shim'on opened, "*Then sang Israel* השירה הזאת (*ha-shirah ha-zot*), *this song* (Numbers 21:17). *Then sang Moses...* השירה הזאת (*ha-shirah ha-zot*), *this song* (Exodus 15:1). There—praise of the Female. Here—praise that ascends to the World of the Male, and it is the praise of the Male.⁴⁶

"Here is the mystery of body and spirit joined as one, body with body, spirit with spirit. *Song of songs*—cleaving of body to body. *Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth's kisses* (Song of Songs 1:2)—cleaving of spirit to spirit, all in the mystery of supernal love, everything becoming one in a single unification.⁴⁷

"Here is the mystery of unification. *Song*—this is *Israel* (Deuteronomy 6:4), appointed as witness of unity. *Songs*—*YHVH, Our God, YHVH* (ibid.), all one, in a single unification. We have established this unification and here is unification of all worlds. *Which is Solomon's*: mystery of *One* (Deuteronomy 6:4). King Solomon is needed for unification in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, to join everything in desire in a single union, one cleaving to the other, so that all is one, for Solomon is the King who possesses peace, in every respect.⁴⁸

"What is the meaning of 'in every respect'? Is there a multitude of שלמין (*shelamin*), types of peace? In fact, there is only one peace—and it is two. One peace is שלמא דביתא (*shelama de-veita*), peace of the home, by which Male is known as Male. The other peace is שלמא (*shelama*), harmonization of two sides. Oneness, unifying, enters between these two sides, creating harmony between them—this is the other peace.⁴⁹

“Peace that makes Male known as Male is צדיק (*Tsaddiq*), Righteous One. He is called Supernal King on its account, the King who possesses peace. Consequently, all of the praise of Song of Songs goes to the King who possesses all peace, producing unification in this place entirely. It takes all desires of all the limbs, all delight, all supernal longing, gathering all within. Therefore, He is called *One*.⁵⁰

“King Solomon, in the mystery of Holy Spirit: when Holy Spirit settled upon him, he desired to join everything in complete devotion, fittingly, to unite everything in affection, in the desire that everything shall be one, above and below. Of this is said *YHVH will be one and His name one* (Zechariah 14:9).⁵¹ [63b]

Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth's kisses! (Song of Songs 1:2).

“It is written: *As I gazed on the creatures—behold—I saw one wheel on the ground next to each of the four-*

faced creatures (Ezekiel 1:15). This verse was taught in Rabbi El'azar's circle. *As I gazed on the creatures*—mystery of Old Man Israel: linked inscriptions on the right and the left. Three inscriptions, bound one to another, in the south, east, and north—*YHV*. Concealed faces that the eye cannot see.⁵²

“But here, *I saw!* Actually, he was looking by way of a light that does not shine—like one gazing in a crystal, with eyes shut, crystal glistening within. Its flame flares momentarily, flickering. Sparkles revolve, one shimmer entering the other.⁵³

“One ascends and descends, fortified on the south side in the mystery of ך (*yod*). It intensifies, entering the north side, rotating in its links, entering and ascending in the mystery of ט (*tet*). Then it is treasured away, as is written: *God saw the light, that it was טוב (tov), good* (Genesis 1:4)—

glistening and flaring in the engraving of *tet*, so He treasured it away.⁵⁴

“Mystery of this letter: sealed in its concealment. All sparks and luminosity that shine and sparkle emerge from it. Happy is the one who sees it in a dream! It is an exedra from which sparks sparkle, burst forth, and are reabsorbed.⁵⁵

“Another ascends and descends, and is burnished on the eastern side, in the mystery of *tet* and *yod*. It spreads out from two sides and rotates in four. Two above, like the inheritance from Father and Mother. Two from two sides, from the south side and the north. Settling within them all is the upper chariot in its four sides.⁵⁶

“*One wheel on the ground next to... the creatures* (Ezekiel 1:15). This is lower chariot, encompassing four sides. Upper chariot, mystery of four sides, extends a light from three sides. One, embracing the legacy of Father and Mother, who had been two and joined as one; and two, from two sides.

“A light emanates from the east. Lower chariot reveals one face toward that light, receiving it, illuminated by it. When that face shines because of that light, it is called *Adonai*. It is sovereign, master in its sovereignty because of its great light. That face, upon receiving that light, is fashioned as a palace for it, treasuring it away within—and because of it becomes Lord, Master, Sovereign.⁵⁷

“A light emanates from the south. Lower chariot reveals a face toward that light, receiving it, illuminated by it. When that face is illuminated by that light it is called *EI*. It rules over the world to bestow goodness upon it in love, to provide nourishment for all, to each and every one, fittingly.

“A light emanates from the north. Lower chariot reveals a face toward that light, receiving it, illuminated by it. When that face is illuminated by it, it is called *Elohim*. It is Sovereign, Master, judging the entire world with justice

and providing justice to all in need, conducting everything justly.⁵⁸

“Up to this point, upper face and lower face are in the mystery of three—three joined, contained in one another. With one face remaining from the lower chariot, everyone inquires after Her: אופן (*ofan*), *wheel?* Where is that remaining פן (*pan*), face? The verse responds, saying: Where is it? *On earth* (Ezekiel 1:15), so that those below will not be neglected, even momentarily. That face—when three others all coalesce—takes from them all, embraced by them all. It alone is comprised within them all, caring beneficially for the whole world. This face offers continual praise, stimulating continual arousal toward transcendent ones above Her.⁵⁹

“Those [63c] lofty ones above Her arouse higher ones above. Those sublime ones above stimulate upward, tying this one with that one, endlessly. When the arousal of those faces is aroused with those supernal kisses, they cleave to supernal mystery, consummating and nourishing all worlds, all rejoicing, as is said: *Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth’s kisses* (Song of Songs 1:2).⁶⁰

Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth’s kisses! (Song of Songs 1:2).

created a man along with YHVH” (Genesis 4:1). *Adam*—Primal Adam, a pattern of subtle, sublime engravings. *Knew*—what he did not know about her before; he knew how to be face-to-face. As soon as face looked upon face in sexual union, then it was written, *knew*. He knew how to saturate her, to sow seed within her to produce offspring. This was all for the good, in the arousal of providence below.⁶¹

Uttered by Elijah: “It is written: *Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have*

“When the serpent copulated with Eve, injecting slime into her, Cain emerged from that filth. If you say, ‘How could he have emerged from there since it is written: *Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain?* This implies that he had come from Adam and not from the Other Side! But you had said that the serpent injected slime into her, from which Cain emerged!’

“In truth, that serpent actually did deposit filth in her! That demonic spirit, coming from the scum that was absorbed in her, rattled about in her belly, lacking a body to contain it, to go forth into the world. Once Adam, aroused by that slime, approached and united with his wife, he fashioned a body for that demonic spirit that had been in her belly, blending with it. It issued out into the world with an appearance—a distortion of his mother’s—from above and below. Eve gawked at this one, saying, “*I have created a man* תא (et), YHVH”—עם (im), along with, YHVH.⁶²

“Consequently, all of Cain’s actions came from that wicked Other Side. When he brought his offering, it came from that side, as is written: *It happened* מקץ ימים (mi-qets yamim), at the end of days (Genesis 4:3), and it is not written *It happened* מקץ ימין (mi-qets yamin), at the end of the right (Daniel 12:13).⁶³

“*She bore as well his brother, Abel* (Genesis 4:2). Actually, that demonic spirit was energized and made mighty through Cain’s deed. Abel’s power and potency were shattered; he was nothing in comparison. Up to this point, everything was under the dominion of the Side of Filth.⁶⁴

“When he approached her later and תש (Shet), Seth, was born, the world became stabilized and fragrant with the righteous and saintly ones who came into the world afterward. תש (Shin tav), Seth—consummation of the alphabet. Even though it was sweetened, foul crookedness did not cease from the world, though it was subjugated by the Side of Faith, because of the consummation of the

letters. Up to this point, the world had been created with the letters of the Torah, but the letters were not fulfilled until Seth was born. Once Seth was born, all workmanship was fulfilled by mystery of the letters. Then, the world was perfumed, its design perfected.⁶⁵

“From here on, the world began to conform to straight paths. It commenced initiation with the letters initially forsaken. אדם (*Adam*), *Adam*, begun with א (*alef*), concluded with מ (*mem*). Afterward, once the alphabet was completed with שׁת (*Shet*), *Seth* (Genesis 5:3), the letters returned. אנושׁ (*Enosh*), *Enosh* (Genesis 5:6)—א (*alef*) as before. ן (*Nun*), which succeeds מ (*mem*), abandoned after *Adam*. שׁ (*Shin*)—beginning of the letters of שׁת (*shin tav*), taking letters from this one and that one. ן (*vav*), image of *Adam*, demonstrating that the generations that followed the straight path in the world, fittingly, descended from Seth.⁶⁶

“Everything was composed with the mystery of letters. Thirty-two sets of the alphabet advanced until Israel stood at Mount Sinai. When Israel stood at Mount Sinai [63d] the letters were gathered in, completed with the inversion of the alphabet. The Torah emerged comprising thirty-two paths of the mystery of supernal Wisdom. The alphabet was inscribed within twelve boundaries, twelve tribes, excluding two that vanished from among them—טת (*het tet*), totally unseen among them until they first came into the land and execration pervaded them with Achan’s sin. Then, these two letters that had vanished from their midst returned, proclaiming and announcing: *Israel* אטת (*hata*), *has sinned...* (Joshua 7:11)!⁶⁷

“These letters did not disappear from among them, even though they were in the Holy Land, through every generation—until Solomon arrived, built the Temple, and worlds were established, above and below, in a single image. Then, all letters were put straight. These two letters inscribed among them were reversed and made reputable,

returning as ט (tet *het*), as is written: *Judah and Israel dwelt* לבטח (*la-vetah*), *securely* (1 Kings 5:5).⁶⁸

“There was peace among all the letters, no contention at all. All the letters of the alphabet were perfected, above and below. Elevated letters perfected above, tenuous letters perfected below.⁶⁹

“Cherubim spread their wings upward from below, and letters flew up from below, and the letters from above, below. These entered those, and those were embraced in these, with kisses of love. When letters joined, all the lower rungs and upper rungs—all the worlds united as one—these kissed those with kisses of love, until they were all one and the blessed Holy One was one, with no separation at all. All kisses of love exist only to be one entity, enfolding this one within that one, with no separation. These kisses subsist within all, causing all to be one, in one assemblage—letters within letters, worlds within worlds, rungs within rungs, wife within her husband, all becoming one.⁷⁰

פיהו (*Pihu*), *His mouth* (Song of Songs 1:2). Why פיהו (*pihu*), *his mouth*? It should be פיו (*piv*), *his mouth*! Well, this enfolds the two of them as one. פיהו (*Pihu*) demonstrates that She is ready, like a woman preparing her mouth to receive kisses from her husband. Thus, Her mouth’s readiness is seen in פיהו (*pihu*).⁷¹

“This deserves consideration. You might suggest that these kisses are transcendent—exalted up to *Ein Sof*—because Scripture formulates it in a hidden way with *Oh, let him kiss me... his mouth*, returning afterward to the revealed form: *your caresses* (ibid.). But—it is not so. Kisses are not suspended up there, but rather between wife and her husband. It is simply that before they had approached each other it was said in a hidden manner. After converging, kissing one another in loving embrace, She says ‘*your caresses*’ in a revealed way. It is not written

his caresses for they are intertwined as one in love, in unison, with no separation at all.⁷²

“*Since your caresses are טובים (tovim), better than, wine (ibid.). טוב (טוב), Good, comes solely from the side of Primal Light, as is written: God saw the light, that it was good (Genesis 1:4). ‘Now that You are perfected, Right blended into the Left, your caresses are sweeter מיין (mi-yayin), from wine.’ This is Wine of Torah, delight of the Left. Good—from the Side of the Left.*”⁷³

Rabbi Shim’on rejoiced, saying, “What true delight I have gained from all these sublime words!”

Elijah said to him, “Rabbi, open your mouth—since, as I have said, your words are written above, whereas mine, only below. Happy are you righteous ones before the Ancient of Days, in this world and in the world that is coming!”

Rabbi Shim’on opened, saying, “*Oh, Let him kiss me with his mouth’s kisses (Song of Songs 1:2). Oral Torah said this to Written Torah, for She pursues [64a] those kisses from Written Torah—pursuing His sweetness, uniting with one another through those kisses.*”⁷⁴

“When She is in the midst of her maidens’ dispute regarding Her adornment, all of them striving to be ornaments for Written Torah, She joins and is embraced by Written Torah in bliss—in a single bond—and He kisses Her amorously. Then, invigorated by Him, She says to Him with affection, ‘How much more precious are Your caresses than Your wine! Your love has seized me, intoxicating me with the wine of love, securing Me to You!’”⁷⁵

“Oral Torah receives magnificent adornment from Her maidens, uniting with Written Torah. Mishnah—crown of the head, mystery of the fitting adornment. *Baraita*—mystery of embellishment of thighs and feet. Body—maidens approach with the fitting array, coming close to decorate Her. One says, ‘מותר (Mutar), Permissible,’ and one says, ‘אסור’

(*Asur*), Forbidden’—this is ornamenting the bride, as they adorn Her. One says, ‘This jewel goes like so,’ and the other responds, ‘No, not like that. Surely, regarding the adornment for the head, the headdress is אסור (*asur*), tied, and the headdress is fastened like this.’ And the other one says, ‘The headdress is מותר (*mutar*), loosened, on this side—and אסור (*asur*), tied, and fastened on this side.’ ‘This golden brooch on the body’s garment—it is פסול (*pasul*), unfit, to have this ornament there.’ This one says, ‘It is כשר (*kasher*), fit, and appropriate to display this one together with that one’—all enhancement and adornment of the bride.⁷⁶

“In any event, as long as they beautify, flinging disputes about ornaments, She is enhanced in power, beauty, color, and refinement by them—sitting gloriously among them, feeling beautified by more than a hundred-fold. After She has been adorned by them, they all take hold of Her by Her ornaments and beautiful embellishments, bringing Her to the King—Written Torah. When *Matronita* sits with the King, refined in Her beauty, and the King sees Her exquisitely adorned, that ornament proclaims that the King should kiss Her—for that is the cleaving of love, being enfolded in one another.⁷⁷

“Who initiates those kisses and that love? Those maidens who adorned Her. When She and the King wish to bestow goodness upon the maidens—gifts for them all—they are given to them all at once. Even though they have contended with one another about the ornaments, the King and *Matronita* bestow gifts and presents with goodwill and affection, endowing them with an inheritance of a thousand worlds of longing for the World that is Coming. All the more so for those who know mysteries of wisdom, adorning embellishments, for there is no measure of their inherited legacy. Of them is written *So I may endow my lovers with substance, and fill their storehouses* (Proverbs 8:21).⁷⁸

“*Oh, let him kiss me from the kisses of his mouth.* Seven words corresponding to seven polished rungs above Her. Corresponding to them are *seven maidens chosen for her* (Esther 2:9), adorning Her, to bring Her to the King. ישקני (Yishaqeni), *Oh, let him kiss me*, corresponds to Life of the Worlds. מנשיקות (Mi-neshiqot), *From the kisses of—Acts of love for David* (Isaiah 55:3). פיהו (Pihu), *His mouth—Old Man Israel.* כי טובים (Ki tovim), *For sweeter—Primal Light.* דדיך (Dodekha), *Your caresses—beloved one from the womb.* מיין (Mi-yayin), *Than wine—transcendent wine, constantly guarded.*⁷⁹

“*Seven maidens chosen for her from the king’s palace* (Esther 2:9): Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Tsadqiel, Raziel, Yofiel. How many thousands and myriads of legions accompany them, as is written: *maidens without number* (Song of Songs 6:8)!⁸⁰

“Three verses here, all with numerical secrets. First, *Song of Songs—mystery of the chariot*, as was said. Second, *Oh, let him kiss me—mystery of seven words in seven rungs*, as was said. Third, *As for scent, your precious oils are fragrant* (Song of Songs 1:3)—[64b] mystery of ten words, ten utterances. This is the mystery of this praise, integrated in a single primordial entity. Praise of Sabbath is established upon this mystery, excluding the last twelve words, part of a different praise.⁸¹

“Here in Song of Songs, *Nard and saffron, cane and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes* (Song of Songs 4:14)—seven kisses on seven rungs. This verse of kisses has seven in number—from each rung, one kiss. Similarly with Jacob’s kisses—seven words comprised of his kisses, as is written: *Jacob kissed Rachel, lifted his voice, and wept* (Genesis 29:11).⁸²

“Tears of loving joy correspond to the word דיין (de-yayin), *from wine—love from joy—demonstrating that those kisses partake of the mystery of seven.* Since She is בת שבע (bat sheva), Daughter of Seven, all of Her words are seven. Of

this is written שובע (sova), *Fullness, of joy in Your presence* (Psalms 16:11). Do not read שובע שמחות (sova semaḥot), *Fullness of joy*, but rather שבע שמחות (sheva semaḥot), *seven joys*.⁸³

“Of all those kisses of love, there are none like those aroused here by Assembly of Israel: *Oh, let him kiss me* מנשיקות (mi-neshiqot), *with some of the kisses, of his mouth*. Even though they are seven kisses, as has been said, only three kisses are manifest here. Three kisses seen in Scripture: ישקני (yishaqeni), *Oh, let him kiss me*—one; מנשיקות (mi-neshiqot), *with the kisses*—two, yielding three. What She asks for now is for some of those kisses. When She says *mi-neshiqot, with some of the kisses* it means one kiss—since it is written מנשיקות (mi-neshiqot), *with some of the kisses*, and not simply נשיקות (neshiqot), *kisses*, since ‘kisses’ implies two. *With some of those kisses* signifies merely one.⁸⁴

“This is necessary. One who beseeches need not ask for much, only a little, because once He has begun, one who takes can take freely. One asks for little from the blessed Holy One and He gives abundantly. Abraham asked for little and the blessed Holy One gave him abundantly. He asked for one son—and what is written? *I will make your seed like the sand of the sea* (Genesis 32:13), for this is the way of the blessed Holy One. Thus it says *with some of the kisses*, rather than kisses.⁸⁵

“*Oh, let him kiss me*—fusion of love, spirit with spirit. Four spirits join and are made one. One gives his spirit to his fellow and takes the spirit of his fellow who has cleaved to him. Thus, his spirit and his friend’s spirit are two; similarly with his friend, yielding four spirits, united as one in those kisses.⁸⁶

“מנשיקות (Mi-neshiqot), *From the kisses*—from those lofty kisses, kissed before. For joyous love comes only from kisses—fusing upper spirit with lower.⁸⁷

“פיהו” (*Pihu*), *His mouth*—it is not written פיו (*piv*), *his mouth*. What is the significance of *pihu*? Surely, it is an invitation to the World that is Coming, the King who possesses peace entirely. Thus the supplemental ה (*he*), added because all love of the lower world is only for the sake of cleaving with the upper world—the World that is Coming. This is why all praises arouse lower world toward upper world.⁸⁸

“*For they are sweeter* (Song 1:2)—kindling and gleaming of supernal lamps. All luminaries are arrayed, kindling and illuminating, fittingly. *Your caresses*—those lamps, those beloved above, all shine and sparkle in their gleam, fittingly. *From wine*—from the joy of fine, supernal wine that illuminates faces, giving joy to the heart, worlds rejoicing in their portion, in that delight.⁸⁹

“Come and see! Israel takes its portion, rejoicing in the delight of fine wine—luminous, pure, tranquil, sitting upon its lees. All other nations take only from those dregs beneath the wine. Therefore, the blessed Holy One bids them to prepare a feast of dregs, for those lees are slag, apportioned entirely for the other nations. Consequently, Israel rejoices in that preserved wine that emerged from the World that is Coming, preserved within its grapes.⁹⁰

[64c] “We have learned: ‘One who sees grapes in a dream: if white, it is a good omen for him; if black, he should offer supplication, as he is undoubtedly being arraigned.’ What is the explanation? Those white grapes are the grapes that preserve supernal wine, their whiteness signifying Mercy. Red grapes—side of Judgment, the color red. If he eats them, he is worthy of the World that is Coming. Why? He has passed over the judgment and he can destroy it. He has a portion in the fine wine of the World that is Coming. If he drinks white wine, it is a good sign for him, signifying joy. Red—judgment rests upon him.⁹¹

“When Jacob approached his father Isaac, he gave him of that fine wine, preserved from the World that is Coming, for there is joy and love only when aroused from fine wine. Therefore Isaac, from the side of Hard Judgment, needed to be gladdened with fine wine that comes from afar. This is as is written: *he brought him wine* (Genesis 27:25)—wine from a distance, from a lofty place. He drew from that joy upon him, to gladden him. Then, anger was sweetened and Hard Judgment enfolded within Mercy, all as it should be.⁹²

“As a result, those דודים (*dodim*), loved ones—sublime lovers—holy lamps, shine only because of that wine. Who is that? Engraved name, expressed in seventy letters. For those holy lamps constitute the ineffable name of seventy names. This is the mystery of those grapes that preserve sublime wine, comprising those seventy. Therefore, joy and desire that are in those kisses arouse love from transcendent wine. Lamps shine and sparkle from that wine, as is written: *כי טובים דודיך מיין* (*ki tovim dodekha mi-yayin*), *your lovers are sweet from wine* (Song of Songs 1:2).⁹³

For fragrance, your oils are sweet (Song of Songs 1:3).⁹⁴

Rabbi Shim'on said, “I have contemplated this verse, concealed in a sublime mystery.

Fragrance—one fragrance and another fragrance; indeed, numerous fragrances. Aroma wafting upward from below, like fragrance of a sacrifice. This aroma ascends, clustering clusters in one another, concatenating in one another, until all is fashioned as one nexus. Its light—one fragrance.⁹⁵

“Another fragrance—King Messiah. He is called ‘aroma,’ as is written: *His sense of smell with the fear of YHVH* (Isaiah 11:3). He is called ‘fragrance,’ tied to the mystery of the scent of sacrifice, mystery of a *fire-offering, a fragrance pleasing to YHVH* (Leviticus 1:9).⁹⁶

“אֵשׁה (*Isheh*), *A fire-offering*, outside the cluster—nourishment and illumination of fiery forces and legions,

constricted in the afternoon.⁹⁷

“רֵיחַ (Rei’ah), *A fragrance*—within it, tied within, luminous in the mystery of Holy Covenant. It is called King Messiah, for it is the fragrance from those heavenly spices, as is written: *like the fragrance of spices*.⁹⁸

“נִיחֹאֵה (Niho’ah), *Pleasing*—illumination of all supernal colors, Beauty of Israel, magnificence of all. נֵיטְיָהָה (Neyyaha), *Balm*, for supernal spirit resting upon it, illuminating it.⁹⁹

“*For YHVH*—for the King of all. Everything is tied, one in another, illuminating one another—becoming one in the joy of all, in the mystery of sacrifices.¹⁰⁰

“If you wish, you could say that this fire, concentrated outside, is that very *fire* (Leviticus 1:9). For it comes from the fire that constricts innumerable forces and innumerable legions, blazing within each other—innumerable species in innumerable sides, gathered in the mystery of sacrifices. They return and enter into that *fire*, since they are all shield-bearers, masters of judgment. When they return, it is like anger that emerged from the nostrils, returning; then, there is comfort in that place.¹⁰¹

“As those forces and legions flare, constrained in their place, so too do the supernal holy forces and legions—masters of comfort and desire—illuminate; and they return [64d] in their glow to bind within that נֵי (he). Then they are all—these in those, one in another, in one bond called *fire*—mystery of comfort, nourishment, and illumination of all sides.¹⁰²

“*Fragrance*—point within the mystery of Holy Covenant. Why is it called *fragrance*? Because it is aroma of superb hidden spices, unrevealed. When they rest upon it, He smells them in it—actually!—like one who smells the fragrance of myrtle—it is fragrance of myrtle. This point is called *Fragrance Wafting from Myrtle*.¹⁰³

“נִיחֹאֵה (Niho’ah), *Pleasing*—the place where upper spirit rests, dwelling upon it, becoming the supernal chariot in

the mystery of seventy-two names. Transcendent chariot, one knot entire.¹⁰⁴

“For YHVH—all becoming one light. Therefore it is called *fragrance pleasing*.

“Fragrance always ascends from another rung, below, while this is fragrance from above. *For fragrance* (Song of Songs 1:3)—transcendent point abiding in concealment, from that most hidden of all concealments, not known at all. This point—aroma from that most hidden concealment. On account of that fragrance, all those oils and spices are all illuminated. They are called טובים (*tovim*), *good ones* (Song of Songs 1:3), because this one sustains them, all becoming one knot, illuminating as one. If this were not so, they would not be called *good ones*, for this heavenly fragrance enters hiddenness through a deep river—filling it, fittingly. Then all rungs are called *good ones*. What are טובים (*tovim*), *good ones*? Lights.”¹⁰⁵

“Rav Hamnuna Sava said thus: ‘These are the days called *tovim*, *good ones*. They are tefillin of the head, tefillin donned by the blessed Holy One. Hence they are called *good ones*, luminous upon the head of the exalted Holy One. ימים טובים (*Yamim tovim*), Festivals, are always tefillin of the head worn by the blessed Holy One. Mundane days of the festival, not called *yamim tovim*: tefillin of the arm, for the moon has nothing beyond the light of *yamim tovim*. Tefillin of the arm—tefillin of the hand—illuminated solely by light of tefillin of the head. Tefillin of the head—*yamim tovim*. Tefillin of the hand—mundane days of the festival.’ Beautifully said, and this is so!¹⁰⁶

“Therefore, mundane days of the festival are like *yamim tovim* with regard to work, and the same joy is required. Hence, on these days—tefillin of the Master of the Universe—it is forbidden to don other tefillin. For these days—sublime tefillin—rest upon the heads of holy Jews.”¹⁰⁷

Rabbi El'azar questioned his father, Rabbi Shim'on, saying to him, "Granted, tefillin of the head rests upon the heads of the holy people on festival days. But, as to tefillin of the hand—mundane days of the holiday—how shall we grasp it, since it is the dull hand?"[108](#)

"It is forbidden to do work on that side. Inducing joy on the side of tefillin of the head is required. The holy people grasp tefillin, and it rests upon them during the festival days and the mundane days of the holiday. It is forbidden to remove the tefillin of the Master of the Universe from one's head in order to put on other tefillin, for the people are paradigm and image below.[109](#)

"This is like a king who wishes to protect his servant. He says to him, 'Fashion an image of my seal. As long as that image is seen upon you, all will tremble and fear you.' Later, out of the intense love that he has [65a] for him, he gives him a seal from his noble signet ring. If he seizes the supreme seal of the king in his hand, the image he had fashioned abandons him. If that servant casts off the noble seal of the king with the seal that he had fashioned, that servant certainly deserves death—having disgraced the king's seal, with no regard for him. Consequently, it is forbidden for the Holy People to cast off the King's noble seal that rests upon them—with that image that we enact—during the festival and the mundane days of the holiday. All the more so on the Sabbath, when everything dwells upon us.[110](#)

"Sabbath of Sabbath eve—tefillin of the hand. Sabbath day—tefillin of the head. This is how the blessed Holy One arranges His love. On mundane days those tefillin fashion an image of the king's seal, protecting them on all sides. On the Sabbath and festival days—days and tefillin of the Master of the Universe, actually—they remove that image and don tefillin of the Master of the Universe. Happy are the people who grasp the noble seal of the king![111](#)

“One who wears tefillin is required to rejoice, as is written: *You shall rejoice in your festival* (Deuteronomy 16:14). One must rejoice with tefillin of the Master of the Universe! This joy comes during festival days and mundane days of the holiday, with tefillin of the head and tefillin of the hand. On festival days it comes from that supreme fragrance—*your oils are sweet* (Song of Songs 1:3)—tefillin of the head. On mundane days of the festival—*Poured oil is your name* (Song of Songs 1:3)—from tefillin of the hand, ascending, uniting in a concealed way with tefillin of the head.¹¹²

“*That is why the young women want you* (Song of Songs 1:3)—on the last day of the festival, when tefillin of the hand is complete, luminous in its perfection, distributing portions to all, to all legions and forces above and all legions and forces below. Therefore, עלמות (*alamot*), *the young women, want you*—legions and forces above; עולמות (*olamot*), worlds—legions and forces below.”¹¹³

Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, “*He smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him, saying, ‘See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH’* (Genesis 27:27). What did Isaac observe? For, despite Jacob’s bringing him food and drink, he did not bless him until he smelled those garments.

“Here, one should take note: those garments were not Jacob’s but, as Scripture attests, *the garments of Esau her elder son* (Genesis 27:15). Yet here is written *the fragrance of his garments!* Were they *his garments?* It should have said *the fragrance of the garments.* What is meant by *his garments?* The explanation is that these garments actually were his garments, not those of Esau. Even though it is written *the garments of Esau*, he had acquired them through thievery.¹¹⁴

“Similarly the well where Jacob sat, where Moses sat: possessed by others through embezzlement. When Jacob

came, the well discerned its master—waters rising toward him. The same happened with Moses.¹¹⁵

“Likewise, Esau had purloined those garments. When Jacob donned them, those clothes were revealed to their master. From the moment that the blessed Holy One produced them, their aroma did not waft upward until this moment when Jacob wore them—garments restored to their paradigm. Jacob bore the image of Adam, truly, as well as his beauty. Once Adam’s garments beheld Adam’s image, fragrance exuded.¹¹⁶

“Three fragrances emitted here: one, *fragrance of his garments*; two, *fragrance of my son*; three, *fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH*. All three, ascending to Isaac when Jacob came before him. All inscribed in this verse: *fragrance of his garments—young women want you* (Song of Songs 1:3). *Fragrance of my son—[the fragrance of] your oils is good* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*). *Fragrance of a field—poured oil is your name* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*). [65b] All one weave, actually!¹¹⁷

“Mystery of sacrifice that we have aroused on this matter, as has been taught: *A fire-offering* (Leviticus 1:9)—*young women want you*—all one mystery. *Fragrance* (Leviticus, *ibid.*)—*poured oil is your name* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*). *Pleasing* (Leviticus, *ibid.*)—*your oils are good* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*)—all one. *For YHVH* (Leviticus, *ibid.*)—*For fragrance* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*). All one substance, one mystery, one cluster, as has been said.¹¹⁸

“משכני (Moshkheni), *Draw me after you, let us run! The king has brought me into his chambers* (*ibid.* 1:4). It is written: *I will place משכני (mishkani), my dwelling, in your midst, and I will not loathe you* (Leviticus 26:11). Come and see: the blessed Holy One placed שכניה (shekhinteh), His *Shekhinah*, in Israel’s midst, crouching over them like a mother over her children, shielding them on all sides. Whenever Holy Mother rests upon them, the blessed Holy One comes to

dwell with them, for the blessed Holy One does not abandon Her, ever—all supernal fondness is upon Her. Therefore, He bestows Her as מִשְׁכּוּנָא (*mashkona*), a pledge, amid Israel, conveying that He will never forget or abandon them. Why? Thanks to that pledge within them. She says, ‘I have been a pledge in the lower realms; I will be a pledge to You, ascending before You. I and my children, *we will run after you* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*).[119](#)

“*Draw me*. Let us return to the weave of earlier words—mystery of *a fire-offering, fragrance pleasing* (Leviticus 1:9). At the moment that aspiration rises from below through mystery of sacrifice, She ascends, saying to Her Beloved, ‘*Draw me*, stretch out your right hand toward Me, to receive Me. Raise Me to the left, side of arousal. To the right, to embrace Me’—this is the significance of *draw me*, uttered *by fire-offering to fragrance; fragrance to pleasing; pleasing to for YHVH*. Thus, *we will run after you*.[120](#)

“What is the meaning of נְרוּצָה (*narutsah*)? *May we be favored*, as is written: וְנִרְצָה (*ve-nirtsah*), *it will be favorable, for him, atoning for him* (Leviticus 1:4). This is as is written: וַיְרִיצֵהוּ (*va-yritsuhu*), *and they hurried him, from the pit* (Genesis 41:14). What is the meaning of *va-yritsuhu*? דְּאָרְצוּ (*De-artsu*), They enticed him, with pleasing words—words of goodwill—for he was sorrowful as a consequence of that pit. Therefore, *narutsah, may we be favored*, with total acceptance, fittingly. אַחֲרֶיךָ נְרוּצָה (*Aḥareikha narutsah*), *Following you, may we be favored* (Song of Songs, *ibid.*)—first take the will, then take us. May all those young women be acceptable, as is written: *Draw me*.[121](#)

“From here we learn that favor and blessings are found only where male and female are joined as one. For this reason, *draw me* toward You first, that I might receive favor from that place where all goodwill is found. Afterward, *aḥareikha narutsah, following you, may we be favored*. If You don’t draw me toward You, aspiration and Upper Will shall

not rest upon You. For blessings do not inhere in womanless man.¹²²

“All this—this image I have awakened—is in mystery of א (*alef*), where all those mysteries reside. *A fire-offering, fragrance pleasing to YHVH*—mystery of above and below, all mysteries of faith depend upon it. And so, it is ascendant in אהא (*ehad*), one—all is *alef*.¹²³

“At the moment this letter bursts into the air, one thousand and one hundred worlds rise, coalescing within it. Other letters are inscribed, afterward engraved. Crowned with a crown, engraved, encompassing all worlds.¹²⁴

“Oneness—א (*alef*)—*A fire-offering, fragrance pleasing to YHVH. A fire-offering*—tip suspended below, mystery of all forces and legions, these and those. *Fragrance*—mystery above that tip, unifying with the middle. *Pleasing*—Chariot spreading out in the middle, supernal spirit dwelling upon it. *To YHVH*—Upper Point, above the middle, sustaining all. One cluster, entirely.¹²⁵

“The one behind the middle says, ‘*Draw me after you* to bond with you, absorbing blessings from Supernal Point above you. When we are Male and Female as one, once you take blessing and favor, I and the tip suspended from Me below, *we will run after you*. We yearn behind You to be one, perfectly, above and below, to be א (*alef*), each [65c] in its own total perfection.”¹²⁶

The king has brought me into his chambers... (Song of Songs 1:4).

It is surely His will that secrets be revealed in this generation!¹²⁷

“It should be known: words of connection are missing in this verse. Since it says *Draw me after you*, what is the meaning of *The king has brought me into his chambers*? It

Rabbi Shim'on wept as before, saying, “Oh, if only it were in our hands to reveal sublime secrets—what delight!

should say ‘Bring me to your chambers,’ and then *we will delight and rejoice in you* (ibid.)! But upper and lower entities—all worlds—depend on the mystery of letters. This is the link of words—a cluster of praise toward the light above Her—that She spoke to Her husband, center of the ך (alef): ‘*Draw me with You,*’ as has been said.[128](#)

“Although She has said this, She longs to be praised before Him. For even though She is below Him, diminished compared to the middle of the alef, resting beneath Him, She says: ‘This is negligible to me. Despite my status in relation to you, *The king has brought me into his chambers*—I am elevated and loved by the Supreme King, with no lowliness, for He *has brought me into his chambers*. Where is this place? In ך (he), the expansion above of the mystery of the Supernal King. Who enters there? It is I! Accordingly, I am greatly praised, in glorious exaltation, though I am common next to you. I care only to be lying under You, with You ruling over Me. Therefore, though I am lowly in relation to You, I and my legions, *we will delight and rejoice in you*. It is our delight and pleasure to be next to You, not set apart from You, for delight and pleasure are only in You. There is only delight and pleasure for a woman with her husband, mother, and father. *The king has brought me into his chambers*. I have received rapture and delight only in You.’[129](#)

“*The king has brought me into his chambers*—chambers of Garden of Eden. If you say, ‘Garden of Eden! She Herself is Garden of Eden, and She has said this?’—actually, those chambers are the chambers from which Garden of Eden is nourished and She is named after them.[130](#)

“First chamber—ך ׳ (yod he). Supernal chamber and hall, unseen, with no color at all, other than a fleeting hue from the measurement of Spark of Darkness. Afterward, it returns, ascending to *Ein Sof* in treasured-away concealment. This first chamber—once its measure vanished—the hue of

its coloring disappeared, secreted away, with no visible color. Then, on four sides—glimpsed in concealment, covered in disclosure—four letters, אֶהְיֶה (*Ehyeh*).¹³¹

“Why is it called so? Because it is poised to be revealed from within fragrance above. Until it is filled to shine below, it is called *Ehyeh, I will be* (Exodus 3:14). This sign—beginning of Moses’ prophecy; until here, Moon had not emerged from its sheath, to illuminate from Sun. Since Moon was in darkness until now, Sun did not shine upon Her and the upper chamber was not revealed for illumination. For Supernal Fragrance vanishes into Concealed of all Concealments, not known at all. Thus, *Ehyeh, I will be*.¹³²

“Once it returns to its place, then it is established—actually—illuminating all. Then, *asher Ehyeh, who I will be* (ibid.). Then, they are prepared to be filled from one slender path, entering in concealment. Even now, with these names, it is not revealed to kindle lamps. Subsequently a third *Ehyeh*, ready to be revealed, to spread out lights in every direction. This is *Ehyeh*—‘Behold! I am ready to be revealed!’¹³³

“This is the third one—[65d] enhancement of the shofar, blasting Voice. Once Voice emerges with the force of Beginning—for Voice goes out with the force of the One blasting it—that initiation of Voice is called אֶהְיֶה [YHVH with vocalization of *Elohim*]. For the force of this Beginning returns to its place, not revealed like other names. Afterward, when Voice spreads out in expansion of tranquility, then it is called אֶהְיֶה (YHVH)—revealed name. Mystery of mysteries for those who know supernal wisdom! Few are those [who know] this name.¹³⁴

“Even though we have upheld the mystery of letters above, the vowels and cantillation signs are a tradition passed from Moses at Sinai to the wise of heart—mystery of *In the heart of all who are wise-hearted I have set wisdom* (Exodus 31:6). For it is from the mystery of vowels and the

undulations of the cantillation signs that they knew how to illuminate designs above. They knew the vowels conducting the letters. From their mystery they knew and were informed how to sustain that design in accordance with supernal mystery. For intention and aspiration are required for all those actions and supernal tracings above. From the mystery of vowels' formations, they knew how to set aspiration and heart for each and every action.[135](#)

“All those drawings of the Dwelling were none other than the mystery of the tenuous letters—for there are large, supernal letters and small, tenuous letters. Small, tenuous letters—workmanship of the Dwelling. Large, supernal letters—workmanship of the Temple, the First Temple. These were designed to be sanctified above only with the drawing of the mystery of vowels of tenuous letters, those from the left side. Vowels of supernal, large letters—from the right side. These like those, completely forgotten—if not for those sages who came, having received light of wisdom from ancient ones, setting them upon the letters to send them on their journeys. Thus, craftsmanship of the Dwelling and craftsmanship of the Temple had perfect aspiration and intention in the design of their vowels.[136](#)

“The movements of the cantillation signs were entirely fulfilled by Moses. Of this is written *They brought the Dwelling to Moses* (Exodus 39:33)—established perfectly through their mystery. Undulations of cantillation signs have movements within mystery below, conducting and sustaining the workmanship of Dwelling, and undulations in mystery above, conducting and sustaining workmanship of the Temple.[137](#)

“King Solomon did not need the vowels and the signs; rather, they came secretly, whispering, traced in the engraved drawings of the Temple, as is written: *in its being built, stone complete...* (1 Kings 6:7). *In its being built,*

precisely! *Built only of stone complete for its journey* (ibid.).[138](#)

“*Stone complete*, not deficient with tenuous letters as in the case of the Dwelling. *The hammer, ax—any iron tool—was not heard in the Temple, while it was being built* (ibid.). *Was not heard*, truly: the place induced silence.[139](#)

“For this reason, the Torah scroll—image of the Temple—does not bear the image of signs and vowels, all concealed within. This resembles the form of mystery of the First Temple, where signs and vowels were hidden within.[140](#)

“Stress, from exertion at the commencement of Voice, returned to its place—letters of that place vocalized יְהוָה (YHVH) in the mystery of the name אֱלֹהִים (Elohim). Consequently, it is called by this name, revealing אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים (Elohim Hayyim), Living God. This is the meaning of its gathering and conveying vowels from below to above, above to below, then returning to its place. Afterward, spreading out in expansion of tranquility, vowels returned in the pattern [66a] of supernal mystery—all becoming one mystery, as is fitting.[141](#)

“Letters and vowels in one pattern. There are vowels in the first three letters, but final ה (he) has no light of Her own. ׀ (Yod)—illuminated by the light of the vowel, in accord with the same pattern, precisely! The same image, precisely! ה (He)—its illumination from a vowel in the same pattern, one mystery. ׀ (Vav)—in the middle, according to its mystery, body and spirit becoming entirely like its form, fully illuminated, fittingly. Therefore, this name is the name of compassion—letters and vowels in a singular pattern and mystery, a straight path.[142](#)

“When letters and vowels are twisted away from each other, then this is not the path of compassion, but a state of upheaval—mystery of *It came into the midst of the Egyptian camp* (Exodus 14:20). The mystery of engraved letters of the blessed Holy One can be seen in these three

sides. When inverted, it is not on the path of compassion, its letters having been overturned; all the more so with letters of a different pattern.[143](#)

“Final ן (*he*) has nothing of Her own and so lacks Her own vowel, unless She is made a messenger—when they lend Her a vowel, entering Her, forming troops and force. As they lend her a vowel, entering into Her, so too do they lend Her letters of the exalted mystery, perfecting Her through this mission.[144](#)

“Second chamber: לך (*El*)—chamber and vault of the right. It has an appearance that is concealed, then treasured away. When it emerges, it shines for a moment, then is treasured away.[145](#)

“*El*—why is it called so? ׀ (*Alef*)—mystery of the first light, contained within two lights. Therefore, *alef* is one—from there, beginning of illumination and expansion of the lights to every side. This is why it is first of all the letters, beginning of them all.[146](#)

“Totality of three that are one. Three lights contained in ׀ (*alef*)—one arm on one side, one arm on another side. ׁ (*Vav*) in the middle, encompassing two arms. The measure of the middle is necessarily equal to the two arms, on the two sides. For it possesses them—it alone is between the two. *Alef*—fire on this side, water on that side, spirit interposing in the middle. Partaking of both sides—all one.[147](#)

“Further, ׀ (*alef*) spreads out—pervasive principle in them all. Once integrated with the fullness of two sides by arousal from below, it arouses toward its Female. Then, *alef* is transformed—a different mystery. It acquires its Female from below and they join together as one. Then, Supreme Point rests upon Him, demonstrating that the upper light—First Point, in the mystery of Upper *Shekhinah*—only dwells in a place where Male and Female are joined as one.[148](#)

“בראשית ברא אלהים את (Bereshit bara Elohim et), *In the beginning, God created* (Genesis 1:1)—four *alefs*. Male and Female joining as one in four words. In each and every word an *alef*, signifying a male; in each and every word a letter, signifying a female.[149](#)

“From the book of Rav Hamnuna Sava: ‘בראשית (Bereshit), *In the beginning*—Adam and his wife. ברא (Bara), *created*—Abraham and his wife. אלהים (Elohim), *God*—Isaac and his wife. את (Et)—Jacob and his wife.’[150](#)

“If you say, ‘את (Et) is always female!’—come and see: ת (tav) is female, א (alef) is male—fused together as one! Then the female is seen in fullness, comprised in the mystery of all letters. Thus even though et is female, it is encompassed within the sphere of the male.[151](#)

“This is why there are four couples here. For each there is *alef*—male—joined with female—a different letter. Kiriath-arba, City of Four—so called because of the four great ones, officials of the world, joined together there.[152](#)

“ל (Lamed)—[66b] tower that flew into the air—Supreme King. Thus it is called לא (El), upper and middle as one. Uppermost and beginning of providence, beginning of all letters as one. לא (El)—א (alef) takes on the assistance of that tower that flies into the air, soaring upon it with the name.[153](#)

“Thirty-two paths issue forth from the Torah—mystery of ten utterances and twenty-two letters of the Torah, all emerging from the mystery of Supernal Point. Ten utterances, all comprised within the mystery of Torah—Supernal King, Mystery of Written Torah, World that is Coming. Twenty-two letters spread out and settle, illuminating from the beginning of Primal Light, in its mystery of unification. For there, letters are revealed; and from there, letters shine, ascending. *Alef*, mystery of all letters—in the mystery of One.[154](#)

“Third chamber: אלהים (Elohim)—red radiance, glittering like gold. Radiance, sometimes eager and kind, sometimes

darkened in gloom, not shimmering as before.[155](#)

“*Elohim*—mystery of arousal toward the Female on that side. This name—within the mystery of mysteries, for those who know wisdom. For this name is Male, arousing toward the Female—everything aroused with this name.

“Without arousal from this name, Righteous One would not be aroused. Even though it is entirely Judgment, and Righteous One is from the right side, nonetheless His arousal comes only from the Left Side.[156](#)

“Adam abandoned this side, aroused by gold’s snare emerging from its filthy dross.[157](#)

“אלהים (*Elohim*): א (*alef*)—Male; להים (*lamed, he, yod, mem*)—arousal of Righteous One. This is מילה (*milah*), circumcision, with פריעה (*peri’ah*), uncovering, without the side of foreskin at all. This is the case when this name is uttered beneficially, as with *Elohim remembered his covenant* (Exodus 2:24), where covenant is aroused. Likewise, with the mystery—*Elohim will surely take account* (Genesis 50:24).[158](#)

“On the Other Side, Torah attests to its Judgment—foreskin exudes there. Sometimes the Female inherits this name to judge the world with that mystery of foreskin. When this *Elohim* is strengthened above and foreskin is hardened, *peri’ah* is lacking. Thus, it is beneficial when in a state of *peri’ah*, for this is the uncovering of foreskin, its elimination, and revelation—mystery of Holy Covenant.[159](#)

“All in the mystery of *Elohim*, color transmuting into numerous hues—sometimes like this, sometimes like that—mystery of *Elohim*. *Elohim*—three names. One—*Elohim Hayyim, Living God*, which is *Everlasting King* (Jeremiah 10:10); *Elohim*—Fear of Isaac; last *Elohim*. From there, they spread out.[160](#)

“Gaze of *Elohim*, Fear of Isaac: *half of it to the First Sea, half of it to the Last Sea* (Zechariah 14:8). *To the Last Sea*—precisely!—for it is called by this name.[161](#)

“Since He receives from above, He has permission to encompass the right within Himself. When He absorbs the right within—then She is joyous!—He bonds with Lower Sea, under Her head, as is written: *His left hand beneath my head* (Song of Songs 2:6). Then He is called *Elohim*, for He has gone to the Last Sea.[162](#)

“This is the chamber of the Exalted King.[163](#)

“Fourth Chamber: image of Old Man Jacob. In the mystery of *YHV*, having received the inheritance of Father and Mother. He grows in their midst, setting out before them.[164](#)

“The universal practice of modesty can be seen here, following the pattern of the ordering of the letters of the Master of All—the protocol of their ordering—יהוה (*YHVH*). It is always customary for a man to put his wife before him—[66c] gazing upon her, removing any suspicion or jealousy from her, not casting an eye on another woman. ׀ (*Yod*)—Male, ה (*he*)—Female. ׀׀ (*Yod he*)—Female before Male, so that He can gaze upon Her constantly. Son goes before His Mother, shielding Her from ogling, for Her honor and the honor of His Father.[165](#)

“The sign for this: *A fruitful son is Joseph* (Genesis 49:22), as is written: *and last, Joseph and Rachel came forward* (ibid. 33:7), Joseph in front of his mother. [Jacob] took his wife, placing her before himself to watch over her—not any other—as is written: *The eyes of YHVH your God are perpetually upon her* (Deuteronomy 11:12). Not leaving his eyes for a moment! This is the order of the holy letters—this shall be the order above and below.[166](#)

“These letters—inscribed with the form of their inscriptions when they issued out with force and power of Shofar. Once they went forth with Shofar’s force and power (constricted, fashioning a sound comprising fire, spirit, and water), letters materialized, inscribed with their faces—each and every one, fittingly, settling into their stations. Letters, concealed within Shofar, with no visible trace at

all. Once they issued forth, they all materialized, inscribed with their images—each and every one, fittingly, as seen in the mystery of vowels.¹⁶⁷

“*His chambers* (Song of Songs 1:4)—hidden chambers. *Has brought me* (ibid.)—into the midst of those letters, in a nexus, in one fellowship. Why all this? *We will delight and rejoice in you* (ibid.)—so that we can delight in You.”¹⁶⁸

Uttered by Elijah: “*Draw me after you, let us run!* (ibid. 1:4). It is written: *God created the human in His image; in the image of God He created him...* (Genesis 1:27). When the blessed Holy One created the human—as the companions said, ‘Happy are those!’—those who were created with two faces, with supernal large letters and small lower letters.¹⁶⁹

“Supernal large letters in the correct order—toward the Male. Small lower letters in reverse order—toward the Female. Supernal large letters, in correct order, toward the Male—א ב ג ד (*alef, bet, gimel, dalet*). Likewise for them all, fittingly—letters proceeding in a straight path toward the Male. Small lower letters were inverted, in reverse order within the Female—ק ר ש ת (*tav, shin, resh, qof*). Likewise for them all, fittingly. She is behind, Knot of the Tefillin, called Back. This is as is written: *Back and front You formed me* (Psalms 139:5). *Back*—in relation to the Female; *front*—in relation to the Male, as is written: *you will see My back* (Exodus 33:23)—Female who was behind.¹⁷⁰

“When the Female was ornamented—supernal King ornamenting Her to settle letters in their places, fittingly—He brought them into their halls to be perfected, and the letters were perfected. Each female letter called to each male letter; and each and every letter—male and female—was perfected. Each letter called, saying, ‘*Draw me after you, let us run!*’ (Song of Songs 1:4).¹⁷¹

“When they were perfected for bonding, they were perfected in the mystery of א"ת ב"ש (*alef, tav; bet, shin*), settling

in, face-to-face. When Female longs to be seen by Him, She declares that She has been ornamented at the behest of Mother—all letters perfected. Thus *The king has brought me to his chambers* (ibid.). *The king has brought me to his chambers*—to be perfected and ornamented, fittingly.¹⁷²

“All of this because of *we will delight and rejoice* בך (bakh), *in you* (ibid.)—twenty-two letters, supernal inscriptions. בך (Bakh), *In you*—mystery of *You swore to them* בך (bakh), *by Your Self* (Exodus 32:13).¹⁷³

“*Let us recount your caresses* (Song of Songs, ibid.)—“When We join as one in our delight, let us give a portion to each and every one, from our delight! Let us saturate them, as is written: *May He recount all your offerings* (Psalms 20:4). *From wine* (Song of Songs, ibid.)—from our joy, from the side of that wine that brings joy to all.’¹⁷⁴

“*Upright ones love you* (ibid.). מִישָׁרִים (Meisharim), *Upright ones*—other letters that remain. Which ones? מ נ צ פ כ (Mem, nun, tsadi, pe, kaf). Among all the letters, none are called *upright ones* other than these [66d]. These are doubled—these rectified by those. מ (Mem) with ׀ (final mem). נ (Nun) with ׀ (final nun). צ (Tsadi) with ׀ (final tsadi). פ (Pe) with ׀ (final pe). כ (Kaf) with ׀ (final kaf). These are *upright ones*—these with those, this one with that one.¹⁷⁵

“Twenty-two letters, comprising בך (bakh), *in you*. Those remaining ones—*upright ones love you*—fused with you, among those twenty-two letters. Those *upright ones*—hidden letters—concealed within the supernal world. When Primal Light was concealed, these letters were concealed, but Adam knew them. After Adam sinned, they were concealed as before until Abraham came and apprehended them through Holy Spirit that rested upon him. Later, he bequeathed them to Isaac, as is written: *Abraham gave all he had to Isaac* (Genesis 25:5). Isaac bequeathed them to Jacob. Jacob bequeathed them to Joseph. When Joseph died and the children of Israel were in exile, letters were

concealed—vanished—as before, until Israel stood on Mount Sinai. The Torah was given to Israel—letters were revealed and Israel knew them in their pristineness, in the mystery of engraved names. Until they sinned.¹⁷⁶

“Once they sinned, it was written: *The Children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments* (Exodus 33:6). But Moses, Joshua, and those elders knew them, entering the land with them. Once the Temple was built and this Song was revealed, these letters were engraved within the twenty-two letters—mystery of ךּ (*bakh*), *in you—upright ones love you.*¹⁷⁷

“It is written: *It was You who established upright ones* (Psalms 99:4), and *Your palate is like fine wine—flowing to my beloved, to upright ones* (Song of Songs 7:10). All in the mystery of these letters—those that are called *upright ones*. These letters—crowns concealed within the World that is Coming. All of them, cascading in Thought, engraved in the mystery of holy names. Male engraved in Female, in accord as one. There is no accord among all the letters—these with those, this one with that one—without them.¹⁷⁸

“Another explanation: *Upright ones*—יָהּ (yod, he)—their love toward וָ (vav), in complete harmony, with unified desire toward וָ (vav). Therefore ‘*Draw me* (Song of Songs 1:4) toward You, to be with You.’ Holy, supernal letters יָהּ (yod, he), וָ (vav) joining them, yielding holy name יָהוָּ (yod, he, vav), while below Him, having nothing of Her own, Her desire is to ascend toward Him—to bond with Him. But She does not ascend without permission. She says, ‘*Draw me* to be with You, in a single union. *The king has brought me to his chambers* (ibid.)—beautifying Me with all kinds of adornments, sublime beauty, so I can be with You. Thus: *Let us delight and rejoice in you* (ibid.)—I and all my adornments, when I am with You in a single bond.¹⁷⁹

“*Let us recount your caresses* (ibid.)—as has been said, Let Us saturate everyone, providing joy from that wine that gives joy to all. Let Us not cease from bringing them joy, since *upright ones love you*, never ceasing to give You since they *love you*—giving to You, spilling into You, illuminating You.”[180](#)

Rabbi Shim'on said, “If it pleases my master, behold it is written: *It was You who established upright ones*. If they are יָדָה (yod, he), who can enhance them other than Ancient of all Ancients, utterly recondite? The One who is completely unknown, concealed, and hidden cannot be called *You*, yet *It was You who established upright ones!*”[181](#)

He replied, “It has been taught that letters have no image as they concretize, until they emerge. Once they have issued forth, materializing, they are embellished, and the blessed Holy One can be addressed by these letters. Consequently, *It was You who established upright ones!* Once they reach the place that is called *You*, then they are perfected as *upright ones*.”[182](#)

“Therefore, Her desire is to join with those letters, all becoming a complete name. Until Her sides have been perfected, She does not join with the other letters, all becoming the consummate Name. Thus [67a] in Her beautiful embellishments She says, *Draw me after you, let us run!* (ibid.)—She and Her sides. *Draw me after you, let us run! We will delight and rejoice*—She and Her sides, for She is perfected in the beauty of Her adornments, joining, becoming the consummate Name, in a single bond. When She ascends, then it is perfected Name—mystery of the name יהוה אלהים (YHVH Elohim).[183](#)

“If you say, ‘Behold, when She ascends, uniting, the name is complete—YHVH—there is nothing more! Where is the mystery of the Name *Elohim*?’ The answer is that once the name has been consummated, it encompasses upper and lower—upper in the name YHVH, lower in the name *Elohim*—totally complete.”[184](#)

“It is written: *King Solomon* ברוך (*barukh*), *Blessed* (1 Kings 2:45). Why is he called thus? *King Solomon*—King who possesses peace entirely. Sometimes it is written simply המלך (*ha-melekh*), *the king*, and not *ha-melekh Shelomo*, *King Solomon*. The explanation is, however, *king* by itself denotes House of David, while *King Solomon* signifies the King who possesses peace. *Barukh*—because from then on, flow of blessings never ceasing, above and below. *Barukh*—all blessings flow from there, blessing all worlds. All letters entirely illuminated, in one bond—unified perfection.¹⁸⁵

“Then, final letter of the holy name inherits this name, so that She too can be blessed, as is written: אלהי ... דוד אבי יהוה ברוך (*Barukh YHVH Elohei... David avi*), *Blessed be YHVH, God... my father David* (1 Kings 8:15). When it is called *barukh*, then it is all one name, complete, fittingly—all worlds blessed in Fount of Life. This name, above and below—sometimes above, sometimes below.¹⁸⁶

“Happy are you, holy nation, who have holy, supernal mysteries revealed to you!

“In the joining of the letters of the Holy Name, ו (*vav*) descends, drawing ה (*he*) upward from below—becoming a single bond. Subsequently, letters of the alphabet descend and ascend. א (*Alef*) descends toward ת (*tav*), drawing her toward him, joining these within those. ב (*Bet*) ascends toward ש (*shin*), from below, upward—drawn from below—crowned by Her husband. א (*Alef*) is mystery of the letter ו (*vav*), who longs to raise the Bride with songs that She aroused from below, when She was adorned. He extends a hand to Her, drawing Her upward toward Him—letters rejoicing, one with the other.¹⁸⁷

“At the moment that She says to Him *Draw me* (Song of Songs 1:4), א (*alef*)—namely ו (*vav*)—descends toward ת (*tav*) to draw Her toward him. At the moment that She says *Let us run!* (ibid.), ב (*bet*) ascends, running after ש (*shin*), namely *vav*. Then She enters into the chambers of the King—namely

three points—and into chambers and exedrae within chambers. Letter *shin*—three points and exedrae within.[188](#)

“At the moment that She says *Let us rejoice and delight in you* (ibid.), λ (*gimel*) comes to cleave to \daleth (*resh*)—then there is delight and desire within the twenty-two letters, completed by the letter *gimel*. Letter *resh* uncovers Herself before Him, to receive from Him, with no shame at all. He cleaves to Her, pouring into Her with desire.[189](#)

“At the moment that She says *Let us recount your caresses, from wine* (ibid.),’ She recalls how foreskin came into the midst of the camps—confounding Her delight—to take a portion of delight of holiness. When She sees him, impurity clutching at the edges of the Temple, She constricts Herself, giving him a squeezed-out ooze—concealed—like that which flows from a rock. Then \daleth (*dalet*) gives to \aleph (*qof*). *Qof* swells with delight, grabbing a portion in the Temple.[190](#)

“Since it is incumbent upon the Holy Bride to provide to that Impure One, She makes [67b] Herself \daleth (*dalet*), lowly, like one who takes little for herself—a pauper—as required. The sign for this is: *Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why display yourselves* (Genesis 42:1) as sated and wealthy? Sinners of the earth are before you—display yourselves as poor and hungry!’ Likewise, She displays Herself as joyous.[191](#)

“When the Evil One sees *dalet*, \aleph (*qof*)—serpent swelling, extending his tail, strengthened by the joy of suckling from the Temple—is poised to confound delight wherever he sees it. Therefore, wherever there is delight, one must increase one’s powers to prevent incrimination. Similarly, wherever there is mourning, one should augment one’s forces, because he will be found there—he will be unable to prosecute and his legions will be smashed.[192](#)

“At the moment that She says *upright ones*—invoking one letter from among those *upright ones*—a strong letter surges forth, tail extended fifty cubits below. Like that place where Haman was hung— \aleph (*tsadi*). When the serpent

raises its eyes, seeing the hanging that is looming, he forsakes the Temple, fleeing.¹⁹³

“Bride comes forth, toward Him, departing from ך (dalet), entering ה (he). She approaches Him and delight is perfected from all sides, with no foreign opposition, with no admixture.¹⁹⁴

“Here one must look closely. When She says *Draw me*, He is א (alef) and She is ה (tav). When She says *After you, let us run*, She is ב (bet) and He is ש (shin). When She says *Let us delight and rejoice in you*, He is ג (gimel) and She is ו (resh). When the serpent comes, when She says *Let us recount your caresses, better than wine*, She is ד (dalet) and the Accuser is ק (kof). Why are all these letters exchanged from one place to another—He substituted by various letters, and She substituted by various letters?¹⁹⁵

“The explanation is that when She says *Draw me*, no letter draws Her other than this—letter illuminating from the side of Primal Light, mystery of the right. For the right is always drawing near, strengthening Her to draw Her upward. Thus, He is א (alef) and She is ה (tav), for She is adorned by all sides to ascend upward—praising and glorifying to arouse above.¹⁹⁶

“At the moment that She says *after you, we will run*, She lifts up all Her internal legions—constituting a body—toward Herself. She is a house, receiving Her troops, ushering them in before the King, as is written: *Maidens behind her, her companions, are brought to you* (Psalms 45:15). Consequently, She is ב (bet) and He is crowned. He opens palaces—chambers of the King—to receive Her, bringing Her toward Him.¹⁹⁷

“At the moment that She says *Let us delight and rejoice in you*—behold, delight of Righteous One, poised to bring Her delight. Thus, He is ג (gimel) and She is ו (resh). Adorned alone, She is naked before Him, deriving delight. For that

place is like a wife disrobed for sexual intimacy with her husband.[198](#)

“At the moment that She says *Let us recount your caresses, better than wine*, the Accuser draws near. When She sees him, She fashions Herself as a pauper—in mystery of *dalet*—so that the Temple will not be rendered impure. The Accuser extends his tail gleefully, receiving delicacies of joy. Of this: \aleph (*qof*).[199](#)

“Until She utters *upright ones*, revealing *tsadi*: the Accuser flees. She approaches, crossing over from letter *dalet*, entering letter *he*. Then, *upright ones* are revealed: *he*, final *tsadi*—these are *upright ones*! *vav*, final *pe*—these are *upright ones*! This is why letters are exchanged from place to place, rung to rung—all in the mystery of letters of Torah.[200](#)

“Happy is the holy nation, those who cleave to transcendent King—everything perfected on their behalf!”

[67c] Rabbi Shim'on rejoiced. Elijah said to him, “Rabbi! Open your mouth and your words will shine before the Ancient of Days!”

Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, “If it pleases the master, may I ask one question of him?” He said to him, “Rabbi, a cluster of potency, in luminous engravings—how shall this be understood?”[201](#)

He replied, “This is as is written: *Draw me after you, let us run* (Song of Songs 1:4). Where the authority of the supernal king proceeds, there go all, and they are all drawn after Him. Now, Rabbi, speak your words, and prepare your weapons!”[202](#)

He opened, saying, “*Draw me after you, let us run! The king has brought me into his chambers*. It is written: *A psalm of David, when he was in the desert of Judea* (Psalms 63:1). Come and see: the blessed Holy One favored King David more than all other kings of the world, as has been said: *but I chose David to rule my people Israel* (1 Kings

8:16). What is the reason? From the day that David followed sheep in the desert, he gazed upon the craftsmanship of the blessed Holy One, extolling, *When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place* (Psalms 8:4).[203](#)

“What is the explanation? At night, everyone in the world lies asleep in their beds, and he would sit in the desert, gazing at the heavens, moon, stars, constellations—all heavenly works. He would say, *When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place*; and it is written: *YHVH our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!* (Psalms 8:10). Always fearfully reverent, he would praise and laud the blessed Holy One.[204](#)

“Later, he fled from his father-in-law, but through all troubles that befell him he would glorify and pray before the blessed Holy One. And now, *when he was in the desert of Judea*, with King Saul pursuing him, he sang, as is written: *A psalm of David*. Similarly, with Absalom, it is written *A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom* (Psalms 3:1)—he uttered poetry, and here he sings *when he was in the desert of Judea*, when they were pursuing him.[205](#)

“What did he proclaim? *אלהים אלי אתה (Elohim eli attah), God, You are my God; I will search for You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You* (ibid. 63:2). *Elohim Eli Attah*—three names. *Elohim, God*—his rung, Crown of Sovereignty. *Eli, my God*—Top of the Crown, resting upon him. He is the single pillar upon which the whole world stands, as is written: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world* (Proverbs 10:25). *Attah, you*—Supernal Right, as is written: *You are a priest forever* (Psalms 110:4). Three rungs here—*Elohim eli attah, God, my God, You*.[206](#)

“*I will search for You*, and I will seek You every day, constantly. *My soul thirsts for You*—like one thirsty to drink, so is my soul thirsting for You, my flesh longing for you—for

soul and body to cleave to You. *In a parched and weary land with no water* (Psalms 63:2). What is the meaning of *no water*? Where there is no light of Torah, luminosity of transcendent light.[207](#)

“*So, in the sanctuary I will behold You* (ibid., 3). What is the explanation? *So, in the sanctuary I will behold You*—even though I am in this wilderness, a place such as this, I see You, to cleave to You; and I pine after You, to see *your strength and glory* (ibid.). This is as is written: *Draw me after you, let us run* (Song of Songs 1:4)—when You draw me after You, all long to be with You.[208](#)

“*The king has brought me to his chambers* (ibid.)—chambers of the Garden of Eden. We have learned that when the blessed Holy One created Adam, He took dust from the Temple; he was created from there. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and then cleared an opening to the Garden of Eden, ushering him into seventy chambers—holy palaces. He fashioned ten canopies like those canopies the blessed Holy One is destined to construct for the righteous in the Garden of Eden. Noble angels danced before him, and he rejoiced there.[209](#)

“And there, the blessed Holy One caused all those spirits and souls to pass before him—those that were poised and destined to issue forth from him, [67d] to enter into humans. When King David’s turn came, he saw that he had no lifespan at all. He said before Him, ‘Master of the Universe, who is this one who, I perceive, has no lifespan?’ Ultimately, the blessed Holy One responded that it was King David. Once Adam understood this, he donated seventy of his own years—these are the seventy years of King David’s life. Each and every limb, from among all his limbs, gave of itself to him. This deducted seventy years of the thousand years apportioned to Primal Adam.[210](#)

“It is written: *Draw me after you, let us run!* Letters of the mystery of the Holy Name were engraved above and

below. When those letters protruded, ascending toward other letters, all those holy camps traveled on their journeys, in shame and fear, bearing no arrogance toward eminent ones.[211](#)

“From here: all those people who are shameless have no portion in the world that is coming. All those brazen-faced among Israel—when they would gaze upon the letters of the Holy Name that were on the $\gamma\text{״}\zeta$ (*tsits*), medallion, of the holy diadem of the high priest—became broken-hearted and examined their deeds. The *tsits* existed miraculously, for whoever looked at it felt ashamed of his deeds.[212](#)

“Letters of the mystery of the Holy Name *YHVH*—engraved upon the *tsits*—shone, protruding and sparkling. Whoever looked upon that gleaming saw letters protruding and would be crestfallen, terrified with fear of his Master—his heart shattering before the blessed Holy One.[213](#)

“Incense follows the same pattern. Whoever smelled the smoke, as a column rose from the smoke-raiser, became cleansed of heart, through refinement and illumination, bliss and fervor, to serve his Master. Slime and filth from the evil impulse dissipated—then he had a single heart directed toward his Father in heaven. For incense pulverizes the evil impulse in all aspects, actually! Just as the *tsits* existed miraculously, so did the incense, for nothing in the world breaks the Other Side besides incense.[214](#)

“Come and see. It has been established, as is written: *Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take the fire-pan and place fire upon it from the altar and put in incense’* (Numbers 17:11). Shattering the Other Side occurs only with incense, for there is no delight and love before the blessed Holy One like incense! It is poised to eliminate sorcery and evil elements from the home. If the fragrance and incense smoke prepared by regular people for that purpose has the power to eliminate, all the more so incense [in the Temple].[215](#)

“This matter is an established decree before the blessed Holy One: Whoever contemplates and reads *Pittum ha-Ketoret* (the Preparation of the Incense) daily is spared from all elements of sorcery in the world—from all mishaps, evil fantasies, harmful judgment, and from pestilence. He will not be harmed that entire day, for the Other Side is unable to wield power over him. But he must focus his intention upon it.”[216](#)

Rabbi Shim'on said, “If people knew how exalted the *Pittum ha-Ketoret* was before the blessed Holy One, they would take every single word and elevate it as a crown upon their heads, like a crown of gold. Whoever devotes himself in the *Pittum ha-Ketoret*, concentrating upon it every day, has a share in this world and in the world that is coming. Pestilence will depart from him and the world, and he will be delivered from all judgments of this world, from evil aspects, the castigation of Hell, and from the damnation of another kingdom.”[217](#)

“In that incense, as the smoke rose in a column, the priest would see letters of the mystery of the Holy Name spread out in the air, ascending upward in that column. Afterward, numerous holy chariots would surround it on all sides until it ascended, delighting whom it delights. With that incense, [68a] noble מתקשרי קשורין (*mitqasherei qishurin*), links were forged—limbs descending, drawing upward from a lower rung. Then She says, *Draw me after you, let us run!* (Song of Songs 1:4), because the קטורת (*qetoret*), incense, מקשר קשרין (*meqasher qishrin*), forges links, above and below.”[218](#)

He opened, saying, “*You shall make a מזבח (mizbeah), altar, for burning incense ...* (Exodus 30:1). One should contemplate this verse, for there were two altars: an altar for burnt offerings and an altar for aromatic incense—one outside, one inside. The incense altar was inward.”[219](#)

“Why is it called *mizbeah*, a *slaughter-site*, since no animals were sacrificed on it, and a *mizbeah* is named for

that? The explanation is that it nullifies and binds many evil aspects. That Other Side was bound like a burnt offering, tied for slaughter; here, too, the Other Side is bound, unable to rule nor to act as prosecutor. Therefore, it is called *mizbeah*, a *slaughter-site*.[220](#)

“When that Other Side saw the column of incense rising, he was subjugated; he fled and could not approach the Dwelling at all. Consequently, everything was purified—no other mingling in that joy above beside the blessed Holy One, alone. The Other Side derived no pleasure from it, and he has no portion in it as he does with the other sacrifices and burnt offerings. For with other offerings, everyone has a portion and intimacy through the offering. With the incense, no one connects or gains intimacy other than the blessed Holy One, and all evil aspects flee.[221](#)

“Limb binds with limb, this one with that one, each and every one, fittingly. Since it is so beloved, that altar could only stand in the most inward recess. For this is the altar where blessing is found, hence it is concealed from sight.[222](#)

“This sign has been transmitted to us, that wherever *Pittum ha-Ketoret* is uttered with intention and heartfelt devotion, pestilence cannot rule and no one can be harmed. Neither other nations nor other rungs can approach.[223](#)

“What is written of Jacob? *He set his own herds apart* (Genesis 30:40). From here we learn that he purged refuse from the Temple, setting his own portion apart, along with all of those chariots that were fit for the mystery of holy faith. *And did not put them with Laban’s flock* (ibid.)—setting the portion of other nations apart so that they would not mingle with the holy faith. *Connected flocks* (ibid., 41)—bound in a single nexus, unmingled with other nations, because they may never attach themselves to them.[224](#)

“Incense follows the same pattern. For all the holy chariots of the mystery of faith were bound with that

incense, and all supernal and lower limbs were tied together—these with those. For holy chariots below approached, becoming bound—these with those—so that they could all be united, fittingly.^{[225](#)}

“All those camps of the other nations are scattered and separated from each other. Therefore, Israel is called a *single nation* (2 Samuel 7:23), for they are united in a single bond. Therefore they are called צאן המקושרות (*tson ha-mqusharot*), *connected flocks*, in contrast to other nations.^{[226](#)}

“It is forbidden to burn incense in another place.^{[227](#)}

“One who is pursued by judgment needs this incense and must turn back to his Master, for this helps to remove judgments from him. Thereby judgments surely withdraw from him, if he regularly [68b] recites this twice a day, in the morning and in the evening—as is written: *And Aaron shall burn upon it aromatic incense morning after morning*, and it is written: *And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight he shall burn it* (Exodus 30:7–8). This sustains the world perpetually—as is written: *a perpetual incense before YHVH throughout your generations* (ibid., 8). This sustains the world below and sustains the world above.^{[228](#)}

“Wherever the *Pittum ha-Ketoret* is not recited daily, judgments from above prevail, and many plagues and other nations gain dominion there. For it is written: *a perpetual incense before YHVH—enduring perpetually before YHVH*, surpassing all other rituals.^{[229](#)}

“*Draw me* (Song 1:4)—with letters of the holy name: when two names join as one, becoming a full name, *YHVH Elohim*. First name draws another name toward it.^{[230](#)}

“The reason it is written *after you, let us run* (ibid.), and not *I will run*, is because of this name *Elohim*. How many chariots and how many courts are all encompassed within and joined to it! Therefore, it is written *after you, let us run*. Multitudes contained within this name, and it is one name, entirely. Once first name draws another name, it is

all one bond. Upper entities and lower entities—all rungs bound, one with the other, becoming one nexus, one connection, one unity.²³¹

*“The king has brought me into his chambers (ibid.)—supreme, holy King. His chambers—elevated chambers and chariots’ holy vaults—primal chambers.*²³²

“First chamber: Light shining from the right side. Light shining from one end of the world to the other end of the world. Light encompassing all lights. Four-colored light engraved in four sides of the world, called *El gadol*, Great God. Light that takes first—foremost hall and chamber. This is the light united at the top—mystery of *YHVH*.²³³

“Second chamber: Light of darkness, emerging from the side of first light. Red, darkening light—called *Elohim*, on the left side to bond with the first light.²³⁴

“Two halls, bound and joined with one another. Lower light unites with them, and supernal King brings Her into these holy halls. ‘I and all of them—when we are bound as one in a single nexus—we will delight and rejoice בך (*bakh*), in you (ibid.). We will delight and rejoice in the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, called בך (*bakh*), in you.’ This is as is written: *You swore to them בך (*bakh*), by Your Self* (Exodus 32:13); and בך (*bekha*), *By you, will Israel bless* (Genesis 48:20).²³⁵

“אב גד הו זח טי כל מנ סע פצ קר שת (*alef bet, gimel dalet, he vav, zayin het, tet yod, kaf lamed, mem nun, samekh ayin, pe tsadi, qof resh, shin tav*): twenty-two letters of the alphabet, permuted in twenty-two alphabets, in mystery of their holy names engraved in their names. They are called בך (*bakh*).²³⁶

“We will delight and rejoice בך (*bakh*), in you. בך (*Bakh*), In you, actually, for all letters partake of this holy covenant—mystery of בך (*Bakh*), in you: אב גד הו זח טי כל מנ סע פצ קר שת (*alef bet, gimel dalet, he vav, zayin het, tet yod, kaf lamed, mem nun, samekh ayin, pe tsadi, qof resh, shin tav*).²³⁷

“אשב גתד הקו זרח טפי כצל מסן עזר” (*alef shin bet, gimel tav dalet, he qof vav, zayin resh het, tet pe yod, kaf tsadi lamed, mem samekh nun sofit, ayin zayin resh*).[238](#)

“*Akhtariel Yah Tseva’ot, seated on a high and lofty throne* (Isaiah 6:1), and all the troops of princes of lofty hosts. On His right—life; on His left—death. The throne stands upon four columns.[239](#)

“The right column upon four blazing letter-flames: יהו (bet, shin, alef; dalet, tav, gimel; vav, qof, he; het, resh, zayin; yod, pe, tet; lamed, tsadi, kaf, nun, samekh, mem; ayin, zayin, resh; yod, he, vav)—mystery and concealment of the first of four columns supporting the throne, in the mystery of the alphabet. [68c] Twelve for each and every column—establishing each of them on twelve supporting columns—bearing the throne.[240](#)

“Left column—a different mystery. Mystery and concealment of the left column: [רבק צגפ עדס נהם לוך כזי טחי הוי] (tav, alef, shin; resh, bet, qof, tsadi, gimel, pe; ayin, dalet, samekh; nun, he, mem sofit; lamed, vav, kaf sofit; kaf, zayin, yod; tet, het, yod; he, vav, yod)].[241](#)

“The throne is established upon them in mystery and concealment of twelve supports. But, behold, there are only nine! The explanation is that three letters combine within a single permutation, on this side and that side, yielding three words. They ascend and descend, hidden in mystery of YHV, glyph of the engraved, holy name.[242](#)

“יהו יוה הי” (YHV YVH HYV)—hidden away in the first column, column of the right.[243](#)

“יוה יהו הי” (YVH YHV HYV)—hidden away in the left column, completing the throne in mystery of twenty-two letters of the alphabet. Covenant gathers them in, absorbing them within Himself, in mystery of בך (*bakh*), *in you*. Thus, *we will delight and rejoice* בך (*bakh*), *in you* (Song of Songs 1:4).[244](#)

“*Let us count your lovers, from wine* (ibid.)—from wine of Torah. *Your lovers*—deputies, surrounding the holy throne.

Those great ones reign, acquiring judgment from wine. Of this is written *I would give you spiced wine to drink* (ibid. 8:2)—seventy lovers.²⁴⁵

“They are: *Mikhael, Gavriel, Refael, Nuriel, Qedumiel, Malkiel, Tsadqiel, Padael, Tumiel, Ḥasdiel, Tsuriel, Ramael, Yofiel, Saturiyah, Gazriel, Lehamiel, Ḥezkiel, Rahatiel, Qedashiel, Shavniel, Gadhasiel, Umiel, Qadamiel, Ḥakhmiel, Ramael, Qadashiel, Aniel, Azriel, Puriel, Ḥakhmiel, Mavniel, Qaniel, Gadiel, Tsurtaq, Ofafiel, Raḥmiel, Sansaniyah, Vadargazriyah, Vadargaviyah, Rasasiel, Romiel, Saniyah, Tohariel, Azriel, Gadiyah, Shemieli, Inael, Tasuriyah, Danael, Tsuriyah, Kesisiyah, Iriel, Samkhiel, Maroniyah, Kamaniyah, Yeruyel, Tatusiyah, Ḥuniel, Zakhariel, Va’ariel, Datiel, Gadiel, Barael, Ahaniel.*²⁴⁶

“These are the ones encircling the holy throne, called *your lovers*. Their shining and sparkling, from *your lovers* above. Shining and gleaming—hidden, in transcendent concealment. Of them is written *your lovers are sweet, from wine* (Song of Songs 1:2). *Your lovers*, all one assemblage—lower ones from the midst of upper ones—all luminous and shimmering from that preserved wine.²⁴⁷

“Transcendent, mysterious ones—called ‘secret creatures, *darting to and fro* (Ezekiel 1:14)’—shining from a transcendent realm, World that is Coming. Lower ones shine and sparkle from that mystery, concealed light—for they are scintillating.²⁴⁸

“All of them *from wine*—from those seventy names, concealed lights. For those seventy that go around the holy throne below are all from [68d] those seventy inner lights. *From wine*—from those lofty lights—wine of Torah, and they are supernal lamps, illuminating faces and lamps.

“These are the seventy names of the blessed Holy One, in the mystery of the alphabet—twenty-two letters. Among them, ten lofty ones—א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט (alef, bet; gimel, dalet; he, vav; zayin, het; tet, yod)—and twelve others, transmuting into numerous colors, letters permutating. But they never change, for wine of Torah spreads out from here.²⁴⁹

“It does not emerge from those letters but rather from their mystery, for all letters issued from a supernal hidden and concealed point—mystery and entirety of Torah. Letters were not inscribed until they entered a secret palace; letters emerged, liquid, then gelling.²⁵⁰

“Then holy name is engraved in mystery of letters, in the midst of letters that created heaven and earth—supernal, engraved name in mystery of forty-two letters. Once the letters were established in their configurations and the world was stabilized, letters were arrayed in seventy-two names, called ‘wine.’ Seventy names of the blessed Holy One, constituting יין (*yayin*), wine:²⁵¹

נמם י"ל הרח מצר ומב יהה ענו מחי דמב מנק איע חבו ראה יבם היי מום
רהע י"ז ההה מיך וול ילה סאל ערי עשל מיה והו דני החש עמם ננא נית מבה פוי
י"י מלה ההו נתה האא ירת שאה ריי אום לכב ושר יחו להח כוק מנד אני חעם
מהש ללה אכא כהת הזי אלד לאו ההע יזל מבה הרי הקם לאו כלי לוו פהל נלך
והו ילי סיט עלם.²⁵²

Black am I, but beautiful (Song of Songs 1:5).²⁵³

“Lamp of the West,
when it reigns,
standing together with
Lamp of the East—this

one black, this one white—how beautiful in that white light! Light of a lamp: two lights joined as one, lower one black, upper one white. This one ruling over that one, white over black. Nonetheless, how beautiful is She, with adornment from below!²⁵⁴

“Numerous adornments abiding below Her: wick, lamp, and oil. She stands—resplendent—in sublime abundance, in that white light. Similarly, *daughters of Jerusalem* (ibid.)—adornments from below, abiding below Her—Her children. *Dark like the tents of Kedar...* (ibid.)—one black, and one white.²⁵⁵

“Black am I, but beautiful. It is written: Train the youth, according to his way. Even when he is old, he will not

swerve from it (Proverbs 22:6). When the blessed Holy One created the human, He created him according to the transcendent image. His limbs and smooth members, all in sublime mystery.^{[256](#)}

“He lowered him to earth in the Garden of Eden which the blessed Holy One created on earth—in a hidden place, treasured away—in the image and pattern of the one above. This is as is written: *YHVH Elohim took the human and placed him in the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it* (Genesis 2:15). *And placed him in the Garden of Eden*—unspecified, for it is all one mystery.^{[257](#)}

“You might say that in the upper Garden of Eden there are numerous boundaries—abundant fortifications delimiting, entirely surrounding it—with profuse, eminent camps and holy spirits, whereas here, in this earthly Garden of Eden, it is not bounded in this way. For if you were to say that since it is in the celestial image—invested with numerous spirits and souls of the righteous—then before there were righteous ones in the world, this lower Garden of Eden did not abide in the highest image!^{[258](#)}

“In fact, it was in the preeminent form and image from the day the world was created, actually! Until the human was created, how many [69a] boundary-walls of angels surrounded it! It never lacked protection since, in all those palaces, officers guarded it.^{[259](#)}

“Before spirits were assembled to come into this world, all spirits and souls destined to come into the world were already there—even before the human was created. Until the day they came into this world, all spirits destined to come into the world were already there.

“Those spirits and souls, ascending and descending, departed heavenly Garden of Eden, alighting in lower Garden of Eden. They dressed there in garments—bodies of this world. They devoted themselves to Torah study, to know and contemplate the glory of their Master, through

that garment. Each and every one as destined in this world.[260](#)

“One who is handsomely and fittingly adorned in that garment, and is devoted appropriately, they raise him above, before the Holy King—in this garment, simulacrum of the one of this world. He stands before Him and the blessed Holy One delights in him, as is written: *He replied, ‘As YHVH lives, before whom I stood...’* (2 Kings 5:16). *I stood*—before I appeared in the world.[261](#)

“In some instances, holy spirits don garments—models of the bodies of this world—and the body ultimately abandons holy spirit, straying after an evil spirit. Then, holy spirit flies away from the midst of that garment, and that garment is drawn outside the Garden of Eden. For on every second day and fourth day an evil spirit—*woman of whoredom* (Hosea 1:2)—goes about the Garden of Eden. Some garments are lured by that evil spirit, and evil spirit craves them. Since a holy spirit normally descends and is garbed there, it does not remain in its midst, fleeing, flying upward, while that garment is inveigled by an evil spirit which casts it beyond. Afterward, it is judged in Hell, remaining there until the person arrives, donning it in Hell—judged in it every day.[262](#)

“Holy spirit that fled that garment ascends upward—entering a certain treasury—until that sinner begets a son or offspring that draws down that holy spirit into it, completed fittingly. Then, that sinner is comforted, squeals, and ascends, donning another garment. He stands at the opening of Garden of Eden seeing the holy spirit that he had abandoned—how glorious, how luminous! And he is ashamed by it. He looks, too, upon the glory of the other righteous ones, and weeps—disgraced by his behavior.[263](#)

“When the blessed Holy One created the first human, He brought him into the Garden of Eden in a garment—glorious with light of the Garden of Eden. He was completed there with spirit and holy soul—perfectly

consummate. He and his wife promenaded around the Garden of Eden, eminent angels surrounding them, delighting them with innumerable pleasures and enchantments. He opened a certain treasury for him, displaying for him all later generations, each and every generation. With the speculum that shone upon them, he beheld countenances from above and countenances from below.[264](#)

“*Woman of whoredom* landed, along with the one who rides and presides over her—heartless one, inducing all to deviate. They gazed upon the supernal glory of Adam and his wife. *Woman of whoredom*, strengthened by the force and power of the one who rules over her. She sidled up to Eve, beginning to allure her with copious enticements, numerous blandishments—until she was finally beguiled. Then, Adam was inveigled and those garments flew off him. Soul—radiance from speculum above—vanished. And he was left utterly naked—he and his wife.²⁶⁵

“Since he contemplated repentance [69b] after being expelled from the Garden of Eden—subsisting outside—the blessed Holy One had compassion upon him, fashioning other garments for him like those required for use in this world. Later, he availed himself of them, fathering children.²⁶⁶

“Radiance of the elevated soul had vanished from him—ascending upward, concealed in a treasury called Body—until he fathered children, and Enoch emerged in the world. Once Enoch arrived, noble radiance—holy soul—descended into him, and Enoch abided within that eminent abundance that Adam abandoned. This is as is written: *Enoch walked with God* (Genesis 5:24).²⁶⁷

“Later, the blessed Holy One needed to take him from this world, encompassing holy spirit from below and above, incorporating everything into that spirit. That holy spirit, composed of entities from below and above, in order to draw all things—each species—after its own kind. Once integrated, he was transformed into an angel, in this world and the world above. In this world, from coalescence cohering from this world; in the upper world, from the side of coalescence cohering from above.²⁶⁸

“Whenever righteous and saintly ones are in the world, that totality—bound below—is renewed from the side of Enoch. Then he is נער (*na'ar*), Youth, in mystery of renewal of the Moon. This is mystery of חנוך לנער (*hanokh le-na'ar*), *Train*

the youth, according to his way (Proverbs 22:6): What is the meaning of *according to his way*? *According to the way* of חֲנוּךְ (*Hanokh*), Enoch, to follow the path of truth—the way of perfection.²⁶⁹

“*Even when he is old* (ibid.)—visage of Enoch from when he was absorbed into that holiness. Do not say that he aged from length of days and that he was removed from that place! Not so! Indeed, every time that there are righteous and saintly ones in the world, totality from that side is renewed—the image appearing as a youth, actually! He never swerves from there. It is because of that totality that lower ones inherit supernal, saturating dew, and legacy of holy bounty descends into the world.²⁷⁰

“Thus, *Black am I* (Song of Songs 1:5)—from the side below. *But I am beautiful* (ibid.)—from the side of totality above.²⁷¹

“*Black am I*—when I see how many sinners anger the Master of All, and I nourish them with the side of coalescence below that is in Me. *But beautiful*—from the side above.’²⁷²

“*Daughters of Jerusalem* (ibid.)—even though Jerusalem and the Temple are all one, the Temple is superior in numerous sanctifications, multitudinous levels. Temple is one, Jerusalem is one, and Holy of Holies in their midst, more inward than them all. Thus, when *Matronita* is adorned and longs to approach Her husband—when She is arrayed—She says to Her troops, ‘*Black am I*, from the side below; *but beautiful*—from the side upon which lower collectivity depends.’ As is written: *you, cleaving to YHVH your God* (Deuteronomy 4:4). Israel, *cleaving to YHVH*—to that embellishment more than any other.”²⁷³

Black am I, but beautiful. Elijah said to him, “Rabbi, all these words were inscribed above in your name before you came into the world! Now renewed, all established as before—all sealed with the seal of the King’s signet.”²⁷⁴

He opened, saying, “*God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of heaven’* (Genesis 1:14). This verse has been taught, the companions have awakened its meaning, and so it is. But, why is it written thus on the fourth day? Already from the second day the moon appeared deficient, since on the second day, Hell was created. Since it was created then, Moon is lacking on its account! Why is it written on the fourth?[275](#)

“One might ask further: [69c] if the moon is degraded on the fourth day, behold we have taught that a virgin should be married only on the fourth day. The day on which Virgin of Israel is degraded is not fit for another virgin to attain fulfillment, since a woman only gains completion through her husband![276](#)

“The explanation is that on the second day, when Hell was created, it did not attain full existence. For it emerged on the second day—namely darkness—and was created from it, as is written: *He sets an end to darkness* (Job 28:3). The manner of that setting: *each limit he has probed* (ibid.). When? After it was fully established. And it was not fully actualized until the moon was diminished on the fourth, for Moon is fourth leg of the supernal throne. Because She is fourth day in relation to the other three supports, Her fashioning is spoken of on the fourth day. For She has diminished Herself and Her light has been darkened.[277](#)

“Therefore, a virgin is present on the fourth, demonstrating fulfillment of Moon. On that very day when a virgin is married—on the fourth—and she is fulfilled below, a crier calls out above, ‘*Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy! Though I have fallen, I rise; though I sit in darkness, YHVH is my light* (Micah 7:8). Thus, day of falling signifies rising, as is written: *Though I have fallen, I rise.*[278](#)

“*God said, ‘Let there be מארת (me’orot), lights’*—written deficiently, because room was given for *Sitra Aħra* to rule. He veiled the light of the Moon, like the nut whose shell covers the kernel on all sides—shell hardened on the outside, like

foreskin on Covenant. Consequently, light from above is darkened.[279](#)

“Daughters of Jerusalem (Song of Songs 1:5)—She says this toward those legions, not involved in adorning, unlike those intimates. To those innermost ones engaged in adorning, She does not say this. To those intimates who know Her embellishments, who adorned Her with countless, magnificent beautifications, She says, ‘Oh, let him kiss me (Song of Songs 1:2)! How gorgeously prepared am I, to receive kisses from the King!’[280](#)

*“To those outside, oblivious to Her adornments, She says that She is *black* from the side of the lower ones, from the side of the lower collectivity—so that they would not look upon lower ones with an evil eye, denouncing them.*[281](#)

“For they are jealous only of lower ones—when lower ones are elevated, they are more resentful than anyone. If you say that there is no jealousy among them, we have learned that there is no rivalry between them, but there is toward others.[282](#)

*“Since She is like a mother over Her children, over Israel, the most graceful and beautiful ornament of all, from the side of that lower collectivity—on whose account She ascends—She removes them from the view of troops outside so that they will neither begrudge nor denounce Israel. For this reason, *Do not look at me, for I am pitch-black* (ibid. 1:6)—do not look upon this adornment, *for I am pitch-black.*[283](#)*

*“Of all her adornments, there is no embellishment so ravishing and exquisitely sublime—facilitating ascent toward holiness—as that ornament from the side of lower collectivity. All this, She said toward those troops, not toward Her lovers. Of this, She says to them: ‘*Black am I, but beautiful* (ibid. 1:5).’[284](#)*

“Further, ‘*Black am I*—from side below. *But beautiful*—from your side, you *daughters of Jerusalem*. My adornment—through you, for you are holy legions. Therefore, do not look upon me—upon an embellishment from the side of lower ones.’[285](#)

“All of this—like a mother watching over her children. How many accusers poised there! If they were to gaze upon that adornment from collectivity from below—how exquisite, how beautiful, enabling ascent above—they would rush to prosecute, recounting Israel’s sins. They would prevent Her from ascending above, uniting with Her Husband.[286](#)

“Thus, *like the tents of Kedar* (ibid. 1:5)—from the side of lower ones. *As the tapestries of Solomon* (ibid.)—from your side. Therefore, *Do not look upon me*—do not gaze upon Me at all, or upon any of My ornaments from the side of lower ones. For [69d] it is on their account that the sun has scorched Me. Not only this, but *My mother’s sons were incensed at me* (ibid. 1:6)—patriarchs of the world, when they saw My darkness from the side of lower ones.[287](#)

“If you ask ‘Is it appropriate to speak this way?’ the answer is ‘Yes,’ appropriate from two perspectives: One, from path of peace, so that none will bring charges against Israel, Her children. And the other, so that they will not impede Her ascent to join with Her Husband, absorbing comfort. For everything is in the Moon.[288](#)

“When She veils the light of the Moon, Sun does not approach Her, beyond a single ray of transcendent love, drawing down upon Her. It bores into that shell, smashing its power, giving Her splendor and beauty. Of this She says: ‘*Black am I*—from the side of foreskin; *but beautiful*—from the side of that ray drawn down upon Me.’[289](#)

“Further, *black*—from the side of transcendent darkness when invigorated, as is written: *Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth* (Isaiah 60:2). *But beautiful*—from the side of Primal Light. Of this is written *though I sit in*

darkness (Micah 7:8)—from the left side; *YHVH is my light*—from the right side.²⁹⁰

“*You cannot look at me, for I am pitch-black* (Song of Songs 1:6)—She says to Her legions, ‘How confounding for you! For *You cannot look at me*, when that side enshrouds Me—you cannot be illuminated from Me or gaze upon My light at all!’²⁹¹

“*My mother’s sons were incensed at me* (ibid.)—vanished above. The sun withdrew and *my mother’s sons* ascended above. Consequently, foreskin rules. And you, *you cannot look upon me*—you will be unable to see Me or to look upon My light at all.²⁹²

“*They made me guardian of the vineyards* (ibid.)—foreskin is upon Me, suckling from Me, imparting to legions and troops of other nations. *My own vineyard I did not guard* (ibid.)—My holy legions. I am unable to feed them when I am subject to that side.’²⁹³

“Now one must look carefully: how can one engaged with song utter complaints and rebuke at the commencement of praise? Actually, in truth, the first explanation is the mystery of praise. Further, everything is contained within Scripture.”²⁹⁴

Uttered by Elijah: “*Black am I but beautiful* (ibid. 1:5). It is written: *Beautiful in loftiness, joy of all the earth* (Psalms 48:3). *Beautiful in* נֹפֵא (nof), *loftiness*—beauty of נֹפֵא (nofa), boughs, of the Tree of Life—mystery of totality of all letters. For when letters are engraved and inscribed on the Tree of Life, all letters ascend, inscribed in one letter—gathered in that letter. Once they are all combined within, it sends them forth.²⁹⁵

“That letter—praise of them all. That letter makes no other mark beyond itself, embracing all within itself, leaving no inscription beyond concealment and hiddenness.²⁹⁶

“Which is it? ’ (Yod)—single point with no other inscription. All other letters have some other mark where they are written, that mark remaining in the whiteness of that letter. ’ (Yod) is distinct, a single point, with no whiteness from elsewhere.[297](#)

“This point, inherited by the Bride among Her array. It is a single point in the midst of Her forces and camps—designated as Yod, single point. Once She has ascended into this name and is called Yod, She is embellished with heavenly adornments, saying, ‘*Black am I—I have no room to embrace others within Me at this time. For I have been called by the name Yod, in order to ascend above.*’[298](#)

“Thus, *Black am I, but beautiful*—like the preeminent embellishment, top of all rungs. I have been comprised within it, ascending upward. Right now, I have no leeway to expand, to be revealed. I am covered up, with no visibility within mystery of a single point, ascending point by point.[299](#)

“Since I am *black* with no latitude for expansion beyond, *you cannot look upon me*—you have no license to view me at all. You are unable [70a] to gaze upon me, for I am concealed and hidden in the mystery of a single point—no known dimensions at all.[300](#)

“All letters have breadth in whiteness, other than Yod, having no gamut to be viewed at all. Thus, *You cannot look upon me, for I am pitch-black*. On all sides, there is no speck of whiteness, or compass to include others within Me.’

“*Like the tents of Kedar* (Song of Songs 1:5)—hidden among rocks, not venturing out. Similarly, *O my dove, my perfect one* (ibid. 5:2) *in the clefts of the rock* (ibid. 2:14)—a point in the midst of Her legions.[301](#)

“*As the tapestries of Solomon* (ibid. 1:5). *Tapestries of Solomon* encompassed as one, in one letter—utterly unseen in that letter. They are six and they are five. *Mystery of Five of the tapestries shall be joined* (Exodus 26:3)—with no

separation at all. One comprising them, hidden and concealed. One letter with no whiteness from elsewhere. This is ם (*vav*)—no place within it where any other principle can be seen; rather, everything, sealed up within it. Similarly, this point, with no whiteness from any other place—everything comprised within it. Who is enclosed within it? Six other sides.[302](#)

“*Like the tents of Kedar* (Song of Songs 1:5)—another letter containing within it all other rungs, no whiteness from elsewhere, everything contained within it. This is the letter ם (*zayin*). This letter—*tents of Kedar; tapestries of Solomon*—the letter ם (*vav*). Regarding the letter *zayin*, it belongs to the children of Kedar—all waging war, constantly, more than all the other nations. They are prepared to do battle at the end of days with all other nations of the world.[303](#)

“Thus, *Black am I*. As has been said: containing no whiteness from elsewhere, containing all within. *Like the tents of Kedar*—the letter *zayin*, containing no whiteness from elsewhere, containing all within. *As the tapestries of Solomon*—*vav*, containing no whiteness from elsewhere, containing all within.[304](#)

“Despite all this, notwithstanding that these two—*tents of Kedar* and *tapestries of Solomon*—are sealed, containing no whiteness from elsewhere, none is as concealed and hidden as ך (*yod*). Consequently: *You cannot look upon me*, as has been taught.[305](#)

“If you ask, ‘What about ן (final *nun*)?’ It proceeds from ם (*vav*), expanding in the totality of Male and Female. Emerging from ם (*vav*), it is not counted independently. But these two are black, independently. Principle of their inwardness, their inmost parts: no visible whiteness from elsewhere—*Tents of Kedar* and *tapestries of Solomon*. Of all the letters there is none like ך (*yod*), sealed on all sides.[306](#)

“*Beautiful in loftiness* (Psalms 48:3)—beauty of the Tree of Life proceeding from *vav*. Encompassed afterward in

the letter *yod*. After pouring forth all those blessings in a single nexus, it is comprised within *yod*, all becoming one point. This is *joy of all the earth* (ibid.). After being incorporated in that point, it is all *Mount Zion* (ibid.)—one point.³⁰⁷

“Despite Her diminutiveness, She is *city of the great King* (ibid.). No expanse seen in Her, nor whiteness to contain others, yet She is *city of the great King. Great King*—transcendent and sovereign. All His troops, altogether, enter the point—*yod*.³⁰⁸

“This is the meaning of the verse *There was a little city, and few people within it* (Ecclesiastes 9:14)—no whiteness in Her to contain and gather others within. *A great king came to it* (ibid.)—the letter *lamed* (lamed), tower soaring in the pure ether that can be grasped (in contrast to a different ether that cannot be grasped—unknown).³⁰⁹

“Even though this letter is king, greater than all other letters, He enters into Her—small, black letter, containing no whiteness from elsewhere. She gathers Him in, incorporating Him. *He circled it* (ibid.) once—*tet* (tet) that had been *lamed*. In that rotation, revolving around, it was fashioned into the circular *tet*.³¹⁰

“*He built great siege works עליה (aleiha), against it* (ibid.). עליה (Aleiha), *On Her behalf*—trapping [70b] and plucking one who deserves Her snare, as is written: *for She is all snares and nets* (ibid. 7:26). *Built on Her behalf. On Her behalf*—because of Her, actually! For Her honor, granting Her sovereignty over Her children. Numerous executions are imposed by tribunal—abundant penalties, countless punishments—for one who transgresses against that point. Harsh penalties are levied in consideration of this point.³¹¹

“On account of this point—King Solomon lost his kingship, torn away and given to others—despite its being the smallest of letters, one letter alone. For at that time, ’

(*yod*) arose before the holy King, saying before Him: ‘Behold, King Solomon has transmuted me into a lie!’ Which *yod* said this? The *yod* from לא ירבה (*lo yarbeh*), *let him not amass, many horses*; from לא ירבה (*lo yarbeh*), *let him not amass, many wives*; and from of silver and gold לא ירבה (*lo yarbeh*), *let him not amass, too much* (Deuteronomy 17:16–17). The blessed Holy One said to her, ‘Solomon will perish, and a thousand more, yet you will not be uprooted from your position.’³¹²

“Then, קוף (*qof*) decamped from the company of the blessed Holy One, driving Solomon out of his kingship. He wandered off like a commoner, announcing and proclaiming with the letter ק (*qof*): ‘I, קהלת (*Qohelet*), *have been king over Israel in Jerusalem* (Ecclesiastes 1:12).’³¹³

“Of this is written *He built great siege works on her behalf*, trapping people in their sins, for Her sake. If this happened to King Solomon and he was caught in those snares, all the more so—indeed, even more so—for the rest of humanity. Therefore, She says *Black am I*, as has been said. Thus it is written: *You cannot look upon me* (Song of Songs 1:6): ‘You will be unable to see Me and enter into My midst, *for I am pitch-black* (ibid.)—all this as has been taught.³¹⁴

“‘*My mother’s sons were incensed at me* (ibid.)—they constricted me into this point, preventing others from gaining entry to my interior. They spread out, perfected in their configuration, fittingly. Perfected, expanding in the letter ו (*vav*) that emerged from a transcendent point, perfected in their configuration, fittingly. Perfected, expanded, and engraved in the letter ש (*shin*) that emerged from there. Perfected, engraved, and expanded in the letter ך (*final nun*). Perfected, engraved, and expanded in the letter ם (*final tsadi*). And I—I cannot expand in any direction, nor have they left me any space to incorporate you.³¹⁵

“*They made me guardian of the vineyards* (ibid.). I am a single point, guarding the other letters that are written with me. And I guard them, for I go into all the letters and they all spread out from me, expanding from my inwardness.³¹⁶

“*My own vineyard I did not guard* (ibid.) for I have neither extension nor branch, to this side or that. For if I were to spread out branches, I would grasp you within me. But, *I did not guard*—I have not generated branches to any side of the world. *I did...guard*—safeguarded from branching out.’³¹⁷

“This letter—House of Israel—legacy from the transcendent point, as is written: *For the vineyard of YHVH Tseva’ot is the House of Israel* (Isaiah 5:7). Consequently, ‘*My own vineyard I did not guard*; for I have not sent forth branches to any side of the world, to hold you fast.’³¹⁸

“And I, *guardian of the vineyards*—casting forth and extending branches to all letters, composed from within me. While, from My own letter, I have not extended branches. As a result, *You cannot see me*—you are unable to gaze upon Me, or enter into My midst.’³¹⁹

“All this since She is $\bar{\eta}$ (*he*), constituted within Her own unity, ascending upward. She does not need to encompass any other within Her since She, in Her own unification, is an inward point among Her legions. All Her troops long to draw near, into Her midst. But after saying this, She withdrew, concealed from them, delighting above. Once She ascends, Her troops withdraw from Her.’³²⁰

“This is perplexing, since Her legions never abandon Her for a moment! When She is constituted within this letter, She is self-enclosed—hence Her lament. Then [70c] Her troops leave Her, unwillingly. She disengages from them, ascending upward. Upon ascending upward, She says to Her lover, ‘*Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest them at noon?* (Song of Songs 1:7).’”³²¹

Rabbi Shim'on rejoiced, saying, "If it pleases the master, let the one who began this discourse finish it. Since the master's words delight, let him conclude what he commenced!"³²²

He said to him, "Rabbi, your words, engraved and hewn out above, should be said first. My words, engraved and hewn out below, I shall speak afterward. Open your mouth, and let your words shine!"

Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, "הגידה לי (Haggidah li), *Tell me, you whom my soul loves*. I have aroused awareness: Wherever it is written הגד (hagged), *tell*; ויגד (va-yagged), *and he told*; or הגידו (higgidu), *tell*—these are all words of evocation, and one should contemplate them. Here, it is written *tell me*—mystery of wisdom.³²³

"You might say, 'Behold, numerous such instances in the Torah lack mystery of wisdom! For example, it is written: הגד הגיד (hagged higgid), *He just told, us that the asses had been found. But as for the matter of the kingship, he did not* הגיד (higgid), *tell, him what Samuel had said* (1 Samuel 10:16).' Ah, but even these—from the mystery of wisdom! For if they were not of the mystery of wisdom, how did Samuel know if they had been found or not? *The matter of the kingship*—supernal wisdom above and below, mysteries of the blessed Holy One.³²⁴

"*Tell me, you whom my soul loves*. It is written: *God said, "Let the waters under heaven be gathered to one place"* (Genesis 1:9). When the desire arose in the Will of the blessed Holy One to create the earth, He took some snow from beneath the Throne of Glory, casting it into the water. Constrained there, the earth congealed within the water, and was concealed there in darkness, in its tenebrousness.³²⁵

"When He said "*Let the waters under heaven be gathered to one place,*" springs went forth, drawing waters from above to the place of the world's foundation. Then

Earth, which had been concealed below, was adorned, prepared to be seen. Had this place not been prepared, Earth would not be seen, for this place was perfected with the flow of supernal waters only for the sake of providing for the Female.³²⁶

“Once it was arrayed for Her, then, *let the dry land appear. Let...appear*—let Her appear in Her finery. From here we learn that a woman should appear in her finery and adornments only when she is with her husband—then, let her appear and be adorned, fittingly.³²⁷

“Then *God called* לִיבֶשֶׁה אֶרֶץ (*le-yabashah arets*), *the dry land earth* (Genesis 1:10). At first it was יִבֶשֶׁה (*yeveishah*), dry, with neither appearance nor form to produce fruit and greenery. Once perfected by Her Husband, immediately She was called *arets, earth*, a place constituted to produce fruit and greenery. At the very moment that He said “*Let the waters under heaven be gathered*”—in actuality!—then all joy, all delight, all perfection was restored. Once all adornment was arrayed, She rose up toward the Male, saying, ‘*Tell me, you whom my soul loves, אֵיכָה (eikhah), where, do you pasture your sheep? אֵיכָה (Eikhah), Where, do you rest them at noon?*’ (Song of Songs 1:7).³²⁸

“אֵיכָה, אֵיכָה (*Eikhah, eikhah*), *Where, where*—two times, signifying destruction of the First Temple and destruction of the Second Temple. Thus, *where do you pasture*—first destruction; *where do you rest them at noon*—second destruction. Our joy—wondrous and fitting. I must pray from the midst of this joy regarding the two Temples: one being the Upper Temple, one being the Lower Temple.³²⁹

“*I would be at peace like one enrobed...* (ibid.), if not for these two times that I have been prompted to call out ‘*eikhah, alas.*’ *I would be at peace*—at peace, *like one enrobed*, with no pride at all. At peace, over My children below.’³³⁰

“כֶּעֻטְיָהּ (Ke-otyah), *Like one wrapped* (ibid.), as is written: *he is wrapped in a cloak* (1 Samuel 28:14). She is enclosed in a transcendent, holy wrapper—the holy name יְהוָה (Yah). *I would be at peace*—She would be at peace, with all supernal consummation. כֶּעֻטְיָהּ (Ke-otyah)—כֶּעֻטְיָהּ יְהוָה (Ke-oteh Yah), *Like one wrapped with Yah*—integrated in all supreme perfection. *Over the flocks of your fellows* (Song of Songs 1:7)—holy rungs, all corresponding to the ultimate paradigm.³³¹

“Then, [70d] He will reply to Her, beginning after these words, conclusion of the praise. He says, ‘*If you do not know, O loveliest of women* (ibid., 8). If you do not know the reason for these two utterances of *alas* (ibid., 7), *go forth* (ibid., 8)—go, look at the causes of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. Know the reason: *by the tents of the shepherds* (ibid.), destined to abrogate the Torah in the First Temple and the Second Temple.³³²

“‘*Tell me, you whom my soul loves* (ibid., 7). Beloved of my soul, *tell me*, according to the mystery of wisdom, תִּרְעָה אֵיכָה (eikhah tir’eh), *where do you pasture* (ibid.)? אֵי כְדִין תִּרְעָה (Ei ke-dein tir’eh), *Where do You desire, to be close to me, so that I will be near You in joy, to be with You? For when I will be with You, I will be at peace* (ibid.). I will be at peace like the kernel of the walnut, enveloping the palaces within, as is written: *Know today and take to your heart that YHVH is Elohim in the heavens above and on the earth below, there is none else* (Deuteronomy 4:39).’³³³

“Happy are all those engaged with Torah in order to learn the wisdom of their Master, knowing and contemplating transcendent secrets! For when a person departs this world, that lore causes all forms of judgments against him to vanish. Not only this, but thirteen gates of mysteries of pure balsam, from which Supernal Wisdom is suspended, are opened for him. Not only this, but the blessed Holy One engraves his likeness upon that purple robe, where all

images are engraved, in this world and in the world that is coming. The blessed Holy One delights with him in the Garden of Eden, and he inherits two worlds: this world and the world that is coming.³³⁴

“The wisdom one must know: First, to learn how to contemplate the mystery of his Master.

“Second, to understand his body, to become aware of who he is. How was he created? Where did he come from? Where is he headed? Perfection of the body—how is that achieved? How will he be summoned to judgment before the Sovereign of All?³³⁵

“Third, to know and contemplate mysteries of his soul. What is it, this soul within him? Where did it come from? Why did it enter this body—fetid drop!—here today, tomorrow in the grave?³³⁶

“Fourth, to contemplate this world in which he finds himself. How can it be perfected?

“Afterward, with supernal mysteries from the world above, to know his Master. All this, one should contemplate within mysteries of Torah.

“Come and see: whoever goes to that world without this knowledge, even if he has many good deeds, he will be ejected from all its gates.³³⁷

“Go out, look at what is written here: ‘*Tell me* (Song of Songs 1:7)—speak to me of mysteries of wisdom! How do you pasture and conduct that world? Teach me mysteries of wisdom, of that supernal Wisdom, those that I have neither known nor contemplated before, so that I will not be disgraced among those upper rungs that I shall enter. For until now, I have not contemplated them.’³³⁸

“Come and see what is written: *If you do not know* (ibid., 8). If you arrive without knowledge, without having contemplated wisdom before entering here, and you do not know mysteries of the upper world, *go forth* (ibid.)! You are unworthy to enter here without knowledge. Gain awareness בעקבי (*be-iqvei*), *in the tracks of, the sheep* (ibid.), among

those people who are trampled בַּעֲקֵב (*be-eqev*), underfoot. They know supreme mysteries of their Master, and from them you will learn how to perceive.³³⁹

“*Graze your kids* (ibid.)—these are the children, striplings of the study hall, learning Torah. *By the tents of the shepherds* (ibid.)—in the synagogues and study halls where they learn supernal wisdom. Even though they do not understand, you will gain understanding from the words of wisdom they speak.³⁴⁰

“It is written: *God made the two great lights* (Genesis 1:16). *God made*—in the beginning, the two lights were equal, one corresponding to the other, as the companions have established. We have established that those two lights were one mystery, cleaving together as one. They were balanced, [71a] both called *great*, as we have established.³⁴¹

“It is not the case that in the beginning Moon was great and transcendent. Rather, whenever Moon abides with Sun in one mystery, it is on account of the Sun that She was called *great*, along with Him. The tail of a lion is part of the lion, and ‘lion’ it is called.³⁴²

“Moon said before the blessed Holy One: ‘Is it possible for a king to use two crowns at once? Rather, this one on its own and that one on its own.’

“He said to Her: ‘I can see that Your wish is to be head of the foxes. Go, diminish Yourself! Even though You will be their leader, You will be smaller than You were.’³⁴³

“This is what Moon said: ‘*Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture* (Song of Songs 1:7)—how is it possible for You to conduct [the world] with two crowns at once. *How*—how can You manage? *At noon* (ibid.)—for moon is unsuited to shine and You cannot conduct [the world] with two crowns at once, with sun and moon—for what light does moon have at midday? Consequently, You cannot use two crowns at once.³⁴⁴

“*Lest I be like one veiled* (ibid.)—how shall I be enwrapped at noon when the light and power of sun increases and intensifies? I am veiled in shame before Him. I cannot serve before You. And You, how can You manage, making use of two at once?’[345](#)

“The blessed Holy One said to Her: ‘I understand You. Go, diminish Yourself! *If you do not know, O loveliest of women* (ibid., 8)—for you have asked: How is it possible for Me to manage with two crowns at once. Go! Diminish Yourself, and be the leader of foxes!’[346](#)

“*Go forth in the tracks of the sheep* (ibid.)—go out and be the leader of all those troops and puny soldiers below. *Graze* (ibid.) them, manage them, and be sovereign over all those lower ones, treating each and every one as appropriate. Be the ruler at night, actually! Go out and diminish Yourself; it befits You.’”[347](#)

Elijah said to him, “Happy is your portion! For the secrets of your Master shine before you like the light of the sun. So all the words of your mouth are engraved above, and I rejoice having heard them from your mouth. You are worthy in this world and worthy in the world that is coming. This teaching is suspended before the Holy King and is not revealed to all the soldiers above. Who is the one who has revealed it now in this verse? You are the one! Happy is your portion in this world and in the world that is coming!”[348](#)

Uttered by Elijah: “*Tell me, you whom my soul loves* (ibid., 7). Once She has ascended upward, having slipped away from the midst of Her troops and all of Her camps, into the mystery of ’ (*yod*), She says, ‘*Tell me, you whom my soul loves*, You who are the beloved of my soul, *where do you pasture?* Since I am merely a single point, with no expansion at all—contained within Myself—I can neither gather nor give.’[349](#)

“She said this to Her beloved because She sat, constricted within Herself, in one point. But He desires to penetrate Her, as is written: *A great king came to her* (Ecclesiastes 9:14), even though She is the smallest of all letters.[350](#)

“Of this, from the day the Temple was destroyed, the blessed Holy One swore that He would not enter there until Israel entered below. This is as is written: *The Holy One is in your midst and I will not enter the city* (Hosea 11:9). Here is written *the city*, and there is written *a little city* (Ecclesiastes 9:14). For She, letter *yod*, is smaller than them all.[351](#)

“*Why should I be as one veiled* (Song of Songs 1:7), self-contained, for I cannot spread out on any side at all? For She is sealed up on all sides, more than all other letters.[352](#)

“*If you do not know... go forth* (ibid., 8)—extend Yourself in all directions, gathering delights and pleasures in [71b] expansion. What is that expansion, fashioned like a hut built by those who guard flocks of sheep? ה (He).[353](#)

“This is also the meaning of *go for yourself* (ibid.). It is not written תצ (tse'i), *go*, but rather לך תצ (tse'i lakh), *go for yourself*, as is written: *Enlarge the site of your tent, let the curtains of your dwellings be stretched out. Do not stint!* (Isaiah 54:2). For at first, She was only a small, black point, without dimension, sealed up within Herself. Now that She has risen, bonding with Her Husband, He says to Her: ‘*Go for yourself.*’ *Enlarge the site of your tent*—expand Yourself. Then, *graze your kids* (Song of Songs 1:8)—now You can gather delights and pleasures.[354](#)

“When She was a single point and ascended upward, Supernal King descended to penetrate Her; He struck that point, and it expanded in all directions. The point was transformed into ה (he), consummated on all sides, receiving delights and pleasures. Then He said to Her,

'Graze your kids—go, nourish and sustain all Your troops, small and large.[355](#)

"*O loveliest of women* (ibid.)—singular point among the letters. There would be no beauty among all the letters if not for *yod*. With this point, all letters are consummated, and She Herself is the beauty of them all. No letter stirs without this point. She is in them all and they are all in Her. She is beautiful and the loveliness of everything. For She comes from a lofty, concealed place, head of all supreme rungs, and She is Herself pinnacle of all lower rungs below. Consequently, *O loveliness in women* (ibid.)—beauty of all.[356](#)

"Further, *O loveliest of women*. It is written: בַּנְּשִׁים (ba-nashim), *in the women*—in the letters that are female. Who is She? ה (He). She is surely the expansion and elegance of all, pasturing and dividing up portions for all Her celestial troops. For this reason, לָךְ יֵצֵא (tse'i lakh), *Go forth*—from this concealment, for You are contained and sealed up within Yourself. לָךְ (Lakh), *For yourself*, and for your own benefit. All in the mystery of letters.[357](#)

"It is written: *God in her citadels is known as a stronghold* (Psalms 48:4)—indeed, when the Great King approaches Her, drawing Her upward, entering Her, striking Her—it is upon that very point. When He strikes that point, She expands, opening up in all directions. She becomes ה (he), aperture of palaces on all sides, so that the Great King can enter Her. Then, *God in her citadels*—He becomes known in those openings of palaces within ה (he).[358](#)

"*Elohim Hayyim* (God of Life)—taking that name in order to nourish and distribute portions to all. Then, *known as a stronghold*—to be a stronghold for the ones below, dispersing blessings to all, like the pattern above.[359](#)

"When the blessed Holy One wanted to create the world, all things of the world—and all upper and lower rungs—rose up into Thought. Why is it called Thought? The

reason is that it is a singular, concealed point, poised in a thought. Surely, as regards a single point, it is unknown where it will expand, what will become of it, or in which direction its path will turn. This point is the apex of all desires and all thoughts of the world.[360](#)

“All concealed within it, unknown, until this Thought stretched out, fashioning one extension on this side and one on that side. Once this point spread out with this amplification, there was increased disclosure of all that had been concealed.[361](#)

“Not revealed in the sense of knowing. Yet, the one concealed was revealed—the direction of its path—emerging from the mystery of Thought. Surely, it does not abide in Thought nor does it rise up in this name! Actually, it inheres in a name meant for revelation, fashioned into Voice, whispering. Who is it? ה (He), ready to emit all hidden things that were within Thought.[362](#)

“This is the inverse of the paradigm below. Below: the One who strikes that point below when She is concealed, approaching [71c] Her, is the great King in the mystery of *vav*, emerging from upper *he*. *Vav*, emanating from it, strikes that point, dispersing everything it had absorbed from above, expanding and opening in all directions, constructing *he*.[363](#)

Above: the One who struck supernal *he* is the single, eminent, concealed point. Once it struck Her, all things hidden there were dispersed and revealed, issuing forth. Now, Thought—formerly concealed and unknown—is recognized.[364](#)

“Similarly, when *vav* struck the point below, issuing forth were all legions, troops, and camps—lights and deep rivers from above.[365](#)

“Then, they say to Her: *Graze your kids by the tents of the shepherds* (Song of Songs 1:8). Take lights and foodstuffs, apportion them to all those forces—lavish upon them.[366](#)

“Tents of the shepherds—those shepherds who conduct the world. Bestow governance and power to each and every one as befits them. All this from the expansion of that point, concealed before.”[367](#)

Rabbi Shim'on rejoiced, saying, “At first, before these words from Song of Songs were said or revealed, I wept, despondent. Now that these teachings are revealed, I am exultant: How happy is my portion for being here! Even more, that these lofty teachings from above have been revealed by my master.”

To a mare among Pharaoh's chariots, I have compared you, my darling (Song of Songs 1:9).[368](#)

Rabbi Shim'on opened, saying, *“He took six hundred select chariots and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains... (Exodus 14:7).* Come

and see the genius of the Egyptians: in all their undertakings, they acted with the secret of supernal wisdom. And Pharaoh was exceedingly wise since, after all, He would not have been appointed king of Egypt had he not been more cunning than them all.[369](#)

“Of this is written *He took*—he took everything through cunning. He took wise counsel, saying, ‘This nation consists of 600,000.’ He rushed into his chambers, rummaging through all his forms of magic. He devised defiling acts of seductive shattering, confected conjury, taking 600 select chariots. *Select*—elite sorcerers, laden with all kinds of magic and spells, like the mystery above of the empowered one, appointed over them.[370](#)

“He took, laden with conjurations and spells, *six hundred select chariots*, selected in correspondence to the people of Israel. *And all the chariots of Egypt*—each and every one, charged with spells and husks. There were no wise men in all of Egypt who were not fully fraught with magic and sorcery.

“ושלישים (ve-shalishim), *And teams-of-three upon them all.* What is the meaning of ושלישים (ve-shalishim), *and teams-of-three?* Actually, the word implies types of spells and impure names, arranged in letter-triplets. All engraved as weaponized clusters, following the pattern above, in order to have armed nodes matching Israel’s.³⁷¹

“על כלה (Al kulloh), *Upon them all*—it is written על כלה (al kulloh), for he ensnared counsel על כלה (al kallah), *against the Bride*, in order to destroy Israel. All diverse legions *against the Bride*, travelling in front of the people of Israel.³⁷²

“Just then, *YHVH hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, the Israelites going out with a high hand* (ibid., 8). What is ביד רמה (be-yad ramah), *a high hand?* It is the same *high hand* of which is written *Israel saw the great hand* (ibid., 31)—יד הגדולה (yad ha-gedolah), *great hand, is high hand.*³⁷³

“At that moment, the blessed Holy One engraved upon that hand all images, soldiers, and powers of the Egyptians, corresponding to the spells and conjuring that they had performed. When they approached with this magic, that hand—engraved to counter that sorcery—smashed the form hewn into the hand. This is as is written: *Your right hand, O YHVH, glorious in power, your right hand, O YHVH, smashes the enemy* (ibid. 15:6). [71d] In this way, דימיתך (dimmitikh), *I have imaged you* (Song of Songs 1:9). I have engraved images and forms upon You, like those of Pharaoh’s horses.³⁷⁴

“Thus far. But there is no contextual connection! How is this related to the verses above? And, in the mystery of love and the delight of song, what need do we have for Pharaoh’s chariots? And, how is He answering Her? In truth, it is all actually connected to a single mystery: *To a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots.*³⁷⁵

“Let us return to the first issue. From the time the blessed Holy One appointed Her as leader over all those legions and troops below, She offered continual praise,

never still. All of Her legions, too, lauded continuously, ceaselessly.

“This song of love began when She left Egypt, and all legions, above and below, were before Her. Then She began with love songs, directed heavenward. As Pharaoh’s horses and chariots were riding after Israel, She began Her song of love toward the upper realm.³⁷⁶

“The blessed Holy One did not want praise at that moment, as we have learned: *one did not draw near the other all night* (Exodus 14:20). She silenced Herself in the middle of the love song She had begun.³⁷⁷

“Come and see: In the case of a bride waiting lovingly to see her husband—when she sees him, she arouses love toward him and begins singing to him. If he does not want her praise, she becomes quiet, quelling the initiation of arousal of love. This is how Her heart and desire were quieted.

“When all of Pharaoh’s horses and chariots had sunk in the sea, and Israel had witnessed all those mighty deeds and miracles that the blessed Holy One had performed for them, the people of Israel sang praises on earth for Her sake. The blessed Holy One accepted them, as is written: *Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel this song to YHVH* (ibid. 15:1). Afterward, upon the well’s return, Israel sang songs on Her behalf, as is written: *Then Israel sang this song* (Numbers 21:7). Joshua came, singing praises on Her behalf. Deborah and Barak came, lauding praises on Her behalf.³⁷⁸

“When Solomon built the Temple and worlds were all evenly balanced, then She aroused love and lofty song, uttering words of song and love to Him.³⁷⁹

“Then He, because of the Bride’s love and desire, wanted to remind Her of the silence He imposed on Her, declining Her song. He opened, saying, ‘*Like a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots* (Song 1:9). When Pharaoh’s horses and chariots were approaching, pursuing the people of Israel,

דמיתִיךְ (*dimmitikh*), *I silenced you, my beloved* (ibid.)—I quieted you, in stillness.’[380](#)

“דמיתִיךְ (*Dimmitikh*), *I silenced you*, as is said: דומיה (*dumiyyah*), *silent* (Psalms 39:3); וידם אהרן (*va-yiddom Aharon*), *and Aaron was silent* (Leviticus 10:3); דמו להרג (*dimmu la-harog*), *they were silent to kill* (Judges 20:5).[381](#)

“Nonetheless, it was necessary, since from then until now, neither Your sons, nor earthly legions, nor refinements were fittingly complete. Furthermore, You were not fittingly crowned with your adornments.[382](#)

“But now, *Beautiful your cheeks* בתורים (*be-torim*), *with earrings* (Song of Songs 1:10)—how becoming your ornaments! How lovely *be-torim, with Torahs*—for they have since received the Torah, Written Torah and Oral Torah—and you have been crowned with them, as never before.[383](#)

“This is the reason *I silenced you*, wanting neither Your song nor love’s arousal: since *You were still naked and bare* (Ezekiel 16:7), lacking all adornment. But now, Your ornaments so fitting, I desire You and the words of Your songs![384](#)

“צוארך (*Tsavvarekh*), *Your neck* (Song of Songs 1:10)—behold, you have a Temple on earth, like the pattern of all those sublime forms, with multitudes of noble righteous and pious ones entering there. Now that you are crowned [72a] with Your ornaments and their plenitude, all supernal founts, all rungs and limbs are all surely before You—to accept You, to adorn you with exalted embellishments.[385](#)

“Of this is written *Earrings of gold we will make for you* (Song of Songs 1:11). *We will make*—actually! It is not written *I will make*, but rather *we will make*: from the top of Supernal Point until Foundation below, we will adorn You and receive You from the side of Gold, for love is aroused there. *With points of silver* (ibid.)—from the right side.[386](#)

“This demonstrates that this arousal from above is neither awakened nor prepared for Her until embellishments are set in this world first. Once refinements

from this world are configured in Her fittingly, then adornments from the world above can be arranged for Her, bestowing תורי (*torei*), *earrings, of gold with points of silver. Torei, Turns*, as is written: תור אסתר (*tor Ester*), [*When*] *the turn [came] for Esther, daughter of Abihail* (Esther 2:15).[387](#)

“Related to this: when the horses of Pharaoh’s chariotry [gave chase], *I silenced you*, so that you would not sing or arouse love toward Me without embellishments from below. But now, it is appropriate since *beautiful are your cheeks with earrings. Earrings of gold we will make for you*—actually! We will perfect them for You, fittingly. Each and every one, uniquely.[388](#)

“This is how the words are connected.[389](#)

“*To a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots* (Song of Songs 1:9). It is written: *YHVH was going before them by day in a column of cloud* (Exodus 13:21). When the blessed Holy One took Israel out of Egypt, they resisted traveling in the desert on a desiccated path. For they were accustomed to Egypt—which was like the Garden of Eden, as is written: *like the garden of YHVH, like the land of Egypt* (Genesis 13:10). Now, they were traversing parched territory, desolate, uninhabited.[390](#)

“What did the blessed Holy One do? He sent *Shekhinah* before them, proceeding in multi-hued radiance, in all forms of desire. So, they ran after Her, longingly, to see Her. They ran, following after Her, without tarrying. The blessed Holy One arranged this for them to prevent delay of the sanctification of His name at the sea, for He wanted to be glorified in the midst of the nations of the world.[391](#)

“Just as they rushed along, so did Pharaoh devise similarly with his chariots and horses, giving chase speedily, so that his chariotry would not tarry on the way. What did he do? He took his mares and his stallions, placing females in front and males in back. The stallions raced after the mares, the mares bolting in front of the

stallions—these and those bounding along. Pharaoh shrewdly engineered it, chasing Israel with alacrity.³⁹²

“Once he caught up to them, poised to attack, he took the females, hitching them in the back, with the males before them, to fortify his chariotry. Thus, at first it is written *YHVH was going before them by day* (Exodus 13:21), and afterward it is written *The angel of Elohim, who was going before the camp of Israel moved and went behind them* (ibid. 14:19)—so that Israel would be reinforced and safeguarded. All those arrows, catapults, stones, and javelins that they cast toward Israel did not reach them. Of this is written *Stand firm and see YHVH’s deliverance*” (ibid.,13). *Stand firm*—actually! This is why it is written דַּמִּיתִיךָ (*dimmitikh*), *I have made you similar* (Song of Songs 1:9)—in the same fashion—truly!³⁹³

“When the camps crossed, and the whole world witnessed the miracles and mighty deeds that the blessed Holy One performed at the sea, then: *beautiful your cheeks, with Torahs* (ibid., 10)—the people of Israel were perfected in mystery of faith. This is as is written: *they trusted in YHVH and in Moses His servant* (Exodus 14:31). The people of Israel received the Torah on Mount Sinai—Written Torah and Oral Torah—then all was perfected, above and below, fittingly.³⁹⁴

“*Beautiful your cheeks, with Torahs*. Come and see: all colors within, all thoughts, all desires of the world that are found in the heart—all are seen in the face. Through one’s face is one known. Who is he—are his actions good? Who is he—are his actions wicked? This is as is written: *The appearance of their faces [72b] testifies against them* (Isaiah 3:9). Now that all embellishments have been appropriately set—with proper enhancements, with adornments of righteous deeds—straightaway: *beautiful your cheeks*, with no shame at all.³⁹⁵

“All this when the Temple stood and all worlds were in a single bond, above and below. Then, faces arrayed,

fittingly—face-to-face, fittingly.[396](#)

“*Your cheeks*—it is not written *your face*, because it is all one. In truth, it says *cheeks*, because they enable chirping and speaking for contemplation. Consequently, this song—intoned now, rather than any other time in history.[397](#)

Now the word of YHVH came to him, saying, “This one will not be your heir, but he who issues from your loins will be your heir” (Genesis 15:4). Is it possible that Abraham—who walked in perfection before the Holy King—was lacking faith all those times that the blessed Holy One told him that he would have children? As is written: *He took him outside...* (ibid., 5); and, it is written: *To your seed I give this land* (ibid. 12:7). After that, he said: “*Behold, a member of my household is to be my heir*” (ibid. 15:3). Lean back to see the beginning of the passage, where it is written: *I am going to die childless* (ibid., 2), and *Here, you have given me no seed* (ibid., 3).[398](#)

“The truth is, from the beginning, Abram did trust in the blessed Holy One, but he had been gazing upon stars and bird-nest augury, and he saw that he was not destined to have a son. For until now, he had not cleaved in unification to his Master.[399](#)

“Once it was written *He took him outside*, He uprooted him from that course, bringing him closer to Him, to His service—to learn other paths of wisdom. He extracted him from horoscope augury, telling him, ‘Abram does not engender’—actually! *No longer will your name be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you father of a multitude of nations* (ibid. 17:5)!”[400](#)

“What is the explanation? It is because, among all the letters, none is qualified to engender other than the letter ה (he). This letter is better configured than all the letters to produce fruit and growth, which is why it is open on all sides.[401](#)

“If you say: Abraham does not require the addition of this letter, since it is not his—*he* is always feminine! It does sit well for Sarah, however, to have this letter inscribed within.[402](#)

“In truth, there are two *he*'s—upper and lower—one for World of the Male and one for lower world, World of the Female. Once *he* was added to Abraham's name, Primal Light—with this *he*, cloaked within it—shot forth, engendering fruit. Abraham was inscribed in his supernal rung, with the force of upper *he*, for Primal Light has no force or vigor without *he*. This is why Primal Light took *he* alongside, settling into its rung, for it had risen to generate offspring.[403](#)

“Two letters inscribed here, ascendant in Upper World —□ ך (*he*, final *mem*). Final *mem*—from Upper World. What distinguishes final *mem* and *he*, since both are from Upper World?[404](#)

“In fact, when everything is concealed within transcendent Thought, that point emanates and conceals all sublime paths, everything hidden within □ (final *mem*). All routes, all noble letters concealed, comprised within this letter. When it arose within Will to reveal and send forth offspring, □ (final *mem*) opened up, transformed into the letter ך (*he*).[405](#)

“There is no distinction, one from the other, other than being open to generate offspring and to be revealed with a whisper, for this letter is revealed only with an open mouth, not spoken. But, despite being whispered, it comes from an open mouth.[406](#)

“As a result, once it is revealed and opened up, it is poised to beget. For as long as it does not abide in openness of ך (*he*), it is entirely sealed [72c] within, in □ (final *mem*). After opening up, it generates offspring with ך (*he*).[407](#)

“Those descendants do not issue forth, other than through a single limb—holy member—perfected there, then

entering into final *he*. From *he* it emerges, and into *he* it enters—with that limb, adorned by the lower *he*.[408](#)

“At the moment that this letter—transcendent *he*—is augmented and opened up, this limb, Righteous One, upon whom the world is set, is made firm with desire. Consequently, when this limb is arrayed with fervor, *he* is added to it. When this limb is not in a state of desire, it is concealed and hidden—*he* is diminished, appearing only as final *mem*, to demonstrate that it is not ready for procreation.[409](#)

“Mystery of אבר ם (*evar mem*), limb of final *mem*—this one does not engender, for he is ם (final *mem*), unequipped to produce offspring. When ה (*he*) is added—ם (final *mem*) opens up, supplemented by ה (*he*)—that limb is ready to produce offspring. Mystery of אבר ה ם (*evar, he, final mem*)—this one engenders, producing fruit. Consequently, Abram does not engender; but, Abraham engenders, because that limb is not perfected until ה (*he*) arrives. Wherever ה (*he*) appears, it is prepared to produce offspring and fruit. Of this, it is said, one’s name is determinative.[410](#)

“How do we know that it is only rectified as a result of ה (*he*)? The answer is that when he was Abram, that limb was uncircumcised and imperfect. After ה (*he*) appeared, that limb was rectified and circumcised, to produce fruit through final ה (*he*). As long as the upper world was sealed up in ם (final *mem*), that limb was unrefined—foreskin abiding—uncircumcised.[411](#)

“The lower rung abides, as a result of foreskin, in ד (*dalet*)—impoverished. When Upper World is concealed in mystery of ם (final *mem*), Lower World is destitute in mystery of ד (*dalet*). When the world of ם (final *mem*) is opened up, transformed into ה (*he*), covenant is perfected and foreskin sloughed off.[412](#)

“When covenant is configured, two letters depart and two other letters enter. These two exit: ם ד (*dalet, final mem*). Any circumcision in which ם ד (*dam*), blood, does not flow

does not constitute circumcision. For these withdraw, and two others appear. In place of ם (final *mem*), ה (he) enters. In place of ד (dalet), ה (he) enters. Then, everything stands ready for engendering.[413](#)

“This is the mystery of לַמְרֹבֵה הַמִּשְׁרָה (*le-marbeh ha-misrah*), *For the abundance of dominion, and of peace there will be no end, upon David’s throne and kingdom, that it may be established and upheld* (Isaiah 9:6). לַמְרֹבֵה (*Le-mem rabbah*)—this is the mystery: when the letter ם (final *mem*) abounds in sovereignty, its supernal flow swelling, having been opened up and transformed into ה (he), then, *and of peace there will be no end.*[414](#)

“What is the meaning of *and of peace*? In truth, *and of peace*—it is that limb, Foundation of the World. The one from whom foreskin was removed, the latter called *end of all flesh* (Genesis 6:13)—actually! *And of peace there will be no end*—for it has surely been eliminated. For conjugal relations, that *peace—upon David’s throne and kingdom, that it may be established and upheld in justice and righteousness.*[415](#)

“All this when ם (final *mem*) withdraws and opens up; then, foreskin sloughs off and ד (dalet) departs, as has been said. This is the mystery of *Look, דָּם (dam), blood, of the covenant* (Exodus 24:8)—because these two letters had to be removed from it.[416](#)

“Regarding this mystery: אַבְרָהָם—אֵבֶר הֵּ (Avraham—eivar he). For ם (final *mem*) has been opened up so that this limb can serve in the lower world.[417](#)

“This is why Isaac did not appear until foreskin had been removed from the holy, supernal member. From here it can be seen that everything that the blessed Holy One does on earth is entirely according to the mystery of intercourse, conforming to the heavenly paradigm. This demonstrates that He sends forth all names with utmost wisdom, corresponding to the pattern of mystery above—all fittingly.[418](#)

“Now the word of YHVH came to him, saying, “This one will not be your heir” (Genesis 15:4). What is the reason? It is because he was [72d] *an enlightened servant* (Proverbs 17:2). Then he said, “Here, you have given me no seed. Behold, a member of my household is to be my heir (ibid., 3).” For he had gazed and seen through divination that he would not engender.[419](#)

“But the moment that he was circumcised, Abraham was perfected completely—through ה (he) that developed from מ (final mem), and similarly with ד (dalet). Then, Abraham pursued a different course, diverging from his original path of stars and constellations.[420](#)

“Come and see: During the time that he was foreskinned, uncircumcised, the blessed Holy One was revealed to him only in a vision, because Upper World was closed up in final mem, and Lower World was impoverished, in dalet. Once the Upper World was opened up in he, Abraham removed the foreskin, and Lower World departed from dalet, then it is written: *YHVH appeared to him* (ibid. 18:1). Entirely revealed—opening up that which had never been seen before.[421](#)

“Following this model—actually—whenever righteous and pious ones abound in the world, then all is revealed and opened. When King Solomon built the Temple and all Jews were righteous and pious—settled like wine upon its lees—then everything was opened up, and this song was revealed, above and below.[422](#)

“At that very moment, it was written: *Like a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots* (Song of Songs 1:9). As the horses of Pharaoh’s chariots were all armed with all kinds of weapons, so too You were garbed with diverse weapons to wage war. As Pharaoh’s horses were loaded with numerous armaments—stones, arrows, and imperial catapults—all laden to wage war, I have charged You similarly with diverse weaponry. To wage war—to be

sanctified through You in the eyes of them all, waging war against them.[423](#)

“But now, I see You in a different cast, with many magnificent embellishments, lavishly adorned. *Beautiful, your cheeks with earrings* (ibid., 10)—with two *hes*. Everything opened toward you—revealed. Upper *he* rejoices in You, and is beautiful, facing you, opened up. You departed from *dalet*, entering into *he*. These two, *beautiful*, prepared for You. These two *hes*—תורים (*torim*), *earrings*—Written Torah and Oral Torah. *Your neck with strings of jewels* (ibid.)—sublime adornments from all the founts, arranged for You.[424](#)

“This is how He spoke to Her in affection and ardor, out of His yearning for Her: comforting Her, speaking to Her heart, and showing Her great love. Of this, he said to Her: *Earrings of gold we will make for you, with points of silver* (ibid., 11). From now on, jewel upon jewel, adornment upon adornment, will be bestowed upon You.[425](#)

“*YHVH said to Moses, ‘Go up to Me to the mountain and be there, that I may give you the stone tablets, and the teaching and the commandments, that I have written to instruct them’* (Exodus 24:12). This verse has been established by the companions. But, *Go up to Me to the mountain*—happy is the portion of the servant whose Master raised him up to be with Him in His chariot! This is as is written: *Go up to Me to the mountain*. ההרה (*Ha-harah*), *To the mountain*, actually! Since it should have said simply ההר (*Ha-har*), *to the mountain*.[426](#)

“והיה שם (*Ve-heye sham*), *And be there*—now something was transmitted to Moses, never bestowed upon him before—name of the holy chariot, delivered into his hands.

“Now, if you say, ‘Look, it is written: *Remove your sandals...* (Exodus 3:5)!’—in actuality, He commanded him to separate from his wife in every way, but he was not afforded a different mate until this moment. When He said

to him 'והיה שם (VHYH Shem), VHYH Name,' then the blessed Holy One conveyed the hewn name, engraving it upon Moses on earth.[427](#)

"At first, when he was in Egypt, God engraved the name *Elohim* upon him, as is written: *See, I have made you as Elohim to Pharaoh* (Exodus 7:1). This name was engraved upon him—actually—at the onset of his prophecy. [73a] When he ascended to a different level, the blessed Holy One engraved His name upon him—actually—rising above the name *Elohim* that was within him at first. Now He engraved His holy name upon him so that he could unite with the first name. Now, the complete name would abide on earth as above—*YHVH Elohim*—consummate name.[428](#)

"The perfect name resided on earth during Moses' lifetime. *Elohim*—His own mate. *YHVH*—holy name within him. As long as this name was not engraved upon Moses, the name *Elohim* did not couple with him. Once it was written *Go up to Me to the mountain*, permission was granted to him to sit upon the King's chariot. Then, when the King gave him His throne, He gave him His name—actually! This is as is written: ויהיה שם (VHYH Shem), VHYH Name (Exodus 24:12). He set him in His place for all matters.[429](#)

"Moses ascended two rungs at that time, more than any other person had ever attained: he was given the King's throne and the King conveyed His Name to him. Happy is Moses' portion![430](#)

"*That I may give you the stone tablets* (Exodus 24:12). Now, they have established *the stone tablets* according to its simple meaning, but really, all keys were entrusted to Moses. This can be deduced from Scripture: *That I may give you*. לך (Lekha), *You—truly!* For indeed when he rose up to this name, ויהיה שם (VHYH Shem), VHYH Name, the King's throne was handed over to him. Then, He crowned him with all to become perfected array, supernal adornment.[431](#)

"*The Torah and the commandments* (ibid.)—two arms, on this side and that. *That I have written* (ibid.)—two legs.

To instruct them (ibid.)—rung of the singular Foundation, from which issue all the cantillation signs for undulation below. All given to Moses—crowning him according to the pattern of supernal mystery—so that the two hewn names, consummate name, would abide on earth.[432](#)

“Of this, King David said: ‘*Come, gaze upon the acts of Elohim, who has brought שְׁמוֹת (shammot), desolation, on earth* (Psalms 46:9).’ Do not read שְׁמוֹת (shammot), *desolation*, but rather שְׁמוֹת (shemot), *names*.’ Two names—engraved names—ascending to be the consummate name, perfect name on earth like the model above.[433](#)

“When King Solomon arrived and the Temple was built, what did Scripture say? *Solomon sat upon the throne of YHVH as king* (1 Chronicles 29:23). Then this throne was crowned above and below, soaring upward in song.[434](#)

“When She ascended in praise, the King extended His right hand toward Her to receive Her. He took Her in, between His arms, speaking words of love, instructing that She be given gifts, largesse, and abundant honor. He said: *Earrings of gold we will make for you, with points of silver* (Song of Songs 1:11). *Earrings of gold*—pausal signs, guiding the undulation, to the right or to the left.[435](#)

“Why are they called תּוֹרֵי (torei), *earrings*? So that when the תּוֹר (tor), turn—the set time—of a particular rung comes to provide for Her by means of Foundation, it imprints an inscription upon Her, animating and directing Her on the path that She should travel. Similarly, when the turn and set time of another rung comes to endow Her, it etches an inscription upon Her, with a different cadence, to move and guide Her upon that course—actually! Of this is written *For the ways of YHVH are right* (Hosea 14:10)—phrasings of cantillation signs, each and every one, fittingly.[436](#)

“*Earrings of gold*—thus named because signs are suspended from letters like jeweled rings from ears, like

telisha and other signs. Earrings and diadems, adornments of letters.[437](#)

“Words without cantillation signs, lacking phrasing—like a bride’s ears lacking diadems and earrings, bereft of adornments. Words without vowels—like a woman undressed, unable to go anywhere. Thus, letters’ embellishments are signs and vowels. These and those—[73b]—adornments and garments of letters. Of this is written *Earrings of gold*—cadences of cantillation signs.[438](#)

“*Gold*, specifically, because they come from the head of the king, bestowing knowledge and understanding to all letters. Consequently, they all subsist in a single mystery.[439](#)

“Vowel points and cantillation signs—two rungs. All of them, these and those, necessary for enhancement of letters. Letters—inscribed in lofty mysteries—all emerging from the mystery of supernal Wisdom, in thirty-two paths issuing from Wisdom.[440](#)

“All letters, engraved below, and inherited by Oral Torah. When they all arrive to adorn Her with mystery of letters, they enhance Her with vowel points and cantillation signs, as has been said: *Earrings of gold we will make for you, with points of silver*.[441](#)

“Here are noble mysteries, for fathomers. All letters, inscribed in supernal mystery, called ‘body of Torah,’ established to instruct and inform about the highest mysteries.[442](#)

“Vowel points emerge from the mystery of brain, upholding letters according to their configuration. With a single vowel point a word is transformed, conveying that word from one station to a different one.[443](#)

“Spark of Darkness: When it strikes pure ether of the brain, it strikes and does not strike. It touches the brain and withdraws, touching and not touching. Then that striking radiates from the midst of brain toward letters, and the letters become pointed.[444](#)

“If you say that vowel points were established by later sages—God forbid! Even if all the prophets of the world were like Moses, who received the Torah on Mount Sinai, they would not have permission to innovate a single, minute vowel point for one letter—not even a tiny letter—of the Torah.[445](#)

“Striking that settles in the brain is from the pure ether that can be grasped—because there is also pure ether that cannot be grasped. As for the one that can be grasped, once the supernal striking settles in the brain, then all undulation of cantillation signs issues forth.[446](#)

“Cantillation signs are like a horse’s bridle, providing guidance on the straight path—to the right or left—whatever the sign’s desire. Advancing and halting, resting and running, proceeding proudly and humbly. None of the letters are permitted to proceed to this side or that without consent—following the directions the cantillation signs give them. A word is understood on their account, proceeding on the correct path.[447](#)

“In this way, all letters travel according to the mystery of these two—with points and signs as one. This mystery: *Apples of gold in settings of silver, a word spoken in its own right way* (Proverbs 25:11). *Apples of gold*—cantillation signs and undulations. *In settings of silver*—vowel points. *A word spoken in its own right way*—no word is fit without these two. Consequently, *Earrings of gold we will make for you* (Song of Songs 1:11).[448](#)

“It is written: *God said, ‘Let us make a human in our image, according to our likeness. They shall have dominion...’* (Genesis 1:26).[449](#)

“The companions have already been aroused by this. In truth, the blessed Holy One said this to the celestial troops, seeking their counsel to create the human, like a king among his soldiers.[450](#)

“But one can probe further: To which mystery of *Elohim* above does this refer? Does this signify *Elohim Hayyim* (Living God), mystery of Upper World? Or does it refer to *Elohim*, mystery of Lower World? If it is *Elohim*, mystery of Upper World, how can *Let us make* offer refinement to this side and that side?[451](#)

But, really, it is all one paradigm, one mystery. The human is comprised of all sides, his mystery within all. The human comes into being from the mystery of *Elohim*, not from the mystery of other names. This is as is written: *Elohim created the human in His image; in the image of Elohim* (ibid., 27).[452](#)

“*In His image; in the image*—why two images? Well, one is for the male and one for the female. Two iterations of *Elohim*: one male and one female. *In His image*—male. *In the image*—female. Of this: [73c] *God created the human in His image*—Upper World. *In the image of God*—Lower World. This mystery—*Let us make*—a singular totality, as has been said.[453](#)

“At the moment that the human was created, all letters materialized, taking on shape. At the moment that spirit was inspired into him, vowel points emerged, settling into letters. At the moment that he was refined with understanding and knowledge, undulations and cantillation signs went forth, ensconced upon vowels and letters. Every rectification of the mystery of the human proceeded thus, from all sides of the worlds. Everything, embedded within the mystery of the human, as has been taught. One is not human without all these enhancements.”[454](#)

Elijah said to him, “Rabbi, open your mouth! Let your words shine! For permission from above has been granted to you.”[455](#)

He opened, saying: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (ibid., 1). We have established the meaning of this verse in many places. But, come and see: The mystery is in accord with the principle that we have

stated: even if all true prophets of the world arrived, their prophecy rising to the prophetic degree of Moses, they would still be unable to introduce even a single vowel point of the Torah.[456](#)

Why? Because all letters emanate—exclusively—from a single, small point. Letters are the essence of the Torah, yet none of the letters may stray to this side or that without vowel points. All letters—like a body without soul; when vowels appear, then the body endures intact. Then, it is written: *and the human became נפש חיה (nefesh ḥayyah), a living soul* (ibid. 2:7). All flowing from a single point.[457](#)

“When letters issued forth from the midst of World that is Coming, they all materialized in the mystery of the human—body without soul—until Supernal Point was aroused, secretly penetrating World that is Coming. Then all vowel points emerged from this point, stabilizing letters in their posts.[458](#)

“This is the meaning of בראשית ברא אלהים (*Bereshit bara Elohim*), *With beginning, ____ created Elohim*. בראשית (*Be-reshit*)—Supernal Point, through which *Elohim* was created and all letters’ adornments inaugurated. They constitute the mystery of *the heavens and the earth*. If not for this ראשית (*reshit*), *beginning*—mystery of Supernal Point—letters would be unpointed, lacking permanence.[459](#)

“Come and see: *Be-reshit*—with this *reshit*, the mystery of Supernal Point created *Elohim*. With the power of this Point, letters emerged, traced in their configurations, becoming mystery of the body, with known limbs—but devoid of soul. This is the reason that it is written ברא (*bara*), *outward*, because soul had not issued forth into body, to establish it in its station.[460](#)

“When Supernal Point aroused, shooting forth vowel points of soul into World that is Coming, then is written *God said, ‘Let there be light!’* (ibid. 1:3)—letters shining with vowel points of soul.[461](#)

“*Light*—first point to shine from the midst of the hidden, Supernal Point, concealed and unknown. This point—illuminating from the midst of concealment—is called חלם (*holem*), shining above, upon all letters, on account of the glory of the Concealed Point.[462](#)

“Since all letters throng in five hundred parasangs of World that is Coming, this point shimmers five times. This is the esoteric meaning of *God said, ‘Let there be אור (or), light!’ And there was אור (or), light. God saw the אור (or), light, that it was good. God separated the אור (or), light, from the darkness, and God called the אור (or), light, day* (ibid., 3-5).[463](#)

“*Let there be light*—vowel point חלם (*holem*). *And there was light*—a different point, called שרק (*shuruq*). This was necessary because Primal Point called *holem* shines above but, before it flows to illuminate below, it is concealed. Once it streams forth, it beams in the middle, in the mystery of *shuruq*. *God saw the light, that it was good—hireq*, when it shines below.[464](#)

“When vowel points emanate to illuminate the body, Primal Light—*holem*—shines above, dwelling upon the head of the body. It provides [73d] scintillation for the entire head, face, and eyes—for illumination of the head, all enhancements of the head.[465](#)

“*Shuruq* alights in the middle, conferring its effulgence and permanence upon the body, *from its envisioned loins upward* (Ezekiel 1:27), with all its mysteries.[466](#)

“*Hireq* settles below, infusing its brilliance, stabilizing *from the envisioned loins downward* (ibid.), in all of its enhancements and mysteries. Then, *God saw the light, that it was good* (Genesis 1:4).[467](#)

“When the letters’ bodies had been perfected by these [vowels], *God separated the light from the darkness* (ibid.). Separation always subsists within the left arm, for it contains darkness. It shines upon vowel point *segol*, illuminating from the midst of gloom and weariness.[468](#)

“*God called the light ‘day’* (ibid., 5)—vowel point *tseire*—shining and settling upon right arm, perfecting it with all its refinements.[469](#)

“When Female cleaves to the right and left, furnished between them, two vowel points—*tseire* and *segol*—cleave to Her. When She is in a different array—inverted—without them dwelling within Her in this way, *tseire* becomes inverted, and shines upon Her with a different image, dislodged from the Male—this is *sheva*. *Segol* inverts, shining in a different manner—*shuruq*—the one with three points. This demonstrates the love of Male for Female—entirely one, when He illuminates Her. From here, vowel points spread out to all limbs of the body’s letters.[470](#)

“*God said, ‘Let there be a firmament between the waters’* (ibid., 6)—vowel point *patah*, expanding the brilliance gleaming on the Male side, on the left side. It shines upon that side, but now they are inverted, comprising right in the left and left in the right.[471](#)

“*Waters*—on the right, in the mystery of the vowel point illuminated by *tseire*. On the right side, two waters divide, and we have established this. This is the reason that *tseire* is two points—arranged in correspondence with the two waters, one above and one below—as can be seen in vowel point *sheva*.[472](#)

“Later, after *firmament*—namely the vowel point called *patah*—has been illuminated, this vowel moves in between *tseire*’s dots, *between the waters*. It splits them, possessing them. Then, there is water on the left side, on account of vowel point *patah*. Regarding this mystery: *YHVH יפתח (yiftah), will open, for you his goodly treasure, the heavens, to provide rain...* (Deuteronomy 28:12), because *waters* are from the side of *פתח (patah)*.[473](#)

“*Firmament* spread out farther from the right side, penetrating the left side, in the midst of *segol*, becoming *qamats*. Then left penetrated right, one contained in the other: right in the left, and left in the right.[474](#)

“God said, ‘Let the waters under heaven be gathered...’ (Genesis 1:9). *Waters* is written five times above: *Let there be a firmament between the waters* (Genesis 1:6); *and let it divide waters from waters* (ibid.); *it divided the waters* (ibid., 7); *from the waters* (ibid.). *Waters*—five times, corresponding to two vowel points: *tseire* and *segol*. . (*Tseire*)—two; . (*segol*)—three. Five configured on the right and left.⁴⁷⁵

“Female proceeds between right and left, receiving these vowel points that give Her perfect knowledge. But they do not settle there in this way—rather, they are overturned within Her, in a lighter fashion. . (*Tseire*) is overturned within her, becoming vowel point . (*sheva*), in a lighter fashion. . (*Segol*) is overturned within Her, becoming vowel point \ (*shuruq*), in a lighter fashion.⁴⁷⁶

“It is an eternal verity that a woman’s mind is facile, for the vowel points cannot settle within her to perfect her understanding, as is the case above. Instead, they are inverted within her in a simplified way, so that her comprehension is diminished.⁴⁷⁷

“Just as these two vowel points—*tseire* and *segol*—are five, here, too, the *sheva* and *shuruq* within Her are five, but without stability at all.⁴⁷⁸

“*Let the waters [under heaven] be gathered [to one place]* (ibid., 9)—all five in one vowel—[74a] . (*hireq*). It abides below the firmament—, (*qamats*). All these waters, from this side and that—five vowels standing within this point. This one stabilizes, shining toward holy Covenant of the Male, which inherits all five vowel points.⁴⁷⁹

“Once this one inherits them all, Female becomes luminous, producing fruits and greenery, as is written: *Let the earth sprout vegetation* (ibid., 11). It is the force of this point, standing below, that generates fruit and verdure.⁴⁸⁰

“God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven’ (ibid., 14)—vowel point . (*hataf qamats*), shining its light in the same fashion as Primal Light, vowel point ` (*holem*). Because the former does not shine steadily like the

latter, it is written מארת (*me'orot*), *lights*, deficiently, because it does not shine uniformly like *holem*, even though it is fashioned according to its pattern.[481](#)

“God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living creatures...’ (ibid., 20)—in the mystery of vowel point *sheva segol*, since *segol* comprises water within fire. The swarming swarm of *Living Soul*—knowledge given to Her from two sides, wavering within Her. This is the *swarm* of the *Living Soul*, astir with a stirring, venturing forth into all vowel points.[482](#)

“Come and see: *sheva* is called *swift for righteousness* (Isaiah 16:5)—this is its name, indeed. Hence, it is called *soul* of that *living being*.[483](#)

“Three-pointed *shuruq*—when ו (*vav*) withdraws from Her, knowledge departs, along with what She had absorbed from above, as has been taught. In place of *vav*, *shuruq* ventures forth. This is the case in each instance.[484](#)

“Thus, all vowel points exist for illuminating letters, as is the case of the creation of heaven and earth, as well as all the worlds. None of the letters have subsistence or light without the luminosity of vowel points—everything transmitted in the mystery of Torah at Sinai. Thus is the case in the mystery above, and in the entire array of the human, as has been said.[485](#)

“God said, ‘Let us make a human in our image, according to our likeness (Genesis 1:26). It is written: *By YHVH, a man’s steps are set, and He favors his way* (Psalms 37:23). Come and see: when the blessed Holy One created the upper world and the lower world, it was all according to a single form, this one patterned after that. When He wanted to create the human below, He wanted to fashion him according to the pattern of two worlds.[486](#)

“All mysteries, from above and below, all within the human. Skull of the head, positioned above the body, in the mystery of the supernal world, with adornments of the

head. Body in the mystery of the [supernal] body, where rungs are established among known limbs, below the head. Thighs and feet on lower rungs entirely, as is fitting, to be like the model above and the model below. All forms, upper and lower—the blessed Holy One engraved all of them within the human, so that he would be perfected completely.[487](#)

“Come and see: *By YHVH, a man’s steps are set.* When the blessed Holy One is pleased with someone, all his steps and all his ways—all of them—are prepared for him, and He rectifies each and every one, fittingly. *He favors his way—*even in worldly matters.[488](#)

“Further, *By YHVH, a man’s steps are set, and He favors his way.* If a person directs his mind, will, and heart toward the Holy King, following His way—the blessed Holy One favors it, the one that he paves, as if it were His own, actually![489](#)

“At the moment that letters issued from supernal mystery, as has been said, gelling and taking form in the image of the human, vowels proceeded afterward to inspire spirit of life within them. The letters became enduring, like a person standing on his feet, with spirit’s sustenance.[490](#)

“After vowels have been ensconced upon the letters, infusing them with soul, they must perdure with knowledge and understanding, taking their journeys, providing nourishment to others. This is the meaning of [74b] *in our image, according to our likeness* (Genesis 1:26), as we have established. *In our image—*mystery of Upper World. *According to our likeness—*mystery of Lower World.[491](#)

“Another teaching. *In our image—*undulations of cantillation signs, namely perfection and completion of knowledge and understanding, procuring awareness to contemplate above, knowing that it is concealed, and not revealed.[492](#)

“This is like a king, discerning in understanding and wisdom, not wavering this way or that, only proceeding

with knowledge, understanding, and comprehension. Similarly, in the same fashion, cadences of cantillation signs all proceed in their journeys with wisdom, understanding, and comprehension, as is fitting. This is the meaning of *in our image*.[493](#)

“According to our likeness—mystery of vowels that issued from amid the singular image of the supernal point, from that concealed image, unseen. Since they proceed from the midst of a single נקודה (*nequdah*), point, they are called נקודי (*nequdei*), vowel points. *Likeness*—figure of Supernal Point.[494](#)

“If you say: letters [are also called *likeness*], it is not so! For their image does not abide above, nor does form derive from there. Only after they issue from the mystery of the Upper World do they all crystallize, taking on form, as never before. For there is no form or design above at all.[495](#)

“There is no knowledge of this place, nor does anyone have any comprehension of it at all. Beginning of revealed concealment, but unknown. A single point, sealed. That point—not known or revealed—no one comprehends it.[496](#)

“But letters are not depicted nor derived from above, for there is no figure there at all. Of this: *according to our likeness*—these are the vowel points. *In our image*—undulations, fulfillment of all.[497](#)

“Mystery for the fathomers. Phrasings—consummation of all—where are they located within a person? Well, this is the mystery of *in our image*—these are the images of a person, inside and out. Inside: understanding, comprehension, and wisdom. Outside: image hovering over him, guiding him, safeguarding, affording protection from everything. As long as these movements reside within a person, he is entirely complete. Similarly with all supernal mysteries above.[498](#)

“Mystery of *From YHVH, a man's steps are set* (Psalms 37:23)—to travel on his journey, with movements of cantillation signs. *And He favors his way* (*ibid.*)—with vowel

points. *From YHVH*—this mystery is received from Him, integrating everything below in a single pattern, one mystery.⁴⁹⁹

“*From YHVH, a man’s steps are set*—like א (azla), מ (maqaf), ש (shofar holekh). These are *a man’s steps*, each and every one established as fitting—this is the meaning of *set*. The other undulations, as is written: *And He favors his way*. Whether upright, to proceed, to stop, to sing joyously, to be silent, or to pronounce judgment—they all comprise knowledge and understanding for journeying, fittingly.⁵⁰⁰

“ז (Zarqa)—joyous melody. When Spark of Darkness appears—in the striking within incomprehensible pure ether—it produces joy and gladness, casting from afar, chanting joyously to the One who is not known or grasped at all. It is established in its place, but not sufficiently settled to enable comprehension, until it is drawn closer with greater understanding. Similarly with all the cadences, each and every one, fittingly.⁵⁰¹

“Until these movements appear, limbs of the body cannot venture out on journeys. For all limbs of the body are apportioned among the letters—twenty-two letters, materializing in joints and members. Twelve limbs—segments that travel. But these twelve cannot set out on journeys properly without the mystery of twelve inflections, which actualize and propel these joints. Other modulations provide understanding, wisdom, and knowledge for the whole body, raising it, and conferring delight above and below—[74c] everything as appropriate.⁵⁰²

“Twenty-two letters: principle of mystery of the body, all apportioned to limbs of the body. From mystery of letters, the body is consummated. Other letters remain—ten. Twelve primary letters—limbs sustaining the whole body, each and every limb as ordained.⁵⁰³

“This is the case, even though some of the letters appear male and other letters appear female. For example, א (aleph)—male; ב (bet)—female; ג (gimel)—male; ד (dalet)—

female; ה (*he*)—female; ו (*vav*)—male. Similarly with all the other letters, some encompassed within the Male, some encompassed within the Female. If you ask, ‘If this is the case, how can a man be constituted in the mystery of twenty-two letters? Once letters are contemplated and selected as needed, and as fitting for the Male, there are twelve, corresponding to twelve limbs!’[504](#)

“The answer is that all letters—actually—are comprised within mystery of the Male. This is so for the twenty-two letters—male letters and female letters. Regarding all limbs: within the joints, one limb comprises another, one penetrates another. The one entering is male; the one receiving within, female.[505](#)

“All limbs comprise male and female, one entering the other like male into female. Consequently, all letters ascend in the mystery of Male and Female. All letters need each other, cleaving to one another, entering one another like male into female.[506](#)

“Twenty-two other letters incorporated within Female below—small letters. When Male joins Female, with desire—of all the letters in all the limbs—for the Female, He deposits mystery of letters within Her, in Her waters. Afterward, heavens congealed, since letters had materialized, and other letters emerged, modeled after these letters. Hence: there is an alphabet of supernal letters, and an alphabet of diminutive letters.[507](#)

“א (*Alef*) is one, and the mystery of One, emerging and materializing in mystery of three supernal limbs, bound as one—and they are one. Nonetheless, it is only one limb since, when *alef* emanated and was placed at the top, it came forth in the image of others who needed to join with it. When *alef* issued forth, it appeared to two other rungs who needed to be with it—the left and the middle. All united as one, and are seen in its form. Once those two others were situated and stabilized in their places, *alef*

returned and settled into its station, at the apex of the right side.[508](#)

“How did the blessed Holy One do it? When letters issued forth, the first one to appear, head of all letters, was *alef*. What did the blessed Holy One do? He enwrapped Himself in that letter, and created Heavens. With this letter, the blessed Holy One created the mystery of unity—three rungs. Heavens—one mystery. This is as we have established, and has been said.[509](#)

“When Heavens were created in this mystery, they had not yet congealed or solidified. They were hidden in water, mystery of *alef*, on the right. After gelling, out of the midst of water, ם (*vav*) appeared, its tracing traced, materializing in human form. Nonetheless, there was nothing lacking from the form of *alef*, and it returned, stationed in its position.[510](#)

“The brilliance of that letter began to shine from the beginning of the world to the end. It hid its light away within another letter, fashioning a בית (*bayit*), home, for that letter to conceal its light within. It light was hidden within it.[511](#)

“From that moment, it was concealed and secreted away—absent from the world other than on one subtle path, a single ray flowing from it. The world is nourished from it—its existence sustained. From this letter, everything is built. From this letter, all are nourished.[512](#)

“With this letter, [74d] the blessed Holy One protects the people of Israel, smashing their enemies before them, as is written: *Your right hand, O YHVH, glorious in power; Your right hand, O YHVH, smashes the enemy* (Exodus 15:6). When they transgressed, what is written? *He has withdrawn His right hand* (Lamentations 2:3). Then, the people of Israel was exiled from the land, and their enemies ruled over them.[513](#)

“*Alef* settled in the arm with the mystery, strength, and force of two other sides that are strengthened by it—this is

the right hand. ב (Bet) contained within it, absorbing it, facing it, like a woman penetrated by a man. Thus, all letters—one male, one female.[514](#)

“Alef emanates to other letters and is consummated in its perfection. Taking two other rungs—אלף (alef, lamed, final pe)—attaining completion. Mystery of *Those camped next to him, the tribe of so-and-so* (Numbers 2:5, 12, 27). *Those camped next to him*—two rungs in one.[515](#)

“Ultimately, the letters add up to sixty myriads, like the number of tribes of Israel—twelve, totaling sixty myriads. Here, too, when letters are spread apart, they equal sixty: גימל דלת הא וו זין חיט טת יוד כף למד ממ נון סמך עין פא צדי קוף ריש שין תו אלף בית. This is the sum of the letters, totaling sixty myriads—yielding perfection in the mystery of letters, in all of the limbs.[516](#)

“Twelve more letters remain: closed מם (mem, final mem), long צדי (tsadi dalet yod), נון (nun, vav, final nun), פא (pe, alef), כף (kaf, final pe). These are the other letters—the doubles—מנצפך (mem, nun, tsadi, pe, final kaf), adding up to twelve letters. When all letters are complete, they total seventy-two letters, mystery of the holy name by which the blessed Holy One is called.[517](#)

“The people of Israel number seventy souls, with two letters—accompanying witnesses, witnesses in their midst, comprised within them. These are יה (yod he), as is written: *There tribes ascend, the tribes of יה (Yah), a testimony to Israel* (Psalms 122:4). Mystery of הרעובני, השמעוני (ha-Reuveni... ha-Shim'oni), *Reubenites... Simeonites* (Numbers 26:7, 14), as has been established—all totaling seventy-two.[518](#)

“The alphabet follows the same paradigm: all letters ascending to the mystery of seventy-two letters, all becoming the mystery of the consummate body, mystery of the human, mystery of the supernal chariot, mystery of the engraved, holy name.[519](#)

“Consequently, all letters rise with the ascent of the sublime chariot—with their images and with their bodies—

everything becoming a single mystery, fittingly.[520](#) All letters—when they join together, engraved in their engravings, in the mystery of seventy-two engraved letters—all fashioned into one body.”[521](#)

מתניתין

Matnitin

OUR MISHNAH

MATNITIN.¹ Celestial ones fly off from the right. Nine points of Torah flow, apportioned among the letters. Letters undulate through them on subtle journeys, allocated to mysteries. These nine rule over letters—letters ramifying from them. Points remain to elevate them, mobilizing only when these emerge, in the mystery of *Ein Sof*—all letters undulating in the mystery of *Ein Sof*. Just as these convey those, so are these concealed ones conveyed. Letters revealed and not revealed. These hidden ones—upon what do they rest? Letters.²

Nine names, engraved in ten: First, יוד הָא וָאוּ הָא (Yod He Vav He), *Ehyeh* [101a] *asher Ehyeh*, *YHVH*, *El Elohim*, *YHVH*, *Tseva'ot*, *Adon*, *Shaddai*.³ [154b]

MATNITIN. “Heavenly denizens, celestial holy ones, select of the world, kernel of the nut: Gather in to comprehend! A bird descends daily, arousing in the Garden, flaming fire in her wings. In one claw, three trowels sharp as swords; a key in its right claw.⁴

“She roars, demanding, ‘Who among you—that enters and exits, and is strengthened by the Tree of Life, reaches its branches and bonds with its roots, eats of its fruit, sweeter than honey, bestowing life to the soul, tonic to the bones—is shielded from vile thoughts, thoughts that pervert, betraying the Tree of Life, polluting the stream and river of the source of Israel, fashioning a Tree of

Falsehood that delivers death to the soul, breaking one's bones, not surviving at all?'⁵

"Such a thought defiles his source, since that thought ascends and switches soul for soul. Tree of Life vanishes, Tree of Death is strengthened, and a soul is drawn down from there. Woe to him, uprooted [155a] by that reverie from the midst of the Tree of Life, cleaving to the Tree of Death—he has no branches. He will never see any profit, and will be desiccated, utterly depleted, his fruit bitter. Of him is said: *He will be like a shrub in the desert...* (Jeremiah 17:6).⁶

"Since upright thinking soars upward, it grasps the Tree of Life, is strengthened by its branches, and eats of its fruit. All forms of sanctity and all blessings flow from it, bestowing life upon his soul, and a tonic for his bones. Of him is said *He will be like a tree planted by water, spreading its roots by a stream; it does not fear when heat comes...* (ibid., 8). All matters of the world follow contemplation and thought. Of this: *You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy...* (Leviticus 20:7). For all sanctifications in the world emit and draw upon upright thinking.⁷

"Of one defiled by his revolting thoughts, when he comes to have intercourse with his wife and directs his desire and thought toward another woman, sowing seed with alien thoughts—this is the one who exchanges supernal rungs above, rung of holiness for a rung of impurity. Just as his contemplation effects substitutions below, so too does he effect substitutions above. Just as the body of the child who is born is called 'changeling,' so too is his soul called 'changeling,' since he did not draw holy emanation with his thought—consequently the child's soul is swapped with a foreign rung.⁸

"Jacob, more complete than all. It was evident to the blessed Holy One that all his ways were truthful, and his intention—constantly true thoughts in all matters. On that

night when he had sexual relations with his wife Leah, he was thinking of Rachel. Intercourse with Leah while thinking of Rachel! His well-spring followed that intention—unconsciously, for he was unaware.⁹

“As a result, Reuben did not secure real naming. The blessed Holy One knew, and displayed him, announcing, בן ראַן (*Re’u ven*), *Behold, a son* (Genesis 29:32) has been born into the world.’ Of this is written: *‘If one hides in secret places, do I not see him?’ declares YHVH* (Jeremiah 23:24). Do not read it as אַראַן (*er’enu*), *see him*, but rather as אַראַן (*ar’enu*), *display him*—he should be viewed! Since it was clear to the blessed Holy One that Jacob’s action was unintentional, and that his contemplative intention lay on the path of truth, Reuben was not disqualified from the midst of the holy tribes. Had it been otherwise, he would have been disqualified.¹⁰

“Since thought is the essence, producing effects, the blessed Holy One perceived the intention where it joined that first drop, [155b] and transferred the birthright, as is written: *Reuben—he was the firstborn... his birthright was given to Joseph* (1 Chronicles 5:1)—in that very place, for the intention tracked and conjoined to that drop. There it bonded and the birthright was transferred—birthright taken from Reuben and conveyed to the place that his intention cleaved. He was thinking of Rachel and his desire adhered to her, thus the birthright adhered to Rachel—everything following contemplation and thought.¹¹

“Similarly, contemplation and thought perform deeds, drawing a flow onto everything that one joins in secret. This is as is written: *the wife of the dead man shall not become wife outside to a stranger. Her brother-in-law shall come to her* (Deuteronomy 25:5). Here, thought and intention are necessary for joining; and through that intention and contemplation, the necessary effect is achieved, and the name will not be obliterated from the world. This is the secret of *If he sets his heart upon Him, he*

will gather in His spirit and soul (Job 34:14), since intention and thought draw a flow and perform deeds wherever needed—actually!¹²

“Thus, in prayer, will and thought are required to direct. Similarly for all other forms of worship of the blessed Holy One, contemplation and thought perform deeds, evoking a flow into all, wherever needed.”¹³ [161b]

Jacob took rods of fresh poplar, almond, and plane (Genesis 30:37).¹⁴

MATNITIN.¹⁵ “Will of the deed, clusters of faith! A voice—voice of voices—arousing above and below. Open-eyed we

were. Sphere above, rotating toward diverse sides. A voice intones, arousing, “Awaken sleepy, slumbering ones, with sleep in their sockets, who do not know to look and do not see! Stopped-up ears, lethargic hearts, they sleep and do not know. The Torah stands before them, yet they pay no heed, and do not know upon what they gaze; who look but do not see. The Torah sends forth voices, ‘Look, foolish ones! Open your eyes and understand!’ Yet none pays heed, and none inclines his ear! How long shall you remain in the darkness of your desires? Look and understand, and the shining light will be revealed to you!”¹⁶

“When consummate Jacob went from the Land to another domain, in the midst of foreign rungs, he fended them all off, choosing his apportioned lot and share from the midst of darkness, wisdom from the midst of obtuseness. Thus he brought honor to his Master in the domain of a foreign god. Of this is written: *No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale* (Isaiah 29:22).”¹⁷ [251a]

MATNITIN.¹⁸ “Illustrious clusters! Potent chosen ones! Draw near and listen—who among you ascends and descends, who seizes hold of spirit—let him rise and learn!”¹⁹

“When an impulse arose in the will of the White Head to enhance His glory, a single concealed radiance soared upward in the head of all. He blew upon it, generating glistening vaults, joined entirely as one—ascending and descending, they became wholly one.²⁰

“When that hidden radiance fanned it and it shone, then it was called אֶהְיֶה (*Ehyeh*), *I am* (Exodus 3:14). That radiance ascended and descended, flinging gleaming sparks. He blew upon it, and a mighty, hidden one shot out—its name אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*asher Ehyeh*), *that I am* (ibid.), in hidden, concealed engravings. These are the dazzling vaults that bonded together from within a single, hidden monolith, emerging through gravure with the force of that supernal radiance, and it is called *YHVH*.²¹

“He blew upon it again, and gleaming sparks scattered, hurled in every direction. One powerful concealed one emerged, glowing in every direction, and it is called *EI*.²²

“Again, hidden splendid one blew upon it, ascending and descending, exuding into twelve hundred fiery, vaporous clusters. A hidden force shot out, called *Elohim*. From this one, mighty, hidden ones emerged, flaring in every direction—some of them arrayed fittingly, some in a different array.²³

“He blew upon it again, [251b] generating a hidden force standing astride two powers called *Tseva’ot*, from whom all troops and all supernal legions flow, each and every one according to its species, to establish and conduct worlds. Of this is written *YHVH Tseva’ot, Happy is the one who trusts in You* (Psalms 84:13).”²⁴ [2:4a]

MATNITIN. Rabbi Shim’on said, “We are open-eyed, and have seen the wheels of the holy chariot, journeying on their journey. The sound of song—sweet to the ears, enchanting the heart—rising and falling, mobile and immobile. A thousand thousands and a myriad myriads tremble, bursting into song below, rising upward.²⁵

“Responding to that melodious sound stand those who stand, congregation congregating on the right side, fifty-four thousand masters of eyes who see and do not see. Upright in their positions, two other sides return on their account.²⁶

“On the left side, 250,000 masters of trumpeting blare wails and tremolos from their stations. They begin with judgment and conclude with judgment, then sound the alarm a second time, sitting in judgment with books open.²⁷

“At that moment, the Master of Judgment who presides over them rises and sits upon the throne of judgment. Song subsides before a verdict is reached. Masters of eyes from the right side circle, along with [4b] 18,000 others—they sound the trumpets, but without wailing, without tremolo; instead, they erupt in song. The 250,000 trumpeters are startled and blast a second time, but without wailing.²⁸

“The Patron arises from that throne and sits on the throne of absolution. At that instant He invokes the great, supreme, holy name—with that name there is mercy for all. He begins, invoking once, ‘יָד הֵבָה וְאָוֶהָה’ (*Yod he vav he*),’ as is said: *He invoked the name of YHVH* (Exodus 34:5). They erupted as before—holy wheels, thousands of thousands, myriads of myriads—chanting, praising, and extolling, ‘Blessed is the glory of God from His place!’²⁹

“Then came that garden that had been treasured away amid 250 worlds—*Shekhinah*, radiant in the glory that emanates from glow to glow. Her gleam flows to four sides, heads of the ancient ones. Drawn from that glow for all those below, She is designated ‘Garden of Eden.’³⁰

“He proclaimed a second time—the Elder, Patron of all—invoking His name ‘יָד הֵבָה וְאָוֶהָה’ (*Yod he vav he*), and they all uttered the thirteen attributes of compassion.³¹

“Who has seen all these mighty ones—highest of the high, mightiest of the mighty—holy chariots, the heavens and all their forces trembling and quavering in great terror, lauding the holy name and singing song? Happy are the

souls of the righteous, for they partake of this delight and understand it. Of this is said: *Who would not revere You, O King of the nations? For it befits You* (Jeremiah 10:7).³²[12b]

MATNITIN. “Pursuers of truth, those who seek the mystery of faith, those who cling to the faithful cluster, those who know the ways of the Supreme King—draw near and listen!³³

“When two ascend, bursting toward primeval unity, they receive it between two arms. Two descend to three; they are two, one between them. Two sit upon the seat from which prophets suckle. One between them, junction of all, absorbing all.³⁴

[13a] “That holy well stands beneath them—Field of Holy Apples. From this well were watered the flocks that Moses tended in the wilderness. From this well were watered the flocks that Jacob selected, when they were chosen as his share—all those chariots, all those winged beings.³⁵

“Three pillars lie by this well; from them, this well is filled. It is called אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), My Lord; of this is written יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai YHVH*), *My Lord God, You Yourself have begun...* (Deuteronomy 3:24), and similarly: *Let Your face shine upon Your desolate sanctuary, for the sake of Adonai* (Daniel 9:17). אֲדֹן (*Adon*), Lord, of all the earth, as is written: *See, ark of the covenant, Lord of all the earth* (Joshua 3:11). Within it is concealed one holy spring, flowing into it constantly, filling it. This is called יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (*YHVH Tseva’ot*), Lord of Hosts. Blessed is He forever and ever.³⁶ [50a]

The angel of Elohim who was going before the camp of Israel

MATNITIN. Before pure ether settled and shone, pierced stones were sealed up. Three winds enveloped by

moved [and went behind them] three were sunken,
(Exodus 14:19). waters blocked below

holes. By seventy-two
letters, they returned to their places. [50b] After seventy-
two rungs, those stones were split, pierced by an engraved
flint. Gathering together, they became a single
assemblage.³⁷

Afterward, they divided, becoming two waters—half
congealing, half sinking; these rising, those falling. From
here, the world began to divide.³⁸

Above, ever higher, is another flint, engraved with
seventy-two seals of a potent signet ring, subduing the
rolling waves of the sea. When they move, they disperse to
four corners: one division rising, one division falling; one to
the side of the north, one to the side of the south. When
they converge as one, flaming coals arise in the fiery blade
of the whirling sword.³⁹

A single column is thrust into the sea. A rung—
messenger of the supernal governor—rises through that
column above, ever higher, and sees from afar a convoy of
ships sailing the sea. Who has seen waves rising and
falling, wind blowing upon them, fish of the sea pulling all
those ships in all directions of the world?⁴⁰

When that rung descends from that column—a
thousand on his right and a thousand on his left—he
returns and sits in His place like a king upon his throne.
When that rung sails the sea in four directions of the world,
She sets out with Him and returns with Him; He returns to
the column of the King.⁴¹

Then heralds come forth: “Who are the masters of
eyes? Let them raise their eyes above, ever higher! Let the
masters of wings stand erect! Let the masters of faces
cover them until the sea sets forth on its journeys!” Then,
The angel of Elohim journeyed... (Exodus 14:19).⁴² [74a]

MATNITIN. “Dwellers of the world, masters of understanding! Open-eyed masters of understanding, faith treasured away within you! Whoever among you—who ascends and descends, who has the faith of God within—let him rise and understand![43](#)

“When an impulse arose in the will of the White Head to create man, He struck within a particular lamp, and the lamp struck a shining emanation—then that emanation emitted souls. Similarly, it struck within a particular mighty monolith, and that monolith issued a single fiery flame, embroidered with diverse colors. The flame rose and fell until that emanation struck it and it returned, settling into its abode, generating living spirit.[44](#)

“The spirit was bounded, and it absorbed a single color from the sun. Descending below, it absorbed a single color from the moon. Turning to the right, it absorbed the color of water, enfolded within the mouth of a particular lion. Turning to the left, it absorbed the color of fire, enfolded within the mouth of a particular ox, red as a rose. Turning forward, it absorbed the color of wind, enfolded within the mouth of a particular great eagle, with massive wings, bearing all colors, bounded within. Turning behind, it absorbed the color of dust, enfolded within the mouth of man. Then all forms gazed upon him.[45](#)

[74b] “The spirit settled into the dust, garbed by it. Then the dust shook about, descending below. It struck one side of the four sides of the world and an image was formed—a visage. Then the spirit was concealed deep within. That dust that was collected from the four corners of the world—struck by *nefesh* comprised of dust.[46](#)

“*Nefesh* is the basis for the body’s actions; and in accord with the actions of the *nefesh* in the body, the spirit is concealed within. This appears outwardly, ascending and descending. Striking the face, images and markings appear. Striking the forehead, images and markings appear. Striking the eyes, images and markings appear. This is as is

written: *The appearance of their faces testifies against them* (Isaiah 3:9).⁴⁷

“A lamp extends from it—measuring with a single green thread, flame of chaos—strikes a person’s hand when he is asleep, inscribing inscriptions and lines upon his hand. In accord with one’s actions, thus is he inscribed, letters inverting from below upward. The companions of truth recognize these inscriptions of the letters of the lamp. All forces within a person enact inscriptions and tracings, inversions of letters. One who enacts this embroidery, embroiders with the dust of the Dwelling. This is as is written: *I was embroidered with the depths of the earth* (Psalms 139:15).⁴⁸

“Blessed is He, blessed is His name forever and for all eternity.” [3:73b]

THE SECTION OF SEXUAL LICENTIOUSNESS⁴⁹

MATNITIN. Transmitting norms of dazzling beings. Four sharpened keys to four directions of the world, situated in their corners. One in four directions, and four in one direction, engraved in one color. In that color: blue, purple, crimson, white, and red—each blending into its fellow color, its own distinct.⁵⁰

Four heads, rising as one, fusing into one visage. One head rising out of a washing pool in which it bathes. Two does, identical in size, emerge from that washing, as is written: *like a flock of ewes similar in size, coming up from washing...* (Song of Songs 4:2).⁵¹

In their hair, appearance of a four-colored gem. Four wings covering the body, small hands beneath their wings, each engraved with five. Flying high, up above a palace beautiful in form, gorgeous to behold.⁵²

One youth, a boy, emerges with a sharp sword turning into males and females, who carry the measure of an ephah between heaven and earth, sometimes carrying it

throughout the world. All measures are thereby measured, as is written: *an ephah of equity...* (Leviticus 19:36).⁵³

A vision of crystal poised atop one sword. On the head of that sword, red flashing from the crystal. [74a] On two sides, this one and that, the sword appears deeply etched. One mighty warrior—a ladder extending through thirteen worlds—girded with that sword to wreak vengeance. Along with him are girded sixty others, all seasoned and victorious in combat, as is written: *Gird your sword on the thigh, O warrior, your glory and your grandeur* (Psalms 45:4), and it is written *all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh* (Song of Songs 3:8). Their faces turn various colors. No one knows them except one worm who swims among fish of the sea; all rocks that it traverses split apart.⁵⁴

At that time, a voice issuing from those sword-bearers cleaves eighteen enormous mountains. No one inclines his ear; everyone in the world is shut-eyed, hearts stopped-up. No one notices that the structure is about to be destroyed. When deeds are unseemly, deviating from the correct way, the right withdraws and the left rules. Then nakedness appears.⁵⁵

Woe to the wicked who bring this upon the world, for none above are blessed until those below are annihilated, as is written: *And the wicked will be no more. Bless, O my soul, YHVH, Hallelujah!* (Psalms 104:35).⁵⁶ [270b]

MATNITIN. To you mortals—masters of wisdom, masters of understanding—a voice calls out: “Who among you has become enlightened and knows?”⁵⁷

“When White Head enhanced the head, He inscribed from on high below, from below on high. He configured the north side with a wreathed tiara, depth of the supernal abyss inscribed upon it, ascending and descending within it. One concealed rung descended, with one thousand five

hundred inscriptions from one thousand five hundred worlds.⁵⁸

*“Beneath it, one beast of the field found shade (Daniel 4:9), and She had ten rays (ibid. 7:7). Her eyes, like human eyes; Her mouth, uttering grand proclamations. When She rules, She journeys by day, hidden by night. When She descends She is hidden by day, journeying by night. When She travels, four spades that She grasps in Her hands tremble. Traveling with Her are sixty fiery lashes, each one with a sharp sword on its thigh.*⁵⁹

*“When an impulse arose in Will to generate a man for dominion below, through that particular creature He configured fine dust—encompassing all. He blew upon it, and it spread out to four sides of the world—four rolled out, one upward, one downward, one to the north, one to the south.*⁶⁰

*“A great, mighty tree joined and interlinked with Her through one beautiful branch—manifesting all delights. This is as is written: *Beautiful in loftiness, joy of all the earth* (Psalms 48:3). Cleaving to it, they generated one concealed spirit, infusing it into the one kneaded from dust, standing him up on his feet, appointing him sovereign over the entire world, ruler over all. This is as is written: *You make him rule over the work of Your hands, all things You set under his feet* (Psalms 8:7).⁶¹*

*“He was commanded regarding that tree, but he did not keep the commandment, so the King revoked his spirit, and that creature carried it off. Then He obtained another vessel and stationed him among them—a cluster of glyphs amid holy angels, united in a configuration of crowns.*⁶²

“Succeeding generations were ensnared by their sins, their spirits loosed from that vestment. Later, hidden within the dust, amid the clods of the wadi, they were hidden and treasured away. With one unbreakable bone of that garment they were built at the beginning, and so will they come in legions and multitudes a second time, awakening

in the Holy Land. Then the blessed Holy One will summon the original dust of that body—precisely—to knead, infusing it through subtle kneading like yeast in the dough. From that kneading—clear from above—it will be refined and configured into a fitting garment. In the same manner, *A spring shall issue from the House of YHVH and shall water the Wadi of Shittim* (Joel 4:18), for that river increases debauchery in the world. When the holy spring gushes forth, infusing it, then it will be refined and configured, no longer entrenched in its foulness as before.⁶³

“Those who are unworthy will rise to be judged according to the adjudication of the supernal King, as is written: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, these to eternal life, those to shame and eternal contempt* (Daniel 12:2), and then *For as the new heavens and the new earth that I will make shall stand before Me—declares YHVH—so shall your seed and your name stand* (Isaiah 66:22).⁶⁴ [ZH 1d]

MATNITIN. Ten *sefirot belimah*.⁶⁵

One: We have learned—four seasons, winds of the world. Two sides, fifty undulations performing within them. One configured, without substance. From hiddenness emanates one book: three letters traced upon it, three other letters inserted below—one inscribed upon two. ן (Tav) stationed upon it.⁶⁶

Two: Emanating from hiddenness, a second book, with four letters inscribed. Two upon one. ה (He) stationed upon it.⁶⁷

Three: Spread upon [2a] the diminutive one. In the third book, one side—with one letter inscribed upon the royal crown—suspended from supreme ones to supreme ones. On one of its sides an artisan inscribes, placing that letter upon Her—craftsmanship consummated in that letter. North side completed and created from it. Below it, three

sides completed from its three shimmers. ם (Vav) stationed upon it.[68](#)

Four: Emanating above, darkness of the moon, four-headed. Fourth book, stamped by desire of the great abyss. This is the great abyss in which Judgment is allocated an abode, dwelling place for the court. Of this is written *Your judgments [are like] the great abyss* (Psalms 36:7). Settled upon it, two of the letters inscribed upon the King's signet. Through that signet—they move, they rest. One stationed upon four. א (Alef) lodged upon it.[69](#)

Five: Spread over the gleam of the fifth book, a curtain is stretched, dividing lower and upper realms. License granted there to one who inscribes. From above, two powerful ones conveying, a thousand worlds within—inherited legacy rests there. Five letters within, inscribed through two—three upon two. Two others erected there, traced with the mystery of five—five within five. ם (Yod) stationed upon it.[70](#)

Six: Emanating with fiery sparks—two sides upon the sixth book. One side astir with powers, one side with spirit of wisdom, aglow. That gleam, spread over three countenances—shimmer of its sides, established for three. Four traced within four. One rules, facing the other, and one rides. Two letters inscribed in one. ם (Vav) stationed upon it.[71](#)

Seven: Spread over the shimmering of the seventh book—vigor of בלי כלום (*beli klum*), utter nothingness. In the seventh: potent chosen ones, whirlwind of festooned centurions. Cached in the seventh: they conduct, but do not travel; travel, but do not proceed; proceed, but do not subsist; subsist, but are not created; created, but not ceasing. Upper ones and lower ones descend and ascend. Three ride, four traced—restored to one. One—power of a single path resting upon it. ד (Dalet) stationed upon it.[72](#)

Eight: Emanating upon the cause of the eighth book, traced with one star—a single imprint. Standing upon four,

four upon it—one ruling over the other. This one runs, this one sits; this one takes, this one casts; this one ascends, this one descends; suspended from one, created from one. He is Holy, He is Supreme, He exists, He is one. ׀ (He) traced within.⁷³

Nine: Spread out upon the heavenly shimmer—ninth book, seen and not seen. Concealed in 248 worlds astir within it. Weighed in the image of their master. Traced with five, riding upon five. King whom these worlds worship—descending with the brightening day, ascending with the darkening night. Three letters traced upon it. ׀ (Yod) stationed upon it.⁷⁴

Ten: Emanating from the mysteries of eighteen thousand—tenth book. With ten letters, in the name engraved with ten, governing with ten. When trembling arrives among the eighteen [thousand] worlds, four letters range across Her. Ten within ten ride upon Her. Signet of signets. On account of Him, He and His Wife unite—this is oneness.⁷⁵

These ten *sefirot* split off from ten supernal letters of the Holy Name. Corresponding to them, the world was created with ten, their forces radiating in ten utterances. His Name—closed, ineffable. Ten over five, five over ten. Six over five, five over six. Blessed is He, and blessed is His Name, forever and ever. Amen and amen.⁷⁶ [3a]

MATNITIN. Openings were opened, but the gates were guarded—one who enters does not exit, and one who exits, does not enter. Bowing before the opening, mighty nobles enter within. One pillar standing within—embedded. Three colors within: black, white, green. Through it one ascends and descends. All yearn to enter within it, but permission is not granted to all. It predated creation of the world. One governor presiding, treasured away within a thousand worlds. All engravings of the world burst forth from it. Happy is the one who settles within it.⁷⁷

Afterward, two brothers appear, grasping each other. One receives lodgers—Speculum of Life. One who eats at its table lives eternally; and one receives and does not receive lodgers—Speculum of Life and Speculum of Death. One who eats at its table will drop dead—none will save him, none extend a hand. After them, implanted lovers—desirable to behold, desirable to approach.⁷⁸

They were undiscovered, until a blind one went to approach them, but he disdained their provisions. He approached Speculum of Life and Speculum of Death, seizing it, bonding with its trunk. His companion beckoned, “*Thrust a knife into your gullet, if you are a בעל נפש (ba’al nefesh), master of the soul (Proverbs 23:2), but he did not heed nor incline his ear, before he crumpled and died.*⁷⁹

After these, a sweet one gushed forth, dividing into four. All wisdom flowed from that great, glorious one, sating all those loved ones, desirable to behold. Then those two brothers are intertwined.⁸⁰

After them, two young children, youths, fire-flashing sword-blade in their hands—guarding paths and byways so that none may enter or exit, other than he who will neither eat nor drink; they were created before this world. From then on, all sides of the world were perfected.⁸¹

Another row—sides of the left, where shreds plunge to Egypt. A place where fire blazes day and night, a place to toss haughty spirits who stray to the left—indentured there until the epoch of epochs.⁸²

These are the right and left, created before the creation of the world; afterward, corners of the earth.⁸³ [105a]

MATNITIN. In the four seasons, winds of the world, *the enlightened will shine* (Daniel 12:3). Who are *the enlightened*? Those who know how to gaze upon the glory of their Master, and know the secret of wisdom to enter the world that is coming, without shame—they shine like the supernal radiance. As to why it says *the enlightened* and

does not say *the knowers*, they are the ones—actually!—who gaze into the concealed, inner mysteries that do not stand exposed and are not transmitted to all. One who is worthy to gaze upon them with understanding will shine and sparkle in the glistening crown, supreme over all. No gleaming that glows like this; no gleaming that sparkles for that world like this radiance. This is the radiance of Torah; this is the radiance of the masters of wisdom who inherit that world more than anyone. They emerge and enter in all the treasure chambers of their Master, and nobody stays their hand. Everyone pales before their brilliance—radiance sparkling in every direction.⁸⁴

Those who turn many to righteousness (ibid.)—*many*, but not all. This is similar to *Many of those who sleep in ground of dust will awake* (ibid., 2). Why does it say *many*? Since some will not rise. Thus, אדמת עפר (*admat afar*), *ground of dust*. Why is it called *ground of dust*? Well, the explanation is that it is *ground* coming from *dust*. This is the Land of Israel—*ground of dust*. From that dust of which is written *All comes from the dust, and all returns to the dust* (Ecclesiastes 3:20)—even the globe of the sun. The rest of the sinners will be shaken loose from it, and will not rise. This is why it says *many*—referring to the people of Israel.⁸⁵

Here, too, *those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever* (ibid., 3)—the people of Israel who merited to receive the Torah from the Hidden Point. Torah—comprising *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*, comprising the Oral Torah. Since [Torah] is the totality of all, one who attains it, attains everything.⁸⁶

Like the stars—stars are seen in the east, north, south, and west. If it were a pannier of rods—three subtle ones shimmer in each direction, plus two, clustered. Radiant, concealed star shining within the bosom of a wagon. A star

[105b] shines, glistening white from this side; another shines, gleaming red. This one, life; that one, death.⁸⁷

Next to this, tenuous one that neither shines nor issues forth—diminished decade. Within the palace of diminutive letters, seven cantillation notes for Torah suspended from them. These notes are distinct from thirteen others that are invested to guide and provide melody. These seven split into thirteen others that guide and provide melody for *Ketuvim*—distinctive to this location, in the seven palaces of *Ketuvim*.⁸⁸

These seven are different from those others. When they inhere within *Ketuvim* they divide up into ten. On account of them, *Ketuvim* is called Book of the Faithful—ten faithful ones upon them. Afterward, they divide up into thirteen. Everything like the pattern above in the Torah. Prophets dwell in their places, everything following the mystery of the Torah.⁸⁹

Lamp of Adamantine Darkness surveyed with a measuring tool, as they have said—everything in the mystery of *Ein Sof*. Accompanied by the melody of cantillation notes, it alights, striking their ether—that ether that issues from *Ein Sof*. It strikes within brain, and brain emits an ether, then strikes within the throat, causing another ether to flow outward. Three ethers come into being, blended as one, imbuing three clusters, as they have said.⁹⁰

An emanation begins to expand from the Lamp—gauging length, width, height, and depth for those twenty-two supernal keys, then measuring twenty-two letters, and every one of their mysteries, depths, and concealments, corresponding to three ethers, three clusters—יהוה אלהינו יהוה (*YHVH Eloheinu YHVH*), *YHVH, our God, YHVH* (Deuteronomy 6:4). All within the mystery disclosed to Moshe at Sinai.⁹¹

Once they have been uttered, the Lamp flows forth, since these names need to be measured within the extension. Then their extension merges with the

measurements of length and width, depth and height, circle and square. It must be thus, since the mysteries of their names yearn to rely upon *Ein Sof*, and to be enduringly and consummately vitalized within the expansion of the Lamp, with vowel points, and cantillation notes for melody. This is the completion of the mystery of unification, fittingly, and none know the basis of it all other than the masters of faith, and they are few.⁹²

טתא (*Ehad*), *One* (ibid.). א (*Aleph*), uttered hastily—secret for tying the Lamp to those clusters.⁹³

Then it generated the extension of the Torah of Moses—single point issuing from יא (*Ayin*), Nothingness. Prophets spread out from that point, combining, descending below. They rely upon the concealed pillar originating in *Ein Sof*—three clusters, as we have mentioned.⁹⁴

MATNITIN. “Clusters of nodes, crevice-masters! Open-eyed masters of understanding hearts! Draw near and listen! Who among you has heard the sound of the sphere, cooing, revolving in rotation, ascending and descending, notes rising up amid the pleasant melody—three sparks issuing from the foreheads of each voice?⁹⁵

“That sphere rotates above and below, a spark bursting forth, igniting the sphere, causing fire to shoot out from blazing clubs. When the Lamp extends to survey—that sphere emits a pure ether, glowing within those three ethers, of which we have spoken, scintillating as one. From that shimmering, this sphere emerges—rotating, ascending, descending. When the extension of the Lamp issues forth, measuring from above to below, this sphere gathers in all camps. When this extension prevails, this sphere coos sweetly, emitting subtle, sparkling letters, elucidating [105c] letters of the Torah. Then it is called *Masoret*, Tradition.⁹⁶

“From this sphere another, lower, one flares. It expands, kindling other letters to elucidate, but not like the

others—it is called Small *Masoret*. Two spheres called Large *Masoret* and Small *Masoret*—these two, transmitted to the hands of the Faithful Shepherd for contemplation and gazing upon, until letters alighted and were engraved upon stone tablets.⁹⁷

“When the sphere settles, rotating, countless troops, teeming camps, and winged beings fly among those firmaments. Then, letters that shot forth are transmitted to the holy angel called Yofi’el, Master of Wisdom. He proceeds to engrave them around the letters, and then this holy angel bequeaths them to the holy, faithful one, as is said: *YHVH said to Moses, ‘Go up to Me to the mountain and be there...’* (Exodus 24:12).”⁹⁸ [121d]

MATNITIN.⁹⁹ In pristine brilliance, at the onset of the Will of the King, it graved nine glyphs, in dazzling concatenations, and one concealed, unknown.¹⁰⁰

Graving glyphs, it struck inside one lamp—one shot out, faithful to one governor, concealed in its concealment, known and not known. Whoever would fathom it, turns around. It is miniscule, and on account of its diminutiveness, concealed in obscurity of inwardness—unknown. All thoughts of it are confounded, returning, turning back without cleaving. Sealed within, thirty-two eyes—unopened eyes, traced in faint inscription. Thoughts and actions ascend toward it, their meaning unrevealed. Gather them when they are cast out; when gathered in, cast them out. Forms etched within it—secreted, unrevealed.¹⁰¹

Graving glyphs, [122a] it struck, and the second one shot out—one below, revolving round and round, then soaring into the air. Striking the tower, whirling the palace from the midst of the ether from which it sprung. Forms placed in it—artisans of all silver, gold, and bronze vessels.¹⁰²

It advances, hidden away, its voice unheard beyond; but in its innards an unfamiliar voice is heard, a voice issuing from one end of the world to the other—rising and falling, moving and fixed.[103](#)

No eye can behold it. When it is veiled, it is revealed, and when revealed, veiled. Seen through sealed eyes, heard through closed ears. With eyes opened, it is cloaked; not discerned until a true righteous one arrives at the table to eat.[104](#)

It graved inside the glyph of a form, and the third shot forth, cloaked in the ephod and the breastpiece, girding its decorated band. Revealed by day, concealed by night. Emerging once, then regretting, treasured away until \imath (*vav*) arrives, bonding with it. Soothed, it returns to its place, longing to be revealed only to those who call out to Him at night. In the morning the trace of a thin, subtle thread is revealed, joining to them during the day as a result of hymns and delights they sang to him at night.[105](#)

Providing goodness to all, He raises a flag on the right, inscribing and establishing the world. He enters inner palaces and emerges, building worlds. From beginning to end, He is concealed within sixty myriad worlds. He settles on the southern side, issuing forth, grasping a spade, proffering food for all, and shining upon them.[106](#)

It graved a dazzling glyph of pure noontime, the fourth shooting out from the darkness of 200,000 worlds, stripped of shining radiance—from whence depths emerge, becoming revealed. A radiance shines, then is concealed and darkened. One pushes away, the other draws near; one rejects, the other heals. In its hand—scepter of life and death.[107](#)

Concealed within four hundred hostelries, trained warriors—masters of the spear and whirling sword, hordes bursting out and scattering.[108](#)

When the glyph was graven through the smelting of the blazing fire, one burst forth, red as a rose. Its hair hung

like that of the bears of the mountains of gloom. Fearsomeness, dread, and great power are magnified within him, his hands clenching the flame of the whirling sword. On the day that he is aroused, all pass before him like sheep. Happy is the one who approaches him but is spared.[109](#)

It graved glyphs of the shining mountains, shooting out the fifth one, which stands amid the pillars of the world. All stand before him, and he sits in their midst like a king among his troops. Two appointed grandees stand poised before Him, and He makes peace between them.[110](#)

When He is revealed, all stand ready at their posts. He closes and opens. On account of Him, 60,000 myriads stand on countless mountains. All keys of the King abide with Him. He acts according to His will, and none can stay His hand. Supernal concealed ones, exalted hidden ones, stand before Him, delighting in Him. Brilliant portals opened by Him, shining. Hidden seal of the King in His hand, acting as He wishes with the legions of heaven and the dwellers on earth. Beneath his arms dwell 300,000 myriad worlds.[111](#)

His height—from one end of the world to the other. He sits upon a throne of flaming fire, worlds illuminated by Him and nourished by Him. He is one, He will be One, and He is called One. Blessed is He forever and for all eternity.[112](#)

It graved a glyph, striking a form, shooting out the sixth. Moving constantly, uniting millstones, grinding lights—nourishing worlds with those pulverized beacons. Five ingredients of the incense spices are mixed with them. He grinds and radiates, but does not aromatize beyond. His body is concealed so that it will not waft nor will His scent be detected.[113](#)

Preparing for sexual relations in the mystery of five hundred secrets of the King, He stands at His station, [122b] and the King depends upon Him. All steadfast faithful ones abide within Him. He has one companion, and

They grant each other authority—inculcated from the day of Their inception.[114](#)

It engraved and struck its glyphs, shooting out the seventh—the other faithful one, alongside His companion. Executing all of His companion's artistry, He stands ready before Him with abundant devotion. One stands upon the other, the latter absorbing; both faithfully, bestowing goodness upon the House of David.[115](#)

Beloved Abraham relies upon this one. Isaac, perfect offering, relies upon that one. Jacob—most consummate—stands and relies upon them. They are as one, covered over—like a crystal receiving the sun.[116](#)

Graving glyphs, the Lamp struck, shooting out the eighth. This is eighth in the count, emitting the one beloved by all, desired by all, most worthy of all, most trustworthy of all. He is visage of that consummate one—a glistening, scattering in four gleams—fixed to the ground, His head reaching toward the heavens. With beautiful foliage and bountiful fruit, He bears food for all.[117](#)

Below Him a creature is shaded, its boundaries extending to the four sides of the world. In His branches dwell the birds of the heavens. He journeys on, entering into five hundred worlds—conveying food from them all. He absorbs and collects from them: this one bequeaths bread, this one water, this one oil, and this one manna. Gathering, He infuses into the storehouse of the poor, but He is hidden, with no face to gaze outward.[118](#)

His light spans from one end of the world to the other. All life inheres in Him and He bestows upon those with no vitality at all. He enters into those five hundred worlds, taking fifty years from them, but no more, and then He provides. Afterward, He enters into Father and Mother, and from their provisions He bestows, completing seventy. Revealed by day, bordered by twelve boundaries. Seventy date palms and twelve flowing springs are suspended from Him. Righteous ones are called by His name. He gathers

and then provides all food and crops for the entire world. Blessed is His memory forever and for all eternity.[119](#)

Graving once in the impregnable fierce one, it shot out the ninth. Ninth bone, rising during the day, setting at night. Hidden within 365 concealed visages. Journeying, descending, and abiding, they are concealed between the two arms of the King—engraved in a ring, by the scepter with the seal. Messenger guarding the path, rendering judgments, presiding over the examination of the open books. Good and evil poised before Her, from Her side, life, and from Her side, death, side of sweetness and side of bitterness.[120](#)

A serpent stands before Her, his head beneath Her feet. When he thrusts out his head, he strikes with his tail. Whoever touches his scales is hurled to the pit of the great hollow, but Her feet loom over that serpent's head.[121](#)

Upon rising, the Sea splits the ether that touches but does not touch. Rising at night, She apportions goods to the wealthy, and foodstuffs to Her household. Bonding with, and concealed within 248 faces—adorned with royal embellishments. Master of all the earth treasured away a gleaming ray of light within Her, laying planks in the ark of the Torah.[122](#)

Waging battle against His enemies, exacting vengeance. Girding Himself like a mighty warrior—sharp sword at hand, His spear a flaming fire, arrows shot, flaring with the ferocity of the consuming blaze.[123](#)

Sparkling lamp hovering above the heads of the true righteous ones. Innumerable hidden palaces. Her boundaries extend to the shore of the Sea of Ginnosar, and to all four sides—four kings traced from within Her, ruling over the world through them. Two youths affixed beneath Her. She flies through twelve worlds and is treasured away there.[124](#)

Blessed is He forever, and for all eternity.[125](#)

Vatican 206 (V5) (Unpublished Passage, 330b-331a)

MATNITIN. Rabbi Shim'on said, "Supernal ones, hearken! Lower ones, listen! Great mountains and lofty boulders—wise ones, masters of eyes of understanding! Rulers over empty ones, draw near and listen! The one in your midst who ascends and descends, who seizes hold of spirit—draw near to understand![126](#)

"When an impulse arose in the will of White Head to enhance His glory, He generated from the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness a single spark; He blew upon it, and it flared. Out shot a mighty, powerful one, ascending and descending to 270 worlds, then returning to its place, gleaming."[127](#)

"לֵא (El). A spark shot out, striking the glyph of those two letters—powerful hammer, top and middle—hurling sparks, scattering in 370 directions. These two entered beneath the glow of the spray, illuminating three others.[128](#)

"In the letters engraved by the little one of Rabbi El'azar—they are eighty and they bond with the two primordial ones, becoming one thousand. The hammer strikes this one, causing fifty gates [331a] of Understanding to flow forth. This is the light of the tender ones who said, "אֵלֶּף (Elaf), Learn, בִּינָה (binah), understanding."[129](#)

"A spark shot out and struck that letter, comprised of three, forming the Great Sea, called Sea of Wisdom. ם ׳ (Yod mem), engraved in לֵא (El), and אֵילִם (eilim) glowed. From this one mighty myriads flew out, appointed over sparkling keys of the rulers, called בְּנֵי אֵילִם (benei eilim).[130](#)

"A spark shot out, striking those that had emerged, streaming from the crowns. Crown of *Malkhut*, adorned—supernal crown shining upon two hundred and seventy worlds.[131](#)

"The *tsits* appeared, holy flame, crowning אֵילִם (eilim), as is said: צִיִּט (tsits), *the medallion, of the holy diadem was placed upon his head* (Exodus 39:30), encircling אֱלֹהִים

(*Elohim*). In this way, worlds were completed. Of this we have learned regarding Abraham: בֵּה בְרָאָם (*be-he bera'am*), *with he He created them* (Genesis 2:4).¹³²

“After this consummation, a spark descended from this rung, striking from the lower portion, from above. Sparks streamed from flowing crowns, arousing holy spirit for the true prophets, some to the right, some to the left.¹³³

“Some of them are called ‘hand of *YHVH*,’ as is said: *The hand of YHVH came upon me* (Ezekiel 37:1), and *the hand of YHVH came upon Elijah* (1 Kings 18:46). This one is pigmented with diverse colors, *hand of YHVH* above, and *hand of YHVH* below, numerous colors transmuting on the left. Some of them are called ‘word of *YHVH*,’ as is said: *The word of YHVH that came* (Hosea 1:1); *the word of YHVH came* (1 Samuel 15:10); *the word of YHVH was rare* (1 Samuel 3:1); and *the word of YHVH came to Abram in a vision, saying...* (Genesis 15:1). To other prophets it came by means of a messenger—a messenger, precisely! This is as is said: *He sent forth His word and healed them* (Psalms 107:20), and *He sends out His word and melts them* (ibid. 147:18). But of Moses is written: *YHVH said to Moses*.¹³⁴

“From here upward, glow of ten flowing streams. One who sees, sees; one who does not see, does not see. Of the world that is coming is written *He will be the faithfulness of your times, stronghold of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of YHVH is his treasure* (Isaiah 33:6). This is the gist of the matter, but there, in the heavenly delight of that world, the meaning abides before the King. *Blessed be YHVH forever! Amen and amen* (Psalms 89:53).”¹³⁵

תוספתא

Tosefta

ADDENDA

TOSEFTA. “Illustrious clusters! Quaestors of quaestory! Impregnable castles! We are open-eyed, with open ears.” A voice—voice of voices—descends from above, pulverizing mountains and boulders:¹

“Who are those who see without seeing, ears blocked, eyes shut? Neither seeing, nor hearing, nor knowing through contemplation the one encompassed by two within them, and by them cast away. They cling to those two, while one, artisan of artisans, does not abide [62b] within them. They are not inscribed in the Books of Remembrance; they are erased from the Book of Life, as is said: *Let them be blotted out from the Book of Life, and among the righteous let them not be inscribed* (Psalms 69:29).²

“Woe to them when they leave this world! Woe to their lives! Who will plead for them? They are to be handed over to Dumah, scorched in blazing fire from which they cannot escape—except on New Moons and Sabbaths, as is said: *From New Moon to New Moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath...* (Isaiah 66:23). Afterward a herald in the North proclaims: *Let the wicked return to Sheol!* (Psalms 9:18). How many ravaging gangs gather against them! In four directions fire flames in the Valley of Ben Hinnom; three times a day they are seared.³

“Moreover, when Israel responds aloud: ‘Amen! May His great name be blessed!’ the blessed Holy One is filled

with compassion and takes pity upon all. He signals to the angel appointed over the gates of Hell—Samri’el is his name. Three keys are in his hand, and he opens three gates on the side of the wilderness, so they see the light of this world. Fiery smoke billows, choking the ways. Then three deputies under his command fan with three spades in their hands, chasing the smoke back to its site, providing [Hell’s residents] with relief for an hour-and-a-half, following which they return to their fire. So it is three times a day—and whenever Israel recites: ‘Amen! May His great name be blessed...!’⁴

“Happy are the righteous, whose paths in that world radiate in every direction, as is said: *The path of the righteous is like gleaming light, shining ever brighter until full day* (Proverbs 4:18).”⁵ [107b]

TOSEFTA. Illustrious clusters! Potentates of pedagogy! Wise ones of understanding, gaze to comprehend!⁶

When the White Head prepares the throne upon bejeweled stone columns, there is one gem among those jewels—magnificent in appearance, gorgeous in form, a coffer of clusters—flaming in seventy hues. These colors flash in all directions. These seventy—ramifying from three colors.⁷

[From among] these sparks—among those sparks that dazzle to the four corners of the earth, here comes a harsh spark from the left side, uniting with the Heavens. These seventy colors—*the judicial assembly sat and the books were opened* (Daniel 7:10). From here emerge arrows, swords, spears, and quaeator fire. Intense blaze emitted from the Heavens bonded with it, and when supernal ones have bonded with these below, none can suppress the anger [108a] and judgment.⁸

Eyes flashing like fiery plating, descending among them into the world. Woe to one visited by he of girded loins, sharp sword in hand! He does not differentiate between

good and evil, for the writ from those seventy is authorized once he united with the side of heaven. He descends, [sword] in his left hand, with diverse judgments, varying in diverse colors, changing daily—it is called כרום זלות (*kerum zulut*), *exalted starling* (Psalms 12:9), designated for humanity. All the colors of the blessed Holy One's implements of fury can be seen there, and they dwell in the lofty realms of the world.⁹

Human beings, in their foolishness, pay them no heed. *Brimstone and fire* (Genesis 19:24)—seething water and deliquescent fire, fused together by the heavens, descended upon Sodom. Woe to sinners who disregard the honor of their Master!¹⁰

Ten names engraved by decree of the king. They are ten, totaling a great number. Seventy colors, flashing on every side, emerging from the midst of seventy names.¹¹

Engraved is the mystery of the seventy angels' names—mystery of the heavens:

*Mikha'el, Gavri'el, Repha'el, Nuri'el, Qadumi'el, Tsadqi'el, Malkhi'el, Pada'el, Tumi'el, Hasdi'el, Tsuril'el, Razi'el, Yofi'el, Staturyah, Gazri'el, Vadri'el, Qemu'el, Hazqi'el, Rahati'el, Qodshi'el, Shama'el, Berakhi'el, Ahi'el, Hani'el, Lahadi'el, Mahani'el, Qani'el, Ani'el, Ana'el, Gadi'el, Ahina'el, Rahmi'el, Azri'el, Sananyah, Vedargazyah, Resisi'el, Dumi'el, Sanyah, Tohari'el, Azri'el, Neri'el, Samakhi'el, Rami'el, Baraqi'el, Tesuryah, Shavni'el, Qanonyah, Tsuryah, Pesusyah, [108b] Tsurtaq, Adi'el, Samkhi'el, Neri'el, Maronyah, Lasni, Kemusyah, Yadi'el, Totrusyah, Honi'el, Zakhari'el, Vadri'el, Hina'el, Danda'el, Gadi'el, Bada'el, Ofafi'el, Va'adi'el.*¹²

Adonai over them all. When they are all joined together as one in this mystery of supernal power, then it is called ויהוה (*va-YHVH*), *and YHVH* (Genesis 19:24)—all one assemblage. מֵאֵת יְהוָה (*Me-et YHVH*), *From YHVH, out of heaven* (ibid.)—holy name engraved in seventy other names—mystery of *Heaven*. These are the seventy that rule over the seventy judgments—mystery of *YHVH*. These are the seventy names in supernal holiness—*YHVH* and *Heaven*. These take from those—*and YHVH*. Taking *from YHVH*—each one from the

other. These suspended from those, lower ones from upper ones—all one bond. Thus is the blessed Holy One known through His Glory—*heaven*, seventy. Mystery of *YHVH* in the mystery of the seventy names:¹³

והו ילו סיט עלם מהש ללה אכא כהת הזי אלד לאו ההע יזל מבה הרי הקם לאו כלי לוו
פהל גלך ייי מלה ההו נתה האא ירת שאה ריי אום לכב ושר יחו להח כוק מנד אני חעם
רהע ייז ההה מיך וול ילה סאל ערי עשל מיה והו דני החש עמס ננא נית מבה פוי נמם ייל
הרח מצר ומב יהה ענו מחי דמב מנק איע חבו ראה יבם היי מום. ¹⁴

These are the seventy names that preside over seventy lower rungs—mystery of *and YHVH*. These are seventy names—*YHVH*—mystery called *Heaven*. Seven firmaments ascending to seventy names—holy name. Of this: *And YHVH rained...* (Genesis 19:24).¹⁵

From YHVH from Heaven—secret of secrets, transmitted to wise ones. From this name [109a] called *Heaven*—secrets are created, called *Adam*. Number of limbs of his body—two hundred and forty-eight. Number of letters in this name, two hundred and sixteen, constituting mystery and secret of the entire Torah, along with twenty-two letters and ten utterances. For this name is two hundred and sixteen, plus thirty-two paths within, yielding two hundred and forty-eight limbs of the body—mystery of *Adam*, presiding over the throne, mystery of seventy below. This is the esoteric meaning of *Upon the image of a throne, an image like the appearance of a human being upon it above* (Ezekiel 1:26), and mystery of *and YHVH rained upon Sodom... from YHVH out of heaven* (Genesis 19:24). All one, one word, one secret—transmitted to the wise of heart. Happy is their portion in this world and in the world that is coming.¹⁶

The decree upon them was finalized since they prohibited charity, as is said: [*Sodom*] *did not support the poor and the needy* (Ezekiel 16:49). On account of this, in truth, judgment came from Heaven. Charity and Heaven are entirely one, and it is written: *For חסדך (hasdekha), Your love,*

is higher than heaven (Psalms 108:5). Since Charity depends upon Heaven, judgment is from Heaven, as is written: *from YHVH out of heaven*.¹⁷

Judgment against Israel comes from this place, as is written: *The guilt of the daughter of my people exceeded the iniquity of Sodom* (Lamentations 4:6); and Jerusalem is called sister of Sodom, as is written: *sin of your sister Sodom* (Ezekiel 16:49). Their punishment comes from Heaven, identical to that of Sodom—on account of prohibiting charity—other than that this one was overthrown, and that one destroyed; this one will be rebuilt, the other will not be rebuilt.¹⁸ [121a]

TOSEFTA. *Sarah's life endured* (Genesis 23:1).¹⁹

Essence of our mishnah: We were close by, heard a voice concatenating above, downward, spreading throughout the world. A voice smashing mountains, shattering mighty rocks, gargantuan whirlwinds ascending, our ears patulous. Proclaiming in undulations: “Thorn-prick to slumberers, torpor in their sockets, subsisting in their subsistence.”²⁰

“The King speaks! Avoid inebriation, gatekeepers! The ruler of numerous troops is stationed in his place!”²¹

“All are insensate, unaware that the book is open, names recorded. Dumah, too, stands ready to seize according to the reckoning. Dust-dwellers, longing to be settled—soon they will long to be counted among them, averse to the wheel of convolution. But they sink, not rising—sinners blotted out from Dumah's book. Who will press their case? Who presides at their reckoning? Woe unto them for their lives! Woe for their trembling! Attested of them: *Let them be blotted out from the book of life, and among the righteous let them not be inscribed* (Psalms 69:29).²² [147a]

Parashah of Jacob departed from Beer-Sheba and went to Haran (Genesis 28:10).²³

“Mortals, celestial beloved, elite potentates, draw near, and listen! Who among you are wise—masters of eyes of discernment? Let him come and learn: When the White Head lifts up three letters and engraves them in chiseled gravings—א (alef), י (yod), ך (final nun)—אין (ayin), Nothing, is hewn. [א (Alef)]—Supreme Head, Concealed of All Concealed. י (Yod)—ascendant in Will, completed by Head above, descended below, emerging and emitting thirty-two paths until they were engraved amid precious gleaming gems, tied to the letter nun, male and female. Two lovers—powerful nexus consummated between them, holy name bonded within them. From them originates food for all, and worlds are completed. Of this, extended ך (final nun) is engraved, principle of two; bent ך (nun), female alone.²⁴

“י (Yod)—Will [147b] emanates paths, striking between letters, forming the firmament of Jacob between two spirits, infusing speech amid the limbs, ultimately cascading to that ך (who is bent). North and south bonded with Her as one, afterward, linking together as one. Bent ך is called Beer-Sheba, suffused from Jacob to water all the flocks of sheep. Of this: *Jacob departed from Beer-Sheba and went to Haran* (Genesis 28:10).²⁵

“Alternatively, *from Beer-Sheba* above, for He emerges from Her. Afterward, He descends to water הָרֵן (haran), Haran—lower well, flaring הָרֵן (haron), wrath, of YHVH, the sword of YHVH, court of YHVH. Of this: *God, nations have come into Your estate* (Psalms 79:1).”²⁶ [151b]

TOSEFTA. *He looked, and here: a well in the field...* (Genesis 29:2).²⁷

Rabbi El’azar opened, “It is written: *Listen to Me, pursuers of justice* (Isaiah 51:1)—those who seek the mystery of faith, those who cling to the faithful cluster, those who know the ways of the Supreme King.²⁸

When two ascend, bursting toward primeval unity, they receive it between two arms. Two descend below; they are two, one between them. These two—seat of the prophets, site from which prophets suckle. One between them, junction of all, absorbing all.²⁹

That holy well [152a] stands beneath them—Field of Holy Apples. From this well, flocks were watered—all those chariots, all those winged beings.³⁰

Three are stationed, lying by this well; from them, this well is filled, as is written: *for from that well the flocks were watered...* (Genesis 29:2). It is called אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), my Lord; of this is written אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה (*Adonai YHVH*), *My Lord YHVH, You Yourself have begun...* (Deuteronomy 3:24), and similarly: *Let Your face shine upon Your desolate sanctuary, for the sake of Adonai* (Daniel 9:17). אֲדֹן (*Adon*), Lord, of all the earth, as is written: *See, ark of the covenant, Lord of all the earth* (Joshua 3:11).³¹ [161b]

TOSEFTA. Caliginous pure cluster ascended within, within, no dwelling place to be found. Such a place is no place, not found above or below—abandoned by all, rendered to oblivion everywhere. *Avadon* (Oblivion), male—Samael spewed from the smelted severity of Isaac. *Mavet* (Death), his woman—primal serpent, *wife of whoredom* (Hosea 1:2), as is written: *Her feet descend to death* (Proverbs 5:5).³²

These two—*Avadon* and *Mavet*—heard of the rigor of the King's potency, mysterious, concealed, supernal secret. Destroyed completely, eliminated [162a] from thought and contemplation. One who is drawn after them is totally annihilated. Each the utter inverse of the other.³³

Happy is a consummate man like Jacob who ascends, one whose eyes are not darkened by that smoke, worthy to approach truth, seal of the Holy King.³⁴

Come and see: Utterly Supreme, Concealed One—' (*yod*), celestial point emerges from Him. From this supernal point

everything issues, channeling and gushing forth ה (he), Supernal Mother, irrigating all. From here flows ו (vav), mystery of six, uniting all sides—*rods of fresh poplar, almond, and plane* (Genesis 30:37). Two arms joined to it extend and unite with lower ה (he), connecting to Tabernacle as one, becoming one. Then the thirteen attributes are one. Whiteness revealed, ascending above all colors, as is written: *exposed whiteness* (ibid.). Then it is called: *YHVH is one and His name is one* (Zechariah 14:9). Then, *YHVH is my shepherd, I shall not lack* (Psalms 23:1), and *In grass meadows He makes me lie down, by quiet waters guides me. He restores my soul...* (ibid., 2-3).³⁵

[232a] Supernal beloved ones, masters of understanding, observe! Authorities proficient with nail-studded clubs, approach and learn! Who among you are masters of discerning eyes, perceiving?³⁶

When it arose in the Will of Mystery of Mysteries to emit three colors blended as one—white, red, and green—three colors as one commingled, trickling into one another.³⁷

A spade below was dyed, issuing from these colors. All colors reflected in it—a looking-glass to gaze upon, like the appearance of crystal: when a color strikes it, so it appears outwardly.³⁸

These three colors surround Her—a color moving, ascending, descending—interlaced lusters inlaid within Her. Colors revolve, colors blending as one, raising Her above, above—ascending by day, descending by night. A candle burning, visible by night, by day its light concealed—hidden in 248 worlds, all moving because of Her, downward from above, within 365 limbs, treasured away below.³⁹

Whoever probes [232b] to find Her must smash scrapings, concealed shells, and then open gates. One worthy of seeing will see through knowing and

understanding, like someone peering from behind a wall—unlike Moses, supreme, faithful prophet, who saw eye to eye above, in a place unknown.⁴⁰

Whoever is not worthy is thrust outside. Numerous bands of dazzling demons confront him, looming over him, removing him so that he cannot gaze upon the delight of the King. Woe to the wicked, unworthy of gazing, as is said: *They shall not come in to see...* (Numbers 4:20).⁴¹

Rabbi Yehudah said, “I was contemplating and, behold, from the midst of this place, souls of holy righteous ones were gazing when they cleaved here! Through these rays, souls of righteous ones gaze as these colors ascend, intermingling as one. Happy is the one who knows how to combine and unite them all as one, establishing them all in the proper place, above, above. Then one is protected in this world and in the world that is coming.”⁴² [233b]

Sound of a sphere, rolling upward from below. Her braided chariots going forth, whirling—a dulcet melody ascending and descending, floating through the world. Sound of a shofar reverberating through depths of rungs, rotating the sphere.⁴³

Two hydraulica encompass her, on the right and on the left, two colors steeping in each other—this one white, that one red—both turning the sphere above. When turning to the right, white ascends; when turning to the left, red descends. [234a] The sphere turns constantly, never subsiding.⁴⁴

Two birds ascend, chirping, one to the south, one to the north, soaring through the air. The warbling and the euphonious melody of the sphere join as one, and then *A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day* (Psalms 92:1)—all blessings flowing in a whisper, in this sweetness, from the amorous sound of the shofar, in response to those blessings. They descend from above, treasured away as one

within the depth of the well—bubbling of the well, its rippling never ceasing until the revolving sphere is filled.⁴⁵

The sphere revolves, the two hydraulica revolve, the one on the right crying out potently: “Radiance of radiancies, ascending and descending! Two thousand worlds, shine! Middle world within them, gleam with the radiance of your Master!”⁴⁶

All masters of eyes, gaze! Open your eyes and attain this brilliance, this delight—blessings flowing from above!⁴⁷

If one is worthy, the sphere turns to the right—gushing and cascading upon him—and then he will be enraptured by those sparkling, supernal blessings. Happy are those who earn them! But, if unworthy, the sphere turns, and the hydraulicon on the left turns, descending below, conveying judgment upon the ignoble one. A voice erupts, “Woe to those sinners who have proven unworthy!” Flaming fire shoots forth from that side, scorching sinners’ heads. Happy are all those who walk in the path of truth in this world, attaining that supernal splendor, radiant blessings, as is said: *He will satisfy your soul with radiancies...* (Isaiah 58:11).⁴⁸ [2:68b]

TOSEFTA.⁴⁹ Within concealment of the concealed, an inscription was inscribed, not seen, not revealed. That inscription—inscribed and not inscribed. Masters of understanding, open-eyed, cannot fathom it—sustenance of all. That engraving is miniscule, not seen, not revealed. Abiding in Will, to sustain all, absorbing what it absorbs from that which has no inscription nor will, unseen.⁵⁰

The engraving desired to cover itself, and made itself a palace in which to be concealed—generating that palace from itself, stretching it extensively, expansively, toward all sides, enhancing it with precious fabric, opening fifty gates within.⁵¹

Deep, deep within, the inscription was concealed, treasured away. Once hidden inside, entering within, it was

filled with splendor. From that radiance stream rays, sparks shooting out of those gates, illuminating all.⁵²

The palace is covered with six curtains; six curtains, which are five. Deep, deep within those curtains stands one embroidery. By that curtain, the palace is covered; from within, it gazes and sees all. This palace is open-eyed, never asleep; observing constantly, to illumine below from the radiance of that inscription. That Understanding, concealed Wisdom, is Will of Wills—concealed, treasured away, not revealed, existing and not existing. Blessed be He from concealment of concealment. Blessed be He forever and ever. Amen.⁵³ [235b]

TOSEFTA. Among supernal mysteries exist constricted caissons. These—ascend and descend; those—enduringly ensconced. Rotating wheels were established in the epoch that argil was inlaid—wheels that rotate the world. Through the rotations they rotate—clutch of marshals conducting in their midst.⁵⁴

One wheel in their midst—this wheel, rotating and not rotating, sustaining twelve thousand worlds. Inhering among them, ascending and absorbing in their midst.⁵⁵

Beneath that wheel stands one column, implanted into the great depth. Within it, boulders roll; within the depths they ascend and descend. The column prevails over them, journeying and not journeying, rooted from above downward. Two hundred and twenty other wheels rotate around that column.⁵⁶

That other wheel, poised over this one, prevailing over twelve thousand worlds—revolves within Dwelling, revolving and not revolving.⁵⁷

That Dwelling presides over twelve thousand worlds, and within it abides a herald proclaiming: “Beware of the rotating wheel! One who is a master of eyes of understanding will contemplate and gaze upon the wisdom of his Master. These heavenly words, keys of his Master

residing there—concealed within the holy Dwelling. Happy are they in this world, and happy are they in the world that is coming! To them is applied *Happy is the one whose strength is in You—highways in their heart* (Psalms 84:6), and *Happy is the one You choose and draw near, he will dwell in Your courts! May we be sated with the goodness of Your house, holy One of Your temple* (Psalms 65:5).”[58](#)

Sitrei Torah

SECRETS OF TORAH

*He engendered in his likeness, according to his image, and called his name Seth (Genesis 5:3).*¹

We learn from here that others were not fashioned in his likeness. But this one was formed *in his likeness*, like the array of the body and the paradigm of the *nefesh*—on the upright path, fittingly.²

The serpent infused Eve with scum, and that filth rattled about in her belly, unable to take shape. For until Adam sinned, the letters of the alphabet were aligned within him, traced within him in this world. Upon arriving at the letter פ (*pe*), ף (final *pe*), male and female were amorously harmonized in the Garden, supernal angels arrayed before them. At once, Samael was humiliated in the heavens and descended, mounted upon a powerful serpent, appearing before him.³

Suddenly, letters jumbled. Then, Samael bonded with that serpent and they became one. They snatched the letters, executing depraved craftsmanship with the letters ט צ (*tsadi, dalet*), טצ (*tsayyad*), hunter—that is [the meaning of] טצ (*tsadi, final tsadi*). They preyed upon them through licentious seduction. They perpetrated further exploits with the letters ק ר (*qof, resh*)—artisanship of deceit, for they returned to invert letters through villainous contrivance. Just as ק (*qof*) cannot stand since it is legless, קופא (*qofa*), a monkey, has no standing before a human. ר (*Resh*)—רע (*ra*), evil.⁴

They were transposed through wicked artistry until Adam and his wife fell. Through these letters—ק ר (qof, resh)—they sired children, but none survived. Scum with which the serpent befouled Eve—from that filth, actually!—Cain was born. This is how murder came into existence, since murder is the serpent’s craft. The [progression of] letters was interrupted at this point.⁵

When Adam repented, returning to intercourse with his wife as before, what is written? *He engendered in his likeness, according to his image* (Genesis 5:3)—from the restoration of body and spirit, fittingly. Then it was written: *There is הבל (hevel), Abel, fashioned upon the earth* (Ecclesiastes 8:14). At that point the letters were restored, beginning with ש (shin) and ת (tav), as is written: *God שת (shat), has provided me with another seed in place of Abel, for Cain had killed him* (Genesis 4:25).⁶

Seth was in the image and likeness of his predecessors? Not at all! From here the world was constructed in a wholly different pattern of the alphabet—Kenan, Mahalalel, and Jared—letters added to correct the crooked.⁷

The world is ordered with seven spherical clusters. These are seven earths, one above the other, just as there are seven firmaments, one above the other. They are *Erets, Adamah, Arqa, Gei, Neshiyyah, Tsiyyah, and Tevel*. *Tevel* is the highest of them all, as is written: *He judges Tevel with righteousness* (Psalms 9:9).⁸

When Adam left the Garden of Eden, banished, he was deposited in the one called *Erets*—a place of darkness, utterly void, utterly futile. When Adam entered there, he trembled mighty tremors—blade of the whirling sword flashing on all sides there. When the Sabbath ended and he pondered *teshuvah*, the blessed Holy One lifted him up, placing him in the zone called *Adamah*, as is written: *to till האדמה (ha-adamah)* (Genesis 3:23).⁹

A light glows here, along with likenesses of stars and planets. He saw traces of mighty, supernal men—men who had issued from Adam during the 130 years when he fornicated with female spirits. They are perpetually melancholy, joyless. They wander, emerging into this world, transferred to the side of wickedness. They turn back there, pleading fervently, but they are ensconced in their cubicles. They sow seeds in millstones and eat them, but no wheat there, nor any type of grain.¹⁰

Cain and Abel were born in this place. When Cain sinned, the blessed Holy One dumped him in a place called [254a] *Erets*, as is written: *Here, You have driven me today from the face of האדמה (ha-adamah), the earth* (Genesis 4:14)—from that place called *Adamah*. *And I have become a restless wanderer בארץ (ba-arets), in Arets* (ibid.)—having been cast out and banished there. *Whoever meets me will kill me* (ibid.)—blade of the flashing sword.¹¹

Terrified, he contemplated *teshuvah*, and the blessed Holy One whisked him up to *Arqa*. He was there for a while, fathering children. In *Arqa*, a ray beams from the midst of the sun, and consequently they sow seeds and plant trees, but there is no wheat there, nor any of those seven species of grain.¹²

Everyone there is from the offspring of Cain—two-headed. Some are huge men, some diminutive, but none of them is intellectually sound like other people. Sometimes they are righteous, turning to the side of goodness, sometimes reverting to the side of depravity. They sire offspring and die like other people.¹³

Adam was in *Adamah* until he fathered Seth, and from there he ascended upward, three rungs above Cain, attaining the place called *Tevel*. Rising, he ascended all the way to the site of the Temple. *Tevel* was referred to by the names of the places in which he had dwelled.

Gei is an enormous district, comparable to the breadth and length of *Geihinnom*. Among *Gei*, *Neshiyyah*, and *Tsiyyah*

were scattered those who built the Tower [of Babel], engendering there on account of having enraged the Supernal King. That is why it was consigned to a blazing flame. There are people there with all kinds of precious commodities, gold dust, and precious jewels. One who enters there—having come from *Tevel* with a hankering for such riches—is provided with them.¹⁴

Sometimes one rises to the place called *Neshiyyah*—so called because one is forgotten there. Then he descends to *Gei*, oblivious of his place of origin. *Gei* is at the midpoint between top and bottom, and is called *Gei ben hinnom*. A single lash shoots out from there upward to *Tevel*, and it too is called *Gei ben hinnom*—located there is the opening of Geihinnom. The people there are all versed in spells and rare lore. They sow seeds and plant trees there, but there is no wheat there, nor any of the seven species.¹⁵

In *Neshiyyah* the people are totally stunted and diminutive, lacking noses save for two orifices for air to pass through. Everything they do is forgotten at once—that is why it is called *Neshiyyah*. They sow seeds and plant trees, but no wheat there, nor any of the seven species.

Tsiyyah is a place like its name, most arid of all. People there are beautiful to behold. Since it is arid, when it is heard that water is flowing, people throng there. Sometimes they ascend from a place of abundant water to *Tevel*. These people have more faith than other people, and among them are fine dwellings and ample wealth. They sow sparingly because of the aridity there, planting trees without success. They pine to be with people from here.

Of them all, none eat bread other than those in *Tevel*. Surpassing them all is *Tevel*—*He judges Tevel with righteousness* (Psalms 9:9). Just as the natures of all these lands are contained in *Tevel*, and it bears all these names, as the seventh, it follows the paradigm of those zones and regions. Each and every one is called by the name of the zone below. All of these are found in the dwelling places of

human beings, differing from each other, as is written: *How many are Your works, O YHVH! All of them You made in wisdom; the earth is filled with Your creatures* (Psalms 104:24).¹⁶ [1:74b]

The whole earth was of one language and one set of words (Genesis 11:1).

A clutch of officers speaking in the holy tongue—known by supernal angels—not in any other language.

Consequently it is written: *Now nothing they plot to do will elude them* (Genesis 11:6). For if they had spoken in a different language, unknown to celestial angels, the schemes they plotted would have been ruined—for acts of demons last only a moment in human vision, no more.¹⁷

Unique words (ibid., 1)—they fathomed supernal rungs, each and every one according to its nature, no rung substituted for another. This is the meaning of דברים אחדים (*devarim ahadim*), *unique words*. Consequently, they consulted wicked counsel—counsel of wisdom—as is written: *Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens...* (Genesis 11:4).¹⁸

All achieved with the mystery of wisdom. They yearned to strengthen the Other Side on earth and to worship with its rite, knowing that all harsh decrees descend from there to the world, and they sought to drive away the rung of holiness.¹⁹

A city and a tower—through supernal wisdom, for they knew that the holy name can be fortified on earth only with *a city and a tower*. *City*, as is written: *City of David, namely Zion* (1 Kings 8:1)—holy city. *Tower*, as is written: *Your neck is like the tower of David* (Song of Songs 4:4). They constructed it with wisdom so that the Other Side would have sovereignty on earth, to drive away the *Lord of all the earth* (Joshua 3:11) from His place, to provide a dwelling place for the Other Side on earth.²⁰

Let us make a name for ourselves (Genesis 11:4)—just as the Other has a name above, here too, let us strengthen it in our midst, manifesting its name on earth. *Lest we be scattered* (ibid.)—fully grasping that they would be spread out across the face of the earth, they bonded together, constructing this edifice with wisdom.²¹

The Other Side—male and female—power of the filth of Hard Judgment. Just as Adam sinned, strengthening them in the world, they acted similarly, for even greater intensification. This is as is written: [*YHVH came down to see the city and the tower*] *that בני האדם (benei ha-adam), descendants of Adam, had built* (ibid., 5)—descendants of Primal Adam who conjured the Other Side, establishing its sovereignty in the world. Side of Malevolence—just as Side of Holiness is sovereign in this world only with *a city and a tower*, so too did these ones connive to build *a city and a tower* so that the Side of Malevolence could rule in the world.²²

YHVH came down to see [75a]—that Holy Name descended to view the architectural feat that they had achieved. When they had been speaking in the holy tongue to all those holy rungs, they were successful, but when holiness descended, all those rungs were confounded: upper ones descended, lower ones ascended—no longer fixed on the straight path as before. Afterward He jumbled their languages into seventy languages, and they were scattered to all corners of the earth.²³

One archon in the heavens bears all keys of the world's artifacts. He stands poised at particular times and moments of the day, and these ones had known—through the mystery of wisdom—about the cache of this archon. They would open and close it, succeeding in all their deeds through verbal utterances. Once their speech was scrambled, all was withheld from them.²⁴

They had discovered a prime location in a certain valley, the most secret of mysteries. *They found a valley*

(ibid., 2)—prime location for that loathsome side that they wanted to fortify, but they were stymied. Its power to ravage was suspended in that valley until the arrival of forces and troops, like those who had built the city and tower. Then everything was delivered into his hands. Massacred there were all those who did not want to go forth בקץ הימין (*be-qets ha-yamin*), *at the end of the right* (Daniel 12:13). They panicked and fell בקץ הימים (*be-qets ha-yamim*), *at the end of days* (Genesis 4:3), in that place where their strength had dissipated previously—in that very valley. Of this is written *it was full of bones* (Ezekiel 37:1).²⁵

It was strengthened by that idol erected by Nebuchadnezzar, its strength smashed afterward by those bones. As to that idol, those bones rose, surefooted, and the statue was pulverized. Then all the nations of the world knew that there is no God other than the blessed Holy One alone. Further, His name was sanctified by Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—everything occurring on one day! Of this is written *They will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel* (Isaiah 29:23).²⁶

[76b] We have learned: With the force of the potency of the King, a single great and mighty tree is planted, and other trees as well. This tree, surrounded by twelve boundaries, its legs extended to the four sides of the world. Five hundred parasangs, its journeys. All yearnings of those parasangs suspended from it.²⁷

When it is aroused, all are aroused with it, none departing from its will. Afterward, all are in a single accord. Rising from above, descending in its courses into the sea, filling the sea, and it is the source of all flowing waters. Beneath it—all waters of creation are divided. Saturation of the garden—dependent upon it. All souls of the world burst forth from it.²⁸

These souls enter into the garden in order to descend to this world. When a soul goes forth, it is blessed with

seven blessings—becoming אבא (*abba*), progenitor, to spirit, and רם (*ram*), superior, to body, when it leaves the heavenly image. This is as is written: *YHVH said to Abram* (Genesis 12:1)—supernal soul is *abba*, progenitor, to spirit, and *ram*, superior, to the body in its departure from the heavenly image.²⁹

When the soul is on the verge of descent into this world, the blessed Holy One adjures it to observe the commandments of the Torah and to follow His will. He gives it one hundred keys [77a]—blessings for each day to consummate supernal rungs—corresponding to the numerical value of לך לך (*lekh lekha*), *Go for yourself* (ibid.). Everything is given to the soul, to be refined for the Garden, to till and tend it.³⁰

From your land (ibid.)—Garden of Eden. *From your birthplace* (ibid.)—the body, called Tree of Life, comprising twelve celestial tribes. *From your father's house* (ibid.)—*Shekhinah*. *Your father* (ibid.)—the blessed Holy One, as is said: *He who robs his father and mother...* (Proverbs 28:24). *His father* can only mean the blessed Holy One, and *his mother* can only mean Assembly of Israel. *To the land that I will show you* (Genesis 12:1)—this world.³¹

[78a] *I will make of you a great nation* (Genesis 12:2)—one blessing. *And I will bless you* (ibid.)—two. *And I will make your name great* (ibid.)—three. *And you will be a blessing* (ibid.)—four. *I will bless those who bless you*—(ibid., 3), *and whoever curses you I will curse* (ibid.)—*Through you all families of the earth will be blessed* (ibid.)—seven. Once he was blessed with these seven blessings, what is written? *Abram went as YHVH told him* (ibid., 4)—to descend into this world as commanded.³²

Immediately, לוט (*lut*), *curse, went with him* (ibid.)—נחש דאתלטיא (*naḥash de-itlatya*), cursed serpent—and the world is cursed on its account since it crouches at the opening to deceive the body. But the soul does not perform its

commanded service until it attains thirteen years in this world. From twelve onward the soul is aroused to perform the commanded worship. This is as is written: [78b] *Abram was seventy-five years old* (ibid.)—seven plus five yields twelve.³³

Then the soul appears in this world, for it derives from five years—parasangs of the Tree of Life; plus seventy years—the Tree itself, actually! For it is the seventh rung, called seventy years.³⁴

Then it departs from the slime of that serpent, and enters into holy service, as is written: *when he left Haran* (ibid.). From that harshness of Satan that had diverted the body up to now, ruling over it.³⁵

On a tree, foreskin rules for three years; on a person—thirteen years, called ‘foreskin years.’ Once those years have elapsed for the body, and the soul has been aroused to perform holy service, the soul directs the body according to its will, subduing the serpent. For the serpent can no longer [79a] reign as before, as is written: *Abram took Sarai his wife...* (Genesis 12:5). This is the body, for it is to the soul as a woman is to a man. *And Lot* (ibid.)—the serpent, not entirely absent from the body, its adhesion to the body not entirely dissipated. But the soul, now aroused, flogs it constantly, castigating it, subduing it against its will, preventing it from ruling.³⁶

All the goods they had gotten (ibid.)—good works that a person performs in this world through the arousal of soul.

וַאֲתַּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ (ve-et ha-nefesh), *And the soul, they had made in Haran* (ibid.)—that *nefesh* originally cleaving and joined to the foreskin in the body, refined afterward. But from thirteen years and on, *nishmeta* is aroused to rectify the body, and the two of them repair the *nefesh* that had partnered with the serpent’s severity and with its wicked desire. This is as is written: *and the soul they had made in Haran*. Nonetheless, *nishmeta* overcomes that serpent, smashing it with the subjugation of *teshuvah*, with the subjugation of

Torah—dragging him to synagogues and study halls, to prevent him from prevailing over *ruḥa* as before.³⁷

This is as is written: [80a] *Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem* (ibid., 6)—house of assembly, residence of *Shekhinah*. This is as is said: *I have given you אהד שכם (shekhem aḥad), one portion* (ibid. 48:22)—namely *Shekhinah*, befitting [Joseph], since he is called righteous one. For צדק (tsedeq), Justice, dwells only with צדיק (tsaddiq), Righteous One. This is the meaning of *as far as the site of Shechem, as far as the terebinth of Moreh* (ibid. 12:6)—houses of study where Torah is taught and instructed to the masses.³⁸

The Canaanite was then in the land (ibid.)—then the evil impulse becomes fragrant and rectified within the body, under coercion. It has plenty of names, designated by various terms. *Then in the land*—actually—pacified unwillingly, and thereby suppressed. It is then—at the time when the serpent has not fully desisted from the body, on account of adhering to the body—*the Canaanite was then in the land*.³⁹

Why is it called Canaanite? Since it surrounds the body with evil judgments.⁴⁰

Nishmeta is stationed in this world, fittingly, in order to acquire merit afterward, upon departure from this world. If meritorious, she ascends to the place from which she emerged, as is written: *to the site of the altar [he had built there at first]* (Genesis 13:4). And it is written: *to the site where אהלה (oholoh) his tent, had been at the beginning* (ibid., 3). אהלה (Oholah), *Her tent*, with a ה (he). Now she is poised between ascent on high and descent below, *between Bethel and Ai* (ibid.). If *nishmeta* is meritorious, she ascends *to the site of the altar he had built there at first* (ibid., 4).⁴¹

Who *built there*, and who is *the altar*? The explanation is that the blessed Holy One *built there*. He built this Altar there, establishing Her upon twelve stones, *corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom*

the word of YHVH came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' (1 Kings 18:31)—actually!⁴²

This altar, *built there at first*—when He made the supernal world at first, most concealed of all the worlds. Michael the high priest stands ready, offering upon it souls as sacrifices. When [80b] a soul ascends there, what is written? *Abram invoked there the name YHVH* (Genesis 13:4). The soul calls out and is bound up in the bundle of life.⁴³

All this occurs, contingent upon the soul's succeeding in this world to refine the body fittingly, and to overwhelm the power of that accursed one, ultimately severing from it. What is written? *There was a quarrel between the herders of Abram's cattle and the herders of Lot's cattle* (Genesis 13:7). For each and every day in this world, allies and guides of the soul, and allies and guides of the evil impulse strive in strife—these and those. And all limbs of the body agonize in the midst, between soul and serpent, waging war daily.⁴⁴

What is written? *Abram said to Lot* (ibid. 13:8). Soul retorts to the evil impulse, saying, *Pray, let there be no contention between me and you, between my herdsmen and your herdsmen* (ibid.)—my inclinations and yours. *For we are kinsmen* (ibid.)—close to one another, this one on the right, that one on the left. *Is not all the land before you? Please, separate yourself from me!* (ibid., 9)—there are plenty of sinners in the world! Go, roam after them, and separate from me—*if to the left, then I to the right...* (ibid.). He rebuked him and castigated him in the many battles he waged against him daily, until it is written *they parted from one another* (ibid., 11).⁴⁵

Once they separated from each other, what is written? *Abram dwelled in the land* (ibid., 12)—soul remaining among the righteous ones, settled in goodness and tranquility. *While Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain* (ibid.)—execrable prosecutor set off to incite and nestle in a

district of sinners, as is written: *pitching his tent as far as Sodom* (ibid.). What is written afterward? *The people of Sodom were very wicked sinners against YHVH* (ibid., 13). There he dwelt and established his residence among them, joining with them in order to dupe them and ruin them through depraved acts.⁴⁶

When soul was left without accuser, and the body cleansed of that slime, at once the blessed Holy One dwelt within him. This is as is written: *YHVH said to Abram after Lot had parted from him* (ibid., 14)—He established His dwelling within him, never separating from him. It was then that He placed His dwelling within him, endowing a heritage, a legacy above and below. This one had serenity among the righteous, and the blessed Holy One dwelled within Him, whereas that accursed one dwelt among those wicked ones, who sinned with him until there could be no redemption from their transgressions.⁴⁷

What is written? *Abram heard that his kinsman had been captured* (ibid. 14:14). *Abram heard*—soul, enduring in purity within the body. *That his kinsman had been captured*—evil impulse taken hostage among those transgressors through an abundance of sin. *He marshaled his initiates, natives of his household* (ibid.)—these are the righteous, those who delve in Torah.⁴⁸

Alternatively, these are the limbs of the body, hastening to accompany him. *Three hundred and eighteen* (ibid.)—these are the 248 limbs of the body plus 70, corresponding to mystery of the soul radiating there. He girded himself with them all to reach those sinners and to lead them back from their sins.⁴⁹

What is written? *He pursued as far as דן (dan), Dan* (ibid.)—he gave chase after them, informing them of the דִּינָה (dina), judgment, of that world, and of the torment in Geihinnom. Nor did he grant sleep to his eyes, day or night, until he had rebuked those wicked ones and returned them in repentance to the blessed Holy One. What is written? *He*

recovered all the possessions (ibid., 16)—he led them to total *teshuvah*, fittingly.⁵⁰

And also brought back his kinsman Lot... (ibid.)—even that evil impulse did he subdue, forcibly subjugating him, and sweetening him fittingly. He brought them all to perfect *teshuvah*, fittingly, since neither day nor night passed without his castigating them and hounding them regarding their sin, until they repented completely, fittingly. Now let us return to the earlier matters of the *parashah*.⁵¹

The watchmen patrolling the city found me; they beat me, they bruised me. They stripped me of my shawl, the watchmen of the walls (Song of Songs 5:7).⁵²

We have learned: The blessed Holy One fashioned Jerusalem above corresponding to Jerusalem below—with walls, towers, and open portals. The walls had watchmen posted, [81a]

guarding the gates, as is written: *Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set guards...* (Isaiah 62:6), with Michael, the high priest, supreme over all guards of the walls' gates.⁵³

When a soul departs from this world—if worthy—it enters the terrestrial Garden of Eden, planted by the blessed Holy One for the spirits of the righteous, modeled after the celestial Garden of Eden, where all righteous ones reside.

When a soul departs this world, it enters the Cave of Machpelah, entryway to the Garden of Eden. There she meets Primal Adam and the patriarchs residing there. If she is deserving, they delight in her, opening a gate for her, and she enters. If not, they shove her out. Upon entering, she sits in the garden, dressed in the garment of the image of this world, delighting there.⁵⁴

Mystery of mysteries, transmitted to the wise of heart. Three rungs, bound one to another: *nefesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah*. *Nefesh*—force that constructs the body. When a person is aroused in this world during intercourse with his wife, all his limbs are in accord, configured for pleasure there—*nefesh* and its will aligned in that act. A *nefesh* is drawn down, infused into the seed that he shoots. On account of the will and conducting of the *nefesh* conveyed there, another force is channeled from among those rungs called ישׁים (*ishim*). Everything entering with the streaming of that seed—thus is the body constructed. This is the first, the lowest power of the three.⁵⁵

Since that *nefesh* is fused with the body and is its foundation, a portion of the sacrifice offered to atone for the *nefesh* is given to those rungs called *ishim*—for emanation of part of the *nefesh* derives from them. This is as is written: *My offering, My bread, ישׁי לִי (le-ishai), for My ishim* (Numbers 28:2)—they take their portion from the atonement for that *nefesh*.⁵⁶

When a person dies in this world, the *nefesh* never abandons the grave. And it is through this faculty that the dead recognize each other, and can converse with one another.⁵⁷

Ru'ah sustains *nefesh* in this world, and is also the emanation of arousal of the Female toward the Male when they are united in common desire. Then She is aroused toward the Male with Her desire—self-same *ru'ah*—similar to female below, emitting seed in her desire for the male. This is the secret of *ru'ah will return to Elohim who gave it* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).⁵⁸

When *ru'ah* departs this world, separating from *nefesh*, it enters the worldly Garden of Eden. There it is garbed in the ether of the Garden, just as celestial angels are clothed when they descend to this world. For they are composed of that very *ru'ah*, as is written: *He makes מלאכיו רוחות (mal'akhav ruhot), his angels as spirits...* (Psalms 104:4). Similarly, *ru'ah*

is garbed in the terrestrial Garden of Eden in its worldly image, partaking there of all kinds of delights. In that Garden of Eden reside all the forms and images of this world, and forms and images of the celestial world. All the righteous ones go and delight there, and on the New Moon and Sabbaths they yearn to ascend above.⁵⁹

In the middle of the garden—a single column, a braid of all hues. When a *ru'ah* wants to ascend, it strips off its garment and enters into that column, soaring up to the place from which it emerged. This is as is written: *ru'ah will return to God who gave it* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Then Michael the high priest takes it and offers it—fragrant sacrifice—before the blessed Holy One. There it dwells, delighting in the bundle of life, for *No eye has seen, O God, but You...* (Isaiah 64:3). Afterward [81b] she descends to terrestrial Garden of Eden, delighting in all kinds of delights. Enrobed in that garment, she sits there with a crown, twice as beautiful as it was before.⁶⁰

Neshamah is a force superior to all the others, deriving from potency of the Male, mystery of the Tree of Life. She soars upward, and immediately all three rungs are tied to one another, united with one another. But when they separate, each one flies off—returning to the place from which it emerged.⁶¹

When *ru'ah* departs from this world, and enters into the cave of Primal Adam and the patriarchs, she is granted a tablet of designation, and she enters the Garden of Eden. Approaching, she beholds cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword. If she is worthy, they inspect the tablet of designation and open a passageway for her, and she proceeds inward. But if not, they shove her out, and she waits there.⁶²

As long as she remains there she is clothed in the image of this world. On the New Moon and Sabbaths—when she yearns to ascend—the righteous ones in the Garden of Eden grant her a tablet of designation. She soars

upward via that column until she encounters the guards of the walls of Jerusalem. If deserving, they make way for her and she enters. If not, they snatch away the tablet and cast her aside. Then she returns to the Garden, saying, *The watchmen patrolling the city found me... They stripped me of my shawl...* (Song of Songs 5:7)—this is the tablet of designation grabbed away from her. *The watchmen patrolling the city*—guards of the walls of Jerusalem.⁶³ [88a]

After הדברים האלה (ha-devarim ha-elleh), these things, the word of YHVH came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not Abram, I am a shield to you, your reward is very great' (Genesis 15:1).

After הדברים האלה (ha-devarim ha-elleh), these words—words of Torah, as is written: האלה הדברים (ha-devarim ha-elleh), These words, YHVH spoke to your whole assembly

(Deuteronomy 5:19). Just as there, words of Torah, so here, words of Torah. If a person has exerted himself with *these words*, the blessed Holy One sends forth greetings of peace to his soul. This is as is written: *Fear not Abram, I am a shield to you*—from all forms of vileness in Geihinnom.⁶⁴

On account of this, *your reward is very great*—the exertion that you have expended for Torah. *Very great*—for whoever exerts himself in Torah in this world merits and is bequeathed an inheritance, legacy of World that is Coming, as is written: *So I may endow my lovers with יֶשׁ (yesh), substance, and fill their storehouses* (Proverbs 8:21). What is the meaning of יֶשׁ (yesh), *substance*? This *yesh*—from אֵין (ayin), Nothing, thirteen rivers of pure balsam bestowed upon him as a heavenly legacy in World that is Coming. *And fill their storehouses*—in this world, from the riches and all bounty of the world. One who goes to the right—to the World that is Coming; to the left, riches in this world.⁶⁵

When Rabbi Abba came from there, he proclaimed, “Who desires riches, and who desires length of days in the world to come, let him come and engage in Torah!” Everyone thronged toward him.⁶⁶

A certain youth in his neighborhood came to him one day. He said to him, “Rabbi, I wish to ply Torah in order to acquire riches.”⁶⁷

He replied, “Certainly.” He asked him, “What is your name?”⁶⁸

He responded, “Yose.”

He instructed his students that they should call him Rabbi Yose, Master of Riches and Honor.⁶⁹

He sat and engrossed himself in Torah. After some days he inquired, “Rabbi, where are the riches?”

[Rabbi Abba] remarked, [88b] “Conclude from here that he did not act for the sake of heaven!” He entered his chamber, then heard a voice saying, “Do not punish him! Return to him, for he will become a great man.”⁷⁰

He returned to him, and said, “Sit down, my son, sit, and I will give you riches.”

In the meantime, a man walked in with a golden cup in his hands. He displayed it, and light flooded the house. He said, “Rabbi, I wish to acquire Torah, and I have not been privileged to have sons. I seek someone to toil in Torah on my behalf, for I have great wealth left to me by Father. When he would preside at the table, he would lay twelve goblets like this one upon it. I wish to acquire Torah, and I offer riches.”⁷¹

[Rabbi Abba] called out, “Where is Rabbi Yose, Master of Riches and Honor? Behold, riches! Ply Torah and this one will give you riches!” He gave him the golden goblet, and Rabbi Abba applied to him *Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for כלי פז (keli phaz), golden vessels* (Job 28:17). He sat and learned Torah, and the man paid him with riches.⁷²

After a while, ardor for Torah surged in his gut. One day he sat and wept. His master found him weeping and asked, “Why are you crying?”

He replied, “How could I have squandered life of the world to come for this? All I want is merit for myself!”⁷³

He remarked, “Conclude now that he acted for the sake of heaven.”

[Rabbi Abba] called for the man, and said to him, “Take your riches and give it to the orphans and the poor, and I will confer upon you a bountiful share of Torah with all that we learn!” Rabbi Yose returned the golden goblet to him and, until today, the name בן פזי (*Ben Pazzi*), ‘Son of Gold,’ has not departed from him or his sons—this is Rabbi Yose son of Pazzi. He acquired an abundance of Torah—he and his descendants—for there is no greater reward in the world than learning Torah.⁷⁴

After these things, the word of YHVH came to Abram במחזה (ba-mahazeh), in a vision (Genesis 15:1).

Every time that it is written in the Torah במחזה (*ba-mahazeh*), in a vision, it signifies the name that was revealed to the patriarchs.

Which one? *Shaddai*, as is said: *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob through El Shaddai* (Exodus 6:3), and *who beholds מחזה (mahazeh), a vision, of Shaddai* (Numbers 24:4). It is a חזיון (*heizu*), mirror; and all heavenly visions are perceived through it, just like a מראה (*mar'ah*), mirror, through which all images are seen. It is all one—*mar'ah* and *mahazeh* are the same—one in the language of Targum and one in the holy tongue.⁷⁵

Rabbi Yose says such-like abound in the Torah, and this is why permission was given to Onkelos to translate into that language, for the blessed Holy One had revealed it in the Torah. This language is concealed from the celestial angels—*ba-mahazeh* was concealed from the heavenly angels

—they were unaware when it was spoken to Abraham. What is the explanation? It is because Abraham was uncircumcised, and holy covenant was not sealed in his flesh. For this reason it was concealed from the celestial angels—to avert the claim that the blessed Holy One spoke to a foreskinned man. Consequently, it was hidden from them, in Aramaic. Similarly with Balaam, as is written: [89a] *who beholds* מַחֲזֵה (maḥazeh), *a vision, of Shaddai* (Numbers 24:4)—concealed from the holy angels to fend off their potential charge that the blessed Holy One spoke to that foul, foreskinned one. For holy angels have no use for Aramaic.⁷⁶

Now, if you contend that they did not know it, look, Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages, and Aramaic is one of those seventy languages! In truth, they do know it, it is just that they do not attend to it. We have learned that they neither heed nor pay attention to it because it is more abhorrent to them than any other language.⁷⁷

Now, if you say that it is abhorrent to the supernal angels, why did Onkelos translate the Torah in this language, and Yonatan son of Uzi'el the rest of Scripture! Well, actually, to them it is abhorrent; and it was necessary to do so since the angels are jealous of Israel only on account of Torah—and if they knew the supremacy of Torah, they would be exceedingly jealous of Israel. This is why Torah was translated thus. But it is not abhorrent, for in many places the blessed Holy One wrote Torah thus. That is why it is concealed from the holy angels.⁷⁸

On account of this He appeared to Abraham in a hidden manner so that the holy angels would not pay attention, nor would they have an opening to say that the blessed Holy One had appeared to one who is foreskinned.

When was He revealed to [Abraham] in full view of the celestial angels? When He bestowed him with the everlasting holy covenant, as is written: *Elohim spoke with*

him, saying (Genesis 17:3). *Elohim*, holy name, and not *in a vision*—name revealed.⁷⁹

Saying—what is the meaning of *saying*? *Saying*, proclaiming, in every language, no longer concealed, but rather in a language everyone speaks, a language that one speaks to another.⁸⁰

Rabbi Yehudah said, “This is why the letter ה (*he*) was not given to him until he was circumcised. Because it is called covenant, actually! Thus, once he entered into the covenant, he was given this letter—אברהם (*Avraham*), Abraham.⁸¹

Rabbi Ḥiyya was journeying to see Rabbi El’azar. He encountered Rabbi Ḥaggai, who asked, “This path arrayed before my master—where does it lead?”⁸²

He replied, “To behold the Countenance of Days.”⁸³

He asked him, “Would it please my master if I accompanied him on the path?”

He replied, “If you can derive deductively from what you hear, come along. But if not, go back home.”⁸⁴

He said, “Don’t worry about this, Master, for I have heard a few mysteries of Torah, and I was able to grasp them.⁸⁵

“Now, I have heard the mystery of this verse: *My offering, My bread, for My fire offerings...* (Numbers 28:2). [89b] *My offering*—offering of flesh, sacrificed for atonement. Blood for blood, flesh for flesh. For sacrifices are offered from flesh alone, to atone for flesh.⁸⁶

And I have heard this: If a person has sinned, what sin did the animal commit? For the blessed Holy One said, *When a person gives an offering* [מכם (*mi-kem*), *of yourselves, to YHVH*].... (Leviticus 1:2). What is the explanation? Well, the meaning is that the blessed Holy One fashioned the spirit of humans and the spirit of animals, separating one from the other. Consequently, רוּחַ (*ru’ah*), *spirit, of the sons of men, ascends on high*, וְרוּחַ (*ve-ru’ah*), *and the spirit, of a beast,*

descends into earth (Ecclesiastes 3:21)—differentiated from each other, actually!⁸⁷

“Before Adam sinned, what was written? *God said, ‘Look, I have given you every [seed-bearing] plant...’* (Genesis 1:29), and *to you it shall be for food* (ibid.), but nothing more. After he sinned and the evil impulse had been absorbed into his body and that of his descendants, He executed judgment upon them.⁸⁸

“Afterward, Noah came and perceived that the body was built upon the pervasive evil impulse. He offered a sacrifice just as Adam did. What is written? *YHVH smelled the pleasing aroma... since the devisings of the human heart are evil from youth* (Genesis 8:21). The blessed Holy One said, ‘From now on, since his body has been imbued with evil impulse, let the body enjoy as much as a person sees fit—let him eat meat.’⁸⁹

Like the green plants, I have given all to you (ibid. 9:3). When he eats meat, his own flesh delights from that flesh, and they intermingle. His body swells as a result; and on account of the pleasure, the body sins copiously. Thus, the blessed Holy One said, atonement for the body—with flesh. Meat that a person eats produces blood for the body. Blood remaining from that meat—drained—is designated for atonement for blood, manufactured from its own flesh. This is as is written: *it is the blood that gains atonement through the soul* (Leviticus 17:11).⁹⁰

“It is written *my offering* (Numbers 28:2), and it is written *your offering* (Leviticus 1:2). What is the difference between this and that? Well, *my offering* is typified by שלמים (*shelamim*), peace offerings, for the sake of שלום (*shalom*), peace. *Your offering*—typified by sin offerings and guilt offerings, brought because of sin and guilt. Consequently, *my offering*—flesh. *My food* (ibid.)—bread and wine. *Aroma* (ibid.)—incense. *Pleasing to me* (ibid.)—pleasure provided by the priest through intention toward the holy name, and by the Levite through intention in song and praise.⁹¹

*“You shall take care to offer to Me at its fixed time (ibid.). At its fixed time—to what does this refer? If you say daily—morning and night—why did it specify at its fixed time? The explanation: fixed time—ruled at that time by Favor. When Favor is located above in that well-known rung. Of this is written at its fixed time.”*⁹²

“When a sacrifice is offered, all take their share. Shells scatter every which way. Unification, brought close, and made one. Lamps shine. Desire and intention pervade all worlds. And the blessed Holy One is present in the mystery of single unity, fittingly.”⁹³

Rabbi Hiyya drew near and kissed him, saying, “You are more fitting than I to behold the Countenance of Days.”⁹⁴

They proceeded. When they approached, [Rabbi El’azar] saw them sitting by the gate. He said to his assistant, “Go, say to them, ‘A throne with three legs—what is it, when missing one?’”⁹⁵

They said to him, “Go and tell your master, ‘Not in vain did King David say that he was the fourth—*A stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone* (Psalms 118:22).”⁹⁶

He replied, “Ask them where David was castigated to the extent that he uttered *A stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*”

Rabbi Hiyya turned his head toward Rabbi Haggai, saying, “Have you heard anything about this?”

He replied, “I heard that it is related to this verse: *My mother’s sons were incensed at me* (Song of Songs 1:6). This verse was spoken by King David when his brothers thrust him away.”⁹⁷

“I have heard more. What did the blessed Holy One perceive that led Him to bestow the monarchy upon Judah from among all his brothers? Well, the letters of His name are engraved within him, and the blessed Holy One

conferred His glory to his name. Consequently He bequeathed the monarchy to him.⁹⁸

“I have also heard: יהודה (Yehudah), Judah—letters of His name are there, actually, but no ד (dalet) [in the name]! Why is it there? Well, on account of King David, bonded to His name more than anyone in the world. This is as is written: *They will seek YHVH their God and David their king...* (Hosea 3:5)—see, David is tied to His name.⁹⁹

“Alternatively: he is the knot of tefillin, actually! He is ד (Dalet), King David, knot of tefillin, truly! That is why dalet is joined to His name.”¹⁰⁰

They proceeded in. After entering, they sat before him. He was silent, and they were silent. He went into his chamber and heard a voice that said, “Go, respond to their requests, for they are worthy.” He returned to them.¹⁰¹

He asked them, “Has one of you learned something?”

They replied, “We are waiting to be illuminated by the clarity of the supernal lamp; then we will offer [90a] our thoughts.”

He opened, saying, “*YHVH in His holy palace, be silent before Him, all the earth!* (Habakkuk 2:20). When the blessed Holy One wanted to create the world, He gazed into Thought—mystery of the Torah—and etched etchings. But it could not endure until He created *Teshuvah*—inner, supernal palace, hidden mystery. Letters etched and traced there in their engravings. After this creation, He gazed from this Palace, inscribing impressions of the entire world. This is as is written: *Silent before Him, all the earth!* (ibid.).¹⁰²

“He wanted to create the heavens. What did He do? Gazed into the primordial light, enwrapping Himself in it, and created the heavens. This is as is written: *Wrapped in light as in a garment* (Psalms 104:2), and then *spreading the heavens like a curtain* (ibid.).¹⁰³

“He gazed, to fashion the lower world. He produced another palace, and entered into it. From there He gazed, etching before Him all the worlds below, creating them. This is as is written: *YHVH in His holy palace, be silent before Him, all the earth!* (Habakkuk 2:20). סן (*Has*), *Be silent*—inscribed before Him, sixty-five points of the entire world—numerical value of סן (*has*). Consequently, glory of the blessed Holy One is only for those who contemplate His ways of truth and walk in them.”¹⁰⁴

While he was speaking, a blaze erupted, encircling him, while they sat outside. They heard a voice saying, “Oh, holy one! *The king has brought me into his chambers* (Song of Songs 1:4)—into all those chambers of the Elder, the one with the countenance of the Holy Youth. Their keys delivered into his hands, all arrayed for you, and for these ones on account of you. By your life, holy one, all forces of heaven—*We will delight and rejoice in you* (ibid.).”¹⁰⁵

When the others saw this, they trembled, beset by great terror. They cried, “We are not worthy of this! Let’s get out of here, and get on the way!” But they stayed there all day, not seeing him. They said, “It must not be the will of the blessed Holy One for us to remain!” and they fled.

Once they had gone, Rabbi Ḥiyya opened, saying “*Bless YHVH, O His angels, mighty in strength, who fulfill His word, heeding the voice of His word* (Psalms 103:20). Happy are Israel from among all the nations of the world, for the blessed Holy One has chosen them from among all other nations of the world, making them His portion and inheritance. On account of this He gave them the holy Torah, for they were of one accord at Mount Sinai, placing obedience before listening.”¹⁰⁶

“Since they prioritized obedience over listening, the blessed Holy One called to His retinue, saying, ‘Until now, you alone stood before me in the world. From now on, my children are partners with you in everything! You may not sanctify my name until Israel joins together with you on

earth, and then you will all be companions sanctifying My name.’ For they prioritized obedience over listening, just like the celestial angels in the heavens. This is as is written: *Bless YHVH, O His angels, mighty in strength, who fulfill His word, listening to the voice of His word* (ibid.)—*who fulfill His word, first, then listening.*¹⁰⁷

“Alternatively, *Bless YHVH, O His angels* (ibid.)—these are the righteous on earth, as important to the blessed Holy One as the supernal angels in heaven, since they are *mighty in strength* (ibid.)—overpowering their impulses, like a great warrior who conquers his enemies.¹⁰⁸

“*Listening to the voice of His word* (ibid.)—who merit to hear a voice from above every day, at their hour of need. Now, who can stand among those supernal, holy ones? Happy are they who can stand in their presence, those who are able. Providence of the blessed Holy One upon them every day—how can we enter their presence! Of this is written *Happy is the one You choose and draw near, he will dwell in Your courts!* (Psalms 65:5). And it is written: *Happy is the one whose strength is in You—highways in their heart* (ibid. 84:6).”¹⁰⁹

[97a] Potency of the king, seen in three colors. First color: visible to the eye from afar. Unable to focus on it clearly on account of the distance, the eye barely glimpses it through squinting. Of this is written *From afar, YHVH appeared to me* (Jeremiah 31:3).¹¹⁰

Second color: its appearance visible to the eye when sealed. This one, not visible to the eye except when closed. Perceiving a smidgen, but obscure. Close the eye, open a pinch, then grasp the vision of color, requiring interpretation to discern what the eye took in. Of this: *I looked, and behold, I saw. What do you see?* (Ezekiel 1:4; Jeremiah 1:13).¹¹¹

Third color: radiance of a speculum, utterly unseen other than through rotation of the eyeball—when sealed in

concealment—rolling in rotation. Through this rotation one can see the speculum [97b] that shines. One cannot fathom that color without seeing the radiance shining in concealment of the eye. Of this is written *The hand of YHVH came upon me* (Ezekiel 37:1), and *The hand of YHVH came upon Elijah* (1 Kings 18:46). Everything is decoded for the true prophets, other than the heavenly shepherd who merited to gaze above, upon that which cannot be seen at all. Of him is written *Not so my servant Moses...* (Numbers 12:7).[112](#)

Appeared to him (Genesis 18:1)—*Shekhinah* appeared and was revealed to him amid those rungs bonded to Her sides. Michael on the right, Gabriel on the left, Raphael in front, Uriel behind. On account of this, *Shekhinah* was revealed to him amid the terebinths, most fragrant in the world, in order to display the primal covenant—holy marking of the mystery of faith.[113](#)

He was sitting at the opening of the tent (ibid.). Who is *opening of the tent*? Opening of Heavenly Dwelling, for then Abraham entered into that holy marking, in the mystery of faith, and sat at the *opening of the tent*. This is the place called Covenant, mystery of faith.[114](#)

In the heat of the day—this is the mystery to which Abraham cleaved, potency of the right side, his rung. *Opening [98b] of the tent*—mystery of the Gate of Righteousness, opening of faith. Abraham entered into it then with the holy marking. *In the heat of the day*—Righteous One, rung of the single bond. One who is circumcised, inscribed with the holy marking, enters there. He has departed from foreskin, and entered into the existence of two rungs—they are the mystery of faith.[115](#)

Look, three men... (Genesis 18:2)—three angelic messengers, garbed in the atmosphere. They descended to this world, visible to human beings. They were three, like

the pattern above, since the rainbow is seen only with three colors—white, red, and green. So too, here—actually! These *three men*—three colors: white, red, green. White—Michael, since he is the messenger of the right. Red—Gabriel, left side. Green [99a]—Raphael. These are the three colors of the rainbow, since the rainbow is seen only with them. *Appeared to him*—*Shekhinah* revealed in these three colors.[116](#)

All three are necessary. One to heal circumcision—Raphael, master of remedies. One to deliver tidings of a son to Sarah—Michael, appointed on the right side. All largesse and blessings are delivered by him from the right side. One to overthrow Sodom—Gabriel, from the left. He is appointed over all judgments in the world from the left side that are adjudicated and discharged by the Angel of Death, chief executioner in the King's estate.[117](#)

They all performed their charges—each and every one—fittingly: Angel Gabriel in his charge regarding the holy *neshamah*, and a different angel charged with the *nefesh* of the evil impulse. Nonetheless, the holy *neshamah* does not depart until it sees *Shekhinah*.[118](#)

When he saw them joined as one, he saw *Shekhinah* [99b] in Her hues, and bowed down, as is written: *and he bowed to the ground* (ibid.), and *Israel bowed at the head of the bed* (ibid. 47:31)—to *Shekhinah*.[119](#)

Toward *Shekhinah* he uttered the name אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), *My Lord* (ibid. 18:3), but toward Righteous One, אֲדֹן (*Adon*), Lord. For She is called אֲדֹן (*Adon*), *Lord, of all the earth* (Joshua 3:11), when manifest in all Her colors, perfected from above.[120](#)

Conclude: Mirror below draws emanation from above. For these colors draw a flow from above, from those supernal sources. *Adonai* draws from above through these three colors—garbed in them, absorbing all—absorbing from above through them. Since they are Her companions and Her supports in all, this name is uttered—*Adonai*.[121](#)

This name was revealed to him—comprised of supernal mysteries. Revealed to him openly—unlike before, because he had not been circumcised. Until he was circumcised, the blessed Holy One did not want holy seed to issue from him. After he was circumcised, holy seed shot forth from him at once, and on account of this *Shekhinah* was revealed to him with these holy [100a] rungs.[122](#)

The enlightened will shine like זהר הרקיע (zohar ha-raqi'a), the radiance of the sky (Daniel 12:3).[123](#)

Zohar, Radiance—radiance of radiances, radiant in illumination.[124](#)

illuminating, sparkling on diverse sides.[125](#)

Zohar, Radiance—shining and

Zohar, Radiance—rising and falling.[126](#)

Zohar, Radiance—sparkling on every side.[127](#)

Zohar, Radiance—gushing, flowing forth.[128](#)

Zohar, Radiance—never ceasing.[129](#)

Zohar, Radiance—issuing progeny.[130](#)

Zohar, Radiance—hidden and concealed, gleam of all shimmers and lamps. Everything within it—gushing and hidden, concealed and revealed, seen and unseen. Edge of an ax, well-spring—gushing during the day, veiled at night. Delighting at midnight in the offspring it has issued.[131](#)

*Zohar, Radiance—radiating and shining for all, entirety of the Torah. This is what is seen—all colors concealed within it, called by the name *Adonai*. Three colors visible below, from three colors above. From these supernal ones, all celestial ones emanate.*[132](#)

*Zohar, Radiance, unseen—sparkling in twelve sparks, in gleams glimmering from it, thirteen in the mystery of the holy [100b] name. Within the mystery of *Ein Sof*, Infinite One, She is called *YHVH*. When Lower Radiance, *Adonai*, bonds with Upper Radiance, *YHVH*, a hidden name is formed through which true prophets know and gaze into Upper Radiance—*

יאהדונהי (YAHDEVNHY)—vision of hidden ones, as is written: *like the color of amber, from within the fire* (Ezekiel 1:4).[133](#)

MATNITIN.[134](#) Celestial ones fly off from the right. Nine points of Torah flow, apportioned among the letters. Letters undulate through them on subtle journeys, allocated to mysteries. These nine rule over letters—letters ramifying from them. Points remain to elevate them, mobilizing only when these emerge, in the mystery of *Ein Sof*—all letters undulating in the mystery of *Ein Sof*. Just as these convey those, so are these concealed ones conveyed. Letters revealed and not revealed. These hidden ones—upon what do they rest? Letters.[135](#)

Nine names, engraved in ten: First, יוד הוה ואו הוה (Yod He Vav He), *Ehyeh*, [101a] *asher Ehyeh*, YHVH, El, Elohim, YHVH, Tseva'ot, Adon, Shaddai.[136](#)

Ten names, engraved in their respective sides. All these names are hewn, entering into one—*ark of the covenant* (Joshua 3:11). Who is this? The name *Adonai*, revealed now to Abraham.[137](#)

Michael—name of the right, uniting and serving this name more than the others. Wherever the mystery of this name is found, Michael is there. [101b] When Michael departs, he departs alongside this name.[138](#)

At first, there were three men—materializing in the form of the atmosphere, and they ate. Eating, actually! For their blaze consumes and destroys everything, pleasing Abraham. They are fire—actually!—but their blaze, covered in atmospheric form, unseen. That food—flaming fire—and they consumed it, giving Abraham peace of mind.[139](#)

When *Shekhinah* withdrew, what was written? *Elohim ascended from Abraham* (Genesis 17:22). At once, Michael departed too, as is written: *The two messengers came into Sodom...* (ibid. 19:1). *Three* written at first, now two! The

explanation is that Michael was on the right, and withdrew with *Shekhinah*.¹⁴⁰

The angel that appeared to Manoah descended, materializing in the atmosphere, becoming visible. This was Uriel—since he did not descend with Abraham’s angels, he descended here by himself to transmit to Manoah of Dan. [102a] Since Manoah was insignificant compared to Abraham, it was not written *he ate*, but rather *If you detain me, I shall not eat your food* (Judges 13:16). It is also written: *As the flames leaped up from the altar toward the sky, the angel of YHVH ascended in the flames of the altar* (ibid., 20), whereas here *Elohim ascended from Abraham* (Genesis 17:22), for Michael had departed from him.¹⁴¹

Remaining were Raphael and Gabriel, and of them is written *The two messengers came into Sodom in the evening...* (ibid. 19:1), when Judgment is poised above the earth. Afterward, one departed, leaving only Gabriel. By the merit of Abraham, Lot was saved. But he, too, merited them, and so they came to him.¹⁴² [109b]

Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the mountains, his two daughters together with him... and he dwelt in a certain cave, he and his two daughters (Genesis 19:30).¹⁴³
form.¹⁴⁴

By decree of the king, scoria split off from the right side, a knot engraved—cleaving to the midst of slag from gold of the left side, in its habitat of impurity, assuming a tree-

When Isaac wanted to arouse in the world with his power of Harsh Judgment, he strengthened himself and separated rungs from their posts. Abraham fortified himself and separated that one, that distinctive tree-form from the midst of the impurity.¹⁴⁵

Primordial serpent steeped in the fruit of that tree—this is the wine that was drunk—siring two rungs, intertwined.

Rungs encircling the side of impurity, one called Milcom, one called Peor: this one, covert advice; that one, overt advice. Peor—revealed—all his activities on display. Milcom—concealed—all his activities hidden. From these two spread out copious kinds, according to their species, [110a] wound round the great sea and all dimensions of impurity. Each and every one slipped into its spot.¹⁴⁶

Similarly below: Lot deviated from Abraham, establishing his dwelling among the people of Sodom. When judgment was aroused against them, Abraham remembered and sent him away from there, and he was removed from their company. His daughters plied him with wine and two nations were born through them: Ammon and Moab—one revealed, one concealed. Ammon—its rung is Milcom, concealed advice. Moab—its rung is Peor, entirely revealed. His daughters followed this pattern. One said עמי בן (ben ammi), *son of my people* (ibid., 38)—I have a son עמי (immi), from one who was with me, not explicating his parentage—concealed. The other one said, מואב (mo'av), *Moab*—this one מאב (me'av), *from father*—I conceived him from father. His rung is Peor—revealed.¹⁴⁷

King David united with these two afterward. From Moab came Ruth, from whom issued King David. From Ammon, [110b] King David was crowned with the diadem that attests to David's seed, as is written: *and he put the crown on him and the testimony* (2 Kings 11:12). This was from Milcom, rung of the people of Ammon, as is written: *He took the crown of מלכם (malkam), their king* (2 Samuel 12:30). *Malkam*, rung of the people of Ammon, as is written: *it was placed on David's head* (ibid.). Henceforth it was a testimony for his offspring forever, and it promulgated the identity of descendants of David—fit to be king. Even one newly born that day could bear it upon his head, though it was laden with gold and precious stones. Another man could not bear it. This is as is written of Joash: *put the crown on him and the testimony*.¹⁴⁸

David bonded with two rungs—the power of his monarchy—to overpower other nations. For had he not been encompassed by their sides, he would have been incapable of overwhelming them.¹⁴⁹

Lot went up from Zoar [111a] and settled in the mountains, his two daughters together with him (Genesis 19:30).

The leech has two daughters (Proverbs 30:15). *Two daughters*—two daughters of the evil impulse, arousing him to commandeer the

body. One is the *nefesh* constantly tumefying within the body. The other is the *nefesh* that craves foul desires, all lascivious appetites of this world. One is the elder, the other is the younger. The evil impulse can sustain only continual adhesion—seducing men and eliciting their trust—through these two, in order to convey them to a place of lethal, piercing arrows, as is said: *Until the arrow pierces his liver* (Proverbs 7:23).¹⁵⁰

Like bandits who take cover in the mountains, lying in ambush: they hole themselves up in a creepy, mountainous place—but they recognize that people are cautious to avoid such places. What do they do? They designate the most silver-tongued among them—one who knows how to beguile people. He leaves their midst and positions himself in the straight path where everyone passes. When he approaches them, he begins to join...¹⁵¹

[146b] Alternatively, *The sun rises and the sun sets* (Ecclesiastes 1:5). What did King Solomon discern, his book of wisdom beginning here? “Well,” explained Rabbi El’azar, “he based this book on the seven breaths upon which the world stands. These columns and supports sustain the world, therefore they are called ‘breaths.’ As the body cannot exist without breath, so too the world could not endure without these breaths, uttered by King Solomon.

And they are seven, as is written: *Breath of breaths, said Koheleth, breath of breaths, it is all breath* (ibid., 1)—behold, seven.”¹⁵²

“Now, if you contend that the world stands upon these good ones, look, Scripture includes putrid breaths, and they are the unmaking of the world! For example, *This is breath and an evil sickness* (ibid. 6:2), and *this is mere breath and vexatious spirit* (ibid. 4:4). Actually—these seven breaths do sustain the world, but they emit seven others, and they all sustain the world. For in these seven is the breath from which all judgments of the world issue [147a] and spread out. They are called other breaths, to flog people and guide them along the upright path. They are called *breath* because *evil sickness* dwells upon them, *breath* that is *vexatious spirit*. They are sustenance of the world indeed, because on account of them people follow the straight path, trembling before the blessed Holy One. Thus, plenty of these breaths are emitted from these seven.”¹⁵³

“His opening utterance—mystery of the sun—this is the breath that sustains the world, mystery through which one enters supernal faith of the blessed Holy One. Thus, everything below this rung is excluded from the mystery of faith. Of this is written *there was no gain under the sun* (ibid. 2:11)... and *all that is done under the sun* (ibid. 9:3), for below this point, there is no need to bond. Sun and moon are one, with no separation—even though the moon is below the sun, it is all sun, with no division. Below this point, it is all רעות רוח (*re’ut ru’ah*), *vexatious spirit* (ibid. 1:14), and it is forbidden to cleave to it.”¹⁵⁴

Jacob departed [from Beer-Sheba and went to Haran] (Genesis 28:10).¹⁵⁵

Inside the hidden nexus, from within a sealed secret, a *zohar*, radiance, shot forth—shining speculum,

embracing two colors blended together. [147b] Once absorbed in each other, all colors could be seen there—purple, the whole spectrum of colors—to and fro (Ezekiel 1:14). Those rays do not wait to be seen—they merge into the fusion of that *zohar*, radiance.¹⁵⁶

Within that *zohar*, radiance, dwells the One who dwells. It is the name for the Concealed One, utterly unknown—*Voice of Jacob*. Seen there is Faith of All, and the Concealed One, utterly unknown. Here dwells *YHVH*, consummation of all sides, above and below. Here is found Jacob, perfection of the patriarchs, united with all sides.¹⁵⁷

This *zohar*, radiance, called by its selected name, as is written: [*You, Israel, My servant;*] *Jacob, whom I have chosen* (Isaiah 41:8)—called by two names, Jacob and Israel. At first, Jacob; later, Israel.¹⁵⁸

This mystery: at first he was at the End of Thought, Elucidation of Written Torah. She is Oral Torah, called באר (*be'er*), Elucidation, as is said: *Moshe undertook באר (be'er), to elucidate* (Deuteronomy 1:5). *Be'er*, Elucidation—called Seven, as is written: ויבנהו (*va-yivnehu*), *he built it—seven years* (1 Kings 6:38). שבע (*Sheva*), Seven, is Great Voice, and End of Thought is באר שבע (*be'er sheva*), Elucidation of Seven.¹⁵⁹

Jacob entered into this inception of faith. After adhering to this faith, he had to be tested in the same place his forefathers had been tested, entering in peace and emerging in peace. Adam, in contrast, entered recklessly. He was seduced by her, sinning with that woman of whoredom, Primordial Serpent. Noah entered and was seduced by her, sinning, as is written: *He drank of the wine and became drunk and exposed himself within his tent* (Genesis 9:21). Abraham entered and emerged, as is written: *Abram went down to Egypt* (Genesis 12:10), and *Abram went up from Egypt* (Genesis 13:1). Isaac entered and emerged, as is written: *Isaac went to Abimelech king of*

the Philistines (Genesis 26:1), and *Isaac went up from there* (Genesis 26:17, 23).[160](#)

Jacob, having entered into faith, had to proceed, [148a] descending to that side. For one who is saved from there is beloved, chosen by the blessed Holy One. What is written? *Jacob departed from Be'er Sheva* (Genesis 28:10), secret of the mystery of faith, *and set out for Haran* (ibid.), side of the woman of whoredom, the adulteress.[161](#)

Mystery of mysteries: Out of the scorching noon of Isaac, out of the dregs of wine, a cramped cluster—male and female together, crimson as a rose, splitting in many directions and paths. The male, called Samael, his female always contained within him. Just as it is on the side of holiness, so it is on the Other Side: male and female embracing one another. Samael's woman is called Serpent, Woman of Whoredom, End of All Flesh, End of Days. Two vile spirits joined as one: spirit of the male is subtle; the spirit of the female diffused in many ways and paths, but joined to the spirit of the male.[162](#)

She bedecks herself with all sorts of jewelry, like a repulsive prostitute loitering at the crossroads to seduce men. The fool who approaches her—she grabs him and kisses him, pouring him wine from the dregs, from the venom of vipers. Once he drinks, he strays after her. Seeing him stray from the path of truth, she strips herself of all her finery that she dangled before that fool.[163](#)

Her adornments for seducing men: her hair all coiffed, rosy-red, her face white and scarlet, six trinkets dangling from her ears, [her bed covered] with Egyptian linen, on her neck all the laurels of the East, her mouth slightly puckered, gorgeously decked-out! Tongue pointed like a sword, her words smooth like oil, her lips ravishing, crimson as a rose, sweet with all the sweetness of the world. Attired in purple, she is adorned with forty adornments minus one.[164](#)

This fool follows her and drinks from the cup of wine. He fornicates with her, straying after her. What does she do? She deserts him lying asleep in bed. She ascends, denounces him, obtains permission, and descends. That fool awakens, planning to cavort with her as before, but she has discarded her embellishments, returning as a fierce warrior confronting him. Arrayed in armor of flashing fire, his awesome terror induces tremors [148b] in body and soul. Full of fearsome eyes, sharp-edged sword in his hand, bitter drops suspended there. He kills that fool, and flings him into Hell.¹⁶⁵

Jacob descended to her, journeyed to her place, saw all the trappings of her house, and was saved from her. The male was disgraced—he swooped down to wage war, but could not overcome him, as is written: *And a man wrestled with him...* (ibid. 32:25). Saved from all, perfected consummately, raised to a rung of perfection, and called Israel. Then he rose to a high rung, total perfection!¹⁶⁶ [149a]

He dreamed: Here, a ladder set on earth, its top reaching the heavens... (Genesis 28:12).¹⁶⁷

are one-sixtieth of prophecy.¹⁶⁸

A ladder—he foresaw his descendants primed to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. *A ladder*—this is Sinai, rooted in the ground but as eminent as if it soared to the heavens. All celestial troops and legions descended there with the blessed Holy One when He gave them the Torah, and he saw it all.¹⁶⁹

He saw Metatron, elder of the household, ruling over all that is His. Presiding over this world with the name *Shaddai*, ascending upward with the rise of the name of his Master, *YHVH*—site where Jacob was perfected afterward. *Its*

Dreams are from the sixth rung: from the two rungs of prophecy up to this rung—six rungs. Of this: Dreams

top—of the name *Shaddai*—the letter ך (yod). This is the meaning of *reaching to heaven*—when this letter reaches that place it is perfected and called by the name of its master, *YHVH*.¹⁷⁰

Here, angels of God ascending and descending on it—holy angels, close to *Malkhut*, ascending; others, distant, descending. Further, they ascend and descend בו (bo), *on him*—when he ascends, they ascend with him. When he descends, they descend with him.¹⁷¹ [149b]

Angels of God—twelve jewels: *Mikha'el, Qadmi'el, Pada'el, Gavri'el, Tsadqi'el, Hasdi'el, Repha'el, Razi'el, Saturi'ah, Nuri'el, Yofi'el, Ana'el*.¹⁷²

Thousands of שְׁנָאֵן (*shin'an*), *thousands* (Psalms 68:18). שְׁנָאֵן (*Shin'an*)—שׂוֹר (*shor*), *ox*; נֶשֶׁר (*nesher*), *eagle*; אַרְיֵה (*aryeh*), *lion*; ך (final *nun*)—*Adam*, embracing male and female. All ascending when he ascends, descending when he descends.¹⁷³

Further, all these who rule in governance of this world ascend on account of him, and all those who descend, descend on account of him—all on this ladder. *YHVH* rules over all, as is written: *Behold! YHVH was poised over him* (Genesis 28:13).¹⁷⁴

When he awoke, it is written: *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!* (ibid., 17). *House of Elohim, God*—actually! And it is the gate to enter within, as is written: *Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter them and praise Yah* (Psalms 118:19). *This is the gate to YHVH* (ibid., 20), and *this is the gate of heaven*—all one.¹⁷⁵ [151b]

He looked, and here: a well in the field... (Genesis 29:2).¹⁷⁶

A well—rung of the Master of the Entire World. *In the field*—Field of Holy Apples.

Three flocks of sheep—three holy, supernal rungs, arrayed over that well—*Netsah, Hod, and Yesod Olam*, Foundation of the

World. They draw water from above and fill that well—because that spring, Foundation of the World, dwells within that well, flowing constantly, filling the well. Once it is filled—actually—then *for from that well the flocks were watered*. These are all the troops and holy legions, all quenched and drinking from that well, each and every one fittingly.¹⁷⁷

The stone on the mouth of the well was large—this is the stone upon which people stumble. *A stone men strike against* [—*a rock men stumble over*] (Isaiah 8:14)—always looming over this well and its utterances, to exact judgment upon the entire world, blocking the descent of food and bounty to the world.¹⁷⁸

[152a] *When all the flocks were gathered there* (Genesis 29:3). It is not written *When the flocks were gathered there*, but rather *all the flocks*—holy legions above, legions of Israel below. These with songs and praise above; those with prayers and petitions below—these and those. At once *they would roll the stone off the mouth of the well* (ibid.)—rolling and removing it from holiness, abandoning judgment. At once, *they would water the sheep* (ibid.)—celestial angels absorbing above, Israel deriving below.¹⁷⁹

Afterward, *they would put the stone back* (ibid.)—at the injunction of the well, to be present before it, to invoke judgment in the world—so that the world would be conducted justly. This is how it must be, for the world cannot endure without justice—everything existing according to truth and merit.¹⁸⁰

After Jacob was perfected, he needed no extra help with this stone. What is written? *He approached and rolled the stone...* (ibid., 10).¹⁸¹

[*He*] *rolled* (ibid.), and *they would roll* (ibid., 3), not *he removed*, and *they removed*. Indeed, וגללו (*ve-galalu*), *they would roll*—alluding to confusion of Satan, confounding him, preventing him from prosecuting.¹⁸²

Jacob—alone, unaided. Independently, for Jacob was most consummate of the patriarchs. Since he was able to defeat Esau in this world, he can triumph above, as well. Everything requires a deed.[183](#)

Jacob inherited two worlds: one, revealed world; and one, concealed world. Corresponding to that array, two tribes emerged from one, and six tribes emerged from the other. Concealed world issued six sides, revealed world issued two—two cherubim below Her. Jacob is located between two worlds—in their image, actually! Thus, all of Leah's words concealed, and Rachel's revealed.[184](#) [156a]

Reuben went out during the days of the wheat harvest (Genesis 30:14).[185](#)

We have learned: Cup of Blessing receives blessing only from the right side; so as long as the right is aroused

toward Cup of Blessing, the left provides no support. For the right finds warrant in that cup to arouse it toward the upper world.[186](#)

This secret: *Out went Reuben*—south side; thus, his banner is in the south. For he is head of the twelve boundaries, and his desire—to find a means, an offering—for Matronita, to bless Her. What is written? [*He*] *found mandrakes in the field*. He went searching amid all Her treasures and found, in this field, mandrakes. Of them is written *The mandrakes give forth fragrance...* (Song of Songs 7:14)—two cherubim, Her embellishments awakening arousal above. For among all those adornments, none arouse above besides cherubim.[187](#)

South side—when does He arouse toward Her, seeking cause to bless Her? *During the days of the wheat harvest* (Genesis 30:14)—when She distributes shares of fortune to Her legions and all the reapers of the field. At once, [*he*] *brought them to Leah his mother*—their fragrance and

arousal wafted upward, toward Upper World, concealed world, arousing blessings for Lower World.[188](#)

Once She is blessed, those mandrakes collect, then bestow upon all worlds, as is written: *the mandrakes give forth fragrance, at our doors all delicacies* (Song of Songs 7:14). When they exude their aroma, south side absorbs it, arousing toward the Upper World. At once, *at our doors all delicacies*—no beneficence lacking from the world. Lower World [156b] does not arouse toward Upper World without the cherubim wafting fragrance toward the right.[189](#)

After they bestow aroma to the right, and the right arouses toward Upper World, at once Lower World arouses to petition for its needs. What is written? *Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me"* (Genesis 30:14). Give me blessings from the arousal of mandrakes, aroused for you by the right side.[190](#)

Then, Upper World joyfully, playfully, responded to her, saying, *"Is your taking my husband a small thing?"* (ibid. 30:15)—like a mother to her daughter. If so, the Husband of Upper World must be Jacob! Not so! Yearning of the Father is always exclusively for his Daughter. His love is directed toward Her because She is the only daughter, among six sons. He doles out provisions, largesse, and gifts to each of those six sons—but He allocates nothing for Her, nor does She inherit anything. On account of all this, He watches over Her with greater fondness and love than all the rest.[191](#)

Out of love for Her, He called Her 'Daughter.' This did not satisfy Him, so He called Her 'Sister.' This did not satisfy Him, so He called Her 'Mother,' in the name of His Mother. This did not satisfy Him, so He called Her by His name, as is written: *But Hokhmah, Wisdom, found from Ayin* (Job 28:12)—*Hokhmah*, actually! This is why Upper World said to Her, *"Is your taking my husband a small thing?"*—for all of His love is drawn toward You.[192](#)

Concerning the joyful playfulness of Mother to Daughter, how did She respond? “לכן (Lakhen), *Assuredly, he may lie with you tonight*” (ibid.). *Lakhen* always indicates an oath.¹⁹³

ישכב (Yishkav), *He may lie*—what is the meaning of *yishkav*? Well, “lying” always indicates the preparation of the female for the male, so that He can infuse into Her the forms of all letters—this is the meaning of *yishkav*. ו׳ (Yesh)—Upper World, mystery of the Torah, Hidden Point aroused toward Her through כב (kaf bet), twenty-two, letters—this is the meaning of *yishkav*. Yesh—World that is Coming, as is written: [So I may] *endow my lovers with yesh, substance* (Proverbs 8:21). כב (Kaf bet), Twenty-two—Supernal Point infusing all twenty-two letters, mystery of the entire Torah. [157a] This is the meaning of *yishkav*.¹⁹⁴

It is not written ישכב עמך יעקב (yishkav imakh ya’akov), *Jacob may lie with you*, but rather *he may lie with you*—Hidden One, who is fit to arouse toward you, all on account of those mandrakes. All written with love.¹⁹⁵ [157b]

When Jacob came in from the field in the evening (Genesis 30:16)—holy *Tif’eret*, coming from that field where he collected all the blessings, the one of which is written [like the fragrance of a field] *blessed by YHVH* (ibid. 27:27). *In the evening*—why *in the evening*? This is the time that his father Isaac is aroused toward that field, taking hold of it. Isaac is aroused toward that field only *in the evening*, as is written: *Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening* (ibid. 24:63). When Jacob left there in the evening, he left that field for his father Isaac, ascending upward at that time.¹⁹⁶

What is written? *Leah went out to meet him* (ibid. 30:16). Supernal Mother said toward Her only son, “*You are to come to me* (ibid.), beneath my wings, so I may bless You and saturate You with celestial dainties and confections. This is the moment for fondness and delight,

giving You to bestow upon that field, before the power of Isaac blazes.”[197](#)

Once She embraces Jacob beneath Her wings, then *he lay with her* בלילה הוא (*ba-lailah hu*), *in the night—he* (ibid.). *He*—concealed from all. *He*—source of all holy blessings. It is not written *Jacob*, but rather *He*, One who is fit to arouse toward Her. Before He was poised toward Her, beneath Her wings—the One who absorbs those sanctities and blessings—She was not filled by Hidden Point, Upper World. Thus, mandrakes arouse all—all in the array of supernal mystery.[198](#)

Reuben—what is the meaning of *Reuben*? The blessed Holy One designates names on earth, as is written: *Go, gaze upon the acts of Elohim, who has placed names on earth* (Psalms 46:9).[199](#)

[162a] *Jacob took for himself* (Genesis 30:37). He selected as his portion, for his lot. *Rods of fresh poplar* (ibid.)—right side, colored white. *Fresh*—side of water. *Almond* (ibid.)—left side, red as a rose. *Plane*—blending them together. In all of them the right, colored white, is united, ascending in their midst, as is written: *exposing the white* (ibid.). For even though it is joined on both sides, its share inclines to the right side, and is engraved in all—this side and that. Then he is called “consummate man,” consummate in everything.[200](#)

What is written afterward? *So at the time that* המקשרות (*ha-mqusharot*), *the vigorous, of the flocks went into heat, Jacob would place the rods...* (ibid., 41)—mystery of mysteries transmitted to the wise of heart. Celestial rungs in the midst of supernal holy legions—these above those—these inward, those outward. Inward ones מתקשרין (*mitqasherin*), linked, to the Holy King and *mitqasherin*, linked, to Israel, sacred offspring of the blessed Holy One. They are called הצאן המקשרות (*ha-tson ha-mqusharot*), *linked of the flocks* (ibid.)—troops of *linked ones* above and below.[201](#)

When they yearn for sublime radiance above, central column—consummate Jacob—places those rods, *tefillin* of the head, *in the channels* (ibid.), the very site where *tefillin* dwell. From there, all supernal troops and legions, bonded above and bonded below, absorb luminosity. Once they have absorbed from the channels—*the water receptacles* (ibid.)—they become springs, fountains flowing downward, providing for all.²⁰²

This is why Jacob separated upper rungs from other rungs of the remaining nations, as is said: *He set his own herds לבדו (levaddo), apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock* (ibid., 40). He set these flocks aside [162b] for himself, to avoid the share of the other nations. Just as he separated rungs of faith above for his portion and lot, so did he need to separate rungs of holy legions below, linking up with them in the palaces of *Matronita*.²⁰³

All of them are marked by the King's signet above. Just as Israel is inscribed among the other nations, so too rungs of supernal legions—portion of the blessed Holy One—are inscribed among the rest of the troops and legions above. Thus, Jacob selected these for his portion and lot, inscribed for a portion of faith. Consequently, it is written: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself* (Psalms 135:4)—as he chose his portion and lot in the mystery of faith, so too did the blessed Holy One select him from all other troops and legions of the world, and supernal legions were separated from one another.²⁰⁴

When radiance of the flame is revealed in the light of *Shekhinah*, all other rungs are ashamed, *ומתעטפי (u-mit'atefei)*, shrouding themselves, before that radiance, unable to approach. All holy embellishments—Her adornments at the time that radiance was revealed—rejoice at once, soaring upward to draw near and bond with Her; and then She is refined by them. This is the mystery of *העטופים (ha-atufim)*, *shrouded ones, went to Laban and the vigorous ones to Jacob* (Genesis 30:42)—he had to separate and divide holy

rungs for his portion from among rungs of the other nations. Throughout, holy Jacob was essential, and the blessed Holy One wrote of his faithfulness in the Torah, contained in the mysteries of these words. Happy is his portion![205](#)

[165a] Our Mishnah: *Jacob went on his way, and angels of God met him* (Genesis 32:2).[206](#)

Potency of celestial deputies, ramrod straight, and the glinting, whirling sword—appointed over numerous troops and legions. Whirling sword—blood-red, as is written: *YHVH has a sword, full of blood* (Isaiah 34:6). Inversion is suspended from that sword—those who transform to various colors, some females, some males. Other colors diverge on multiple sides toward various rungs.[207](#)

From the side of Tree of Life emerge those who unite, bonded in a nexus—holy beings drawing constantly *of the dew of heaven* (Genesis 27:39). Name of God is perfected through them. Of this is said *of the fat of the earth* (ibid.), perfected on the four sides of the universe. They are fashioned into supports for the Throne—all of them jewels, sockets, and pillars, never disengaging from this Name.[208](#)

All those clusters that Jacob selected as his portion, tied to this Name, departed in the evening. When Jacob set off, journeying to the four sides, they surrounded him, extending protection to the four corners of the earth. After but a moment he sensed, from the site of the Upper Tree, guardianship for the Lower Tree. Then, *when he saw them, Jacob said, "This is a camp of God!" And he named that place* מַחֲנַיִם (*Maḥanayim*), *Twin Camps* (ibid. 32:3).[209](#) [2:146a]

Have them take Me an offering
(Exodus 25:2).[210](#)

Mysteries to fashion Glory for His glorification, He caused

Secret of Secrets for those who understand wisdom. When desire arose in Mystery of All

glorification, He caused

a spirit to blow from Supernal Point, stretching from above below, configuring its array to be established in this world.[211](#)

Why? Lacking source or root in this world, there would be no worldly vessel at all to receive the flow. And if it were not poured into this world, the world would perish at once—unable to endure for even a moment. Since its array is filled from this world, it pours from one side toward this world, and from another side toward the celestial angels—all slaked at once.[212](#)

The array of this spirit is perfected by the spirits of the righteous in this world. This spirit was perfected when Enoch, Jared, and Mahalalel resided in this world; but when sinners proliferated, this perfection was stripped away. When they perished, Noah arrived and perfected it. Along came the Generation of Dispersion, and this perfection was stripped away. Abraham arrived and perfected it. The people of Sodom came and stripped it away. Isaac arrived and perfected it. Philistines and sinners of the generation came and stripped it away.[213](#)

Jacob and his offspring—immaculate bed—appeared, consummating that perfection. They departed from the holy land, descending to Egypt; and on their account, She tarried there. Since the people of Israel reverted to Egyptian practices, that perfection was subjugated and depleted until they emerged from Egypt and built the Dwelling.[214](#)

The blessed Holy One said, “I wish to dwell among you, but I cannot until you perfect My Spirit so that it can dwell among you.” This is as is written: *Have them make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them* (Exodus 25:8). This is the mystery of *Have them take Me an offering* (ibid., 2).[215](#)

Moses said to the blessed Holy One, “Who can take Her and fashion Her?”[216](#)

He replied, “Moses, it is not as you surmise; rather, *from every man whose heart impels him* (ibid.)—from their yearning and their spirit you shall take Her and perfect Her.”[217](#)

When Solomon arrived, he completed that spirit with consummation from above. For from the day that She was perfected below during the days of Moses, that perfection was never withheld at all through the arrival of Solomon. When Solomon came, he exerted himself to perfect it above, and he began to configure the mirror of Upper World, so that Lower World could be attuned by that mirror. This is the meaning of [*Song of Songs*] אשר לשלמה (*asher li-shlomo*), *of Solomon*.[218](#)

REFERENCE MATTER

Abbreviations

<i>ABD</i>	David Noel Freedman, ed., <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
Alter	Robert Alter: * <i>Five Books of Moses; Book of Psalms; Wisdom Books; Ancient Israel</i>
<i>Arukh</i>	Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, <i>Sefer he-Arukh</i>
<i>Arukh ha-Shalem</i>	Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, <i>Arukh ha-Shalem</i>
<i>Battei Midrashot</i>	Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer, ed., <i>Battei Midrashot</i>
B.C.E.	before the Common Era
<i>Beit ha-Midrash</i>	Adolph Jellinek, ed., <i>Beit ha-Midrash</i>
<i>Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot</i>	Boaz Huss, ed. <i>Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot she-be-Sefer ha-Zohar</i>
Berlin	Adele Berlin, <i>Lamentations</i>
Bloch and Bloch	Bloch and Bloch, <i>Song of Songs</i>
Brody	Seth Brody, <i>Rabbi Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, Midrash ha-Ne'lam</i> on Lamentations
BT	Babylonian Talmud
C.E.	Common Era
C1	Dd. 3, 5, University Library, Cambridge
C10	Add. 521, 1-2, University Library, Cambridge
CH1	Heb. 60, Harvard University, Cambridge (Mass.)

Cogan and Tadmor	Cogan and Tadmor, <i>II Kings: A New Translation and Commentary</i>
Cr or Cremona	Cremona edition of the <i>Zohar</i>
CT3	F 12 141, Trinity College, Cambridge
<i>Derekh Emet</i>	<i>Derekh Emet</i> , in <i>Sefer ha-Zohar</i> , ed. Reuven Margaliot
<i>Derekh Emet</i> (ed. Hamiz)	Joseph Hamiz, ed., <i>Derekh Emet</i>
diss.	dissertation
ed.	editor (plural, eds.); edition; edited by
Edri	Yehuda Edri, trans., <i>Sefer ha-Zohar</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed., 2007
Englander	Lawrence Englander, trans. and ed., <i>The Mystical Study of Ruth</i>
ES1	G-III-14, Biblioteca de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Escorial
Eskenazi & Frymer-Kensky	Eskenazi & Frymer-Kensky, <i>The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth</i>
esp.	especially
Fishbane	Fishbane, trans., <i>Midrash ha-Ne'lam, Eikhah</i> , in Fishbane, <i>Biblical Myth</i>
Fox	Michael V. Fox: [*] <i>Proverbs; Ecclesiastes</i>
frag.	fragmentary
Galante	Abraham Galante, in <i>Or ha-Hammah</i> , ed. Abraham Azulai
Gordis	Robert Gordis: [*] <i>Book of Job; Song of Songs and Lamentations</i>
<i>Hadrat Melekh</i>	Shalom Buzaglo, <i>Hadrat Melekh</i>

<i>Haggahot Maharḥu</i>	Ḥayyim Vital, <i>Haggahot Maharḥu</i>
<i>Hash</i>	<i>Hashmatot</i>
<i>Heikh</i>	<i>Heikhalot</i>
Hillers	Delbert Hillers, <i>Lamentations</i>
intro	introduction
<i>IR</i>	<i>Idra Rabba</i>
<i>IZ</i>	<i>Idra Zuta</i>
J1	MS Heb. 4°612, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow, <i>Dictionary</i>
JT	Jerusalem Talmud
KP	Lavi, <i>Ketem Paz</i>
L33	Or. 10772, British Library, London
L37	Add. 16407, British Library, London
L38	Add. 27009, British Library, London
L39	Add. 27173, British Library, London
Levine	Baruch Levine, <i>JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus</i>
M	Mishnah
M2	Cod. hebr. 203, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
M5	Cod. hebr. 20, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
M7	Cod. hebr. 217, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
M8	Cod. hebr. 218, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
<i>Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah</i>	Oded Porat, <i>Sefer Ma'yan ha-Ḥokhmah</i> , ed., in <i>Kitvei ha-Iyyun</i>
Mantua	Mantua edition of the <i>Zohar</i>
Margaliot	Reuven Margaliot, <i>Nitsotsei Zohar</i>

<i>Mat</i>	<i>Matnitin</i>
<i>Matoq mi-Devash</i>	Daniel Frisch, <i>Peirush Matoq mi-Devash</i>
MD2	g.X.2.56, Estense e universitaria, Modena
<i>MhN</i>	<i>Midrash ha-Ne'lam</i>
<i>Miqdash Melekh</i>	Shalom Buzaglo, <i>Miqdash Melekh</i>
Milgrom	Jacob Milgrom: [*] <i>JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers; Leviticus</i>
Mopsik	Charles Mopsik: [*] <i>Le Zohar</i>
MS	manuscript
MS3	MS Guenzburg 174, Russian State Library, Moscow
MS4	MS Guenzburg 290, Russian State Library, Moscow
MT	Masoretic Text
n. (plural, nn.)	note(s)
N22	MS 1760, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N23	MS 1761, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N27	MS 1876, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N29	MS 1789, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N36	MS 1916, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N41	MS 1930, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
N53	MS 3821, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York

N55	MS 5479, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
NC1	X 893 K 13, Columbia University, New York
n.d.	no date
<i>Nefesh David</i>	David Luria, <i>Nefesh David</i>
<i>Nitsotsei Orot</i>	Ḥayyim Joseph David Azulai, <i>Nitsotsei Orot</i>
<i>Nitsotsei Zohar</i>	Reuven Margalioṭ, <i>Nitsotsei Zohar</i>
NJPS	<i>Tanakh</i> , New Jewish Publication Society
n.p.	no publisher
NZ	Reuven Margalioṭ, <i>Nitsotsei Zohar</i>
O2	MS Bodl. Or. 574, Bodleian Library, Oxford
O17	MS 2514, Bodleian Library, Oxford
O18	MS Opp. 737, Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>OY</i> or <i>Or Yaqar</i>	Moses Cordovero, <i>Or Yaqar</i>
P1	MS héb. 778, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
P3	MS héb. 780, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
P5	MS héb. 782, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
P13	MS héb. 797, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
P24	MS héb. 859, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
PR13	Cod. Parm. 351, Biblioteca Palatina, Parma
PR14	Cod. Parm 2216, Biblioteca Palatina, Parma
par.	paragraph
<i>Pereq Shirah</i>	Malachi Beit-Arié, ed., <i>Pereq Shirah</i>
<i>Piq</i>	<i>Piqqudin</i>
pl.	plural
Pr13	MS 351, Biblioteca Palatina, Parma

<i>QhM</i>	<i>Qav ha-Middah</i>
R1	MS 2971, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome
Radak	Rabbi David Kimḥi
Ramban	Rabbi Moses Nahmanides
Rashi	Rabbi Solomon Yitshaki
<i>RM</i>	<i>Ra'aya Meheimna</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Raza de-Razin</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
S	<i>Zohar Ḥadash</i> , Salonika
SA	<i>Sefarim aherim</i>
Sarna	Nahum Sarna: [*] <i>JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis; JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus</i>
Sasson	Jack Sasson, <i>Ruth</i>
Scholem	Gershom Scholem: [*] <i>Sefer ha-Zohar shel Gershom Shalom; Zohar Ḥadash</i> of Gershom Scholem
<i>SdT</i> s	<i>Sifra di-Tsni'uta</i>
<i>ShS</i>	<i>Shir ha-Shirim</i>
sing.	singular
<i>SO</i>	<i>Sitrei Otiyyot</i>
SP1	Evr. II A 317, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg
<i>ST</i>	<i>Sitrei Torah</i>
<i>Sullam</i>	Yehudah Ashlag, <i>Sefer ha-Zohar... im... ha-Sullam</i>
T1	Friedberg Collection 5-015, University of Toronto Library, Toronto
Th	<i>Midrash ha-Ne'lam</i> on Ruth, Thiengen
<i>Tiq</i>	<i>Tiqqunim</i> (in <i>Zohar Ḥadash</i>)
<i>Tos</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
trans.	translator(s); translated by

<i>TZ</i>	<i>Tiqqunei ha-Zohar</i>
Urbach	Ephraim Urbach, <i>The Sages</i>
V	<i>Zohar Ḥadash</i> , Venice
V5	MS ebr. 206, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican
V6	MS ebr. 207, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican
V7	MS ebr. 208, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican
V16	Neofiti 23, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican
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Vital	Ḥayyim Vital, in <i>Or ha-Ḥammah</i> , ed. Abraham Azulai
Zakovitch	Zakovitch: [*] <i>Rut; Shir ha-Shirim</i>
<i>ZH</i>	<i>Zohar Ḥadash</i>

^{*} The intended particular work or volume by this author can be inferred from the context in which it is cited.

Transliteration of Hebrew and Aramaic

א	<i>alef</i>	' <u>1</u>	ל	<i>lamed</i>	<i>l</i>
ב	<i>bet</i>	<i>b</i>	מ	<i>mem</i>	<i>m</i>
ב	<i>vet</i>	<i>v</i>	נ	<i>nun</i>	<i>n</i>
ג	<i>gimel</i>	<i>g</i>	ס	<i>samekh</i>	<i>s</i>
ד	<i>dalet</i>	<i>d</i>	ע	<i>ayin</i>	' <u>2</u>
ה	<i>he</i>	<i>h</i>	פ	<i>pe</i>	<i>p</i>
ו	<i>vav</i>	<i>v</i>	פ	<i>phe</i>	<i>f</i> <u>3</u>
ז	<i>zayin</i>	<i>z</i>	צ	<i>tsadi</i>	<i>ts</i>
ח	<i>het</i>	<i>h</i>	ק	<i>qof</i>	<i>q</i>
ט	<i>tet</i>	<i>t</i>	ר	<i>resh</i>	<i>r</i>
י	<i>yod</i>	<i>y, i</i>	ש	<i>shin</i>	<i>sh</i>
כ	<i>kaf</i>	<i>k</i>	ש	<i>sin</i>	<i>s</i>
כ	<i>khaf</i>	<i>kh</i>	ת	<i>tav</i>	<i>t</i>

The English equivalent letter is doubled when a strong *dagesh* in Hebrew or Aramaic characterizes a verbal conjugation or indicates an assimilated letter, e.g., *dibber*, *yitten*. However, if the Hebrew letter (in which a *dagesh* appears) is represented by two English letters (such as *sh* or *ts*), then that English equivalent is not doubled, e.g., *va-yishaqehu*, *matsot*. Further, a single English equivalent letter is not doubled when preceded by a hyphenated prefix, e.g., *ha-sefer*, *la-melekh*, *mi-tokh*.

Proper names that appear in roman type do not follow the above schema. Biblical names are rendered according to the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*. Rabbinic names are rendered according to common convention, e.g., Akiva,

Resh Lakish. Medieval names are Anglicized, e.g., Moses de León, Joseph Gikatilla. Authors' names in the Bibliography follow library listings or the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

1. *Alef* is not transliterated at the beginning or end of a word nor after a hyphenated prefix. Elsewhere it is transliterated only when accompanied by a vowel, e.g., *Shemu'el*.

2. *Ayin* is not transliterated at the beginning of a word, nor after a hyphenated prefix, nor, unless accompanied by a vowel, at the end of a word. Thus, *Shema*, but *Bava Metsi'a*.

3. Occasionally transliterated as *ph* to compare or contrast it to the letter *pe*.

Glossary

Adam Human being; man; the first male (sometimes called Primal Adam); the first human being, who is androgynous or a male androgyne. Also refers to the Primordial Adam—the anthropomorphic configuration of *sefirot*.

Adonai Lord. One of the divine names, traditionally used as the vocalized form of the ineffable *YHVH*. In Kabbalah, it represents *Shekhinah*.

aggadah, aggadta, pl. *aggadot, aggadata* “Tale”; the nonlegal contents of the Talmud and Midrash, often based on biblical exegesis. It includes ethical and moral teaching, theological speculation, legends, and folklore.

alef The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the beginning of divine and human speech.

Amidah “Standing”; the central prayer, recited three times daily.

Arikh Anpin “Slow to anger, long-suffering, forbearing, patient”; the highest sefirotic realm, characterized by pure love and compassion (corresponding to *Keter*).

Assembly of Israel Hebrew, כנסת ישראל (*Keneset Yisra'el*); in rabbinic literature, a phrase normally denoting the people of Israel. In the *Zohar*, the phrase can refer to the earthly community of Israel but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people.

at bash An acronym for an esoteric technique of letter transmutation (encryption): last for first, penultimate for second, etc.

Attiqa Qaddisha “The Holy Ancient One;” the most ancient manifestation of *Ein Sof* through *Keter*, Its crown.

Ayin “Nothingness”; the creative “no-thingness” of God, out of which all being emanates.

baraita A Tannaitic teaching that is not included in the Mishnah. In the *Zohar* it can often refer to a kabbalistic teaching, sometimes from elsewhere in the *Zohar* itself.

bet The second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. When spelled out, its name can be vocalized as *bayit*, meaning “house,” and symbolizing *Binah*.

Binah “Understanding”; the third *sefirah*; the Divine Mother who gives birth to the seven lower *sefirot*.

blessed Holy One Common rabbinic name for God. In the *Zohar* it often designates *Tif'eret*, or *Tif'eret* and the *sefirot* surrounding Him.

Companions The close circle of disciples around Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai.

Da'at “Knowledge”; the hidden *sefirah* mediating between *Hokhmah* and *Binah*.

dalet The fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The name's meaning is midrashically construed as “lowly one,” inviting an association with *Shekhinah*.

Din “Judgment”; the fifth *sefirah*; the left arm of the divine body, balancing *Hesed*. The roots of evil lie here; also called *Gevurah*.

Dumah Literally, “Silence.” In the Bible, a name for the netherworld. In rabbinic literature, Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead. In the *Zohar*, he also oversees Hell.

Dwelling Hebrew, משכן (*mishkan*). The portable sanctuary (or Tabernacle), which according to Exodus was constructed by Moses and the Israelites, and then carried from encampment to encampment as the people journeyed through the Sinai Desert. In the *Zohar*, often a symbol of *Shekhinah*.

Ehyeh asher Ehyeh The divine name that God provides after Moses asks about God's identity (Exodus 3:14). In its ancient context, this name identifies the specific divine quality related to Moses' upcoming mission. In the *Zohar*, the name usually signifies *Keter*.

Eikhah The book of Lamentations.

Ein Sof "There is no end"; that which is boundless; the Infinite. The ultimate reality of God beyond all specific qualities of the *sefirot*; the God beyond God. Sometimes the sense is simply adverbial: "without end."

Elohim "God, gods"; a biblical name for God. In the *Zohar* it has various sefirotic associations: *Binah*, *Gevurah*, *Shekhinah*.

Gedullah "Greatness"; the fourth *sefirah*; the outpouring of God's great goodness; also called *Hesed*.

Geihinnom Hell.

Geonic Pertaining to the period or literature of the Geonim (the heads of central governing councils and academies based in the Land of Israel and in Babylonia), which extended from approximately 600 to 1040 C.E..

Gevurah "Power"; the fifth *sefirah*; also called *Din*.

gimatriyya, pl. ***gimatriyya'ot*** Derived from the Greek *geometria* ("measuring the earth"); a method of interpretation based on the numerical value of Hebrew letters.

Great Sanhedrin The Supreme Court of Jewish jurisprudence, consisting of seventy members.

halakhah, pl. ***halakhot*** "Practice, law, legal decision," from the root הלך (*hlkh*), "to walk": the way that one should follow. Referring generally to the details of Jewish practice.

halitsah The ritual that releases a levir from the obligation to marry his deceased brother's widow, if that brother died without children.

Hashmatot "Omissions"; additions printed at the end of the first of the three standard Aramaic volumes of the

Zohar, drawn from the Cremona edition and *Zohar Hadash*.

ḥasid, pl. **ḥasidim** “Pious one,” devotee, saint, lover of God.

ḥayyot “Living beings, beasts”; the angels who carried the Chariot-Throne, as described by the prophet Ezekiel.

he The fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; it occupies both the second and fourth positions in the tetragrammaton, where it represents the two typically feminine *sefirot*, *Binah* and *Shekhinah*.

Heikhalot “Palaces, Halls”; the extended descriptions of the heavenly and demonic halls in *Zohar* 1:38a-45b; 2:244b-268b (see Volume 12).

Ḥesed “Loving-kindness, love, grace”; the fourth *sefirah*; the right arm of the divine body, balancing *Din*; also called *Gedullah*.

Hod “Splendor”; the eighth *sefirah*; the left leg of the divine body; source of prophecy along with *Netsah*.

Ḥokhmah “Wisdom”; the second *sefirah*; the primordial point of emanation.

Ḥol ha-Mo’ed Profane (or mundane) intermediate days of the week-long festivals of *Sukkot* and *Pesah* (Passover).

Holy Ancient One The most ancient manifestation of *Ein Sof* through *Keter*, Its crown.

idra “Threshing place,” assembly.

Idra Rabba “The Great Assembly”; a description of the gathering of Rabbi Shim’on and the Companions at the threshing house, where profound mysteries of divine being are expounded. *Zohar* 3:127b-145a.

Idra Zuta “The Small Assembly”; a description of the last gathering of Rabbi Shim’on and the Companions, the master’s final teachings, and his ecstatic death. *Zohar* 3:287b-296b.

ispaqlarya “Mirror, looking-glass.” An instrument for viewing supernal objects; often used symbolically to refer

to *Shekhinah* or *Tif'eret*.

Israel Often, the people of Israel.

Jubilee The year of release, occurring every fifty years at the end of the cycle of seven sabbatical years. According to Leviticus 25, in the Jubilee all land reverts to its original owners and all indentured Israelite slaves are freed. In Kabbalah, often a symbol of *Binah*.

Kabbalah Hebrew, קבלה (*qabbalah*), "receiving, that which is received, tradition"; originally referring to tradition in general (or to post-Mosaic Scripture), but from the thirteenth century onward, specifically to the esoteric teachings of Judaism.

Kaddish "Holy"; an Aramaic prayer praising God, recited at the conclusion of each main part of every communal prayer service.

Keter "Crown"; the first *sefirah*; coeternal with *Ein Sof*; also called *Ratson* ("Will") and *Ayin* ("Nothingness").

Lamed Tallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Often associated with the Talmudic trope of the "tower flying through the air." Frequently signifies *Binah*.

Lilith A demoness who harms babies and seduces men; married to Samael.

Malkhut "Kingdom"; the tenth *sefirah*, ruling the lower worlds; also called *Shekhinah*.

Matnitin "Our Mishnah"; short pieces scattered throughout the *Zohar*, most of which appear as utterances of a heavenly voice urging the Companions to arouse themselves and open their hearts to the mysteries. Some of them contain principles of kabbalistic teaching in a condensed form, constituting a kind of mystical Mishnah.

Matronita Aramaized form of Latin *matrona*, "matron, married woman, noble lady," often applied in the *Zohar* to *Shekhinah*, the wife of *Tif'eret*.

Metatron One of the supreme powers in the divine realm, often depicted as the chief angel. He is sometimes identified as *sar ha-panim* (Prince of the Countenance),

standing face-to-face with God, or as *sar ha-olam* (Prince of the World).

mezuzah Literally, “doorpost.” In rabbinic Judaism it refers to the parchment bearing certain scriptural passages that is affixed to one’s doorposts.

midrash, pl. **midrashim** Homiletical or legal interpretation of the Bible.

Midrash ha-Ne’lam “The Concealed Midrash, the Esoteric Midrash”; an early stratum of the *Zohar*. Its language is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on the Torah pertains to several portions of Genesis, the beginning of Exodus, and several other portions; it is printed partly alongside the main text of the *Zohar* and partly in *Zohar Hadash*. *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Song of Songs, Ruth, and Lamentations is printed in *Zohar Hadash*. The subject matter of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on the Torah is mostly Creation, the soul, and the world to come; its style is often allegorical.

Mishnah Collection of oral teachings compiled near the beginning of the third century by Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi; the earliest codification of Jewish Oral Law; the core of the Talmud.

mitsvah, pl. **mitzvot** “Commandment”; one of the 613 commandments of the Torah or one of various rabbinic precepts; religious duty; by extension, good deed.

na’ar “Youth.” A frequent label for Metatron, who according to a classic midrash was formerly the youthful Enoch—transformed into an angel.

nefesh “Soul; life force”; the basic level of the tripartite soul, animating the human being. (The other two levels are *ruah* and *neshamah*.) *Nafsha* in Aramaic. Sometimes called *nefesh ha-behemit* (see, e.g., above, [p. 33](#)).

neshamah “Breath, soul,” soul-breath; the highest level of the tripartite soul. (The other two levels are *nefesh* and *ruah*.) *Nishmeta* in Aramaic.

Netsah “Endurance”; the seventh *sefirah*; the right leg of the divine body; source of prophecy along with *Hod*.

nishmeta le-nishmeta “Soul of soul.” A level of soul even higher than the *neshamah*.

notariqon An esoteric technique of interpretation that splits a word into parts in order to evince another meaning.

Oral Torah The rabbinic interpretation of the Written Torah (the Five Books of Moses); in Kabbalah, a symbol of *Shekhinah*.

Other Side Aramaic, אחרא אהרא (*Sitra Aħra*); the demonic realm, or the shadow of the divine, led by Samael and Lilith.

parashah, pl. ***parashot*** “Portion”; portion of the Torah read on a particular Sabbath, named after its opening word (or phrase) or a key word (or phrase) in the opening sentences.

Piqqudin “Commandments”; kabbalistic interpretations of the commandments scattered throughout the *Zohar* (to be distinguished from *Ra’aya Meheimna*).

Pittum ha-Ketoret “The Preparation of the Incense.” The name of a section of liturgy deriving from the Talmud’s listing of the ingredients of the incense for the Temple service.

Qav ha-Middah “The Line of Measure”; Rabbi Shim’on’s extended and detailed description of the divine instrument used for measuring supernal emanations. *Zohar Hadash* 56d-58d.

Qedushah “Sanctification”; one of several prayers describing the sanctification of God by the angels in heaven and its imitation on earth by the people of Israel.

qof The nineteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Its name also means “monkey.” Since this letter begins the Hebrew words for “husk” and “curse,” and because in its orthography it lacks either base or stem to stand upon (i.e.,

it looks unstable), it serves as a symbol for Samael and the demonic realm.

Ra'aya Meheimna "The Faithful Shepherd"; a separate composition on the kabbalistic meaning of the commandments, printed piecemeal in the *Zohar*. Here Moses, the Faithful Shepherd, appears to Rabbi Shim'on and the Companions, revealing secrets.

Rahamim "Compassion"; the sixth *sefirah*, harmonizing the polar opposites *Hesed* and *Din*; also called *Tif'eret*.

raz Alternatively, *raza*; pl. *razim*. "Mystery, secret."

Raza de-Razin "The Secret of Secrets"; a section of the *Zohar* dealing with physiognomy, metoposcopy, and chiromancy (*Zohar* 2:70a-75a [printed alongside the main text], *Zohar Hadash* 35b-37c). A second version is incorporated into the main body of the *Zohar* (2:70a-78a).

Rosh Hashanah The Jewish New Year, celebrated on the first two days of the Hebrew month Tishrei.

ruah "Spirit, wind, breath"; the second level of soul. (The other two levels are *nefesh* and *neshamah*.) *Ruḥa* in Aramaic.

Rut The book of Ruth.

Samael Prince of demons, married to Lilith; identical with Satan.

Sava "The Elder; old man."

Sava de-Mishpatim "Old Man of [Torah portion] *Mishpatim*"; an account of the Companions' encounter with a donkey-driver who turns out to be a master of wisdom. *Zohar* 2:94b-114a.

Sefer ha-Zohar "The Book of Radiance."

sefirah, pl. **sefirot** Literally, "counting," number, numerical entity; in Kabbalah, one of the ten aspects of divine personality, nine of which emanate from *Ein Sof* and the first *sefirah*, *Keter*. See the diagram on [page ix](#).

Shaddai An obscure divine name, which may originally have meant "[God of] the mountain."

Shavu'ot "Weeks"; second of the three annual pilgrimage festivals, celebrated seven weeks after the beginning of Passover.

Shekhinah "Presence," divine immanence; the tenth and last *sefirah*; female partner of *Tif'eret*; also called *Malkhut*.

Shema Literally, "hear"; central prayer recited morning and evening, comprising Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41. The opening verse is: *Hear O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one!*

shin Twenty-first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. With its three-pronged shape, it often symbolizes the sefirotic triad of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

Shir ha-Shirim The book of Song of Songs.

Sifra di-Tsni'uta "The Book of Concealment"; an anonymous, highly condensed commentary on the beginning of the Torah, consisting of five short chapters and composed in obscure sentences. Its subject is the mysterious dynamics of divine being. *Zohar* 2:176b-179a.

Sitra Aḥra "The other side"; the demonic realm, or the shadow of the divine, led by Samael and Lilith.

Sitrei Otiyyot "Secrets of the Letters"; a discourse by Rabbi Shim'on focusing on the letters of the divine name *YHVH* and how they symbolize the process of emanation. *Zohar Ḥadash* 1b-7b.

Sitrei Torah "Secrets of Torah"; interpretations of certain verses of Genesis, printed in separate columns parallel to the main body of the *Zohar* and in *Zohar Ḥadash*. Its homiletical style is similar to the main body of the *Zohar*, with a particular interest in the demonic realm, and largely without reference to individual rabbis.

Sukkot "Booths"; festival of Booths, last of the three annual pilgrimage festivals, celebrated in the middle of the month of Tishrei at the conclusion of the summer harvest.

Talmud Each of the two compilations of Jewish law, legend, ethics, and theology comprising the Mishnah and

its vast commentary (the Gemara) by rabbis of the third through fifth centuries. The Jerusalem Talmud was compiled ca. 400 C.E.; the Babylonian Talmud, about one hundred years later.

tanna, pl. **tanna'im** "One who repeats, teacher"; an authority cited in the Mishnah or belonging to the Mishnaic period (first two centuries of the Common Era); an Amoraic scholar whose task was to memorize and recite tannaitic texts.

Targum "Translation"; an Aramaic translation of the Torah or the Bible.

tav The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

tefillin, sing. **tefillah** "Phylacteries"; two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the arm and on the head, and are prescribed for men to wear during weekday morning prayer. Each of the biblical passages indicates that the Children of Israel should place a sign upon their hand and a frontlet (or reminder) between their eyes.

teshuvah "Return, turning back to God, repentance."

Tiferet "Beauty, glory"; the sixth *sefirah*, harmonizing the polar opposites *Ḥesed* and *Din*; male partner of *Shekhinah*; the torso of the divine body; also called *Raḥamim*.

Tiqqunei ha-Zohar "Embellishments on the *Zohar*"; an independent book whose setting is similar to *Ra'aya Meheimna*. It comprises a commentary on the beginning of Genesis, each *tiqqun* opening with a new interpretation of the word בראשית (*be-reshit*), "in the beginning."

Tiqqunim "Embellishments"; additional material in the genre of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, printed in *Zohar Ḥadash* 93c-122b.

Torah "Instruction, teaching"; the Five Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); by extension, the entire

corpus of Jewish religious literature.

Tosafot, sing. **Tosefet** “Additions”; a collection of comments on the Talmud written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in France and Germany, printed in standard editions of the Talmud. Also, a set of Zoharic additions printed at the end of the second and third of the three standard Aramaic volumes of the *Zohar*, drawn from the Cremona edition and from *Zohar Hadash*.

Tosefta “Addition”; in rabbinic literature, a collection of precepts parallel to and contemporary with the Mishnah. In the *Zohar*, a collection similar to *Matnitin*.

Tsaddiq “Righteous One”; a name for *Yesod*, the ninth *sefirah*.

tzitzit “Tassel,” one of four affixed to the hem of a garment, and later of a prayer shawl. See Numbers 15:37-41.

vav Sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and third letter of the tetragrammaton. With its torso-like shape, it often represents the six middle *sefirot* (*Hesed* through *Yesod*), and also symbolizes primordial Adam.

White Head In the *Idra* sections of the *Zohar*, this term variously signifies: *Arikh Anpin*, “Long Face,” an alternate term for *Keter*, also called *Atiq Yomin*, “Ancient of Days” (see Daniel 7:9); the three different aspects of the divine head; and the active dimension of *Keter*. In *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*, it refers to the uppermost reaches within Divinity.

world that is coming Hebrew, העולם הבא (*ha-olam ha-ba*); Aramaic, עלמא דאתי (*alma de-atei*); often understood as referring to the hereafter and usually translated as “the world to come.” From another perspective, however, “the world that is coming” already exists—occupying another, timeless dimension. In Kabbalah this phrase often refers to *Binah*, the continuous source of emanation, who is “coming constantly and never ceasing.”

Written Torah The Five Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); in Kabbalah, a symbol of *Tif'eret*.

Yah A contracted biblical form of the divine name *YHVH*.

Yesod "Foundation"; the ninth *sefirah*, who channels the flow of emanation to *Shekhinah*; the phallus of the divine body; also called *Tsaddiq*.

YHVH The ineffable name of God, probably deriving from the root הוה (*hvh*), "to be." In the *Zohar* it often symbolizes *Tif'eret*.

YHVH Tseva'ot Literally, "YHVH of armies [or: hosts]."

yibbum "Levirate marriage." According to the biblical custom, if a married man dies childless, his brother should marry the widow and then father a child, who will be considered the offspring of the deceased. Posthumously providing the dead man with offspring prevents his "name" from being blotted out. In Kabbalah, levirate marriage is understood in terms of reincarnation, with the deceased's soul transmigrating into the embryo formed by the sexual union of the widow and the brother.

yod First letter of the tetragrammaton, where it represents *Hokhmah*. Sometimes called a "point" on account of its being the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In that "dimensionless" sense, it is symbolically the most esoteric of the letters.

Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, observed on the tenth of the Hebrew month Tishrei.

Ze'eir Anpin "Short-tempered, irascible, impatient"; the configuration of *sefirot* from *Hokhmah* (or *Hesed*) through *Yesod*, characterized by a tension between opposites: right versus left, *Hesed* versus *Din*.

zohar "Radiance, splendor."

Zohar Hadash "New Zohar"; a collection of Zoharic texts not included in the early editions of the *Zohar*. Most of what is called *Zohar Hadash* today was first printed in

Salonika in 1597; and in 1658, *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth was incorporated into it, as well. The title *Zohar Hadash* is misleading in that it contains much of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, an early stratum of the *Zohar*.

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3. TRANSLATIONS OF THE ZOHAR

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1. Rabbi Reḥumai opened *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* includes this relatively short treatment of Song of Songs. It does not appear in the first printings of *Zohar Ḥadash* (Salonika, 1597; Cracow, 1603), being published for the first time in the Venice edition of 1658.

On *Midrash ha-Ne'lam al Shir ha-Shirim*, see Asulin, “Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 67–71. On the title, see below, [note 51](#).

2. four רוחות (*ruḥot*), spirits... The verse in Isaiah refers to four independent *ruḥot*, bestowed upon the Messiah, while the verse in Ezekiel suggests that there exists only one true *ru'ah*. Rabbi Reḥumai proceeds to explain the paradox that the single *ru'ah* is complete insofar as it is comprised of four parts.

Rabbi Reḥumai does not appear at all in rabbinic literature, and only infrequently in the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* and the *Zohar*, but he is commonly found in the *Bahir*. See *Bahir* 12 (16), 46 (68), 74 (104–5), 82 (113), 87 (123, n. 1), 91 (134), 99–100 (149–50); *Zohar* 1:11a.

On the Messiah's inheriting four spirits, see *Zohar* 1:103b; 3:130b (*IR*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 23 (27–28); cf. *Asher ben David: His Complete Works*, 70. On this passage, see *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*.

The word *ru'ah* means “breath, wind, spirit.” The context is Ezekiel's vision of dry bones and in context the four *ruḥot* are the four winds or four directions. On the verse in Ezekiel, see *Zohar* 1:139a (*MhN*), 175b–176a, 235a; 3:130b (*IR*).

3. He said... Rabbi Reḥumai's partner in exchanging mystical lore remains undisclosed, though it may be Rabbi Berekhiah, as below.

4. one borne of love in a kiss... In the exchange of breath that occurs through kissing, spirits join—as each one gives of his own spirit while partaking of the spirit of his fellow. This engenders four spirits, united as one. This unification of four spirits into a single spirit occurs in kisses

between men, but when it occurs between a man and woman it can lead to the birth of a child, and in the context of the verse, of the Messiah, or of redemptive blessing in the form of a child.

The trope of “four spirits” is expounded variously in several passages in the *Zohar*. It can be understood as referring to the union of human male and female, resulting in Messianic offspring, as well as to the union of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Malkhut*. At first, when Rabbi Reḥumai restricts the legacy of four spirits to the Messiah, he appears to be talking about a divine overflow from the *sefirot* that results in the birth of the Messiah. In explaining the mechanics, however, he appears to be talking about the normal intermingling of souls when two people kiss. See *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On kissing and the intermingling of spirits, see *Zohar* 1:184a; 2:124b, 146a-147a, 253b-254a, 256b (last two from *Heikh*); *ZH* 63a and 64b (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 396; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 372; Hecker, “Kissing Kabbalists,” 189-93. On the trope of “four spirits,” see Ezekiel 37:9; *Zohar* 1:235a; 2:146b; 3:130b (*IR*); *ZH* 64b (*ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 2:254a (*Heikh*).

5. I examined him... In BT *Bava Batra* 9a the rabbis dispute whether a poor person should be investigated to authenticate his poverty before he is entitled to charity in the form of food or clothing. Here, Rabbi Berekhiah interrogates his guest to determine his knowledge of Torah and thus his worthiness of hospitality.

Throughout the *Zohar*, mysterious figures (often a donkey-driver or a child) join the company of the rabbis who greet the seemingly ignorant strangers with abuse. They are inevitably astonished later when they discover these figures’ vast kabbalistic knowledge. Moreover, these mysterious kabbalists often bear Messianic significance. See, e.g., JT *Ta’anit* 1:4, 64b; *Zohar* 1:5b, 238a; 2:45b, 94b-114a, 145b, 155b-157a; 3:21a-23a, 186b; *ZH* 48a, 77d,

80d, 83a-d (all *MhN, Rut*); *TZ* 23, 69a; Idel, “Defusim shel pe’ilut go’e-let,” 254-56, esp. n. 14; Schwartz, *Ha-Re’ayon ha-Meshihi be-Hagut Yisra’el*, 117-21; Yisraeli, *Sod ha-Parshanut*, 76-79; Benarroch, *Sabba ve-Yanuqa*, 14-15.

This story is based on a similar one regarding Rabbi Yannai in *Vayiqra Rabbah* 9:3. Significantly, that midrash opens with a reference to the cryptic use of the letter *shin* (שׁ) in Psalms 50:23, the letter to be analyzed below. On that story, see Margalioth’s notes. On Psalms 50:23, see ibn Ezra and Radak.

6. brazenfaced... The stranger’s ignorance is a sign of impudence, cause enough for him to be treated like a cur.

See BT *Beitsah* 25b in the name of Resh Lakish: “There are three distinguished in impudence: Israel among the nations, the dog among animals, and the cock among birds.” See *Shemot Rabbah* 42:9; *Zohar* 2:65a, 121b; *ZH* 56d.

Gush Halva, literally “fat ground,” was a town in the Upper Galilee, and referred to as Giscala by Josephus. See Josephus, *War of the Jews* 2:20:6; M *Arakhin* 9:6; *Tosefta Menaḥot* 9:5; JT *Shevi’it* 9:3, 38d; *Sifra Behar* 4:1,108b; *Sifrei Ha’azinu* 316; *Ve-zot ha-berakhah* 355; BT *Pesaḥim* 53a; *Menaḥot* 85b; *Shemot Rabbah*, *Shemot* 5:1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 2:8, 11:2.

For the term *az panim*, “brazenfaced,” see Deuteronomy 28:50; Daniel 8:23.

The entire verse in MT Isaiah reads: *The dogs are greedy [or: of fierce appetite]; they never know satiety. They are shepherds incapable הִבִּין (havin), of understanding. Each of them has turned his own way, every last one for his own gain.*

For other instances of a difference between the Masoretic spelling or wording and the *Zohar*’s reading, see *Zohar* 1:32a-b, 58b, 83b, 84a, 93b, 97a (*ST*), 106b, 122b (*MhN*), 147b (*ST*), 151a, 155b (*Mat*), 157b (*ST*); 2:3b, 40a, 41b (*Piq*), 82a, 83a, 124b, 167b, 177b (*SdT*s), 182b, 246b

(*Heikh*); 3:4b, 6a, 30a-b, 34a, 40b, 42b, 57b, 68a, 74b-75a, 76b, 80b, 86a-b, 129a (*IR*), 184a, 202b, 203b, 207a, 270b (*Mat*); *ZH* 47b, 48a (last two *MhN, Rut*), 60c (*MhN, ShS*), 71c (*ShS*), 75a, 79b, 80b, 81d, 83a, 85d, 86a, 88a, 88d, 89a (last ten all *MhN, Rut*), 91d, 92d, 93a (last three *MhN, Eikhah*); below, [p. 541](#), [n. 11](#); *Minḥat Shai*, passim (e.g., on Numbers 7:1); Emden, *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 27-34, 73-74; Rosenfeld, *Mishpaḥat Soferim*. On this phenomenon, see *Zohar* 3:254a (*RM*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:55-56; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 50, 131-32, n. 125; Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, 389-90.

On the same phenomenon in rabbinic literature, see also BT *Qiddushin* 30a; Lewin, *Otsar ha-Geonim, Berakhot* 48a, 113-14; *Megillah* 4a, 6-7; Rashi on BT *Zevahim* 118b, s.v. *ve-lo*; *Tosafot, Shabbat* 55b, s.v. *ma'aviram*; *Niddah* 33a, s.v. *ve-ha-nissa*; *Sha'arei Teshuvah (Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim)*, 39; Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa* (wrongly ascribed to Naḥmanides), §232; David ibn Abi Zimrah, *Responsa*, Part 4, 101, § 1172; *Minḥat Shai* on Leviticus 4:34; Malachi ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Yad Mal'akhi* 1:149b; Aptowitz, *Das Schriftwort in der Rabbinischen Literatur*; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 23:113; Maori, "Rabbinic Midrash as Evidence for Textual Variants in the Hebrew Bible"; Rosenthal, "Al Derekh Tippulam shel Hazal be-Hillufei Nussah ba-Miqra."

7. set the table even before Adam arrived... See BT *Sanhedrin* 38 in the name of the rabbis: "Why was Adam created on the eve of the Sabbath?... So that he might enter the banquet straight away." Cf. *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 8:9.

8. forbidden to curse oneself... According to M *Shevu'ot* 4:13, "One who curses himself or his fellow by any of them [that is, divine names] violates a negative commandment." BT *Shevu'ot* 36a adds the verse: *But take care, take exceeding care for your self* (Deuteronomy 4:9), implying that such a curse is dangerous. See *Vayiqra*

Rabbah 15:7; *Zohar* 1:14b; 2:266a (*Heikh*); 3:155b, 246a (*RM*). On the curse from a sage, see BT *Makkot* 11a; *Zohar* 1:175a.

9. With whomever you find your gods... When Laban chased after Jacob, after the latter had fled with his family and household, he accused Jacob of having stolen his idols. Jacob was unaware that Rachel had hidden them and according to rabbinic tradition, it was as a result of his curse that Rachel died before they reached their destination (Genesis 35:16–19). See *Bereshit Rabbah* 74:9; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 10:5; *Tanḥuma Vayetse* 12; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36; Rashi, Joseph Bekhor Shor, and Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* on Genesis 31:32.

10. he was blotted out... *Parashat Tetsaveh*, the portion that begins *You shall command*, extends from Exodus 27:20–30:10. The absence of Moses' name in this *parashah* is understood as a direct result of God's fulfilling Moses' self-imposed curse. This section of the Torah is always read publicly during the week of the seventh of Adar—which, according to tradition, was the date of Moses' death.

See *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 7; Scholem. On Exodus 27:20, see Ḥayyim Palti'el; Rabbenu Asher; Ba'al ha-Turim. On Exodus 32:32, see Rashi; Baḥya ben Asher. Cf. BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b.

11. But it was after You shall command... Rabbi Berekhiah recognizes his guest's sagacity, but objects to the stranger's interpretation, since Moses' curse in Exodus 32:32 occurs after *Parashat Tetsaveh*, which ends with Exodus 30:10.

12. There is no early and late in the Torah That is, the Torah does not follow chronological order. This rule of interpretation is applied throughout rabbinic and medieval writings to explain a large variety of exegetical difficulties dealing with chronology.

See BT *Pesaḥim* 6b; *Mekhilta, ha-Shirah* 7; *Sifrei Beha'alotekha* 64; *Tanḥuma, Terumah* 8; *Shir ha-Shirim*

Rabbah on 1:2; *Rut Rabbah* 4:5; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:12; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 22, 111a; Rashi on Genesis 6:3, 35:29; Exodus 4:20, 19:11, 31:18; Leviticus 8:2; Numbers 9:1; Joshua 8:30; Isaiah 1:1, 6:1; Ezekiel 1:3, 29:17; Psalms 72:20; BT *Pesahim* 6b, s.v. *ein muqdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah*; *Sotah* 35a, s.v. *shavu ha-mayyim*; ibn Ezra on Genesis 6:3, 11:29, 18:13; Exodus 4:19, 16:15, 32:11, 33:7; Leviticus 25:1; Deuteronomy 28:5, 31:15; Naḥmanides on Genesis 32:23, 35:28; Exodus 2:1, 15:9, 20:15; Numbers 9:1, 16:1; *Zohar* 3:148a; *ZH* 82c (*MhN, Rut*); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 16a.

13. Large ש (shin)... ב (bet)... is large... Why are the opening letters written large? And why these two letters?

According to MT, certain letters in the scriptural text are written large—for example, the ש (*shin*) of שיר (*shir*), *Song*, and the ב (*bet*) of בראשית (*be-reshit*), *In the beginning*. Others are written small—for example, the א (*alef*) of ויקרא (*va-yiqra*), *And He called* (Leviticus 1:1). In Zoharic kabbalah, the large letters usually correspond to *Binah*, and the small letters to *Malkhut*.

On small and large letters, see “Midrash Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef al Otiyyot Qetanot ve-Gedolot ve-Ta’ameihen,” 478–88; *Zohar* 1:3b, 159b; 2:132a, 143b, 174a, 180b, 205b, 228b; 3:2a, 165a, 220a; *ZH* 65d, 66c, 74c–d (all *ShS*).

14. Shin... three columns... “The patriarchs” signifies *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, which together support the upper chariot, *Binah*. *Song of Songs* itself signifies the upper chariot, and therefore it begins with the three-pronged ש (*shin*), alluding to the patriarchs. The letter ב (*bet*) is in the form of a house, which also symbolizes *Binah*.

On the patriarchs as constituting the chariot, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6, 69:3, 82:6; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 6 (111). On the three branches of *shin* corresponding to the three patriarchs, see *Zohar* 2:119b–120a (*RM*); *TZ* 21 (55b), 70 (133b); cf. *Zohar* 2:143b–144a; Scholem. On the letter ב (*bet*) as בית (*bayit*), house, of the world, see *Bahir* 11 (14); *ZH* 2d (*MhN*); *TZ* 16a. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:10.

15. standing at the beginnings of books—there are four... Four books in Hebrew Scripture are customarily written with large letters at the outset. Each of these letters bears within itself the symbolic key to understanding the entire work.

16. that letter teaches the mystery of the whole book As with the *bet* of *Bereshit*, *In the beginning*, and the *shin* of *Shir*, *Song*, so too do the א (*alef*) that begins *Chronicles* and the מ (*mem*) that begins מִשְׁלֵי (*Mishlei*), *Proverbs*—the “heads” of these books—illustrate the spiritual essence of their books.

17. א (Alef)... image and secret of אדם (Adam)... *Alef* is imagined in anthropomorphic form, with the head, represented by *yod*, called here “primal point”; a torso, represented by a diagonal *vav*; and the female adjoining, represented by a forward-leaning *dalet*. When the female joins the male, he is complete. The human is also a microcosm of Divinity, and these component letters, in turn, symbolize the entire sefirotic array: *yod* signifies *Hokhmah*, which contains *Binah*; *vav* signifies the middle six *sefirot*, *Hesed* through *Yesod*; and *dalet* signifies *Malkhut*.

On *alef* as symbolizing the entire sefirotic array, see ZḤ 65b-c, 66a-b, 74a (all *ShS*); Moses de León, *Or Zaru'a*, 284-86; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 88-89 (111-12); idem, Ms. Munich, 47, 362a-b, cited in Mopsik, *Le Side du Sanctuaire*, n. 898. On the primal point, see, e.g., Naḥmanides on Genesis 1:1; *Zohar* 1:2a, 15a, 16b, 18a; ZḤ 64d, 65b, 66a, 69d, 71b, 72b, 73c (all *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 21-22 (25-26); Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 74 (and Oron's note there); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 190; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 281; Mopsik, *Le Sicle du Sanctuaire*, 65-70. On *vav* as symbolizing *Adam*, see *Zohar* 2:180b-181a; 3:66b; ZḤ 2c, 3c, 5c (all *SO*); cf. *Zohar* 2:42a (*RM*). On *dalet* symbolizing *Malkhut*, see ZḤ 67a-b, 72c (both *ShS*). On the linguistic symbolism of the human body, see Wolfson, “Dimmui Antropomorphi.” On the feminine as

completing the human, see Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other.”

18. vav is in the middle... Another way to conceive of *alef* as representing the human form is with the diagonal *vav* in the middle, and the upper and lower extensions, written as *yods*, signifying two arms. In this configuration, *vav* represents *Tif'eret*, the upper *yod* represents *Hesed*, and the lower *yod*, *Gevurah*. See *ZH* 5c–6b (*SO*), 66a (*ShS*).

19. א (alef)—form and secret of Adam... 1 Chronicles 1:1 opens with אדם (*Adam*) and his genealogy. Since the large letter *alef* represents Divinity in microcosm, it is perfectly apt as a symbol for the progenitor of humanity, Adam. Chronicles traces the scope of human history as recorded in Scripture, and it is through the continuation of the human line that human beings fulfill their purpose on earth. The “sides and rungs” are a mirror image of the sefirotic structure above that becomes manifest in humanity below.

20. Surrounded on three sides... The letter *bet* appears as a container with one side open, the side from which Judgment and evil enter into the world. Since this letter delineates the nature of the world’s construction, it is fitting that it stand at the beginning of the Torah, where the world’s creation is described. In Zoharic kabbalah, the north is associated with *Gevurah*, harsh Judgment.

The entire verse in Jeremiah reads: *From the north evil will open up [or: be let loose] on all the inhabitants of the land.* Jeremiah is referring to an attack by the Babylonians, who would approach from the north, Jerusalem’s most vulnerable point. In *Bahir* 109 (162), this verse is quoted to demonstrate that north is linked with evil. See *BT Bava Batra* 25b; *Zohar* 2:203a; 3:178b; *ZH* 1d–2a (*Mat*); cf. *Zohar* 2:130a. On the incomplete nature of the north, see *BT Bava Batra* 25; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3; *Zohar* 3:178b; *ZH* 2a (*Mat*). Cf. *Zohar* 2:130a.

21. Name of Forty-Two [Letters]... As the world was created by means of the divine Name of Forty-Two Letters, so is that name embedded at the beginning of the Torah. The Book of Genesis begins with the letter *bet* and concludes with the letter *mem*, whose numerical values are two and forty, respectively, demonstrating that the Name of Forty-Two Letters is integral to the work.

The Forty-Two Letter Name is mentioned in the name of Rav, though not recorded, in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. According to Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam), this name consists of the first forty-two letters of the Torah, from the ב (*bet*) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning*, through the ב (*vet*) of בהו (*vohu*), *empty* (or *void*) (Genesis 1:2). By this complex divine name, the world came into being. Hai Gaon indicates that the Name of Forty-two Letters consists of the following letters: קרעשטן, נגדיכש, בטרצתג, חקבטנע, יגלפזק, שקוצית, אבגיתז, which are also the initial letters of the forty-two words constituting the prayer *Anna be-Khoah* (Please, with the Strength [of Your Right Hand's Greatness]).

Cordovero (*OY*) describes how the name *YHVH* can be permuted into a forty-two-letter name; cf. *Zohar* 2:260a (*Heikh*). In *Zohar* 1:9a, Moses' staff is described as "radiating the engraved name in every direction with the radiance of the wise, who engraved the explicit name in forty-two colors."

See Lewin, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim, Hagigah*, 23; *Tosafot, Hagigah* 11b, s.v. *ein doreshin*; *Zohar* 1:1a, 15b, 30a-b; 2:92b (*Piq*), 130b, 132b, 175b, 187a, 234a-b; 3:78a, 172b; *ZH* 42a; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 21:12-13; *KP* 1:46c-d; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 94-96; Idel, "Al ha-Peirushim shel Rabbi Nehemiah ben Shelomo ha-Navi," especially 161-62, n. 24; 167-68, n. 52. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:62.

22. מ (Mem)... mystery of the perfect Female... The letter *mem* (specifically the open *mem*) signifies *Shekhinah*, the Divine Female above. Several of the chapters of Proverbs

warn against the snares of the evil woman, taken here to signify Samael's consort. Thus, it is fitting that the book open with an enlarged letter *mem*—to encourage men to seek the *Shekhinah*, as represented in the final chapter of Proverbs, rather than her demonic counterpart.

In the sixteenth century, the kabbalists in Safed established the custom to sing Proverbs 31 (beginning with verse 10) on Shabbat evening, in honor of the *Shekhinah*. See Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 75; Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation," 142; Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Customs of Shabbat*, 298–300.

On the letter *mem*, see BT *Shabbat* 104a; *Bahir* 57 (84). On the open *mem* as symbolizing *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 2:53b; 3:66b. The book of Proverbs refers to the "evil woman" in chapters 2, 5–7.

23. mystery of the supernal chariot *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah* represent different potencies within Divinity, but when they are united, each is contained in the other. Their balance and union is fully actualized by the action of *Tif'eret*, represented by Jacob. At that moment, they serve as the chariot for *Binah*, signified by "upper world." See above, [note 14](#).

24. this praise... Signifying the praise of the Song of Songs. The esoteric significance of the entire book is the mystery of the upper chariot, constituted by *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* who support *Binah*. Thus the first letter *ש* (*shin*) is written large to signal that meaning.

"Mystery" renders the word *רָזָה* (*raza*), and this translation generally renders the term in that way, indicating an entryway into a mystical experience of Divinity. The term can also mean "secret," signifying discrete, esoteric content.

25. make your flesh sin... Rabbi Berekhiah's guest had wondered why the verse refers to sin of the flesh, when actually it is the soul that chooses to transgress. The simple sense of this verse is *Do not let your mouth lead you to sin*.

Rabbinic sources interpret this as a warning to avoid making public pledges for charitable gifts, since one may fail to keep one's commitment. See *Va-yiqra Rabbah* 16:5; *Qohelet Rabbah* and *Qohelet Zuta* on Ecclesiastes 5:5; *Midrash Tehillim* on Psalm 52:1; Rashi; ibn Ezra; Rashbam; Joseph Qara.

26. speak lewdly... Inappropriate speech, even in the context of a permitted marital relationship, inevitably leads to promiscuous thoughts and impure behavior. What are the consequences? He will have sexual relations with his wife ("thresh on his threshing floor") while thinking of other women ("sow foreign oats"). The *flesh* from the verse in Proverbs refers specifically to the male sexual organ, easily aroused by racy language. Lascivious thoughts inevitably lead to a betrayal of holy circumcision. See *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Mopsik.

See BT *Nedarim* 20a-b: "They asked Imma Shalom, 'Why do you have such beautiful children?' She said to them, '[My husband, Rabbi Eli'ezer,] does not have intercourse [literally: speak] with me at the beginning of the night, nor at the end of the night, but at midnight. And when he has intercourse with me, he unveils a handbreadth and veils it again, and appears as if he were driven by a demon.' I asked him, 'What is the reason [for this strange behavior]?' And he said to me, 'In order that I not imagine another woman, and the children will come to be bastards....' Rabbi said, 'Let not a man drink from this cup and have his mind on another cup.'" See BT *Yoma* 29a; *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Leviticus 12:2; *Zohar* 1:155a (*Mat*); cf. BT *Ḥagigah* 5b.

On improper speech and improper thoughts during intercourse, see *Zohar* 1:8a-b; *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, 326, 331-37. Cf. *Zohar* 1:154b (*Mat*); Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah*, 164. On improper "threshing," see *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:5. For the use of the term *flesh* as a euphemism for phallus, see Leviticus 15:2; Jeremiah 11:15;

Ezekiel 16:26; 23:20; *Zohar* 1:94a; TZ 19 (41b). In Ruth 3:6-14 (which uses the Hebrew term *goren* rather than *idra*), a threshing floor is the scene of an encounter with sexual overtones. On the association between threshing and sexual activity, see Liebes, *Peraqim*, 93-94.

In MT the phrase from Genesis reads: *My covenant will be in your flesh*. On discrepancies between MT and Zoharic citations from the Bible, see above, [note 6](#).

27. sacrifice offered for mistakes... One should not speak lewdly before an angel, lest one's remarks be reported above. If one violates a prohibition, such as illicit relations, whose intentional transgression invokes the penalty of excision, one brings a sin offering when the act is done unintentionally, as here.

On speaking before an angel, see ibn Ezra on Ecclesiastes 5:5. On the sacrifice for this inadvertent transgression, see M *Keritot* 1:1-2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shegagot* 1:1.

28. heavenly bird will convey that voice... An angel will deliver the man's vulgarities (his "voice") for arraignment before God.

29. one who bears the holy covenant... If a man scrupulously observes proper sexual norms (e.g., avoiding adultery, masturbation, and intercourse with non-Jewish women), he has demonstrated fidelity to the covenant of circumcision, and he is protected from the terrors of Hell. If a man transgresses sexually, his foreskin is extended anew as a sign of his lost protection.

See BT *Eruvin* 19a: "[What is the meaning of the verse:] *Who pass through the Valley of Weeping* (Psalms 84:7)? That refers to those sinners who are at that time under sentence to suffer in Hell, but our father Abraham comes, lifts them up, and accepts them, excluding a Jew who has had sexual intercourse with the daughter of an idolater, for he has extended his foreskin and so he is not recognized."

The stranger may have had in mind a midrashic teaching in the name of Rabbi Berekhiah, thus polemically ascribing sexual misdeeds to apostates and others who defected from Jewish piety. See *Shemot Rabbah* 19:4: “Circumcised Jews do not descend to Hell. Rabbi Berekhiah said, “To prevent the *minim*, heretics [or: apostates], and the wicked ones of Israel from saying, “Since we are circumcised, we will not go down to Hell,” what does the blessed Holy One do? He sends an angel who stretches their foreskin and then they descend to Hell, as is said *He reaches out his hand against his whole ones, profaned His covenant* (Psalms 55:21). When Hell sees their hanging foreskins, she opens her mouth and devours them; hence: [*Sheol has opened wide its gullet*] *and parted its jaws in a measureless gape* (Isaiah 5:14).”

On violating the covenant, see Targum on Psalms 27:4 and *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. *bashqar*; BT *Sanhedrin* 99a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:8; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20; *Haggahot Maimoniyyot, Hilkhot Milah* 1:10; *Zohar* 1:8a, 93a, 94a, 95b, 131b, 189b; 2:3b, 7a, 57b, 60b–61a, 87a–b, 90a, 264a (*Heikh*); 3:13b–14a, 57b, 104b, 111a (*RM*), 127a (*IR*), 142a (*IR*), 266a; *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*), 92a (*MhN, Eikhah*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212–13; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51–54 (63–67); David son of Judah he-Ḥasid, *Sefer Mar’ot Tsov’ot*, 222; Tishby, *Wisdom*, 1365, 1370–71; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, 152, n.102; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 56, 75, 81–82, 137–38, 139–40 nn. 41, 168. Cf. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21; BT *Shabbat* 32b.

30. honor of your fellow... The stranger concludes his erudite teaching with a rebuke to Rabbi Berekhiah for his prejudiced assessment when they first met. See M *Avot* 2:10, 12.

31. holy regions and districts... The Land of Israel, for example, is a holier place to dwell than elsewhere in the world. “We learned there...” suggests that Rabbi Joshua is

referring to an occasion of the Companions' studying together.

Some birds nest in a house, such as the דרור (*deror*), *swallow*, whose name also means "release, freedom." The psalmist longs for the intimate proximity that these birds might have had in the Temple precincts, possibly nesting in little crevices between the stones.

On the superiority of the Land of Israel, see Halevi, *Kuzari*, 2:8-14. On the verse from Psalms, see Rashi; ibn Ezra; Radak; Alter. On the swallow as dwelling in a house, see BT *Shabbat* 106b.

32. modeled after the human... The earth is patterned after the human being who, in turn, is a microcosm of Divinity. This topographical hierarchy is patterned after the human body, in which some organs are superior to others.

On the human being as a microcosm, see Plato, *Timaeus*, 29-47; Philo, *On the Creation* 27.82; *Tanḥuma*, *Pegudei* 3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan A*, 31; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:4; *Aggadat Olam Qatan*, in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 5:57-59; Donnolo, *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 63d-66b; Joseph ibn Tsaddiq, *Sefer Olam ha-Qatan*, 20-42; Baḥya ibn Paḥuda, *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, 2:4; Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 4:3; Maimonides, *Guide* 1:72; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 268; *Zohar* 1:90b, 134b, 140a-b, 186b; 2:23b, 76a; 3:141b (*IR*); Altmann, "Delphic Maxim." On selection of seed in conception, see BT *Niddah* 31a; *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Leviticus 12:2, 312. On refining in Earth's creation, see *Zohar* 1:16a.

33. snow from beneath His throne of Glory... The "blessed Holy One" signifies *Tif'eret*, who joins with His feminine counterpart, *Shekhinah*, infusing Her with snow taken from beneath the Throne of Glory.

Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer 3 describes creation of the earth: "From where was the earth created? From the snow beneath the throne of glory. He took it and threw it upon the waters, and the waters congealed and dust was made."

See Job 37:6; BT *Yoma* 54b; JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77a; *Midrash Konen*, 24; *Tanhuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 11 and n. 66; *ZH* 76a–b (*MhN*, *Rut*). Cf. *Zohar* 1:16a.

34. woman does not conceive... According to the second-century Greek physician Galen, sperm is generated by both male and female. Commenting on Leviticus 12:2, which reads *When a woman yields seed and bears a male*, Nahmanides says: “The rabbis have said, ‘*When a woman yields seed*—if the woman yields seed first, she bears a male.’ The intent of the rabbis was not that the child is formed from the woman’s seed, for although the woman has generative organs like male testicles, yet seed is not formed by them at all, or [if it is formed], that seed is not congealed (*niqpa*) and does not contribute anything to the embryo. Rather, the rabbis used the term ‘she yields seed’ with reference to the blood of the uterus, which gathers in the mother at the consummation of intercourse, and holds fast to the seed of the male. For in the opinion of the rabbis the child is formed from the blood of the female and the white [semen] of the man, and both of them are called ‘seed.’”

A cardinal principle in Kabbalah holds that no blessing of any kind flows from above until arousal comes from below—often represented as lower, feminine waters calling to upper, masculine waters. Here the physiological preparation of the human female’s body for sexual intercourse is understood in the larger context of the feminine arousal of the masculine.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: “Rabbi Shim’on son of El’azar said, ‘No handbreadth [of water] descends from above without being met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep...* (Psalms 42:8).’ Rabbi Levi said, ‘The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, “Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers.” They immediately receive them, as is written:

Let the earth open (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.”

See *Tosefta Ta’anit* 1:4; JT *Berakhot* 9:2, 14a; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (in *Battei Midrashot* 1:25); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 29b, 32b, 46a, 60b, 159a, 235a, 244a-b, 245b; 3:223b (RM).

On Leviticus 12:2, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:743-44; BT *Berakhot* 60a; *Niddah* 25b, 28a, 31a; *Tanḥuma, Tazri’a* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tazri’a* 4; *Zohar* 3:42b-43b.

35. First... a navel... As an embryo develops from the navel outward, so too does God fashion the world, in anthropomorphic form, beginning with the navel. On earth, that navel is Point of Zion, signifying the Foundation Stone, underlying the Temple in Jerusalem.

On the anthropomorphic form of the world, see *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3. On the navel as the point from which fetal development begins, see BT *Sotah* 45b: “From where is the embryo formed? From the head—and so it says *From my mother’s womb You took me (gozi) out* (Psalms 71:6) and it also says *Shear [gozi] your locks and cast them away* (Jeremiah 7:29). Abba Sha’ul says, ‘It is from the navel, its root spreading in all directions.’” See BT *Yoma* 85a.

See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: “The Land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Foundation Stone, from which the world was founded.”

On Israel as the focal point of the world, see BT *Yoma* 54b, *Sanhedrin* 37a; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qedoshim* 10; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:2; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 18:25; *Zohar* 1:78a, 84b, 226a; 2:157a, 184b, 193a; 3:65b, 161b.

On the Foundation Stone, see M *Yoma* 5:2; *Tosefta Yoma* 2:14; JT *Yoma* 5:2, 42c; BT *Yoma* 54b; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 28:30; *Targum* on Song of Songs 4:12; *Targum* on Ecclesiastes 3:11; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:4; *Pesiqta*

de-Rav Kahana 26:4; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35; *Tanḥuma, Peḳudei* 3; *Qedoshim* 10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:4; *Midrash Kohen*, 24-25; *Zohar* 1:71b-72a, 186a, 231a; 2:50a-b (*Mat*), 91b, 152a, 222a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 333; idem, *Sheḳel ha-Qodesh* 74-75 (95); Vol. 4, p. 526, n. 582; Noy, "Even ha-Shetiyah"; Lieberman *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 4:772-73. Cf. Ezekiel 38:12.

36. inscribed with His letters—אֲדֹנָי (ADNY), Lord... By inscribing the Land of Israel with the letters of the divine name, God's special relationship to the land is underscored.

See Deuteronomy 11:10-12; BT *Ta'anit* 10a; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 8; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 18:25; on Deuteronomy 11:10-12; *Zohar* 1:61a, 84b, 107a, 108b, 199a; 2:22b, 141b, 209a; 3:189a, 209a-b, 265b. Cf. BT *Ketubbot* 110b: "Whoever lives in the land of Israel is like one who has a God; whoever lives outside the land of Israel is like one who has no God."

"Core" (or "essence," "crux," "basis," "foundation") renders אֲפֵס (gufa). See *Zohar* 1:255b (*Hash*); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 171, 254-55.

37. filament that stretched from the south... In the supernal world, the south and right side signify *Hesed*, the first *sefirah* to emerge from the union of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. Corresponding below is the right side of the world, manifest as the Garden of Eden, apex of the world.

38. filament that stretched from the north... In the supernal world, the north and left side signify *Gevurah*, the attribute of Divine Judgment. In the world below, these sides produce Hell, where judgment is executed.

On dross from snow, see *Zohar* 1:16a.

39. Temple was constructed... Dwelling was erected... The Torah contains instructions for the assembly of the Dwelling (or Tabernacle), but rabbinic tradition understood the Temple as the fullest expression of that biblical structure.

40. Mouth of the entire world... Sinai was the place where God first spoke to the entire Jewish nation, but also to the whole world.

See BT *Shabbat* 88b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “Each and every utterance emerging from the mouth of the Almighty divided into seventy languages [of humanity]. The school of Rabbi Yishma’el taught: [*Is not My word like fire, declares YHVH, and*] *like a hammer shattering rock?* (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as this hammer breaks a stone into several fragments, so too each and every utterance that emerged from the mouth of the blessed Holy One divided into seventy languages.”

See *Shemot Rabbah* 5:9; *Tanḥuma, Shemot* 22; *Midrash Tehillim* 68:6; *Sefer Hanokh (Beit ha-Midrash, 2:116)*.

41. contractions and pangs during childbirth... The similarity of the human being and the terrestrial world extends even to their respective beginnings.

Cf. *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 5.

“Inert” (or “lowly, sunken”) renders נמוך (*namukh*). In its simple sense, Psalms 104:5–8 reads: *He founded earth on its solid base, so that it shall never totter. With the deep You covered it like a garment; over mountains the waters stood. From Your blast they fled, from the sound of Your thunder they rushed away—mountains rising, valleys sinking—to the place You established for them.*

42. blow onto the infant... “Blow onto” renders the term מפעפעיין (*mefa’apa’in*), treated as a term derived from the name “Puah,” one of the midwives in Egypt (see Exodus 1:15). Other folk etymologies of the term probably reflect various childbirth practices. The earth, too, came into being with an awesome spectacle of sound and light, the earth quaking just as the baby cries.

See *Shemot Rabbah* 1:13: “[She is called Puah] מפעה שיהיתה (*she-haytah maf’eh*), because she would revive [blow air into], the [apparently stillborn] child when they had pronounced it dead.” See *Da’at Zegenim* on Exodus 1:15:

“[She is called Puah] because פועה (*po’ah*), she blows, upon the child’s belly, calling ‘Come out,’ and it emerges.” *Arukh* suggests that the term signifies “shouting at the child” until it awakes from its unconscious state. *Sullam* explains that the child is rocked or shaken.

See BT *Sotah* 11b and Tosafot, s.v. *she-haytah po’ah li-vlad*; *Qohelet Rabbah* 7:1; *Midrash Shemu’el* 23:5; *Arukh*, s.v. *pa*; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* on Exodus 1:15, n. 165; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 9:6; Mopsik.

Your thunder’s sound under the wheel could refer to the booming sound of the wheels of God’s chariot, or the terrifying sounds of the Egyptian chariot wheels. See Radak; Alter.

43. the open was sealed... When Israel left Sinai and entered the Land of Israel, they no longer benefitted from the face-to-face communication that Moses enjoyed, thus, “speech had ceased.” Once the Temple was erected, represented here as the navel, food was provided primarily to Israel, with scraps left for the other lands.

On the Temple as the navel, see BT *Sanhedrin* 37a. On the image of the fetus in the womb, see BT *Niddah* 30b, which records the following discourse in the name of Rabbi Simlai: “What does an embryo resemble when it is in its mother’s belly? A folded writing tablet. Its hands rest on its two temples, its two elbows on its two legs, and its two heels against its buttocks. Its head lies between its knees, its mouth is closed and its navel is open, and it eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks. ...As soon, however, as it comes out into the air, the closed one opens and the open one closes, for if that had not happened the fetus could not live even one single hour.”

See BT *Yevamot* 71b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 14:8; *Tanḥuma*, *Pegudei* 3; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, on Leviticus 12:2, 316; *Midrash Aggadah*, *Tazri’a* 12:2 (28); Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*.

On nourishment from “drippings,” see BT *Ta’anit* 10a: “The land of Israel drinks water directly from the rain, while the rest of the world drinks of the drippings [Munich MS: of the Land of Israel].”

See Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 11:10-12; *Zohar* 1:84b, 108b, 255b (*Hash*); 2:22b, 152b; 3:209a-b, 265b; *ZḤ* 9d (*MhN*), 81a, 87d (last two from *MhN, Rut*).

44. some locations... are superior... Garden of Eden is the supreme place on earth, with the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge occupying the preeminent location there. See Genesis 2:8-10.

45. concealed niche... The bird and its nest are enigmatic images here, but draw on Deuteronomy 22:6-7: *If a bird’s nest happens to be before you on the way, in any tree or on the ground—fledglings or eggs—and the mother is crouching over the fledglings or over the eggs, you shall not take the mother together with the children. Surely send off the mother and the offspring you may take for yourself—so that it may go well with you, and you will prolong your days.* Elsewhere in Zoharic kabbalah, the bird (especially the mother bird) can signify the Messiah or *Binah*, the place that is hidden from comprehension.

On the Messianic meaning of the bird, see *Devarim Rabbah* 6:7; *Zohar* 2:8a-9a; 3:196b; *Zohar Ḥadash* 77b-c, 78a (both *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden* (in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:132). Cf. *Zohar Ḥadash* 13c-d (*MhN*). On the bird signifying *Binah*, see *Bahir* 74 (104-5); Naḥmanides and Recanati on Deuteronomy 22:6; *Zohar* 1:158a; 2:93a; 3:254a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 338-39; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 33b (7a-b); *Hullin* 142a (32c-d); Asulin, “Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 67-71. Cf. *Zohar* 1:219a; 2:85b. On the bird in the Garden, see *Zohar* 1:154b (*ST*); 2:8a. On prayer and birds chirping, see *Zohar* 2:166b; 3:43a, 196b, 204a.

46. holy soul... liberated “Liberated” renders בת חורין (*bat ḥorin*), which in rabbinic literature often designates a woman emancipated from slavery. The righteous soul leaves this world and flies up to the Garden of Eden, freed of its bodily shackles. See *Zohar* 3:196b.

47. Jubilee... According to the Bible, every seventh year is a Sabbatical, during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1-24; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). After seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8-55). In Kabbalah the Sabbatical symbolizes *Shekhinah* (seventh of the lower *sefirot*), while the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, who is frequently characterized by the number fifty. Here, *Binah* finds shelter within *Ḥokhmah* above Her, while *bird* and *swallow* of Psalms 84:4 (with which the homily began) refer to *Shekhinah* and *Binah* respectively, each finding Her own niche.

48. six fledglings and this bird... Signifying the six *sefirot* that emanate from *Binah* (*Ḥesed* to *Yesod*), and *Shekhinah*. “Inner altar” and “outer altar” signify *Binah* and *Shekhinah* respectively. The central six *sefirot* have two different kinds of desire: to receive and to give. They long to draw down divine blessing from *Binah*, and to convey it in turn to *Shekhinah*.

The altar for ascent offerings (called here “outer altar”) stood in the courtyard in front of the tabernacle (and later the Temple), whereas the incense altar (called here “inner altar”) was placed within the tabernacle (and the Temple). On the inner and outer altars, see *Zohar* 2:219a; 3:151b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 66 (83).

49. never ceasing from singing songs... *Shekhinah* stands in constant adoration of *Binah*, and *Song of Songs* signifies both *Shekhinah* and Her paramount praise for *Binah*, signified by *Solomon*.

On Song of Songs as *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 2:144a; *ZH* 61d-62a (*ShS*). On *Solomon* as *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:29a, 2:5a (*MhN*), 22a, 144a; *ZH* 62a-d, 65d, 67a (all *ShS*); cf. *Zohar* 2:127b, 132a.

50. flame is kindled upon the wick... When the people of Israel are dedicated to God and holy action, *Shekhinah* rests upon them, bestowing blessing, and singing the Song of Songs. But when the people of Israel lack wholehearted devotion, *Shekhinah* disappears. She is not actually lacking, of course, but Her absence makes it seem so.

See *Zohar* 3:187a: “Every wise person has his eyes and his words on his head, focused on [*Shekhinah*] who is resting right there. With his eyes there he knows that the light kindled on his head needs oil. For the human body is a wick, and a light is kindled above. King Solomon cried out: *Let... your head not lack oil* (Ecclesiastes 9:8)—the light on one’s head needs oil, the oil of good deeds!” See *NZ* ad loc., n. 3.

On the image of oil, wick, and flame, see Proverbs 20:27; *Bereshit Rabbah* 62:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 6:2; *Qohelet Rabbah* 5:11; *Zohar* 3:187a and *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 3; *TZ* 21 (49b). Cf. Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 104 (133).

Song of Songs is the absolutely superlative song, as famously described by Rabbi Akiva in *M Yadayim* 3:5, “All of scripture is holy, but Song of Songs is holy of holies.” See Abraham ibn Ezra, Introduction: “This book is glorious, entirely delightful, and there is none other among the 1005 songs of King Solomon that is like it. Thus it is written, *The Song of Songs of Solomon*, for this song is superior to all other songs of Solomon. Within it is a secret, concealed and sealed from the days of Abraham until the coming of the Messiah.”

See the comments of Joshua ibn Shuaib (*Derashot Yehoshu’a ibn Shuaib*, 42a): “The author of the Targum

translated this verse [Song of Songs 1:1] to mean that it is superior to the ten songs that had been uttered in the world.... The song of Adam... the song of Moses at the sea; the song *Ha'azinu*; the song of Israel at the well; the song of Joshua; the song of Deborah; the song of Hannah; the song of David; and this song, which is the song of the Messiah.”

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:1:11; Rashbam on Song of Songs 1:1; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Buber), 9 and notes 32, 34; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Schechter), 53 and notes; *Bahir* 117 (174); *Zohar* 2:18b, 98b (both *MhN*), 143b, 145b; *ZH* 47d (*MhN, Rut*), 61b (*MhN, ShS*).

“Aligned” renders מסורגל (*mesurgical*), referring to the proper ruling of blank parchment so that the scribe will write in even lines. See *JT Megillah* 1:8, 71d; *BT Soferim* 1:1.

51. flame glows upon the wick The flame signifies the individual’s devotion to divine service as reflected in one’s soul. The full verse in Ecclesiastes reads: *Recall your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of evil come, and the years arrive, when you will say, “I have no delight in them”*—King Solomon admonishes that one should apply oneself in one’s youth, before one’s strength falters.

The rest of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on *Shir ha-Shirim* interprets the first seven verses of Ecclesiastes 12 as a commentary on the destruction of the Temple, the exile of the Jewish people, and the final resurrection. This focus on Ecclesiastes prompted Scholem to suggest that the whole work should have been titled instead *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on *Qohelet*. See Scholem on *ZH* 60c (*MhN, ShS*).

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *BT Shabbat* 151b; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Hayyei Sarah* 7; *Midrash Zuta* 12:1; Rashi, ibn Ezra, Samuel ben Me’ir (Rashbam), Joseph Qara on Ecclesiastes 12:1; *Zohar* 1:204a; 3:87b. Cf. *BT Sukkah* 53a; *ZH* 7a-d (*MhN*); *Zohar* 3:227b (*RM*).

52. arouse before the blessed Holy One in song... Solomon called to *Shekhinah* and urged Her to sing before the blessed Holy One, Her Creator, to inspire love for Herself and for Israel. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

53. when the moon is diminished... The moon, signifying *Shekhinah*, is diminished when the flow from the river, signifying *Yesod*, ceases. This divine overflow ultimately originates in Eden, a symbol of the uppermost reaches of Divinity—*Keter*, *Hokhmah*, or *Binah*. On this verse, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 229–51.

Ecclesiastes 12:2 reads in full: *Before the sun darkens, and the light and the moon and the stars, and the clouds come back after the rain.*

54. His right hand... The primordial light that God created on the first cosmic day signifies *Hesed*, a light in which He enwrapped Himself as a veil through which to reveal Divinity into the world. As with *Yesod* above, *Hesed* is also prevented from emanating divine overflow.

On the primordial light, see *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 7: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Rabbi Yehotsadak asked Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥman, ‘Since you are a master of *aggadah*, tell me how the blessed Holy One created the world.’ He replied, ‘When the blessed Holy One wished to create the world, He enwrapped Himself in light and created the world, as is said: *Wrapped in light as in a garment* (Psalms 104:2), and afterward: *spreading the heavens like a curtain* (ibid.).’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:4 (and Theodor, ad loc.); *Shemot Rabbah* 50:1; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayaqhel* 6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 21:5; *Midrash Tehillim* 104:4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:26; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 493–94; Ezra’s letter, ed. Scholem, “Te’udah Hadashah,” 29; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 110–11, 116; *Zohar* 1:2a, 15b, 29a, 90a (ST), 245a; 2:98a–b, 164b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 197.

55. sea, filled by that river When the river of *Yesod* no longer receives the flow of emanation from above and cannot enter the sea of *Shekhinah*, then the moon's light wanes.

56. twelve constellations *Shekhinah* directs the world of angels through twelve channels.

57. archons of the nations Each nation is ruled by its own heavenly prince, and when Israel is in exile under the domination of the other nations, they are subject to the nations' celestial rulers.

58. angels of peace... The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Behold, the Erelim cried outside; angels of peace weep bitterly.* On the verse in Isaiah, see *Zohar* 1:120a, 182a, 210a-b; 2:2b, 195b-196a; *ZH* 37d; 93a (*MhN, Eikhah*); Vol. 6, 113-14, n. 20.

59. guards of the walls... Celestial beings—signified variously by “guards of the walls,” “*Sixty warriors*,” “those who eat the sacrificial offerings,” and “wings of the creatures”—were appointed to staff the Temple. When it was destroyed, they were thrown into disarray and diminished. Angels “eating” sacrificial offerings refers to the process of spiritualization of the animal flesh, preparing it for divine consumption. See *Zohar* 2:5a; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the reduced number of creatures' wings, see BT *Hagigah* 13b: “One verse says *Each one had six wings* (Isaiah 6:2), and another verse says *Each of them had four faces, and each of them had four wings* (Ezekiel 1:6)! There is no contradiction: this one refers to the time when the Temple was standing, and the other one to the time when the Temple was no longer standing—when, as it were, the wings of the living creatures were diminished.”

On the different kinds of angels, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 623-26. On the *sixty warriors*, see *Zohar* 1:37a; 2:5a (*MhN*), 30b, 50b-51a, 66b, 226a; 3:60a; *ZH* 25d (*MhN*), 75b (*MhN, Rut*). On the creatures' wings, see

Tanḥuma, *Emor* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Emor* 23; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 33, 155b-156a; *Zohar* 3:9b. On God's angelic eyes, see *Zohar* 1:241a; 2:38b, 107b; 3:76a.

Ecclesiastes 12:3 reads in full: *On the day that the guards of the house will quake and the stalwart men are bent, and the maids [or: molars] who grind grow idle, for they are now few, and those who look from the casements go dark.*

The verse in Isaiah reads in full: *Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all day and all night they will never be silent. O you who praise YHVH, do not be silent!* See *Zohar* 1:80b-81a (ST); 2:89b, 212a.

The fuller context in Song of Songs 3:7-8 reads: *Behold, the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel, all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night.*

The phrase “eyes of YHVH, ranging over the whole earth” represents a conflation of the verse from Zechariah and of 2 Chronicles 16:9. On these two verses, see below, [p. 209, n. 523](#).

60. Gates of Tears... With the destruction of the Temple (also called the Canopy of David), all conventional avenues of appeal are sealed, and the Song of Songs that was constantly sung by *Shekhinah* to *Tif'eret* ceases.

See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 59a in the name of Rabbi El'azar: “Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been locked.... Yet even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not, as is said: *Hear my prayer, O YHVH, to my cry hearken, to my tears be not deaf.*” See BT *Berakhot* 32b; *Zohar* 1:132b; 2:12b, 19b-20a (MhN), 165a, 245b (*Heikh*); 3:20a; ZH 93a (MhN, *Eikhah*).

On the watches of the night, see BT *Berakhot* 3a-b; Rashi on BT *Berakhot* 3a, s.v. *i qa-savar*; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 1; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer Meshiv*

Devarim Nekhoḥim, 184-85; *Zohar* 1:122a (*MhN*), 159a, 188b-189a, 230b-231b; 2:18b (*MhN*), 143b, 173a-b, 195b-196a; 3:64b; *ZḤ* 5d-6a, 17d, 47c (last three all *MhN*), 88a (*MhN*, *Rut*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Rosh ha-Shanah* 24b, p. 17a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 403; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70-71 (88-89).

On the theme of angels constantly reciting song, see BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, 14a; *Ḥullin* 91b. In the pre-kabbalistic Heikhalot corpus, the motif of angelic praise is ubiquitous; see, for example, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §§94-106, 152-69.

Ecclesiastes 12:4 reads in full: *The double doors close in the market as the sound of the mill quiets [or: grows faint], and the sound of the bird arises, and all the songstresses are bowed.*

61. pleasantness and holiness... Normally, the angelic hierarchies are protective and harmonious, but after the destruction of the Temple, each level fears its superior.

In medieval Jewish philosophical literature, the angels signify the separate intellects or spiritual forms emanating from God. According to Maimonides in *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* (2:8) they are “alive and recognize and know the Creator with immense knowledge, each of the forms according to its level.” See also *ibid.*, 2:5: “each one is below the level of the other and exists by virtue of its influence, one above the other... Solomon in his wisdom alluded to this, saying: *height upon height keeps guard* (Ecclesiastes 5:7).”

Ecclesiastes 12:5 reads in full: *Of the very height they are afraid, and terror is in the road. And the almond blossoms, and the locust tree is laden, and the caper-fruit falls apart. But man goes to his everlasting house, and the mourners turn round in the market.*

62. Terror is in the road... Before the destruction, God had cleared a path (signifying *yesod*) through the sea

(that is, *Shekhinah*), effecting union and bliss above. After the destruction, the raging forces of evil tread that very same path, oppressing *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:29b, 48b, 197b, 237a, 243b; 2:31a-b, 137a, 215a; 3:171b.

MT reads: *Who makes a path through the sea, a path through mighty waters*. For other Zoharic discrepancies from the Masoretic spelling, see above, [note 6](#).

63. for twenty-one days... Twenty-one days elapsed from the time that the walls of Jerusalem were breached until the Temple was destroyed, corresponding to the duration from the almond's first blossom until it produces fruit.

See JT *Ta'anit* 4:8, 68c; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥtot* 23; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7.

On the almond's maturation, see *EJ* (1:683): "The almond can be regarded as having two periods of ripening. It is edible together with its rind a few weeks after the tree blooms, while the fruit is still green. Its second ripening is three months later, when the outer rind has shriveled and the inside cover has become a hard shell. Two strains of almond grow in Israel: one, the *amygdalus communis* var. *dulcis*, usually producing pink blossoms and sweet fruit; the second, the *amygdalus communis* var. *amara* producing white blossoms and bitter fruit... [The latter] is edible only with the rind when it is young. Roasting, however, destroys the poisonous alkaloid [hydrogen cyanide], and makes this almond edible even in its later stages." See *Tosefta Ma'aserot* 1:1-2; BT *Hullin* 25b.

The verse in Daniel reads: וַיִּשְׁקֹד יְהוָה (Va-yishqod YHVH), *YHVH has watched, over the evil, and brought it upon us*. The root שִׁקַּד (*shqd*) means "to watch, be wakeful, lie in wait, be alert, eager." On the sense *has been eager to bring the evil upon us*, see BT *Gittin* 88a; *Sanhedrin* 38a; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13, p. 260; *Tanḥuma*, *Noah* 3; *Tazri'a* 9; *Tanḥuma*

(Buber), *Tazri'a* 13; Rashi on Deuteronomy 4:25; *Zohar* 3:54a.

64. burden, laid upon the shoulders of the House of David... While nature proceeds in its regular cycle of productivity, ruin and death engulf humanity. *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* interprets each of the metaphors negatively, so *the locust tree is burdened, and the caper-fruit falls apart*, with nature mirroring the human devastation. האדם (*Ha-Adam*), "The man," going to "his eternal abode" refers to the Divine Glory, *Shekhinah*, who leaves the Temple and returns to *Binah*, called *Eternal Abode*.

On the departure of *Shekhinah* at the time of destruction, see BT *Sanhedrin* 96b (with the emendation of Elijah of Vilna) in the name of Ulla: "Ammon and Moab were evil neighbors of Jerusalem. As soon as they heard the prophets predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, they sent to Nebuchadnezzar, 'Leave [your country] and come here.' He replied, 'I am afraid lest they do to me as they did to my predecessors.' They sent word: 'For the man is not at home (Proverbs 7:19); and האיש (*ha-ish*), the man, refers only to the blessed Holy One, as is written: *YHVH is a man of war* (Exodus 15:3).' He replied, 'But he may be near,' to which they responded, 'He is off on a distant journey (Proverbs, *ibid.*).'"

The entire verse in Jeremiah reads: *For death has climbed through our windows, has entered our fortresses, to cut off babes from the streets, young men from the squares.*

65. thread of grace... A thread emanating from *Hesed* when the Temple was standing; when it snaps, *Malkhut* loses Her connection above and is smashed below. Alternatively, "ray of love."

On the thread of grace, see BT *Hagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish: "To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of grace by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love* (Psalms 42:9).

Why? Because *in the night His song is with me* (ibid.).” *His song* is the song of Torah.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13, pp. 254–55; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17, p. 22; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:15; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 92a, 104a, 178b, 194b, 207b; 2:46a, 57a, 149a; 3:22a, 23b, 25a–b, 36a, 44b–45a, 64b–65a, 68a, 76a, 213a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 54.

Yofi’el is an angel appointed over secrets of Torah and wisdom. See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 34:6; *Zohar* 2:247b (*Heikh*); 3:154a, 197b; *ZH* 64a (*ShS*); Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*. Cf. *Zohar* 3:2b (standard editions).

The term “confounded” (or “perplexed”) renders נבוכים (*nevukhim*), and may be a subtle polemic against Maimonides’ philosophical *Guide of the Perplexed*. See Mopsik.

Ecclesiastes 12:6 reads in full: *Until the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is smashed, and the pitcher is broken against the well, and the jug smashed at הבור (ha-bor), the pit [or: cistern].* The word *bor, pit*, can signify both a cistern and a grave.

66. the world will be consumed... See the teaching in BT *Sanhedrin* 97a ascribed to Rav Katina: “The world will exist for six thousand years, and for one thousand lie desolate.” See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a; cf. *Avodah Zarah* 9a.

On the application of the verse to the destruction of the Temple, see *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 reads in full: *The dust will return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

67. Many of those who sleep... The entire verse in Daniel reads: *Many of those who sleep in ground of dust will awake—these to everlasting life, those to shame and everlasting contempt* (Daniel 12:2).

[68.](#) **kissing him on the head...** On kissing as a sign of approbation, see Hecker, "Kissing Kabbalists," 182-86.

Rabbi Marinos appears numerous times in rabbinic works, but only here in Zoharic literature.

1. In the days... The full verse reads: *In the days when the judges [or: chieftains] judged, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.*

2. The rabbis explained the verse... The development of this verse continues below on 76a. On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:189a; 3:22b; *ZH* 76a (*MhN, Rut*).

3. He created only for His glory... The author interprets the verse from Isaiah hyperliterally: *Everyone who is called by My name*, signifying the human being, actually bears the divine name within him. The four-part composite soul of the human being manifests the four-letter ineffable name of God. *Nefesh* (“soul”) is the basic power animating the human being. The higher levels of soul are *ruah* (“spirit, breath”), *nishmeta* (in Hebrew: *neshamah*, “breath, soul”), and *nishmeta de-nishmeta* (“soul of soul”). These four correspond, in ascending order, to *Malkhut, Tif’eret, Binah*, and *Hokhmah*. Together, four aspects of soul and four letters of the tetragrammaton symbolize the Divine Family: Father, Mother, Son, and Daughter.

The concept “soul of soul” as a component of the composite human soul is rare—found only in four passages: here, below at 78b, 82c–82d (both in *MhN, Rut*), and *Zohar* 1:79b (*ST*). See also Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 438. The phrase derives from Solomon ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* 4:47: “You are alive but not through... soul, for You are soul of soul.” See *Zohar* 1:103b, 245a; 3:109b (*RM*), 152a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97; idem, “Iqvotav shel Gabirol ba-Kabbalah,” 43–45.

On this application of the verse in Isaiah, see *Avot* 6:9; *BT Yoma* 38a. On the correspondence of the tetragrammaton to the four parts of the human soul, see *Zohar* 1:79b–80a (*ST*); *ZH* 78c, 82c (both in *MhN, Rut*).

On the rabbinic notion of five faculties of soul, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9 and notes of Theodor-Albeck there. On the teachings regarding the soul in the *Zohar*, see

Tishby, *Wisdom*, 677–722; in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* specifically, 703–13; cf. below, [note 734](#). Different names are used for different faculties of the soul throughout *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth, indicating a mix of various theories.

On יָד (yod he) as Father and Mother, see BT *Sotah* 17a and Rashi, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:95b, 232b, 237b; 2:22a, 123b, 126b, 165b; 3:10b, 11a, 78a, 290b, 291a (last two *IZ*); *ZḤ* 48d; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 99 (126–27); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 45b, 91a, 92b, 94b. On וָד (vav he) as Son and Daughter, see *Zohar* 3:10b, 11b, 290b.

4. Following the pattern... The notion of an animal *ruah* and *nefesh* deriving from the left side is unique to *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth and to later scribal additions to *Sitrei Torah*. These components of the soul are associated with the Evil Impulse within the human being. While wine can be improved by sitting on its dregs, the author’s intent here is to signify the superiority of holy souls to animal ones. Spirit and soul of the left side correspond to Samael riding upon the serpent.

The simple sense of the verse is *Who knows if the spirit of the sons of men ascends on high while the spirit of a beast descends into earth?* but the author of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth is certain of these souls’ destinations. There may also be a play here on the word מִי (*Mi*), *Who*, since *Mi* is often used in the *Zohar* to allude to *Binah*—it is *Binah Who knows*. Thus, *Binah* knows the spirit of the human that ascends on high, whereas the animal spirit descends.

On the image of “wine on its dregs,” see Isaiah 25:6, and Rashi and Radak, ad loc. Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the intellectual soul, see Maimonides, *Shemoneh Peraqim* 1; *Zohar* 1:79b, 81a (both *ST*); *ZḤ* 6d (*MhN*), 9a (*MhN*), 33b (*MhN*), 34c (*MhN*), 82b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 38–47; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 24, 33, 35. On the animal soul (*nefesh behamit*), see Nahmanides on Leviticus 17:11; *Zohar* 1:79b (*ST*). On Ecclesiastes as “wisdom of

Solomon,” see BT *Megillah* 7a. On the relation between Samael and the evil serpent, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13 and 21, where Samael is described as riding the serpent; cf. 3 Baruch 9:7, where Satanel cloaks himself with the serpent as with a garment.

5. To the side of impurity... Letters of God’s name are not manifest among the animal spirit and soul as they were with the aspects of soul of holiness. With the name אָנִי (*Ani*) signifying *Shekhinah* in its aspect as the attribute of judgment, while *YHVH* signifies the attribute of mercy, the phrase *I am YHVH* indicates the union of these qualities within the Godhead, and the attempt to articulate the transcendent *Tif’eret* through the more immanent *Shekhinah*.

On *Shekhinah* as אָנִי (*ani*), *I*, see *Zohar* 1:6a–b, 65b, 204b, 228a; 2:236b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 380 (and Wolfson’s nn. 8–9); cf. *Mekhilta, Beshallah* 3.

6. mystery of YHVH... “Rabbi” (most likely referring to Rabbi Yehudah) explains how the tetragrammaton, *YHVH*, is represented by the four characters of the story: Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Ruth.

The word “array” renders דוגמא (*dugma*), which appears pervasively in the *Zohar* in the Aramaic form גַּוְוָנָא (*gavvna*). In the *Zohar* proper it is translated as “model,” “pattern,” but in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* could be translated as “analogy,” or perhaps even “parable.” In the *Zohar*’s style of meaning-making through symbolic imagery, the signifying term is inextricably bound up with and transparent to the entity being represented. In most of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam*, biblical figures represent divine or metaphysical aspects of reality through the more attenuated form of allegory, in which the signifying term can ultimately be sacrificed once the signified term has been identified. See Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 56–110; Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah*.

L38, L39, MS3, CH1, and Thiengen all omit the attribution to “Rabbi.” While the MT records *kindness of*

the Lord in Psalms 90:17, *Minḥat Shai* indicates that there are versions circulating with *kindness of YHVH*.

For other instances of a difference between the Masoretic spelling or wording and the *Zohar's* reading, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

The association of the four letters of *YHVH* with these personalities serves the allegorical aim of teaching about the four levels of the human soul, and it draws on the *Zohar's* gendering of those four letters, yet it does not reflect anything about the characters of Elimelech and Mahlon in particular. On these four individuals, see *ZH* 47a (*MhN, Rut*); cf. *Zohar* 3:10b, 11b, 290b (*IZ*); *ZH* 20C.

On *Binah* as the *no'am*, *kindness* [or: *pleasantness*, *sweetness*] of *YHVH*, see *Zohar* 1:197b, 219a; 2:31a-b, 57b, 127a, 170b; 3:79b, 161b; *ZH* 85b (*MhN, Rut*).

On the name Naomi, see Sasson, 17-18.

The full verse in Psalms reads: *May the kindness of the Lord, our God be upon us. The work of our hands, establish for us; the work of our hands, establish it.*

7. תור (*tor*), turtledove... Ruth and Naomi are both compared to birds in Scripture, based on wordplays. The letters of רות (*rut*) are reversed, yielding תור (*tor*), meaning “turtle-dove”; and Naomi’s name can be translated as “kindness,” “sweetness,” or “pleasantness”—words that are used to describe the dove in Song of Songs.

The verse from Genesis refers to Abraham’s covenant with God, when God’s presence is revealed to Him. Here, the author interprets the verse from Song of Songs in the same light—as a request to see the divine presence.

On the association of Naomi and *nishmeta*, (“highest soul”), see *Zohar* 1:80b (standard edition). On Ruth and the turtledove, see *Zohar* 1:80b (*ST*).

8. Virtuous acts—YHVH rests upon him... When a person behaves virtuously, Divinity rests upon him. Rabbi proves this with the verse from Proverbs, in which *wisdom of women* represents the two female figures: Naomi,

signifying *Binah* and “highest soul,” and Ruth, symbolizing *Shekhinah* and “soul.” Impiety leads to spiritual abasement, marked by the ascendancy of a degenerate animal soul, represented by Orpah.

On this verse, see ZH 82d (*MhN, Rut*).

9. fashioned from a drop... Concurrent with the physical development of the embryo, God implants soul and spirit within the fetus. The developing child is enlightened in this way—as indicated by the luminous cloud by day and the column of fire by night. The fire by night, symbolizing *Malkhut*, signifies the commandments, while the column of cloud by day, representing *Tif'eret*, signifies the Torah. Along with this spiritual infusion, the embryo is taught the entire Torah and its commandments.

See BT *Niddah* 30b, in the name of Rabbi Simlai: “What does an embryo resemble when it is in its mother’s belly? A folded writing tablet.... A light burns above its head and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other, as is said: *When His lamp shone over my head, by its light I walked in darkness* (Job 29:3).... And there is no time in which a man experiences greater good than in those days, for it is said: *Would that I were as in moons of yore, as the days when God watched over me* (ibid., 2). Now which are the days that constitute months but do not make up years? The months of pregnancy. It is also taught the entire Torah, for it is said: *He taught me and said to me: ‘Let your heart hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live* (Proverbs 4:4). As soon as it emerges into the world, an angel approaches and slaps it on its mouth, causing it to forget all the Torah completely, as is said: *At the opening crouches sin* (Genesis 4:7).”

On being ensouled “bit by bit,” see BT *Sanhedrin* 91b: “Antoninus said to Rabbi, ‘When is the soul placed in a human being; as soon as it is decreed [or: from conception] or when the embryo is actually formed?’ He replied, ‘From the moment of formation.’ He objected, ‘Can a piece of

meat be unsalted for three days without becoming putrid? Rather, it must be from the moment of the decree.’ Rabbi said, ‘This Antoninus taught me—and Scripture supports him, for it is written: *And your decree my spirit kept* (Job 10:12).’”

On the spiritual journey and instruction in the womb, see *Tanḥuma, Tazri’a* 1; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:153–55); ZH 42a, 47a (*MhN, Rut*); Urbach, 246–48; Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*, 29–46; cf. Plato, *Meno* 81.

The author has conflated the two verses from Exodus, each of which speaks of the column of cloud. The full verse in Exodus 14 reads: *The angel of Elohim who was going before the camp of Israel moved and went behind them, and the column of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.* The full verse in Exodus 13 reads: *YHVH was going before them by day in a column of cloud to lead them on the way, and by night in a column of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and by night.*

A different and expanded version of this homily can be found in ZH 46d–47a (*MhN, Rut*).

10. He is cautioned... Before coming into the world, a soul is cautioned about the dangers of Hell, referred to here as “tortuous path called Night” and “Darkness.” The image of “the dog” recalls the figure of Cerberus, the multi-headed dog who sits at the entrance to Hades from Greek and Roman mythology.

“Tortuous path” renders דרך עקלתון (*derekh aqalaton*), which could also be translated as “Path of the Twisted One.” Isaiah 27:1 refers to נחש עקלתון (*naḥash aqalaton*), in a context that illuminates this Zoharic passage: *On that day, YHVH will punish—with His fierce, great, mighty sword—Leviathan the elusive snake, Leviathan the twisted snake, and He will slay the Dragon in the sea.* On the serpent, see Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 273–92. This entire first homily explores the contrast of day and night (Job 38:7; Exodus 13:21; 14:19).

On the preexistence of the soul, see also *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:7; BT *Yevamot* 62a; *Tanḥuma*, *Yitro* 11, *Pequdei* 3, *Nitsavim* 3; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:153–58); *Hibbut ha-Qever*, ed. Higger, 253–55; *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. *guf*; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:698–703. A tour of both Paradise and Hell is described in *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 3; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad*; and *Hibbut ha-Qever*; cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 6:6.

On the role of a dog in connection to sin, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a. On *terror in the night* as the terror of Hell, see BT *Yevamot* 109b; *Tanḥuma*, *Mishpatim* 6; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:3; *Zohar* 2:163b. The context in Song of Songs (3:7–8) reads: *Behold the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel—all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night.* On the dog as Cerberus, see Vol. 10, p. 571; Idel, “Qeta 10 yadu’a,” 74–75.

11. an angel will be fashioned for you... In rabbinic literature, commandments serve as angelic defenders, transgressions as prosecutors. Here, the angels that are created through the performance of commandments are depicted as road-builders, clearing the path for angels of destruction, who wait for sinners.

See Mishnah *Avot* 4:1, in the name of Rabbi Eli’ezer son of Jacob: “Whoever performs one commandment acquires for himself one advocate, but one who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against punishment.”

On the acquisition of protective or accusatory angels, see *Tosefta Pe’ah* 4:21; BT *Shabbat* 32a, *Bava Batra* 10a; *Zohar* 3:17a, 83b, 118a, 268b, 307b; *ZḤ* 47a (*MhN*, *Rut*); cf. BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a. On the cleared pathway for the righteous in the afterlife, see BT *Berakhot* 18b; *Ketubbot* 33b; *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*); cf. BT *Ketubbot* 77b, 104a.

12. each and every letter... Commandments and Torah study are depicted as the luminous columns guiding the Israelites through the desert, signifying in turn the protection that guides the righteous past the travails of Hell.

On the Torah as a path, see *Shemot Rabbah* 30:13. On the individual portions allotted to the righteous, see BT *Shabbat* 152a: “When a person is going to one’s everlasting home (Ecclesiastes 12:5)—Rabbi Isaac said, “This teaches that each and every righteous person is given a dwelling place in accordance with his honor. A parable: A king enters a city along with his servants. When they enter, they all enter through a single gate, but when they sleep, each and every one is given a dwelling place in accordance with his honor.”

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1, 27:1; *Rut Rabbah* 3:4; *Shemot Rabbah* 52:3; *Tanḥuma, Emor* 6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Emor* 9; *Midrash Tehillim* 34:2; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 9:1; *Zohar* 3:196b; *ZḤ* 26b (*MhN*), 34a–b, 46c (*MhN, Rut*), 49b.

13. Go you forth... Rabbi Yehudah interprets God’s command to Abram to leave the comforts of his homeland in terms of the injunction to the *neshamah* to leave its pristine and divine origins for its embodied journey in this world. The “blessed Holy One,” signifying *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah* together engender the soul before it proceeds downward. Seven blessings are educed from the three biblical verses cited, as promised to Abram, that is, the *neshamah*.

On Abram as an aspect of soul, see *Zohar* 1:79b (*ST*); cf. *Zohar* 1:76b (*ST*); *ZḤ* 24a–b (*MhN*). On the inter-relationships between *neshamah*, *ruah*, and body, see *Zohar* 1:62a, 81a (*ST*), 206a; 2:141b, 182a; 3:24b–25a, 70b; Tishby, *Wisdom*, 684–98. On the divine couple as parents of the soul, see *Zohar* 1:245b; 2:12a, 94b (*TZ*); 3:174b. On the blessed Holy One and the Assembly of Israel as Father and Mother, see BT *Berakhot* 35b. On the seven blessings, see *Zohar* 1:76b and 78a (both *ST*); *ZḤ* 24a–b (*MhN*).

14. worthy... Worthiness is defined as righteousness, achieved through performance of the commandments, and through knowing the name of God, identified with the Torah. This is the path of becoming a kabbalist, and it is through kabbalistic lore that the soul is protected from the various torments of Hell.

As confirmation of the promises made regarding angelic assistance, Psalms 91:11 reads: *For His angels He will command for you, to guard you on all your ways.*

On Torah as God's Name, see Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 548; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 37; *Zohar* 2:55b, 60a, 87a, 90b, 124a, 161b; 3:13b, 19a, 21a, 35b-36a, 61a, 71a-73a, 76a, 80b, 89b, 98b, 159a, 176a, 265b, 298b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 341-42; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 37-44; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1085-86; Idel, "Tefisat ha-Torah"; Wolfson, "The Glorious Name and the Incarnate Torah." Cf. Nahmanides, introduction to Commentary on the Torah, 6-7; idem, "Torat ha-Shem Temimah," in *Kitvei Ramban*, 1:167-68.

15. Could this be Naomi?... All those who reside in that dark path, either angels or other condemned souls, gape at the newly arrived soul, signified by Naomi, astonished that she fell so low despite all the benefits that accompanied her into this world.

The preposition in the phrase signifying "soul of soul" varies in the text—reading sometimes as *nishmeta de-nishmeta* and sometimes as *nishmeta le-nishmeta*—but the reference remains the same.

16. Do not call me Naomi... This verse could be construed as: *Do not call me Sweet One, call me Bitter One...* When *nishmeta* says *I left full*, she refers to the Torah and illumination granted her in the womb. When she refers to her emptiness, she is speaking of her failure to study Torah and to perform the commandments.

17. Turn back, my daughters... Naomi (signifying the highest soul) urges Ruth (signifying the *nefesh*, “soul”) and Orpah (symbolizing the animal soul) to depart, so that they will not suffer her fate. Because Ruth represents a purified *nefesh*, she yearns to stay with her upper partner. See Englander; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

18. Orpah... In contrast to Ruth (representing the holy *nefesh*, “soul,” that wishes to remain attached to *nishmeta*, “highest soul”), Orpah (who signifies the *nefesh ha-behemit*, “animal soul”) pines for the body and the delights that it experienced in physical existence. The body, in its misery, appears to have learned its lesson, assigning blame to the animal soul.

The narrative of the body’s complaint derives from a teaching in BT *Shabbat* 151b: “*I will spread dung upon your faces, the dung of your feasts* (Malachi 2:3). Rav Huna—others say Rav Ḥagga—said, ‘This refers to people who abandon words of Torah and make all their days like feasts.’ Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rav Pappi in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a, ‘After three days [in the grave], his belly bursts and it [i.e., its contents] falls upon his face, exclaiming to him, “Take what you put into me!”’”

On the *nefesh* mourning over the body, see JT *Mo’ed Qatan* 3:5, 82b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 100:7; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:6; BT *Shabbat* 152a; *Tanḥuma, Miqqets* 4; *Zohar* 1:122b (*MhN*), 218b-219a, 226a; 2:142a-b, 199b; *ZḤ* 83a, 83d-84a (both *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 396-97.

19. Happy is one who considers דל (dal), the poor... Rabbi, presumably intending Rabbi Yehudah, explains the word דל (*dal*), “poor, helpless, powerless,” in the sense of being forsaken, that is, deprived of God’s grace. Rabbi Yehudah goes on to interpret משכיל (*maskil*) not as *considers* but as *provides succor*. Thus, *Happy is one* who enlightens the person who is resentful, feeling abandoned. Such a person will bring the latter to peaceable relations with God.

In a surprising reversal, the word מַעוּזִי (*ma'uzi*), *My refuge*, signifies the impecunious person who needs to be reconciled with God, and the one who *holds fast to ma'uzi* is anyone who supports him.

All of the manuscripts and printed editions (excluding Venice) have a different arrangement of materials than that found in Margalioth, skipping after the full citation of the verse from Isaiah to the middle of 75d, and then returning to 75c (bottom) and 75d (top), below. The entire section is marked by a lack of mystical, theosophic or theurgic materials, reading more like rabbinic midrash.

On the righteous person reconciling the indigent with God, see *Zohar* 2:61a, 250b (*Heikh*); cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 41:3. The full verse from Psalms reads: *Happy is one who considers the poor; on the day of evil YHVH will deliver him*. As is often the case, the uncited part of the verse is an essential part of the homiletical teaching.

20. Job ultimately hurled accusations heavenward... On Job's murmuring against God, see BT *Bava Batra* 16a; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 47, 189b-190a; *Masekhet Semahot* 8:11; cf. BT *Berakhot* 31b; *Sukkah* 53a. On Job's denying resurrection, see BT *Bava Batra* 16a. The meaning of "cast stones at images of the king" is not entirely clear; it may signify various aspersions that Job directs at God and His apparent lack of providence.

21. the Accuser asserted... By allowing Satan to present Job's failings before God, Rabbi Nehorai ostensibly provides an ethical justification for Job's afflictions. Job has been scourged because he does not live up to his reputation as *blameless and upright, revering God and shunning evil*. This is derived from Job 1:8, which reads in full: *YHVH said to Satan, "Have you noticed My servant Job? For there is no one like him on earth, a man blameless and upright, revering God and shunning evil."*

In Job 34:35, Elihu ascribes to *discerning men* the following: *"Job speaks without knowledge, and his words*

are without any sense." Cf. BT *Bava Batra* 16b.

22. Is this good... In the course of his complaints to God, Job refers to Him as a "crofter," which renders אָרִיס (*aris*), "tenant farmer, sharecropper." Though the talmudic passage upon which Job's comments here are based (see next paragraph) refer to God as a "partner," Job's description of God's role is pejorative. Cf. *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik; Englander.

BT *Niddah* 31a records: "There are three partners in [the creation of] a human being: the blessed Holy One, his father, and his mother. His father supplies the semen of white substance, out of which [are formed] bones, sinews, nails, the brain in his head, and the white of his eye; his mother supplies the semen of red substance, out of which [are formed] skin, flesh, hair, and the black of his eye; and the blessed Holy One gives him spirit and *neshamah*, beautiful features, eyesight, hearing, speech, the ability to walk, understanding, and discernment. When his time to depart from the world approaches, the blessed Holy One takes back his portion and leaves the shares of his father and his mother with them."

The full verse in Job reads: *Does it benefit you to oppress, spurn Your own hands' labor, and on the plan of the wicked to shine?*

23. [75c]... At this point, the version in the manuscripts reverts to the sequence of the printed edition.

24. Let him make peace with Me... From the perspective of rabbinic Judaism, Isaiah's statement seems strange: Why would someone have to make peace with God, when He Himself is the master of peace? The formulation of Rabbi Nehorai's question derives in part from Job 25:2: *He makes peace in His heights.*

25. One who takes hold... Rabbi Nehorai repeats elements of the teaching offered in the name of Rabbi above. The repetitiveness here is not entirely uncharacteristic in the *Zohar*.

On God's leniency with Job because he was suffering, see BT *Bava Batra* 16b. On charitable giving as peacemaking between the indigent and God, see Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 356–57.

26. muzzling himself... In God's exchange with Job, God appears to demand that Job reply to the rebuke, and yet Job refuses. Though it is not clear in the biblical text whether this refusal stems from defiance, fear, or humility, the author here interprets it as submission to the validity of divine judgment. This follows the apparent meaning of Job 40:4: *Look, I am worthless. What can I say back to You? I clap my hand to my mouth.* See Nahmanides on Job 40:2.

27. you have not spoken rightly to Me... Rabbi Pedat explains why God specifies that Job's companions did not speak correctly to Him, since in the text, the companions speak to Job and any other listener—but are not addressing God. The word לַי (elai), *to Me*, is included to indicate the absence of their contrition. Whereas Job retracted his words, his companions did not.

28. Whoever suspects worthy men... According to Numbers 12:1, *Miriam, and Aaron with her, spoke against Moses concerning the Cushite wife he had taken.* For gossiping about Moses, Miriam was punished with a scaly skin disease (ibid., 9). According to rabbinic tradition (BT *Shabbat* 97a), Aaron was similarly punished but was quickly freed from the disease. In Rabbi Yehoshu'a of Sikhnin's reading, Job's companions were doomed by virtue of their groundless accusations of Job, being redeemed only by Job's prayer on their behalf.

On the eruption of scale disease as a result of misplaced suspicions, see BT *Shabbat* 97a, in the name of Resh Lakish: "One who suspects worthy men is physically afflicted, for it is written: *But, look, they will not believe me*, but it was known to the blessed Holy One that Israel would believe. He said to him, 'They are believers, [and] the descendants of believers, whereas you will ultimately

disbelieve. They are believers, as is written: *the people believed* (Exodus 4:31); the descendants of believers: *he [Abraham] believed in YHVH* (Genesis 15:6). You will ultimately disbelieve, as is said: [*And YHVH said to Moses and Aaron,*] *Because you did not believe in Me* (Numbers 20:12). From where do we learn that he was afflicted? Since it is written: *And YHVH said further to him, 'Bring, pray, your hand into your bosom...'* (Exodus 4:6)." Cf. BT *Arakhin* 16b.

Scaly affliction renders צרעת (*tsara'at*). On the term *tsara'at*, often translated imprecisely as "leprosy," see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:774–76, 816–26. On the association of scale disease with death, see BT *Nedarim* 64b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:29; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:34; 5:4; *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 13; cf. BT *Yevamot* 103b; *Sifrei*, Numbers 105; Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.264.

29. What is נבלה (*nevalah*), *disgrace*... Rabbi Yose son of Kisma provides etymological support for the teaching of Rabbi Yehoshu'a of Sikhnin above, explaining the word נבלה (*nevalah*), *disgrace*, as related to the word נבילה (*neveilah*), "carcass," which shares the same spelling.

Rabbi Yose's cited Aramaic version of the verse does not appear in the standard *Targum* rescensions. The rhetorical question in Numbers reads: *Had her father spat in her face, would she not be disgraced seven days?*

30. He responded in kind... Rabbi Yose son of Ḥalafta explains that God responds to Job, measure for measure. Since Job accused God of attacking him from a whirlwind, via transposing the middle two letters of his name אִיּוֹב (*Iyyov*) to yield אוֹיֵב (*oyev*), God ultimately responds to him from a whirlwind.

See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: "Rabbah said, 'Job blasphemed with a tempest... as is written: *He crushes me with a tempest*. He said before Him, "Master of the universe! Perhaps a tempest wind has passed before You, causing you

to confuse אֵיב (Iyyov), Job, with אוֹיֵב (oyev), enemy.”” See Mopsik, n. 38.

31. anguish from Satan... The rabbis engage in wordplay, noting the similarity of צַעֲרָא (*tse'ara*), “anguish,” and רוּחַ סַעֲרָה (*ruah se'arah*), *blast from a whirlwind*. They suggest that while Job’s physical distress is implemented by Satan (demon *ruah*, “spirit”), permission had to have been given by God, as proven by the verse from Psalms.

32. written with a שׁ (*sin*)... The word *se'arah* can be written with a תּ (*sin*) or with a ס (*samekh*), reflecting the fact that the name Satan can also be written with both תּ (*sin*) and ס (*samekh*). See Englander; cf. Mopsik.

There are two figures, father and son, in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds named Rabbi Bun (or Avin or Ravin). The father is distinguished for reporting traditions from the land of Israel to the rabbis in Babylon. See BT *Gittin* 9b, *Ketubbot* 62a, *Bava Batra* 139a.

33. written as בַּשַּׁעֲרָה (*bi-s'arah*)... In the teaching of Rabbi Bun, we find the word לַשַּׁעִירִים (*la-se'irim*), *to the demons*, a masculine form, while Rabbi Reḥumai notes that the word is also written in the feminine form: בַּשַּׁעֲרָה (*bi-s'arah*), *with a tempest*. Similarly, in Genesis 27:11, Esau is described as אִישׁ שַׁעִיר (*ish sa'ir*), using the masculine form, whereas in Genesis 33:16 he travels שַׁעִירָה (*se'irah*), *to Se'ir*, using a locative form with הָ (*he*) at the end of the word—but interpreted here as if it was the (identically spelled) feminine form. These disparities reflect the masculine and feminine manifestations of demonic forces. If God speaks to Job *from the* סַעֲרָה (*se'arah*), *whirlwind*, one might think that the *samekh* form denotes a divine wind—and yet both *samekh* and *sin* have denoted the demonic. Rabbi Reḥumai explains that God indeed speaks to Job from the midst of this destructive wind.

Rabbi Reḥumai is a late *amora*, appearing infrequently in the *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* and the *Zohar*, but commonly in the *Bahir*. See *Bahir* 12 (16), 46 (68), 74 (104–5), 82 (113), 87

(123, n.1), 91 (134), 99–100 (149–50); *Zohar* 1:11a; *ZH* 60c (*MhN, ShS*). Cf. BT *Ketubbot* 62b. On this destructive wind, cf. *Zohar* 2:203a.

34. *Elijah ascended בסערה (ba-s'arah), in a whirlwind...* If סערה (*se'arah*) denotes something destructive, how can it also refer to the whirlwind that carried Elijah to heaven? God grants special dispensation to Elijah, ending his life without having to suffer agonies at the hands of the Angel of Death. The Angel of Death objects that others may seek similar relief, but God replies that Elijah is “unlike all the other creatures.” Elijah ultimately subdues Satan, also known as סערה (*se'arah*), pinioning him and inducting him as bearer of the fiery chariot that carries Elijah to heaven.

The description of Elijah as “unlike all the other creatures” accords with the view of Moses de León, according to whom the angel Elijah assumed bodily form in descending to earth. See his *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 63, 68–71. Cf. *Zohar* 1:46b, 151b, 209a, 245b (*Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 2); 2:197a; 3:88b; *ZH* 84c–d (*MhN, Rut*). Moses de León’s view is criticized by Moses Cordovero (*Pardes Rimmonim* 24:14).

On God’s stipulations with creation on Elijah’s behalf, see *Zohar* 2:198b. This section dealing with Job, Elijah, and the questions regarding the different spellings of *se'arah* are found almost verbatim in Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 60–61, 68–69.

The full verse in Kings reads: *As they [Elijah and Elisha] were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind to heaven.*

35. bent nun... The word מן (*min*), *from*, is written uniquely with the medial letter ן (*nun*), rather than with the normal ן (final *nun*). This “bent” form is interpreted to mean that Job himself was bent over by God’s judgment, manifest as the satanic whirlwind. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

V24, O17, O18, MS3, MS4, L37, L38, L39, CH1, N41, V6, Th, and V all add “He opened and said” followed by all

or part of Job 38:7—*When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*—immediately after God’s rebuke of Job. Although V6 has a formulation that is more plausible than the rest—omitting “He opened and said”—the addition seems to reflect an early scribal error, misplaced from or unduly influenced by the next homily. Cf. Englander.

On the unusual written form of the phrase *מִן הַסְעָרָה* (*min ha-se’arah*), *from the whirlwind*, see Moses de León, *Commentary on the Chariot*, 59; *Minḥat Shai*.

36. morning stars... On the first light of dawn, often symbolized by the *morning stars* of Job 38:7, see, e.g., *Zohar* 2:10a–b, 188a–b; 3:22b, 52b, 171b–172a, 249a; Liebes, *Pulḥan ha-Shaḥar*, 31–43, 141–79. On the angels and stars singing in the morning, see *Zohar* 1:172b, 231b; 2:30a, 196a; 3:36a.

37. dispatching all those angels... The angelic “sons of God” mark the celestial changing of the guard with their shouting. See *Zohar* 3:22b.

38. Silon is its name... As part of the ceremony—one that the author carefully indicates is choreographed by the blessed Holy One—a star with a brief role named Silon guides the nighttime and daytime angels.

V24, O17, O18, MS3, MS4, and L39, as well as Thiengen, Venice, and *Or Yaḡar* indicate *סילון* (*Silon*) as the name of the star, yet its actions appear to correspond to those of *וילון* (*Vilon*), “Curtain,” referred to in BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘There are two *רקיעים* (*reqi’im*), firmaments [or: heavens, vaults]....’ Resh Lakish said, ‘Seven—namely *Vilon* (Curtain), *Raqi’a*, *Sheḥaqim*, *Zevul*, *Ma’on*, *Makhon*, *Aravot*. Curtain performs no function at all except entering in the morning and leaving in the evening, and renewing each day the act of creation.’”

See *Zohar* 1:108b (ST), 207b, 233b; 3:239b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut* 338; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 6, 257; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 12 (15), 50 (61).

39. From Zion the world was founded... According to the progression of the verses, God creates the world from the location where the sun rises—identified in Psalms 50:2 as Zion—the place from which *God shone forth*.

BT *Yoma* 54b explains why M *Yoma* 5:2 calls an ancient Temple stone by the name Foundation: “A *Tanna* taught: ‘[It was so called] because from it the world was founded.’ We were taught in accord with the view that the world was created from Zion. For it was taught in a *baraita*: ‘Rabbi Eli’ezer says: “The world was created from its center, as is said: *When the earth melts to a mass, and its clods cling fast together* (Job 38:38).” Rabbi Yehoshu’a said, “The world was created from its sides on, as is said: *For to the snow He says, ‘Fall to the ground! and rain in torrents, the rain of His mighty torrents* (ibid. 37:6).” Rabbi Yitshak said, “The blessed Holy One cast a stone into the sea—from it the world was founded, as is said: *On what were her pedestals sunk, or who laid her cornerstone?* (ibid. 38:6).” But the rabbis said, “The world was created from Zion, as is said: *A psalm of Asaph. God, Elohim YHVH* (Psalms 50:1)... and it continues: *From Zion, perfection of beauty* (ibid., 2) —out of Zion, the world’s perfection.””

On Zion as the place from which the world was founded, see *Tosefta Yoma* 2:14; JT *Yoma* 5:2, 42c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:4; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:4; *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 35; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:4; *Midrash Konen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:24-25); *Zohar* 1:71b-72a, 231a; 2:211a, 222a; 3:65b-66a; ZH 28a (*MhN*), 61a (*MhN, ShS*), 76b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 333; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 74-75 (95); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 372-73; Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 4:772-73; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:14-16, n. 39.

40. light within light... The process of creation is described as an unfolding of stages of radiance, each subsequent layer serving as garment for the previous stage, or as shell for the previous kernel.

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 7: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Rabbi Yehotsadak asked Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥman, ‘Since you are a master of *aggadah*, tell me how the blessed Holy One created the world.’ He replied, ‘When the blessed Holy One wished to create the world, He enwrapped Himself in light and created the world, as is said: *Wrapped in light as in a garment*, and afterward: *spreading the heavens like a curtain* (Psalms 104:2).’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:4 (and Theodor, ad loc.); *Vayiqra Rabbah* 31:7; *Midrash Tehillim* 104:4; *Shemot Rabbah* 50:1; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:26; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 493–94; Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, ed. Scholem, “Te’udah Ḥadashah,” 157–58; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 172–73; *Zohar* 1:2a, 15b, 29a, 90a (ST), 245a; 2:164b; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 13.

41. the blessed Holy One took snow... *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3 describes creation of the earth: “From where was the earth created? From the snow beneath the throne of glory. He took it and threw it upon the waters, and the waters congealed—and dust was made.”

See BT *Yoma* 54b; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77a; *Midrash Konen*, 24; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 11 and n. 66); *ZH* 61a (*MhN*, *ShS*).

Isaiah 40:12 reads: *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, gauged the heavens with a span, held in a measure the dust of the earth, and weighed mountains on a scale and hills in a balance?*

42. a single place congealed first... The foundation stone. This creation story is like conception and gestation in which a white substance is cast into “waters,” here signifying the female genitals, developing in all directions from that single point.

On the foundation stone, see below, [note 44](#). On the similarity to human development, see *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

43. stacking up to submerge it... On the waters' attempt to rise up and God's suppression of them, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 5.

44. they did not subside... The waters longed to return to their original place, like all creations. To still the impending deluge, God engraved a stone with the divine name of seventy-two letters and threw it into the watery depths. This stone sank, sealing the depths and ensuring that the waters would not rise and inundate the world. From this stone, the whole world was founded.

Cf. BT *Sukkah* 53a-b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "When David dug the hollows [beneath the site of the Temple], the abyss arose and threatened to drown the world.... [David] inscribed the [divine] Name on a potsherd and cast it into the abyss, and it subsided...."

See JT *Sanhedrin* 10:2, 29a; BT *Makkot* 11a; *Midrash Shemu'el* 26; Gaster, ed., *Sefer ha-Ma'asiyyot*, 113-14; *Zohar* 2:50b (*Mat*), 91b, 152a; 3:198b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:258, n. 70; Sperber, "Sealing the Abysses"; Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 117-31, 311-17; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 124-31; Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah*, 177-89.

The name of God in question, consisting of seventy-two elements, is a complex divine name derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea: Exodus 14:19-21. Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads (or "words"), according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad); etc.

On this name of seventy-two triads, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:19; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; *Leqah Tov*, Exodus 14:21; Rashi on BT *Sukkah* 45a, s.v. אַנִּי (*Ani*); Hai Gaon, in Lewin, ed., *Otsar ha-*

Ge'onim, Hagigah, 23; *Sekhel Tov*, Exodus 14:21 (with vocalized triads); Ibn Ezra (long) on Exodus 14:19; *Bahir* 76 (107), 79 (110); Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah*, 1:131-32; idem [pseud.], *Peirush ha-Roqeah al ha-Torah*, Exodus 14:19-21; Naḥmanides, introduction to Commentary on the Torah, 6-7; idem, *Kitvei Ramban*, 1:168; Abulafia, *Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, 58-64; idem, *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, 24-33; *Zohar* 1:7b, 17a, 79b; 2:51b, 115a (RM), 132b, 269b-270a (*Tosafot*); 3:34b, 73a, 75a, 150b-151a, 219b (RM); *ZH* 61d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 148-49; Baḥya ben Asher on Exodus 14:21; 15:3; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 21:5; *Sefer Razi'el*, 24b, 28a-29b, 30b-31b, 40b, 43a; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 95-97; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, 14:67, 284-86; Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, 93-106; Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, 23-24, 35-38; idem, *Golem*, 98-101; Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, 162; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 235-36; Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 144; Huss, "All You Need Is LAV," 612-14.

Various other traditions discuss a divine name of seventy-two letters or components, or a name equivalent numerically to seventy-two. For example, according to *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:19 (in the name of Rabbi Avin), God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt by His seventy-two-letter name. See Theodor's note, ad loc.; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:2; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 13; Ibn Ezra (short) on Exodus 3:13; Ibn Ezra (long) on Exodus 14:19; 33:21; Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush Merkevet Yehezqel*, on 1:1; Naḥmanides on Numbers 11:16; *Zohar* 1:117b-118a; 2:51b, 58a; *Minḥat Shai* on Ezekiel 1:1; Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:130-31; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 342; Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, 105; Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, 52, 63;

Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 235–36. Cf. *Zohar* 2:35a.

On the Foundation Stone, see *M Yoma* 5:2; *Tosefta Yoma* 2:14; *JT Yoma* 5:2, 42c; *BT Yoma* 54b; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 28:30; *Targum* on Song of Songs 4:12; *Targum* on Ecclesiastes 3:11; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:4; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3; *Qedoshim* 10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:4; *Midrash Kohen*, 24–25; *Zohar* 1:71b–72a, 186a, 231a; 2:50a–b (*Mat*), 91b, 152a, 222a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 333; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 74–75 (95); Lieberman *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 4:772–73; Noy, “Even ha-Shetiyah”; Vol. 4, p. 526, n. 582.

45. At Zion... Where the potsherd with the engraved divine names came to rest. The sacred center in Zion is marked by God’s name, thus averting chaos and constituting its beauty.

See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 10: “The land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the nave in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the nave, and in front of the ark the Rock of Foundation, from which the world was founded.”

On Israel as the focal point of the world, see *BT Yoma* 54b, *Sanhedrin* 37a; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qedoshim* 10; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:2; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 18:25; *Zohar* 1:78a, 84b, 226a; 2:157a, 184b, 193a; 3:65b, 161b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 74–75 (95).

46. One who swears truthfully... The sustenance by the potsherd bearing the divine name, which serves as the bulwark against a deluge from the waters of the depths, depends upon the truthful behavior of humanity. A false oath, in contrast, threatens the world’s continued existence. This is because God’s seal—truth—undergirds the cosmos and depends upon human affirmation. The simple meaning of the verse is לֹא תִּסָּא (Lo tissa), *You shall not*

take, the name of YHVH your God אֱשׁוּבָה (*la-shav*), in vain; here, however, Rabbi Pedat interprets the opening words hyperliterally, thereby leaving the world exposed to the threatening waters.

On truth as the divine seal, see JT *Sanhedrin* 1:1, 18a; BT *Shabbat* 55a, *Yoma* 69b, *Sanhedrin* 64a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 81:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:9; *Devarim Rabbah* 1:10; *Zohar* 2:220b. On a false oath inciting the waters below, see *Zohar* 2:91b.

47. His place... Referring, apparently, to the Foundation Stone in the Holy of Holies. The obscure formulation in the verse from Ezekiel leads Rabbi Hizkiyah to interpret *His place* as a reference to a specific place. Cf. *Bahir* 90 (130–33); *Zohar* 2:63b (standard edition), 207a.

48. supporting columns... This marks the introduction of *sefirot* and kabbalistic theosophy into a cosmological discourse. The seven “supporting columns” signify the bottom seven *sefirot*—*Hesed* through *Shekhinah*. The Righteous One (*Yesod*) is the foundational pillar because it serves as the bridge between upper *sefirot* and *Shekhinah*.

The verse reads $\text{וְצַדִּיק יְסוּד עוֹלָם}$ (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*), whose simple sense is *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*; but it is understood midrashically as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*.

See BT *Hagigah* 12b: “The Sages say, ‘[The world] stands on twelve pillars....’ And some say seven pillars.... Rabbi El’azar son of Shammu’a says, ‘On one pillar, whose name is Righteous One, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world.*’” See *Zohar* 3:69a.

49. seven heavens... The entire cosmos is composed of elements numbering seven—heavens, stars, lands, days, depths—all manifestations of the seven lower *sefirot*, and all correlating with each other.

On various “sevens,” see *Sefer Yetsirah* 4:12: “From here onward, go forth and contemplate upon that which the mouth is unable to utter, the ear unable to hear. These are

the seven stars in the universe: Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars. These are the seven days of the year: seven days of Creation. Seven gates in the soul: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth. Engraved upon them are seven heavens, seven lands, and seven hours. Thus did He show favor to sevens below the heavens.”

See *ibid.*, 4; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:11; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 23:10; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan A*, 37; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 18; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:11; 92:2; *Zohar* 2:165a; 3:9b; *ZH* 3a (*MhN*).

On the seven heavens, see also BT *Hagigah* 12b. On the seven rivers, see *Zohar* 1:52a. Cf. the four rivers mentioned in BT *Bava Batra* 74b; *Midrash Tehillim* 24:6.

The rare use of the term *sefirot* in material that has traditionally comprised *Sefer ha-Zohar* shows the influence of *Sefer Yetsirah*, yet it appears also to be a reference to the theosophic *sefirot* that underpin the *Zohar's* conception of Divinity. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 165–66.

50. Seven holy lands couple with them... Each daytime corresponds to a male firmament that couples with the nighttime, which signifies a land. This suggests that the seven *sefirot* here extend from *Binah* to *Yesod*, treated as masculine, in loving union with seven corresponding gradations within *Malkhut*. Those seven are then identified with twelve gradations within *Malkhut* that are symbolized by the twelve tribes. See Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 81b; cf. *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

Construed literally, the verse in Exodus begins: *Six days YHVH made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them; and He rested on the seventh day.* The simple meaning is that God made the world in six days. However, the temporal notice lacks a preposition such as ׀ (*be*), “in,” which creates grammatical ambiguity. Here, the verse is read hyperliterally to suggest that *YHVH made six days*, that

is, He emanated six cosmic days (usually, the *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*), thereby generating *Tif'eret* (*heaven*) and *Shekhinah* (*earth*).

On the verse in Exodus, see Exodus 31:17; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 14:4; *Bahir* 39 (57), 55 (82); Naḥmanides on Exodus 20:11; Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa* 1:423; *Zohar* 1:30a, 247a; 2:31a, 89b; 3:94b, 103b, 298b; *ZH* 26c; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 134. On the correspondence between the seven earths and the seven heavens, see *Zohar* 1:253b (*Hash, ST*); *ZH* 9b (*ST*).

51. seven engraved columns... Aspects of *Malkhut*, “suspended from the heavens,” signifying *Tif'eret*. Rabbi Peraḥiah employs the rabbinic interpretative technique called *gezerah shavah* to derive common meaning from two unrelated verses, based on their use of an identical term. Since both verses use forms of the verb שמע (*shm'*), *hear*, it is concluded that the subject of the verb in each instance—*heavens* and *Israel* must be identical.

52. seven celestial ones... Expounding the verse from Amos, Rabbi Reḥumai contrasts the “seven celestial ones”—signifying the *sefirot* and identified with the divine name—with “seven chambers” below *Malkhut*, signifying gradations within *Malkhut* or archangels, who manage this world. He deduces the following associations: *He founds* and *tevel* (“the world”), both symbolizing *Binah*; *His vault*, signifying the seven beings above the lower world; *earth*, symbolizing the earth in which humanity dwells; and *His Wisdom*, symbolizing *Hokhmah*, overseeing all. See *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik; Englander.

53. but they are seven! Scripture refers to one sea, but above, reference was made to seven depths! It appears that this is a play on the homonym *yamim*, which can mean both “days” and “seas.” Thus, the term that instigates the question is not actually about “seas,” but rather “days.”

54. but one sea... The ocean, which encompasses the entire world. See *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

55. They are seven... Rabbi Reḥumai explains that the apparent contradiction in Scripture actually indicates that there are seven minor seas which flow into the Great Sea, signifying *Shekhinah*.

On the seven seas, see also JT *Kil'ayim* 9:4, 32c; *Ketubbot* 12:3, 35b; BT *Bava Batra* 74b; *Midrash Tehillim* 24:6.

56. When the blessed Holy One casts a glance... The verse in Psalms concludes: *if there is one who is wise, who seeks God*. If the blessed Holy One does not find any righteous ones, the world will tremble and be inundated.

57. Rabbi Nehorai... The name Nehorai means “light,” an appropriate choice given that the upcoming homily deals largely with the light at daybreak. Rabbi Nehorai interprets the stars’ twinkling as an expression of their awe of God.

In the *Zohar*, the companions frequently experience elements of the natural world as an opportunity for contemplation. They view the natural world as a symbolic portal to the worlds above and to Scripture, each being a necessary concomitant of the other. See Wolfson, “Mirror of Nature”; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 111-20; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies*, 1-18, 116-41.

58. sons of God... Angels who send off the night shift and prompt the morning stars to sing.

59. When the sun came forth... Elsewhere the *Zohar* notes that the early light of dawn is a time that elicited prayer and even worship of the sun. According to early Islamic sources, the Mandaeans (called Sabians) performed such worship. The medieval pagans of Harran (also called Sabians) worshiped the sun alongside their main deity, the moon. According to the ninth-century Muslim scholar Aḥmad Ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi, the Harranians’ first prayer of the day included multiple prostrations “half an hour or less before the rising of the sun, finishing at sunrise.”

See Gündüz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 24, 26-27, 143, 164. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:29. On sun worship, see also Ezekiel 8:16; M *Sukkah* 5:4; BT *Berakhot* 7a; *Zohar* 1:95b; 2:35a, 188a-b; Scholem, "Parashah Ḥadashah min ha-Midrash ha-Ne'lam she-be-Zohar," 430, and n. 12 there. On the *Zohar's* ambivalence toward sun worship, see Liebes, *Pulḥan ha-Shaḥar*, 31-43.

60. sun bursts forth... At the end of an astronomical discourse about the sun's movements, *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 6 says: "The sun has three letters of the Divine Name written upon his heart, and the angels lead him. Those who lead him by day do not lead him by night, and such as lead him by night do not lead him by day. The sun rides in a chariot and rises, crowned as a bridegroom, rejoicing as a mighty one, as is said: *He is like a groom coming forth from his canopy* (Psalms 19:6)."

In the Sabbath Morning service, the liturgy praises "the God who daily opens the doors of the gates of the East and cleaves the windows of the sky, who brings out the sun from its place and the moon from its abode." On the mythical emergence of the sun, see *Zohar* 2:137a, 188a.

On the letters of the divine name written upon the sun, see Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei Razaya, Ot Yod*; Vol. 10, p. 559; Isaac ibn Sahula, *Meshal ha-Qadmoni*, V 1231-32. Cf. 2 Enoch 14:2-4; 3 Baruch 6:1-8; *Zohar* 2:35a.

61. red... "Red" and "white" here allude to the sun's manifestations as *Gevurah* and *Ḥesed*, respectively. When the sun first chases back the demonic powers that lurk at night, it does so as a manifestation of *Gevurah*, a mighty warrior. After successfully beating them back, it reverts to its normal color of white, signifying *Ḥesed*.

The context in Psalms 19:5-6 reads: *The sun he set up as a tent for [the heavens]... He is like a groom coming forth from his canopy, rejoicing like a mighty one running his course.*

62. a field... In the *Zohar*, a field symbolizes the *Shekhinah*; and *meḥatsedei ḥaqla*, “reapers of the field,” is a common appellation for the kabbalists. Arriving at a field serves as a prompt for the delivery of mystical homilies. Here Rabbi Isaac inquires of his “master,” presumably Rabbi Nehorai. See below, [note 124](#).

63. when the sons declared it to Jacob... See BT *Pesaḥim* 56a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish: “[Upon his death bed,] Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the end of days, but *Shekhinah* departed from him [depriving him of inspiration]. He said, ‘Perhaps, Heaven forbid, there is a blemish in my bed [i.e., someone unfit among my children], like Abraham, from whom issued Ishmael, or like my father Isaac, from whom issued Esau.’ His sons answered him, ‘*Hear, O Israel!* [i.e., Jacob]. *YHVH is our God, YHVH is one*—just as there is only *one* in your heart, so there is only *one* in our heart.’ At that moment our father Jacob opened and exclaimed, ‘Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever!’” Rabbi Nehorai explains that when Jacob’s sons uttered these words, they were demonstrating their worthiness. Further, when Moses taught them to the entire nation of Israel, that was a necessary part of the divine instruction. But, since Rabbi Nehorai assumes that all Jews recite this line twice daily, the question arises as to whom the teaching of God’s oneness is now directed.

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 35:22; *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Genesis 49:1; *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 8:7, 112c; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31, 312; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:5, 96 (pp. 1200–1202); 98:3; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:7; *Devarim Rabbah* 2:35; *Zohar* 1:148a; 2:134a–b; cf. Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 370–71.

64. our forefather Jacob did not die... According to biblical narratives, only Enoch and Elijah did not die a mortal death. According to rabbinic tradition, Jacob

likewise did not really die, but rather was given eternal life through the people Israel's perpetuity. This notion is based on Genesis 49:33: *Jacob finished instructing his sons, and he gathered his feet into the bed, and he expired, and was gathered to his people.* The use of the unusual term וַיָּגוּעַ (*vayigva*), *he expired*, rather than *he died*, prompts this rabbinic interpretation. Jacob's image is engraved upon the throne in order to serve as a link between Israel below and God above. Following the midrashic model in which Jacob's sons say to him *Hear, O Israel*, here the whole nation calls to him with the same words, seeking his validation of their faithfulness. See the previous note.

On Jacob's immortality, see BT *Ta'anit* 5b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "Jacob our father did not die..., as is said: *Do not fear, My servant Jacob—declares YHVH—do not be dismayed, O Israel! For I will save you from afar, your seed from the land of their captivity* (Jeremiah 30:10). The verse compares him to his seed; just as his seed is alive, so he too is alive."

See Rashi and Naḥmanides on Genesis 49:33; *Tosafot, Ta'anit* 5b, s.v. *ya'aqov avinu*; *Zohar* 1:235b, 248b; 2:48b, 141b, 174a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 108-9, 370; idem, "Commentary on the Ten *Sefirot*," 336b.

On Jacob's image engraved upon the divine throne, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12; 78:3; 82:2; *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:2; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Genesis 28:12; BT *Hullin* 91b (and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *bi-dyoqno*); *Bemidbar Rabbah, Bemidbar* 4:1; *Tanḥuma, Bemidbar* 19; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35; Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 32:8; Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 43; *Zohar* 1:72a; Moses de León, "Commentary on the Ten *Sefirot*," 338b; Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 112-20; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, 1-62.

On testimony to Israel's twice daily unification of God, see *Zohar* 2:160b; *ZH* 45a, 57a (*QhM*).

65. supernal Holy One who blesses him... In this continued reworking of the midrash of Jacob and his sons, God declares the distinctiveness of Jacob and the children of Israel, and the hosts of heaven respond with the exclamation previously voiced by Jacob's sons: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever!"

See *Zohar* 1:12a, 18b; 2:139b, and sources mentioned above in [note 63](#).

66. thirteen rivers of pure balsam... According to a rabbinic tradition, thirteen rivers of balsam await the righteous in the world that is coming. Frequently in the *Zohar* these rivers flow from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*. The number thirteen is significant in rabbinic and kabbalistic literature as a symbol for the thirteen divine attributes of mercy, and its recurrence here may be such an allusion.

See JT *Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c; *Bereshit Rabbah* 62:2; BT *Ta'anit* 25a; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Pegudei* 7; *Zohar* 1:4b, 7a, 88a (*ST*), 176a; 2:127a-b, 146b, 175b, 177a (*SdTs*); 3:67a, 131a (*IR*), 181a; Englander; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Normally, *Jeshurun* is simply a poetic name for Israel meaning "the upright one." Here, however, the author engages in wordplay, comparing שׁוּרוֹן (*Yeshurun*), *Jeshurun*, to a protective שׁוּר (*shur*), "wall." See Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26.

Matoq mi-Devash speculates that the following material, until the return of Rabbi Yitshak and Rabbi Nehorai, was inserted here by the editor of *Zohar Ḥadash*, and it is absent in V6.

67. Like the pattern... It is a common refrain throughout Zoharic Kabbalah that the lower realm is patterned after the higher realm.

See BT *Hullin* 91b: "The ministering angels do not utter song above until Israel sings below, as is said: *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy* (Job 38:7)."

On Jacob in both this world and the transcendent realm, see *Zohar* 2:17a (*MhN*), 216a; 3:129b, 262b. On twelve supernal tribes, see *Bahir* 82 (113); *Zohar* 1:155a–b, 159b; 2:229b; 3:134b; *ZH* 87c (*MhN, Rut*). On angels singing in heaven, pursuant to the praise of Israel, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 306; *Zohar* 1:40a (*Heikh*), 90a (*ST*), 231a; 2:129b, 164b; 3:66a, 190b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 91; cf. *ZH* 12b (*MhN*).

68. Thus says YHVH... The verse is usually understood as *Thus says YHVH, who redeemed Abraham, to the house of Jacob*. However, Rabbi reads it hyperliterally, based on the midrashic tradition that Jacob's (future) merit *redeemed Abraham* from Nimrod's fiery furnace. As Abraham was cast into the furnace, the heavenly court debated whether he should be saved. The angels opposed rescuing Abraham because Ishmael was destined to issue from him.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:2; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:4; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 4, *Shemot* 4; *Zohar* 1:154b. Cf. BT *Sanhedrin* 19b; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 1. Parallels to this whole passage appear in *Zohar* 3:57a; *ZH* 47b–c (*MhN, Rut*).

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Therefore, thus says YHVH to the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham: No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale.*

69. Well, Isaac... God replied that Isaac would also issue from Abraham, implying that Isaac's extreme devotion—demonstrated by his willingness to be sacrificed on the altar—should suffice to redeem Abraham.

70. But Esau... Ishmael and Esau are regarded as wicked and as blemishes in their fathers' lineages, rendering Abraham and Isaac irredeemable in the eyes of the angels.

Rabbinic typologies and kabbalistic symbolism represent Ishmael and Esau as the progenitors of Islam and Christianity, respectively, and thus as oppressors of the Jewish people through history.

On the unfit natures of Ishmael and Esau, see, e.g., *Tosefta Sotah* 6:6; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:11; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; BT *Pesahim* 56a; Rashi on *Sukkah* 29a, s.v. *eloheiha*; *Zohar* 1:118b, 139a-b, 146a; 2:11a, 17a (*MhN*), 32a, 86a, 111a (*SA*), 163b; 3:124a (*RM*), 192b, 199b, 246b (*RM*); *ZH* 23d, 27d (last two *MhN*), 47a, 78d (last two *MnN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 53-54 (66-68); Kiener, "The Image of Islam in the Zohar," 49-65; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 17-185.

71. Surely for Jacob's merit... In contrast to Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's children all remained faithful to the divine covenant, and thus his lineage is considered pure. See above, [note 63](#).

72. When they bound... As Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were about to be cast into the furnace, each one proclaimed a verse (or verses).

Rabbinic sources describe these three heroes as proclaiming parts of verses from Psalms 115 and 117. See BT *Pesahim* 118a; *Tanḥuma*, *Noah* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noah* 15; *Midrash Tehillim* 117:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 9:1; 18:5.

73. This one will say... In one of the consolation passages in Isaiah, God promises that the faithful will rise proclaiming their fidelity, and He will respond by redeeming Jacob's descendants. Here, Rabbi associates three of those giving testimony with Daniel's three companions, proving that it was the merit of Jacob that saved them.

74. Belteshazzar... In Daniel 1:7, Nebuchadnezzar's chief officer gave Babylonian names to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar praises Daniel's dream interpretation and pays him homage. In chapter 4, when Nebuchadnezzar calls on Daniel to interpret his dream, he calls him by the name Belteshazzar, noting that this is the name of one of his

deities. He heralds him as רב הרטמייא (*rav hartumayya*), *chief magician* (ibid. 4:6; though a number of the manuscripts denote him רב חכמייא (*rav hakhimayya*), “chief sage”). In Rabbi’s treatment, Daniel becomes aware of the fiery furnace and God’s injunction from Deuteronomy and—fearful that he will be mistaken for one of the idols to be consigned to the fire—he bolts.

This story derives from a rabbinic legend in BT *Sanhedrin* 93a: “Our Rabbis taught: Three were involved in that conspiracy [to keep Daniel out of the furnace] : The blessed Holy One, Daniel, and Nebuchadnezzar. The blessed Holy One said, ‘Let Daniel depart from here, lest it be said that they were delivered through his merit.’ Daniel said, ‘Let me leave this place, so that I do not become a fulfillment of *The graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire* (Deuteronomy 7:5).’ And Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Let Daniel escape, lest people say he has set his god ablaze.’ And from where do we know that he worshipped him? Since it is written: *Then King Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself, and worshiped Daniel [and commanded that a meal offering and incense be offered to him]* (Daniel 2:46).”

The full verse in Daniel reads: *Finally there came before me Daniel—whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and who is endowed with the spirit of the holy gods—and before him I related the dream.*

75. frogs leapt into the flames... In Exodus 7:28, God instructs Moses to warn Pharaoh that *The Nile will swarm frogs and they will come up and come into your house, into your bedroom, onto your bed, into your servants’ houses, upon your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls.* Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah concluded that if frogs, who generally do not receive commandments, decided to jump into the ovens based on God’s word, all the more so should they allow themselves to be martyred to sanctify God. In some of the rabbinic legends from which

this story derives, an inference is drawn from Exodus 8:9: *the frogs died out from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields*; that is, excluding those that jumped into the ovens. Daniel's companions were presumably encouraged by this miraculous event.

See BT *Pesaḥim* 53b, and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *mah ra'u*; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer* 19; *Tanḥuma, Va'era* 14; *Midrash Tehillim* 28:2; *Zohar* 2:29b; 3:232b (RM); *Pereq Shirah* 4.

76. forsake sleep Studying Torah at night (particularly from midnight to dawn) is highly praised in the *Zohar*, and viewed as ideal behavior for the companions. Rabbi Nehorai's suggestion alludes to Moses' activity at Mount Sinai.

See 2 Enoch 8:3; *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 3:3, 111b; JT *Berakhot* 1:1, 2d; BT *Sanhedrin* 102a; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13, pp. 254-55; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17, p. 22; *Aggadat Bereshit* 23:5; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:15; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:10b, 40b (*Heikh*), 72a, 77a-b, 82b, 92a-b, 104a, 136a-b, 178a-b, 194b, 206b-207b, 231b-232a, 242b; 2:26b, 30a, 36b, 46a, 56b-57a, 67b, 130a-b, 136a, 149a, 173b, 195b-196a, 209a; 3:11a, 13a, 21b-23a, 25a-b, 36a, 44a-b, 49b, 52b, 64b-65a, 67b-68a, 81a, 90a, 156b, 193a, 213a, 260a; *ZḤ* 13b-c, 18a (both *MhN*), 53b, 122a (*Mat*); Vol. 10, p. 554; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 54; [idem?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 294-95 (3:138); Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 146-50; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 121-45; Asulin, "Midrash ha-Ne'lam le-Bereshit," 231. Cf. BT *Tamid* 32b, in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya: "Whoever engages in Torah at night—*Shekhinah* faces him."

77. a voice... Very often in the *Zohar*, the companions hear a voice urging slumbering humanity to rouse itself from spiritual and moral somnolence. Here the voice warns that the world is about to be judged and that humanity must awaken. The trembling pillars probably refer to both the lower seven *sefirot* and the famous righteous martyrs,

whose fate is described in the forthcoming passage. The exalted tone of the invocation is similar to that found in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*.

See *Zohar* 1:4a, 62a (*Tos*), 77a-b, 121a (*Tos*), 161b (*Mat*), 227a; 3:52b, 57b-58a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 1; Hellner-Eshed, 204-17. Cf. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 68-75; BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:4; MacRae, "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts."

"Fawn" renders עזילא דאילתא (*uzila de-ayalta*). Alternatively, "young doe."

78. noble ones... According to rabbinic tradition, virtuous people may be seized for the sins of others. See BT *Shabbat* 33b: "Rabbi Gorion (according to others, Rabbi Yosef son of Rabbi Shema'yah) said, 'When there are righteous ones in the generation, the righteous are seized for the sin of the generation. When there are no righteous in the generation, schoolchildren are seized for the sin of the generation.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 33:1; *Kallah Rabbati* 6:4; Rashi on BT *Ta'anit* 11a, s.v. *ha-tsaddiq avad*; *Zohar* 1:67b-68a, 180a; 2:10b, 38b, 53a, 195a; 3:46b, 218a. Cf. *Mekhilta, Neziqin* 18; BT *Shabbat* 54b-55a, *Avodah Zarah* 4a.

On *Shekhinah* as a doe, see *Zohar* 1:4a; 2:7b, 8b, 10a-b, 36b, 46a, 52b, 56b, 119b (*RM*), 219b-220a; 3:21b, 25a-b, 68a, 249a-b; Liebes, *Pulḥan ha-Shaḥar*, 153-67.

79. weeping of Rabbi Yishma'el... In the narratives of "The Story of the Ten Martyrs," Rabbi Yishma'el and Rabban Shim'on son of Gamli'el were the first victims. The story is set during the "Hadrianic persecutions" following the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 C.E., but actually takes on its literary form in Byzantine Palestine between the late fifth and early seventh centuries. The story intertwines a range of martyrological stories from the Jerusalem Talmud and early Palestinian midrashic collections. Though historically these ten span several

generations of the first and second centuries, the story's power derives from compacting them into a single, long gruesome event of sacrifice and redemption. In the story, Rabbi Yishma'el and Rabban Shim'on son of Gamli'el cast lots to determine who would be executed first. Rabban Shim'on son of Gamli'el was the first to be decapitated, upon which Rabbi Yishma'el picked up his head, wailing over the loss. The martyrology came to be universally known in the Jewish world through its incorporation into the Yom Kippur liturgy for Musaf.

On the double execution of Rabbi Yishma'el son of Elisha and Rabban Shim'on son of Gamli'el, see *Mekhilta Mishpatim* 18 (313); *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 38; B, 41; *Massekhet Semahot* (Higger) 8:8; Saul Lieberman, "Redifat Dat Yisra'el," 227-28 and parallels there.

See *Midrash Tehillim* 9:13; *Midrash Eileh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:64-72); *Zohar* 1:106a, 202a; 2:33a; *ZH* 46a, 89d (*MhN, Rut*), 93b (*MhN, Eikhah*); Stern, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 143-65; Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*; Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic*, especially 51-60, 71-98; below, [pages 260-61](#), [note 681](#).

80. judging of the judges... The straightforward reading of the verse is *In the days when the judges* [or: *chieftains*] *judged*, but Rabbi Rehumai reads the verse hyperliterally to mean that the fate of the leaders themselves was being reckoned. The decree was a famine, killing them off, as inferred from the continuation of the verse: *and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab*.

The book of Judges portrays this period in Jewish history in alternating intervals of sinfulness and punishment. According to rabbinic tradition, the story of Ruth occurs during the time of Ibzan (Judges 12:8-10).

On the famine in the story as a form of divine punishment, see Targum; *Rut Rabbah* 1:1, 4; Rashi. On the rabbinic dating of the book of Ruth, see BT *Bava Batra* 91a.

On Elimelech and his sons as leaders in Bethlehem and Moab, see *Targum* 1:2; *Rut Rabbah* 1:4; Rashi, ad loc. On the historical context of the story, see Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

81. וְיִשׁ (ish), a man... In its simple sense, the word *ish* may have designated the head of a household or landowner. Later interpretive traditions explain it as signifying a community leader. *Beit Leḥem*, “Bethlehem,” literally means “house of bread [or: food].” In a town whose very name bespeaks fertility, the onset of famine suggests its severity—and also its being part of a divine plan.

On the words *ish* and *Beit Leḥem*, see Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

82. one should disappear... The Angel of Death lashes out at both the righteous and the wicked indiscriminately, so Rabbi Yehudah and the rabbis concede that even a leader should try to flee the carnage. As the passage continues, different opinions emerge about the legitimacy of Elimelech’s flight, but Rabbi Yehudah and the rabbis absolve him of moral culpability.

See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a-b: “Rabbi Yosef taught: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out from the entrance of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22)? Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked. Moreover, he begins with the righteous first, as is said: *I will wipe out from you both the righteous and the wicked* (Ezekiel 21:8)’... Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? Keep your feet indoors.’... Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? One should not walk in the middle of the road because the Angel of Death walks there, for as soon as permission has been granted him, he strides brazenly.’”

See *Mekhilta*, *Pisha* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 64b, 67b-69a, 101b-102a, 107b, 113a, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a, 196b-197a, 227a; 3:38b, 54a-b; *ZH* 81c (*MhN*, *Rut*).

83. the Shunammite... Elisha offers to advance the Shunammite woman's cause before the authorities, but she declines, preferring to be inconspicuous. Rabbi Yehoshu'a lauds this behavior, because it is specifically a mark of distinction that draws the attention of the Destroying Angel.

"The Shunammite" was a wealthy woman from the town of Shunem who fed and housed the prophet Elisha. She was rewarded with a son, who later died but was resuscitated by Elisha. She is referred to here as a model of exemplary behavior, for not separating herself from the community.

See BT *Berakhot* 49b, in the name of Shemu'el: "A person should never exclude himself from the entire community." See M *Avot* 2:4; BT *Berakhot* 29b-30a.

See 2 Kings 4:8-36; *Zohar* 1:69b, 160b; 2:33b, 44b; 3:231a. Cf. 2 Kings 8:1-2 and the remarks of Yefet ben Eli on Ruth 1:3; Levine, *Aramaic Version*, 45. On the Shunammite's motive, cf. Englander.

84. anonymously... Rabbi Yehoshu'a criticizes Elimelech, depicting him as a failed leader, unwilling to protest the sinful behaviors of his community. Sometimes the righteous one is punished particularly for not rebuking the wicked for their sins.

See BT *Shabbat* 54b, in the name of Rav, Rabbi Ḥanina, Rabbi Yoḥanan (or Yonatan), and Rav Ḥaviva: "Whoever can protest against his household [committing a sin] and does not, is seized for [the sins of] his household; [if he can protest] against his townspeople [and does not], he is seized for his townspeople; [if he can protest] against the whole world [and does not], he is seized for the whole world."

See BT *Shabbat* 119b, *Avodah Zarah* 18a; *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 7; *Zohar* 3:46b, 218a. Cf. JT *Beitsah* 2:8, 61d; *Ketubbot* 13:1, 35c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 25:1; BT *Shabbat* 55a,

119b; *Tanḥuma*, *Shemini* 9; *Balaq* 19; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Balaq* 28; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:23; *Qohelet Zuta* 7:11.

This critique (and that of Rabbi Peraḥiah below) reflects the situation in the Jewish community in thirteenth-century Castile, in which moralists sharply criticized communal leaders for failing to rebuke sinners. In 1280-1281 a number of prominent Jewish courtiers were executed by the command of King Alfonso X, and these deaths were interpreted as punishment for their failures of moral leadership. See Jonah Gerondi, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3:131: "One who cohabits with a maidservant is like those liable for the death penalty.... As our sages, of blessed memory, said, 'One who cohabits with a Gentile woman should be struck down by zealous ones' (BT *Sanhedrin* 81b), as is written: *He stabbed the two of them* (Numbers 25:8). Thus, if you find such a person erring in full sight of others, and he will not stop, you are to kill him as soon as you come upon him. This act is more grave than all others liable for the death penalty, for those others are executed only with witnesses, warning, and judgment of the Sanhedrin. But this sinner is to be killed by whoever comes upon him, without witnesses or warning." See *ibid.* 3:59, 72-73; *Zohar* 2:3b; Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:250-70 (esp. 253, 257, 263); Hecker, "The Face of Shame," 42-46.

85. sheltered him... Rabbi Peraḥiah dramatizes the court scene, with Ruth 1:1-5 serving as the script. Once again, Elimelech is apparently singled out for timorous leadership. Why his sons were included in the punishment is not stated, but some earlier sources hold that it happened because they had married Moabite women.

Targum on 1:4-5 reads: "And they transgressed the ordinance of the Word of YHVH and they took for themselves foreign wives, from the daughters of Moab... And because they had transgressed the commandment of the Word of

YHVH by marrying into foreign nations, their days were cut short. And both Mahlon and Chilion died on unclean soil.”

On this teaching, see *Rut Zuta* 1:1; *Yalqut Shim’oni Rut* 599. On the prohibition against marrying Moabites, see Deuteronomy 23:4-7; *Tanḥuma, Behar* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Behar* 8; Eleazar of Worms on Ruth 1:4; *Zohar* 3:190a; *ZḤ* 81a (*MhN, Rut*); cf. *Rut Rabbah* 2:9; *Rut Zuta* 1:5; Ibn Ezra on Ruth 1:2; *ZḤ* 79a (*MhN, Rut*).

The context in Ruth reads: *And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. They lived there for about ten years, and then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died...* (vv. 3-5).

86. disparaged their leaders... Rabbi Yehudah affirms that even though the people disparaged their leaders, Elimelech should still have rebuked them.

See BT *Shabbat* 119b, in the name of Rav Yehudah: “‘Jerusalem was destroyed only because scholars were scorned there. For it is said, *But they mocked the messengers of God, and disdained his words, and taunted his prophets, until the wrath of YHVH arose against his people, beyond remedy* (2 Chronicles 36:16).’ What does *beyond remedy* intimate? Rav Yehudah said in Rav’s name: ‘He who despises a scholar, his wounds are *beyond remedy*.’”

See BT *Arakhin* 16b: “Up to what point should one offer rebuke? Rav said, ‘To the point of being struck.’ Shemu’el said, ‘To the point of being cursed.’ And Rabbi Yoḥanan said, ‘To the point of being scorned.’ This is like the dispute among the *tanna’im*: Rabbi Eli’ezer says, ‘To the point of being struck.’ Rabbi Yehoshu’a says, ‘To the point of being cursed.’ Ben Azzai says, ‘To the point of being scorned.’”

See *Tanna de-vei Eliyahu* 18; cf. BT *Beitsah* 30a, *Yevamot* 65b; Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitsvot* 205; idem, *Hilkhhot De’ot* 6:7-8; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Margalioṭ) par. 412; *Sefer Ḥastdim* (Wistinetzki) par. 1338; *Tosafot* on *Bava*

Batra 60b, s.v. *mutav she-yihyu*; Moses of Coucy, *Sefer Mitsvot ha-Gadol* 11; Isaac of Corbeil, *Sefer Mitsvot Qatan* 112; Yom Tov Ishbili, *Hiddushei Ritva* on *Yevamot* 65b; *Sefer ha-Hinnukh* 239; above, [note 84](#).

87. ויהי בימי (*va-yhi bi-ymei*), ***It came to pass in the days...*** The word ויהי (*va-yhi*), *It came to pass*, is read as ויהי (*vai hayah*), “there was woe,” or as ויהי (*vai, hi*), “woe, wailing.” Rabbi Yehoshu’a treats Elimelech’s sin as a national one: leaving both country and people.

See BT *Megillah* 10b: “Rabbi Levi, or some say Rabbi Yonatan, said, ‘This matter is a tradition handed down to us from the Men of the Great Assembly: Wherever it is said ויהי (*va-yhi*), *It came to pass*, this denotes sorrow.’... Rav Ashi said, ויהי (*va-yhi*), *It came to pass*, sometimes denotes this and sometimes not—while ויהי בימי (*va-yhi bi-ymei*), *It came to pass in the days of*, always denotes sorrow.’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 41(42) :3 (on Genesis 14:1); *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7; BT *Megillah* 11a; Eleazar of Worms on Ruth 1:1; *Zohar* 1:16b, 119b; 2:140b, 167a; 3:231a; Moses de León, *Commentary to Ezekiel’s Chariot*, 57.

88. From afar... Moses saw God more directly and fully than any other human, and several different metaphors are used to describe the higher quality of his vision. Rabbi Hilkiyah expresses the difference in terms of proximity and distance, so that other prophets perceive as if from afar. Rabbi El’azar distinguishes between opacity and clarity of vision, speaking in terms of the instrument or organ of vision.

See BT *Yevamot* 49b: “All the prophets gazed through an opaque glass, whereas Moses our teacher gazed through a translucent glass.” The phrase “an opaque glass” renders אספקלריא שאינה מאירה (*ispaqlarya she-einah me’irah*), literally “an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine.” The phrase “a translucent glass” renders אספקלריא המאירה (*ispaqlarya ha-me’irah*), literally “an *ispaqlarya* that shines.” The word *ispaqlarya* derives from

Greek *speklon*, “mirror, window-pane,” and Latin *speculum*, “mirror.”

See Maimonides, Commentary to M *Kelim* 30:2: “*Speqlarya*—a screen [or curtain] that is fashioned so that forms may be seen from behind it. According to my understanding, this is a compound word: ספק לראיה (*safeq le-re’iyah*), inconclusive vision, since one who looks through a screen made of glass or crystal, or any other transparent material, does not see the object in its true place, as is clarified in optics, nor is it seen according to its proper dimensions. And the sages call a very transparent screen that does not conceal anything behind it a “speculum that shines.” By way of example they said this regarding the apprehension of our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, of divine entities—and that he perceived the Creator at the pinnacle of a person’s capability, one whose intellect is tied to materiality.”

In the main body of the *Zohar*, *Shekhinah* is a speculum that does not shine on its own, but rather reflects and transmits the other *sefirot*. She is the medium through which prophets normally perceive a sefirotic vision. Moses, in contrast, attains the rung of *Tif’eret*, corresponding to the speculum that shines. In this section of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth, however, the terms do not appear to signify theosophic gradations.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 97b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:14; Maimonides, Commentary to M *Sanhedrin* 10:1, *ha-yesod ha-shevi’i*; idem, *Shemoneh Peraqim*, 7; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 33–34 (95–96); Nahmanides on Exodus 6:2; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 408; *Zohar* 1:33b, 120a, 170b–171a, 183a; 2:23b, 69a–b, 82a–b, 130b, 213a, 221a; 3:174b, 268b; ZH 39d; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 58; idem, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 69; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:44–45, n. 242; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, index, s.v. “speculum”; Huss, *Ke-*

Zohar ha-Raqi'a, 17-21. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face."

Numbers 12:6-8 reads: *He said, "Hear My words: If there be among you a prophet of YHVH, in a vision I make Myself known to him, in a dream I speak with him. Not so My servant Moses—in all My house he is trusted. Mouth to mouth I speak with him; in a vision, not in riddles; and the form of YHVH he beholds."*

89. love... does not reach them... How could Jeremiah's statement about seeing God *from afar* be taken as a universal principle describing the prophets? Indeed, the very same verse talks about God's love for him!

90. distant drawn near... Rabbi [Yehudah] and Rabbi El'azar disagree about how to interpret the term *afar* in these two verses. Rabbi Yehudah explains that the verse from Proverbs, traditionally ascribed to King Solomon, describes the normal state of things: kings do not have an intimate visionary relationship with God. The verse from Jeremiah suggests divine grace overcoming distance. Rabbi Yehudah's classification may allude to kabbalists and communal leaders, echoing the distinction in the previous homily. Rabbi El'azar contends that the two verses are exceptional, rather than typical: the one from Proverbs, indicating intimacy beyond the norm; the verse from Jeremiah representing a divine vision that lacks clarity because of its distance, though prophets normally have anthropomorphic visions, as in Ezekiel 1. Rabbi Hilkiyah takes a different approach, contending that in fact when prophets have visions, perhaps as opposed to receiving oracles or dreams, it is through a speculum that shines, a rung normally ascribed only to Moses. See Englander.

On kings and prophecy, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b: "Rav and Shemu'el had a dispute. One said, 'Fifty gates of *binah*, understanding, were created in the world; and all were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6). Now, Koheleth sought

to find out *words of delight* (Ecclesiastes 12:10). [That is to say,] Koheleth sought to be like Moses. A divine voice burst forth, saying, “And it is written: *write honestly words of truth* (ibid.), and *There did not arise again in Israel a prophet like Moses* (Deuteronomy 34:10).” The other said, ‘Among the prophets *there did not arise*, but among the kings there did arise.’”

See M *Yoma* 5:2, *Sotah* 9:12; BT *Sotah* 48b; *Targum* on Song of Songs 1:1; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:3; Rashi on *Bava Batra* 75a, s.v. *oy lah le-ottah bushah*; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:45; *Zohar* 2:154a. On prophecy among Moses de León, Joseph Gikatilla, and others who may have been part of the circle of authorship of the *Zohar*, see Mopsik, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 6–8 (Hebrew pagination).

The passage “Distant drawn near... Near distanced” is absent from V24, O17, L39, MS4, Th, and V. The addition—its original provenance undetermined—fills in an apparent lacuna.

91. Rabbi Bun... The author represents Rabbi Bun as similar to Elimelech, leaving town in anticipation of judgment for the place’s sinfulness, in recognition that he cannot change their ways. Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*. On this story, see Greenstein, *Roads to Utopia*, 166–68.

92. singsong... Rendering the unusual form רִנְנָא (*rinena*), which may have been chosen to rhyme with the term תְּנִינָא (*tenina*), “learning.” See Targum Job 3:7: “May that night be a desolation, may the רִנְנָא (*rinena*), song, of the תְּרַנְגוּל בְּרָא (*tarnegol bera*), wild rooster, not be heard praising in it.” The word בְּרָא (*bera*), “wild” (or “field”) may have been creatively misread by the author of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth to mean “offspring,” in anticipation of the upcoming homily.

“Studying in the sing-song of Torah” renders דְּאוּרִייתָא לְעֵי בְּרִנְנָא (*la’ei be-rinena d’oraita*) but could also be translated as “studying the song of Torah.” Torah is referred to as “song” in BT *Eruvin* 18b; *Megillah* 32a. Cf. BT *Hagigah* 12b.

93. Nest... Teshuvah (Repentance) The person learning proceeds to interpret the verse word-by-word in terms of each word's theosophic significance. *Teshuvah* is a common designation for *Binah*.

On the kabbalistic interpretation of this verse's commandment, see *Bahir* 74 (104-5); Naḥmanides and Recanati on Deuteronomy 22:6; *Zohar* 1:158a; 2:8a, 93a; 3:254a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 338-39; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 33b, pp. 7a-b; *Hullin* 142a, pp. 32c-d.

94. On the way... The speaker interprets this phrase as alluding to Rachel, who died *on the way* (Genesis 35:19; 48:7) and who, according to tradition, remains there mourning over the exile of Israel. Rachel signifies *Shekhinah*, who shines constantly—illuminating the way for the righteous, Joseph and Benjamin. There are two aspects of *Yesod*, known as Righteous One. Joseph attains the rank of Righteous One above, while Benjamin represents "righteous one" below. Once *Shekhinah* has guided the righteous through the night, they are shepherded by *Tif'eret*, signified by both daylight and Jacob.

On the dual position of righteous ones, see *Zohar* 1:153b, 155a-b, 245b; 2:211b, 259a (*Heikh*).

In rabbinic literature, Joseph is granted the title Righteous One in recognition of his resisting the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. See Genesis 39; BT *Yoma* 35b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 93:7; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:3, 6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim*, 460. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Noah* 5, *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noah* 4, and *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 38, which cite Amos 2:6.

In kabbalistic literature, because of his sexual purity Joseph attained the level of *Yesod*, the divine phallus and site of the covenant. *Yesod's* epithet as Righteous One is based on Proverbs 10:25: וצדיק יסוד עולם (*Ve-tsaddiq yesod olam*). The verse literally means *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation* but is understood as *The righteous one is the*

foundation of the world. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

Benjamin is the only other one of Jacob's sons who is accorded the title Righteous. See BT *Yoma* 12a, *Megillah* 26a (and Rashi, ad loc.), *Sotah* 37a, *Bava Batra* 11a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 3. On the identification of daylight with Jacob, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 2:3.

[95.](#) כָּל (kol), **All...** *Yesod*, also known as Righteous One, Life of the Worlds, is called *kol*, "all," because He includes the entire flow of emanation and conveys it to *Shekhinah*.

On *Yesod* as *kol*, "all," see *Bahir* 14 (22); Naḥmanides on Genesis 24:1; *Zohar* 1:17a, 31a, 129a, 130b; 2:40b, 134b, 157a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 129; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381; *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 12 (14-15), 56 (69).

On various senses of the title חי העולמים (*Hei ha-Olamim*), “Life of the Worlds,” see Daniel 12:7; *Mekhilta, Pisha* 16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5; *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:9; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §275; *Bahir* 123 (180); *Zohar* 1:4b, 132a, 135b, 164a, 167b, 193b, 207b, 211b; 2:138a; 245b (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 123; idem, *Sefer Maskiyot Kesef*, 21; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 49 (60), 55–56 (68), 58 (71); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 60b.

96. twelve supernal tribes Within *Malkhut*.

97. garment for the body The nation of Israel in this world is like a garment for the *Shekhinah* and Her twelve supernal tribes above. Cf. Mopsik.

98. mother... Signifying *Shekhinah*, sent into exile on account of Israel’s sins.

On the exile of *Shekhinah*, see *Mekhilta, Pisha* 14, in the name of Rabbi Akiva: “Wherever Israel went in exile, *Shekhinah*, as it were, went into exile with them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And when in the future they return, *Shekhinah*, as it were, will return with them.”

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 84; JT *Ta’anit* 1:1, 64a; BT *Megillah* 29a; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:54; *Zohar* 1:68b–69a, 120b, 134a, 149a, 159b, 182a, 211a; 2:2a–b, 41b (*Piq*), 82a, 2:189b, 216b; 3:2b, 6a–b, 74a–b, 114b–115a, 199a, 297b; ZH 47d (*MhN, Rut*), 65b (*ShS*), 80d, 84a (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 122–23; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 73–74 (92–93); Tishby, *Wisdom* 1:382–85.

On the verse in Isaiah, see *Zohar* 1:237a; 2:189b; 3:8a, 74b–75a, 102b, 115a. The full verse reads: *Thus says YHVH: Where is your mother’s bill of divorce by which I sent her away? Or which of My creditors was it to whom I sold you off? Behold, it is for your sins that you were sold, and for your crimes your mother was sent away.*

99. sign of compassion... One might construe this commandment in terms of an effort to mitigate the mother bird's grief, shooing her away so that she would not see the seizing of her chicks and eggs. Clearly, however, this commandment is not interested in the mother bird's feelings.

M *Berakhot* 5:3 warns: "If a man said [in his prayer], 'To a bird's nest do your mercies extend,'... he should be silenced." In the talmudic treatment of this passage (33b), Rabbi Yose son of Zebida explains that such a man "transforms the attributes of the blessed Holy One into [expressions of] mercy, when they are nothing but decrees."

Rashi, s.v. *middotav*, comments that God enacted this and other commandments solely "to impose legal decrees upon Israel, so that they might know that they are His servants—followers of His commandments and the full extent of His laws—even in those matters to which Satan and the idolaters might retort, asking, 'What benefit do these serve?'"

See BT *Megillah* 25a and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *mi-penei*; Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Berakhot* 5:3. Cf. Ibn Ezra and Nahmanides on Deuteronomy 22:6–7; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:48; *Sefer ha-Hinnukh*, #545.

100. destroyed my house... The true meaning of these verses concerns the destruction of the Temple, the exile of the Jewish people, and the sorrow of *Shekhinah*.

Shekhinah's lament is derived from BT *Berakhot* 3a. There, God blames the Jewish people's sinfulness as cause for the sacking of the Temple, whereas the Zoharic version emphasizes the catastrophe and pain. Cf. Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 2:495.

101. until she finally goes... The verse is emphatic about sending off the mother bird to indicate that in fulfilling the divine injunction one sends her off repeatedly,

showing no concern for her emotional state or the welfare of her offspring. Once successful, the person takes the nestlings with impunity, and can expect his reward as promised: *And you will prolong your days*. The utter lack of compassion demonstrated in this practice proves that Divine Compassion is directed toward Israel in exile, not to a bird and her eggs.

“Covey” renders the word קוטרָא (*qutra*); alternatively, “cluster, pack.” See JT *Megillah* 3:6, 74b; *Shabbat* 7:2, 10c; Jastrow; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*.

102. ***prolong your days...*** The homily concludes through the tying together of its various strands. Scripture promises that the one who fulfills the injunction to shoo away the mother bird will receive longevity in return. This extension of one’s days derives from the six primordial days, which are here called *banim*, *offspring*, signifying the central *sefirot*—*Hesed* to *Yesod*. They also correspond to the first six of the thirteen attributes of mercy—as delineated in BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17b—recited as supplication for God’s mercy. Under the influence of later kabbalistic teaching, it has become normative to recite them repeatedly on the Day of Atonement, fast days, and other occasions. The two Temples were destroyed as a result of Israel’s sinfulness, but through the performance of the commandment involving the mother bird, one elicits mercy from the six central *sefirot*—effectively, a performance of the attributes of mercy. The conclusion is paradoxical inasmuch as the voice that Rabbi Bun has heard denied the connection of divine mercy to the performance of the Torah’s command, yet divine mercy is elicited on behalf of Israel through that very same performance.

God’s “thirteen attributes” of compassion are derived from Exodus 34:6–7: *YHVH, YHVH! A compassionate and gracious God, long-suffering, and abounding in kindness and faithfulness, keeping kindness for the thousandth*

generation, bearing crime, trespass, and sin; yet He does not wholly acquit, inflicting the guilt of fathers upon sons and upon sons of sons, to the third and fourth generations. In kabbalistic thought, these attributes are often associated with *Keter*, the realm of total Compassion. In certain strata of the *Zohar*, *Keter* is designated as אַרִיךְ אַנְפִּין (*Arikh Anpin*), “long-suffering; slow to anger; taking a long time for his nostrils to flare.” See Ibn Ezra (short) on Exodus 34:6; *Zohar* 2:176b (*SdTs*); 3:129a-b (*IR*); Vol. 5, pp. 152-53, n. 38.

103. three clusters... The biblical terms *wisdom, understanding, and knowledge* refer respectively to the upper sefirotic triad of *Hokhmah, Binah, and Da’at*, by which all was eventually created. “Clusters” renders קִיטְרִין (*qitrin*), “knots, bonds, nexuses.” Sometimes in Kabbalah, each of the *sefirot* is treated as a composite of ten *sefirot* within, or as bearing the influence of preceding *sefirot*.

On the creative function of *wisdom, understanding, and knowledge*, see BT *Berakhot* 55a; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 6; *Shemot Rabbah* 48:4. These sources all ascribe knowledge of these creative potencies to Bezalel, who fashioned the Dwelling (or Tabernacle)—the model for the Temple.

See *Zohar* 2:14b (*MhN*), 221a; *ZH* 3d-4a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 9. On *Tevunah*, see *Zohar* 2:14b (*MhN*), 221a; 3:64a, 290b (*IZ*); *ZH* 3d (*MhN*).

104. Cluster of faith... In this chain of being, the most recondite *sefirot* are manifest within the human being, and subsequently through all creatures. A hierarchical continuity of intelligence pervades all reality.

105. not knowing... The pathos of the scene is exacerbated by the bird’s consciousness, her awareness of her plight and her perplexity about the possibility of salvation. But just as understanding extends to all creatures, so does divine compassion; the blessed Holy One

is stimulated by the bird's angel to take care of His children, the Jewish people.

On angels presiding over all aspects of earthly existence, see 2 Enoch 19:3-5; 3 Enoch 14:3-4; *Bereshit Rabbah* 10:6; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:10; *Zohar* 1:34a; 2:15b (*MhN*), 30b, 80b; 3:86a; *ZH* 8b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 181, 294; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 135.

106. Then the voice proceeded... This is apparently the same voice that Rabbi Bun had heard before. Now it affirms Rabbi Bun's essential message regarding the blessed Holy One's concern for all those sauntering without direction. Ultimately, he forgives all of them for the sins that had sent them rambling.

107. Let the bird dwell outside... The bird's suffering—losing her fledglings and being exiled from home—is purposeful, arousing compassion from the blessed Holy One. As a result, the one who causes this torment by sending off the mother bird, ultimately prompts a profound repair for people exiled everywhere. This is why Scripture provides its extraordinary promise to the one who fulfills this precept. Cf. Englander.

108. If I have come... just to hear this... Similar exclamations appear in rabbinic literature and often in the *Zohar*. See BT *Berakhot* 16a, 24b; *Shabbat* 41a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 6:2; *Qohelet Zuta* 5:17; *Zohar* 1:2a, 129b (*MhN*), 148b, 164b, 235b, 240a; 2:99a, 121b-122a, 193b; 3:26a, 121a, 203a.

109. tracing of wisdom... "Tracing" renders the word *tufsa*, which derives from Greek *tupos*, "form, shape, figure, pattern, outline, mold, matrix, configuration, frame, template, formula." See *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178-80.

On the human form as a template for all other creatures, see Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 61.

On birds' knowledge of the healing power of herbs, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 22:4.

110. it will benefit you... The seemingly mysterious voice interprets the third-person grammatical inflection of the irregular verb, explaining that it is not God personally providing longevity to the person who enacts the ritual of sending away the mother bird, but rather the very act itself serves as a mechanism eliciting compassion upon the world and upon the individual.

111. kissed him... The kiss at the end of a homily variously marks its approbation, an act of recognition between members of the kabbalistic fraternity, or even mystical alignment between the two participants. See Hecker, "Kissing Kabbalists," 182–84.

112. corruption of justice... Rabbi Yannai correlates *the judging of the judges* with *there was a famine in the land*. When the judges are found to be lacking integrity, famine comes to the world.

M *Avot* 5:8 indicates that famine is the punishment for a variety of transgressions, whereas corrupt justice is said to be punished with the sword. On famine coming as a result of corrupt judges, see *Tanḥuma, Shemini* 9.

The סבא (*Sava*), "Old Man," is one of the *Zohar's* mysterious characters, frequently appearing as a donkey-driver. Here he is merely referred to as (literally) "that Old Man." The word (*Sava*), rendered here as "Old Man," was also equivalent to "father"; in modern Hebrew, it has taken on the primary meaning of "grandfather."

113. sufficient food in the world... A sign that justice is being preserved; consequently, even the fields of the poor provide abundantly. Famine is a sign of injustice, specifically the injustice perpetrated by judges.

See *Midrash Mishlei* on 13:23 in the name of Rabbi Shimon son of Yoḥai: "In this world, the rich man devours the poor man; but in the time to come, the blessed Holy One will lay this claim against him, as is said: *From the*

plunder of the poor, from the groans of the needy, now will I rise,' says YHVH (Psalms 12:6)."

The MT has preserved an extra letter א (*alef*) in the word ראשׁים (*rashim*), so while it actually denotes ראשׁים (*rashim*), *poor* [or: *destitute*], it can be read as *heads*, meaning *leaders*. The author of our text uses this misreading to consider the fate of corrupt leaders and judges in a time of famine.

114. the poor are vessels... One might infer from the verse in Proverbs that the poor die for others' transgressions. Instead, their suffering is a signal to God regarding injustice in the world. Those who are *swept away* are those who have ruled *without justice*, that is, have corrupted justice.

On the poor as God's vessels, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 7:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 24:5; *Zohar* 1:10b; 2:86b; 3:9a; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 38:1; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1455, n. 120; 1463, nn. 288, 308.

Exodus 22:22 reads in full (hyperliterally): *If you abuse, abuse him, when he cries, cries out to Me, I will hear, hear his outcry*. Exodus 22:26 reads: *When he cries out to Me, I will hear, for I am compassionate*. As for Exodus 22:23, it is here applied to God's punishment of the wicked, who are responsible for the famine.

115. according to the letter of the law... This renders לאמתו (*le-amito*), "according to the truth of the matter." Rabbi Yannai considers both positive and negative meanings for the term, while emphasizing that manifesting the true intent of the law may lie in its abrogation and extension. See next note.

116. As with Abba... Sometimes the true intent of the law requires punctilious observance, while other times a right-minded jurist must violate that narrow definition to attain the law's intent. Thus, during a time of promiscuity, lack of concern for the poor, or other transgressions, one

must “erect a fence for the Torah” to ensure that its core values are being sustained.

See BT *Yevamot* 90b, in the name of Rabbi El’azar son of Ya’akov: “I heard that a court may mete out lashes and punishments even without any Torah [authority for their rulings]; not, however, for the purpose of transgressing the words of the Torah, but in order to erect a fence for the Torah. It once happened that a man rode on horseback on the Sabbath in the days of the Greeks. He was brought before the court and was stoned; not because he deserved this penalty, but because the exigencies of the hour demanded it. And another incident occurred with a man who had intercourse with his wife under a fig tree; and he was brought before the court and flogged; not because he deserved such a penalty, but because the exigencies of the hour demanded it.” See BT *Sanhedrin* 46a.

See also BT *Bava Metsi’a* 30b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “‘Jerusalem was destroyed only because they gave judgments there in accordance with biblically ordained law.’ Were they then to have judged in accordance with untrained arbitrators? Instead, say the following: [Jerusalem was destroyed only] because they based their judgments on strict interpretations of the Torah, and did not go beyond the letter of the law.” On the Talmud’s use of this “supererogatory” approach to its own legal system, see BT *Yevamot* 90b; *Sanhedrin* 27a, 45b-46a; *Niddah* 13b; JT *Ḥagigah* 2:2, 78a; *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 6; *Megillat Ta’anit*, 336; *Entsiklopedyah Talmudit* 8:521-26; Elon, *Jewish Law*, vol. 2, 515-16, n. 94; Ben-Menahem, *Judicial Deviation in Talmudic Law*, 82-84, 142-49; see next note.

On the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages, different rulers ceded a range of powers of self-rule to local Jewish communities and their leaders. Rabbis Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba) and Asher ben Yeḥiel (Rosh) were granted considerable authority in this respect, including the permission to impose corporal punishment.

On the various forms of corporal punishment administered by medieval Jewish authorities as justified on the basis of exigency jurisdiction, see e.g., Maimonides, *Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 24:4-5; Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba), *Responsa* 4:311; 5:238; Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh), *Responsa* 18:13; *Tur Hoshen Mishpat* 2 and *Beit Yosef*, ad loc.; Assaf, *Ha-Onshim aharei hatimat ha-Talmud*, 61-101.

On the *Zohar's* critique of laxity in sexual mores in Castile and the critique of contemporary Castilian leadership for failing to censure transgressors, see sources cited above, [note 84](#).

117. no fence for himself... Rabbi Yannai expands the metaphor of the word סֵד (seyag), “fence, hedge,” to include protection from prosecutors in this world and the next. Forms of protection in this world include descendants or temporal rulers, while a record of good deeds insulates one from punishment in the world to come.

On good works serving as a protection in the world to come, see *M Avot* 3:12. On progeny as a shield after one's death, see *Zohar* 3:188a; *ZH* 89c (*MhN Rut*).

Normally in this translation, the term עֵלְמָא דְאַתִּי (*alma de-atei*) is rendered as “the world that is coming,” but here it is rendered as “world to come” because the context shows little reworking beyond the ancient rabbinic framework (in which there is a temporal divide between this world and the next), rather than the medieval, mystical paradigm (which recognizes a world that is “constantly coming, never ceasing”). See *Zohar* 3:290b (*IZ*); Vol. 1, p. 4, n. 19.

118. אִישׁ (ish), a man... The use of the word אִישׁ (*ish*), *a man*, to designate Elimelech indicates that he was a senior figure who could rule justly and independently. His merits sufficed to protect him and his fellow townsfolk. Esau stands in contrast, the very model of wickedness.

On אִישׁ (*ish*), *a man*, as connoting a great or prominent man, see *Tanḥuma*, *Shemini* 9; Ibn Janah, *Kitab al-Utsul*, s.v. *ish*; Rashi on Numbers 13:3, 1 Samuel 1:11, and Isaiah

2:9; Radak, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *ish*; Eleazar of Worms on Ruth 1:2. For other interpretations, see *Matoq mi-Devash*; Englander.

119. place of the Great Sanhedrin... Throughout rabbinic literature, *water* is interpreted as a symbol for Torah study. In BT *Bava Qamma* 60b, s.v. *asher be-sha'ar*, Rashi explains that *the gate of Bethlehem* in the verse from 2 Samuel signifies the “Sanhedrin, the elders at the gate.” Elimelech’s transgression, then, becomes an abandonment not only of his leadership role, but also of the benefits of being in a site from which Torah originates.

120. But you, Rabbi... Rabbi Yannai contrasts Rabbi Bun with Elimelech, saying that the latter fled the fount of Torah, while Rabbi Yannai left his town to seek out the blessing of Torah.

See M *Avot* 4:14: “Rabbi Nehorai said, ‘Exile yourself to a place of Torah...’”

121. [Rabbi Bun] No name is offered for the prior speaker or for this respondent, but it may be intended to be Rabbi Bun because he is again the protagonist of the upcoming story.

122. no one goading... In many of the *Zohar*’s narratives, a rabbi will be accompanied by a mysterious figure serving as a donkey driver. These characters are apparently innocuous, even ostensibly uneducated, but inevitably they turn out to be great kabbalists. Here—as elsewhere—it is a child, often identified in the *Zohar* as the son of the great Rabbi Hamnuna.

“Goading” renders טעין (*ta’ein*), derived from the noun טעיא (*tayya’a*), “Arab; Arab caravaner,” itself derived from the name of the Arabian tribe *Ṭayyī’*. In the *Zohar*, *tayya’a* usually indicates one of various wandering donkey-drivers encountered by the Companions on the road. On the word טעין (*ta’ein*), “goad,” see Radak on Genesis 45:17; idem, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *t’n*; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, nn. 42, 46; idem, *Kabbalah*, 227.

On the figure of the donkey-driver, see M *Qiddushin* 4:14, in the name of Abba Guryya: “One should not teach one’s son to be a donkey-driver or a camel-driver, or a barber or a sailor, or a herdsman or a shopkeeper, for their craft is the craft of robbers. Rabbi Yehudah says in his name, ‘Most donkey-drivers are wicked...’”

See JT *Ta’anit* 1:4, 64b; BT *Berakhot* 56b, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 26b, *Yevamot* 120b, *Bava Batra* 73b, *Sanhedrin* 110a, *Hullin* 7a, *Niddah* 14a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; *Zohar* 1:5b, 238a; 2:45b, 94b-114a, 145b, 155b-157a; 3:21a-23a, 186b; *ZH* 83a-d (*MhN, Rut*); *TZ* 23, 69a; Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur*, 248-54; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, nn. 42, 46; idem, *Kabbalah*, 227; Idel, “Defusim shel pe’ilut go’elet,” 254-56, esp. n. 14; Schwartz, *Ha-Re’ayon ha-Meshiḥi be-Hagut Yisrael*, 117-21; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod ve-Sod ha-Parshanut*, 76-79; Benarroch, *Sodo shel Yanuqa*, 77-80. Cf. BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 25a-b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3.

On the figure of the child, see BT *Hagigah* 13a; *Zohar* 1:70a-b, 238b-240b; 3:171a-b, 186a-192a, 204b-206a; *ZH* 48a (*MhN, Rut*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 197-223; Oron, “Motiv ha-Yanuqa u-Mashma’uto be-sefer ha-Zohar”; Benarroch, *Sodo shel Yanuqa*; idem, *Sava ve-Yanuqa*. On the figure of the wise fool, see Goldberg, “The Foolishness of the Wise.” The prophet Elijah returns to earth as a *tayya’a* in BT *Berakhot* 6b, and as an ערבי (*aravi*), “Arab,” in *Rut Zuta* 1:20; 4:11.

123. You’ve incited harm upon yourself... See M *Avot* 3:4, in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina son of Ḥakhinai: “One who walks on the way alone... is liable to the death penalty.”

In BT *Eruvin* 54a the female sage Beruriah speaks of the need to have Torah ingrained in one’s 248 limbs, similar to the child’s concern here. On the importance of engaging in Torah while on a journey, see Deuteronomy

6:7; *Zohar* 1:7a, 58b, 69b-70a, 76a, 87a, 115b. A similar scenario occurs in *Zohar* 1:69b.

124. They sat down in a field... The group remedies Rabbi Bun's deficiency by gathering under a tree. When the members of the *Zohar's* mystical fraternity sit down somewhere to exchange words of Torah, their chosen site and the brief details supplied are often loaded with kabbalistic significance. Here, a tree in a field marks the conjunction of the masculine and feminine potencies of Divinity, and the kabbalists locate themselves at this juncture to partake of the mystical harmony there.

See above, [note 57](#). On the significance of sitting to study Torah and topography, see Hecker, *Mystical Bodies*, 121-25.

125. One who sets out on a journey... Rabbi Ḥiyya understands the brightening of the path of the righteous as a direct result of their exchange of words of Torah while traveling. He proceeds to interpret the verse's details in a hyperliteral fashion to demonstrate this.

126. הולך ואור (*Holekh va-or*), *He walks with light...* The formulation in Proverbs is poetic, while Rabbi Ḥiyya exploits the simple, straightforward meaning of הולך ואור (*Holekh va-or*), *shining ever brighter*. This yields a reflection on the group's own activities of walking with *light*, namely Torah.

On the significance of walking in the *Zohar*, see Greenstein, *Roads to Utopia*.

127. עד נכון היום (*Ad nekhon ha-yom*), *Until the fullness of day...* The syntax of the phrase, in which *fullness* is construed as a portion of the day, allows Rabbi Ḥiyya to explain that *fullness* signifies *Shekhinah*.

This translation of the sentence follows V6 and Venice, but V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, Thiengen (and *OY* with a slight discrepancy) read: "until *Shekhinah* is arrayed together with him. And we do not learn from him: 'Wherever there are words of Torah....'" This version allows Rabbi Ḥiyya to

continue with his rebuke of Rabbi Bun through his homily, by qualifying a well-known rabbinic teaching. Rabbi Ḥiyya warns Rabbi Bun that one cannot simply learn Torah on one's own and expect the accompaniment of the *Shekhinah*; rather, one must be engaged in active discourse with one's fellow in order to induce *Shekhinah*'s descent.

On the *Shekhinah*'s dwelling even with a single individual who is studying Torah, see M *Avot* 3:6; BT *Berakhot* 6a. The verse in Exodus concludes: *I will come to you and bless you.*

128. Torah is medicinal... See the *baraita* in BT *Qiddushin* 30b: “*ושמתם* (*ve-samtem*), *And you shall set [these words upon your hearts and upon your soul]* (Deuteronomy 11:18, from the second paragraph of the *Shema*)—*sam tam*, a perfect remedy. The Torah is comparable to an elixir of life. This may be analogized to a man who struck his son with a mighty blow, and applied a bandage to his wound, saying to him: ‘My son! As long as this bandage is on your wound you can eat and drink to your heart’s content, and bathe in hot or cold water, without concern. But if you remove it, it will break out into sores.’ Thus did the blessed Holy One say to Israel: ‘My children! I created the Evil Impulse, but I also created the Torah as its antidote. If you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into his hand.’”

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 45. On the proper recitation of *Shema*, see below, [notes 139-43](#), [710-19](#), [742-45](#); Vol. 10, pp. 568, 572.

Proverbs 3 opens: *My son, do not forget my Torah, and let your heart keep my commandments*, enabling Rabbi Yehudah to understand *Torah* as the subject of verse 8. On the latter verse, see JPS, Fox, Alter.

129. 248 words... Rabbi Nehorai extends the medical metaphor by asserting that each and every word of the *Shema* has a restorative effect for each corresponding limb in the body.

On the correspondence of the number of words in *Shema* and limbs of the body, see *Tanḥuma*, *Qedoshim* 6; *Shibbolei ha-Leget ha-Shalem*, 15; *Maḥazor Vitri*, 65; El'azar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ*, 320; Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne, *Sefer ha-Eshkol*, 9; Judah ben Yaḳar, *Peirush ha-Tefilot ve-ha-Berakhot*, 30–31; *Peirushei Siddurei ha-Tefillah la-Roqeaḥ*, 297; Abraham ben Nathan ha-Yarḥi, *Sefer ha-Manhig*, *Dinei Tefillah*, 33; *Kol Bo*, 9; Rabbenu Yonah, *Sefer ha-Yir'ah*, 8a; *Zohar* 1:24a (TZ), 101a (*Mat*, standard editions), 253a (*Hash*); 3:263a (*Piq*); Moses de León, *Maskiyyot ha-Kesef*, 26; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 84 (107); David Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham*, 77; Wolfson, “Dimmui Antropomorphi,” 161 n. 62.

On the 248 limbs of the human body (that is, joints or bones covered with flesh and sinews), see M *Oholot* 1:8; BT *Nedarim* 32b; *Makkot* 23b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:1; *Pesiḳta de-Rav Kahana* 12:1; El'azar of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah la-Roqeaḥ*, 679; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 132, 262.

130. only 245 words... The *Shema* consists of three paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21; Numbers 15:37–41. Together with the rabbinic formula *Barukh shem kevod malkhuto le-olam va'ed*, “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever,” inserted after the first line, it includes 245 words, not 248.

131. repeat three words... The repetition of three words does not constitute a normative interruption of one's concentration in prayer. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, traditions circulated in Germany and France to resolve the numerical discrepancy, arising from the midrashic claim of correspondence between words and limbs. The custom had developed in Ashkenaz to say נאמן אל מלך (*El melekh ne'eman*), “God is a faithful king,” before the *Shema*. Because the acronym of these three words spells *Amen*, they were construed as a plausible, albeit unusual, response to the preceding blessing. This practice elicited

strong protests from Nahmanides and subsequent Spanish rabbinic authorities. The solution offered here is a novel one (notwithstanding the child's assertion that it was instituted by the rabbis), attempting to attain the 248 words while avoiding the halakhic problems of the Ashkenazi practice.

In addition to the perceived need to attain the number of 248, the rabbis instituted a requirement that one conclude the *Shema* by adding the word אמת (*emet*), "truth," at the end without interruption as an affirmation of Jeremiah's assertion that ויהוה אלהים אמת (*va-YHVH Elohim emet*), *And YHVH is the God of truth*. See Jeremiah 10:10. When the Mishnah establishes the places during the *Shema* at which a worshiper may be interrupted, Rabbi Yehudah contends that one may not interrupt between the end of the third paragraph and the succeeding blessing, beginning with the word *emet*, "truth." See M *Berakhot* 2:2; BT *Berakhot* 14a-b; *Shabbat* 55a, in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina: "The seal of the blessed Holy One is Truth." See also BT *Yoma* 69a, *Sanhedrin* 64a.

On אמן (*amen*) as an acronym for *El melekh ne'eman*, see BT *Shabbat* 119b, and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *amar rabbi Ḥanina*; *Zohar* 3:285b. Cf. *Midrash Aggadah* on Deuteronomy 5:11, where *El melekh ne'eman* is added to the text of the Ten Commandments to attain a sum of 613 words.

The translation follows V24, MS4, Thiengen, and Venice, which indicate that one repeats the words אלהיכם יהוה אני (*Ani YHVH Eloheikhem*), *I am YHVH, your God*. V6, O17, L39, MS3, O18, and *Or Yaqar* all have יהוה אלהיכם אמת (*Adonai Eloheikhem emet*), in accord with the emerging normative practice. See *TZ* 10 (25b); Moses ben Jacob (of Kiev), *Sefer Shushan Sodot* (Korets, 1779), 8b–9a.

See *Zohar* 1:101a (*Mat*, standard edition), *ZH* 78a (*MhN, Rut*), and *TZ* 10 (25b), which record *Adonai Eloheikhem emet* as the words to be repeated. It is possible that Moses de León also adopted two different positions: different

manuscript versions of *Shushan Edut* record each of the possibilities. MS Oxford 1947 38 says *ani YHVH Eloheikhem* are repeated, while MS NY 1887 15a indicates that one should repeat *Adonai Eloheikhem emet*. (This latter text affirms that it is the divine body that is being perfected, rather than the human body.) De León's *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 84-85 (107-8), has an unusual halakhic discussion affirming that one should repeat the words *Adonai Eloheikhem emet*, and it appears that the halakhic emphasis on joining *Adonai Eloheikhem* with *emet* served as an impetus to repeat those three words, ultimately leading to inconsistency even within the manuscripts that first recommend repeating *Ani YHVH Eloheikhem*.

Texts from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain indicate that the practice there was to repeat *ani YHVH Eloheikhem*. This was adopted by Shne'ur Zalman of Liadi, the first rebbe of Lubavitch, for an individual; and it was instituted as the practice for the public prayer service by Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the last rebbe of Lubavitch. See *Siddur Rabbeinu ha-Zagen*, 90, and nn. 121-22.

On the different practices regarding the repetition of three words after *Shema*, see Nahmanides, *Hiddushei Ramban* on *Berakhot* 11b; Abraham of Narbonne, *Sefer ha-Eshkol, Hilkhhot Tefillah u-Qri'at Shema*, 5:11; Recanati as cited in Maharam Alashqar, *Responsa* 60; Meir Halevi Abulafia as cited in David Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham*, p. 77-78; Moses ben Jacob of Kiev, *Shoshan Sodot*, 8b-9a; Simeon ben Tsemah Duran, *Responsa* 2:236; Joseph Caro, *Beit Yosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 61:3; Buber's note 7 in *Midrash Aggadah* on Deuteronomy 5:11; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Ta-Shma, "El Melekh Ne'eman"; Katz, "Hakhra'ot ha-Zohar bi-dvar Halakhah," 39-43; Wolfson, "Dimmui Antropomorphi," 161-63 and nn. 62, 66, 67.

132. Ten Commandments... Rabbi Akiva's version adds to the child's argument with the correspondence to

the Ten Commandments, and by contending that the three words to be repeated are יהוה אלהיכם אמת (*Adonai Eloheikhem emet*)—the last two words of the *Shema* and the first word of the succeeding blessing, *Emet ve-yatsiv*.

On recitation of the *Shema* and the Ten Commandments, see the teaching ascribed to Rav Ba in JT *Berakhot* 1:4, 3c: “‘The Ten Commandments are the very essence of *Shema*.’ Rav Matnah and Rabbi Shemu’el son of Nahman both said, ‘It would have been appropriate to read the Ten Commandments daily. And why don’t we read them? Because of the claim of the heretics—to prevent them from saying that these alone were given to Moses at Sinai.’”

See M *Tamid* 5:1; JT *Berakhot* 1:4, 3c; BT *Berakhot* 12a; *Otsar ha-Midrashim*, 489; Freundel, *Why We Pray*, 30–50; Tabory, “Prayers and Berakhot,” 291–92. On the three words to be repeated, see preceding note.

133. they instituted three blessings... The child resumes his discourse, explaining the position that his father had rejected: that in the statutory prayer (the *Amidah*), the composers of the liturgy instituted three introductory blessings and three concluding blessings, as well as three names of God at the beginning and ending of the recitation of the *Shema*.

134. without the congregation... With out hearing the repetition of the final three words during the public service, one cannot completely fulfill the injunction regarding *Shema*’s 248 words.

There are sixteen terms of praise that follow the *Shema*, at the beginning of the morning blessing that succeeds the *Shema*. After the first one, *emet*, “truth,” the next fifteen are all joined with the letter ם (*vav*), “and.” It is not clear how the recitation of these fifteen *vavs* serves as a substitute for a full 248-word recital of *Shema*, but the prayer commentary ascribed to Eleazar of Worms indicates that these fifteen times six—the numerical value of *vav*—equals ninety, corresponding to the word צדק (*tsedeq*), *just*, in Psalms 17:1;

the letter צ (*tsadi*) at the beginning of the word has the numerical value of 90. *Midrash Tehillim* 17:6 explains as follows: “שמעוה (Shim’ah), Hear, YHVH, what is just—this signifies the recitation of *Shema*.” Alternatively, as suggested by Joseph Caro in *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 61:3, the number 90 corresponds to the numerical value of three iterations of YHVH, plus four for the number of letters of the name. These explanations are more convoluted than the *Zohar*’s usual style.

Cf. Judah son of Yaqar, *Peirush ha-Tefillot ve-ha-Berakhot*, 30–32; *Peirushei Siddur Tefillah la-Roqeah*, 298–99; “Sefer ha-Navon,” 118, 127–28, 132–33.

135. A crooked thing... Ultimately, there is no replacement for praying with the community, because it is only with the prayer leader’s repetition of the final three words that one attains the sum of 248.

On the verse from Ecclesiastes, BT *Berakhot* 26a teaches: “A crooked thing cannot be made straight—this denotes one who omitted the *Shema* of the evening or the *Shema* of the morning, or the prayer of the evening or the prayer of the morning. Nor can the lack be counted—this denotes one whose companions formed a group to perform a *mitsvah* and he was not included with them.”

136. Expound your verse... A nearly identical expression appears in rabbinic literature. There too it is addressed to children, whose casual utterances of biblical verses constitute a form of divination.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 15a–b, *Gittin* 56a, 68a, *Ḥullin* 95b; *Ester Rabbah* 7:13; Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 195–98.

137. [48a]... The printed editions all note a caesura at this point, indicating that the child’s homily continues “below,” at 80d where Rabbi Bun relays the child’s teaching. There is, however, another homily of the child that floats alone at *ZH* 48a; and a number of editors indicate that it, too, is continued “below.” The Vilna Gaon

reconstructed the text, moving back and forth between 77d and 48a, concluding on 80d–81a, and then returning to the regular flow of the text on 78a. This translation follows the reconstruction proposed by Benarroch.

See Munkacz at 1:79a; 2:30b; *Sefer Midrash Rut ha-Ḥadash (Hadrat Qodesh)* 8a–b; *Nitsotsei Zohar* 48a, 78a; Scholem; Mopsik, p. 77, n. 118; *Matoq mi-Devash* on 48a, 80c; Benarroch, “The Mystery of Unity,” 233 and n. 7.

Moses Cordovero remarks upon the incomplete and sometimes fragmentary quality of available *Zohar* manuscripts. These brief statements are expanded in his comments on *Tiqqunei Zohar*: “I do not possess this book in its proper form and arrangement. And I have struggled greatly with the codices and arranged the book with great effort. And God knows the extent to which I regret [any mistakes I have made regarding] this book’s order because [my efforts] are intended only for the sake of heaven. May God forgive me if I have bungled some of the sequencing! But my intent was only to arrange the book appropriately.” See *Or Yaqar Tiqqunei Zohar* 2:81; *ibid.* 1:15; *Or Yaqar*, 5:9; 14:82, 89. On the problems of assembling the *Zohar*, see Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, 224–438, especially 232–65.

138. Witness me... The conventional construal of the phrase עֲנֵה בִי (*aneh vi*) is *testify against me*, with God rhetorically asking what excess burden He has imposed upon the Jewish people to make them so resistant to His call. Here, the child explains the verse midrashically as *witness Me* [or: *testify about Me*], becoming a petition that Israel attest God’s oneness through their study and prayer, particularly through the recital of the *Shema*.

139. Name of Forty-Two Names... Reciting each one of the paragraphs of the *Shema*, as delineated here with specific numbers of words, achieves a unification of Divinity. The Name of Forty-Two Words appears to be a reference to the Name of Forty-Two Letters that is

mentioned in the name of Rav, though not recorded, in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. According to Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam), this name consists of the first forty-two letters of the Torah, from the ב (bet) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning*, through the ב (vet) of בהו (*vohu*), *empty* (or *void*) (Genesis 1:2). By this complex divine name, the world came into being. Hai Gaon indicates that the Name of Forty-two Letters consists of the letters, שְׁקוּצִית, יְגִלְפוּק, חֲקִבְטוּנֶה, בְּטִרְצָתָהּ, אֲבִגִיתָן, קִרְעֵשְׁטָן נְגִדִיכֵשׁ, which are also the initial letters of the forty-two words constituting the prayer *Anna be-Khoah* (Please, with the Strength [of Your Right Hand's Greatness]).

Cordovero (Or *Yaqar*) describes how the name $\gamma\psi\nu\eta$ ("the engraved, explicit name") can be permuted into a forty-two-letter name; cf. *Zohar* 2:260a (*Heikh*). In *Zohar* 1:9a, Moses' staff is described as "radiating the engraved name in every direction with the radiance of the wise who engraved the explicit name in forty-two colors."

See Lewin, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim, Hagigah*, 23; *Tosafot, Hagigah* 11b, s.v. *ein doreshin*; *Zohar* 1:1a, 15b, 30a-b; 2:92b (*Piq*), 130b, 132b, 175b, 187a, 234a-b; 3:78a, 172b; *ZH* 42a; Bahya ben Asher on Exodus 2:12; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 21:12-13; *Ketem Paz* 1:46c-d; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 94-96; Scholem, "Rav Moshe mi-Burgos," 54-61; Idel, "Al ha-Peirushim," 161-62, n. 24; 167-68, n. 52. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:62.

On the Name of Forty-Two Letters and the forty-two words in the "second" paragraph of the *Shema*, see *Zohar* 3:263a (*Piq*); *ZH* 46d (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 83 (106); idem, *Maskiyot Kesef*, 28.

140. Name of Seventy-Two Words... The child reveals that other sections of the *Shema* also have numerical word-counts that correspond to divine names. Actually, the "paragraph" in Deuteronomy with seventy-two letters is not a natural literary paragraph; and the final paragraph of *Shema*, from Numbers, comprises only sixty-nine distinct

words—three words short of what is claimed here. The name of fifty letters is derived from *these words* (Deuteronomy 11:8) until the end of Deuteronomy 11:21.

On the seventy-two words and fifty words in these paragraphs of *Shema*, see *Zohar* 3:263a (*Piq*); *ZH* 46d, 90c (both *MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 84 (106); idem, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 29. On the name of seventy-two names, see above, [note 44](#).

The number fifty is frequently associated with *Binah*, based on a statement attributed to Rav and Shemu'el (BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, *Nedarim* 38a): “Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, and all were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).” See Naḥmanides, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, intro, 3-4; *Zohar* 1:3b.

[141. These four paragraphs...](#) The *Zohar* apparently innovates this division of the *Shema* into four paragraphs. The “twelve upper words” refers to the six words that begin the *Shema*, from Deuteronomy 6:4, along with the response *Barukh shem kevod malkhuto le-olam va-ed*, “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever,” added by the rabbis.

On the four paragraphs of *Shema*, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 84 (106). On the addition of “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever,” see above, [note 63](#).

[142. Whoever recites Shema fittingly...](#) See *Tanḥuma*, *Qedoshim* 6, in the name of Rabbi Mani: “Do not look askance at the recital of *Shema*, for there are 248 words in it like the sum of limbs in a human body... The blessed Holy One said, ‘If שמרת (*shamarta*), you are vigilant, regarding Mine [i.e., My 248 words]—reciting *Shema* as prescribed—then אשמר (*eshmor*), I shall guard, yours [i.e., your 248 limbs].”

On the “evil spirit” that fill the limbs of the one who does not recite *Shema*, cf. *Zohar* 3:186a.

[143.](#) **Three words...** Apparently, the competing impulses for each set of three words (actually repeating the last three words, versus joining the words *YHVH Eloheikhem* to *emet*) led to this contradiction regarding which three words to repeat, sometimes even within the same manuscript.

On these three words, see above, [note 131](#); *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

[144.](#) **Old Man...** A number of narratives link the Old Man (see above, [note 112](#)) with the child, either as his father or grandfather. On their relationship, see Benarroch, *Sava ve-Yanuqa*, 258–352.

While the text cites Ecclesiastes 9:15 as referring to a *poor, wise child*, MT reads: *a poor, wise man*; the change in wording, if intentional, seeks to identify the child of the story with the wisdom and messianic elements of the succeeding homilies. What follows are seven interpretations of the anecdote from Ecclesiastes.

The context of the verses in Ecclesiastes reads: *There was a small city, and few people within it, and a great king came against it [or: to it] and went round it and built great siegeworks against it. And there was found within it a poor, wise man who might have saved it [or: who saved it] with his wisdom, but nobody thought of that poor man.* Modern translators have interpreted some of these terms in multiple ways, and the upcoming homilies likewise choose variously among these options. See NJPS; Fox; Alter.

On discrepancies between MT and scriptural citations in the *Zohar*, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

[145.](#) **Noah's ark...** This begins a new series of homiletical interpretations of the passage in Ecclesiastes. The first one is fragmentary. Later in the series, a more developed homily likewise cites Noah and his family in the ark, which may be a fuller version of this one. The Vilna Gaon omits this homily, along with the opening from the Old Man. For another treatment of the anecdote, see *Zohar* 3:68b.

[146. \[80c\]](#)... The homilies regarding the *small city* continue here. See above, [n. 137](#).

[147. Rabbi Yitzhak](#)... This homily draws directly on two teachings of Rabbi Ammi son of Abba in BT *Nedarim* 32b, addressing the 248 limbs of the male Jewish body and the verses under consideration here: “[First] אַבְרָם (*Avram*), Abram, is written; then אַבְרָהָם (*Avraham*), Abraham. At first, God gave him mastery over two hundred forty-three limbs, and later over two hundred forty-eight, the additional ones being the two eyes, two ears, and the membrum.’ [The addition of the letter ה (*he*)—with the numerical value of five—accounts for the increased self-control after circumcision.] Rabbi Ammi son of Abba also said, ‘What is the meaning of *There was a small city...? A small city*—this is the body; *and few people within it*—these are the limbs; *and a great king came against it and went round it*—this signifies the Evil Impulse; *and built great siegeworks against it*—these are sins. *And there was found within it a poor, wise man*—this signifies the Good Impulse; *who saved it with his wisdom*—this refers to repentance and good deeds; *but nobody thought of that poor man*—for when the Evil Impulse gains dominion, none remember the Good Impulse.’”

See *Qohelet Rabbah* on Ecclesiastes 9:15. The latter part of Ecclesiastes 9:16 reads: *but the poor man’s wisdom is scorned, and his words are unheard*.

[148. little sister—Assembly of Israel](#)... Signifying the *Shekhinah*, who is called Holy City in Her relationship to *Tif’eret*, known as the blessed Holy One. She is *small* in relation to the blessed Holy One; and She has few dedicated inhabitants, such as the patriarchs.

“Assembly of Israel” is described as God’s sister, based on a midrashic reading of Song of Songs 5:2: *my sister, my beloved*. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Pequdei* 8; *Shemot Rabbah* 52:5; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8.

149. *Shekhinah* descended with him... *Shekhinah's* residence on earth is entirely dependent upon human righteousness or criminality. Her smallness is a sign of that vulnerability, and the persistent sinfulness of humanity a proof that there are few people attached to Her.

On the various stages of *Shekhinah's* ascents and descents, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7, in the name of Rabbi Abba son of Kahana: "The root [or: essence] of *Shekhinah* was in the world below. Once Adam sinned, She withdrew to the first heaven. Cain sinned; She ascended to the second heaven. The generation of Enosh sinned; She ascended to the third. The generation of the Flood sinned—to the fourth. The generation of the Dispersion—to the fifth. The Sodomites—to the sixth. The Egyptians in the days of Abraham—to the seventh.

"Opposite these, seven righteous ones arose—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses—and brought Her down to earth. Abraham, from the seventh to the sixth; Isaac brought [Her] down from the sixth to the fifth; Jacob brought [Her] down from the fifth to the fourth; Levi brought [Her] down from the fourth to the third; Kohath brought [Her] down from the third to the second; Amram brought [Her] down from the second to the first; Moses brought Her down below."

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:1; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5, 18b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:1; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 6, *Naso* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 24; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34; *Zohar* 2:145a, 146a; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 15–16. In *Sha'arei Orah*, 8a–9a, Gikatilla extends this midrashic theme to David and Solomon, explaining that only with Solomon's Temple did *Shekhinah* finally find a permanent dwelling place on earth.

150. Ploni... The name "Ploni" normally signifies anonymity, but here it is a euphemism for Samael,

personification of the Other Side. Scholem suggests that this could be a reference to Jesus.

On the caution regarding enunciating the name Samael, see Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 248, n. 1. Cf. Ruth 4:1.

151. divine overflow was withheld... Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, Jacob is called “master of the house,” signifying “husband of *Shekhinah*.” When Joseph was reported killed, Jacob lost the holy spirit that he had enjoyed.

On the withdrawal of *Shekhinah*, see Rashi on Genesis 45:27. On Jacob as “master of the house,” see *Zohar* 1:21b, 138b.

152. Moses After Jacob’s death, Moses becomes “master of the house.” See *Zohar* 1:21b, 152b, 236b, 239a; 2:22b, 235b, 238b, 244b (*Heikh*). Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

153. Matronita’s exile *Shekhinah* goes into exile with the Jewish people.

See BT *Megillah* 29a, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai: “Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.” See also sources cited above, [note 98](#).

154. Zion... This teaching interprets the verses as a parable describing the blockage of divine overflow from *Yesod* to *Shekhinah* when *Shekhinah* is besieged by Samael. When the Messiah comes, that flow resumes, restoring divine harmony. “Zion” is a name for *Shekhinah*. The “six days of creation” signify the six lower *sefirot* from *Ḥesed* to *Yesod*. When Samael encircles *Shekhinah*, the effusion from those six is choked off. The messianic figure (depicted as *riding on an ass*, and represented here by David) will come to free the stream from above—redeeming Righteous One, symbol of *Yesod*.

The full verse in Zechariah reads: *See, your king is coming to you! Righteous and triumphant is he; poor and riding on an ass—on a donkey, foal of a she-ass.* The full verse in Isaiah reads: *The righteous one אַבֵּר (avad), perishes [or: is lost], and no one takes it to heart; devout people are taken away, while no one understands that because of evil, the righteous one was taken away.* On the verses from Isaiah and Zechariah, see *Zohar* 2:57a-b.

155. Messiah son of David... King Solomon is specified as the literal son of David, redeeming *Shekhinah* and Zion by virtue of his wisdom. When Solomon acts in this way, he redeems *Yesod* itself—and salvation will flow to Zion.

156. poor, wise man—Noah... This time, the poverty of the poor, wise man lies in Noah's inability to save himself or his family. The one with wisdom is Abraham, and by virtue of his being an eventual descendant of Noah's son Shem, the ark and its passengers are delivered.

On Noah's being redeemed by his descendants, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 29:5; *Tanḥuma, Noah* 2.

157. Jerusalem—at this time... After the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem is laid waste and its Jewish inhabitants exiled. In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream featuring a fearsome statue, with iron legs. For the author of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth, the statue symbolizes the rule of Esau's descendants, later to be vanquished by the messianic redeemer. In Genesis 36:1, Esau is identified with Edom, whom (according to 2 Samuel 8:13-14) David defeated. In rabbinic literature Esau represents the Roman Empire, while in medieval Jewish literature he stands for Christianity.

The two Messiahs apparently reflect the dual-Messiah doctrine, in which one military figure—designated Messiah son of Joseph—will arise and be defeated. He will be succeeded by Messiah son of David who will bring about the ultimate redemption.

See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Exodus 40:11; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:9; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:1; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 15, 72b; BT *Sukkah* 52a-b; *Midrash Tehillim* 60:3; 87:6; Saadiah Gaon, *Emunot ve-De'ot* 8:5; *Sefer Zerubavel*; Nahmanides on Exodus 17:9; Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 515; *Zohar* 1:25b (TZ); 3:278b, 279a (both RM); ZH 56b; Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 17-18; Berger, "Three Typological Themes," 141-48; Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs*, 31-32. Cf. *Zohar* 2:7b.

This passage bears echoes of the medieval apocalyptic work *Sefer Zerubavel*, particularly since that work features a stone statue carried into battle by the Roman leader. On *Sefer Zerubavel*, see Himmelfarb, "Sefer Zerubbabel."

On the identification of Esau, Edom, and the Roman Empire, see Yisraeli, *Pithei Heikhal*, 157-63.

In the verse from Daniel, it is actually the legs that are of iron. Daniel 2:32-33 reads: *The head of that statue was of fine gold; its breast and arms were of silver; its belly and thighs, of bronze; its legs were of iron, and its feet part iron and part clay.*

158. handles for Torah... BT *Eruvin* 21b ascribes the following teaching to Rava: "What is the meaning of the verse *More than being wise, Qohelet further taught knowledge to the people, and weighed, and searched out and framed many maxims* (Ecclesiastes 12:9)? ...וַאֲזַן (ve-izzen), and weighed, and searched out and framed many maxims—Ulla explained in the name of Rabbi El'azar, that the Torah was at first like a basket that had no אֲזַנִּים (oznayim), handles, until Solomon came and affixed אֲזַנִּים (oznayim), handles, to it." Rashi explains in light of BT *Yevamot* 21a that these handles refer to decrees instituted by King Solomon. The text in *Or Yaqar* and later printed editions include a passage indicating that Solomon's wisdom saved the city from heresy and apostates.

This homily appears fragmented in all the manuscripts consulted and in Thiengen, while Venice and *Or Yaqar*

apparently draw on a source supplying interpretations of the earlier part of the parable in Ecclesiastes.

159. efforts expended... by that *poor man*—David...

On David's adornment of *Shekhinah* through song, in advance of Solomon's efforts, see *Zohar* 2:145a. On David as a poor person, see Psalms (traditionally ascribed to King David) 25:16; 34:7; 35:10; 40:18; 69:30; 70:6; 86:1; 102:1; 109:22.

160. potent rectification for the lamp... If David would have lived for one hundred years, he would have firmly secured the position of *Shekhinah*, represented by the בוצינא (*botsina*), "lamp," so that divine overflow would have persisted down to this world.

Nathan Neta Shapira (*Megalleh Amuqot*, 200) notes that in Psalms 23:6, when the psalmist longs to *dwell in the house of YHVH for many long days*, the numerical value of the word ימים (*yamim*), *days*, equals one hundred.

161. But אדם לא (*Adam lo*), *Adam did not, remember...* The simple meaning of the phrase *Adam lo* is *nobody*, but here it is interpreted hyperliterally as a reference to Primal Adam, the first man, who forgot about David's future reign and limited lifespan. According to a midrashic tradition, King David was destined to die at childbirth, but Adam offered him 70 of his own 1000 allotted years, so David lived for 70 years and Adam for 930. Samael came riding on the serpent, which appeared like a camel, and he and the serpent enticed Adam and Eve respectively. King David became impoverished as a result of that original sin. Adam should have remembered him because when he was first created, God brought all future souls to pass before him.

See *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13: "Samael... took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had*

made. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him.”

On Adam’s donating seventy years to David, see Jubilees 4:30; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 19, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 31; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* B, 42; *Zohar* 1:55a-b, 91b, 140a, 168a-b, 233b, 248b; 2:103b, 235a; *ZH* 67d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

On Samael riding the serpent (or Lilith), see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21; *Bahir* 141 (200); *Zohar* 1:35b, 55a, 64a, 137b, 145b-146a, 153a, 160b, 169b, 228a; 253b (*Hash, ST*); 2:236a, 242b-244a; *ZH* 8c, 69a (*ShS*), 91d (*Eikhah*).

On future souls passing before Adam, see *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:2; BT *Sanhedrin* 38b; *Avodah Zarah* 5a; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Zohar* 1:55a, 90b, 227b; 2:70a; *ZH* 16d (*MhN*); 37b (*ST*); 67d, 69a (both *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

162. Samael did not have the power... The serpent is female, and Samael is male, with each one allowed to seduce its human counterpart of the same sex.

See *Bahir* 140 (199); *TZ* 59, 93a.

163. Shekhinah was exiled with them... This explains why *Shekhinah* was exiled with the Jewish people, to the exclusion of the higher, male *sefirot*: it was due to the sinfulness of Eve.

On *Shekhinah*’s exile with Israel, see above, [note 98](#). Though this passage seems like an interpolation, I am including it in the critical edition because it is found in V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, Thiengen, and Venice.

164. to strengthen him... If David had had the full measure of one hundred years, he could have reinforced and properly configured *Shekhinah*, represented by the lamp. Thus, Adam’s sin had long-term historical consequences.

165. all that remained for him... So much of David's time was consumed with duties or in flight from Saul and Absalom that he was unable to do the work of repair to the *Shekhinah* that would have given Her permanence.

On Absalom's rebellion, see 2 Samuel 14-18.

166. King Solomon praised himself... King Solomon's statement appears at first to be grand hubris, but he makes his declaration lest he suffer the same troubles of being ignored and persecuted as his father King David had been. In this interpretation of *a poor, wise man* (Ecclesiastes 9:15), David is *poor* and Solomon is *wise*. The child explains the phrase in Ecclesiastes 9:13—וגדולה היא אלי (*u-gdolah hi elai*)—to mean *it is an extraordinary [or: grand, great] thing that falls to me*.

See *Sullam*. On the word אלי (*elai*), *to me*, cf. *Rut Rabbah* 2:5. The simple sense of Ecclesiastes 9:13 reads *Wisdom, too, have I seen under the sun, וגדולה היא אלי (u-gdolah hi elai), and it is great in my eyes*.

167. tearing at them with their talons... As Rabbi Bun and Rabbi Shim'on proceed on their journey, they see several instances of vicious animal behavior. The vision of other birds tearing at fledglings suggests the plight of the Jews in exile. "Tearing at them with their talons" renders אמרטון טופרהא (*imretun tufreha*).

168. What satisfaction is there for this serpent... Unlike the lion, the snake did not eat his victim. What can account for this wanton violence?

See BT *Ta'anit* 8a, in the name of Resh Lakish: "What is the meaning of the verse *If the snake bites because no charm was uttered, there is no advantage to the charmer* (Ecclesiastes 10:11)? In the future age, all animals will assemble and come to the serpent and say to him, 'The lion claws [his victim] and devours it, the wolf tears it and devours it, but what benefit do you derive?' His reply will be, '*There is no advantage to the charmer.*'"

See JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 16a; *Zohar* 1:143a; Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 61.

169. In a שַׁעֲרָה (*se'arah*), tempest—alluding to Satan... The term שַׁעֲרָה (*se'arah*) resembles the word שַׁעִיר (*se'ir*), “goat,” and also the name of Mount Se'ir, both of which are associated with Satan or Samael. Rabbi Shim'on draws attention to an apparent contradiction: in Job, the verb שָׁף (*shuf*), “crush,” is enacted by the demonic against humanity, whereas in Genesis it is the human being who will crush the head of the snake. He resolves the problem by noting that because Satan appears in the guise of a tempest, his nature is to cause wanton harm, as opposed to humans killing snakes as an act of self-defense.

On the שַׁעֲרָה (*se'arah*), *tempest wind*, as a symbol of Satan, see *ZH* 75b–76a (*MhN, Rut*), and above, [notes 31–33](#).

170. Does the snake bite... The full verse reads: *If the snake bites because no לַחֲשׁ (lahash), charm, was uttered, there is no advantage to the charmer.* *Lahash* means “whisper, incantation, charm, spell.” Here Rabbi Bun understands it as “whisper,” referring to a divine whisper commanding the snake to kill someone who deserves to die. Once the serpent has been prompted, it is certain to kill someone, even if its originally intended victim cannot be found.

For a different interpretation, see *Matoq mi-Devash*. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 26:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 4:2; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 10:11; *Tanḥuma, Huqqat* 4; *Zohar* 2:68b, 268b (*Heikh*); *ZH* 54a.

171. What is written regarding Elimelech... A case in point regarding the dangers of inscription is that of Elimelech. Once identified, because of his status as a judge, he and his family were all subject to Satan's wide prosecutor's net, sanctioned from above. *Matoq mi-Devash* explains that he was liable for corruption of justice.

See *Yalqut Shim'oni, Mishlei* 939.

172. A judge is obligated to probe... A judge is liable for the misdeeds and laxity in his town, so he must provide leadership and rebuke where appropriate. He must not insulate himself in the narrow confines of rendering judgment.

On the obligation to investigate the deeds of one's townsfolk, see above, [note 84](#).

173. blessed Holy One was aroused to execute judgment... Virtually the same teaching can be found above on 77a, in the name of Rabbi Peraḥiah.

174. named Mahlon and Chilion... Many names in the book of Ruth convey thematic meaning. מַחֲלוֹן (*Mahlon*) can be related to illness, from the verbal root *ḥlh*; alternatively, it resembles the root *mhl*, which in postbiblical Hebrew means “forgive.” כְּלִיֹן (*Khilion*) derives from *klh* or *kly*, “end, destroy, annihilate,” as in Ezekiel 11:13.

See BT *Bava Batra* 91b; *Rut Rabbah* 2:5; Eleazar of Worms; Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

175. Mahlon—so called... Rabbis Pedat and Peraḥiah offer punning interpretations of the names Mahlon and Chilion, deducing the former's redemption, and the latter's oblivion. Ruth later underwent levirate marriage with Boaz, providing offspring in the name of Mahlon, whereas Orpah, Chilion's wife, moved on.

See *Yalqut Shim'oni Rut* 600.

176. As with them... Just as the men's names foretold their fate, so do the women's names. In Orpah's case, she turned her back on Ruth and the people of Israel.

“Stiff-necked” renders קַשְׂיָא קַדְלָא (*qashya qedal*), the Aramaic form of the Hebrew קֶשֶׁת עֲרֵף (*qeshat oref*), upon which the pun is based. See *Rut Rabbah* 2:9.

On the name Orpah, see Sasson. On her turning her back on Naomi, see *Rut Rabbah* 2:9; Eleazar of Worms on 1:4.

177. so was Ruth fit to join... According to Deuteronomy 23:4-5, *No Ammonite or Moabite shall be*

admitted into the Assembly of YHVH; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted. Mishnaic law, however, asserted that the injunction proscribed marriage to male Moabites and Ammonites only—and did not prohibit marriage to their females.

See M *Yevamot* 8:3; BT *Yevamot* 69a, 76b-77a; *Qiddushin* 7b, 75a; *Ketubbot* 7b; *Hullin* 62b; cf. M *Yadayim* 4:4.

In the rabbinic tradition, some teachings assert that the permission to marry female Moabites and Ammonites was not widely publicized, or that it was innovated in Boaz's day. See *Rut Rabbah* 2:9, 4:1; 7:10; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 16:1; Margaliot, *Olelot* 41-44.

On the analogy of *Rut* and *tor*, see *Zohar* 1:80b (*ST*, standard editions). On the name Ruth, see Sasson.

178. a son who ריבה (*rivvah*), satiated, the blessed Holy One... This refers to King David who, according to tradition, composed the book of Psalms. See *Ruth* 4:18-22; BT *Berakhot* 7b, *Bava Batra* 14b; Eleazar of Worms on *Ruth* 1:4.

179. came into the congregation... The names of these four predict whether they would produce offspring that continued the line of Israel. Although Mahlon had sinned—perhaps by leaving the land of Israel in a time of distress or through complicity in his father's failings—he was ultimately forgiven.

On the perpetuation of the memory of Mahlon, see *Ruth* 4:10.

180. Corresponding to this... After elaborating the spiritual status of these individuals above, the author explains their correspondences (as well as those of Naomi and Elimelech) to the different aspects of the human soul. See *Zohar* 1:80b (*ST*, standard editions) for a virtually identical discussion; *ZH* 75a, 82c (both from *MhN*, *Rut*); above, [notes 3-4](#), [17-18](#).

181. *spirit of man...* Answering Solomon's question in Ecclesiastes, the text explains that actually the *spirit of man* comes from the right side, is aligned with holiness, and therefore it would *ascend on high*. In contrast, *spirit of a beast* is derived from the left side, and therefore it does not enjoy eternal membership among the nation of Israel.

182. *Moabite women...* Moab descended from the incestuous union between Abraham's nephew Lot and his older daughter, and Moab is generally regarded negatively in the Bible. Biblical marriages are usually endogamous, with Israelite marrying Israelite. There are some exceptions, however, with Moses being the most prominent, marrying a Midianite. Beyond the injunctions in Deuteronomy (7:3; 23:4) proscribing marriages to non-Israelites, and particularly to Ammonites and Moabites, Ezra and Nehemiah strongly protest the influx of "foreign" women. See, especially, Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13:23-30. The book of Ruth offers a more welcoming solution to the problem of intermarriage, portraying her as an exemplar of commitment to Israel and God, and—through rabbinic eyes—as a model convert.

The Bible's most basic statement regarding the Moabites is in Deuteronomy 23:4-5, 7: *No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the Assembly of YHVH; none of their descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall ever be admitted. Because they did not greet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor from Aram Naharaim to curse you... You shall not seek their well-being or their prosperity all your days, forever.*

The Targum translates and interprets the sons' acts as follows: "They transgressed the decree of the Word of YHVH and took for themselves foreign wives from the daughters of Moab." On the rabbinic interpretations of these prohibitions, see above, [note 177](#).

The author refers to the marriages with the word ויקחו (*va-yiqhu*), and they took, whereas MT reads וישאו (*va-yis'u*), *And they married, Moabite women*. The term *va-yis'u* derives from the root נשׂא (*ns'*), “carried; lifted up.” In biblical literature, it is used to designate a marriage partner only in postexilic works, while the root לקח is more common throughout the Bible for this purpose. See Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky on 1:4, 4:13, and pp. xlvi-xlvii.

183. daughters of Eglon, King of Moab... According to Judges 3, YHVH punished the Israelites for their serial transgressions, subjecting them to various foreign rulers. Among them was Eglon, king of Moab, who defeated the Israelite army with the aid of the Ammonites and Amalekites, and then proceeded to rule over them for eighteen years. He was assassinated by Ehud.

Another motive for the rabbis' ascribing Ruth's royal filiation may be to account for a later Moabite king's willingness to shelter David's parents when the latter was a fugitive. See 1 Samuel 22:3-4.

On Ruth and Orpah as daughters of Eglon, see *Rut Rabbah* 2:9. Other ancient sources indicate only that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon; see *Targum*; BT *Sotah* 47a, *Sanhedrin* 105b; *Zohar* 3:190a. Others say that Ruth was Eglon's granddaughter; see BT *Nazir* 23b and *Tosafot*, s.v. *bat beno shel Eglon*; *Horayot* 10b.

184. a Moabite, but not a Moabite... Rabbi Bun argues that it was the Moabite women's seduction of the Israelite men that led to Israel's downfall. If a group is to be excluded, he concludes, it should be the women—not the men!

In the biblical passages cited, the first refers to Moabite women, while the second refers to Midianite women. In Numbers 22 the two nations had jointly hired Balaam, and it appears that they were political allies. See Numbers 22:4 and Rashi, Nahmanides, Bahya ben Asher, and Milgrom, ad loc.; *Zohar* 3:189b-190a.

Rabbi Bun's formulation—"If I had been there"—highlights the tension surrounding the dating of the permissibility of marrying a Moabitess. While this statement would be ironic in rabbinic literature, it is doubly ironic here. See above, [note 177](#). For expressions similar to "If I had been there," see JT *Berakhot* 1:2, 3b; *Zohar* 1:72b.

[185. under coercion...](#) Since Moses and Eleazar admitted young Moabite girls into the Israelite camp, there must be a general presumption of their innocence. Rabbi Bun cites a teaching that purportedly demonstrates that it was the Moabite men who were wicked, not the women.

Regarding the females allowed to live, the literal translation of the verse is *all the little ones of the women*, referring either to girls who were not yet sexually active or were still prepubescent. See Rashi; Tigay; Alter.

[186. the men...](#) BT *Yevamot* 76b explains the exclusion of women from the prohibition against Ammonites and Moabites: "*Because they did not greet you with food and water. It is customary for a man to greet [travelers], but it is not customary for a woman to greet them.*" Rabbi Bun concludes from here, and from the fact that a foreign seer was hired to curse the Israelites, that the noxious Moabite behavior came from the men.

[187. Wadi of Shittim boosts promiscuity...](#) A rabbinic tradition in *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:22 ascribes lewd behavior to the Wadi of Shittim: "*Israel stayed at Shittim and the people began to go whoring...* (Numbers 25:1). *Shittim*—they committed folly, for *He who commits adultery with a woman is senseless* (Proverbs 6:32) Some fountains foster strong men and some weaklings, some handsome and some ugly, some chaste and some steeped in lewdness. The fountain of Shittim—promiscuity." From this teaching it appears that the Moabite women were prone to adulterous behavior. Rabbi Oshaiah's teaching about the purification of Wadi Shittim in the messianic era provides more proof

that the Moabite women were innately lascivious and did not pursue the Israelite men under duress.

On Wadi Shittim and promiscuity, see *Zohar* 3:165b, 270b (*Mat*). Different kinds of waters promote holy or evil impulses; see *Zohar* 1:66a, 125a (*MhN*); 2:30b; 3:101a. On the rectification of Wadi Shittim, Rashi says that the river from the house of *YHVH* will atone for the sin of Peor. Cf. Zechariah 14:8.

188. It is self-evident... Rabbi Menasia asserts that it is inconceivable (in a premodern culture) that women would have publicly cavorted before foreigners if their own menfolk were present, had there not been some duress and incitement to do so.

189. if this scroll came only to trace the lineage of David... Rabbi Yose contends that the book of Ruth did not find its way into the canon for the political purpose of authorizing David's kingship, but rather to illustrate a particular woman's ethical virtues, and to present her as an ideal convert.

See *Rut Rabbah* 8:1. Some modern commentators have argued that the genealogy in Ruth 4:18–22 is an appendix, legitimizing David's foreign origins or of inclusion within the canon. See Sasson, 178–86; Zakovitch, 19.

190. lineage of David... The book actually comes to demonstrate the purity of the Davidic line, refined through repeated episodes of purification. "Smelted time and again [or: once and twice]" because Peretz was born of the union of Judah and Tamar, Obed from the coupling of Boaz and Ruth. In each case, a questionable union leads to ultimate redemption in the absorption into Judaeon and Davidic royalty.

The translation follows the text in *Or Yaqar* and Venice, which is close to that of V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, and Thiengen. V6 reads: "For Peretz and Obed are clarified silver, smelted time and again," further underscoring the stages of purification of their non-Israelite mothers. Cf.

Joseph of Hamadan, *Ta'amei ha-Mitsvot*, in Idel, "Additional Fragments," 47-48.

191. such mothers... The Davidic and messianic line calls for the influence of both holy and demonic sides of humanity. The ideal leader originates from a purified mixture of a non-Israelite woman—with adverse elements purged—and an Israelite man. This combination fulfills the commandment to love God with both good and evil impulses. Cf. *ZH* 79a (*MhN, Rut*).

See *M Berakhot* 9:5: "With all לבבך (*levavekha*), your heart—with both your impulses: the good impulse and the evil impulse." The word לבבך (*levavekha*) is written with the unusual double כ (*vet*), prompting the rabbis to understand it as *your hearts*. Ideally, one should serve God not only with the good impulse but even with the evil impulse—by subduing it, or by sublimating and channeling one's passions into holy deeds, thereby dedicating the raw power of the evil impulse to good ends.

On the two impulses, see *Tosefta Berakhot* 6:7; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy (Finkelstein), 55; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Deuteronomy 6:5; *JT Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 4:13-14; 9:7; *BT Berakhot* 5a, 54a, 61a; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:5; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 16; *Zohar* 1:12a, 49b, 144b, 155b, 165b, 174b, 178b; 2:26b, 28a, 162b-163a, 174a; 3:263b (*Piq*), 267a-268a; *ZH* 47a (*MhN, Rut*), 58a, 58d, 78a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 42-43, 101; Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 255-63; Urbach, *The Sages*, 471-83; Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 64-67; Satlow, "And on the Earth you shall Sleep," 209-21; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, esp. 26-29, 54-58, 61-64, 72-78, 146 n. 52. Cf. *JT Sotah* 5:7, 20c.

The full verse in Deuteronomy reads: *You shall love YHVH your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.*

192. נשמתא לנשמתא (*nishmeta le-nishmeta*), soul of soul...

As Elimelech and his family were mapped onto the different aspects of soul, Rabbi [Yehudah] now does the same with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. While Abel is deemed the natural and holy offspring of Adam and Eve, the *Zohar* treats Cain as the demon child born of the serpent's injecting his filth into Eve. In contrast to the redeemed mixture of the previous homily, resulting in the Davidic line, Cain represents an illegitimate union of disparate elements, and is thus compared to the prohibition of yoking together the ox (a beast fit for eating) with a donkey (an animal not fit for eating).

Leviticus 19:19 reads: *Your beast: you shall not mate כלאים (kil'ayim), different kinds; your field you shall not sow with kil'ayim; and a garment of kil'ayim, sha'atnez shall not be donned by you.* The word *kil'ayim*, *different* [or: *two*] *kinds*, is rendered by *Targum Onqelos* as עירובין (*erubin*), "mixtures," and by *Targum Yerushalmi* as עירבובין (*irbubin*), "motley mixture [or: confusions]." The etymology and meaning of *sha'atnez* are uncertain; see Milgrom, *Leviticus* 2:1664.

For the mapping of different aspects of the soul onto the figures from the story of Ruth, see *Zohar* 1:80b (*ST*); *ZH* 75a-b, 80b (both in *MhN, Rut*); cf. *ZH* 82c (*MhN, Rut*).

On the serpent's copulation with Eve and its role in engendering Cain, see 4 Maccabees 18:7-8; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (per British Library MS 27031, ed. Clark); BT *Yevamot* 103b; David Luria, *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21, n. 8; 22; Nahmanides, "Torat ha-Adam," in *Kitvei Ramban*, 296; Scholem, "Qabbalot R. Ya'aqov ve-R. Yitsḥaq," 237; Todros ben Joseph Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 132; *Zohar* 1:36b-37a, 52a, 54a-55a, 63b, 122b, 126a-b, 145b; 2:94a, 167b, 178a (*SdT*s), 193b, 236b; 3:14b, 76b, 97b, 143a (*IR*); *ZH* 8c-9b, 63c (*ShS*), 83b (*MhN Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 139; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 81 (103); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 12, 27-28;

Israel Knohl, "Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan?" Cf. 1 John 3:10-12.

On the prohibition of plowing with an ox and donkey together because one is ritually pure and one ritually impure, see Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah* 8:2; idem, *Hilkhot Kil'ayim* 9:8. In the *Zohar*, the prohibition arises because both ox and donkey are associated with the demonic side. See *Zohar* 1:166b, 172b; 2:64b-65a; 3:86b, 207a; *ZH* 47c (*MhN, Rut*).

193. holy covenant in a different domain... The principle of prohibited mixtures is extended to sexual relations with a non-Jew, construed here as tantamount to idolatry. The sign of the covenant—the virtual imprinting of God's name upon the male sexual organ—symbolizes *yesod*; consequently, intercourse of a male Jew with a non-Jewish woman signifies introducing God's name into the realm of the demonic.

This anxiety should be seen within the broader context of concern about miscegenation in Medieval Spain. King Alfonso the Wise of Castile, contemporary of the *Zohar's* authorship, said the following: "Since Christians who commit adultery with married women deserve death, how much more so do Jews who lie with Christian women, for these are spiritually espoused to Our Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of the faith and baptism they received in His name..." See Nirenberg, "Religious and Sexual Boundaries in the Medieval Crown of Aragon," 144.

On the prohibition against Jewish men having sexual intercourse with non-Jewish women, see BT *Eruvin* 19a; *Zohar* 1:93a, 131b, 189b; 2:3b, 7a, 57b, 60b-61a, 87b, 90a, 264a (*Heikh*); 3:13b-14a, 57b, 104b, 111a (*RM*), 142a (*IR*), 266a; *ZH* 21a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212-13; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 51-54 (63-67); David son of Judah he-Hasid, *Sefer Mar'ot Tsov'ot*, 222; Tishby, *Wisdom*, 1365, 1370-71; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, 152, n. 102; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 56, 75, 81-82,

137–38, 139–40 n. 41, 168. Cf. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21. On the verse in Hosea, see *Zohar* 1:93a, 204a; 2:90a. See Nirenberg, “Religious and Sexual Boundaries in the Medieval Crown of Aragon”; idem, “Love Between Muslim and Jew in Medieval Spain: A Triangular Affair”; idem, *Communities of Violence*, 127–65.

194. Adam—patterned after heavenly paradigm... Since the Jewish male is patterned after Divinity, his behavior can have grave consequences. Interaction with “donkey and ass”—ritually impure animals that signify Samael and Lilith—is particularly dangerous. The female “ass” plays a role in Balaam’s visions, since it is through his sexual intercourse with her that he attains prophecy. Thus, the author associates the Jew’s defilement through intercourse with a non-Jewish woman with three negative tropes: idolatry; union with the feminine aspect of the demonic; and Balaam’s prophetic bestiality. For God, there is no greater offense—eliciting His anger—than degrading the covenantal mark that signifies *Yesod*.

On Balaam’s coupling with his ass, see BT *Sanhedrin* 105a–b and Rashi, s.v. *be’or she-ba al be’ir*; *Zohar* 1:125b; 2:21b (*MhN*); 3:107b, 194a, 206b–207a, 209b; *ZH* 47c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer Sheqel Ha-Qodesh*, 14–15 (18); idem, “*She’eilot u-Teshuvot be-Inyanei Kabbalah*,” 75.

On God’s zeal for the covenant, see Malachi 2:11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 26:5; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:9; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 12; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 33; *Zohar* 1:240b; 2:3b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 213. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* 1:36: “Know that if you consider the whole of the Torah and all the books of the prophets, you will find that the expressions *wrath*, *anger*, and *jealousy* are exclusively used with reference to idolatry.”

195. man with ’ (yod), ה (he), ו (vav), ה (he) within... The ineffable name is inscribed within the first man, constituting soul of soul, which is his essence. Within Divinity, the *yod* signifies *Hokhmah*, the second of the *sefirot*; it

also comprises the top nine *sefirot*, from *Keter* through *Yesod*. These nine are imprinted within the human soul. Consequently, when the Torah describes the human being created in God's image, it refers to his soul—not the body, which is merely a garment. Here, the name *Adam* refers exclusively to the paradigm of the Jewish male.

On human beings as modeled after Divinity's array of the four letters of the tetragrammaton, see *ZH* 75a (*MhN, Rut*). On the nine radiances, *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Englander. On the name *Adam* as signifying the Jewish male, see Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 42–90. On the body as a garment, see *Zohar* 1:20b; 2:75b–76a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 44, 159; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 28–30 (33–36); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:680. On the divine significance of *Adam*, see also Ezekiel 1:26; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 52.

196. Coupling with ' (yod) ... ה (He) signifies both *Binah* above and its correlate within *Adam*. Together with ' (yod), its influx gushes to the other *sefirot*, all constituting a single unity. With *Hokhmah* it produces an indivisible bond, evoking the comparison to the original *Adam*—above and below—a unity consisting of both genders.

The word אדם (*adam*), “human,” may be related to the word אדמה (*adamah*), “ground, earth,” just as in English the word “human” is likely related to “humus.”

197. ו (vav)—called spirit... Within man, ו (*vav*) represents *ruah*, an intermediate aspect of the soul, and in Divinity it represents *Tif'eret* and the five *sefirot*—*Hesed* through *Yesod*—surrounding it. *Zohar* 3:290b indicates that the word בינה (*Binah*) can be divided into two parts, each consisting of two letters: בן (*ben*), “son of,” plus יה (*yod he*), signifying *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. The second ה (*he*) of the tetragrammaton, signifies the *nefesh* within the human being, and *Shekhinah* within the Godhead. The numerical value of the letters of the tetragrammaton when spelled out—יהוה (*yod, vav, dalet*), 20; אהוה (*he, alef*), 6; וואו (*vav alef vav*), 13; אהוה (*he alef*), 6—is forty-five,

equal to that of the name אדמ (alef, 1; dalet, 4; mem, 40). Lastly, the sum of the numbers from 1 to 9 also equals forty-five. All these numerical equations demonstrate the symbolic identity of Divinity (as manifest in the *sefirot*, tetragrammaton, and Divine Family) and *Adam* (whose letters comprise the numerical value of God's Name).

On ו (vav) as Son, see *Zohar* 1:28a (TZ); 3:10b, 118b, 121b (RM), 232a (RM); ZH 82c (MhN, Rut); cf. 1:158a, 219a; 2:84a, 85b. On ה (he) as Daughter, see *Zohar* 1:28a (TZ); 3:10b, 11a-b; ZH 82c (MhN, Rut). On the identity of YHVH and *Adam*, see Liebes, *Peraqim*, 34-35. On the linguistic symbolism of the human body, see Wolfson, "Dimmui Antropomorphi." On the Divine Family, see Idel, *Ben*, 382-85.

198. between Adam and Adam... One verse indicates that the composite human soul—a manifestation of YHVH—constitutes *Adam*, while another states that it is the body that is designated *Adam*. The explanation is that the term's meaning is contingent upon whether *Adam* is said to be created *in the image of God* or not.

The verse from Genesis concludes: האדם (ha-adam), *the human, became a living being*.

199. made coats of skin... In creating the first humans, God creates soul, body, and finally garments. According to the verse in Genesis, God fashioned garments for Adam and Eve after they sinned. The simple sense of עור כתנות (kotnot or), *coats of skin*, is "coats of animal skin; hides," but a variant reading recorded in midrashic literature is אור כתנות (kotnot or), *coats of light*, suggesting Adam and Eve's original aura or garments of splendor. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12: "In the Torah [scroll] of Rabbi Me'ir, it was found written: 'כתנות אור (kotnot or), *garments of light*.' These are the clothes of Adam." Elsewhere the *Zohar* teaches that as a result of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve lost their lustrous *coats of light* and from then on were clothed in human *coats of skin*.

On *kotnot or, coats of skin (or of light)*, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:6; 20:12 (and Theodor's note); *Zohar* 1:36b, 224a; 2:76a, 179a (*SdT*s), 208b, 229b; 3:83b, 261b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 404; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 404, n. 87. For Gnostic parallels, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4:40; *Hypostasis of the Archons* 90:17; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1:5:5.

200. אַף (*af*), **anger, caused this...** The succession of three verbs in the verse in Isaiah refers to three stages in the creation of the first humans: levels of soul; garments of light; and, garments of skin. Though Genesis 3:21 indicates that God created these garments, the verse from Isaiah, read hyperliterally, demonstrates that this event was induced by אַף (*af*), *anger*, signifying the demonic serpent or the Other Side.

The word אַף (*af*), *indeed* (or *also, yea*), can also denote “anger” in the Biblical idiom. See, e.g., Genesis 30:2, 39:19; Exodus 4:14, 22:23, 32:10–12; Numbers 25:4; Deuteronomy 9:19; 2 Kings 24:20. The verse in Isaiah concludes: *whom I created for My glory*.

201. name of impurity... Rabbi Shim'on continues with his description of holy and demonic entities. Having discussed Cain and Abel, *YHVH* and Samael, holy souls and the evil impulse, and garments of light and skin, he now refers to different uses of the name *Elohim*—sometimes holy, and sometimes impure, as in Exodus 20:3.

202. Whoever mars one of his limbs... The symbolic correspondence of the human body and the anthropomorphic form of Divinity is perfected through the performance of the commandments. Thus, performance of the commandments has a direct impact on the unity, strength, and purity of the Divine body above. Damage above results in damage, that is, punishment below. Of paramount concern is the improper mixing of species—vegetable, animal, and human—with those mixtures that include the last species being the most accursed.

On causing a defect above, Moses de León writes in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*: “Know that the Creator, may He be blessed, created the human and established him in the upper form, the correct pattern, distinguishing him from all other creatures. Inasmuch as the human is above all other creatures, in a lofty paradigm, he must be careful not to damage or cause any disfigurement to that supernal form so that the countenances will be complete without any damage, not displaying any blemish in that pattern.”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 74a (in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai); *Zohar* 2:26b, 85b, 162b, 165b; 3:8a, 16b, 66a, 78a, 79a, 297a-b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon* 298-99; Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 2a-3a; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 294, 427-29; idem, *Sefer Tashak*, 18; Meier, “Introduction” to *A Critical Edition of the Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 23-26; idem, *Sefer Toledot Adam*, 86b-87a; Idel, *New Perspectives*, 184-87; Wolfson, “Mystical Rationalization,” 230-35. On the concept of weakening and strengthening God, see BT *Shabbat* 89a; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 319; *Vayiqra Rabbah*

23:12; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:33; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 25:1; *Zohar* 1:57b, 234b; 2:32b, 64a, 65b; 3:22a, 75b. On *sha'atnez*, see above, [note 192](#).

See BT *Pesaḥim* 49b, in the name of the rabbis: “Let a man always sell all he has and marry the daughter of a scholar. If he does not find the daughter of a scholar, let him marry the daughter of one of the great men of the generation. If he does not find the daughter of one of the great men of the generation, let him marry the daughter of the head of a synagogue.... But let him not marry the daughter of an *am ha-arets*, ignoramus, because they are detestable, their wives are vermin, and of their daughters is said *Cursed be he who lies with any beast.*” Here, Rabbi Shim’on has transformed the teaching in accord with the persistent warning against Jewish men having sexual relations with Gentile women. On the use of animal metaphors in Jewish-Christian polemics, see Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 198–239.

The verse in MT reads: *My wrath shall flare up and I will kill you by the sword, and your wives shall be widows and your children orphans.*

203. Samael, soul of soul... The evil impulse is comprised of the demonic counterparts to the holy soul—*נשמה* (*Neshamah*), “highest soul,” *רוח* (*ruah*), “spirit,” and *נפש* (*nefesh*), “soul.” Within a Jewish person, they do not detract from the status of *adam*, in contrast to non-Jews—who do not share that status. The homily interprets *I have set before you* as if it said *I have placed within you*, affording a choice that is profoundly immanent.

The ethnocentric interpretation of the term *adam* is first expressed by Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai in BT *Yevamot* 60b–61a: “The graves of Gentiles do not impart impurity by a tent [i.e., one who stands on or bends over such a grave, thereby constituting a tent with his body, is not rendered impure], as is said: *You, My flock, flock of My pasture, are*

adam [and I am Your God] (Ezekiel 34:31). You are called *adam*; Gentiles are not called *adam*.”

See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 114b, *Karetot* 6b; *Tosafot* on *Yevamot* 61a, s.v. *ve-ein ha-ovdei kokh-avim*; on *Bava Qamma* 38a, s.v. *ela adam*; on *Sanhedrin* 59a, s.v. *ela ha-adam*; *Zohar* 1:20b; 2:25b (*Piq*), 86a; 3:173a, 219a; *ZH* 37b (*RR*); Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 42-57. Cf. M *Avot* 3:14; *Bava Qamma* 38a; *Avodah Zarah* 3a; *Sanhedrin* 59a.

204. Jewish demons... In kabbalistic demonology, some demons are subject to—and descended from—Samael, Lilith, and Na'amah; meanwhile, Jewish demons are descended from and ruled by Ashmedai, king of demons. These latter demons are constrained by the Torah. Sometimes they even appear as great sages, distinguished by special knowledge of philosophy and astrology. Indeed, Isaac ben Moses of Vienna says: “My teacher, Rabbi Judah the Pious, may his memory be a blessing, used to say that demons believe in the Torah and perform everything decreed by the sages.” When a person comes into the world, the blessed Holy One gives him His own name (*YHVH*), another name from a Jewish demon (“Mundane”), and a third name from Samael and the Serpent (“Darkness”).

On Jewish demons, see BT *Pesahim* 110a; *Yevamot* 122a and Rashi, s.v. *limmedeni Yonatan shida*; *Sefer Hasidim* (ed. Wistinetzki) pars. 733, 1763; Isaac ben Moses, *Sefer Or Zaru'a*, *Hilkhhot Eruvin* 147; Zlotnick, “Ma'aseh Yerushalmi,” 27-29; *Zohar* 3:253a, 277a (both *RM*); *ZH* 47a (*MhN, Rut*), 48d; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 320-26; Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 224-25 nn. 9-11; cf. BT *Gittin* 66a. On Ashmedai, see Tobit 3:8, 17; 6:13-14; 8:3; Testament of Solomon 5; BT *Gittin* 68a-b; Scholem, “Peraqim Hadashim”; Shaked, “The Zoroastrian Demon of Wrath.” On demons inclined to piety in medieval Christianity, see Barbara Newman, “Possessed by the Spirit,” 749-59.

Rabbi Shim'on continues his dualistic description of metaphysical entities by describing the Christian and Moslem deities as "dregs of Jewish demons." These *other gods* are then identified with Evil Impulse. The latter counsels violation of the prohibition against sexual contact with an animal—which is fulfilled via sexual intimacy with a Gentile woman.

205. demons that are Jewish, Moslem, and Christian... Christian and Moslem demons are the most eminent among demons because they derive from the same family as the Jewish people—Ishmael as half-brother to Isaac, Esau as twin brother to Jacob. Any resemblance or connection to them pertains only to a common physical root, excluding any spiritual relationship.

Several of the manuscripts and printed editions omit or transmute the word "Christian," presumably because of censors.

206. god of Esau's people bows down to them... In the Biblical story of Balaam, it is *Elohim*—God of Israel—who visits him, but the homily reads the term generically to refer to the deity of the nation of Esau. "To honor the body" appears to be an anti-Christian critique, ridiculing the notion of Jesus as God incarnate.

On the respective positioning of the righteous and wicked below and above their deities, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 89:4.

MT reads: *Elohim came to Balaam at night*, while Genesis 20:3 reads: *came to Abimelech in a night-dream*. The author has apparently conflated the two. Cf. *Zohar* 2:96a, where the two verses appear together.

207. a portion in the world that is coming... While a repentant Gentile may attain everlasting life in the world that is coming, presumably because he has gained the lower aspects of soul, this portion is distinct from that of Jews.

On the eligibility of Gentiles to enter the world that is coming, see *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 13:1-2; *BT Sanhedrin* 105a; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer*, 121; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:5; *Melakhim* 8:11.

In this Talmudic passage, Rabbi Shim'on assumes a connection between *human* and "impurity by a tent," based on the wording of Numbers 19:14: *When a human dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anyone in the tent will be impure seven days*. See *Tosafot to Avodah Zarah* 5a, s.v. *ein ben David ba*; *Zohar* 1:20b, 28b, 131a; 2:25b (*Piq*), 86a; 3:219a; *ZH* 8d (*MhN*), 37b (*RR*); Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 110-11.

208. lees in his body... The corruption of the Gentile body is so extensive that it requires considerable repair from holy soul and spirit, ultimately redeeming it. In the end, the old contaminants dissipate.

209. a Gentile's body is impure... Generally, a corpse—a body without a soul—imparts impurity. See Numbers 19:14: *When a person dies in a tent, anyone entering the tent and anyone in the tent will be impure for seven days*. According to rabbinic teaching, once the soul of a Gentile has departed, his body is no longer impure.

See *BT Bava Metsi'a* 114b; *Zohar* 1:20b, 47a, 131a, 220a (standard editions); 2:21b (*MhN*), 25b (*Piq*), 86a; 3:25b, 104b, 219a; *ZH* 10c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 211-12; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 66-67, 110-11; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 6-7. On the complicated question of Gentile ritual impurity, see Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*.

210. two trees—one holy, one impure... The holy tree signifies *Yesod*, the male sexual organ of Divinity, its fruitfulness contrasting with the sterility and impotence of the demonic realm, represented by the impure tree.

On the impotence of the demonic realm, see *Zohar* 2:103a and the other sources cited below, [note 213](#).

[211.](#) **Israel and the descendants of Esau...** Even though Israel and the descendants of Esau are both physical offspring of Jacob, their spiritual constitutions are polar opposites. Israel's holiness and fruitfulness stems from its possession of Torah, which sustains life and quenches the thirst for wisdom. The use of the formula "descendants of Esau" is apparently part of an anti-Christian polemic. See below, [note 213](#).

BT *Ta'anit* 7a records a series of teachings comparing Torah to water and attesting to Torah's life-giving properties: "Rav Yehudah said, 'The day when rain falls is as great as the day when the Torah was given, as is said: *Let my teaching drop like rain* (Deuteronomy 32:2), and there is no *teaching* other than Torah, as is said: *For good teaching I have given you, do not forsake my Torah* (Proverbs 4:2).'... Rabbi Hanina son of Ida said, 'Why are words of Torah compared to water, as is written: *Ho, everyone who is thirsty, go to water* (Isaiah 55:1)? To teach you: just as water descends from a lofty place, flowing to a lower one, so too words of Torah endure only with one who is humble.'"

See *Mekhilta, Vayassa* 1; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:22; BT *Sukkah* 52b; *Qiddushin* 30b; *Bava Qamma* 82a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 54:1; *Tanḥuma, Beshallah* 19; *Zohar* 1:12b; 2:60a.

[212.](#) **He will inherit...** A Jew who is engaged with Torah in this life purifies his body of its earthly dross, and his soul delights in *Shekhinah*. Before the physical body is stripped away at death, a spiritual body is prepared. This latter body is apparently the ethereal body.

On a holy body, see *Zohar* 2:61b-62a; Bahya ben Asher, *Shulḥan shel Arba*, 505; cf. Moses de León, *She'eilot u-Teshuvot*, 72-73.

The *Zohar* draws on and employs diverse conceptions of the astral or ethereal body and its function. See Naḥmanides on Genesis 49:33; *Zohar* 1:7a, 38b (*Heikh*),

81a (*ST*, standard edition), 90b-91a, 115b (*MhN*), 131a, 191a, 217b, 219a, 220a (standard editions), 224a-b, 227a-b, 233b; 2:11a, 13a-b, 96b, 141b, 150a, 156b-157a, 161b; 3:13b, 43a-b, 61b, 70b, 104a-b; *ZH* 10b-c (*MhN*), 68d-69a (*ShS*), 90b (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 390; idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; Scholem, *Shedim Ruḥot u-Nshamot*, 215-38; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158-59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251-73; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770-73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Hagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruḥot u-nshamot*; Vol. 6, p. 197, n. 266.

The homily conflates the two verses from Genesis. MT reads: *God said, "Let the earth sprout grass, plants generating seed, fruit trees [literally: a fruit tree] yielding fruit of each kind, that has its seed within it upon the earth." And so it was. The earth brought forth grass, plants generating seed of each kind, and trees [literally: a tree] yielding fruit that has its seed within it of each kind, and God saw that it was good.*

213. fruit from the Tree of Impurity... Signifying the teachings of Christianity. "Their Torah" may signify their teachings, their mode of exegesis, Jesus himself, or perhaps the cross. The "inedible fruit" here and the impotence described above probably allude to Christian celibacy and the monastic ideal, which the *Zohar* rejects.

See *Zohar* 2:103a, 109a, 176b (*SdTs*); 3:135a-b (*IR*), 142a (*IR*), 292a (*IZ*); Tishby, *Wisdom*, 1362; Mopsik; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 149, 156, and 234, n. 47; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 311-12, 385. Cf. *Zohar* 1:55b; 3:5b, 7a; Scholem; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Mopsik. On the tree as a symbolic target of anti-Christian polemics, see Abulafia, *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, 130-31; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 52; cf. Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Or*, 109-110.

The context in Psalms (1:3-4) reads: [*The righteous one*] *shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither—*

and in all that he does he prospers. Not so the wicked, but like chaff that the wind drives away.

214. seed of David... Rabbi Hoshaya builds upon the preceding discussions of hybridity, concluding that King David—signifying *Malkhut* and associated with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—draws from the goodness emerging from his Jewish side, and the necessary evil derived from his mother’s side. Though Ruth bestows a legacy from the side of evil, she does not manifest their impudence (alternatively: she was not among their most impudent). This continues the discussion of David’s mixed heritage from above, [pp. 92-93](#) and [nn. 190-91](#).

On the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, see *Zohar* 1:33a, 35a, 221b (standard edition); 3:42b, 107b, 217b, 239b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 22 (27), 80 (101); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah* 13a-b, 17a, 20a, 60b-61a.

215. Merciful from the paternal side... On the mercifulness of Israel and the cruelty of the nations, a teaching in BT *Yevamot* 79a relates: “*The king [David] called to the Gibeonites, and said to them... ‘What shall I do for you, and how shall I atone, that you may bless YHVH’s heritage?’ And the Gibeonites said to him, ‘We have no claim of silver or gold against Saul and his house, and we have no man in Israel [to put to death].... Let seven men of his sons be given to us that we may impale them before YHVH... (2 Samuel 21:2-4, 6). He tried to pacify them but they would not be pacified. Thereupon he said to them, ‘This nation [Israel] has three distinguishing characteristics: They are merciful, bashful and benevolent. Merciful, as is written: And give you mercy, and be merciful to you, and make you multiply (Deuteronomy 13:18).’* Rashi explains that it was from this behavior of the Gibeonites that David decreed that they be excluded from the Jewish nation. The talmudic story notably omits the verses in which David responds to the Gibeonites’ request by handing over seven of Saul’s sons. Cf. Jeremiah 6:22-23.

The expression “vengeful and raging as a snake” comes from BT *Shabbat* 63a and *Yoma* 23a. On the need for David and his line to have instinctive cruelty, see *Zohar* 1:110b (ST). On the two opposing qualities of David, cf. *Zohar* 2:73a (RR).

On Israel’s inherent compassion, see JT *Qiddushin* 4:1, 65b; *Sanhedrin* 6:4, 23d; BT *Beitsah* 32b, *Yevamot* 79a; *Midrash Shemu’el* 28:7; *Devarim Rabbah* 3:4; *Midrash Tehillim* 1:10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 8:4. Cf. *Zohar* 2:12b.

216. called by another name... Naḥmanides writes of Moses’ father-in-law that “Hobab was the new name that they gave to Jethro when he returned to the Torah of Israel—for such is the way of all who convert, for *His servants he will call by a different name* (Isaiah 65:15).” See Naḥmanides on Numbers 10:29.

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b, in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: “Four things tear up the writ of a person’s verdict: charity, crying out, change of name, and change of conduct.” See Maimonides’ wording in *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:4: “Among the ways of *teshuvah* are... changing one’s name, by which one says: I am another [person], no longer that person who did those deeds.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:12; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 28:3; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 5:6; *Tanḥuma, Noah* 8; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noah* 13; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Margalioṭ), par. 20; *Zohar* 1:133b; 3:9a, 76a. Cf. *Targum* on 2 Chronicles 13:2, 15:16.

217. when she married Mahlon... Her new name bestowed an elevated status upon her.

See BT *Berakhot* 7b. Below at ZH 81a, the author says that Naomi’s sons died because they had married Gentile women. On the question of whether Ruth had already converted when she married Mahlon, see *Rut Rabba* 2:9; Ibn Ezra on Ruth 1:2; *Tosafot* on *Ketubbot* 7b, s.v. *ve-ha Bo’az almon*; *Zohar* 3:190a; ZH 81a, c, 82a (all in *MhN, Rut*).

On Ruth’s ascent, cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

218. many cautions... Rabbi Pedat wonders why Naomi went to such lengths dissuading Ruth from continuing with her if she had already converted, as suggested by Rabbi Yose's son. The former assumes that this was part of the normative practice of deterring would-be converts.

See BT *Yevamot* 47a-b: "Our Rabbis taught: If a person comes to convert nowadays, he is to be addressed as follows: 'What has motivated you to desire to convert? Are you unaware that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed, and overcome by afflictions?' If he replies, 'I know, and I am unworthy,' he is accepted immediately—and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments.... He is not to be overburdened [with detail] nor scrutinized excessively. Rabbi El'azar said, 'What is the scriptural proof? It is written: *When she [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased arguing with her* (Ruth 1:18). "We are forbidden regarding Sabbath boundaries," [Naomi] told [Ruth]. "*Wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge* (ibid., 16)." "We have been commanded six hundred and thirteen commandments." "*Your people shall be my people* (ibid.)." "We are forbidden idolatry." "*And your God my God* (ibid.)." "Four modes of execution were entrusted to the courts." "*Where you die, I will die* (ibid., 17)."" See *Rut Rabbah* 2:22-24.

219. her compliance... was considered contingent... Certain situations, such as the potential for intimidation by one's master or husband, raise the concern that an apparently free-willed conversion lacks full commitment. That shadow fell upon Ruth's and Orpah's conversions until their true intentions were revealed after the deaths of their husbands.

BT *Yevamot* 24b records: "Both a man who converts for the sake of a woman and a woman who converts for the sake of a man; and, similarly, one who converts with the

motive of eating at the king's table, or of joining Solomon's servants, are not converts. These are the words of Rabbi Nehemiah, for Rabbi Nehemiah maintained, 'Neither converts because of [fear of] lions, nor converts because of dreams, nor the converts of Mordecai and Esther are considered converts unless they convert at the present time.' ... Concerning this, it was stated that Rabbi Yitshak son of Shemu'el son of Marta said in the name of Rav: 'The law is in accordance with the one who says, "They are all valid converts."'"

On invalid conversion, see JT *Qiddushin* 4:1, 65b; *Avodah Zarah* 2:2, 41a; BT *Gittin* 45b, *Avodah Zarah* 47b, 57a; *Gerim* 1:3; *Tosafot* on *Yevamot* 79a, s.v. *u-ntinim David gazar aleihen*; *Tosafot* on *Avodah Zarah* 57b, s.v. *ad she-tishtaqa*; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Issurei Bi'ah* 13:10-14; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Sagi and Zohar, *Transforming Identity*, 9-36. On conversion in the *Zohar*, see Wijnhoven, "The Zohar and the Proselyte"; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 165-74.

Her gods renders אלהיה (*eloheiha*), although the simple sense is the singular *her god*, since Moabites of the period worshiped only Chemosh, a deity who evolved and developed along the same lines as the Israelite YHVH. See Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

220. Her name was Gilit... This name could connote joy, revelation, or exile. Cf. Scholem.

The contrast between the paths chosen by Orpah and by Ruth is intensified in BT *Sotah* 42b, which identifies Orpah as the mother of Goliath: "It is written: *Haraphah* (2 Samuel 21:18) and also Orpah (Ruth 1:4)! Rav and Shemu'el: One said that her name was *Haraphah*. And why was she called Orpah? Because all עורפין (*orphin*), had intercourse from the rear, with her. The other said: Her name was Orpah; and why was she called *Haraphah*? Because all ground her like הריפות (*harifoth*), grits.... *These four were born to Haraphah in Gath; and they fell at the hand of David, and at the hand of his servants* (2 Samuel 21:22).

Who were they? Rav Hisda said, ‘*Saph, Madon, Goliath, and Ishbi-benob* (ibid., 18, 20,19, 16). *And they fell at the hand of David, and at the hand of his servants*—as is written: *And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung unto her* (Ruth 1:14).’ Rabbi Yitshak said, ‘The blessed Holy One said, “May the sons of the one who kissed [Orpah] come and fall by the hand of the sons of the one [Ruth] who cleaved.”’”

[221.](#) **son of Geiri...** Or “son of converts.”

[222.](#) אורים ותומים (*urim ve-tummim*), **Urim and Thummim...** These were elements of an oracular device whose precise character is unknown. They were placed within the garments worn by the High Priest when he would enter the Dwelling (or Tabernacle). Their use may have been similar to a Mesopotamian practice of psephomancy—divination by means of white and black stones, such as alabaster and hematite. Several Akkadian texts refer to the alabaster stone as shining or radiant, a clear parallel to the term *urim*, deriving from *or*, “light,” or *ur*, “flame.” The Bible nowhere describes the appearance of the Urim and Thummim, the material from which they were made, or the technique of their use. Apparently the device generated a binary response, indicating which of two alternatives was right. See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 14:41-42 (see LXX and Alter, ad loc.); 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65; Ibn Ezra on Exodus 26:5. Cf. 1 Samuel 23:9-12; 30:7-8.

See BT *Yoma* 73b: “Why were they called אורים ותומים (*urim ve-tummim*)? *Urim*—שמאירין (*she-me'irin*), for they illumine [or: elucidate], their words. *Tummim* [understood here as based on the root תמם (*tmm*), “to be complete”]—for they fulfill their words.”

See *Matoq mi-Devash*; Horowitz and Hurwitz, “Urim and Thummim.”

[223.](#) **two fires...** They are out of sight.

On the two fires, see Targum Yonatan. The full verse in Isaiah reads: *'His rock shall melt with terror, and his officers shall collapse from weakness,' declares YHVH, whose fire is in Zion, His furnace in Jerusalem*

224. In Zion alone... This begins a discourse on the fires of hell. See BT *Eruvin* 19a: "Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, 'Geihinnom has three gates: one in the wilderness, one in the ocean, and one in Jerusalem... In Jerusalem, as is said: *Declares YHVH, whose fire is in Zion, His furnace in Jerusalem.*' The school of Rabbi Yishma'el taught: *'Whose fire is in Zion—this is Geihinnom. His furnace in Jerusalem—this is the opening of Geihinnom.'*... Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi said, 'Hell has seven names: Sheol, Ruin, Pit of Destruction, Tumultuous Pit, Miry Clay, Shadow of Death, and Netherworld.'" On Zion and Jerusalem in relation to the entrance to Hell, see *Midrash Kohen (Beit ha-Midrash, 2:30)*.

The fires gendered "male" and "female" refer to male and female desire. Cf. BT *Yevamot* 113a, *Ketubbot* 86a, *Gittin* 49b, *Bava Metsi'a* 84a. See also next note.

"Zion" and "Jerusalem" generally allude to *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, corresponding to the male and female attributions here. See *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Zohar* 2:262b.

225. evil impulse and good impulse... The most complete worship of God is with both of these "fires." See above, [note 191](#).

226. Hidden... Directly beneath the site of the national conclave with Divinity during the pilgrimage festivals, lies the opening to hell. North is normally associated with *Gevurah*, the *sefirah* of Judgment from which evil emerges.

See *Bahir* 109 (162): "What is [this attribute]? It is the Satan. This teaches us that the blessed Holy One has an attribute whose name is Evil; and it is to the north of the blessed Holy One, as is written: *From the north evil opens [on all the inhabitants of the land]* (Jeremiah 1:14). That is

to say, any evil that comes to *any of the inhabitants of the land*, comes from the north.”

The viewing of God derives from Exodus 23:17: *Three times a year all your males ירא׳ה (yera’eh), shall be seen, in the presence of the Lord YHVH.* See the interpretation attributed to Rabbi Yehudah in BT *Hagigah* 4b: “ירא׳ה (Yir’eh), *He shall see*, ירא׳ה (yera’eh), *He shall be seen*; just as He comes to see, so He comes to be seen.” Here, Rabbi Reḥumai reads the verse to mean that the individuals come to see God.

In the liturgical poetry: “May the Merciful One bless the tender, circumcised one on the eighth day, that he might merit to see the face of the *Shekhinah*, three times a year”—for if he had not been circumcised, he would not have merited this. Here it is maleness itself, as indicated by the male organ, that facilitates viewing God at the pilgrimage festivals. See *Nitsotsei Zohar* on *Zohar* 2:124a (*Milu’im*).

“Cavity” renders מחלון (*maḥalon*), an otherwise unknown word that is attested in most of the manuscripts. It resembles the term מחילה (*meḥilah*), “cavity,” whose plural is מחילין (*meḥilin*). The use of מחלון (*maḥalon*) may reflect a scribal error, or it may have been used deliberately to associate this opening to Hell with Ruth’s husband, Mahlon.

227. subterranean fire... The two fires mentioned in the verse in Isaiah correspond to the sacrificial fire in the Temple, and the fire of Hell directly below: one serving the purposes of holiness, and the other wrathful destruction of evil. The fire below signifies the uncircumcised penis, obscuring the corona—which represents the holy covenant. Uncircumcised, a man’s sexual desire is voracious and, consequently, more destructive.

On the enormity of Hell, cf. BT *Pesaḥim* 94a; *Ta’anit* 10a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 6:9; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 99. On circumcision as a means to reduce sexual desire, see Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, 7; Judah

Halevi, *Kuzari* 1:115; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:33, 49; Gross, “Reasons for the Commandment of Circumcision,” especially 25–33.

228. inscribed with the covenant... The covenant of circumcision signifies *Yesod*. When the circumcised Jewish males came for the pilgrimage and stood within the Temple precincts, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, they manifest and unite these two *sefirot*. The two אורים (*urim*), *fires*, mentioned in Isaiah refer to this moment of unification—the honor for *YHVH*.

The full verse in Exodus reads: *Three times a year all your males shall appear in the presence of the Lord YHVH*. The phrase *in the presence* [or: *before the face*] of the Lord *YHVH* alludes to *Yesod*, apparently because אדון (*adon*), *Lord*, refers to *Shekhinah*, *before* whom is *Yesod*. On the biblical phrase, see *Zohar* 1:2a. On *your males* and the sign of circumcision, see *Zohar* 2:183a; 3:165b.

229. Foreskin... This is the marker that divides Jew from non-Jew, holy from demonic, procreation from perversion, and thus it is a fitting name for the entry to the fires of Hell. The positioning of male circumcised Jews in the Temple subdues the raging fires of sexual desire and forces it into its designated geographical locale.

230. Seven names for the evil impulse... See BT *Sukkah* 52a: “The evil impulse has seven names. The blessed Holy One called it Evil... ; Moses called it Uncircumcised... ; David called it Impure... ; Solomon called it Enemy... ; Isaiah called it Stumbling Block... ; Ezekiel called it Stone... ; Joel called it Hidden One.” See *Zohar* 2:262b–263a. The proof-text from Exodus appears to reinforce the focus on circumcision and legitimate sexual practice as the key targets for the evil impulse.

On the seven names of the evil impulse, see *Zohar* 2:262b–263a; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 97. On the names of Hell, see *Zohar* 1:18a, 185a; Moses de León, *ibid.*, 97, 99. On the seven entrances to Hell, see *Pirquei de-Rabbi*

Eli'ezer 53; *Zohar* 1:237b; 2:150b; 3:285b; *ZH* 25b (*MhN*); cf. BT *Eruvin* 19a. On its seven compartments (or divisions), see BT *Sotah* 10b; *Midrash Tehillim* 11:6; *Midrash Kohen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:30, 35-36); *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 28 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:34); *Zohar* 1:40a (*Heikh*), 62b (*Tos*), 237b; 2:150b, 263a-68b (*Heikh*); 3:178a, 285b-286a; *ZH* 25b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 117; *Massekhet Geihinnom* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:149); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:20, n. 56. On Geihinnom in general, see Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 63-73; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 96-120. On the evil impulse, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 767-70; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*. On the sinners' end, see *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Dumah (literally "silence") is a name for the netherworld in the Bible, e.g., Psalms 94:17: *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in dumah*. Cf. Psalms 115:17.

In rabbinic literature, Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead (BT *Berakhot* 18b; *Shabbat* 152b; *Hagigah* 5a; *Sanhedrin* 94a). In the *Zohar* he retains this role but also oversees Hell. See 1:8a-b, 94a, 102a (*MhN*), 121a (*Tos*), 124a (*MhN*), 130b, 237b; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 99-100, 154; Weiss, *Kol Yordei Dumah*, 18-22, 46-66.

The biblical term צלמות (*tsalmavet*), understood here as "Shadow of Death," means "gloom, darkness," but according to popular folk etymology it combines צל (*tse*l), "shadow," and מות (*mavet*), "death."

231. snakes and scorpions... Infesting the pit. Once one has descended to this place, there is no recourse—as with the serpent who cannot be charmed.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:16 regarding Joseph: "They took him and threw him into the pit, and the pit was empty; there was no water in it (Genesis 37:24). Water was not in it; snakes and scorpions were." Cf. *Targum Yerushalmi*,

Genesis 37:24; BT *Shabbat* 22a; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayeshev* 2; *Zohar* 1:185a; 3:279a (RM); ZH 33d.

232. Destroyer, Wrath, Rage... Dumah is the chief angel of destruction, ranking above Destroyer, Wrath, and Rage. They in turn preside over bands of angels below.

In BT *Shabbat* 55a, Rav Ḥisda identifies six angels of destruction: “Indignation, Wrath, Rage, Destroyer, Breaker, and Annihilator.”

On the names of angels of destruction, see *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 9:19; JT *Ta’anit* 2:1, 65b; *Shemot Rabbah* 41:7; *Devarim Rabbah* 3:11; *Midrash Tehillim* 7:6; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 4:3; *Midrash Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 20; *Midrash Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Ki Tissa* 13; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 45; *Zohar* 1:23b, 27b (both TZ); 2:41b, 227b (both RM), 249b, 264b (last two *Heikh*); 3:236b, 237a (both RM); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, 14b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 114. Cf. BT *Nedarim* 32a; *Tosafot* on *Shabbat* 55a, S.V. *qetsef af ve-heimah*.

233. corresponding to these three... Ultimately, judgment derives from holiness—Jerusalem, the Temple, and *YHVH*—even if it is executed by angels of destruction.

234. all night long... Judgment commences for the wicked with the onset of night, continuing through daybreak. But it is the evening’s darkening that signals their doom.

MT for Micah does not read *plowing evil*, but rather *designing evil*, and the use here of the term “plowing” seems to have a sexual connotation, emphasizing that the wicked are engaged in masturbatory, adulterous, or other illicit sexual acts. The full verse in Micah reads: *Ah, those who plot iniquity, designing evil on their beds. When morning dawns they do it, for they have the power.* Rabbi Reḥumai interprets the second half of the verse as referring to the punishing angels, and it is because of the phrase *When morning dawns they do it*, that he describes the continuing of judgment into daytime.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Woe unto those who would hide their plans deep from YHVH! They do their deeds in darkness and say, 'Who sees us, who knows us?'*

The simple reading of the phrase from Song of Songs is *because of terror בלילות (ba-leilot), in the night*, but Rabbi Reḥumai reads the plural form *ba-leilot* hyperliterally—*because of terror of the nights*—as a symbol for the destroying angels. On *terror in the night* as the terror of Hell, see BT *Yevamot* 109b; *Sanhedrin* 7b; *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 6; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:3; *Zohar* 2:163b, 226a.

The context in Song of Songs (3:7–8) reads: *Behold the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel—all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night.*

235. Yet He is compassionate... This verse begins the evening prayer and is apparently designed to keep destructive forces at bay. It first appears in *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, and then in all subsequent liturgies.

The full verse in Psalms reads: *Yet He is compassionate, He purges iniquity and does not destroy, and often restrains His wrath and does not arouse all His rage.*

236. not on Shabbat... On Friday night (eve of the Sabbath), when harsh Judgment is eliminated, this verse is inappropriate and should not be recited. Through the course of Shabbat, the punishing angels have no sway over the souls in Geihinnom. Reciting this verse on Shabbat would, however, arouse those terrifying angels.

The medieval Ashkenazic custom of omitting this verse on Sabbath eve spread to Spain. By the time of the *Zohar*, it had largely displaced the native Sephardic custom of reciting the verse. See Abraham ben Nathan ha-Yarḥi, *Sefer ha-Manhig*, 1:118–19, 133; *Zohar* 2:130a, 135b, 207a; 3:243b (RM); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 113–14; *Sha'arei Teshuvah (Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim)*, 80; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 100, 114; *Tur, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 267; Katz,

Divine Law in Human Hands, 22–23; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh sheba-Nistar*, 29; Liebes, “Ha-Zohar ke-Sefer Halakhah,” 582, 584–85. Cf. Vol. 1, p. 264, n. 1220.

According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 11:5, one of the dwellers in Hell reports: “Whoever does not observe the Sabbath willingly in your world observes it here under coercion.... All week long we are punished, and on the Sabbath we are allowed to rest.”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 65b; *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 33; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 23; *Zohar* 1:14b, 17b, 41a (*Heikh*), 48a, 62b, 197b, 237b; 2:31b, 88b, 100a, 136a, 150b–151a, 203b, 207a; 3:94b, 288b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 17a–b (*MhN*); Weiss, *Kol Yordei Dumah*, 33–45.

237. to demonstrate that judgment has vanished... Cf. Mopsik, who interprets אסור... להורות (*asur...le-horot*)—rendered here as “forbidden... to demonstrate”—as a reference to the prohibition against issuing legal rulings on Shabbat.

238. pick up a lash... Reciting *Yet He is compassionate* on Shabbat is compared to raising a whip to threaten sinners protected by the king, Shabbat. Uttering the names of the punishing angels would frighten the sinners needlessly, since on Shabbat they are shielded by the king. Whereas on week-nights, the second blessing following the *Shema* concludes “who guards His people Israel forever,” on Sabbath eve (according to an Ashkenazic custom adopted in parts of Spain and promoted by the *Zohar*) this wording changes to “who spreads a canopy of peace over us, over His entire people Israel, and over Jerusalem.”

See *Zohar* 1:48a; 2:205a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 112–13; *Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim*, *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, 80; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1266, n. 139; Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Qadmon*, 142–56; Liebes, “Ha-Zohar ke-Sefer Halakhah,” 582. Cf. *Nitsotsei Zohar on Zohar*

2:205a. On the protection of sinners during the Sabbath, cf. “Commentary of the Baal Shem Tov on Psalm 107.”

239. Judged in this compartment... The text turns to a cataloguing of the various sins that lead to the suffering of the seven compartments of Hell. Interrupting Torah study—the “words bestowed upon the tablets”—with frivolous conversation is viewed grievously. Rabbi Reḥumai puns on the word סִיח (*siaḥ*), *wormwood* [or: *bush*], with סִיחָה (*siḥah*), “conversation,” linking the bitterness of one with the other.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Levi said, ‘Whoever interrupts words of Torah to engage in idle talk is made to eat coals of broom, for it is said: *They pluck saltwort through סִיח* (*siaḥ*), *idle chatter, and broom roots are their food* (Job 30:4).’”

On the opposition to conversing during prayer, see *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Wistinetzki), par. 1589; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Margalioṭ), par. 18 and note 92; *Zohar* 2:131b, 205b–206a; 3:126a; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Ḥallamish, *Ha-Qabbalah*, 401–33. Cf. BT *Megillah* 28a–b; *Avodah Zarah* 3b. On one who scorns the disciple of the wise, see *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

Many of the sins enumerated here and correlated with the various compartments of hell are listed in Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3–4.

The full context of the verse in Job reads: *In want and starvation, bereft, they flee to desert land—the darkness of desolate dunes—plucking saltwort, leaves of wormwood* [or: *plucking saltwort from the bush*], *the roots of wormwood their food* (Job 30:3–4). Both saltwort and wormwood are plants that are particularly bitter and are thus eaten only by those in dire straits.

240. when the congregation is praying... This apparently refers to someone who prays with his back to the synagogue entrance, thus praying in the direction opposite that of the congregation, and thus away from God.

See BT *Berakhot* 6b: “Rav Huna says: ‘Whoever prays behind a synagogue is called wicked, as is said: *All around go the wicked* (Psalms 12:9).’ ...A certain individual prayed behind the synagogue and did not turn to face it. Elijah passed by, appearing to him in the guise of an Arab merchant. He said to him: ‘This is how you stand before your Master?’ He drew his sword and slew him.”

On praying behind the synagogue, see Rashi; *Tosafot* on 6a, s.v. *aḥorei beit ha-keneset*; Rabbenu Yonah, s.v. *ve-Rabbenu Yitshaq ha-zaqen*, 3b (according to pages of Alfasi); Yom Tov Ishbili on *Berakhot* 6b; cf. BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 27b, 28b, 29a.

241. second compartment... See BT *Berakhot* 19a: “Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi said, ‘Whoever disparages מִטְטָאן (*mittatan*), the biers of scholars is cast into Geihinnom, as is said: *And those הַמִּטִּים (ha-mattim), who bend, to crookedness, may YHVH take them off with the wrongdoers. Peace upon Israel!* (Psalms 125:5)... It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishma’el: If you see a scholar who has committed an offense by night, do not think ill of him by day, for perhaps he has repented.”

Shaming one’s fellow (in public) is deemed one of the most heinous of transgressions. See M *Avot* 3:11; BT *Bava Metsi’a* 58b; Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitsvot*, Negative Commandments 303; idem, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 10 (p. 141 in Qafaḥ); idem, *Hilkhot De’ot* 6:8; idem, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:14; *Midrash ke-Tapuaḥ Atsei ha-Ya’ar* (in *Batei Midrashot* 1:282); *Maḥazor Vitri* 531 (p. 725); *Sefer ha-Roqe’aḥ, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 16, 28; Moses son of Jacob of Coucy, *Sefer Mitsvot Gadol*, Positive Commandments 70; Negative Commandments 6; Jonah Gerondi, *Sha’arei Teshuvah* 3:140–41, 214.

On hectoring (or “swaggering”), see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a. On gaining honor through another’s disgrace, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5.

On the caution regarding pleasure from another's stumbling, see BT *Berakhot* 28b: "Rabbi Nehunia son of ha-Qaneh used to say a prayer upon entering the study hall and a short prayer upon exiting... Our Rabbis taught: On entering what does one say? 'May it be Your will, *YHVH*, my God, that no offense may occur on account of me; that I not stumble in a matter of *halakhah*; that my colleagues may rejoice in me; that I not call impure 'pure,' or pure 'impure'; and that my colleagues not stumble in a matter of *halakhah*; and that I may rejoice in them.'" See Rashi, ad loc.

On avoiding a local synagogue, see BT *Berakhot* 8a; Maimonides *Hilkhot Tefillah* 8:1.

On unpleasant interactions with a local colleague, cf. BT *Shabbat* 63a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish: "When two scholars are amicable to each other regarding *halakhah*, the blessed Holy One listens to them, as is said: *Then those who revere YHVH נִדְבְּרוּ (nidberu), spoke with one another, [and YHVH listened attentively]...* (Malachi 3:16)."

On benefiting from one's hosts' scanty resources, see Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 4:4, who cites this as one of the actions that seem benign, thus eluding one's purview for repentance. On striking one's fellow when unprovoked, see BT *Sanhedrin* 58b; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Hovel u-Mazziq* 5:2.

242. third compartment... On being arrogant about one's erudition, see M *Avot* 4:5: "Rabbi Tsadok said, 'Do not use [words of Torah] as a crown to elevate oneself, nor as a spade to dig with.' And Hillel used to say, 'He who makes use of the crown [of Torah] shall perish. Thus one learns: Whoever derives worldly benefit from words of Torah, removes himself from the world.'" See Maimonides, ad loc.; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On revealing meanings in the Torah that are contrary to *halakhah*, see M *Avot* 3:11; *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 12:9; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el, Massekhet de-Pisha Bo* 5; *Sifrei*,

Numbers 112; JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 16b; *Pesahim* 6:2, 33b; *Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27c; BT *Yoma* 85b and Rashi and *Tosafot*, s.v. *huts mi-poreq ol*; *Sanhedrin* 99a–b, *Shevu'ot* 13a, *Karetot* 7a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 26; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:11; cf. M *Megillah* 4:9.

On not responding to one's fellow's blessing, see *Zohar* 3:286a. On one who ridicules a scholar who has forgotten his learning, see BT *Berakhot* 8b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi: "Be careful [to respect] an old man who has forgotten his knowledge through no fault of his own, as we say: Both the whole tablets and the fragments of the tablets were placed in the Ark."

243. withholding wages of the hired laborer... See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 279: "Whoever withholds a hired person's wages is as though he takes his life." On the passage in *Sifrei*, see *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 24:15; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 112a; *Zohar* 3:84b–85a. Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* on 1:15. On fornicating with a Gentile, see BT *Eruvin* 19a; *Sefer Hasidim* (Margaliot), 1129; and sources cited above, [notes 84](#), [193](#).

244. fifth compartment is called Sheol... In the Bible, *שְׁאוֹל* (*she'ol*) is the name of the underworld, abode of the dead. See *Zohar* 2:266a (*Heikh*); cf. 3:54b.

On this group of sinners, see M *Sanhedrin* 10:1: "All of Israel have a share in the world to come, as is said: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified* (Isaiah 60:21). And the following have no share in the world to come: One who denies that resurrection is a biblical doctrine, that the Torah was divinely revealed, and a skeptic." See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:6.

Most of the denizens of this compartment of Hell sinned by denying key elements of belief. Informers attained their occupancy because of the gravity of their transgression, having been a perennial problem for Jews

living under foreign rule. See BT *Berakhot* 28b, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a, *Megillah* 17b. BT *Shabbat* 33b tells the story of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai's refuge in a cave after an informant reported his slander against the Romans.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hovel u-Mazziq* 8:9-11: "It is forbidden to inform about a person to the Gentiles and endanger his physical person or his property. [This applies] even when the person concerned is a wicked person and a sinner, and even if he causes irritation or distress. Whoever informs about a Jew and endangers his person or his property to the Gentiles has no portion in the world to come. It is permissible to kill an informer in any place, even in the present age when [the court] no longer metes out capital punishment... It is a frequent occurrence, in western locales, to kill informers who have made an established pattern of informing with regard to people's property, and to hand the informers over to Gentiles to punish them, beat them, and imprison them, according to their wicked ways."

In Spain, the problem of informers became so severe that the word *malshin*, "informer," became adopted into Spanish: *malsin*; *malsinería*; *malsindad*. On Jewish informers in the Middle Ages, see Rashi on *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a, s.v. *ve-ha-msorot*; Kaufmann, "Jewish Informers in the Middle Ages"; Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:161-62, 231-34; Lourie, *Crusade and Colonisation*, XII, 69-89.

245. with a Gentile woman... These two were already mentioned in the fourth compartment. V24, O17, L39, MS4, and MS3 all refer to a Gentile woman or a menstruant, but Thiengen and subsequent editions read: "with their mother or a menstruant," thus distinguishing from the previous compartment.

246. Netherworld... See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a: "Transgressors of Israel who sin with their body and transgressors of the Gentiles who sin with their body

descend to Hell and are punished there for twelve months. After twelve months their body is consumed, their soul burned, and the wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as is said: *You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet* (Malachi 3:21). But as for the heretics, informers, skeptics, those who rejected Torah, those who denied the resurrection of the dead, those who abandoned the ways of the community, those who *spread their terror in the land of the living* (Ezekiel 32:23), and those who sinned and led the masses to sin..., these descend to Hell and are punished there for generation after generation.... Hell will be consumed, but they will not be consumed.”

See *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 13:4; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 3; *Zohar* 1:62b, 77b; 2:150b; 3:285b–286a.

247. twelve months... The wicked who intended to turn back to God but never fulfilled this in their lifetime are punished in Hell but then rise from there.

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b–17a, in the name of the House of Shammai: “There are three groups at the Day of Judgment: one of the completely righteous, one of the completely wicked, and one of the intermediate. The completely righteous are written and sealed immediately for life; the completely wicked are written and sealed immediately for Hell... ; the intermediate go down to Hell and [on account of their punishment] squawk [or: chirp, twitter, squeal], and rise.”

See M *Eduyyot* 2:10; *Zohar* 2:150a; 3:178a; *ZH* 33d, 69a (*ShS*). On intending *teshuvah*, see BT *Gittin* 57b, *Qiddushin* 49b; *Zohar* 1:41a (*Heikh*); 3:220b.

The verse in Isaiah concludes: *for their worm will not die, nor their fire be quenched, and they will be a horror to all flesh.*

248. shines thickest murk The darkness of this place is so complete that even the light that shines there is gloom itself. See Alter; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

249. He repented... See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 20: "On the first day of the week, Adam entered the waters of the upper Gihon until the waters reached his neck, and he fasted seven weeks until his body became like a sieve. Adam said before the blessed Holy One, 'Master of all the worlds! Remove, please, my sin from me, and accept my repentance—and all the generations will learn that one can repent, and that you accept the repentance of penitents.' What did the blessed Holy One do? He extended His right hand, erased his sin, and accepted his repentance." See *Bereshit Rabbah* 22:13; BT *Eruvin* 18b; cf. *Avodah Zarah* 8a; *Zohar* 1:55b.

Genesis 2:13 identifies the Gihon as the second of the four branches of the river that issues from Eden. Gihon is also the name of the spring providing water for Jerusalem, where Solomon was anointed. On the Gihon, see 1 Kings 1:33–34; 2 Chronicles 32:30; Rashi on *Berakhot* 10b, s.v. *satam mei gihon*; *Zohar* 2:35a. On the double sense of Gihon, see David Luria on *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 20, n. 30.

"Seven lands," also known as the "seven climates [or: zones]," are the distinct inhabitable regions recognized in Ptolemaic and medieval geography. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:11 records the names of the seven earths: *Erets, Adamah, Arka, Gei, Tsiyyah, Neshiyyah*, and *Tevel*. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 4:12; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 37; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:2; *Zohar* 1:9b, 39b (*Heikh*), 157a, 177a, 253b (*Hash, ST*); 2:30b; 3:9b–10a; *ZH* 9b, 33b, 87b, 89c (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 11. On Cain's and Abel's birthplace, cf. BT *Sanhedrin* 38b and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *veyaredu arba'ah*.

This whole section is similar to *Zohar* 1:253b–254a (*Hash, ST*); *ZH* 9b.

250. from the face of Adamah... a restless wanderer upon Arets... Though these terms are synonyms for earth, Rabbi Reḥumai reads them hyperliterally, as references to different zones in the world. Cain is lowered to *Arets*, one

level below *Adamah*. After his repentance, he is raised to one level higher, *Arqa*.

On the different levels of earth, see preceding note. On *Arqa* and *Erets*, see *Zohar* 1:157a.

[251.](#) **Tevel...** *Tevel* is the highest of the seven lands. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:11.

[252.](#) **Cave of Machpelah...** Rabbi Kisma associates the sweet fragrance of the righteous dead in the Cave of Machpelah with that of Eden. According to rabbinic tradition, Adam and Eve were buried in this cave. Based on this tradition, the *Zohar* teaches that the Cave of Machpelah leads to the Garden of Eden.

The place-name מכפלה (*makhpelah*) is interpreted according to the root כפל (*kphl*), “double.” See BT *Eruvin* 53a: “Regarding the cave of Machpelah, Rav and Shemu’el: One said, ‘Two chambers, one within the other.’ The other said, ‘A chamber and a second story above it.’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:4, 8; BT *Eruvin* 53a; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 20, 36; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra on Genesis 23:9; *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 57b; 81a (*ST*), 127a–128b, 219a, 248b, 250b; 2:151b; *ZH* 21a (*MhN*).

On the fragrance of the Garden of Eden as the paradigmatic ideal, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:11; Rashi on Genesis 27:27; cf. BT *Ta’anit* 29b; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 10, 22. On the fragrance of the dead in rabbinic literature, see Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness*, 169–96. In kabbalistic literature, see Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 137; Mopsik, *Les Rites Qui Font Dieu*, 198–99. Cf. Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 226, n. 23.

On Seth’s tending to Adam, see *Life of Adam and Eve* [*Apocalypse*], 39. Seth’s birth is described in Genesis 5:3: *Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and he engendered in his likeness, according to his image, and called his name Seth*. According to a midrashic interpretation, Seth alone was in Adam’s likeness, unlike both Cain and Abel. See BT

Eruvin 18b; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 22; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:7; *Zohar* 1:55a; 2:167b–168a, 231b; *ZḤ* 8c–9b.

253. The blessed Holy One tended to him... Rabbi Reḥumai offers a different description of Adam's burial.

See *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36: “[Abraham] ran to fetch a calf [for the three messengers visiting him (Genesis 18:7)], but the calf ran away from him and entered the Cave of Machpelah; so he went in after it, and there he found Adam and Eve lying on their beds asleep, with lamps burning above them and a lovely fragrance around them, like a *pleasing aroma* (Leviticus 1:9). Therefore he desired to possess the Cave of Machpelah as a burial site.” See *Zohar* 1:127a.

An ancient tradition relates that upon expulsion from Eden, Adam pleaded with God to be permitted to take some of the garden's fragrant spices with him. See *Life of Adam and Eve [Apocalypse]*, 29. On Adam's burial by God, cf. *ibid.*, 39.

254. He created him from the Temple... In rabbinic tradition, God created Adam from the dust of the Temple. According to Rabbi Neḥemiah, God thought that the homage being paid to Adam was inappropriate and so relocated him to the Garden of Eden.

See *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 11: “He began gathering the dust of Adam [see Genesis 2:7] from the four corners of the earth.... He stood up on his feet [and] his height equaled the distance from one end of the earth to the other... and he bore the likeness of God. The creatures saw him and were terrified, thinking that he was their creator, so they all came to bow down before him.” Cf. *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 12: “He created him from a pure, holy site. From where did He take him? From the site of the Temple.”

See 2 Enoch 30:13; *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8 (and Theodor, *ad loc.*); *JT Nazir* 7:2, 56b; *BT Sanhedrin* 38a–b; *Tanḥuma, Peḳudei* 3; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 2:7;

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Beit ha-Behirah* 2:2; *Zohar* 1:34b, 130b, 205b; 2:23b, 24b; 3:46b, 83a (*Piq*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 344.

255. ten canopies... See BT *Bava Batra* 75a: “Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, ‘...The blessed Holy One will fashion a canopy for each and every [righteous] person... befitting his honor.’... Rabbi Ḥanina said, ‘...Each one will be scorched by the canopy of his fellow. Alas for such shame! Alas for such humiliation!’”

See *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*), 130a; 2:246b (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 348; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 374.

256. When Samael descended... Adam’s exalted rank aroused Samael’s envy. See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13: “Samael... took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined there was none as cunningly evil as the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made.* He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him.”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 59b, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Tema: “Adam was reclining in the Garden of Eden, while the ministering angels roasted meat and strained wine for him. Thereupon the serpent peeked in, saw his glory, and became envious of him.”

See *Zohar* 1:35b, 52a, 64a, 137b, 146a, 153a; Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 249 n. 4.

257. What caused him to sin... Literally, “How did he sin?” Rabbi Alexandrai and Rabbi Ḥizkiyah disagree, the former indicating that it was a moral failing, related to sexual passion; the latter contending that a more essential force corrupted Adam.

See BT *Sotah* 3a, in the name of Resh Lakish: “A person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters into him.”

258. forty-less-one lashes... The four sinners—Adam, Eve, serpent, and the earth—together constitute the paradigm for corporal punishment in rabbinic law. See M

Makkot 3:10: “How many lashes do they inflict? Forty-less-one, as is written: *In number, forty [he is to be struck, no more]* (Deuteronomy 25:2-3)—a number close to forty. Rabbi Yehudah says, ‘He suffers the forty lashes in full.’”

On the number of lashes administered, see *Tanḥuma*, *Qoraḥ* 12; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:21; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhhot Sanhedrin* 17:1; *Zohar* 1:61b; 2:184a, 249b (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 28-31.

On the ten curses decreed upon Eve, see BT *Eruvin* 100b. *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 14 enumerates nine curses applied to each of Adam, Eve, and the serpent. *Hadrat Qodesh* deduces the curses from the scriptural verses.

259. near to all who call unto Him Adam was formed from the dust of the future Temple Mount, the place where sacrifices were offered to procure atonement. When there is no Temple standing, repentance and prayer serve the same goal.

On Adam’s repentance, see *ZH* 19b (*MhN*). Rabbi Bun’s citation of King David is an Aramaic translation of Psalms 145:18, the subject of the next homily. On the following passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1515-17.

260. the blessed Holy One desires the heart... The importance of heartfelt devotion is articulated in rabbinic literature, but becomes a matter of central concern for medieval philosophers, mystics, and pietists. Ibn Ezra writes in *Yesod Mora* 7: “All commandments [are performed] in [one of] three ways: First, with faithfulness of the heart; second, with the mouth; and, third, through action. But just as the number one is comprised within any mathematical calculation, so too the essence of every commandment that is fulfilled with the mouth or through action requires faithfulness of the heart. And if it is absent, it is all in vain and worthless. And the sages say, ‘The Compassionate One desires the heart’” (BT *Sanhedrin* 106b).

See Bahya ibn Paquda, *Hovot ha-Levavot*, Introduction; Ibn Ezra (long) on Exodus 31:18; idem on Ecclesiastes 5:1; *Sefer Hasidim* (ed. Margalio), 530, 590, 1013; *Zohar* 2:162b; 3:281b (RM).

On nothing blocking the way to repentance, see JT *Pe'ah* 1:1, 16b: "Nothing withstands anyone who is repentant." See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:14; *Zohar* 2:12b, 106a; 3:78b, 122b; ZH 19d (MhN).

261. contingent upon the heart... According to *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, these two verses both call for confession as part of the ritual of the sacrificial offering, affirming that heartfelt devotion is the essential component.

On these two confessions as understood in the biblical and ancient context, see Levine; Milgrom.

262. One who fasts... offers a perfect sacrifice... Rabbi Neḥunia compares the act of fasting to the ritual sacrifices. The person's bodily depletion is reckoned as a perfect substitute. The "heat and aroma" of the breath play on the words of Leviticus 1:9: אִשֶּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה (*isheh reiaḥ niḥoaḥ la-YHVH*), a fire offering, a pleasing aroma to YHVH, and thus serve as substitute for the fire of the altar and the aroma of the sacrifice.

See BT *Berakhot* 17a: "When Rav Sheshet kept a fast, upon concluding his prayer he said the following: 'Master of the Universe, You know full well that in the time when the Temple was standing, if a person sinned he used to bring a sacrifice. Though all that was offered of it was its fat and blood, it procured atonement for him. Now I have kept a fast, and my fat and blood have diminished. May it be Your will that my fat and blood that have been diminished be deemed as if I had offered them before You on the altar, and You favored me [with forgiveness].'"

Formerly, animal sacrifice was a representation of the self, whereas Rav Sheshet, through offering his own flesh

and blood, giving through pain, symbolically offers from the self. See Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 48–49. In the *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth, “heart and will” become the altar, the media that symbolically transfer parts of the person’s very self to God. On offering one’s own fat and blood to God through fasting, see *Zohar* 2:20b (*MhN*), 153a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 127–28; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 80–81; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies*, 75–76. Cf. *Zohar* 2:62a; 3:9b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 79. On one’s breath serving as part of the sacrifice, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 41:1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 1.

263. apportioned to numerous sides... The material parts of an offering are distributed among the *sefirot*, angels, and even the demonic shells. *Tif’eret*, signified by the blessed Holy One, is interested only in the sacrifice’s inward aspects: the sincerity and devotion.

264. mind, heart, and liver... Corresponding to three organs in the human body: the brain, heart, and liver. According to medieval anatomy (based on Galen), these are the three main organs. The liver receives the digested food and transforms it into “nutritive blood,” which flows through the veins, nourishing the peripheral organs. Some blood enters the right chamber of the heart, from where it passes through the lungs and the septum to the left chamber. There the blood mixes with *pneuma*, or spirit, producing “vital blood,” which reaches the brain (and the rest of the body) via the arteries. However, in the sefirotic realm the process is reversed: the divine brain (*Hokhmah*) receives the initial flow of emanation from *Keter* and conveys this to the heart (*Tif’eret*), who gives to the liver (*Shekhinah*), who in turn feeds the lower worlds.

Rabbi Neḥuniah’s description of these organs as “three kings” apparently alludes to the fact that the initial letters of מוחא (*moḥa*), “brain,” לבא (*libba*), “heart,” and כבדא (*kavda*), “liver,” spell מלך (*melekh*), “king.” See Simeon ben Tsemah Duran, *Magen Avot* 5:19: “The experts in medicine agree

that there are three major organs in the human being, namely המוח והלב והכבד (*ha-moah ha-lev ve-ha-kaved*), the brain, the heart, and the liver; their sign: מלך (*melekh*), king.”

These three organs within the divine body refer to *Hokhmah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*. Divine overflow proceeds from *Keter* to “brain,” or *Hokhmah*, which absorbs it all. It then proceeds to *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, who is represented as the sea that is never full. *Shekhinah* receives from above and distributes to all creatures below.

On the three organs, see *Zohar* 1:138a (*MhN*); 2:153a; 3:224a–b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:296–97; 3:1516, n. 50. On Galen’s theory, see Siegel, *Galen’s System of Physiology and Medicine*, 51, 87–91, 104–6, 113–15, 183–90; Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, 33–34, 48–50.

This section appears somewhat fragmentary, lacking a link to the theme of fasting and repentance, but it can be explained through reference to a similar passage in *Zohar* 2:153a. By fasting, one stimulates the sefirotic process according to the human pattern: liver, then heart, then brain. The person’s own fat and blood, together with his intention, are offered to *Shekhinah* (the liver), who offers it to *Tif'eret* (the heart), who offers it to *Hokhmah* (the brain), who rule over the entire sefirotic body. “This structure is analogous to the sea” probably refers to the flow of arousal from below to *Shekhinah*, who then transmits those energies upward to the blessed Holy One, signified by the heart. Because *Shekhinah* continually sends arousal upward, She is never full. Thus the individual’s fasting demonstrates the commitment of the human heart, which is then received by the divine heart, *Tif'eret*, above. Ultimately, fasting operates on three separate levels: physiological, spiritual/emotional, and sefirotic.

265. Three types of repentance... After the kabbalistic explanation, Rabbi Yehudah returns to classical rabbinical methods for eliciting God’s merciful attentions.

Each of the terms in the verse from Psalms signifies a different level of repentance, with “tears” being paramount because they arouse the entire body. Weeping signifies the broken heart suggested in Psalms 51:19: *The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit; a broken and crushed heart, O Elohim, You will not spurn.*

On these three terms—*hear, give ear, and be not deaf*—see *Zohar* 1:132b. See BT *Bava Metsi’a* 59a, in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been locked.... Yet even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not, as is said: *Hear my prayer, O YHVH, to my cry hearken, to my tears be not deaf!*” See BT *Berakhot* 32b; *Zohar* 1:132b; 2:12b, 19b–20a (*MhN*), 165a, 245b (*Heikh*); 3:20a; *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

On the twelve heavenly gates, see *Zohar* 1:92a; 2:128b; 3:170a. Cf. V6, MS3, and O17, as well as *ZH* 18d (*MhN*), mentioning thirteen such gates, which would signify God’s thirteen attributes of mercy. See *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik; Englander.

266. What is the difference... Namely, between the verse’s three different terms. And why is repentance through tears formulated differently?

267. declines to fulfill his request... See *Midrash Haserot vi-Yteirot* 222 (in *Battei Midrashot*, 310): “Every instance of *shema* in Scripture is deficient, even that of the blessed Holy One: *O Listener to prayer, unto You all flesh shall come* (Psalms 65:3). Why is this so? Sometimes [prayer] is heard, and sometimes it is not heard.”

See *Zohar* 1:105; cf. *Tanḥuma, Ha’azinu* 4.

268. Cry—superior to prayer... On the superiority to regular hearing of the listening implied by *give ear*, see *Zohar* 3:286b. For a ranking of other terms related to prayer, see *Zohar* 2:20a (*MhN*).

269. Not all tears enter... See BT *Berakhot* 55a, in the name of Rabbi Yitṣhak: “Three things cause a man’s sins to

be remembered [on high]: [walking next to] a shaky wall, expectation of [the fulfillment of] prayer, and calling on heaven to punish his neighbor.”

270. What is written regarding Hezekiah?... When Hezekiah fell ill, Isaiah conveyed God’s message that he should set his affairs in order, for he would not get well. Hezekiah responded with the following prayer: *“Please, O YHVH,” he said, “remember how I have walked before You sincerely and wholeheartedly, and have done what is good in Your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept profusely.* God’s response concludes: *I hereby add [literally: I hereby He will add], fifteen years to your life* (Isaiah 38:3, 5). Hezekiah’s tears are the medium through which God sees his true devotion, leading to His compassionate response.

The full verse in Isaiah 25 reads: *He will swallow up death forever. My Lord YHVH will wipe away tears from all faces and remove the disgrace of His people from the whole earth—for YHVH has spoken.*

271. the time to come... The homily about repentance and tears concludes with a prediction for the messianic era: when Israel repents sincerely, with tears from the heart, God will graciously receive them.

272. Rabbi Kruspedai fell ill... Given Rabbi Kruspedai’s mysterious behavior, the rabbis assumed that he had died. While certain preparations of the corpse are permitted on the Sabbath, the rabbis determined that Rabbi Kruspedai’s corpse did not require any further measures, such as placing an infant or loaf of bread upon the body to permit carrying it to another place. See *M Shabbat* 23:5: “One may perform all necessary tasks for a corpse: anointing and washing it, provided that one does not move any of its limbs. One may remove a cushion from under it, and lay it on sand to extend its preservation. Its jaw may be bound... One may not close the eyes of a corpse on the Sabbath.”

See BT *Shabbat* 151a-b and Rashi, ad loc.; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Shabbat* 26:20-23; *Nitsotsei Zohar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

Rabbi Kruspedai (also known as Krispa, Kruspai, Krispi) was a third-century Palestinian *amora*, and a student of Rabbi Yoḥanan. The story about him that begins here is modeled after one in BT *Bava Batra* 10b about Yosef the son of Rabbi Yehoshu'a: "He was sick, becoming comatose; seemingly dead. [After he recovered], his father said to him, 'What was in your vision?' He replied, 'I saw a topsy-turvy world, the upper below and the lower above.' He said to him, 'You saw a refined world.' 'In what condition did you see us [students]?' He replied, 'As our esteem is here, so it is there. I also heard them saying, "Happy is the one who comes here in full possession of his learning."'" Samuel Eidels (Maharsha) explains, "The essence of study, and what makes the greatest mark, is study that comes through writing. It is on account of this that sages are called 'scribes.'"

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a; *Pesaḥim* 50a and Rashi, s.v. *itnegid*; cf. *Rut Rabbah* 3:1; *Tosafot*, s.v. *elyonim le-matah*; *Zohar* 3:164b; *TZ* 70 (136a). Cf. also Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Luke 13:30.

273. to fulfill Elimelech's post... Since the verse specifies that the sons remained after Elimelech's death, Rabbi Yoḥanan interprets it to mean that in some sense they were to serve as substitutes for him. Since Elimelech signified "soul of soul," while Mahlon and Chilion represented the much lower rungs of "holy spirit" and "animal spirit," they were inadequate for the task—and they died as well. The sons' inferiority is indicated in the verse by the feminine singular formulation of the verb (*she was left with her two sons*), moving them into the background. Rabbi Yoḥanan anticipates the objection that Elimelech could not have truly died, since he represents the letter ך (*yod*), first letter of the tetragrammaton. He

explains that the death described in Ruth actually refers to his fall from prominence. Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 96:3: “[The term] ‘death’ signifies only decline.” See note in Theodor-Albeck; BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a; *Zohar* 2:19b (*MhN*); 3:135b (*IZ*). On the symbolic ranking and identification of the souls of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, see above, [note 192](#).

274. went to sleep... This phrase renders דָּמַוּךְ (*damukh*), “lay down; sleep; die.” “Rupture upon rupture” refers to the woeful series of losses through these rabbis’ deaths.

275. I will tell you—but I cannot fathom it... Literally, “I saw, but I do not know what it was.”

276. Arrange your words... Rabbi Kruspedai informs Rabbi Yoḥanan that his death is imminent; he conveys this news partly by instructing him to arrange and consolidate his teachings while he still can. This is part of the broader lesson that Rabbi Kruspedai learned in his visit to the heavenly realm. It also echoes the heraldic message that concludes the talmudic story; see above, [note 272](#).

As something of a consolation, Rabbi Yoḥanan learns that he will be given honorable accompaniment by twelve great rabbis who already reside in the heavenly realm. See *Zohar* 1:218a.

277. Happy are those... Three groups are identified here. First are the elite for whom Torah study is their primary vocation—presumably a reference to the kabbalists. Second are the righteous who play a leadership role in fostering piety in their community. Third are common people who have achieved the uncommon ethical distinction of not longing for retribution from those who have wronged them.

“Waiving the right of retribution” (or “overcoming his natural temperament”; literally “passing by his measures”) is a talmudic ideal that becomes a staple of talmudic and medieval ethical works. See BT *Megillah* 28a: “Rabbi Akiva asked Rabbi Neḥunia the great: ‘On account of what merit

have you reached such length of days?... He replied, 'Never in my life have I accepted presents, nor have I insisted on retribution [when wronged], and I have been generous with my money.' 'Nor have I insisted on retribution,' as Raba said: 'He who waives his right to retribution is forgiven all his sins, as is said: *forgiving iniquity and passing over transgression* (Micah 7:18). Whose iniquity is forgiven? The iniquity of one who passes over transgression.'"

See Rashi, ad loc.; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a; *Yoma* 23a, 87b; *Ta'anit* 25b; *Sefer Mitsvot Gadol*, Positive Commandments 16, 70; Negative Commandments 12; Baḥya ibn Paquda, *Hovot ha-Levavot*, 6:6; Maimonides, *Hilkhot De'ot* 7:7; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Margalioṭ), 607; Jonah Gerondi, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 1:28.

278. Permission had been granted... The Angel of Death was authorized to take Rabbi Kruspedai's life, but then *Shekhinah* intervened on his behalf. The Angel of Death's recourse was to the heavenly tribunals—where Rabbi Kruspedai glimpsed Sandalfon, who was "braiding bands" (or "tying knots") for the blessed Holy One.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 13b: "A certain angel, who stands on the earth with his head reaching the living creatures. It is taught in a *baraita*: His name is Sandalfon: he is higher than his fellows by a [distance of] five hundred years' journey; and he stands behind the chariot, tying crowns for his Maker."

See *Shemot Rabbah* 21:4; *Ma'yan Hokhmah (Beit ha-Midrash, 1:59)*; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20; *Midrash Tehillim* 88:2; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§582, 597, 655–56, 821–22; *Tosafot, Ḥagigah* 13b, s.v. *ve-qosher*; El'azar of Worms, *Sodei Razaya*, 74, 76–77, 112, 114; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 495; *Zohar* 1:167b; 2:58a, 146b, 202b, 209a, 245b–246a (*Heikh*); *ZḤ* 36b (*RR*); Recanati on Genesis 19:27, 26a; Margalioṭ, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 148–54; Green, *Keter*, 20–41. Cf. *Zohar* 1:37b, 132a, 168b–169a.

“Braiding bands” renders מקשר קשרין (*meqasher qishrin*). In many of the sources cited above, Sandalfon weaves כתרין (*kitrin*), crowns or laurels for God from Israel’s prayers.

279. We have found indemnification... What ultimately saved Rabbi Kruspedai was his prominent quality of forgoing retribution, a willingness to forgive all who wronged him.

The story of Rabbi Kruspedai was woven together from a number of talmudic stories. On this section, see BT *Ta’anit* 25b: “An incident occurred involving Rabbi Eli’ezer, who ordained thirteen fasts upon the community and no rain fell. In the end, as the people began to depart [from the synagogue], he exclaimed, ‘Have you prepared graves for yourselves?’ The people broke down sobbing, and rain fell. It is further related of Rabbi Eli’ezer that once he descended before the ark [to lead the prayer service] and recited the twenty-four benedictions [for fast days] but he was not answered. Rabbi Akiva descended after him and exclaimed, ‘Our Father, our King, we have no king but You. Our Father, our King, for Your sake have mercy upon us,’ and rain fell. The Rabbis were whispering among themselves [about this preference for Rabbi Akiva]. A Divine Voice emerged, proclaiming, ‘This man was answered not because he is greater than the other man, but because he forgoes the right of retribution and the other does not.’”

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a: “He who waives the right to retribution is forgiven all his iniquities, as it says: *forgiving iniquity and passing over transgression* (Micah 7:18). Who is forgiven iniquity? One who passes by transgression [against himself]. Rav Huna son of Rav Yehoshu’a was once ill. Rav Papa went to inquire about him. He saw that he was very ill and said to those present, ‘Make ready the provisions for his journey.’ Eventually, however, he recovered, and Rav Papa felt ashamed to see him. He said to him, ‘What did you see?’ He replied, ‘It was

indeed as you thought,' but the blessed Holy One said to them [the angels]: 'Because he [Rav Yehoshu'a] does not insist upon his rights, do not be particular with [Rav Papa], as it says, *Forgiving iniquity and passing over transgression*. Who is forgiven iniquity? He who passes over transgression.'" See BT *Ḥagigah* 5b.

Rabbi Kruspedai appears only a few times in rabbinic writings, but he was probably selected as the subject of this story because of his famous statement in BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b: "Rabbi Kruspedai said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: 'Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the intermediate. The completely righteous at once are inscribed and sealed in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked at once are inscribed and sealed in the book of death; the fate of the intermediate is suspended from New Year until the Day of Atonement: if they are deemed meritorious, they are inscribed in the book of life; if not, they are inscribed in the book of death.'" "

280. complete my study... Rabbi Kruspedai was released from the clutches of the Angel of Death because of his redeeming quality of forgiveness; however, he had a persistent flaw of not having fully arranged and, perhaps, composed in writing, the fruits of his study. The Angel of Death would not depart empty-handed, so Rabbi Kruspedai's more elderly namesake was delivered to him as a substitute. Cf. *Zohar Ḥadash* 54a.

Several talmudic stories relate that when an individual's demise approaches, he encounters the Angel of Death; but he can seek a reprieve to review his learning. See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a, *Ketubbot* 77b; cf. *Berakhot* 38b, *Pesaḥim* 68b. What distinguishes Rabbi Kruspedai here from those rabbis is that he requested time to complete his study. See *Nitsotsei Zohar; Matoq mi-Devash*. On the Angel of Death substituting a namesake, see BT *Ḥagigah* 4b-5a.

On the significance of remembering one's learning, see M *Avot* 3:8, in the name of Rabbi Me'ir: "Of one who forgets one word of his learning, Scripture appraises him as liable for his own soul, as is said: *But take care, take exceeding care for your soul lest you forget the words that your own eyes have seen* (Deuteronomy 4:9)."

On Torah knowledge as a means of protection after death, see BT *Ḥagigah* 27a, in the name of Rabbi El'azar: "The fire of Hell has no dominion over scholars." See *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 1; *Midrash Mishlei* 10; *Zohar* 1:132a; 2:123b; 3:144a (IR), 196b; *ZH* 2c (SO), 8d (MhN), 70d (ShS). Cf. *Zohar* 1:4a; 2:134b; 3:205b.

281. tears on my cheeks... Each interval of Rabbi Kruspedai's trance corresponded to a particular episode in his travels. When he was weeping, it was from fear of the Angel of Death. His smile resulted from his joy in his salvation through *Shekhinah*. The role of Rabbi Oshaya is not clear. See *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

282. Who pass through the Valley of Weeping... The word בכא (*bakha*) refers to a certain valley, through which pilgrims may have passed on their way into Jerusalem. Since it resembles the root בכה (*bkh*), "weep," the Septuagint and Targum, followed by *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* here, interpret it as Valley of Weeping. Similarly, the word מורה (*moreh*), in the scriptural context, signifies *the early rain*, but is interpreted according to its homonym, "teacher." Thus, Rabbi Kruspedai has survived the encounter with the Angel of Death, represented by the *Valley of Weeping*; he is destined to become a *fountain* of Torah as a result of his completion of his learning; and, as a *teacher* he will *cloak* his student *with blessings*.

The simple meaning of the verse is *Happy the folk whose strength is in You, the highways in their heart, who pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it into a spring—yes, the early rain cloaks it with blessings* (ibid., 6-7).

[283.](#) **Rabbi Yoḥanan...** Although Rabbi Kruspedai returned bearing news of Rabbi Yoḥanan's imminent death, Rabbi Yoḥanan praises Rabbi Kruspedai for reaffirming faith in God's goodness and the beauty of Torah, even in the face of death.

On besmirching the world, see *Zohar* 1:73a.

[284.](#) **Naomi said...** The author has conflated two verses in inverse order. On discrepancies between the MT and Zoharic citation, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#). Cf. *Hadrat Qodesh*.

[285.](#) **he turned aside...** On the critique of Elimelech's departure on account of the famine, see BT *Bava Batra* 91a; *Rut Rabbah* 1:4.

[286.](#) **practice of the righteous...** All three patriarchs left the land of Canaan during times of famine, so Elimelech's behavior seems unexceptional, even appropriate.

See Genesis 12:10; 26:1; 45:9–13. See also BT *Bava Qamma* 60b: "Our Rabbis taught: 'When there is a famine in town, withdraw your feet [i.e., get moving], as stated: *And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there* (Genesis 12:10).' Cf. BT *Bava Metsi'a* 75b.

[287.](#) **he dwelt with them...** The text is fragmentary. It implies that Elimelech lived among righteous people, so his case was different from that of the patriarchs. He was punished for his callousness in the face of his people's suffering, and for his preference to live among Gentiles—given that the famine was no less severe in Moab than in the land of Israel.

[288.](#) **[81a]...** The material spanning 80c–81a was translated above. See [pp. 79–85](#).

[289.](#) **the event derived from judgment...** In the biblical story, David consults an oracle to inquire about the reason for the famine, and he is informed that it is the consequence of Saul's murder of Gibeonites.

See BT *Yevamot* 78b: “*David sought out the presence of YHVH. What does this mean? Resh Lakish explained, ‘He inquired of the Urim and Thummim...’ And YHVH said, ‘On account of Saul and on account of the house of bloodguilt, because he put the Gibeonites to death.’ On account of Saul—because he was not eulogized properly; and on account of the house of bloodguilt—because he put to death the Gibeonites. Where, however, do we find that Saul put to death the Gibeonites! The truth is that since he killed the inhabitants of Nob—the city of priests—who were supplying them with water and food, Scripture regards it as if he himself had killed them. Justice is demanded for Saul because he was not properly eulogized, and justice is demanded because he put to death the Gibeonites? Yes, as Resh Lakish said, ‘What is meant by the verse Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be hidden on the day of YHVH’s wrath (Zephaniah 2:3)? Where there is his judgment, there are also his executions.’” See JT *Sanhedrin* 6:7, 23d; *Bemidbar Rabbah*, *Naso* 8:4.*

2 Samuel 21:1 reads in full: *There was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought out the presence of YHVH. And YHVH said, ‘On account of Saul and on account of the house of bloodguilt, because he put the Gibeonites to death.’*

2 Samuel 21:14 reads in full: *And they buried the bones of Saul and of Jonathan his son in the territory of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father; and they did all that the king had charged. And God then granted the plea for the land.*

290. drippings of the land of Israel... The prominence of the land of Israel elicits benefits and misfortune. Its relationship with Divinity is unmediated so it receives preeminent blessings, but when judgment rules the world, Israel is punished first.

See BT *Ta’anit* 10a: “The land of Israel drinks water directly from the rain, while the rest of the world drinks of

the drippings [Munich MS continues: of the land of Israel].”

See Nahmanides on Deuteronomy 11:10-12; *Zohar* 1:84b, 108b, 255b (*Hash*); 2:22b, 152b; 3:209a-b, 265b; *ZH* 9d (*MhN*), 61b (*MhN, ShS*), 87d (*MhN, Rut*).

291. Elimelech was righteous... In contrast to David—who sought the welfare of the land and its inhabitants—Elimelech simply fled, abandoning his people. His sons, too, rejected their people by marrying Moabite women.

292. Uzza and Aza’el... According to ancient legend, the angels Uzza and Aza’el opposed the creation of Adam and Eve, fell from heaven, and were attracted by *the daughters of men* (Genesis 6:2).

See 1 Enoch 6-11; Jubilees 5:1-8; *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 6:4; BT *Yoma* 67b; *Pesikta Rabbati* 34; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 22; *Yalqut Shim’oni*, Genesis 44; *Shemḥazi ve-Aza’el (Beit ha-Midrash, 4:127-28)*; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literature*, §8; Rashi on *Niddah* 61a, s.v. *benei aḥi’ah*; *Zohar* 1:9b, 19b, 23a (*TZ*), 25a-b (*TZ*), 37a, 37a (*Tos*), 55a, 58a, 126a, 133b; 2:112b, 178b-179a (*SdTs*); 3:60b, 144a (*IR*), 194a, 207b-208b, 212a-b, 233a-b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:147-51; 4:169-72; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 631-32; Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*; Reed, *Fallen Angels*. Cf. Testament of Solomon 6:1-4; Orlov, *Dark Mirrors*, 47-81.

On rabbinic discomfort with this legend, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 26:5 (and note of Theodor-Albeck): “*The sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind*. Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai called them ‘sons of judges.’ Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai cursed all who called them ‘sons of God.’” See *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 6:2, 4; *Targum Yerushalmi* and Rashi on Genesis 6:2.

293. בני אלהים (ishim), and... בני אלהים (benei elohim), sons of God... The transition from heavenly realms to the mundane necessitates a translation from the spiritual to the material. In order for angels (or other ethereal entities, such as manna) to descend into this world, they must take on

aspects of the material world as garments. Both wind and fire are necessary for the angels to appear in this world, so the angels composed of fire contribute fire to those composed of wind, and vice-versa.

Popular etymology suggests a relationship between אִישִׁים (*ishim*), “fiery beings; angels,” and אִישׁ (*ish*), “man,” indicating metaphysical similarity. Though the usual biblical plural of *ish* is אַנְשִׁים (*anashim*), *ishim* does appear three times as the plural form (Isaiah 53:3; Psalms 141:4; and Proverbs 8:4). Similarly, the fact that the בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (*benei elohim*), “sons of God,” were able to blend in with humanity suggests their near-parity as well.

On the materialization of spiritual entities, see Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar* 1:34a-b, 58a, 81a (*ST*), 98b (*ST*), 101a, 144a; 2:197a, 229b, 231a; 3:126b, 152a, 155b, 208a; *ZH* 48c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 316-17. Cf. *Zohar* 2:61b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 395.

See BT *Bava Qamma* 86b: “Rabbi Tanḥum son of Ḥanilai said, ‘One should never deviate from custom; for look, Moses ascended on high and ate no bread, whereas the ministering angels [who appeared to Abraham] descended below and ate bread.’” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:14; *Zohar* 1:102a.

On the names of different kinds of angels, see Maimonides, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:7: “The differing nomenclature of the angels corresponds to their rank. Thus they are called: *ḥayyot ha-qodesh* (which are superior to them all), *ofanim*, *er’elim*, *ḥashmalim*, *seraphim*, *mal’akhim*, *elohim*, sons of *elohim*, *keruvim*, and *ishim*.... The tenth category is the rank of form called *ishim*, because their level is closest to the level of human knowledge.” See *ibid.* 7:1; *Zohar* 1:81a (*ST*); 2:43a (*RM*); *ZH* 6a (*MhN*), 33b; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 24b, p. 17a.

On angels returning heavenward once they have completed their task, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2; *Tanḥuma*,

Vayera 8.

294. He makes winds His messengers... The verse in Psalms reads: עושה מלאכיו רוחות משרתיו אש לוחט (*oseh mal'akhav ruhot, mesharetav esh lohet*), whose simple meaning is: *He makes winds into His messengers, flaming fire into His ministers.* Here, Rabbi Kisma adopts a midrashic reading that transposes the objects being acted upon with their described end state.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 4: "When they are sent off by His word, they are made into winds; and when they minister before Him, they are made into fire, as is said: *He makes His angels winds, His ministers flaming fire.*"

See *Tanḥuma, Hayyei Sarah* 3; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:4; Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1; 49:33; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 77; *Zohar* 1:40b (*Heikh*), 58a, 81a (*ST*), 101a, 144a; 2:10a, 98b, 173a-b, 229b, 231a; 3:9b, 126b, 152a; *ZH* 10a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 316-17; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 128; Gikatilla, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 54-55; Cohen-Alloro, 29; Wolfson, "The Secret," xxv-xxvii.

295. blend into this world... After seven days, a spiritual entity—angel or human soul—becomes attached to its physical abode. In this case, two factors weighted them down: the angels mixed in the elements of water and earth to their composition, and in addition, they saw the beauty of *the daughters of humankind* and were apparently smitten. See *Zohar* 1:23a, 25a (both *TZ*); 3:43b, 206a; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

296. magical arts... See 1 Enoch 7-8: "And they taught them magical medicine, incantations, the cutting of roots, and taught them about plants.... And Aza'el taught the people the art of making swords and knives, and shields, and breastplates; and he showed to their chosen ones bracelets, decorations... ornamentation, the beautifying of

the eyelids, all kinds of precious stones, and all coloring tinctures and alchemy.”

On the *Ancient Mountains*, cf. Deuteronomy 33:15.

[297.](#) **Balaam acquired his sorcerer’s skill...** On Balaam’s learning of the magical arts, see *Zohar* 1:126a.

[298.](#) **to subvert the celestial family...** Part of Uzza’s and Aza’el’s crime was to defy the natural order and undermine the boundaries of different species, by mating with human women. Were they to continue, the world could not endure.

The phrase “subvert the celestial Family” renders דלעילא פמליא (akhḥish pamalya di-l’eila), which derives from BT *Sanhedrin* 67b, where Rabbi Yoḥanan asks, “Why are they called מכשפים (mekhashephim), sorcerers? Because sorcerers מכחישין פמליא של מעלה (makḥishin pamalya shel ma’lah), subvert [or: negate, impair, deny] the celestial Family [i.e., the heavenly household; divine agents].”

See BT *Hullin* 7b; *Tanḥuma, Mi-Qets* 2; *Zohar* 1:243b; 3:86b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 279.

[299.](#) **suckle from the north...** North is the side of Judgment, and all malevolent forces derive from there.

300. Na'amah... Na'amah, whose name means "lovely," was the sister of Tubal-Cain and a great-great-great-great-grand-daughter of Cain (Genesis 4:22). According to rabbinic tradition, the fallen angels were attracted by her beauty.

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Huqqat*, add. 1; *Midrash Aggadah* and *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Genesis 4:22; Naḥmanides on Genesis 4:22; *Zohar* 1:9b, 19b, 55a; 3:76b-77a; *ZH* 19d (*MhN*); *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 246-48.

301. mother of demons... In the *Zohar*, Na'amah is the mother of Ashmedai, king of the demons. She is often said to generate demons by seducing men in their sleep. Here, she is the seductive spirit that causes the fallen angels to stray after human women.

See Naḥmanides on Genesis 4:22; *Zohar* 1:9b, 19b, 55a; 3:76b-77a; *ZH* 19d (*MhN*).

The full verse reads: *The Nephilim [or: fallen ones] were on earth in those days—and afterward as well—when the sons of God came in to the daughters of humankind, who bore them children. These are the heroes of old, men of renown.*

302. men of the name... Rabbi Shalom offers a hyperliteral reading of the phrase אֲנֹשֵׁי שֵׁם (*anshei shem*), *men of renown*. The invocation of a name—divine or demonic—is a central feature of magical practice, and it is fitting that the descendants of the fallen angels, who had taught magical arts to humanity, should be masters of names. (Typically, however, names are used in particular situations, to achieve particular goals, rather than being permanently associated with some object in nature, as indicated here.)

See Luria, *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 7, n. 32. On the use of names in magical practice, see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 78-103; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 17-18, 117-19, 305-7, 376-78; Harari, *Early Jewish Magic*, 245-55, 258-61.

In its simple sense, the verse from Genesis reads: *The Nephilim [or: fallen ones] were on earth in those days—and afterward as well—when the sons of Elohim came in to the daughters of humankind, who bore them children. These are the heroes of old, men of renown.*

303. Men of the name—actually... Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yose use the word ממש (*mamash*), “actually,” to signal that the formula אנשי שם (*anshei shem*) refers to *men of Shekhinah*. They derive this from the presence of the word גברים (*gibborim*), *heroes* [or: *warriors*], in both Genesis 6:4 and Song of Songs 3:7. Their teaching is not fully explicated, but somehow they have concluded that either the *sons of God* or their offspring are *heroes* dedicated to *Shekhinah*.

In its simple sense, the verse from Song of Songs reads: *Behold the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel.*

See Sullam. On *Shekhinah* as God’s name, see *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Yerushalmi* on Exodus 20:21.

משמש (*Mamash*), “Actually,” is a technical term that signals the transparency of the mundane world to the supernal world and, from a hermeneutical perspective, “an overlapping of exoteric and esoteric signification.” See Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden,” 80–88.

304. heroes of Israel... Rabbi Yitshak rejects the previous teaching on the grounds that the verse identifies the *men of the name* as *heroes of Israel*, which the fallen angels are clearly not.

305. Why is witchcraft more common among women... The biblical prohibition specifies a female practitioner of sorcery, prompting Rabbi Azariah’s question.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 67a: “Most women engage in witchcraft.” In *Soferim* 15:7, Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai teaches: “The most worthy of women practices witchcraft.” See M *Avot* 2:7; JT *Qiddushin* 4:14, 66b; Rashi, Rashbam,

and Ibn Ezra on Exodus 22:17; *Zohar* 1:126a-b; Fishbane, “Most Women Engage in Sorcery.”

306. No רעה (ra’ah), evil, will befall you... With his interpretation of the verse from Psalms, Rabbi Yose concedes that wickedness comes in both male and female forms: in the word-pair *evil* and *affliction*, one is female and the other is male. By citing the verse from Ecclesiastes, he demonstrates that females are far more malevolent.

The word “depths” renders עומקין (*umqin*; singular *umqa*), which is used by *Targum Onqelos* to signify the word שאה (*se’et*), *inflammation* [or: *swelling*], one of the features of the skin disease *tsara’at*, generically called *nega*, “affliction.”

The verse from Ecclesiastes reads in full: *I find woman more bitter than death. For she is all snares, and nets her heart, and fetters her hands. He who is good before God will escape her, and an offender will be trapped by her.*

On women’s propensity for sorcery, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1358 and notes there; Koren, *Forsaken*, 114-16.

See *Targum Onqelos* on Leviticus 13:2, 10, 19; 14:56; cf. Ecclesiastes 7:24. See Fox on Ecclesiastes 7:24, 26; Alter on *ibid.* 7:26.

307. fetters her hands... How should one understand Ecclesiastes’ assertion that the seductress’s *hands* (or *arms*) are fetters? Rabbi Yannai explains that a man’s contact with a woman, even with just her hand, is so sexually seductive that it plunges him into hell. On account of the sexual desire she arouses, her *hands* themselves are *fetters*.

See BT *Berakhot* 61a: “Our Rabbis taught: If a man counts out money from his hand into the hand of a woman so as to have the opportunity of gazing at her, even if he has assets of Torah and good deeds like Moses our teacher, he shall not escape the punishment of Geihinnom, as it says: *Hand to hand, evil will not go unpunished*—he shall

not escape the punishment of Geihinnom.” See BT *Eruvin* 18b.

See BT *Kallah* 1:3: “Rabbi El’azar son of Azariah warned with three hundred rams’ horns, ‘Whoever receives a cup from the hand of a bride, and drinks it, has no portion in the world to come.’”

On the dangers of magic being passed hand to hand, see *Zohar* 2:192a.

308. women would murder and bring death... Rabbi Yehoshu’a offers a harsher interpretation of the verse from Ecclesiastes. Heaven restrains woman and *her hands are fettered*, because if not, women’s sexual allures and magical practices would bring death and destruction to the entire world. According to Rabbi Yannai, danger is contingent upon a man’s incautious behavior; here, women’s danger is so pervasive that it is only heaven’s restraint upon her that protects the world.

309. she originates in his depths... Since woman emerges from man—in Genesis 2 and as elaborated in kabbalistic literature—she has intimate knowledge of his thinking and can easily entrance him, coercing him by administering oaths with impure names and sorcery. In the hierarchy of language and action, language is associated with the male and action with the female, but woman remains responsible for eliciting both.

Matoq mi-Devash interprets the references to male and female here as symbolic of gender in the demonic realm. On female rootedness within the male, see Wolfson, “Re/membering the Covenant”; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, 142–89.

310. One who passes between two women... In ancient and medieval times, menstruating women were considered to be sources of contagion, whose gaze emitted toxins that could pollute the air and have murderous effects upon men where their gaze alighted. Even if these women are not menstruating, their behavior is suspicious and they

are likely casting an evil eye upon passersby. That is, these women can harm men simply by looking at them.

See BT *Pesahim* 111a: “When two women sit at a crossroad, one on one side of the road and one on the other side, facing each other, they are certainly engaged in witchcraft. What is the remedy? If there is another road, let him go that way. But if there is no other road, then if another man is with him, let them clasp hands and switch places. If there is no other person, let him recite: ‘Iggeret, Azlat, Asiya, Belusiya [the demons whose aid you seek] are killed by arrows.’”

On the fear of menstrual blood as a repository of demonic forces, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:948–53. On the menstrual gaze, see Koren, *Forsaken*, 106–9. On the evil eye, see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 54–56; Kern-Ulmer, “The Power of the Evil Eye,” 344–53, especially 350–51; idem, *The Evil Eye*.

311. Go away, go away!... This formula will unbind whatever evil spell the woman has cast. It is recommended for anyone who passes between two women.

See BT *Pesahim* 111a: “Our Rabbis taught: ‘There are three who must not pass between [two men], nor may [others] pass between them—a dog, a palm tree, and a woman.’ Some say: ‘a swine, too’; some say: ‘a snake, too.’ If they do pass between, what is the remedy? Rav Papa said, ‘Let them recite [a verse] commencing with *EI* and [a verse] concluding with *EI*.’” See Rashi, Rashbam, *Tosafot*.

312. a woman following behind him... This is another story demonstrating women’s engagement with witchcraft, but this one shows the superior power of rabbinic holiness and learning, as Rav Huna easily dispels her magical attempts.

In the talmudic source, it is Hanina son of Dosa, the wonder worker, who deflects the witch’s spell. See BT *Sanhedrin* 67b: “A woman once attempted to take dirt from under Rabbi Hanina’s feet. He said to her, ‘If you succeed

in your attempts, go and practice it [sorcery].” See BT *Hullin* 7b.

313. He who is good before God... Rabbi Hiyya teaches that it is righteousness and piety that protects one from witchcraft.

314. famine in town... The homily proceeds to other dangers that are contingent on visibility. If one does not take precautionary measures during dangerous times, one is liable for one’s own demise.

The simple meaning of the verse in its context (Genesis 42:1-2) reads: *Jacob saw that there were provisions [or: that there was grain] in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, “למה תתראו (lammah titra’u), Why do you keep looking at one another?”* Jacob discerns the brothers’ unease regarding the prospect of a return trip to Egypt, expressed (with the reflexive verb form) as *looking at one another*. Here Jacob’s question is interpreted to mean, literally, *Why are you allowing yourselves to be seen, [since that exposure could be dangerous]?*

See BT *Bava Qamma* 60a-b: “Rabbi Yosef taught: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *None of you shall go out from the entrance of his house until morning* (Exodus 12:22)? Once permission has been granted to the Destroyer, he does not distinguish between righteous and wicked. Moreover, he begins with the righteous first, as is said: *I will wipe out from you both the righteous and the wicked* (Ezekiel 21:8)’... Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? Keep your feet indoors.’... Our Rabbis taught: ‘A plague in town? One should not walk in the middle of the road because the Angel of Death walks there—for as soon as permission has been granted him, he strides brazenly.’”

See *Mekhilta, Pisha* 11; *Zohar* 1:63a, 64b, 67b-69a, 101b-102a, 107b, 113a, 182b, 197b, 204b; 2:36a, 196b-197a, 227a; 3:38b, 54a-b; *ZH* 77a (*MhN, Rut*).

On this reading of Genesis 42:1, see *Targum Onqelos*; BT *Ta’anit* 10b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:2; *Tanḥuma, Mi-Qets* 8;

Tanḥuma (Buber), *Mi-Qets* 8; *Zohar* 1:197b; Sarna. Cf. *Zohar* 1:208a. On the significance of outward display, see Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 130–41.

315. Why were Mahlon and Chilien punished... Naomi and her family had left the land of Israel—where there was famine—so that they would not appear satiated while everyone else was hungry; she returned only when word arrived that the famine had ended and food was available. If so, why were her sons punished, since they had conducted themselves appropriately? Because they had married outside the fold.

See *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*. The context in Ruth reads: *they lived there about ten years... for in the fields of Moab she had heard that YHVH had taken note of His people and given them food.*

316. no women in the world... like the Moabites... The power of the Moabite women's power was such that when the Israelites ate just a morsel of food produced by their sorcery, the men were ensnared and began worshipping Moabite idols.

The context in Numbers reads: *The people began to go whoring with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. And Israel clung to Baal Peor, and the wrath of YHVH flared against Israel* (Numbers 25:1–3).

317. Like the clinging of bracelets... Just as they were attached to and adored their own jewelry, so did they cling to Baal Peor. See BT *Sanhedrin* 64a; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:23.

318. how to utter words... The simple meaning of the phrase *by Balaam's word* is that he had ordered them to entice the Israelite men. Rabbi Yose here reads the phrase hyperliterally to mean that it was Balaam's words, and the mode of uttering them, that signified their advance in magical knowledge.

For his part, Rabbi Yoḥanan emphasizes Ruth's uniqueness—a recurrent theme in this work—by asserting that Ruth was worthy and uninvolved with the magical arts. Cf. Mopsik, n. 285.

The full verse in Numbers reads: *Look, these are the ones who led the Israelites by Balaam's word to trespass against YHVH in the affair of Peor, and there was a scourge against the community of YHVH.*

319. to her daughters-in-law... MT reads: *Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law.* On scriptural variants in the *Zohar*, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

320. If you are worthy... יַעֲשֶׂה (ya'aseh), **May [YHVH] treat...** Masoretic tradition indicates that the word should be written יַעֲשֶׂה but vocalized יַעֲשֶׂה (ya'as), where—according to the *Zohar*—the letter ה (he) signifies *Shekhinah*. In this homily, the discrepancy registers the righteousness of Ruth and Orpah: if they are saintly, *Shekhinah* will be with them, and if not, they will be deprived of that protection.

321. מִכֶּם (mi-kem), from you... The homily picks up on the unusual use of the preposition מִן (min) attached to the pronominal suffix כֶּם (khem), *you*. While the simple meaning of the verse reads the preposition comparatively: *it has been far more grievous for me than for you*, the speaker indicates that a more common expression—עֲלֵיכֶם (aleikhem)—could have been chosen to convey that point. Consequently, he interprets מִן (min) as *from*, to indicate that Ruth and Orpah are the direct causes of Naomi's distress.

MT reads: מֵר לִי מְאֹד (mar li me'od), *far more bitter for me*, rather than צָר לִי מְאֹד (tsar li me'od), *far more grievous for me*, as here. On scriptural variants in the *Zohar*, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

The further explanation is offered in the name of Rabbi Bizna, according to a number of the manuscripts, though other manuscripts and printed editions variously read the name as Kizba, Kahana, and Ukba.

The second half of the verse reads: *Enough, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you; indeed, the hand of YHVH has struck me.*

322. הרפה, Harafah was her name... Rabbinic tradition offers a series of pejorative interpretations of the name Orpah, identifying her with Harafah from 2 Samuel 21:18. The term הרפה (*ha-rafah*) means literally *the giant* [or: *titan; race of giants*], but because of its similarity to Orpah it is used for wordplay. Ultimately, the sons of Orpah—the one who turned away from Naomi and her values—fell at the hands of David, the paramount descendant of Ruth, who affirmed Jewish faith and practice.

See BT *Sotah* 42b, cited above, [note 220](#).

323. Ishbi of Nob... The name of David's assailant is actually Ishbi-benob, but the *Zohar* reads it as Ishbi of Nob, to highlight his connection to the events at Nob. In fact, the battle with the Philistines occurred at Gob, rather than Nob, thus prompting the question. Rabbi Pinḥas explains that the name יִשְׁבִי בְנוֹב (*yishbi be-nov*), Ishbi-benob, is a play on words. See 2 Samuel 21:18 and the next note.

324. For [David] had prompted the affair at Nob... 1 Samuel 21-22 recounts an episode during David's flight from Saul when the latter was trying to assassinate him. David went to the priestly town of Nob and told Ahimelech the priest that he was the king's emissary, when in fact he was seeking refuge from Saul's pursuit. An assistant of Saul's, Doeg the Edomite, saw the affair and, when he supplied the information to the king, King Saul assigned Doeg the task of decimating the city, including women and children. Only Abiathar, one of Abimelech's sons, survived the slaughter and when he told David of the events, David said, *I am the one who caused the loss of all the lives of your father's house* (1 Samuel 22:22).

Even though Saul actually perpetrated the crime, rabbinic tradition holds David responsible for the massacre in Nob, telling an elaborate tale of the various attempts to

take revenge on him—and the miracles that save his life. The crimes committed at Nob are said to lead ultimately to Sennacherib’s invasion and siege of Jerusalem, as intended to requite the sin. *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth proceeds to tell much of that story here.

Though David’s infraction does not seem to call for the catastrophe that followed, in rabbinic tradition God is said to be exacting regarding the sins of the righteous. See BT *Yevamot* 121b, in the name of Rabbi Abba: “The blessed Holy One deals strictly with those around Him, even to a hairbreadth.”

On Nob and its destruction, see BT *Sanhedrin* 95a-b; cf. *Zohar* 1:63b; 2:49b, 224a. On the higher standard set for the righteous, see *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 11, p. 217; JT *Sheqalim* 5:1, 48d; BT *Bava Qamma* 50a; *Tanḥuma, Balaq* 20; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Balaq* 29; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:24; *Zohar* 1:140a, 185b; 2:247b (*Heikh*); *ZH* 34b.

325. This is the one who killed your brother... According to the tale in BT *Sanhedrin* 95a, Goliath was Ishbi’s brother, and Ishbi noticed David himself. See above, [note 220](#).

326. let my seed be enduring... See BT *Sanhedrin* 95a, in the name of Rav Yehudah: “The blessed Holy One said to David, ‘How long will this crime be concealed in your hand? By your hand Nob, the city of priests, was massacred; by your hand, Doeg the Edomite was banished; and by your hand, Saul and his three sons were slain. Should your seed be ended, or shall you be delivered into the enemy’s hand?’ He replied: ‘Master of the Universe! I would rather be delivered into the enemy’s hand than that my line should end.’”

In the talmudic version of the story (BT *Sanhedrin* 95a), it is Abishai who utters the Ineffable Name, as an interpretation of *Abishai son of Zeruah came to his aid* (2 Samuel 21:17), but the oldest manuscripts do not specify here who utters God’s name, while the context suggests

that it is David. On this passage, see *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik; Englander.

On Ishbi's attempt to crush David beneath his own weight and with the use of his מטה (*matteh*), "staff," a midrashic tradition teaches: "He shoved him beneath the legs of המטה (*ha-mittah*), the bed,... to crush all his limbs." See *Midrash Goliat ha-Pelishti (Beit ha-Midrash, 4:140)*.

327. riding a king's horse... See M *Sanhedrin* 2:5: "None may ride on [the king's] horse, none may sit on his throne, and none may make use of his scepter. None may see him while his hair is being cut, nor while he is naked, nor while he is in the bathhouse, as is written: *You shall surely put over you a king* (Deuteronomy 17:15)—one whose awe shall be over you." Abishai is asking whether the mishnah's rule applies in extenuating circumstances, such as when the king's life is in danger.

Abishai counsels David to reverse his request to God, petitioning now that his own life be preserved rather than his line. See BT *Sanhedrin* 95a: "[Abishai] said to him, 'Retract your prayer!... Better that your grandson sell wax rather than that you should suffer!'"

328. How can I give back to YHVH... The simple meaning of this verse is one of thankfulness: *How can I give back to YHVH for all he requited to me?* In this crisis, David has accepted his fate and asks Abishai how he could possibly recant that consent. At this point, the text appears to conflate two different rabbinic traditions. BT *Yevamot* 77a relates that Doeg questioned the legitimacy of King David when the latter was being prepared by Saul for battle with Goliath. The Talmud cites a tradition from the court of the prophet Samuel: "*An Ammonite* (Deuteronomy 23:4), but not an Ammonitess; *a Moabite* (ibid.), but not a Moabitess." What is probably intended, however, is the following from BT *Berakhot* 10a, with Hezekiah speaking in the name of King David: "This tradition I have from the house of my ancestor: 'Even if a sharp sword rests upon a

man's neck, he should not desist from prayer.'" In *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth, David's insight leads him to pray for his own salvation, instead of on behalf of his descendants. *Sullam* suggests that the aid that Abishai provided was precisely this advice. Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 4:3.

329. she killed off... she spoke... The two verses offer contradictory versions of the events. In 2 Kings, Athaliah (the queen mother) dispatches all the royal descendants in Jerusalem, while in 2 Chronicles, she merely predicts the ultimate demise of David's seed.

330. measure for measure... Just as one of the offspring of Ahimelech remained alive, so too did Joash, one of David's progeny, survive. See above, [note 324](#).

331. Attribute of Judgment still stands... Even though an extraordinary toll had been taken from David, still the prosecuting angel insists that judgment has not been adequately meted out. Though Divine Judgment is strict with King David, one of the great leaders of Israel, one is to derive comfort from the much harsher punishment rendered to the wicked.

332. to her people and to her gods... Naomi explicitly distinguishes between Orpah and Ruth, using the third person *her people and her gods* to highlight their contrasting commitments. On the expression *her gods*, see above, [note 219](#).

333. she had been a convert... There is considerable dispute within rabbinic literature and here in *Midrash ha-Ne'lam Rut*, about whether Orpah and Ruth had converted before they married Chilion and Mahlon, respectively, and to what extent potential intimidation in marriage undermines conversion.

In medieval interreligious polemics, foul odors are frequently ascribed by one group to another as a way of demeaning their religions. See Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, index, s.v. smell, stench, stinking.

On the timing of Ruth's and Orpah's conversions, see above, [note 217](#). On Orpah's backsliding, see previous note.

334. he cautioned her... Rabbi Brokah wonders about the apparent redundancy of the verse, in its saying that Abraham placed upon her, after already indicating that he had given her food and water. He explains that the second iteration signifies Abraham's admonition to Hagar (who came originally from Egypt) to maintain her fidelity to the true God. Like Orpah and Naomi, Hagar was also leaving the confines of a household that could enforce her religious practice, and so she henceforth faced a test of her commitment.

The context of the verse from Exodus—the episode at Marah, in which Moses is given a tree to sweeten the bitter waters—as interpreted by the rabbis, calls for complete adherence to Torah. Because the key term $\square\psi$ (*sam*), “placed, set,” is used there as well as in the story of Hagar, it demonstrates that Hagar too was being encouraged to reaffirm her former commitments.

The context in Exodus reads: *He cried out to YHVH, and YHVH showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the water turned sweet. There He $\square\psi$ (*sam*), set, him statute and law, and there He tested him. He said, “If you really heed the voice of YHVH your God, and do what is right in His eyes, and hearken to His commands and keep all His statutes, all the sickness that I imposed upon Egypt I will not impose upon you, for I am YHVH your healer” (15:25–26).*

On the *tree* in Exodus 15:25 as Torah, see *Mekhilta, Vayassa* 1; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:25; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Beshallah* 18. Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Exodus 15:25, n. 261*. On Torah as *tree* and Tree of Life, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 47; BT *Berakhot* 32b, *Arakhin* 15b; *Zohar* 1:152b, 168a, 174b, 193a; 3:53b, 261a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 330.

335. she returned to her degradation... Like Orpah, Hagar too abandons her earlier fidelity to true faith as soon

as she is released from a Jewish household, returning to her idolatrous patrimony. The verse from Jeremiah, with its similar wording, proves that Hagar's having *strayed* signifies idol worship.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30, and Luria's note there; Rashi on Genesis 21:14.

The pairing of Orpah and Hagar seems to be a subtle polemic against both Christianity and Islam: Orpah returned to Moab, symbolically associated with Edom and therefore with Christianity; Hagar, as the mother of Ishmael, symbolically represents Islam.

In its simple sense, the verse in Genesis concludes: *and sent her away*, וַתִּתֵּן (va-teta), *and she wandered, through the wilderness of Beersheba*.

336. A Gentile who is engaged in Torah... Rabbi Shim'on contrasts the rabbinic statement praising the Gentile who studies Torah, with the verse proclaiming the Torah to be the exclusive heritage of Israel. If Gentiles do not receive reward for their engagement with Torah, how can they be compared to the high priest! Moreover, Rabbi Akiva's teaching is that only those who stood at Mount Sinai—a qualification that includes the people of Israel alone—will receive reward for fulfillment of the Torah.

On the reward of Gentiles for performance of the Noahide commandments, see BT *Bava Qamma* 38a, in the name of Mar son of Rabana: "Even were they to keep the commandments, they would receive no reward.'—No? But it has been taught in a *baraita*: 'Rabbi Me'ir used to say, "From where do we know that even an idolater who is engaged with Torah is like a high priest? As it says: [*You shall keep My statutes and My laws,*] *which a person shall do and live through them* (Leviticus 18:5). Priests, Levites, and Israelites are not mentioned, but *a person*. Thus, you learn that even an idolater who is engaged with Torah is like a high priest.'" — 'I mean [in saying that Gentiles would receive no reward] that they will receive a reward

not like one who has been commanded to perform *mitsvot*, but like those who have not been commanded but do perform. As Rabbi Ḥanina has stated: “Greater is the reward of one who has been commanded and performs, than that of one who has not been commanded, but performs.”” See BT *Sanhedrin* 59a, *Avodah Zarah* 3a.

The full verse in Psalms reads: *He established a testimony in Jacob, and ordained a teaching in Israel, which He commanded to our fathers to make them known to their children.*

337. ignorant high priest... In his response, Rabbi Ḥidka first demonstrates that there are different grades of high priests, with an ignorant priest ranking quite low. In quoting the verse from Proverbs, Rabbi Ḥidka plays on an ancient variant within the biblical text tradition: the word מִפְּנֵינִים (*mi-peninim*), *more... than rubies*, is actually written as מִפְּנֵי— which he construes midrashically as *more than merely inside*, that is, as לִפְנֵי וּלְפָנִים (*lifnei ve-lifnim*), “within, within; before and within; inner sanctum.” This yields the teaching that Torah is far more valuable even than the status of the high priest.

Only the high priest may enter the Holy of Holies (“within, within”) on Yom Kippur—an exalted status, ranking high for questions of triage; but if he is ignorant, then a bastard scholar takes precedence over him. See *Tosefta Horayot* 2:10: “A regular priest takes precedence over a Levite, a Levite over an Israelite, an Israelite over a bastard, a bastard over a *natin* [a descendant of the Gibeonites, whom Joshua made into Temple slaves], a *natin* over a convert, and a convert over an emancipated slave. When [does this apply]? When they are all [otherwise] equal. However, if the bastard is a scholar and the high priest an ignoramus, then the bastard scholar takes precedence over the ignorant high priest. As is said: *She is precious מִפְּנֵינִים (mi-peninim), more than rubies* (Proverbs 3:15)—than a high priest who enters within, within.”

See M *Horayot* 3:8; BT *Horayot* 13a; *Zohar* 2:95b.

On the significance of the priest's understanding the importance of his worship, see *Sifrei*, Numbers 116; BT *Hullin* 132b-133a; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 521; *Zohar* 1:45b (*Heikh*), 89b (*ST*); 2:57a; 3:8b, 18a, 35a, 146b; Baḥya ben Asher, *Kad ha-Qemah*, 292; Lieberman, *Tosefet Rishonim*, 2:207; Scholem, "Seridim me-Rabbi Azriel," 209.

Rabbi Yoḥanan blends two similar verses describing wisdom, here identified with Torah: *She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her* (Proverbs 3:15), and *For wisdom is better than rubies; nothing desired can compare with her* (ibid. 8:11).

338. a high priest must be a scholar... By citing Rabbi Yuda's opinion, Rabbi Ḥidka completely undermines the initial teaching cited by Rabbi Shim'on son of Yose, asserting that the comparison regarding the high priest referred only to one who was an ignoramus. The worship by an ignorant high priest is entirely worthless, rendering comparisons to him relatively meaningless. In the end, this high priest and the Gentile are on par because neither of them receives reward for their service.

The verse in Malachi concludes: *For he is a messenger of YHVH Tseva'ot.*

339. other descendants are not commanded... Rabbi Shim'on son of Yose rhetorically infers from the verse's specification of *Aaron and his sons* that only Aaron's own progeny are fit to offer sacrifices. He states that the limitation excludes priests who are ignorant of the proper mystical intentions—such worship is worthless.

On the intention of the priest, see above, [note 337](#).

340. contemplate the Holy Name... The priest's task is to contemplate, align, and unite the "supernal rungs"—the *sefirot*, as symbolized by the Holy Name.

On the requirement for priests, Levites, and Israelites to be present at sacrificial offerings, see M *Ta'anit* 4:1; BT

Ta'anit 27a; Rashi on *Sotah* 8a, s.v. *aqorbanaihu*.

341. three rungs The three terms of the verse—*fire offering*, *aroma*, and *pleasing*—correspond to Levites, Israelites, and priests, respectively.

On the different roles of these three groups, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 885–88.

342. Fire offering... In Kabbalah, both fire and the Levite symbolize *Din*, or *Gevurah*, on the left. The Levites' joyous singing—attending to its qualities of pattern, melody, and delight—attunes the left side.

On the song of the Levites, see *Zohar* 1:104a; 2:19a (*MhN*), 143b.

On the term *ישׁה* (*isheh*), *fire offering*, see Levine, *Leviticus*, at 1:9, citing David Zvi Hoffman. Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:161–62, who contends that this term actually means “gift” or “food gift.”

343. blaze of fire... Since the Levite is associated with fire and song, his aptitude for service is measured by the sustenance of the “fire within him”—his youthful vigor—and the strength of his voice. After these weaken, which occurs at the age of fifty by the Bible's assessment, he can no longer perform all of his duties.

On the semi-retirement of the Levites, see *Sifrei*, Numbers 63; *Sifrei Zuta* 8:26; *Tosefta Hullin* 1:16; BT *Hullin* 24a–b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 6:8–9; Rashi and Nahmanides on Numbers 8:25; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Kelei ha-Miqdash* 3:8; idem, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:45; *Zohar* 1:249b; 3:151b.

The full context for the Levites' service in Numbers 8:24–26 reads: *This is what regards the Levites. From twenty-five years old and up, each shall come to do legion service in the work of the Tent of Meeting. From the age of fifty years he [the Levite] shall retire from the legion of service and serve no more. He shall serve his brothers in the Tent of Meeting to keep watch, but work he shall not do.*

[344](#). אִישִׁים (*ishim*), **fires...** Corresponding to the Levites, who play instruments and sing in the Temple, angels play and sing above to *Shekhinah* (known as Master). Since they are aligned with the Levites and with the אִשָּׁה (*isheh*), *fire offering*, of the left side, they are called אִישִׁים (*ishim*), “fires, men, agents.” The situational context and the verb “appointed” evoke the sense of the singular noun *ish* (of which *ishim* is a rare plural form) as the agent or representative of another party—in this case, of God. See Exodus 11:3; 32:1; Numbers 12:3; Deuteronomy 33:1; Daniel 9:21.

According to the Bible, every seventh year is a Sabbatical, during which the land must lie fallow and at the end of which all debts are remitted (Leviticus 25:1–24; Deuteronomy 15:1–3). After seven Sabbaticals comes the Jubilee, proclaimed every fifty years, when slaves are released and land reverts to its original owner (Leviticus 25:8–55). The fifty-year age limit of the Levites corresponds to the fifty-year cycle of the Jubilee, the pinnacle of a recurrent cycle. In Zoharic Kabbalah, the Jubilee symbolizes *Binah*, who in general is characterized by the number fifty, based on a statement attributed to Rav and Shemu’el (BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, *Nedarim* 38a): “Fifty gates of בִּינָה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world—all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).” This passage is probably not referring to the *sefirah*, but the image of fifty gates is part of the chain of associations.

On angels singing, see BT *Ḥagigah* 14a; *Ḥullin* 91b; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §§30, 58, 161, 185–88; *Zohar* 1:159a, 1:189a, 231a–b; 3:64b; *ZḤ* 5d–6a (*MhN*). On אִישִׁים (*ishim*), see above, [note 293](#). On the fifty gates, see Naḥmanides, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, Introduction, 3–4; *Zohar* 1:3b, 106a, 208b, 261b (*Hash*); 2:68b (*Tos*), 83a, 123a, 139b, 175b, 183a; 3:15b, 142a (*IR*), 233b; *ZḤ* 48a

(*MhN, Rut*), 67b, 73a (last two *ShS*), 82b (*MhN, Rut*). On the five rungs and the fifty gates, see *Matoq mi-Devash*.

345. smashing their power... Like the Levites, who are deposed after completing their term of duty, so too the angels who sing above are cast out of their positions when their strength flags. Once finished, they are sent to the outer gates, receiving a lower form of nourishment: smoke from the sacrifices, rather than nourishment from the fire itself.

On the daily issuing of singing angels, see BT *Ḥagigah* 14a: “Shemu’el said to Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Rav, ‘O son of a lion! Come, I will tell you one of those fine words said by your father: Every single day ministering angels are created from a river of fire [or: the Dinur River], chant a song, then cease to be, as is said: *New every morning, [immense is Your faithfulness!]* (Lamentations 3:23).’”

See 3 Enoch 40:4; *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:1; *Shemot Rabbah* 15:6; *Eikhah Rabbah* 3:8; BT *Ḥagigah* 13b; *Ma’yan Ḥokhmah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:60); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 510; *Zohar* 1:17b, 2:10a, 213b-214a, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:39b, 73b (*Mat*); *Sidrei de-Shimmusha Rabba*, 123-24 (and Scholem’s n. 31); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 65; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 205; idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 139; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Ḥagigah* 14a, p. 23d; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:624-25.

346. pour forth their prayer... Returning to the interpretation of the verse, Rabbi Ḥiyya explains that the word *aroma* signifies Israel, who offer prayer while their sacrifice is offered at the altar.

347. contemplates the pattern... of the Holy Name... The spiritual task of the priest is to meditate upon the letters of the Ineffable Name, thus uniting them. Then the rungs, possibly signifying *sefirot*, all beam their luminosity, deriving from *Binah*, signified by the “supernal, hidden depth.” *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Ruth largely avoids

explicit reference to *sefirot*, though they often seem to be lurking beneath the surface.

On the “supernal [or: high] depth,” see *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:5: “depth of above, depth of below.” See *Zohar* 1:30b, 229a–b; 2:244a; 3:26a, 70a, 265b.

348. the priest must be enlightened with wisdom... Due to the profound mystical significance of his service, the priest must be a paragon of humanity. Lacking such distinction, a priest has no worth in God’s eyes.

349. Slime of a Gentile... Rabbi Shim’on son of Yose closes his homily comparing the High Priest and the Gentile by returning to the status of the non-Jew. He contrasts Ruth and Orpah, signifying intellectual soul and bestial soul, in terms of their respective abilities to transcend innate human filth.

On the taint of original sin that remains for three generations after initiation into Judaism, see BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a: “‘Rav Yosef taught, “...Why are idolaters lustful? Because they did not stand at Mount Sinai. For when the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), slime [or: filth, lust]. Israel, who stood at Mount Sinai—their *zohama* ceased. Star-worshippers, who did not stand at Mount Sinai—their *zohama* did not cease.’ Rav Aḥa son of Rava asked Rav Ashi, ‘What about proselytes?’ ...Rabbi Abba son of Kahana said, ‘Until three generations the *zohama* did not disappear from our forefathers: Abraham begat Ishmael, Isaac begat Esau, [but] Jacob begat the twelve tribes in whom there was no taint whatsoever.’”

On the difficulty of removing Gentile filth, even after conversion, see *Zohar* 2:87b; 3:14b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212; cf. ZH 78d (*MhN, Rut*).

On the theme of “three generations,” see Deuteronomy 23:9, according to which the *third generation* (i.e., the grandchildren) of Edomites and Egyptians living among Israelites may be admitted *into the assembly of YHVH*. See M *Yevamot* 8:3; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 252.

On being the most fit from among the Gentiles, see *Mekhilta, Beshallah* 1, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: "The best among the Gentiles—kill! The best among serpents—smash its brains!" See *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 14:7; JT *Qiddushin* 4:14, 66b; *Tanḥuma, Beshallah* 8; *Soferim* 15:7.

350. the king's mother... In context, King Solomon sets out a throne for his mother, Bathsheba. Here, Rabbi Neḥemiah reads *the king's mother* as a reference to Ruth.

See BT *Bava Batra* 91b: "They dwelt there (1 Chronicles 4:23)—referring to Ruth the Moabite, who saw the kingdom of Solomon, the grandson of her grandson. For it is said: [Solomon] set out a throne for אַם הַמֶּלֶךְ (*em ha-melekh*), *the king's mother*. Rabbi Eleazar said, 'For אַם הַמַּלְכוּת (*em ha-malkhut*), the mother of the dynasty."

351. full, actually... Since according to MT the word שלמה is written in the defective form—without a ך (yod)—it can be read as either *shelomo*, *Solomon*, or *sheleimah*, *full*. Rabbi Neḥemiah opts for the former reading, which yields: ותהי משכרתך שלמה (*u-thi maskurtekh Shlomo*), *May your recompense be Solomon*—in other words, Boaz says to Ruth, 'May the reward for your commitment be that you will see your descendant Solomon upon the royal throne.' He infers as well that the double reading indicates that Ruth merits reward in this world and the next.

On the significance of "actually," see below, [note 387](#).

352. holy soul, intellectual soul, and bestial soul left the body... This interpretation employs the allegorical reading of the story, in which each of the characters corresponds to an aspect of the soul: Naomi signifies "highest soul"; Ruth, "intellectual soul"; and, Orpah, "bestial soul." Rabbi Neḥemiah explains that Naomi's departure from Moab (with her daughters-in-law), a land that symbolizes "the body," represents the response of different aspects of the soul after death. The higher, "intellectual soul," when enlightened, longs to stay with

“holy soul,” rather than with the body, while the “bestial soul” clings to the body.

On these allegorical associations, see above, [notes 3](#) and [18](#).

The rabbinic metaphor of coming under the wings of *Shekhinah* to describe conversion derives from Ruth 2:11–12, where Boaz says to Ruth: *I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before. May YHVH reward your deed, and may you have a full recompense from YHVH, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge.* See BT *Shabbat* 31a; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 18:6; and *Vayiqra Rabbah* 2:9: “Thus have the sages taught in the Mishnah: If a convert comes to convert, one should extend a hand to him to bring him beneath the wings of *Shekhinah*.”

On converts entering beneath the wings of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:13a–b; 2:70a; 3:14a–b, 168a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 16, 212–13; J. Wijnhoven, “The *Zohar* and the Proselyte,” 123–25.

[353. the wife of Obadiah...](#) According to the account in Kings, the prophet Elisha performed a miracle for an anonymous poor woman, providing her with an immense amount of oil. In Scripture, the woman is unidentified, but according to various sources she was the widow of the prophet Obadiah.

See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 9:4:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 2:5; *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 5; *Targum Yonatan*, Rashi, and Radak on 2 Kings 4:1.

The verse in Kings concludes ‘*Your servant my husband is dead, and you know how your servant revered YHVH. And now a creditor is coming to seize my two children as slaves.*’

[354. early... and late...](#) Rabbi Alexandrai seeks to explain why Obadiah’s widow is calling to Elisha. According

to the chronology in Kings, it appears that Obadiah could not yet have met Elisha, since the latter had not yet begun to accompany Elijah. Rabbi Alexandrai applies the principle that “there is no early and late in the Torah [or: the Torah does not follow chronological order],” a rule that is applied throughout rabbinic and medieval writings to explain a large variety of exegetical difficulties dealing with chronology in the Torah. Since Obadiah’s wife says *Your servant my husband is dead, and you know how your servant revered YHVH*, Elisha must have met him.

On the rule that chronology does not apply in the Torah, see *Mekhilta, ha-Shirah* 7; *Sifrei*, Numbers 64; BT *Pesaḥim* 6b; *Tanḥuma, Terumah* 8; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2; *Rut Rabbah* 4:5; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:12; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 22, 111a; Rashi on Genesis 6:3, 35:29; Exodus 4:20, 19:11, 31:18; Leviticus 8:2; Numbers 9:1; Joshua 8:30; Isaiah 1:1, 6:1; Ezekiel 1:3, 29:17; Psalms 72:20; BT *Pesaḥim* 6b, s.v. *ein muqdam u-m’uḥar ba-Torah*; *Sotah* 35a, s.v. *shavu ha-mayyim*; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 6:3, 11:29, 18:13; Exodus 4:19, 16:15, 32:11, 33:7; Leviticus 25:1; Deuteronomy 28:5, 31:15; Naḥmanides on Genesis 32:23, 35:28; Exodus 2:1, 15:9, 20:15; Numbers 9:1, 16:1; *Zohar* 3:148a; *Tiqqunei Zohar* 16a.

On Obadiah’s distinctive moniker as one who *feared YHVH greatly*, see BT *Sanhedrin* 39b: “Rabbi Abba said, ‘Greater [praise] was expressed of Obadiah than Abraham, since of Abraham the word *greatly* is not used, while of Obadiah it is.’ Rabbi Isaac said, ‘Why did Obadiah merit the gift of prophecy? Because he hid a hundred prophets in caves, as is written: *When Jezebel was killing off the prophets of YHVH, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water* (1 Kings 18:4).

355. King Yehoram was coming... In the story in Kings, Obadiah had hidden one hundred prophets, fifty to a cave, away from Ahab’s murderous intent. According to

rabbinic legend, Obadiah and his wife had secured credit from Yehoram at high interest in order to feed the refugee prophets, submitting their two children as collateral for the loan.

See *Shemot Rabbah* 31:4; *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 9; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 2:5; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:189–90, 240–41.

According to Biblical law, wives and children could be seized for nonpayment of debts. See Exodus 21:7; Sarna on Exodus 21:7; Cogan and Tadmor on 2 Kings 4:1; cf. Isaiah 50:1.

356. They told Obadiah... Other souls informed Obadiah about his wife's activity. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

357. Hezekiah... The Vilna Gaon points out that Hezekiah would not be born yet for several generations, so perhaps Elijah is intended. See *Hadrat Qodesh*.

358. go to Elisha Ultimately she turns to Elisha and, according to the account in Kings, he performs a wonder for her, producing vast amounts of oil that allow her to pay off her debt. See 2 Kings 4:2–7.

359. How can they converse... in the grave... Rabbi Alexandrai wonders how the dead can converse in the grave, since their souls have left their bodies and ascended to the Garden of Eden.

On souls conversing in the grave, see BT *Berakhot* 18b.

360. If a difficulty remains... Rabbi Bun explains that speech is justifiable when it clarifies understanding of the Torah. To express that point, he inverts a talmudic adage of a certain Rabbi Yehudah from BT *Megillah* 18a: “‘What is meant by the verse *To you praise is silent* (Psalms 65:2)? The best medicine of all is silence.’ When Rav Dimi came, he said, ‘They say in the West: “A word is worth a *selā*; silence, two *selas*.”’” Cf. BT *Hullin* 89a.

361. two clusters... Generally, the soul has three rungs: נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*), “soul”; רוּחַ (*ruah*), “spirit”; and נִשְׁמָה (*neshamah*), “holy soul [or: breath].” *Nefesh*, lowest of the

three, vitalizes and animates the body through the performance of commandments. *Ruah* is the intermediate aspect, arousing the person through study of Torah and providing moral guidance. If a person is sufficiently animated through commandments and Torah, he will merit a higher soul—*neshamah*—overflowing from above.

On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:729–31. On the three aspects of soul, see *Zohar* 1:62a, 81a (*ST*), 83a–b, 205b–206a, 224b–225a; 2:94b (*TZ*), 95a–b, 141b–142b, 182a; 3:24b–25a, 70b–71b, 91b; *ZH* 6d (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 40; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 305; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 28–29 (33–34). Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 32:2; *Devarim Rabbah* 2:37; Rashi and Nahmanides on Genesis 2:7. For an extensive discussion of the three aspects of the soul, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:684–722, 761–64. On *ruah* as providing moral guidance, see *ibid.*, 729, n. 45.

The full verse reads: *With my soul I desire You in the night, with my spirit within me I seek You at dawn. For when Your judgments reach the earth, inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.* See *Zohar* 1:83a–b; 3:67a, 68a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 197.

Nafsha and *nefesh*, *ruḥa* and *ruah*, and *nishmeta* and *neshamah* are Aramaic and Hebrew cognate terms for the same entities, respectively.

362. With these two... *Nefesh* and *ruah* comprise a unit and, while *nefesh* animates the body, it is dependent upon *ruah*.

363. supernal wisdom... Supernal wisdom here probably signifies generic wisdom from above. Cf. Tishby; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

364. power of repentance... תשובה (*Teshuvah*), “Repentance, return,” signifies *Binah*, source of the *neshamah*. All aspects of the soul are ultimately conjoined under the governance of *neshamah*, seeking to return to their source in

Binah. *Binah* is mother to *Tif'eret*, who is the source of *ruah*—and thus *neshamah* is like mother to *ruah*.

On the origins of the different aspects of the soul, see Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah* (86a): “This *sefirah* [*Binah*] is called... Repentance, the reason being that the *neshamot* are emanated from this place, *ruhot* from *Tif'eret*, and *nefashot* from the *sefirah Malkhut*. They are bound to one another so that they can all be unified in the *sefirah Binah*.” See *Zohar* 1:94a; 2:95b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 407; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 100 (127). On the mother and son relationship, see Tishby; Mopsik; Englander.

365. נשמתא לנשמתא (*Nishmeta le-nishmeta*), **Soul of soul...** *Nishmeta le-nishmeta* is the highest aspect of the human soul, deriving from *Hokhmah*. Thus, as *Hokhmah* is united in love with *Binah*, producing *Tif'eret*, so does *nishmeta le-nishmeta* overflow onto *nishmeta*, producing *ruah*. The four aspects of soul thus symbolically correspond to *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Malkhut*, as expressed by the four letters of the tetragrammaton, יהוה (YHVH). Keeping in mind the centrality of Torah study and the performance of commandments—both of which are paradigmatically male activities—in the actualization and induction of *ruah* and *neshamah*, this formulation establishes the symbolic parallelism of Divinity and the Jewish adult male.

“Fear” (or “awe, reverence”) derives from *Hokhmah*, based on the association in Psalms 111:10: *The beginning of חכמה (Hokhmah), Wisdom, is fear of YHVH*.

On *nishmeta le-nishmeta*, see *Zohar* 1:79a–b (*ST*, standard edition); 2:118b (*RM*); above, [note 192](#).

The phrase “soul of soul” derives from Solomon ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* 4:47 where it is a description of God: “You are alive but not through... soul, for You are soul of soul.” See *Zohar* 1:103b, 245a; 3:109b (*RM*), 152a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 110, 375, n. 97.

On the four letters of the tetragrammaton as representing four *sefirot*, configured as a family, see *Zohar*

1:28a (TZ), 162a (ST); 3:11a-b, 34a (RM), 258a (RM); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 18 (35a), 21 (61b); above, [note 3](#).

366. ruḥa and nafsha on the left... The soul is conceptualized as having parallel components on the right and left sides, corresponding to the sides of holiness and impurity within a person. Each side has its own impulse, prompting it to do good or evil. The verse in Deuteronomy on human choice echoes the verse in Genesis about the Tree of Knowledge. The tree is interpreted as a symbol of the human soul, with its choices of good and evil. The concluding comment for those with understanding indicates that through the choice of eating from the *good*, one cleaves to the side of holiness. Through eating from the *evil*, one cleaves to *Sitra Aḥra*.

On the parallel construct of the soul, see *Zohar* 1:79b (ST, standard edition); ZH 75b-c (MhN, Rut). On this interpretation of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, see Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 209-10. The Hasidic master Mordekhai Yosef Leiner (of Izbica) expands upon this teaching: "In the messianic era, when the sin of Primal Adam is rectified, the verses will be combined—*From every tree of the garden you may surely eat and from the tree of knowledge of good, and afterward, but evil you may not eat*. Thus only the good in the tree he was permitted to eat, but the evil he should not eat. And YHVH, may He be blessed, will clarify that he ate only from the good, whereas the sin, by His assessment, was like a garlic peel, nothing more." See Leiner, *Mei ha-Shiloah*, 1:15a-b.

367. Wisdom of women builds her house... Mother and daughter—signified by the first and second ך (he) of the tetragrammaton, are represented by *women* of the verse in Proverbs. The bestial soul of the evil impulse is represented by *folly* in the verse. These three spiritual entities correspond to Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah, respectively; thus, the women of the story symbolize different aspects of the human soul. Each individual has the option of following the

edifying side of holy spirituality or the destructive side of demonic spirituality in conducting one's life.

368. When a person... sleeps... Every night, one's spirit longs to make an ascent to the upper worlds, but innumerable angels stand at each gate, intercepting the unworthy.

On the soul's wandering at night, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 34, in the name of Rabbi Zechariah: "Sleep at night is like this world, and the awakening of the morning is like the world to come. And just as in the nighttime sleep one lies down and sleeps, his spirit roams over all the earth, and tells him in a dream whatever happens, as is said: *In a dream, a vision of night... He then uncovers human ears* (Job 23:15-16), similarly with the dead: their spirits wander over all the earth, telling them everything that happens."

369. Son of Proud Ones... An episode in *Heikhalot Rabbati* recounts how Rabbi Yishma'el was approached by his fellow mystical initiates, beseeching that because of his great erudition in Torah, he should recall Rabbi Neḥuniah son of Kanah. The latter had ascended on high and the besieged rabbis sought to learn their fate, which they thought Rabbi Neḥuniah might have discovered. They address Rabbi Yishma'el as בן גאים (*ben ge'im*), "Son of Proud Ones"—referring to his parents, who would have taken great pleasure in their son's accomplishments. In this rendition of the story, imitating the style of *Heikhalot* imagery, it is Neḥuniah who asks Yishma'el to describe his vision. See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §225. Cf. Scholem.

The following vision is replete with imagery and verbal formulations from *Heikhalot* literature.

370. Yaldumi is his name... The name *Yaldumi* is probably derived from the names of the angels Dumi'el and Dumah. In the story from *Heikhalot Rabbati* concerning Rabbi Yishma'el and Rabbi Neḥuniah, the latter relates the central role played by the angel Dumi'el in the initiate's

ascent. Here, as in the stories of Moses' terrifying ascent to heaven, Rabbi Yishma'el utters God's name as a magical practice to protect himself from the angels' incendiary breath.

The manuscripts and printed versions offer several different permutations of this angel's name. Cf. *Zohar* 2:129a, 142b.

On Dumī'el, see Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§230–35. “Dumah” (literally “silence”) is a name for the netherworld in the Bible, e.g., Psalms 94:17: *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in dumah*. Cf. Psalms 115:17. In rabbinic literature, Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead. See BT *Berakhot* 18b; *Shabbat* 152b; *Hagigah* 5a; *Sanhedrin* 94a. In the *Zohar*, he retains this role but also oversees Hell. See *Zohar* 1:8a–b, 94a, 102a, 124a (last two *MhN*), 130b, 237b.

Tales of the rivalry between the angels and humanity are pervasive in rabbinic and hekhalot literature. See BT *Shabbat* 88b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi: “When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels said before the blessed Holy One, ‘Master of the Universe! What is one born of woman doing here among us?’ He answered, ‘He has come to receive Torah.’ They said, ‘That precious treasure—hidden by You for 974 generations before the world was created—You desire to give to flesh and blood! *What is a human that You are mindful of him, a human being that You take note of him?* (Psalms 8:5)...’ ‘Answer them,’ said the blessed Holy One to Moses. ‘Master of the Universe,’ he replied, ‘I fear they could scorch me with the breath of their mouths.’ He said, ‘Grasp My throne of Glory, and answer them.’”

See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20, 96b–98a; *Ma'yan Hokhmah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:58–61); *Zohar* 1:5a; 2:58a; 3:78b.

“They froze” renders כולם ועמדו (*ve-amedu khulam*); alternatively, “they stood stock-still.”

371. one gate... It is unclear if this gate is on the eastern or southern sides. *Matoq mi-Devash* emphasizes that it is the eastern side. See following note.

372. opened only on the New Moon... In his vision concerning the Temple rite, Ezekiel refers to a gate that is opened only on the Sabbath and New Moon: *Thus says the Lord God: The gate of the inner court facing east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened* (Ezekiel 46:1). While Ezekiel relates that this gate is opened for the prince whenever he brings a freewill offering, *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* says it is opened on these special days for the faithful of Israel, the *righteous nation*—specifically, the virtuous among them.

373. above the earthly Garden of Eden... On Sabbaths, festivals, and the New Moon, righteous souls ascend from the earthly Garden of Eden, through celestial windows marked by the tetragrammaton, toward the supernal Garden of Eden. In the earthly Garden of Eden, they are clothed in an ethereal body that resembles the physical body that they inhabited on earth. On these festive days, *ruhot* are stripped of the garments that they wore in the earthly Garden, and they ascend to the heavenly Garden. It appears that the term “*ruhot*” is being used generically to mean “soul,” rather than signifying the middle entity of the tripartite human soul.

On the four windows inscribed with the letters of God’s name, located in the heaven above the Garden of Eden, see *Zohar* 2:212a-b; Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 132; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 145; cf. *Zohar* 2:209b; *ZH* 90b (*MhN*, *Rut*).

On the ethereal body, see Naḥmanides on Genesis 49:33; *Zohar* 1:7a, 38b (*Heikh*), 81a (*ST*), 90b-91a, 115b (*MhN*), 131a, 217b, 219a, 220a (standard editions), 224a-b, 227a-b, 233b; 2:11a, 13a-b, 96b, 141b, 150a, 156b-157a, 161b; 3:13a-b, 43a-b, 61b, 70b, 104a-b; *ZH* 10b-c (*MhN*),

90b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 390; idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 135, 139-40; Scholem, *Shedim Ruhot u-Nshamot*, 215-45; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158-59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251-73; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770-73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Hagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruhot u-nshamot*.

On the spirit's (or soul's) Sabbath and festival ascent, see *Zohar* 1:81a (*ST*); 2:141b-142a, 212a; 3:70b, 144b-145a (*IR*), 159b, 168a; Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 138-39.

On the image of "a putrid drop," see *M Avot* 3:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Tanḥuma, Hayyei Sarah* 7 (Buber); *Qohelet Rabbah* on Ecclesiastes 12:1; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 19; Lieberman, "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine?" 136-37; Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 45, 247, nn. 67-70; Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 69, 166-70; Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, 117.

[374.](#) **Six winged ones...** *Hadrat Qodesh* interprets this to mean "six-winged ones."

[375.](#) **added among the living...** When spirits of the righteous ascend from the earthly Garden of Eden to the supernal Garden of Eden, others descend from the earthly garden, becoming the additional Sabbath soul. Throughout, the Garden remains fittingly populated.

The image of an additional soul derives from BT *Beitsah* 16a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish: "On Sabbath eve, the blessed Holy One imparts an additional נשמה (*neshamah*), soul, to a human being. When Sabbath departs, it is taken from him."

See *Zohar* 1:48a; 2:88b, 98a, 135b-136b, 204a-b; 3:173a, 288b (*IZ*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1230-33; Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, 121-36.

On the Garden as never being empty, see *Zohar* 2:136a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 27-28 (32-33); idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 138, 153. Cf. *Zohar* 2:253a (*Heikh*).

376. When Sabbath departs... Once the Sabbath concludes, this verse and Psalm 91 are recited, prompting the extra soul to go back to the earthly Garden of Eden, and souls from the heavenly Garden of Eden to return to the earthly one.

On reciting Psalms 90:17, see *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 81-82; *Maḥazor Vitri*, 1:114; *Zohar* 1:17b, 197b; 2:31b; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 102; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

While the MT records *kindness of Adonai* in Psalms 90:17, *Minḥat Shai* indicates that there are versions circulating that read *kindness of YHVH*. On discrepancies between MT and biblical citations, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

The full verse in Psalms reads: *May the kindness of the Lord our God be upon us. The work of our hands, establish for us; the work of our hands, establish it.*

377. neshamah and nefesh journey as one... Rabbi Alexandrai reads the verse allegorically, with Naomi representing the *neshamah*, while Ruth stands for the *nefesh*. The phrase *the two of them* is essentially redundant but emphasizes the joint nature of their travel. See Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

378. filled with all kinds of bounty... When the soul leaves the upper realms to descend into this world, it is given tours of Heaven and Hell, and then it comes replete with holiness and knowledge of Torah. In this world, however, it is buffeted by sorrows and desires that tarnish its original beauty. *Neshamah*, signified by Naomi, leaves her former dwelling place, returning to the storehouse of souls, signified by Bethlehem, and all there are astonished by her changed state.

On the soul's preparation to descend to the world and its return to heaven afterward, see above, [pages 29-33](#) and [note 9](#).

The full verse in Job reads: *When His lamp shone over my head, by its light I walked in darkness.*

379. Call me Mara... The name *Mara* means “bitter,” in contrast to the name *Na’omi*, which connotes sweetness or loveliness. Naomi’s response could be construed as *Do not call me Sweet One, call me Bitter One*. The *Targum* reads: “Do not call me Naomi, call me Bitter of Soul.” The emptiness that she refers to, of course, is the deaths of her husband and sons—and by extension, her status in her home community. Here, Naomi signifies a soul that has not attained its spiritual promise on earth, and so it returns to its source, bereft.

The name *Shaddai* (Almighty) is associated with havoc (Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15), and Job uses identical phrasing in ascribing his suffering to *Shaddai*. See Job 27:2; cf. 5:17. However, in Genesis 49:25, the name is also associated with fertility, and possibly with breasts, so Naomi’s invocation of that name could be ironic, signaling her lack of the blessings normally ascribed to *Shaddai*. See Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky; cf. Sasson.

380. For He has injected the evil impulse into me... In the verse, Naomi attributes her suffering to God, and Rabbi Alexandrai interprets this ascription as the *neshamah*’s blaming God for saddling her with the evil impulse, in the form of bestial *nefesh* and bestial *ruah*. Citing the verse from Proverbs, the soul notes that it is *Folly*, namely “bestial *nefesh* from the evil impulse,” that brought on death. After its demise, the physical body undergoes its suffering, while the *nefesh* mourns over it.

The words *has dealt harshly with me* render עָנָה בִּי (*anah vi*), interpreted by *Targum* as “my sin has testified against me.” See Sasson; Zakovitch.

On the *nefesh* mourning over the body, see JT *Mo’ed Qatan* 3:5, 82b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 100:7; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:6; BT *Shabbat* 152a; *Tanḥuma, Miqqets* 4; *Zohar* 1:122b (*MhN*), 218b–219a, 226a; 2:142a–b, 199b; *ZH* 75c, 83d–84a (both in *MhN, Rut*); Moses de

León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 396–97; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 105, 131.

381. two sentries... one, lame; the other, blind... The soul and body are both punished, since they are jointly accountable for any misdeeds.

On the parable concerning the joint responsibility of body and soul after death, see *Mekhilta de-Rashbi* on Exodus 15:1 (76–77); *Vayiqra Rabbah* 4:5; BT *Sanhedrin* 91a–b. See *Zohar* 1:225a; 2:199b; 3:53a, 126b; *ZH* 83d–84a (*MhN, Rut*); Bregman, “The Parable of the Lame and the Blind.”

382. donkey-driver... טַיָּא'א (*Tayya'a*) more precisely designates an “Arab; Arab caravaner,” derived from the name of the Arabian tribe *al-Ta'i*. In the *Zohar*, *tayya'a* usually indicates one of various wandering donkey-drivers encountered by the Companions on the road. These donkey-drivers are invariably great kabbalists—wise fools in disguise. The word טַעַן (*ta'an*) is Arabic for “goad”—specifically of donkeys—but these mystical donkey-drivers goad the companions, as well.

See 1:5b; 2:45b, 94a–114a, 145b, 155b–157a; 3:21a–23a, 186b, 299b; *TZ* 23, 69a. Cf. *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 21:1; *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:1; JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77a; BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 25a–b, *Hagigah* 14b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 32:10; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3.

On *tayya'a*, see BT *Berakhot* 56b; *Rosh ha-Shanah* 26b; *Ta'anit* 22b; *Yevamot* 120b; *Bava Batra* 73b–74a; *Sanhedrin* 110a; *Hullin* 7a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 46; idem, *Kabbalah*, 227; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 76–79. On *ta'an*, see Radak, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, 54b, s.v. טַעַן. The prophet Elijah returns to earth as a *tayya'a* in BT *Berakhot* 6b, and as an עַרְבִי (*aravi*), “Arab,” in *Rut Zuta* 1:20; 4:11.

On words of Torah being like a nut, see BT *Hagigah* 15b, in the name of Rava: “What is the meaning of the verse: *I went down to the nut grove to see the new green by the brook?* Why are scholars compared to a nut? To tell

you that just as in the case of a nut, even if it becomes soiled with mud and filth, its contents remain unsullied, so in the case of a scholar: although he may have been corrupted, his Torah is not disgraced.”

383. a nut has a shell and a kernel within... The nut was a popular symbol in medieval Jewish mysticism, because of its ability to connote inward holiness and outward profanity; as a symbol for the divine chariot and mystical experience; or as here, signifying the external versus internal meanings of Torah. The text does not elaborate on the meaning of its terms; *ma'aseh* might signify narrative, while *midrash* might represent legalistic meaning. Eventually, a fourfold system of interpretation developed, associated with the acronym פֶּרְדֵּס (*PaRDeS*), “orchard,” and comprising the following levels: פֶּשֶׁט (*Peshat*), “simple meaning”; רֵמֶז (*Remez*), “allegory”; דְּרָשָׁה (*Derashah*), “homily”; and סוּד (*Sod*), “mystery.”

The printed texts from Venice onward include a fourth, esoteric element—סוּד (*sod*), “mystery, secret, esoteric meaning.” All modern scholarship has assumed that this is the first mention of the fourfold method of exegesis in Jewish sources. However, the early manuscripts and Thiengen have only the three interpretive methods witnessed above.

On the image of the nut, see *Zohar* 1:19b-20a, 44b (*Heikh*); 2:15b (*MhN*), 140b-141a, 233b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 156-60; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 239; Altmann, *Studies*, 161-71; *ABD* 2:808; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 574-79; Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*.

On the various levels of meaning in Torah, see *Zohar* 1:26b (*TZ*); 2:99a-99b, 114b (*RM*); 3:152a, 202a; *ZH* 102d, 107c (*TZ*); Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 56, 64; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 105; Bahya ben Asher, “Introduction to Commentary on the Torah, 4-6; Bacher, “L'exégèse biblique dans le Zohar,” 34-40; Sandler, “Li-

V'ayat 'Pardes'"; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 50-62; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1077-92; Heide, "PARDES"; Talmage, "Apples of Gold," 319-21; Matt, "New-Ancient Words," 204-6; Wolfson, "Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes"; Idel, "PaRDeS"; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, 429-37; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 213-19. On the meanings of the terms here, see Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Englander.

384. When King Solomon revealed the Song of Songs... The revelation of Song of Songs is the spiritual apex of history, when love and harmony reign between God and the Jewish people, as symbolized by the Song. At that time, the scum that dwelt within humanity—a consequence of Eve's initial copulation with the serpent—was purged. Until then, all human offspring were defiled.

On the composition of Song of Songs as a climactic moment, see *Zohar* 2:143a: "This song was aroused by Solomon when the Temple was built and all worlds were consummated, above and below, in single perfection.... This song was uttered solely in completeness, when the moon became full and the Temple was constructed according to the pattern above."

See *M Yadayim* 3.4; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:11, 12; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Buber), 9 and notes 32, 34; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Schechter), 53 and notes there; Rashi on Song of Songs 1:1; *Derashot Yehoshu'a ibn Shu'eib*, 42a; Isaac ibn Sahula, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 407-8; *Zohar* 2:143a-146a; 3:74b, 181b; *ZH* 62c-d (*ShS*).

According to a rabbinic tradition, Cain was engendered by the sexual union of the serpent and Eve. See *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21 (according to David Luria's emendation, based on *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis 35): "The serpent-rider [Samael] copulated with her and she conceived Cain. Afterward her husband, Adam, copulated with her and she conceived Abel." Cf. BT *Shabbat* 145b-146a, in the name of Rav Yosef: "When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lust]." Rashi

(ad loc., s.v. *ke-she-ba naḥash al ḥavah*) explains: “When he counseled her to eat from the tree, he had sexual relations with her, as is written: *The serpent* הַשִּׂיאִי (*hissi’ani*), *betrothed me* (Genesis 3:13), deriving from נִשּׂוּאִין (*nissu’in*), marriage.” The verse from Genesis actually reads: הַשִּׂיאִי הִנְחִישׁ (*ha-naḥash hishi’ani*), *the serpent beguiled me*,” but Rashi alters the vocalization to derive this teaching. Cordovero asserts that the serpent did not literally copulate with Eve. See, however, Recanati, who writes: “It seems to me that even though there is a double meaning... nonetheless, [the serpent] performed an actual act of intercourse with her.” See *Peirush al ha-Torah*, 12c; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 25:6.

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (variants); BT *Yevamot* 103b; *Zohar* 1:36b-37a, 52a, 54a-55a, 122b, 145b; 2:178a (*SdT*s), 231a; 3:76b; *ZḤ* 8c-9b, 63c (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 165, 368-69; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 12, 27-28, 30; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 38-53; Knohl, “Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan?”; Koren, *Forsaken*, 89-92. Cf. 4 Maccabees 18:7-8.

385. mouth of Elijah... Indicating that it is a very ancient teaching. Since Cain was the progeny of the serpent, he too became a murderer, killing his brother Abel.

According to 2 Kings 2:11, the prophet Elijah did not die a normal death but was carried off to heaven in a chariot of fire. He became associated with the Messianic age; in rabbinic tradition, he is described as “still existing” and revealing divine secrets to righteous humans. The early kabbalists spoke of their mystical experiences and knowledge as “revelations of Elijah.”

See Malachi 3:23-34; BT *Bava Batra* 121b; *Bava Metsi’a* 59b; *Zohar* 2:216b; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 19-21.

On the serpent’s copulation with Eve and its role in engendering Cain, see 4 Maccabees 18:7-8; *Targum*

Yerushalmi, Genesis 4:1 (per British Library MS 27031, ed. Clark); BT *Yevamot* 103b; David Luria, *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21, n. 8; Naḥmanides, "Torat ha-Adam," in *Kitvei Ramban*, 2:296; Scholem, "Qabbalot R. Ya'aqov ve-R. Yitshaq," 237; "Peirush Merkavat Yehezqel le-Rabbi Moshe mi-Burgos," 184; Todros ben Joseph Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 132; *Zohar* 1:36b-37a, 52a, 54a-55a, 63b, 122b, 126a-b, 145b; 2:94a, 167b, 178a (*SdT*s), 193b, 236b; 3:14b, 76b, 97b, 143a (*IR*); *ZH* 8c-9b, 78c, 83b (latter two from *MhN Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 139; Israel Knohl, "Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan?" Cf. 1 John 3:10-12.

Cf. *ZH* 63c-d (*ShS*), which seems to be an elaboration of this entire passage. On the formulation "extending back to the mouth of Elijah," see *Zohar* 2:216b.

386. Cain, who slithered out... The verse is parsed into three sections: one corresponding to the serpent; the second to Cain; and the third to his murderous heritage. Ideally, one can whisper a magical incantation or a charm for a wound, but not over one from the malevolent serpent.

The word מעופף (*me'ofef*), *flying*, signifies a replication of the serpent in Cain through its spelling with a double פ (*peh*). Further, *Targum Onqelos* on Exodus 26:9 renders the word וכפלת (*ve-khafalta*), *and you shall double over* [or: *and you shall fold*], as ותיעוף (*vetei'of*), deriving from the root עפף (*'#*), which can mean "fly" or "double." On Cain's deriving from the serpent, see *Zohar* 1:54a; 3:76b.

387. He came from Adam... The verse states explicitly that Eve conceived as a result of intercourse with Adam, and her exclamation—*I have got me a man with YHVH*—confirms that the child derives from the side of holiness.

In its simple sense, Eve's naming announcement means "*I hereby engage an agent-and-successor in the service of YHVH.*" See Naḥmanides, ad loc.: "This son will be for me an acquisition for YHVH—for when we shall die, he will exist in our stead to worship his Creator."

וַדַּי (*Vadai*), “Actually,” is a technical term that signals the transparency of the mundane world to the supernal world and, from a hermeneutical perspective “an overlapping of exoteric and esoteric signification.” Here it indicates Eve’s understanding that her child has actually derived from her partnership with *YHVH*. See Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden,” 79–88. In rabbinic literature, the term has precisely the opposite meaning, signaling the literal meaning as opposed to the figurative. See Loewe, “The ‘Plain Meaning’ of Scripture in Early Jewish Exegesis”; Halivni, *Peshat and Derash*, 17–19, 76–77.

388. rattled about in her womb... How could both the serpent and Adam have contributed to the formation of Cain? Adam’s seed served as the material substrate for the wicked slime that was already in Eve’s innards, but that could not constitute a corporeal body on its own.

Red is the color associated with the side of Judgment and death, signaling Cain’s character, and the ruddiness here anticipates the birth of Esau in Genesis 25:25.

See *Life of Adam and Eve [Apocalypse]*, 21:3: “And she bore a son, and he was lustrous... and his name was called Cain.” See Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 146.

389. seed that Adam injected... When Adam heeded Eve’s advice and ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he became subject to the evil influence of the serpent—and his own seed was transformed, fortifying the evil slime deposited by the serpent. By receiving seed from Adam, who was created in the image of *YHVH*, Eve assumed that her offspring, too, would bear the divine stamp.

390. מִקֵּץ יָמִים (*mi-qets yamim*), at the end of days... Rabbi Alexandrai contrasts this verse from Genesis 4:3—ending with יָמִים (*yamim*), *days*—with Daniel 12:13, which ends: לְקֵץ הַיָּמִין (*le-qets ha-yamin*), *at the end of days*. In the verse from Daniel, יָמִין (*yamin*) is an aramaized form of the Hebrew יָמִים (*yamim*), “days,” but Rabbi Alexandrai now interprets it as the Hebrew יָמִין (*yamin*), *right*, distinguishing

between קץ הימים (*qets ha-yamim*), *end of days*, and קץ הימין (*qets ha-yamin*), *end of the right*.

Qets ha-yamin, *End of the right*, alludes to *Shekhinah*, who is the consummation of the divine flow, characterized by the grace of *Hesed* on the right (as opposed to the Other Side, which derives from the left). She will eventually bring redemption, reigning as the Kingdom of Heaven throughout all the worlds. *Qets ha-yamim*, “End of days,” refers to the Other Side, who appears as the Angel of Death and ends all human life.

In its simple sense, the verse in Genesis reads: *It happened* מקץ ימים (*mi-qets yamim*), *in the course of time, that Cain brought from the fruit of the soil an offering to YHVH*. The verse in Daniel reads: *As for you, go on till the end; you will rest, and arise for your share* לקץ הימין (*le-qets ha-yamin*), *at the end of days*.

On *qets ha-yamin*, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:7; *Zohar* 1:54a-b, 62b-63a, 75a (*ST*), 210b, 233b, 234b-235a; 2:33a-34a, 181b; 3:142b (*IR*); *ZH* 63c (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 73-75, 368-71; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 80-81 (102-3); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 158.

391. Seth—foundation... See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12: “He named him שֶׁט (Shet), Seth (Genesis 5:3), because on him the world הושתת (*hushtat*), was founded.”

On the righteous as descending from Seth, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 23:5; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 22; *Zohar* 1:36b, 38a, 55a, 55b; 3:77a; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 372-73; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 74. Cf. *BT Eruvin* 18b.

392. consummation of the alphabet... The letters of Seth’s name—ת, ש (shin, tav)—are the last two letters of the alphabet and proceed in the proper sequence. The correct sequencing of letters signifies the harmonious composition of the world. After Seth, the righteous in the world diminished and the linguistic order was reversed.

The reversal of the letters is indicated in the verse from Isaiah, *For from the stock of the snake there sprouts a צפע* (*tsefa*), *asp*, whose letters—צ, פ, ע (*tsadi, feh, ayin*) are in reverse sequence. The *asp* that comes *from the stock of the snake* is a symbolic manifestation of the corruption of the divine linguistic order. Given that God spoke the world into being, undermining language connotes the profanation of reality itself.

On the inversion of the alphabet, see *Zohar* 1:2b, 55b-56a, 205b; 2:51b, 212b; *ZH* 8c-9b, 66c-d (*ShS*).

393. from these, the whole earth spread out... A dearth of righteous people allows for corruption of humanity and of language itself. As a result, the linguistic restoration accomplished by Seth is undone by the time of the Flood, and the letters once again appear in reverse order. *These* refers to the letters—that is, humanity proceeded from these jumbled letters. See *Hadrat Qodesh*.

394. stood on Mount Sinai... When Israel accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai, they were sweetened—and cleansed of the primal filth that the serpent had injected into humanity. Consequently the alphabet was rectified, though some letters continued in their distorted fashion. When the Israelites sinned with the golden calf, their own spiritual putrefaction led to further corruption of the letters. When they repented, the letters were perfected again, attaining yet a different form.

On the purifying effect of the revelation at Sinai, see BT *Shabbat* 145b-146a, in the name of Rav Yosef: “When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), slime [or: filth, lust]. Israel, who stood at Mount Sinai—their filth ceased. Idolaters, who did not stand at Mount Sinai—their filth did not cease.” See BT *Avodah Zarah* 22b; *Zohar* 2:87b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 212.

The text is somewhat fragmentary here. The phrase “some remained inverted—one here and one there” may

indicate a confused and inconsistent state of the world, or that the letters are proceeding in a combinatory sequence related to א"ת ב"ש (*at bash*), normally an esoteric technique for substituting letters—last for first, penultimate for second, etc.—but here combining the pairs. Here that would indicate that holiness proceeded in an esoteric fashion. Yet another possibility is that this is a reference to the so-called inverted *nuns* that appear in Numbers 10:35–36. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the transmutations of letters, see BT *Sanhedrin* 22a, in the name of Rabbi: “At first the Torah was given to Israel in this writing [i.e., *Ashurit*]. When they sinned, it was changed into *Ro’etz* [i.e., the archaic Hebrew script]. When they repented, it was restored, as it says: *Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope* (Zechariah 9:12).” See Rashi, s.v. *bikhtav zeh nitnah torah le-yisra’el*.

395. When Solomon came... With the arrival of King Solomon, the Temple was built, language was stabilized, and the moon—probably signifying *Shekhinah*—was fully illuminated: perfection was recovered. The pinnacle of that cosmic, spiritual, and historical moment was the revelation of Song of Songs, because then God’s love for the Jewish people was completely revealed. This homily began by considering the ways in which the Torah is like a nut: simple meaning without, profundity within. By concluding with the sacred history of humanity, in conjunction with the sacred history of the alphabet, the nut is now seen as a symbol of the axis of Torah, language, and history.

On the link between Solomon’s reign and the full moon, see *Shemot Rabbah* 15:26: “The moon, on the first of Nisan, begins to shine and continues to illuminate for fifteen days... Similarly, there are fifteen generations from Abraham to Solomon.... When King Solomon came, the disc of the moon became full, as is said: *And Solomon sat on the throne of YHVH as king...*” (1 Chronicles 29:23). See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:12.

On Solomon in the *Zohar*, see *Zohar* 1:73b-74a, 150a, 223a-b, 225b, 238a, 243a, 249b; 2:85a, 149a, 242a; 3:61a, 74b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 342; idem, *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 22-23 (26-27); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 149; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 93-99. On the significance of Song of Songs in the *Zohar*, see above, [note 384](#).

The verse in Kings reads in full: *Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.*

396. לחם (Lehem), bread—Torah... Torah is commonly associated with bread, but what is puzzling is the discrepancy between the two parts of the verse: the first part refers to two women, while in the second part the local women ask about Naomi only, as if she were alone.

On the identification of bread with Torah, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 9; *Bereshit Rabbah* 43:6, 48:11, 70:5; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 30:1; *Shemot Rabbah* 25:8, 47:5; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 8:9, 13:15; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 27:1; *Tanḥuma, Aḥarei Mot* 10; *Rut Rabbah* 2:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* 7:16, 10:19; *Midrash Tehillim* 34; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:14; *Eliyahu Zuta* 13; *Zohar* 1:165a; 3:58a, 236a (RM).

The full verse in Ecclesiastes reads: *Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already been pleased by your deeds.*

397. even the empty among you... A reference to the donkey-driver as an unskilled laborer. See BT *Sanhedrin* 37a, in the name of Resh Lakish: “*Like a pomegranate, רקתך (raqqatekh), the curve of your cheek* (Song of Songs 6:7). Even *הריקנים (ha-reiqanim), the empty, among you are filled with commandments like a pomegranate!*”

398. dismounted... The rabbis' dismounting recalls a famous rabbinic story (BT *Hagigah* 14b): “Once Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai was riding on a donkey, traveling on the road, and Rabbi El'azar son of Arakh was guiding the donkey behind him. [Rabbi El'azar] said to him, ‘Master,

teach me one chapter of the Account of the Chariot [based on Ezekiel's vision]." [Rabbi Yoḥanan] replied, "Have I not taught you: 'Nor [may one expound the Account of] the Chariot in the presence of one, unless he is a sage who understands on his own' (M *Hagigah* 2:1)?" He said to him, 'Master, permit me to say before you one thing that you have taught me.' He replied, 'Speak!' Immediately, Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai dismounted from the donkey and enwrapped himself and sat upon a stone beneath an olive tree. He [Rabbi El'azar] said to him, 'Master, why did you dismount from the donkey?' He replied, 'Is it possible that you are expounding the Account of the Chariot—and *Shekhinah* is with us, and the ministering angels accompany us—and I should be riding on a donkey?' Immediately, Rabbi El'azar son of Arakh began expounding the Account of the Chariot, and fire descended from heaven and encompassed [or: intertwined with] all the trees of the field, whereupon they all opened in song."

See *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:1; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 21:1; JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77a.

399. tablets were written front and back... The two verses from Exodus apparently specify a doubling of the tablets: first, it says *on the one side and on the other they were written*, and then there is a repeated reference to the tablets. Thus, one tablet symbolizes "front and back," while the other symbolizes "right and left." In Kabbalah, "front and back" signify *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, respectively; and, "right and left" signify *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, respectively.

According to BT *Shabbat* 104a, in the name of Rav Hisda, the divine engraving of the first tablets had miraculous features: "The *mem* and the *samekh* that were in the tablets stood via a miracle.... The writing of the tablets could be read from within and without [that is, from both sides], e.g., נבוב (*nevuv*), hollow [would be read] בובן (*vuvan*); בהר (*be-har*), on the mountain, [as] רהב (*rahab*); סרו (*saru*), they departed, [as] ורס (*varas*)." See also M *Avot* 5:6; *Mekhilta*,

Vayassa 5; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 16:32; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 355; JT *Sheqalim* 6:1, 49d; BT *Pesaḥim* 54a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 37; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 19, 46; *Kasher, Torah Shelema*, Exodus 32:15 and nn. 160-62; *Zohar* 2:84a-b.

400. (ve-ha-mikhtav mikhtav), and the script... script... Initially, God wanted to give two Torahs to Israel—presumably the Written Law and the Oral Law—signifying *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*. These two are represented by the letters ם ן (vav, he)—literally *and the*—which are the last two letters of the tetragrammaton. The *vav* and *he* preceding the words *tablets* and *script*—along with the fact that there are specifically two tablets and two iterations of *script*—indicate that one tablet manifests the union of masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity.

401. והלוהות (Ve-ha-luhot), And the tablets... The second tablet manifests the union of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, signified by $\eta \prime$ (*yod he*). The miraculous engraving is an act of *Elohim*, the divine name signifying *Binah*. Thus, the two tablets together—one signifying *vav he*, and one signifying *yod he*—express the union of the totality of God.

402. two arms... Continuing in a series of interpretations of the letters ν (*vav*) and η (*he*), here they signify *Hesed* and *Gevurah*.

403. Jacob and Rachel... *Script* that is defined by *vav* and *he* refers to Written and Oral Torah, signifying *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*. This pair is often symbolized by the pairs “Jacob and Rachel,” “sun and moon,” or two breasts. When they are united, they are as one.

On “two breasts” as signifying two tablets, see *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 8: “The sages say, ‘Ten [utterances] on this tablet and ten on that, as is said: ...*Your breasts are two fawns, twins of a gazelle* (Song of Songs 7:4).’”

404. ḥeirut, freedom... The tablets, or the Torah, provide the ultimate redemption from all ills. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:3: “*Ḥarut, engraved upon the tablets*. Do not read *ḥarut, engraved*, but rather *ḥeirut, freedom*. Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Neḥemiah, and the Rabbis [disputed the matter]. Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘Freedom from the Angel of Death.’ Rabbi Neḥemiah said, ‘Freedom from kingdoms.’ The Rabbis said, ‘Freedom from suffering.’”

See *Avot* 6:2; BT *Eruvin* 54a, *Avodah Zarah* 5a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:6; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 16, *Egev* 8; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Va’era* 9; *Shelaḥ* add. 1; *Shemot Rabbah* 41:7; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 46; *Zohar* 1:37b, 63b, 131b–132a, 152b; 2:45b, 113b–114a, 183a; 3:6b, 176a, 196b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 25 (29–30). Cf. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 2.

405. letters flew off from two sides... The sin of the golden calf caused the linguistic dissolution of the tablets—the masculine right and front sides departed, leaving only

the feminine left and back, a distorted and deficient revelation.

On the letters flying away, see BT *Pesahim* 87b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 2; *Shemot Rabbah* 46:1. On the distinction between the original tablets and their copy, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1103-06.

406. bread... The end of the famine and the deliverance of bread signifies the giving of the second tablets, another bestowal of Torah.

In rabbinic and kabbalistic literature, bread frequently serves as a symbol for Torah—for both are life-sustaining staples. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:5: “[Aquila the convert] came to Rabbi Yehoshu’a and began with words of comfort: “The bread is the Torah, as is written: *Come, eat my bread-food* (Proverbs 9:5).” See above, [note 396](#).

407. Whole—Righteous One... The term כל (*kol*), *whole*, signifies *Yesod*; and העיר (*ha-ir*), *the city*, signifies *Malkhut*. Thus, the arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem marks a restoration of divine unity.

408. Could this be Naomi... In the biblical story, Naomi leaves the land of Israel with her husband and two sons, and—according to rabbinic tradition—as part of a family of wealthy community leaders. She returns as a widow, indigent, and with a widowed daughter-in-law. Here, Naomi’s downfall represents the shattered tablets. When the first tablets were given, Israel experienced bliss and freedom from worldly concerns. The revelation of the first set of commandments was characterized by the experience of *seeing the* קולות (*qolot*), *the thunderings*. Now the unified *sefirot Yesod* and *Malkhut*, represented by *the whole city*, are astonished by the fallen state of the tablets. Naomi, signifying the Torah, also bemoans her degradation. The name Naomi means “delight” or “sweetness,” which she, and the Torah corresponding to her, no longer manifests. Upon receiving the second set of tablets, this multi-sensory experience is not depicted, and the people therefore ask:

Could this be Naomi? Can this be the same Torah we received before?

On the striking formulation of *seeing* הקולות (*ha-qolot*), *the thunderings*, see *Mekhilta, Bahodesh* 9, in the name of Rabbi Akiva: “They were seeing the fiery word issuing from the mouth of Power and being engraved on the tablets, as is said: *The קול (qol), voice, of YHVH hews flames of fire* (Psalms 29:7).”

See *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 20:15; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 41; *Midrash Shemu’el* 9:4; Rashi, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra (short and long) on the verse; *Bahir* 29 (45); Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:46; *ZH* 41b-c; *TZ* 38, 79a. Cf. *Zohar* 1:52b; *Zohar* 2:81a-b, 82a.

The full verse in Exodus 20 reads: *All the people were seeing the thunderings [or: voices], and the flashes and the sound [or: voice] of, the shofar and the mountain smoking, and the people saw and trembled and they stood at a distance.*

409. you will see My back... At first, the people of Israel were offered revelation in its full glory, with tablets of right and left, front and back. Forging the calf represented their rejection of that aspect of Torah, so they were left with an inferior version—just left and back sides.

410. to the other nations... According to rabbinic tradition, before giving the Torah to Israel, God offered it to the other nations. However, they refused to accept its moral constraints.

On God offering the Torah to other nations, see *Mekhilta, Bahodesh* 5; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 343; *Midrash Tanna’im*, Deuteronomy 33:2; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Deuteronomy 33:2; *BT Avodah Zarah* 2b; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 41; *Tanḥuma, Vezot Haberakhah* 4; *Shemot Rabbah* 27:9; *Zohar* 1:25a (*TZ*); 2:3a; 3:19b, 91b, 192a-193a.

411. infants and sucklings... God has two Torahs and procures two sets of guarantors, “the babes and sucklings.”

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4, in the name of Rabbi Me'ir: "When Israel stood before Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the blessed Holy One said to them, 'Shall I give you the Torah without guarantors! Rather, bring me trustworthy guarantors as assurance, and then I shall give it to you.' They said, 'Our forefathers will be our guarantors.' The blessed Holy One said to them, 'Your forefathers need guarantors!... I have [charges] against them. I have a charge against Abraham because he said, *How shall I know [that I will inherit it?]* (Genesis 15:8). I have a charge against Isaac because he loved Esau, while I hated him, as is said: *But Esau I hated* (Malachi 1:3). [Against] Jacob, as is said: [*Why do you say, O Jacob*]... *'My way is hid from YHVH'* (Isaiah 40:27)... Bring me trustworthy guarantors and I shall give it to you!' They said to Him, 'Behold, our children will be our guarantors.' The blessed Holy One said, 'These are indeed trustworthy guarantors. By means of their surety I shall give it to you.' This is as is written: *From the mouths of babes and sucklings You have founded strength* (Psalms 8:3)."

412. Those weaned from milk... In Isaiah, all sections of the verse are questions. Here, the last question is read as a statement answering the first two.

On the theme of the son redeeming the father, see ZH 49a-b, 84a-c (both *MhN, Rut*); Benarroch, *Sava ve-Yanuqa*, 264-65.

413. Israel stood at Mount Sinai... Mount Sinai is called בית לחם (*Beit Lehem*), "House of Bread," because the Torah—which is compared to bread, was given there. When the Torahs were given, all the nations, signified by *the women*, are astonished and proclaim: *This is indeed Naomi*, signifying their awareness of the sweetness of Torah. Thus, the teaching has turned the question into an exclamation.

On Torah as *bread*, see above, [note 406](#).

The name Naomi means "she of loveliness [or: pleasance, sweetness]." The name is quite old, often

appearing in Ugaritic as an epithet for gods and the heroes Aqhat and Keret. See Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

414. they arrived at Marah... The place name Marah means “bitter,” referring to the bitterness of the desert springs encountered by the Israelites in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. The bitter waters there were their first experience of the challenges and demands of Torah. In response to this experience, Naomi—signifying the Torah—refers to herself as *Mara, Bitter*.

In rabbinic literature, the verse *There did He set him a statute and law, and there did He test him* is applied to the laws of circumcision, Sabbath, sexual morality, honoring one’s parents, and the establishment of law courts. See *Mekhilta, Vayassa 1; Tanḥuma (Buber), Beshallah 18; BT Sanhedrin 56b; Bahir 107 (161); Zohar 2:40a, 60b; TZ 60, 93a.*

415. three parasangs... The donkey driver who previously goaded for them now rides upon them, a mark of great honor. A parasang is a Persian mile, equaling just under three-and-a-half modern miles. In the Talmud, distances were measured by the time it would take to traverse them, and it was approximated that three parasangs would take three-and-a-half hours to walk.

According to Rav Sheshet in BT *Sotah 46b*, one should escort his teacher a distance of a parasang; a distinguished teacher, however, is to be escorted for three parasangs. This is also the distance one must have from one’s teacher in order to be able to teach Torah. *Bereshit Rabbah 32:10* relates that when Rabbi Yonatan was startled by the wisdom of his donkey driver, he “immediately descended from his donkey and made the driver ride three miles. He applied... to him *Like a pomegranate, the curve of your cheek*—even the ריקנין (*reiqqanim*), empty ones, among you are full of answers like a pomegranate.”

On the fullness of those who are ignorant at first glance, see *Bereshit Rabbah 32:10; Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*

18:5; above, [notes 122](#), [382](#), [397](#). On the significance of three parasangs, see BT *Eruvin* 63a, *Sanhedrin* 5b; *Leqah Tov*, *Shofetim* 34b; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 20:9, *Hilkhot Avel* 14:3; *Zohar* 1:51a, 87a, 96b, 150b, 217a, 240a; 2:14a, 164a, 187a; 3:8b.

416. crowned with supernal, engraved names... See *Tanhuma* (Buber), *Shelah*, add. 1: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai said, ‘He equipped them with weapons engraved with the Ineffable Name, and as long as they possessed these, no evil could touch them, neither the Angel of Death nor anything else. Once they sinned, Moses said to them, *Now take off your ornaments, and I will know what I should do with you* (Exodus 33:5).’”

On Israel’s ornaments at Sinai, see *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 33:4, 6; *Targum Shir ha-Shirim* 2:17; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* 24; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; BT *Shabbat* 88a; *Tanhuma*, *Shelah* 13; *Shemot Rabbah* 45:2; 51:8; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 16:24; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 47; Naḥmanides on Exodus 33:6; *Zohar* 1:52b, 63b; 2:227a; Green, *Keter*, 68–77.

417. Rabbi Alexandrai continued... This continues Rabbi Alexandrai’s discourse from 83a. “Rabbi Alexandrai continued his trend” appears to be a gloss interpolated by a later hand to make the connection. See Scholem; *Matoq mi-Devash*; above, [page 161](#).

418. Why is it so named?... The root לְהַמ (*lhm*) can mean “quarrel, battle, dispute.” Thus, *beit lehem* can be read as “house of dispute.” When a person dies, the body and soul are judged in the celestial tribunal, where there is contention over the person’s fate. *The whole city hummed* signifies all the souls of the dead who are in tumult, concerned about the outcome.

419. angel appointed over the cemetery... On seeing an angel at the time of death, see *Massekhet Hibbut ha-Qever*, 150–51; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 104.

[420.](#) **lame one and the blind one...** The parable of the blind and lame thieves entails the latter climbing on the back of the other, so that the two of them together can steal from the king's orchard. This explains the relationship of the body and soul, neither of which can sin on its own, but they can transgress effectively together. Each pleads innocence—each blaming the other. For three days, they are judged jointly, based on the evidence provided by the person's speech and actions.

On the soul being judged together with the body for three days, see BT *Shabbat* 151b: "*I will spread dung upon your faces, the dung of your feasts.* Rav Huna—others say Rav Haga—said, 'This refers to people who abandon words of Torah and make all their days like feasts.' Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rav Pappi in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a, 'After three days [in the grave], his belly bursts and it [i.e., its contents] falls upon his face, exclaiming to him, "Take what you put into me!"'"

On the parable of the lame and blind watchmen and its application to the body and soul, see above, [notes 380-81](#). On the insertion of the soul into the body before judgment, see *Massekhet Hibbut ha-Qever*, 150-51. On the bodily disgrace after three days, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1.

[421.](#) **The soul mourns...** After three days, vermin afflict the body and the soul mourns its failure to learn Torah and act virtuously in this world.

On the *nefesh* mourning over the body, see above, [note 380](#).

From here on, the sections of text on 84a appear in a different sequence in V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, and Thiengen. A long passage—dealing with quartets of letters, aspects of soul, and the tetragrammaton—that appears on 84a-b is being omitted from the critical edition of our text. Though it is found in all the early manuscripts, its style reveals that it was a later addition. See Scholem; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 176; Weiss, "Shte'i Girsat," 534-35 and n. 56.

422. why was *Shekhinah* exiled... *Shekhinah* is held responsible for spoiling Israel, continuing to bestow material goods upon them without regard for their lack of piety. Consequently, She is sent into exile along with them. Thus, She is like the soul that is supposed to guide and discipline the pleasure-seeking body; when the soul fails to do so, it is punished along with the body.

On *Shekhinah*'s exile, see BT *Megillah* 29a: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai says, 'Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.'" See above, [note 98](#).

On Israel's rebellions arising from excessive material well-being, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 312.

423. children of Ishmael and Esau... The "children of Ishmael" can represent the biblical figure's descendants, but most often, as here, signifies Muslims. In rabbinic literature, the name Esau (or his nation Edom) often represents Rome, and in medieval literature it often represents Christianity. Rabbi Alexandrai explains the midrash regarding the decomposition of the body symbolically, regarding the vermin as representative of Muslims and Christians, and the bursting of the body as symbolic of those nations' persecution of Israel. This is part of divine retribution for their moral and spiritual backsliding. The *Shekhinah* mourns over their tribulations, and She then ascends upward to *Binah*, signified by Naomi.

On persecution of the Jews by Muslims and Christians, see *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 30; *Zohar* 2:17a (*MhN*), 178b. On Ishmael in the *Zohar*, see Kiener, "The Image of Islam in the *Zohar*." On Esau representing Rome and Christianity, see Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought"; Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 10-12.

424. hummed with excitement... The excitement generated by Naomi's and Ruth's return is identified with the astonishing experience of revelation at Mount Sinai.

This section appears out of place and is not found in the printed text. However, because it is present in V24, MS4, O17, L39, MS3, OY, Th, and V, I have included it here.

425. his lips are astir... One has "his learning in his hands" if he has recited the teachings repeatedly. Then, even in the grave, his lips will continue to utter words of Torah, which offer protection from punishment.

The notion of repeated recital of one's learning is exemplified in a teaching ascribed to Hillel in BT *Ḥagigah* 9b: "He who repeated his chapter a hundred times is not to be compared with one who repeated it one hundred and one times."

On having total possession of one's learning through repeated recital, see BT *Pesaḥim* 50a, and Rabbenu Hananel, ad loc.; *Bava Batra* 10b, and Rabbenu Gershom, ad loc.; ZH 80b (*MhN, Rut*). Maharsha explains that the phrase signifies one who has composed his understanding of Torah in writing. See Maharsha on *Bava Batra* 10b; cf. BT *Yoma* 38b.

On lips *she-shonim*, "that recite"—rather than being like *shoshanim*, roses—see BT *Shabbat* 30b; ZH 47d (*MhN, Rut*). On scholars' lips moving in the grave, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:10: "Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'Even when a scholar [reading בן תורה (*ben torah*), "son of Torah," instead of בן תורתה (*ben tortah*), "son of Tortah"] is dead, his lips move in the grave. Why? *Stirring the lips of sleepers* (Song of Songs 7:10).'" On *shoshanim* as roses, see Vol. 1, p. 1, n. 1; Benarroch, "'The Mystery of Unity,'" 243–44, nn. 63–64.

See also BT *Sanhedrin* 90b, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yehotsadak: "If a law is quoted in a person's name in this world, his lips stir in the grave, as is said: *stirring the lips of sleepers*." See JT *Berakhot* 2:1, 4b; *Sheqalim* 2:5, 47a; *Mo'ed Qatan* 3:7, 83c; BT *Yevamot* 97a,

Bekhorot 31b; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 3; *Midrash Tehillim* 30:3; *Midrash Shemu'el* 19:4; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 2, 5b-6a; *Zohar* 3:39a-b; 96a; 135a (IR); ZH 47d (MhN, Rut).

On Torah's protection in the grave, see *Avot* 6:9; *Sifra, Aḥarei Mot* 13:11, 86b; BT *Sotah* 21a and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *hi tesihkha*; *Devarim Rabbah* (Lieberman) on 6:9; *Aggadat Bereshit* 46; *Zohar* 1:175b, 185a.

The end of the verse from Song of Songs reads: *his lips are like lilies dripping flowing myrrh*. The full verse in Proverbs, understood as describing Torah, reads: *When you walk, she will guide you; when you lie down, she will protect you; you will awake, and she will speak for you*.

426. complete his studies... Several talmudic stories relate that an individual encounters the Angel of Death but seeks a reprieve to review his learning. See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 28a, *Ketubbot* 77b; cf. *Berakhot* 38b, *Pesaḥim* 68b; above, [note 280](#).

427. While speaking with him... In the midst of Rabbi Ḥisda's speaking with Rabbi Yose, angels came to escort Rabbi Ḥisda up to his heavenly abode.

428. deserved punishment there On the dangers of watching souls' heavenly ascent, see BT *Bava Metsi'a* 85b, in the name of Rav Ḥaviva son of Surmakia: "I saw one of the rabbis whom Elijah used to frequent, whose eyes were clear in the morning, but in the evening they looked as if burnt in fire. I asked him, 'What happened here?' And he answered me, 'I asked Elijah to show me the Rabbis as they ascend to the heavenly academy. He replied, "You can look upon all, except for the chair of Rabbi Ḥiyya—upon which you may not look." "How is it to be distinguished?" "All are accompanied by angels when they ascend and descend, except Rabbi Ḥiyya's chair, which ascends and descends on its own." But unable to control myself, I gazed upon it. Two fiery streams issued forth, struck, and blinded the man [a euphemism for "me"] in one eye. The following day, I went

and prostrated myself upon his grave—crying out, “It is your *baraita* that I study!”—and I was healed.”

429. kinsman on her husband’s side... The nature of Boaz’s familial connection to Elimelech is unclear, but based on 3:12, he appears to be a distant relation. Rabbinic tradition suggests that he is Elimelech’s nephew and Naomi’s cousin. See BT *Bava Batra* 91a; Rashi.

Powerful might renders גבור חיל (*gibbor hayil*). In narratives about Israel’s early history, the term signifies military might, but later it comes to mean social and economic worth. In rabbinic texts, it comes to signify erudition in Torah. See BT *Sanhedrin* 93b; *Rut Rabbah* 4:3; *Targum*; Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

430. גבור (*gibbor*), Mighty, in the land... If one has procreated and has descendants, he has “built” in the world, securing his future in eternity. If he does not sire children and is compelled to undergo the suffering of *yibbum* (levirate marriage), then he must proceed “hand to hand,” through reincarnation. Such a person is evil and cannot escape punishment.

Rabbi Reḥumai understands *hand to hand* as a reference to reincarnation which, in Zoharic Kabbalah, is activated through levirate marriage. This doctrine is deeply esoteric in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Kabbalah, as indicated here by Reḥumai’s oblique use of the verse from Psalms. The verse concludes: *And to them He reveals His covenant*, with the term *covenant* being understood as a symbol for procreation.

According to the biblical custom of levirate marriage, if a married man dies childless, his brother should marry the widow and then father a child, who will be considered the offspring of the deceased. Posthumously providing the dead man with offspring prevents his name from being blotted out. In the story of Ruth, Boaz—as kinsman to Mahlon—fulfills the function normally performed by the brother. In Kabbalah, levirate marriage is understood in terms of

reincarnation: not only the name of the deceased husband is preserved but also his soul, transmigrating into the embryo generated by the union of his widow and his brother.

On levirate marriage, see Genesis 38; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 3-4; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 231-32, 482-83; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, xxxii-viii. On the medieval context, see Katz, *Halakhah ve-Qabbalah*, 127-74; Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious*, 90-101. The English term "levirate marriage" derives from Latin *levir*, "husband's brother." The corresponding Hebrew term יבום (*yibbum*) similarly derives from יבם (*yabbam*), "husband's brother."

On reincarnation in Kabbalah, see *Bahir* 86 (121-22), 104 (155-56), 126-27 (184), 135 (195); Naḥmanides on Genesis 38:8, Deuteronomy 25:6, Job 33:30; *Zohar* 1:48a, 131a, 186b-188a, 239a; 2:75a, 91b; 3:7a, 88b, 177a, 182b; *ZH* 59a-c (*MhN*), 89b-90a (*MhN, Rut*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Yevamot*, p. 25a; on 62a, p. 25c-d; *Ketubbot* 111a, p. 27c; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 250-57; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 242-43; idem, *Kabbalah*, 344-50; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 188-94, 237-38 (on the Catharist theory of reincarnation), 456-60; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 197-250 (on the Catharists, 199-200); idem, *Shedim Ruḥot u-Nshamot*, 186-214, 298; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1362-63; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 370-96; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 291-327; Elior, "Torat ha-Gilgul"; Oron, "Qavvim le-Torat ha-Nefesh ve-ha-Gilgul"; idem, "Mavo" to Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 22-24 (and nn. 43-46); Schwartz, "Ha-Biqqoret al Torat Gilgul ha-Neshamot"; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 113-29; Ḥaggai ben Shammai, "Gilgul neshamot," 117-36. The first extensive kabbalistic discussion of reincarnation is found in the section titled *Sava de-Mishpatim* (*Zohar* 2:95a-113a).

On the connection between levirate marriage and reincarnation, see Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-*

Shirim, 537; Nahmanides on Genesis 38:8; *Zohar* 1:155b (*Mat*), 186b-188a; 3:167a, 177a, 259b; *ZH* 59a-c (*MhN*), 89d-90a (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 353-60; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 240-52; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 136-46; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 33-35; Katz, *Halakhah ve-Qabbalah*, 167-71; idem, *Divine Law in Human Hands*, 45-49.

The verse in Proverbs concludes: *but the seed* [or: *offspring*] *of the righteous escapes*. See Fox.

431. redeeming kinsmen Actually, Mahlon will be redeemed from his failure to father children—as achieved through the levirate marriage of, and procreation by, Boaz and Ruth.

432. will not go unpunished How can Boaz's levirate marriage resolve the issue, since the verse seems to promise that Mahlon would be punished?

433. guardsman who whips sinners... It is true that one who dies childless will be scourged, but once levirate marriage achieves its aim of producing offspring (the "surety" in the parable) in the name of the deceased husband, he is relieved of further punishment. At that point, the guard ceases his flogging.

434. one who resuscitated a person... The truth of this matter is so recondite that it will not be revealed until the arrival of Elijah, precursor of the messiah—the one who had revived a child. See 1 Kings 17:23; Malachi 4:23. Alternatively, it may be a reference to the messiah who will resurrect the dead.

The exchange here between Rabbi Rehumai and Rabbi Nahman is somewhat obscure. Others have interpreted it as referring to two different esoteric understandings of transmigration of souls. See *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Englander.

435. Rabbi Zemira'ah... The following story, often called "The *Tanna* and the Restless Dead," outlines a method for alleviating the suffering of a sinner in Geihinnom. The

story enjoyed wide circulation in over forty versions in medieval folktales, liturgical works, midrash, ethical literature, and Kabbalah. A number of the versions portray Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai as the hero, while some have Rabbi Akiva. This is the first version to name Rabbi Zemira'ah as the hero. The mysterious Arab here may be understood as Elijah in disguise.

On voices coming from beneath the ground, see BT *Sanhedrin* 110a, in the name of Rabbah son of Bar Ḥana: “I was proceeding on the road, when an Arab said to me, ‘Come, and I will show you where Korah [and his band were] were swallowed up.’ I went and saw two crevices, smoke issuing from them. Thereupon he took a piece of clipped wool, soaked it in water, attached it to the point of his spear, and passed it over there—and it was singed. I said to him, ‘Listen to what you are about to hear.’ And I heard them saying thus, ‘Moses and his Torah are true, but they [Korah’s company] are liars.’” Cf. BT *Eruvin* 19a, *Ḥagigah* 15b, *Bava Batra* 74a, *Sanhedrin* 65b.

“Enclosed” renders קרטוניא (*qartunyah*), from קרטון (*qarton*), which refers to an enclosure for a division in a military camp. However, the phrase בקעי קרטוניא (*baq’ei qartunia*), “enclosed crevices,” recalls the crevices encountered by Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Yose in the טורי קרדו (*turei qardu*), “mountains of Kurdistan,” in *Zohar* 1:63a. See Vol. 1, p. 366, n. 178; *ZḤ* 49a. Further, the word is similar to קרטופנא (*qartufna*), plural קרטופני (*qartufanei*), which can mean “incision, scratch.” On קרטון (*qarton*), see BT *Berakhot* 32b. On קרטופנא (*qartufna*), see BT *Pesaḥim* 30b, *Ketubbot* 107b, *Bava Qamma* 86a, *Avodah Zarah* 33b; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 187, s.v. *qartufa*.

“Clustered” renders קומטרי (*qumterei*), based on the root קמט (*qmt*), “to bind, tie” (as in *Targum Yonatan*, Proverbs 5:22). See *Zohar* 1:107b (Tos); 3:18a, 88a; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 187, s.v. *qumta*; Luria, *Va-Ye’esof David*, s.v. *qumta*.

On Elijah disguised as an Arab, see BT *Berakhot* 6b; *Midrash Rut Zuta* 1:20, 4:11.

On the story, see *Nispaḥim le-Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Pirgei Derekh Erets*, 22–23; *Kallah Rabbati*, 2:9 (Higger); *Ginzei Schechter*, 238–40; *Maḥazor Vitri*, 112–13; Isaac ben Moses, *Or Zaru'a, Hilkhhot Shabbat*, vol. 2, 50; Abu Hamad al Ghazali, *Sefer Mozenei Tsedeq*, 121; *ZH* 49a–b; M. B. Lerner, “Ma’aseh ha-tanna ve-ha-met”; Rella Kushelevsky, “The Tanna and the Restless Dead”; idem, “Ha-tanna ve-ha-met ha-noded”; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-be-Nistar*, 116–18 n. 39; Weiss, “Shteir Girsat.”

436. He asked him... On listening to and communicating with the dead, see BT *Berakhot* 18b, *Sanhedrin* 65b; Meroz, “The Grieving Dead,” 49–50.

437. He is a sinful Jew... The sinner speaks about himself in the third person—a literary expression of his alienation, being adrift between the worlds of the living and the dead.

438. sinners... cannot remember their names On the dead not remembering their names, see *Massekhet Hibbut ha-Qever (Beit ha-Midrash)*, 1:150; *ZH* 49a.

439. punished three times a day... On the daily punishments in Hell, see *ZH* 69a (*ShS*).

440. voice of a child reciting... Each of the children gives Rabbi Zemira’ah an oracular message. The first encourages him to continue his search—for, like Torah, the understanding that he seeks can be achieved only through diligence. The second child communicates that through particularly virtuous behavior, one can spare oneself from punishment. As a result, Rabbi Zemira’ah proceeded with his investigation.

On the oracular quality of children’s recitation of verses, see Augustine’s comment: “I heard the voice of a boy or a girl—I know not which—coming from the neighboring house, chanting over and over again, ‘Pick it up, read it; pick it up, read it.’” See Augustine, *Confessions*,

8:12:29; Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 195–98. On the verse from Proverbs, see Fox; Alter. The verse in Zephaniah concludes: *on the day of YHVH's wrath*.

441. slaughterhouse It is unclear what sinful behavior marked the father's being a butcher and the child's activity at the slaughterhouse. In the parallel version in *Zohar Hadash* 49b, it says that a man had sought out the child and "saw a child who was קַחֲשֵׁק (*mesaḥeq*), sporting, with the youths at the slaughterhouse." The word *mesaḥeq* could suggest idolatrous, murderous, or illicit sexual behavior, which in this case would suggest homosexual activity. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 53:11.

442. He sought him out... Rabbi Zemira'ah took it upon himself to reform the sinner's child and to educate him, to the point that the child grew up to be a renowned scholar.

In parallel (and earlier) versions of the story (see above, [note 435](#)), the child is taught to perform a public liturgical act, such as saying *Barekhu*, reciting *Qaddish*, or chanting the *haftarah* (a unit of prophetic writings that follows the Torah reading on the Sabbath and holy days). The absence of that element in this version suggests opposition to minors performing these acts.

On the resistance to minors' discharging these rituals publicly, see Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Qadmon*, 308–9.

According to Rashi, Rabbi Shim'on *ha-Pekuli* was a cotton dealer who presented Rabban Gamli'el a version of the eighteen blessings for the daily statutory prayer. See BT *Berakhot* 28b, *Megillah* 17b; Rashi on both texts, s.v. *ha-Pekuli*. The word *pekuli* could mean simply "bundles"; in Greek, the word *fakelos* means "bundle of wood."

443. ha-Pekuli... The narrator devises a folk etymology through wordplay, based on the similar sounding phrase in Isaiah. Subsequently other great sages were apparently

able to redeem other sinners from hell-fire, on account of their learning.

According to BT *Sanhedrin* 104a: “A son confers benefit onto his father.” Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4. On the sequence of the sinner’s gradual alleviation of punishment, see *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Mopsik; Englander.

The simple meaning of the phrase from Isaiah is *stumble in judgment*.

444. eased my punishment... Even a great sinner can be redeemed by a righteous son who learns Torah. See *Zohar* 1:115b, 188a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 110; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 138.

445. my throne was prepared... The deceased undergoes three stages of elevation in hell, and then in his fourth ascent he attains the Garden of Eden. This last phase coincides with the son’s receiving public honor and being adorned with crowns, the glory given to whoever engages in Torah.

On the sinner’s ascent, see Weiss, “Shteir Girsat,” 527–28 and n. 24. On crowns as adornment for Torah study, see *Zohar* 3:22a, 36a; cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:2. On leaving a son who learns Torah, see Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 61.

446. Rabbi Akiva Some of the versions recount this story as happening to Rabbi Akiva rather than Rabbi Zemira’ah, while *Maḥazor Vitri* says that the child’s name was also Akiva, forging a strong identity between the child and his redeemer.

447. different nature altogether... Asking whether Elijah fathered children is the greatest impertinence. While having children is one of the most important commandments, Elijah was the sole prophet who ascended to heaven—deserving to be called an “angel”—and thus more than any of them should not be subjected to questions that presume familiarity. This is the meaning of the verse from Chronicles: people of preeminent holiness are beyond

reproach by ordinary mortals. Cf. Joseph Caro, *Maggid Meisharim*, 106; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The description of Elijah as having “a different nature altogether” accords with the view of Moses de León, according to whom the angel Elijah assumed bodily form in descending to earth. See his *She’elot u-Tshuvot*, 60–63, 68–71, and the critique by Moses Cordovero (*Pardes Rimmonim* 24:14).

Various sources allude to Elijah’s heavenly or angelic status. See *Midrash Tehillim* 8:7: “The bird of heaven (Psalms 8:9)—this is Elijah, who flies through the world as a bird.” In *Targum*, Ecclesiastes 10:20, and *Ma’yan Hokhmah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:60) Elijah is identified as “Master of Wings.”

See BT *Berakhot* 4b, *Bava Metsi’a* 85b, 114a–b; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 29, and David Luria, ad loc., nn. 66–67; Abraham ben David (Rabad) on Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:2; *Zohar* 1:46b, 151b, 209a, 245b; 2:197a; 3:68a–b, 88b; *ZH* 76a (*MhN*, *Rut*); Ish-Shalom, “Introduction,” *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah ve-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, 2–20; Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 16, n. 25.

448. from the tribe of Gad Elijah was descended from Gad, so he could not have been truly angelic. Moreover his status was ambiguous regarding his tribal origins as well, and this was subject to rabbinic debate. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:9: “Rabbi Lazar said, ‘From Benjamin, [as is written]: *Jareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham.... All these were of the descendants of Benjamin* (1 Chronicles 8:27, 40).’ Rabbi Nehorai said, ‘From Gad, as is written: *Elijah the Tishbite, of the settlers of Gilead, said... (1 Kings 17:1).*’... On one occasion our Rabbis were debating about him [Elijah], some maintaining that he was from Gad, others, from Benjamin. He came and stood before them, saying to them, ‘Masters, why do you debate about me? I am a descendant of the sons of Rachel.’” Cf. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 4 and [note 451](#) below.

449. Who has gone up to heaven... Midrashic sources apply this verse both to God and to biblical heroes such as Moses and Elijah. For earlier midrashic treatments of this verse, see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:4; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5, 15a-b; *Tanḥuma, Naso* 24; *Midrash Mishlei* 30:4; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:11. Cf. *Zohar* 2:78b-79a, 197a.

450. And come down—beforehand... Elijah's ascent to heaven is reported in 2 Kings 2:11: *Elijah ascended in a whirlwind to heaven*, but this alone does not account for the second half of the Proverbs verse, *and come down*. The latter words apply to Elijah, as well, since he did not originate on earth, but rather in the heavens, like an angel.

The verse in Proverbs continues: *Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if you know?*

This explanation and the other forthcoming applications of this verse from Proverbs show that Rabbi Natan had anticipated an explanation of the end of the verse, regarding *his son's name*.

451. Elijah—he is Phinehas... If Elijah is Phinehas, not only did he have a normal human origin, but also he must be a priest—and therefore from the tribe of Levi! Moreover, just because each of them was zealous is no proof, as many can be zealous for God's honor. And yet, the doubling of the word *zealous* in the verse from 1 Kings indicates that there is one speaker for two events of zealotry—once for the time that Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi at Shittim (see Numbers 25:6-15), and a second time in Kings when he stands up to Ahab and Jezebel. This confirms the identity of Elijah and Phinehas. God directs his question to Elijah, a single "you," suggesting continuity of a single individual's zealotry. From all these arguments it is clear that Elijah was not an angel. Cf. *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Englander.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 29: “The blessed Holy One appeared to [Elijah] and said, ‘*What are you doing here, Elijah?*’ He answered, ‘*I have been zealous, zealous indeed [for YHVH, God of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant]*’ (1 Kings 19:10). The blessed Holy One said, ‘You are always zealous! You were zealous in Shittim on account of sexual immorality [Numbers 25]..., and here too you are zealous.’”

On Elijah as identified with Phinehas, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 6:18; Numbers 25:12; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 114b, and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *lav kohen mar*; *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *mahu she-yessaderu be-va'al hov*; idem, ad loc., s.v. *amar leih lav kohen mar*; *Tanḥuma*, *Pinḥas* 1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 47; Radak on 1 Chronicles 8:27; *Zohar* 1:209b; 2:190a; 3:214a, 215a (RM), 282a (RM). Cf. Pseudo-Philo 48:1-2; Origen on John 6:7; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:316-17, n. 3.

452. And come down—Jonah... Elijah is not an angel, since the word ויֵרֵד (*Va-yered*), *And come down*, refers to Jonah, not to Elijah.

The association of Elijah and Jonah draws on the midrashic view that a stricken boy whom Elijah revived (according to 1 Kings 17) was none other than Jonah. Therefore Jonah is called *son of אמתי* (*Amittai*), alluding to the statement by his mother, the widow from Zarephath, to Elijah after her son's revival: *Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of YHVH in your mouth is אמת* (*emet*), *truth*.

Both Elijah and Jonah prayed that they might die; see 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:8. On the parallels between these two biblical figures, see Liebes, “Yonah ben Amittai,” 304-5. On Jonah as the son of the widow from Zarephath, see JT *Sukkah* 5:1, 55a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 98:11; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 33; *Midrash Tehillim* 26:7; *Midrash Haserot vi-Yterot*, 173 (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:299-300). None of these sources connects the name of Jonah's father, אמתי (*Amittai*), with the word אמת (*emet*) in the verse from Kings, but the

Church father Jerome quotes this midrashic interpretation in the introduction to his commentary on Jonah. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:318, n. 9.

453. hollow of his hands... Moses This is how Moses instigated the plague of boils. See Exodus 9:8: *YHVH said to Moses and to Aaron, 'Take you handfuls of soot from the kiln and let Moses throw it toward the heavens before Pharaoh's eyes.'*

454. Elisha, who healed the waters... After Elijah had ascended to heaven (see 2 Kings 2:11), Elisha was asked by the disciples of the prophets in Jericho to remedy the waters which were spoiling the earth. See *ibid.*, 20-22: *[Elisha] responded, "Bring me a new dish and put salt in it," and they brought it to him. He went to the spring and threw salt into it. And he said, "Thus said YHVH, 'I heal this water; no longer shall death and bereavement come from it!'"* The water has remained wholesome to this day, in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha. To achieve this feat, in fulfillment of the words *in a garment*, Elisha used Elijah's magical mantle, which he had picked up after the latter's ascent heavenward (see *ibid.*, 8, 13-14).

455. באברהם (be-Avraham), by Abraham On account of the merit of Abraham, the world was created and sustained.

The anagram בהבראם (*be-hibbare'am*), *when they were created*—באברהם (*be-Avraham*), *by Abraham*, appears in *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9. There, according to Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah, it indicates that *heaven and earth* were created for Abraham's sake. See also *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 16; *Lekh Lekha* 4; *Zohar* 1:3b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b, 247a; 2:31a, 48b, 79a, 220b; 3:31a, 38a, 117a, 298a; *ZH* 19b (*MhN*).

456. YHVH Tseva'ot is His name... Behind all these miraculous acts by the various prophets lies the power of God. *His son* signifies His people Israel.

On the question *What is his son's name?* see also *Zohar* 1:154b; 2:79a, 197a; 3:191b. On the divine son in Jewish mysticism, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 144-52; Idel, *Ben*, especially 403-34.

457. the blessed Holy One The subject of all these verses is God, not any of the prophets adduced above. This applies as well to the double question *What is his name, and what is his son's name?* Here, the name *YHVH Tseva'ot* is used for God, while the name *Israel* refers not only to the people Israel but also to *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, "Beauty of Israel," who is (generally) the son of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*.

Alternatively, since the author of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth rarely refers to *sefirot*, Rabbi Naḥman's qualification here applies only to the previous verses and not to the final question.

458. tree in a field... Having unexpectedly met up in a field, Rabbi Nehorai and Rabbi Yudai sat down to learn Torah together.

On the significance of this type of setting, see above, [note 124](#). "A youth" renders רױק (*ravvaq*), based on *Targum Yonatan* on Isaiah 40:30. See *Hadrat Qodesh; Nitsotsei Zohar*.

459. There is no peace... The standard rabbinic greeting upon meeting is שלום עליכם (*shalom aleikhem*), "peace to you." The youth interprets the verse from Isaiah hyperliterally, to mean that one should not greet the wicked by extending wishes for peace. But when he sees the rabbis' tzitzit (ritual tassels worn on the corners of one's garment), he knows that they are trustworthy. Then he feels safe to offer the proper greeting.

"Wings of commandment" renders כנפי מצוה (*kanfei mitsvah*). The youth construes the noun כנף (*kanaf*), "corner [where the ritual is executed]," in its poetic and metaphorical sense of "wings" that provide protection. Thus the phrase could also be translated as "protection of the commandment" or "commandment corners." The

ensuing homily proceeds to consider the protective qualities of commandments. For the biblical source of the commandment of tzitzit, see Numbers 15:37-41.

On refraining from greeting the wicked, see *Kallah Rabbati* 3; *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. Margalio, par. 51; *Zohar* 1:171b, 205a; 2:23b.

460. It is written מזוזה (*mezuzat*), **doorpost...** In deficient form, without the second ו (vav), the word could be construed in the singular. How could placing a scroll on just one doorpost suffice?

Both the first and second paragraphs of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21) refer to the commandment of mezuzah, while the third paragraph (Numbers 15:37-41) refers to tzitzit.

461. ensconced within commandments... One should always seek the adornment of even a single commandment, because through dedication to constant engagement with Torah study and the performance of commandments, one cleaves to God—eliciting divine protection.

On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1015, n. 445.

462. one on his right and one on his left... One who is occupied with commandments is protected by incremental levels of protection. An angel on the right and the left, representing *Hesed* and *Din*, guard the person once he leaves home. Moreover, God Himself steps into the role of protector.

On a person's two accompanying angels, see BT *Shabbat* 119b, *Ta'anit* 11a, *Hagigah* 16a; *Zohar* 1:12b, 144b, 165b; 2:106b, 239a; 3:52b; *ZH* 47a (*MhN, Rut*). On Psalms 91:11, see *Zohar* 3:262a.

463. blessed Holy One guards him... The mezuzah, bearing the divine name on the outside of the scroll, wards off all harmful forces and ensures that the blessed Holy One watches over those within the house. This answers the

opening question regarding the defective spelling of the word *mezuzot*, written as if it said *mezuzat*, in the singular form: it is the commandment of mezuzah and not merely a particular scroll that provides protection.

A talmudic legend relates that when Onqelos converted to Judaism, the Roman emperor sent a series of contingents of Roman soldiers to bring him back. As described in BT *Avodah Zarah* 11a, on the third attempt (after two contingents were themselves enticed to convert), “they took hold of him; and as they were walking on, he saw the mezuzah that was affixed to the door-frame. He placed his hand on it, saying to them, ‘What is this?’ They replied, ‘Tell us.’ He said, ‘According to universal custom, the mortal king dwells within, and his servants guard him outside; but [in the case of] the blessed Holy One, it is His servants who dwell within—while He guards them outside. This is as is said: *YHVH will guard your going and your coming, now and forever* (Psalms 121:8).’ They converted. [The emperor] sent for him no more.”

See BT *Menaḥot* 43b; *Zohar* 3:76b, 238a (RM), 263b–264a (Piq), 266a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 231; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amey ha-Mizwoth*, 71. In the Geonic period, customs developed to write the names of angels and various obscure divine names on the outer side of the mezuzah, to further ensure protection. The protective uses of the mezuzah became a controversial topic in twelfth- and thirteenth-century halakhic discussions. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillin, Mezuzah, ve-Sefer Torah* 5:4, and *Haggahot Maimoniyot*, ad loc., n. 4; Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh), “Hilkhhot Mezuzah,” 18; Joseph Caro, *Beit Yosef, Yoreh De’ah* 288, s.v. *katav*; Moses Isserles, *Darkhei Moshe*, ad loc., nn. 3–4. See Aptowitzer, “Les Noms de Dieu et des anges dans la Mezouza”; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 146–52; Gordon, “*Mezuzah*: Protective Amulet or Religious Symbol.”

464. לדרתם (*le-dorotam*), **for their generations, written defectively** What is distinctive about the commandments of tzitzit and the Sabbath that leads both of them to be described as rituals to be performed *for their generations*? And, why in both cases is the word לדרתם (*le-dorotam*), *for their generations*, written defectively, without the letter ו (vav)?

In fact, the argument is forced; many commandments that are established for all time are written in this defective form. See Genesis 17:9; Exodus 12:42; 27:21; 30:21; 40:15; Leviticus 17:7; 21:17. Curiously V6, V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, *Or Yaqar*, and the printed text all write out the form לדורותם, which does not appear at all in the Hebrew Bible.

The verse in Numbers concludes: *and place on the tassel of the wing [or: hem, corner] a thread of violet [or: bluish purple].*

465. recital of Shema was established... The ritual reciting of the *Shema* includes Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41, the last one being the passage on tzitzit. Further, according to rabbinic tradition, the body of the Jewish male is comprised of 248 limbs corresponding to the 248 words of the entire *Shema*. But the commandment regarding mezuzah includes only the first two paragraphs of the *Shema*, excluding the passage on tzitzit—apparently rendering the commandment deficient and in need of completion. The individual achieves this rectification by wearing his tasseled garment at his doorway, establishing a union of the tzitzit and the mezuzah.

On the correspondence of human limbs to the words in *Shema*, see above, [note 129](#).

466. blessed Holy One rejoices... This unification leads to delight for God and protection from any harmful demons or angels. The wordplay of *dorotam* and *diratam* indicates that the commandment is fulfilled with encouragement *for their generations* when their dwellings are perfected.

On the mezuzah as offering protection from demons, see David ben Judah he-Ḥasid in *Mar'ot ha-Tsove'ot*, 70: “Therefore a person must make a mezuzah for the doorway of his home, in which is written the Holy Name שדי (Shaddai) with supernal crowns. Then [demons] approach and see written on the mezuzah שד (shin, dalet), and they think it is the name שד (shed), demon. Immediately, they draw closer and reach the Name, and when they see it is שדי (Shaddai), they render honor to the Name of the King. Then they move far away from Him.” See also Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 72.

467. זז מות (zaz mavet), **Death slinks off...** Further proof that harmful forces are driven off lies in the anagram of the word מזוזת (mezuzot), *doorposts*. Its letters can be rearranged to spell זז מות (zaz mavet), “death slinks off.”

On this anagram, see *Tiqqunei Zohar* 22 (66a). On the mezuzah (and tzitzit) as protection from death, see BT *Shabbat* 32b.

468. lamp lit and the table set... The word *le-dorotam* is written defectively, so that it can be read *le-dirotam*. The Sabbath is the bride (*Shekhinah*), but she cannot enter a Jewish home and attain union with the groom (*Tif'eret*), unless the home has been properly prepared. The verse can now be read as לעשות (la'asot), *making, the Sabbath* לדירתם (le-dirotam), *for their dwellings*—through preparing their homes they accommodate the Sabbath.

On the prepared Shabbat home, see BT *Shabbat* 119b (quoted below, [note 470](#)). On the wordplay between *le-dorotam* and *le-dirotam*, see *Zohar* 3:238b (RM).

469. This dwelling is not of Israel... Since the verse from Exodus defines the Jewish observance of the Sabbath as a defining feature of the covenant between God and Israel, if a Jewish home does not demonstrate its commitment overtly, it is deemed outside the nation. Belonging is interpreted explicitly as a result of ritual performance.

470. enwrapped in the commandment... If one is wearing tzitzit and tefillin, he bears the appearance of a perfected Jew, surrounded by commandments. Accordingly, *Shekhinah* and the angels appointed over him all bless him. An accusing angel—who stands ready at all times when a person leaves his home, waiting for a slip in behavior—is ironically compelled to affirm the blessing.

On the two accompanying angels, see BT *Shabbat* 119b, in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Yehudah: “Two ministering angels accompany a person on Sabbath eve from the synagogue to his home, one a good [angel] and one an evil [one]. And when he arrives home and finds the lamp burning, the table laid, and the bed covered with a spread, the good angel exclaims, ‘May it be like this on another Sabbath, too,’ and the evil angel responds unwillingly, ‘Amen.’” See BT *Ta’anit* 11a; *Zohar* 1:12b, 165b; 2:106b; *ZH* 47a (*MhN, Rut*), 48d.

On wearing tzitzit and tefillin, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1161–65. On this ideal comportment with tzitzit and tefillin, see *Zohar* 3:265a; cf. *Devarim Rabbah* 4:4; *Zohar* 2:106b, 199a; 3:52b, 160b; *ZH* 41d. On coercing wicked forces to affirm the righteous, see *Zohar* 1:144b, 165b; cf. 2:106b.

471. Remember and Keep are the essence of the entire Torah... The first version of the Ten Commandments reads: זָכוֹר (*Zakhor*), *Remember, the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Exodus 20:8). The second version reads: שָׁמוֹר (*Shamor*), *Keep, the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Deuteronomy 5:12). According to Kabbalah, *zakhor* alludes to זָכָר (*zakhar*), “male,” signifying the male divine potency, whereas the alternative formulation, *shamor*, signifies the female, *Shekhinah*. Further, *zakhor* implies the 248 positive commandments of Torah (since time-bound positive commandments are generally incumbent only on men), while *shamor* alludes to the 365 negative commandments (incumbent on women as well), together totaling 613 commandments. Since according to

rabbinic tradition the two were spoken simultaneously, constituting a unity, when these two principles are united they comprise the entirety of Torah.

The mezuzah represents *Shekhinah* because of its association with guarding Jews at home and upon departure; further, the opening where the mezuzah is posted is a visual reminder of the feminine *Shekhinah*. However, the scriptural passages written upon the scroll are masculine, and they are contained within the scroll and its housing.

On *remember* and *observe* as being spoken simultaneously, see *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 7; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 20:8; *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 5:12; JT *Nedarim* 3:2, 37d; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 27a.

On *remember* and *observe* as male and female, see *Bahir* 124 (182); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 496-97; Nahmanides on Exodus 20:8; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 420; *Zohar* 1:5b, 47b, 48b, 164b, 199b, 248a; 2:70b, 92a (*Piq*), 92b, 138a, 165b; 3:81b, 92b (*Piq*), 115b, 224a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 118; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 110; Wolfson, introduction to *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 63-71.

On the mezuzah as signifying the feminine, see *Zohar* 3:257a (*RM*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 231; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 72-73, 383. On tzitzit as feminine, see *Zohar* 1:141a; 3:178a (*RM*), 278a (*RM*); *ZH* 42a.

472. When one leaves the gates of his home... When a man wears tefillin and tzitzit, he manifests the masculine and feminine potencies. When he stands at the doorway (signifying the male) with his tzitzit (signifying the female) he has replicated the iconic representation again. Even the mezuzah, on its own, manifests the unity of male and female.

See BT *Menaḥot* 43b: "Our Rabbis taught: 'Beloved are Israel, for the blessed Holy One surrounded them with

mitsvot: tefillin on their heads, tefillin on their arms, tzitzit on their garments, a mezuzah on their door.”

On tzitzit as representing the female, and tefillin as symbolizing the male, see *ZH* 101c (*Tiq*); *TZ* 10 (26a), 70 (130b).

473. Tefillin above... tefillin of the arm... Separately, the tefillin of the head and tefillin of the arm also represent male and female, respectively. The whole ensemble of ritual couture—tefillin and tzitzit—is a manifestation of total unity.

See *Zohar* 1:13b-14a, 168b; 3:269b; *ZH* 64d-65a (*ShS*).

474. who can speak! It would be presumptuous of me to speak in the presence of such great masters of esoteric wisdom.

475. with none other than this verse The book of Ruth should have started here, since the aim of the book is to establish King David’s lineage, and it is only with the introduction of Boaz that the narrative of the genealogy begins.

Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 11; Rashi on Genesis 1:1.

476. Teshuvah *Teshuvah* means “return; turning back to God; repentance.” Without the opportunity of *teshuvah*, humanity would be subject to strict Judgment and the world would be doomed; so surely its creation preceded the world, as a precondition.

See *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3: “Before the world was created, the blessed Holy One and His name alone existed, and the thought arose to create the world. He began to trace the foundations of the world, but it could not stand. They told a parable: ‘To what can this be compared? To a king who wishes to build his palace. If he has not hewn out its foundations in the earth, its exits and its entrances, he does not begin to build. Likewise, the blessed Holy One traced out the plans of the world, but it could not endure until He created *teshuvah*.’”

See BT *Pesaḥim* 54a: “Seven things were created before the world was created: Torah, *teshuvah*, the Garden of Eden, Hell, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4; BT *Nedarim* 39b; *Tanḥuma, Naso* 11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 19; *Midrash Tehillim* 72:6; 90:12; *Midrash Mishlei* 8:9; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 2-3, 96, 98-99, 102-3, 116; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittaḥom*, 410; *Zohar* 1:90a (ST), 134b; 3:34b, 69b; ZH 5a (MhN); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1499-1502. Cf. *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 31, p. 160; *Midrash Tehillim* 93:3; *Zohar* 1:113a (MhN).

477. single pillar... Once *teshuvah* was created, God proceeded to create the world, resting on the foundation of the Righteous One, the *sefirah Yesod*.

See BT *Yoma* 38b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “The world is sustained even for the sake of one righteous one, as is said: *The righteous one is the foundation of the world.*”

The pious formulation כביכול (*ki-v-yakhol*) “as it were,” is an attempt to emphasize the figurative rather than literal understanding of a given statement. Though its use is not rare in the *Zohar*, it feels misplaced in a text whose lyrical power arises from its assertions about how Divinity acts in the world, and may be one of the signs of different authors, or the hands of redactors and scribes. See Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 325-401.

Although the simple sense of the verse is *The righteous one is an everlasting foundation*, it is understood midrashically as *The righteous one is the foundation of the world*. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b; *Bahir* 71 (102); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 34.

478. He created teshuvah... While the righteous one is the foundation for the world, God actually created the world with the light that emanated from *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah*

signifies *Binah*, which emits *Hesed*, the light that extends from one end of the world to the other.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon: “With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One foresaw the corruption of the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, He hid it away from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). Where did He hide it? In the Garden of Eden. *Light is sown for the righteous, joy for the upright in heart* (Psalms 97:11).”

On the hiding away of the first light, see BT *Hagigah* 12a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini*, 9; *Midrash Tehillim* 27:1; *Bahir* 97–98 (147), 106 (160), 131 (190); *Zohar* 1:1a, 7a, 21a, 30b, 31b–32a, 45b–46a, 47a, 59a, 121b (*MhN*), 131a, 203b; 2:35a, 78b, 127a, 147b, 148b–149a, 166b–167a, 220a–b, 224b, 230a; 3:34a–b, 88a, 93a, 225b, 231b; *ZH* 1a, 15a (*MhN*), 66a (*ShS*), 122a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 183; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 140; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

479. another light that emerges from it... The world could not be sustained by a light that was hidden away, but rather it is maintained primarily by *Yesod*, the light that emerges from the concealed light.

See BT *Yoma* 38b, in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “Even for the sake of a single righteous one was the world created, as is said: *God saw the light, that it was good* (Genesis 1:4). And there is no good other than the righteous one, as is said, *Say of the righteous one that he is good* (Isaiah 3:10).”

480. seed of David... was planted... The entire lineage of King David was initiated from *Yesod*, represented by Boaz, the righteous one. This is alluded to in the cited verse from Psalms, which says *Seed* עֲבֹדָנוּ (*ya’avdennu*), *shall serve Him*, an allusion to the name of Boaz’s son, עֹבֵד (*oved*),

Obed. His progeny was Jesse, who in turn fathered David. Further, the entire royal House of David would also be derived from this line, originating in Righteous One. Since David signifies *Malkhut*, the generative flow from Boaz to David manifests the divine intimacy between *Yesod* and *Malkhut*.

On the planting of the righteous, see Psalms 92:13-16: *The righteous one flourishes like a palm tree, like a cedar in Lebanon he grows. Planted in the house of YHVH, in the courts of our God they flourish. They bear fruit still in old age, full of sap and fresh they are, to tell that YHVH is upright, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.* See also Psalms 1:3. See BT *Yoma* 38b: “YHVH saw that the righteous were few, so he planted them in every generation.” See also *Bereshit Rabbah* 26; *Midrash Tehillim* on 92:14.

The simple meaning of the verse from Proverbs is: *YHVH made everything for its purpose.*

481. there had been another... This enigmatic statement appears to refer to the rabbinic teaching that God originally created other worlds and destroyed them. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:2: “*Everything He has made appropriate in its time* (Ecclesiastes 3:11)... Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘From here we learn that the blessed Holy One kept creating worlds and destroying them, until He created these [i.e., heaven and earth]. Then He declared, “These please Me; those do not.”’”

The theme of previous worlds that did not endure is developed in the *Idrot* and inspired Isaac Luria’s theory of “the breaking of the vessels.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:7; *Qohelet Rabbah* and *Qohelet Zuta* on 3:11; *Midrash Tehillim* 34:1; *Shemot Rabbah* 30:3; *Zohar* 1:29a, 154b, 223b; 2:34b, 176b (*SdTs*); 3:128a (*IR*), 135a-b (*IR*), 142a (*IR*), 292a-b (*IZ*); *ZH* 2d (*MhN*); Vol. 5, p. 546, n. 4; Liebes, “Ha-Mashiah shel ha-Zohar,” 219-21; idem, *Studies in the Zohar*, 65-68, 134-35, 155-56; Meroz, “Requimato shel Mito,” 182-83. Cf. Origen, *De Principiis*, 3:5:3.

482. new-ancient words... These words have never been spoken before, but they express the most ancient truths.

The *Zohar* frequently employs the paradoxical phrase “new-ancient words” to signify simultaneously the novel interpretations that its authorship evokes, and the esoteric assertion that the secrets being revealed have always been latent within the biblical text. See, e.g., *Zohar* 1:243a; 2:183b; 3:166b, 168a, 171b, 197b; *ZH* 69b, 70d (both from *ShS*); Daniel Matt, “New Ancient Words.”

483. I shall tell you afterward Even my identity is esoteric and cannot be revealed immediately.

See *Zohar* 1:87a, 149a, 207a; 2:16b (*MhN*), 157a, 187b; 3:39b, 75b, 158a; *ZH* 11c (*MhN*).

484. sashed, exalted, enduring rungs... Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz signify *Shekhinah*, *Binah*, and *Yesod*, respectively. Ruth’s son Obed and the entire Davidic line emerges from the nexus of these three figures.

“Sashed” renders *qumrin*—the plural of *qamar*, “sash, belt, cummerbund, girdle,” presumably adorned to signify a social position of distinction. See BT *Horayot* 13b and Rashi, s.v. *nahei de’ahanei* and *qamara*; *Tosafot* on *Shabbat* 59b, s.v. *a-avnet shel melakhim*; *Arukh*, s.v. *qmr*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

485. Who is נַעֲמִי (no’am), kindness... The sequencing in the verse indicates the hierarchy that inheres between Naomi and Ruth, and the *sefirot* that they represent. The name נַעֲמִי (*Na’omi*), “Naomi,” derives from the common noun נַעֲמִי (*no’am*), “kindness”—here symbolizing *Binah*, also associated with *Teshuvah* (Repentance) and with World that is Coming. *His palace* signifies *Malkhut*, the lower world.

On “Kindness of *YHVH*” and World that is Coming, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:4; *Zohar* 1:197b, 219a; 2:31b, 57b, 127a, 170b; 3:161b.

The full verse reads: *One thing I ask of YHVH, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of YHVH all the*

days of my life—to gaze on the beauty of YHVH, and to contemplate His palace (Psalms 27:4).

486. Ruth... saturating... Ruth signifies the lower world, *Malkhut*, represented in the verse by *His palace*, ideally engaged in the continual praise of Her lover above. The letters of רוּת (*rut*) are reversed, yielding תור (*tor*), “turtledove.” In rabbinic literature, “Assembly of Israel” denotes the people of Israel. In the *Zohar*, Assembly of Israel can refer to the earthly community but also (often primarily) to *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine counterpart of the people, the aspect of God most intimately connected with them. Just as the turtledove’s call is distinctive, so is the quality of praise that comes from Assembly of Israel. Further wordplay offers a different vocalization of the letters תור, yielding *tur*, which refers to awakening or arousal. Thus *Shekhinah*’s praise is unique not only in its ability to arouse the divine Male, but also as an expression of the superior quality of Jewish prayer.

On the wordplay with Ruth’s name, see BT *Berakhot* 7b: “What is the meaning of *Rut*? Rabbi Yoḥanan said that she had the privilege that David—who inundated the blessed Holy One with songs and praises—would descend from her. From where do we know that a name determines destiny? Rabbi El’azar said, ‘For Scripture states: *Go, gaze upon the acts of YHVH, who has brought שְׁמוֹת (shammot), desolation, on earth* (Psalms 46:9). Do not read שְׁמוֹת (*shammot*), *desolation*, but rather שְׁמוֹת (*shemot*), *names*.’”

“Praise of arousal” renders בשבחה תור (*be-shavḥa tur*), following MS4 and V24. The verb *tur* means literally “to awaken,” but the author (or a scribe) appears to have chosen this form to enhance the wordplay. The printed text has יתיר (*yatir*), “abundant,” while O17, L39, and *Or Yaqar* all omit the word.

On Ruth and the turtledove, see *ZH* 75b, 78b (both *MhN, Rut*). On *Shekhinah*’s continuous praise to Her lover above, see *ZH* 62b, 63b (both *ShS*).

487. two calls as one... The turtledove and Assembly of Israel are similar also in having two components to their praise. The turtledove's call has two parts, one of a higher pitch, the other lower. *Shekhinah* sings in two directions simultaneously: above to *Binah*, and below to the people of Israel. The psalmist beseeches God twice, signifying the two directions. The simultaneity of *Shekhinah's* song emphasizes the harmonious love above and below.

In nature, the male turtledove's territorial and courtship call is a series of mournful cooing notes, with the second note stressed and higher in pitch than the other.

488. Boaz... The name בועז (*Bo'az*) implies בו עוז (*bo oz*), "in him is strength." Through his triumph over his sexual impulse, Boaz attained the rung of *Yesod*, known as Righteous One.

According to rabbinic tradition, Boaz was tempted to have intercourse with Ruth, but he overcame his sexual impulse by adjuring it. See *Rut Rabbah* 6:4: "Rabbi Yose said, 'There were three who were attacked by their impulse but girded themselves against it with an oath: Joseph, David, and Boaz.' ... How do we know this concerning Boaz? Because it is said: *By YHVH's life! Lie down until morning* (Ruth 3:13)... Rabbi Yehudah said, 'That whole night his impulse incited him, saying, "You are single, looking for a wife; and she is single, looking for a husband. Go have intercourse with her—and she will be your wife!" He adjured his impulse, saying, "As YHVH lives, I will not touch her!" And to the woman he said, *Lie down until morning.*'"

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 88; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 33; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:11; BT *Sanhedrin* 19b; *Zohar* 2:104a; 3:280 (*RM*); *TZ* 31 (75b).

489. a redeemer closer than he... If Boaz signifies *Yesod*, how could there be a redeemer closer than he, since normally *Yesod* unites with *Shekhinah*? The explanation is that since the righteous one, representing *Yesod*, is referred to as

good, he can be compared to another *sefirah*, *Hesed*, that is also called *good*, as demonstrated by the verse from Genesis. Therefore, Boaz explains, there is *good*, closer—that is, with greater claim—that can redeem Ruth. The youth reads the verse from Ruth hyperliterally, yielding *good will redeem*; that is, a prior *good*—*Hesed*—will redeem.

In their simple sense, the verses from Ruth read: *But while it is true I am a redeemer, there is [another] redeemer closer than I. Stay for the night. Then in the morning, if he will redeem you—good, let him redeem! But if he does not want to redeem you—I myself will redeem you, as YHVH lives! Lie down until morning.*

According to rabbinic tradition, Elimelech had a brother whose name was Good; and thus Boaz specifically identified that other redeemer. See *Rut Rabbah* 6:3.

490. King who possesses Peace... The man referenced in the verse—Boaz—symbolizes *Yesod*. As such, he stands in direct relationship to Naomi, as described in the phrase “the King who possesses Peace,” whose elements signify *Binah* and *Yesod*, respectively. Consequently, the verse should not state that Boaz was known to Elimelech, but rather to Naomi!

See BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim’on son of Ḥalafta refers to the phallus as “peacemaker of the home.”

On the sefirotic associations of Elimelech and Naomi, see above, [note 6](#). On the phrase “the King who possesses peace,” see *Sifra, Shemini, Millu’im*, 15, 44c; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:2, 3; *Shemot Rabbah* 52:5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* on 1:5; 3:9, 11; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* on 3:9, 11; *Tanḥuma, Naso* 9; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Pequdei* 8; *Naso* 16; *Bereshit Rabbati, Va-Yḥi* on 48:22, 230; *Zohar* 1:5b, 29a, 184a, 226b, 248b; 2:5a (*MhN*), 14a (*MhN*), 127b, 132a–b, 143b–144b, 145b, 164a; 3:10b, 20a, 60a, 73b, 284b; *ZḤ* 62a (*ShS*), 87c (*MhN, Rut*).

491. World that is Coming receives delight... The apparently contradictory pairings, as delineated in Ruth 2:1 and the expression “the King who possesses Peace,” can be harmonized when one understands that Boaz stands in relation to Ruth in an analogous manner to Elimelech’s standing in relation to Naomi. Thus, Boaz (Righteous One) is *known to* Elimelech (*Hokhmah*, called Thought here) and “knows of him” insofar as he provides delight to the Lower King (*Malkhut*), just as Elimelech provides it to the Upper King (*Binah*).

492. absorb all delight of the body... The name בועז (*Bo’az*) implies בו עוז (*bo oz*), “in him is strength,” namely a strength within *Yesod* to draw down all the delight within *Tif’eret*, signified by “the body.” It then conveys that divine overflow—consisting of the souls of the Davidic dynasty, their spiritual grandeur, and the commandments of the Torah—to *Shekhinah*.

“The body” is identified with different locations throughout the *Zohar*. It stands for the heavenly treasure-house of unborn souls located in the Garden of Eden, or for *Shekhinah* as the point from which souls emerge, or for *Tif’eret*.

See BT *Yevamot* 62a, in the name of Rabbi Assi: “The Son of David [i.e., the Messiah] will not come until all souls in the body have been depleted.”

On *Bo’az* as *bo oz*, see *Zohar* 2:104a. “Living eternally” renders חַי לְעֵלְמִין (*hai le-almin*), commonly representing *Yesod*. See *Zohar* 1:135b, 167b, 193b, 207b, 211b; 2:138a, 245b; Moses de León, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 21; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 49 (60), 55–56 (68); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381.

493. entire basis for this scroll... Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth This answers the opening question regarding the relevance of the first two chapters of the book of Ruth. Why begin with Elimelech and his family? To illustrate the interconnections from *Hokhmah*, represented by Elimelech, all the way down to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by Ruth.

494. Enoch walked with God... Enoch was taken before his time because of his holy stature. Gradually, he was elevated to the rank of chief angel, Prince of the Presence.

The verse's enigmatic wording probably reflects a fuller narrative that was expurgated. In postbiblical literature the statement was understood as alluding to Enoch's miraculous ascension alive to heaven, where he learned God's mysteries and was transformed into the angel Metatron, the "youth." His journey is recorded in the pseudepigraphic Enoch literature.

On Enoch and his transformation into Metatron, see 3 Enoch 4:1-10; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 5:24; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 5:24; BT *Yevamot* 16b; *Tosafot* on *Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh*; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva A* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:354-55); *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:12; *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva ha-Shalem*, 451-52; Ibn Ezra on Psalms 73:24, 101:2; *Zohar* 1:37b, 56b, 223b; 2:179a (*SdT*); 3:83b (*Piq*), 217b; *ZH* 42d-43a, 69b (*ShS*); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:156-64, nn. 58-61; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 73-108; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 626-32; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377-81; Idel, "Enoch is Metatron"; idem, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, 74-104; idem, *Ben*, 645-70; Alexander, "From Son of Adam to a Second God: Transformation of the Biblical Enoch"; Mopsik, *Le Livre hebreu de Henoch*, 44-58; Abrams, "Boundaries of Divine Ontology"; Wolfson, "Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah," 64-68, 77-92; Yisraeli, "Aliyyatam shel Hanokh ve-Eliyahu."

495. extracting her... Like Enoch, plucked out of one realm to attain a higher rank, so too is Ruth selected for a higher purpose: matriarch of the Davidic, and thus messianic, line.

496. The blessed Holy One established Enoch's role... Enoch is raised up to a position of intimacy with God. He is crowned to indicate that he was a paragon of human nature.

In the Masoretic text of Deuteronomy 22 (discussing various situations in which a maiden's virginity is impacted) the word נוער (*na'ara*), *maiden*, is spelled without the final ה (*he*), which the youth here interprets as a scribal act intended to honor Metatron, called נוער (*na'ar*), "Youth."

On Metatron's being named *na'ar*, see below, [note 498](#). On נוער (*na'ara*) and נוערה (*na'arah*), see BT *Ketubbot* 40b; *Zohar* 1:51a; 2:38b; 3:156b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 115; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 43 (51); *Minḥat Shai* on Deuteronomy 22:19.

The following passages until the middle of 87c, are missing in the majority of manuscripts, as well as Thiengen and Venice. V22, *Or Yaqar*, and the standard edition all have versions of the following material.

497. his rule is from two sides... Metatron distinctively intersects the boundaries between *sefirot*, angels, and humanity. He was a human being who was transformed into an angel. As chief angel or "Angel of the Presence," he stands at the nexus of *sefirot* and angelic realms. From above he takes divine overflow to benefit the lower worlds; from below he takes human prayers, conducting them above.

See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 28:12; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

498. Ḥanokh la-na'ar, Enoch into Youth... The youth teaching the homily reads the verse hyperliterally: the verb *ḥanokh* literally means *train*, but here it is taken as well as a reference to the human *Ḥanokh*, "Enoch," who was trained (or: transformed) into *Na'ar*, a *youth*, one of the names of Metatron. He was elevated because of his exemplary conduct on earth.

On Metatron as *na'ar*, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 42-43 (51); Idel, *Ben*, 130-33, 135-36, 147.

499. I have been נוער (na'ar), Youth... Metatron ages, yet he is continually rejuvenated, to fulfill his role of conducting blessing down to the world.

On the declaration by the Prince of the World, see BT *Yevamot* 16b in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World: *I have been a youth; I have also been old* (Psalms 37:25). Who said it? If you suggest it was the blessed Holy One, does old age pertain to Him? So David must have said it. But was he so old? Rather you must conclude that the Prince of the World uttered it.”

See *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva A* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:354); *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:12; *Tosafot* on *Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *pasuq zeh*; *Zohar* 1:95b, 124b-125a, 126a-b (*MhN*), 143a, 162a, 179b, 181b, 223b; 2:66a, 143a, 164a, 169b; *ZḤ* 69b (*ShS*).

[500.](#) **the lion itself** A reference to the young kabbalist.

[501.](#) **Yeisa the Younger...** He is like Metatron, called Youth—bearing wisdom beyond his years. On Rabbi Yeisa’s young age, see *Zohar* 1:162a; 2:79b, 153a; *ZḤ* 31a.

[502.](#) **nestled in the fragrant dust...** See *M Avot* 1:4, in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Yo’ezer: “Let your house be a meeting-house for the sages; sit amid the dust of their feet, and drink in their words with thirst.”

[503.](#) **their Torah travels...** The mystical wisdom that originated with Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai had traveled a great distance, transmitted by the youth. Members of the kabbalistic fraternity, designated as “pillars of the world,” are even more intimidating to the angels than ordinary scholars.

The contention about the sages’ superiority to the angels on high appears to be a mild retort to the child’s emphasis on the great stature of Enoch, who transcended his humanity to become an angel. For Rabbi Nehorai, one need not abandon one’s humanity to achieve greatness on high.

On scholars’ lips murmuring in the grave, see above, [note 425](#). On the superiority of scholars to angels, see BT *Sanhedrin* 93a, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “The

righteous are greater than the ministering angels, as is said: *He answered, 'But I see four men unbound, walking about in the midst of the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a divine being'* (Daniel 3:25)." Rashi explains that the angel is mentioned last because it is the least of the four. See *ZH* 26a.

504. blessed Holy One decrees—and he annuls... A voice emerges from heaven, banishing the destructive forces that brought the plague, and adjuring that it be banished from Lydda and from anywhere it could travel. This illustrates the principle that a righteous person can abolish God's harsh decrees.

See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 16b, where Rabbi Abbahu quotes God as saying: "I rule over humanity. Who rules over Me? The righteous one. For I issue a decree and he abolishes it."

See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 33:1; *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tavo* 1; *Devarim Rabbah* 10:3; *Shemot Rabbah* 15:20; *Zohar* 1:10a, 45b (*Heikh*); 2:15a (*MhN*), 262a (*Heikh*); 3:242a. Cf. BT *Shabbat* 63a, *Bava Metsi'a* 85a; *Rut Zuta* 2:19; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:6; *Zohar* 1:209a; 3:68a.

On the special status of Rabbi Shim'on, see BT *Sukkah* 45b; *Zohar* 1:218a, 223a; 2:15a (*MhN*), 38a, 97b; 3:59b-61b, 71b, 79b, 132b (*IR*), 159a, 206a, 241b, 296b (*IZ*); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 1-84; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 31-61; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi'a*, 11-42.

"Camel saddles" renders עביתתא (*aviteta*), probably derived from the word עביטא (*avita*). See *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 31:34; JT *Bava Qamma* 10:6, 7c; BT *Bava Qamma* 115a.

505. greater than Moses Boaz Huss has argued that Moses, when compared negatively to Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai, is a cipher for Moses Nahmanides. See Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi'a*, 38-42.

506. Moses had to expend all this effort... Rabbi Me'ir adds to Rabbi Nehorai's observation that while

Moses had to supervise a complex incense offering to cease the plague, Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai simply declares that it must disappear.

507. Ruth was fit Rabbi Yeisa the Younger returns to his previous discussion, affirming that Ruth was worthy of joining the Jewish people. Cf. Scholem.

508. her suitability was not apparent... When Ruth reports to Naomi about her conversation with Boaz, she is described as *Ruth the Moabite*, an appellation that had not been used recently, but was renewed apparently because she still lacked some probity and discretion. Boaz had invited Ruth to join together with his נערות (*na'arot*), "young women," who were harvesting, but Ruth apparently misreports this invitation in relating it to Naomi, referring instead to the נערים (*na'arim*), *youths*, the young men in the fields. Naomi prudently corrects Ruth's (possibly youthful) misinterpretation.

See *Rut Rabbah* 5:11: "*Ruth the Moabite said, 'He even told me, "Stay close by my young men'"* (Ruth 2:21). Rabbi Hanin son of Levi said, 'Truly, she was a Moabite, for Boaz said to her, *Stick here close to my maidens* (ibid., 8), while she said *by my young men.*"

In the biblical story, both Boaz and Naomi may be concerned with Ruth's welfare and safety in urging her to cling to the young women, whereas it is possible that Ruth, knowing that greater gleaning opportunities may be available to the men, noted that Boaz gave her the opportunity to align herself with them (2:9, 15). On Ruth's restatement in verse 21, see Eleazar of Worms; Zakovitch; Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

The context in MT (Ruth 2:8-9) actually reads: *Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Don't go to glean in another field and don't go away from here, but stick here close to my maidens. Let your eyes be on the field they are reaping, and follow after them. I have ordered the young men not to harm you. And if you are thirsty, go to the*

vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.” On discrepancies between the *Zohar*’s citation of verses and those in MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

509. Don’t go to glean in another field... Boaz warns Ruth about the dangers of the fields of others, referring to other religions or men of other nations. But Ruth’s choices were already informed by holiness—as evinced by her having told Naomi *Let me go to the field*, signifying *Shekhinah*, called Field of Apples, and also called Faith. Clearly, she was righteous even before she met Boaz!

The image of the apple orchard derives from an interpretation of the verse in Genesis. See BT *Ta’anit* 29b, in the name of Rav: “*Like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH...—Like the fragrance of a field of apple trees.*”

On the image of the field and on *Shekhinah* as a field or apple orchard, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 10, 22; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:11; 7:9; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35–37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 85a–b, 122a, 128b, 139a, 141b, 142b–143b, 224b, 249b; 2:39a–b, 48b, 60b, 61b, 84b, 127b; 3:74a, 84a, 95a, 133b (*IR*), 135b (*IR*), 202b, 286b–287a, 288a (*IZ*), 292b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 4.

510. What is the meaning of... as it happened... In the story of Balaam, the verbal root *yqr* implies impurity, so how can it be applied to a worthy woman such as Ruth? The explanation is that the term is pointed slightly differently, so as to indicate an alternate meaning: “glory” (or “honor, preciousness”).

On *va-yiqqar* as signifying impurity, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 52:5: “What is the difference between the prophets of Israel and those of other nations? Rabbi Ḥama son of Rabbi Ḥanina said, ‘The blessed Holy One reveals Himself to the prophets of other nations with half-speech only, as is said: *God encountered Balaam* (Numbers 23:4).’ Rabbi Issachar of Kefar Mandi said, ‘The term *va-yiqqar* signifies only

impurity, as is said: [*Should there be among you a man who becomes impure through*] a מקרה לילה (*miqreh lailah*), *nocturnal mishap* (Deuteronomy 23:11). But to the prophets of Israel He speaks with complete speech, in terms of love and holiness, with language in which the ministering angels praise Him, as is said: וקרא (*ve-qara*), [*Seraphs*] *called, to one another, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is YHVH of hosts* (Isaiah 6:3).” The *Zohar’s* formulation here derives from Rashi on Numbers 23:4.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:13; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayishlah* 24; *Zohar* 3:210a; Epstein, *Torah Temimah* on Ruth 2:3.

The unusual formulation *va-yiqer miqreha, as it happened*, denotes serendipity or happenstance, but it can also imply divine providence. See Genesis 24:11; 27:20; Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky. The simple reading of the verse from Numbers is *God encountered Balaam*.

511. field of the righteous... The “reapers of the field” are the Companions, who harvest secrets of Torah sprouting in the field of *Shekhinah*. Ruth went there to learn its mysteries.

See *Zohar* 1:156a (*ST*), 216a; 2:37a, 79b, 85b, 240b, 258a (*Heikh*); 3:106a, 127b, 141b, 143a, 144a (last four, *IR*), 214b, 297a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 175–76, n. 99.

512. Great Sanhedrin above... These reapers are the seventy angels who surround and are nourished by the Field, *Shekhinah*. They are the heavenly princes who oversee the nations of the world—and are called Great Sanhedrin because each group comprises seventy members. Boaz signifies *Yesod*; his greeting conveys blessing from YHVH (the divine name representing *Tif’eret*) and from the other *sefirot* above, to the heavenly princes and nations below. The angels’ blessing in response empowers *Yesod* to elicit blessing from *Binah*, symbolized by World that is Coming.

On the seventy heavenly princes, see Daniel 10:13, 20-21; Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8-9; Jubilees 15:31; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 11:8, Deuteronomy 32:8-9; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 24; *Leqah Tov*, Genesis 9:19; *Zohar* 1:46b, 61a, 113a (*MhN*), 149b, 177a; 2:16b (*MhN*), 46b, 95b-96a, 126b, 186b-187a, 209a-b, 232b; 3:260b-261a, 298b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:204-5, n. 91.

513. he inquired after her... He asked about the *Shekhinah* and Her condition; perhaps he also reminded the other heavenly powers that She is the consort to *YHVH* alone.

514. This scroll alludes... World that is Coming signifies *Binah*; and She arouses *Yesod* with the Written Torah, alluding to *Tif'eret*. This arousal leads *Yesod* to bond with Oral Torah, representing *Shekhinah*. This is the secret of the Scroll of Ruth: the three main characters—Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth—represent the three *sefirot* involved in the divine union above. As a result of this description of unity of Written and Oral Torah comprised within the book of Ruth, the rabbis established that it should be read on Shavu'ot, marking the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

On the reading of Ruth on Shavu'ot, see *Masekhet Sofrim* 14:16.

בוצינא קדישא (*Botsina Qaddisha*), “the Holy Lamp,” is the title of Rabbi Shim'on. See *Zohar* 1:3b-4a, 156a, 197b, 217a, 235b-236a; 2:4a, 31a, 123b, 127b, 149a-150a, 160b, 162a, 189b-190b, 200a-b, 203b, 204b, 210b, 223b; 3:7b, 25b, 31a, 61a-62a, 100b, 106a, 159a, 166b, 171a, 173b, 197a, 214b-215a, 217b, 220b, 234a, 240a, 275b, 291b (*IZ*), 296b (*IZ*), 298a, 299b; *ZH* 59c; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 137, 139-40. Cf. 2 Samuel 21:17; *Bereshit Rabbah* 85:4; BT *Ketubbot* 17a, where Rabbi Abbahu is called בוצינא דנהורא (*Botsina di-Nhora*), “Lamp of Light”; *Berakhot* 28b, where Rabban Yoḥanan son of Zakkai is called נר ישראל (*Ner Yisra'el*), “Lamp of Israel”; and *Zohar* 1:6a, where *Botsina Qaddisha* designates Rav Hamnuna Sava.

515. don't be aroused by another kingdom... *Yesod* admonishes *Shekhinah*, represented by Boaz and Ruth, respectively, that She should remain steadfast in Her attachment to the *sefirot*, and not be enticed by a demonic power. Jacob's action of separating the flocks was a careful segregation of holiness from impurity. So She should not abandon the "chariots" and "crowns" reserved for Her—probably referring to the Torah and its commandments. Alternatively, Boaz counsels Ruth to avoid the temptations of foreign religions and foreign people.

On Jacob's separation of the flocks, see *ZH* 68a (*ShS*).

516. khoh... When Boaz says *Stick close* כה (*khoh*), he means *Stick close with khoh*, the *Shekhinah*. Similarly, while the simple meaning of the verse in Psalms is *Your devoted ones* יברכוכה (*yevarekhukha*), *will bless you*, Rabbi Yeisa construes the superfluous final *heh* as significant, interpreting the verse to mean *Your devoted ones yevarekhu khoh, will bless khoh* [i.e., they will bless *Shekhinah*].

See BT *Sotah* 38a: "כה (*koh*), *Thus, shall you bless the children of Israel* (Numbers 6:23)—with the Ineffable Name. You say that it means with the tetragrammaton; but perhaps the intent is to use a כנוי (*kinnui*), cognomen [i.e., pronounced *Adonai*]. Scripture says, *They shall set My name [upon the People of Israel]* (ibid., 27)—My name that is unique to Me."

On *koh*, "here, thus, so," as a name of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:90b, 96a, 152b, 174b; 2:23b, 37b, 139b; 3:145b-146a, 148a, 264b; *Gikatilla, Sha'arei Orah*, 12a-13a. On the verse in Psalms, see *Zohar* 2:79b, 139b, 3:146a, 264b, 267a; *ZH* 1c (*SO*).

517. קו המדה (Qav ha-Middah), Ray of Measurement... The *Qav ha-Middah* is the instrument used by God to regulate the divine overflow for the *sefirot*. Boaz's gift to Ruth, signifying the allotment of Divinity from the six central *sefirot*—*Hesed* to *Yesod*—to *Shekhinah*, enables her to return to Naomi, representing *Binah*, World that is Coming. In order

for *Shekhinah* to reunite with *Binah*, She must be endowed with holy influx from above, as signified by the “presents and gifts.”

The term קו המדה (*qav ha-middah*), *the measuring line*, appears in Jeremiah 31:39, in a description of the future rebuilding of Jerusalem. In Kabbalah, *Qav ha-Middah* is the luminous, invisible, divine instrument that maps out the paths and stages of emanation: measuring, giving scale, shape, light, and color to the *sefirot* below.

On the *Qav ha-Middah*, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 89–90; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 113; *Zohar* 1:15a, 18a–b; 2:233a–b, 258a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 31c, 33a–d, 56d–58d (the section called *Qav ha-Middah*); *TZ* 18, 37b. In *Qav ha-Middah* 57a, 58b, and *TZ* 18, 37b, *the measuring line* is identified with the Lamp (or Spark) of Adamantine Darkness, whereas elsewhere *qav ha-middah* emerges from it. On the whole, the subject is quite enigmatic, and Cordovero comments that “even basic understanding is elusive.” See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 4:7.

The literal meaning of שש שעורים (*shesh se'orim*) is “six barleys,” but since that is so miniscule an amount, traditional and modern commentators interpret it to mean “six measures of barley,” specifically *se'ahs*, amounting to 58–95 pounds. See Targum; Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

518. Lift up your heads, שעורים (*se'orim*), O [measures of] barley... The verse in Psalms continues: *Be lifted up, openings of eternity! So the King of Glory may come.* All six measures of barley are called upon to prepare for the *King of Glory*, signified by Ruth. Boaz places six measures of barley upon Ruth, alluding to *Yesod's* conveyance of divine overflow from the lower six *sefirot* (*Hesed* to *Yesod*) to *Shekhinah*. Then *Shekhinah* is fully the *kallah*, “Bride,” a term signifying Her ability to embrace blessing from all six sides.

In its simple meaning, the verse in Psalms reads: *Lift up your heads*, שַׁעֲרִים (*she'arim*), *O gates!* Yeisa the Younger's revocalization turns the *she'arim* into *se'orim*, [*measures of*] *barley*.

519. יְהִי (*yehi*), ***Let there be...*** After *Shekhinah* has received blessings from all six *sefirot*, conveyed by *Yesod*, She receives a supplemental blessing from *Binah*, called World that is Coming. That blessing consists of the word יְהִי (*yehi*), *Let there be*. *Binah* identifies *the one who noticed Shekhinah* as *Barukh*, one of the names of King Solomon who, like Boaz, symbolizes *Yesod*.

Binah's blessing—*yehi*—alludes to the entire stream of emanation, from the primordial point of *Hokhmah*, symbolized by the first ך (*yod*), through *Shekhinah*, symbolized here by the second ך (*yod*). The potent command, יְהִי (*yehi*), “Let there be,” appears three times in the opening chapter of Genesis, in connection with the creation of the “expanse”; the sun, moon, and stars; and the primordial light of the first day. The potency of creation is now transplanted here.

Since the passive participle *barukh*, normally translated as *blessed*, can also be a name, Yeisa the Younger suggests that it could be interpreted as part of King Solomon's name: “King Solomon Barukh.” Once *Yesod* has this name, it can be conferred upon *Shekhinah* as well.

The simple meaning of the verses in Ruth is: *She carried it and proceeded to town. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and she took out and gave her what she had left over after eating* שְׂבֵעָה (*sov'ah*), *her fill*. *Her mother-in-law asked her, 'Where did you glean today? And how did you accomplish it? May the one who noticed you be blessed*. Here, revocalization transmutes (*sov'ah*), *her fill*, into שְׂבֵעָה (*shiv'ah*), *seven*, signifying the seven *sefirot* below *Binah*—*Hesed* through *Shekhinah*.

On *yehi*, see *Zohar* 1:16b, 232b; 2:177a (*SdT*s). On *Barukh* as one of King Solomon's names, see *ZH* 67a (*ShS*), 87c

(*MhN, Rut*). On the phrase “the King who possesses peace,” see above, [note 490](#).

520. cleave perpetually to the youths... *Shekhinah's* desire is to stay close to the holy beings below Her. *Sullam* and *Matoq mi-Devash* identify these angelic beings as Metatron and Sandalfon.

The association of cherubim and youths derives from BT *Sukkah* 5b: “What is כְּרוּב (*keruv*), cherub? Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘כְּרַבִּיא (*Ke-ravya*), Like a child, for in Babylon they call a child רַבִּיא (*ravya*).’”

On the childlike cherubim, see BT *Hagigah* 13b; *Zohar* 1:1b, 18b, 172a, 228b; 2:176a, 278a; 3:60b, 217b, 274a; *ZH* 43c. (The plump childlike angels of Christian art conceivably derive from the Talmudic tradition, but more likely from the Greco-Roman *Erotes*, “loves,” winged boys in the company of Aphrodite.)

521. You might say she spoke falsely... When Boaz told Ruth to *stick close* כֹּה (*khoh*), *here, to my maidens*, he addressed her with the name *khoh*, but that name is applicable only when *Shekhinah* is perfectly arrayed, which occurs when She adheres to two cherubim. When She is aligned above them, She can receive the blessings of the twenty-five letters of *Shema*—twenty-five also being the numerical value (*gimatriyyah*) of the name כֹּה (*khoh*), *here*. It is only then that *Shekhinah* can cleave to the *maidens*, perhaps signifying chariots below.

On the twenty-five letters of *Shema*, see *Zohar* 2:139b; *ZH* 91c (*MhN, Eikhah*). On *koh* as a name of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:90b, 96a, 152b, 174b; 2:23b, 37b, 79b, 143b; 3:145b–146a; *Gikatilla, Sha'arei Or*, 12a–13a.

522. he showed her cherubim... The demonstrative זֶה (*zeh*), *this*, suggests that Boaz actually pointed at something when instructing Ruth—namely the cherubim. He admonishes her that at all times she should stay connected to one of these two (without specifying which one). This is like the ancient teaching in the Book of Adam that the

Shekhinah would always retain Her connection to one of the two cherubim. Thus, Ruth correctly understands that she should cling to *the youths* and to *the maidens*, signifying the cherubim and chariots, respectively.

According to various medieval traditions, the angel Raziel transmitted a magical book to Adam. Later, probably in the seventeenth century, *Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh* (the Book of the Angel Raziel) was compiled in its present form, comprising ancient magical, mystical, and cosmological teachings. This book is not to be confused with the Book of Adam in the Apocrypha. Note the comment by Shim'on Lavi, *Ketem Paz*, 1:22d: "All such books mentioned in the *Zohar*... have been lost in the wanderings of exile.... Nothing is left of them except what is mentioned in the *Zohar*."

On the pair of cherubim connected to the Temple, see ZH 43a-b. On the use of the demonstratives *zeh* and *zot* in rabbinic and kabbalistic literature, see Rojtman, "Sacred Language and Open Text." On the disappearance of one of the cherubim, see *Zohar* 3:162a; ZH 92d (*MhN, Eikhah*).

On the Book of Adam, see BT *Bava Metsi'a* 85b-86a, *Sanhedrin* 38b, *Avodah Zarah* 5a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:1; *Zohar* 1:17b, 37a-b, 55a-b, 58b, 72b, 90b, 227b; 2:70a-b, 70a-b (*RR*), 77a, 131a, 143b, 180a, 181a, 197a; 3:10a, 68b; ZH 16d (*MhN*), 37b; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:117-18, n. 110; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 85-87; idem, *Pulhan ha-Shahar*, 66-77.

523. ripe for interpretation... The verse can be interpreted homiletically, but the kabbalistic meaning is that Boaz is referring to God's "eyes"—angelic beings *ranging over the whole earth*. Boaz encourages Ruth to follow them to acquire heavenly wisdom.

The scriptural citation is a conflation of the verse from Zechariah and a nearly identical phrase from 2 Chronicles 16:9. In describing God's providential eyes, the prophet Zechariah employs a masculine verb, whereas Chronicles

employs a feminine verb—and the *Zohar* often interprets these as two separate forces.

On God's angelic eyes, see *Zohar* 1:241a; 2:38b, 107a, 108a (*ST*); 3:76a. On discrepancies between MT and biblical citations, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

524. never abates... The cherubim always long to derive divine nourishment from *Shekhinah*; but when She attends to humanity below, they are constrained from approaching Her.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *That you may suckle and be sated from her breast of consolation, that you may draw from her bosom, and delight from her glory's gleam.*

525. suckle from the mystery of the upper world... When *Shekhinah* directs Her attention toward *Binah*—which is called “upper world” and also represented by the word אֲשֶׁר (*asher*), *that*—She must do so in concert with arousal from the cherubim below.

On *asher* as a name of *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:15a, 158a, 246a; 2:49b, 85a, 97b; 3:65b.

526. supernal cherubim... Here *the youths* represent *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, the two *sefirot* that conduct supernal efflux from *Binah* down to *Shekhinah* below.

The term “Great Faces” derives from BT *Sukkah* 5b. See *Zohar* 3:201a, 217b, 274a; *ZH* 47d (*MhN, Rut*). On its signifying *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, see *ZH* 87c (*MhN, Rut*).

527. from the Holy Lamp... Although the youth was the speaker, the other rabbis ascribe the mystical teachings to Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai because he was the original source.

The *Zohar* frequently refers to the generation of Rabbi Shim'on as one of the most exalted in history, particularly well-suited for revealing the most esoteric secrets.

On the uniqueness of this generation and its fitness for revealing secrets, see *Zohar* 1:226a; 2:86b, 144a; 3:79a, 105b-106a, 159a, 167b, 179b, 236b, 298a; Liebes,

“Mashiah shel ha-Zohar,” 143-44; Matt, “New Ancient Words,” 184; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows*, 49-50, 102-4.

528. to expound upon it homiletically This renders למדרש ביה דרשא (*le-midrash beih derasha*). The rabbis seek the mystical meaning, beyond the exoteric meanings that they can deduce.

529. Your brothers who hate you... That is, the enemies of the faithful—alluding to “other nations.” They reject *YHVH* and mock the faithful; but in the future, their errors will be revealed—and they will be disgraced. Since the verse invokes listening to God’s word, of what use is further description?

The translation here follows the prosody of the Masoretic cantillation and the interpretation by Rashi; see *The Jewish Study Bible*. According to its simple meaning, the verse reads: *Hear the word of YHVH, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you, who ban you because of My name, have said, ‘Let YHVH be glorified, so that we may see your joy!’ But they will be put to shame* (Isaiah 66:5). On this verse, see *Zohar* 2:188b.

530. rung of Faith... *Word of YHVH* alludes to Faith, one of the names of *Malkhut*, since Speech is associated with *Malkhut* who derives from *YHVH*. The word *Hear* issues from *word of YHVH*, drawing attention to Her authority. See Mopsik; Englander; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

531. Israel, always trembling... They do so out of their great zeal and concern for the dignity of *Malkhut*. The plural form חרדים (*hareidim*) signifies Israel’s vulnerability when in exile among the nations: they are potentially subject to attack, as a consequence of their transgressions. But the plural form also alludes to the multiple ways that the Jewish people seek to consummate *Malkhut*, known as *word of YHVH*.

532. descendants of Esau... The Muslims and Christians are the perennial enemies of Israel, but because they descend from Ishmael and Esau—the brother of Isaac

and of Jacob, respectively—they are referred to as *your brothers*. In spite of their oppression, they are excluded from the higher spiritual stature of the Jewish people, whose laws forbid them from various forms of socializing with non-Jews.

In medieval Spain, legislation under both Muslim and Christian rule regulated commercial and social interaction with Jews, effectively treating the latter as a lower class. Rabbi Yeisa the Younger ironically turns the tables, contending that it is the Jews who limit contact with their neighbors. On Muslim and Christian enmity, see above, [notes 70, 423](#).

On the avoidance of commensality with Gentiles, see Daniel 1:5-16; Septuagint Esther C 28; Judith 12:1-4; Joseph and Asenath 7:1; Tobit 1:10-13; Jubilees 22:16; Letter of Aristeas, 128, 130, 139, 142; M *Berakhot* 7:1, *Shevi'it* 8:10, *Avodah Zarah* 2:3-7; 5:3-8; *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* 4:6, 11; BT *Sanhedrin* 104b, *Avodah Zarah* 8a, 29b, 31b, 35b, 36b, 38a, 64b, *Hullin* 116b; *Sifre Numbers* 131; Moses de León, *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 52-54 (65-67); Rosenblum, *Food and Identity*, 36-45, 81-102; Kramer, *Jewish Eating and Identity*, 123-36 and in index, s.v. "Separation from Gentiles."

533. in your exile... Common features of medieval anti-Jewish polemic were the charges that Jews were tainted, and that their degraded historical stature reflected God's rejection of them. Spanish Christians claimed that God's true glory was found in their own midst, while sarcastically taunting the Jews regarding their expectations of redemption. Jewish polemicists quoted Isaiah's words, trusting that eventually the true picture would emerge.

See the remarks of the anti-Jewish polemicist Friar Raymond in his tract *Pugio Fidei* (as cited in Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, 353): "It is sufficiently evident how immense is the stupidity, how great the madness, how enormous the folly of the Jews, who do not cease to

practice circumcision, the Sabbath, and other rituals which God took away from them and the devil restored.” See also Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*; Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*; idem, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe*, 43–51, 163–82.

534. threshing chamber... The “wealthy man” and the “threshing chamber” allude not only to *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, respectively, but also to the narrative in Ruth 3:6–15, in which Ruth joins Boaz at night at the threshing place. Though they can be identified discretely as two, when united they are as one. In the demonic realm, there is an exact parallel with a male and female, but they are always excluded from the realm of holiness. *Word of YHVH* is now understood as *good name*, exemplifying the adornments that *Shekhinah* and *Yesod* share in conjugation.

The simple sense of the verse is טוב שם (*tov shem*), *a good name, is better than fine oil*. Here, the youth breaks the verse down as if it were a sequential code, with *name* representing *Shekhinah*, and *good* symbolizing *YHVH*. Then it is precisely analogous to דבר יהוה (*devar YHVH*), *word of YHVH*, where *word* alludes to *Shekhinah*.

The rich man is identified with wine’s lees because wine ages best on its sediment, or lees.

For the expression “wine on its lees,” see *Zohar* 1:216b; 3:128b (*IR*), 140b (*IR*), 248a. The phrase “coming from the side of wine’s lees” is from the Munkacz edition of *Zohar Hadash*, edited by the seventeenth-century kabbalist Nathan Neta Shapira.

535. Their names, evil inversions... The male and female on the left, usually identified as Samael and Lilith, are the demonic counterparts to *YHVH* and *Shekhinah*. They have demonic names to signify their status as evil copies of the holy names.

536. not because of their names... Samael and Lilith govern the other nations, but they are unable to nourish them themselves. Rather, because *Shekhinah* is in exile among

the nations with Israel, She bestows sustenance upon שם רע (*shem ra*), “Evil Name,” or “dog”—names of the demonic female consort—who conveys it to the nations, as nutriment devised from the sins of Israel.

On Samael and Lilith, see above, [notes 161-62](#). On the metaphor of throwing a bone to a dog, see *Zohar* 2:152b; 3:63a-b (*Piq*), 197a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishkal*, 124, 126-27; cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 4:11.

537. when She is consummated... *Mealtime* signifies *Shekhinah* as receiving spiritual influx from Jewish worship and angelic service. “Sacrifices, burnt offerings, prayers, and the longing of will” marks the sequence of ascending and deepening worship, as service is increasingly spiritualized in movement from the materiality of animal sacrifices (from which portions are eaten) to nonverbal, heartfelt devotion. Angels offer homage through supplying celestial food and sacred pleasures.

On Israel’s providing nourishment for the divine realm by sacrifices, see *Midrash Tanna’im*, Deuteronomy 15:9; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1:15; *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim* 1:15 (27-28); *Yalqut Shim’oni*, Exodus 418; *Zohar* 3:3b-4a, 7a-b. Cf. *Tosefta Menaḥot* 7:9. All of these are based on Numbers 28:2: *My offering, My bread, for My fire offerings, My pleasing aroma, you shall take care to offer to Me at its fixed time*. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 880-90.

538. Then desire of Righteous One... Once *Shekhinah* has been sated with worship from below, She arouses the desire of *Tif’eret* above. He summons Her, and She comes fully adorned. Then *Tif’eret* bestows blessing upon Her distribute to holy beings below.

539. dipping in vinegar... Even during the harmonious union of *Tif’eret* and *Malkhut*, nourishment is provided for the demonic Other Side. There are two different descriptions of the origins of this nourishment, though in both cases it comes from the side of Judgment on the left side of the sefirotic tree. Both vinegar and fire

derive from *Gevurah*, providing food for the Other Side, which in turn sustains the nations and all demonic entities, called “dogs.” This food is described as “scraps,” leftovers from the primary meal of holiness.

According to the verse’s simple sense, the fact that Ruth had some left over is a sign of Boaz’s generosity. Here, the word ותתר (va-totar) is understood in the sense of “residue” or “excess,” something beyond the essential. “Roasted grain” is a popular food among field workers because it can be quickly prepared and easily transported. See 1 Samuel 17:17; 25:18; 2 Samuel 17:28. See Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

540. ויִטֵּב לְבוֹ (va-yiytav libo), **and his heart was glad...** Alternatively, in its simple sense: *he was in a cheerful mood* [or: *he felt free of care*]. The description here suggests that Boaz’s meal was festive and that it put him in a receptive, possibly intoxicated, frame of mind. See Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky. Cf. Judges 19:22; 1 Samuel 25:36; 2 Samuel 13:28; 1 Kings 8:66; Proverbs 15:15; Ecclesiastes 9:7; 11:9; Esther 1:10.

541. Grace after Meals... According to *Rut Rabbah* 5:15 (on this verse), Boaz’s *heart was glad* because he blessed God for the food that he had eaten. Here, Rabbi Hizkiyah reinterprets the verse as *he gladdened his heart*, that is, by offering a blessing Boaz *gladdened* the divine heart, *Shekhinah*. *Gladdened* renders ויִטֵּב (va-yiytav), derived from טוב (tov), which alludes to *Yesod*. Thus even before Ruth’s arrival, Boaz’s reciting of Grace after Meals signifies the erotic union of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 2:218a; *ZH* 86c, 87c (*MhN, Rut*); Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 78–81.

542. without reciting the Grace after Meals... See BT *Berakhot* 35b, in the name of Rabbi Hanina son of Papa: “Whoever enjoys this world without reciting a blessing—it is as if he robs the blessed Holy One and Assembly of Israel, as is said: *He who robs his father and mother and*

says, “It is no crime,” is partner to a destroyer—father is none other than the blessed Holy One... and *mother* is none other than Assembly of Israel.” In that Talmudic passage, Assembly of Israel apparently refers to a supernal hypostasis (the mother of Israel), as it later does regularly in Kabbalah, designating *Shekhinah*.

See *Zohar* 1:77a (ST); 2:193a-b, 250a (*Heikh*); 3:44b, 55a, 61b, 119a, 156a, 270b (*Piq*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 104, 217, 349 (and Wolfson’s notes); Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 27; cf. Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amey ha-Mizwoth*, 84; Bahya ben Asher, *Kad ha-Qemah*, 79; idem, *Shulhan shel Arba*, 487-89.

543. Jeroboam son of Nebat... King Jeroboam (who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel) erected two golden calves for worship (see 1 Kings 12-13). By sinning and causing Israel to sin, he ruined the union of the divine couple (or parents), *Tif’eret* and *Shekhinah*, who are alluded to in the verse from Proverbs. Moreover, see 1 Kings 11:28, where Jeroboam is referred to as *ha-ish Yarov’am*, *Jeroboam the agent* [or: *commissioner, official*].

544. adds power above Reciting Grace after Meals fortifies Divinity above.

See *Zohar* 2:168b-169a, 218a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 104; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amey ha-Mizwoth*, 84. On the significance of Grace after Meals, see Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 171-73.

545. Great is Grace after Meals... See previous note.

546. redeem hostages... Redeeming hostages is considered to be one of the greatest of the commandments. See BT *Bava Batra* 8b: “Ifra Hormizd the mother of King Shapur sent a chest of gold coins to Rav Yosef, requesting that it be used for the fulfillment of a very important commandment. Rav Yosef thought deeply about what such a precept could be. Abbaye said to him, ‘Since Rav Shemu’el son of Yehudah has taught that money for charity is not to be levied from orphans even for the redemption of

captives, we may conclude that redemption of captives is a commandment of great importance.’ Raba asked Rabbah son of Mari, ‘From where is derived the maxim of the Rabbis that the redemption of captives is a commandment of great importance?’ He replied, ‘From the verse *And if they ask you, “To what shall we go forth?” Answer them, “Thus said YHVH: Those destined for the plague, to the plague; those destined for the sword, to the sword; those destined for famine, to famine; and those destined for captivity, to captivity”*’ (Jeremiah 15:2). Rabbi Yoḥanan commented: ‘Each punishment mentioned in this verse is more severe than the one before.... Captivity is harder than all, because it includes the sufferings of all.’”

See *Tosafot*, s.v. *pidyon shevuyim*; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Matnot Aniyyim* 8:10.

As will soon become evident, the “woman of the house” is the innkeeper’s daughter, while the term probably also alludes to *Shekhinah*. The forthcoming story of her and her young husband, along with the teachings about dining rituals, receives expanded development at *Zohar* 2:165b-169a. Cf. 3:272a (*RM*); Baḥya ben Asher, *Shulḥan shel Arba*, 463-82; Wineman, *Mystic Tales from the Zohar*, 89-104. In the other version, the two rabbis are Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Abba.

On the custom of studying Torah at midnight, see BT *Berakhot* 3b, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on the Ḥasid: “A lyre was suspended above [King] David’s bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind would come and blow upon it, and it played by itself. He would rise immediately and engage in Torah until the first rays of dawn.” See Psalms 119:62.

In the *Zohar* this legendary custom is expanded into a ritual. At midnight, God delights in the souls of the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and those who study Torah here below partake of that joy. Kabbalists are expected to rise at midnight and adorn *Shekhinah* with words

of Torah in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*. This parallels the midnight vigil common among Christian monks from early medieval times. In *Zohar* 3:119a, Rabbi Yehudah alludes to the Christian practice: "I have seen something similar among the nations of the world."

See above, [note 76](#).

547. kindling the lamps... Honoring the innkeeper's daughter who kindled a lamp, Rabbi Bun begins his exposition with teachings about the significance of lamps.

See *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Metsora* 17: "Why were [the commandments of menstrual impurity, separating a portion of dough before baking, and kindling the Sabbath lamps] given to the woman? The blessed Holy One said, 'She [i.e., Eve] extinguished the lamp of the world [i.e., the soul of Adam]..., so she [the woman of the house] should keep the commandment of the lamp.' The blessed Holy One said, 'She rendered the dough of the world impure—Primal Adam, who was the dough of the world....' Regarding menstrual impurity, the blessed Holy One said, 'She spilled the blood of Primal Adam, so she is liable to have her own blood spilled. Thus she should observe her menstrual impurity to atone for the blood that she spilled.'"

On women lighting the Sabbath lamp, see M *Shabbat* 2:6; JT *Shabbat* 2:6, 5b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:8 (and Theodor, ad loc.); BT *Shabbat* 31b–32a; *Tanḥuma*, *Noah* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Noah* 1 (and n. 15); *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 9; *Zohar* 1:48b; 2:166a.

548. exchange him for another... Paradoxically, Rabbi Bun suggests that the man's daughter should divorce her ignorant young husband. He then asks the logical question of what prompted the man to betroth his daughter to the youth in the first place.

549. Qaddish... The *Qaddish* is one of the most important liturgical units in the daily prayers, so the zeal of the young man's response to the *Qaddish*, apparently signifying the depth of his learning, so impressed the innkeeper that he

acted impulsively and married off his daughter to the youth.

See BT *Shabbat* 119b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi: "Whoever responds with all his might: 'Amen! May His great Name be blessed'—his [heavenly] decreed sentence is torn up." See Rashi, s.v. *be-khol koḥo*; *Tosafot*, s.v. *kol ha-oneh amen*.

Jacob ben Sheshet, a mid-thirteenth-century kabbalist, comments: "The most fitting way to explain 'with all one's might' is that it refers back to the divine name. That is to say, that one should direct one's intention toward the divine name as fitting with its letters, explanations, constructs, and appropriate vocalization.... This is the meaning of 'with all his might': with all the power of the divine name."

See BT *Berakhot* 3a and *Tosafot*, s.v. *ve-onin yehei shemeih ha-gadol mevorakh*; *Sefer Abudarham*, 67; El'azar of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah le-Roqeah*, 247; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 172; *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 62b; 2:129b, 165b–166a; 3:220a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 69–71 (and Wolfson's notes); idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Shabbat* 119b, p. 12a; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 80–84.

On God's remembering His children as a result of this response, see BT *Berakhot* 3a (per Munich MS 95), in the name of Rabbi Yose (quoting a teaching he heard from the prophet Elijah): "When Israel enters the synagogues and houses of study and responds: 'May His great name be blessed,' the blessed Holy One nods His head and says, 'Happy is the king who is praised thus in his house! Woe to the father who has exiled his children, and woe to the children who have been banished from their father's table!'"

550. son who will teach him Torah... That would justify the marriage and resolve the problem of his ignorance.

551. leaped toward them... Suddenly, the young husband appears, jumping once again. As with the donkey-drivers and other child kabbalists, this young man also surprises the rabbis with his wealth of kabbalistic lore. See above, [notes 122, 382](#).

552. speaking about Grace after Meals... Like Elihu, the speaker of the verse in Job, the young husband initially restrained himself, but now he is eager to share his insights. He proceeds to demonstrate his mastery of the prayer that he supposedly did not know. First, he outlines ten principles regarding Grace after Meals, before expanding upon them one by one.

On the young husband's teachings on Grace after Meals, cf. *Zohar* 2:168b. On the ten principles and rituals for table behavior, see *Zohar* 3:272b (RM).

553. sitting to eat before the King... In the context of the verse's biblical setting, when the Temple stood and Israel made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they could actually *eat before YHVH*. Here, the youth takes the phrase out of context to indicate that all of one's meals, even meager ones, are eaten *before YHVH*, and so the table should be set accordingly, with dignity.

The full verse in Deuteronomy reads: *You shall eat before YHVH your God, in the place that He chooses to have His name dwell, the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, and the firstborn of your cattle and your sheep, so that you may learn to revere YHVH your God all the days.*

554. Laving hands before eating... See BT *Sotah* 4b: "Rav Avira expounded... 'Whoever eats bread without laving his hands is as though he had intercourse with a harlot, as is said: *For a whore's price is a loaf of bread* (Proverbs 6:26)'... Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rabbi El'azar, 'Whoever makes light of laving the hands will be uprooted from the world.' ...Rabbi Abbahu says: 'Whoever eats bread without first drying his hands is as though he

has eaten impure food, as is said: *YHVH said, "So shall the Children of Israel eat their bread impure"* (Ezekiel 4:13)."

See Rashi, s.v. *kol ha-okhel beli nigguv yadayyim*. Cf. M *Hagigah* 2:5; BT *Shabbat* 62b; *Eruvin* 21b; *Hullin* 105a; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 6:1, 19; *Tur Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 158; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 158:1, 9.

555. right laves the left... The right hand holds the laving vessel and pours over the left, and then vice versa. "Up to the joint" apparently means to the second phalanx of the fingers.

See BT *Hullin* 106a and Rashi, Nahmanides, ad loc.; *Zohar* 3:245a (RM). Cf. JT *Berakhot* 8:2, 12a; *Haggahot Maimoniyyot, Hilkhot Berakhot* 6:7; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 56–57.

556. linking arms... The rabbis enjoined raising one's hands, but one must also join them together.

See BT *Sotah* 4b, in the name of Rav: "With the first washing, one must raise one's hands up... This is also taught in a *baraita*: When washing one's hands, one must lift them up—lest the water pass beyond the joint, flow back, and render the hands unclean."

557. recite the blessing... See BT *Berakhot* 60b.

558. give of one's bread... See BT *Berakhot* 54b–55a: "Rav Yehudah said, "There are three matters which, if one prolongs their duration, extend a person's days and years: ...one who prolongs his mealtime... Regarding prolonging one's mealtime, perhaps a poor person will come and he will give him." See *Zohar* 3:245b, 272b (both RM).

559. carefully enunciating the ה (he)... On *motsi* and *ha-motsi* in the blessing over bread, see JT *Berakhot* 6:1, 10a; BT *Berakhot* 38a–b and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *ve-hilkheta ha-motsi*; *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:7; *Midrash Tehillim* 104:11; *ZḤ* 87b (*MhN, Rut*). On the sefirotic significance of *ha-motsi*, see *Zohar* 1:2a; 2:120b–121a (RM), 168b, 231b; 3:98a (*Piq*), 244b (RM), 272a–b (RM); *TZ* 17 (31a), 22 (68a), 51 (86b–87a).

560. neither a gorger nor a glutton See BT *Berakhot* 39b, *Yoma* 39a-b; *Derekh Erets* 5:4; *Derekh Erets* (*Pirgei ben Azzai*) 4:5; 5:1; *Bereshit Rabbah* 45:5; *Devarim Rabbah* 6:11; *Otsar Midrashim*, 30; *Zohar* 2:168b; 3:246a (RM), 272a (RM); Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Toledot Adam*, 97d. Cf. *Zohar* 2:154b.

561. Words of Torah... See below, [note 579](#). Cf. *Zohar* 2:153b, which appears to exclude the possibility of reciting Grace after Meals to satisfy the requirement for words of Torah. See *Magen Avraham* 170:1; *Nitsotsei Orot*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

562. Final waters... See BT *Hullin* 105a-b: “Rav Idi son of Avin said in the name of Rabbi Yitshak son of Ashyan, ‘The first waters [i.e., washing the hands before the meal] are מצוה (*mitsvah*), a commandment; and the last [waters, i.e., rinsing after the meal] are חובה (*hovah*), an obligation.’ ... Abbaye said, ‘At first I thought the reason why the last laving may not be performed over the ground was that it made a mess, but now my Master has told me: It is because an evil spirit rests upon it.’”

On why this rinsing is called “an obligation,” see BT *Eruvin* 17b, in the name of Rav Hiyya son of Ashi: “This is because of salt from Sodom, which can blind one’s eyes [on account of its corrosive nature].”

The question of whether to recite a blessing—רחיצת ידים (al *rehitsat yadayyim*)—over rinsing after a meal was a matter of dispute in medieval halakhic literature. The standard edition and the Munkacz edition read that one does not recite a blessing, but V6, V24, O17, L39, MS3, MS4, Th, and V all indicate that the blessing should be said. See BT *Berakhot* 53b: “*You shall sanctify yourselves* (Leviticus 11:44)—these are the first waters; *and be holy* (ibid.)—these are the final waters; *for holy* (ibid.)—this is oil; *am I, YHVH your God* (ibid. 20:7)—this is blessing.”

On the “final waters” (or “fingerbowl water”), see also *Tosefta Berakhot* (Lieberman) 5:13; BT *Berakhot* 53b,

Hullin 105b-106a; *Tanḥuma, Balaq* 15; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Balaq* 24; Rashi (s.v. *she-melaḥ sedomit yesh*) and *Tosafot* (s.v. *mayyim aḥaronim ḥovah*) on *Eruvin* 17b; idem on *Hullin* 105b, s.v. *mayyim rishonim*; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Berakhot* 6:3; 7:12; *Zohar* 2:154b, 169a, 265a, 266b (last two *Heikh*); 3:186b, 246a (RM), 273b (RM); Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 87; Bahya ben Asher, *Shulḥan shel Arba*, 463, 475-76; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 181; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh* 181:1; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 62, 80-87.

563. providing human sustenance... See BT *Pesaḥim* 118a, in the name of Rabbi El'azar son of Azariah: "Human sustenance is as difficult [to provide] as splitting the Red Sea, as is written: *Who gives food to all flesh* (Psalms 136:25); and near it: *To Him who cut the Red Sea into pieces* (ibid., 13).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 97 (98):3; *Zohar* 1:207b; 2:52b, 170a; 3:292b (IZ).

The phrase "from the horns of wild oxen..." appears in a description of God's weekday daytime schedule in BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b, in the name of Rav: "For the first three hours, the blessed Holy One sits engaged in Torah. For the second [three hours], He sits and judges the whole world. Once He sees that the world deserves to be destroyed, He rises from the seat of Judgment and sits upon the seat of Compassion. For the third [three hours], He sits and feeds the whole world, from the horns of wild oxen to the eggs of lice. For the fourth, He sits and plays with Leviathan." See BT *Shabbat* 107b; *Zohar* 2:170a; 3:252b (RM).

On God's feeding the wicked, both worthy and unworthy, see Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 104.

564. Shekhinah comes first... *Shekhinah* signifies *the table that is before YHVH*. Thus She is already present, waiting to see how the Jewish people will set their tables. During the week, one should set the table in a way that is visibly incomplete as a remembrance of the absence of the

Temple; but on the Sabbath, the table should be fully adorned.

On minor forms of asceticism in remembrance of the Temple, see BT *Bava Batra* 60b: “One may stucco one’s house—but should leave a little bare.... One can prepare a full-course banquet—but should omit something small. What should this be? Rav Papa said, ‘A hash of fish.’ A woman can put on all her ornaments—but leave off one or two.”

On the significance of the table, see Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 117-19.

565. ministering angels eat in holiness... The Jewish people should emulate the lofty standards of the angels since, as deduced from the verse in Psalms, people eating before God are eating the *bread of angels* [or: *of the mighty*].

Washing one’s hands is required before prayer, priestly service, or the consumption of sacred foods.

On the angelic meal (often consisting of beholding the Divine Presence itself), see *Wisdom of Solomon* 16:20; *Life of Adam and Eve* [Apocalypse], 4:1-2; BT *Yoma* 75b. On angels eating, see Vermes, “He is the Bread”; Goodman, “Do Angels Eat?” On sanctity of the body for eating, see *Zohar* 2:154b; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 151-53.

On this midrashic teaching, see BT *Berakhot* 53b as quoted above, [note 562](#). In the talmudic passage, there is a reference to a “blessing” to be recited but not Grace after Meals specifically, and it is that ambiguity that led to the dispute regarding a blessing for rinsing one’s fingers after the meal. However, the fact that in the discussion above, the manuscripts and most of the printed texts indicate that one should say a blessing for rinsing one’s fingers, whereas here the rabbinic teaching is understood as referring to Grace after Meals, suggests two different stages of redaction of this text.

The speaker has conflated Leviticus 11:44 and 20:7. On the phenomenon of divergence between the MT and the *Zohar's* citation of biblical texts, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

566. bread from Evil Eye... The simple meaning of the verse in Proverbs is *Do not eat the bread* רַע עַיִן (*ra ayin*), *of a stingy man, nor desire his delicacies*, but the young husband construes it so as to link *ra ayin*, which means literally *of an eye of harm*, to the rabbinic concept of *yetser ha-ra*, “evil impulse.” In the simple sense, the bread comes from a *stingy man*, whereas here it derives from Satan—who is identified with the evil impulse. When a person eats without ritually laving his hands, he demonstrates that he is in thrall to the evil impulse, and his food reflects that impurity.

See BT *Bava Batra* 16a, in the name of Resh Lakish: “Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.” On the verse in Proverbs, see BT *Sotah* 38b; *Zohar* 1:144a; 2:3a; 3:104a, 147b, 206b.

567. Two attributes... These are like the two angels who accompany one home from the synagogue on Friday night. Here it is the ritual hand laving that is the deciding factor between the two competing forces, determining if one is in the domain of goodness or the domain of evil. See *ZH* 48d; above, [note 470](#).

568. his host had not laved his hands... Ritual washing—or its omission—before eating bread is a social and mythical marker that identifies those whose food is holy and whose is impure. The full verse reads: *Do not make yourselves detestable through any swarming thing that swarms and do not become impure with them*, וְנִטְמַתֶּם (*ve-nitmetem*), *becoming impure, through them*. According to the young husband (based on a Talmudic passage), the lack of the letter א (*alef*) in the word וְנִטְמַתֶּם (*ve-nitmetem*), *becoming impure*—which would normally be spelled וְנִטְמַאתֶם (*ve-nittmetem*)—allows for a different reading: וְנִטְמַתֶּם (*ve-nittamtem*),

becoming obstructed [or: *stopped-up*]. One who eats forbidden food defiles and obstructs himself irremediably.

This story develops one in *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Balaq* 24: “There was a story during a time of oppression of a Jewish shopkeeper who would cook kosher meat and pork, and he would sell it so that no one would detect that he was a Jew. This was his practice: Whoever would enter his store and would not lave his hands, he would note that he was an idol worshipper and would give him pork. Whoever would lave his hands and recite a blessing, he would note that he was a Jew and would feed him kosher meat. One time a Jew entered to eat and did not lave his hands. The shopkeeper reasoned that he must be an idol worshipper—and gave him pork. The man ate without reciting a blessing. He came to settle his account for the bread and meat, and pork was selling at a premium. He said to him, ‘You owe me this amount for the meat you ate, because the meat costs ten *manah*.’ He replied, ‘Yesterday you gave it to me for eight, and today you want ten!’ The shopkeeper said, ‘But this is pork that you ate.’ When he told him this, the man’s hair stood on end, and he trembled, terrified. He said to him, ‘I am a Jew, but disguised, and you gave me pork!’ He replied, ‘May your spirit perish! When I saw you eat without laving and without a blessing, I thought you must be an idol worshipper.’ Consequently, the rabbis said, ‘When Rav Dimi came [from Palestine] he reported: The omission to lave one’s hands before the meal caused one to eat pig’s flesh; final waters, he has killed a soul.” See Buber’s note; *Tanḥuma*, *Balaq* 15; BT *Yoma* 38b, 83b; *Hullin* 106a.

The youth is apparently referring to טומאה רצוצה (*tum’ah retsutsah*), “stopped-up impurity,” whose powerful ability to contaminate is described in *Hullin* 71a: “Impurity that is stopped-up breaks through upward to the sky.” See M *Ohalot* 7:1; *Hadrat Qodesh*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

On the impact of eating impure foods, see BT *Yoma* 39a: “Sin dulls [or: obstructs] a person’s heart, as is said: *Do not become impure with them*, ונטמתם (*ve-nitmetem*), *becoming impure, through them*. Do not read ונטמאתם (*ve-nitmetem*), *becoming impure*, but rather [per Munich MS] ונטמתם (*ve-nittamtem*), *becoming stopped-up* [or: *obstructed*].” See *Pesiqta Zutarta* and Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 11:43; *Zohar* 2:125b; 3:41b–42a, 75b; Baḥya ben Asher on Leviticus 11:43.

569. lave one’s right hand with the left... The right hand symbolizes *Ḥesed* (Loving-kindness) and the left hand symbolizes *Gevurah* (Judgment). By washing the right hand with the left, one subjugates left to right, making the left serve the right—and thereby ensuring that Loving-kindness will prevail over Judgment, and that Amalek, deriving from the left, will be thwarted.

See *Zohar* 1:198b; 2:154b; Moses de León, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 9; Joseph Caro, *Beit Yosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 4:8–11; idem, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 4:10; Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands*, 53–54; Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 1–28.

The verse in Exodus concludes: *when he would let down his hand, Amalek prevailed*.

570. Levite... According to the *Zohar*, the priest symbolizes *Ḥesed* on the right, while the Levite symbolizes *Gevurah* on the left. See *Zohar* 1:244a; 2:143b; 3:32a–b, 90b, 151b, 176a–b, 241b; 3:146b; *ZH* 46c.

571. anything called yad... The fourteen phalanges (or finger segments) of the hand correspond to the numerical value of the word יָד (*yad*), where *yod* signifies ten and *dalet* signifies four. Thus, whatever corresponds to *yad* (hand) or *yod-plus-dalet* (fourteen) must be sanctified. This applies even to the *hand* that is *upon Yah’s throne*, apparently belonging to the side of Judgment or Amalek, hindering the consummation of God’s name. The significance of the number fourteen is corroborated by Rav Hamnuna Sava, who uses the technique of letter permutation known by the

acronym at *bash*: substituting the first letter of the alphabet, א (*alef*), with the last letter, ת (*tav*); the second by the penultimate, and so on. If one begins the pairing process with the letter ה (*he*), there are fourteen letters altogether, and the numerical sum of each pair (using only single-digit values per letter) is fourteen: ה (*he*) equals five and is paired with ז (*tsadi*), equaling nine; ו (*vav*) equals six and is paired with ח (*pe*), equaling eight; and so on. The fourteen phalanges of the left have the fourteen of the right and vice versa, providing reciprocal consummation.

On the symbolism of fingers and phalanges, see Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer ha-Malkhut*, 93b-c. On *at bash*, see *Zohar* 2:132a-b; *ZH* 66c, 67a-b, 68b (all *ShS*). On *at bash* from *he* onward, see *Hadrat Qodesh*; *Sullam*; Scholem; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Englander.

The verse in Exodus concludes: *War for YHVH against Amalek from generation to generation*. On this verse, see Naḥmanides; *Zohar* 1:25a (*TZ*), 214a (standard editions); 2:67a; 3:245b (*RM*), 249a (*RM*); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21 (50a); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 68; Baḥya ben Asher.

572. **fingers are an image of the supernal realm...**

The ten fingers of the human hand represent the ten *sefirot*. The twelve phalanges of the fingers (excluding thumbs) correspond to twelve components of the chariot. While the chariot signifies *Shekhinah*, the twelve phalanges either represent twelve camps of angels below Her or the *sefirot* *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Malkhut*, each accompanied by one creature and one *ofan* (wheel).

On the ten fingers, see *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:3; *Midrash Tadshe* 10 (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 3:174); *Bahir* 87 (124), 94 (138); Naḥmanides on Exodus 17:12; 20:13; 30:19; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, *Sotah* 37b-38a, pp. 29b-c; idem, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 57; *Zohar* 1:20b-21a; 2:57a, 67a-b, 75b-77a, 208a-b; 3:143a (*IR*), 145a (*Piq*), 186a-b, 195b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 56-57, 254. On the twelve phalanges, see *Matoq mi-Devash*.

573. twelve letters... The four fingers correspond to the four letters of the tetragrammaton, and the twelve phalanges to the twelve-letter divine name.

A name of twelve letters is mentioned, but not identified, in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. Later it was associated with the three occurrences of *YHVH* in the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24–26). See *Bahir* 80 (111): “numbering three, numbering twelve.” See *Zohar* 1:16a, 19b; 2:58a, 201b; 3:78a–b, 172b; *ZH* 62b (*ShS*); Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 92, 290, n. 32; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

574. extra digit... The thumb is separate from the other four fingers; its two phalanges signify the more recondite *sefirot* *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. These two, in turn, provide access to *Keter*—called here Hidden One—the source of all blessing.

575. two elevated phalanges... The wrist and elbow, or elbow and shoulder. The sum of the number of fingers and thumb, their phalanges, and these two additional joints is twenty-one, corresponding to the numerical value of the word אהיה (*Ehyeh*), *I will be*. Both arms together thus correspond to the two iterations of this word in God’s declaration to Moses of His name, אהיה אשר אהיה (*Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*), *I will be who I will be*. ראש (*Rosh*), *Head*, signifying *Hokhmah*, is an anagram of the letters of אשר (*asher*), *who*, signifying *Binah*. Thus the divine name *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh* is represented by the two arms and their component parts and the head, all of which signify the *sefirot* *Hokhmah* through *Gevurah*. Washing one’s hands and extending one’s fingers effectively draws on those two upper *sefirot*, drawing their blessing into *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, represented by the two arms.

On extending the fingers, see Moses de León (?), *Tsava’at Rabbi Eli’ezer ha-Gadol*, 12; idem, *Maskiyyot ha-Kesef*, 9. On *asher* and *rosh*, see *Zohar* 1:15a. On the verse in Deuteronomy, see Moses de León, *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot*, 341a.

576. One should give of one's food... One should give the food that one most desired to enhance the indigent's self-esteem and make him feel like a desired guest. All of one's food is ultimately a gift from above, and so it should be shared with a sense of gratitude and generosity. In the *Zohar*, this obligation is discussed most often in relation to the festivals.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Issurei Mizbeah* 7:11: "One who desires to gain merit for himself should subjugate his evil impulse, amplify his generosity, and bring a sacrifice from the most desirable and superior specimen of the species he is bringing.... The same principle applies to everything given for the sake of God, who is good. It should be of the finest and highest quality.... If he feeds a hungry person, he should feed him from the finest and tastiest foods of his table. If he clothes one who is naked, he should clothe him with his finest garments... as is said: *All fat to YHVH* (Leviticus 3:16).

See *Zohar* 1:10b; 2:88b, 198a, 199b; 3:104a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 140; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 145, 174-75.

577. seven lands... Also known as the "seven climates [or: zones]," these are the distinct inhabitable regions recognized in Ptolemaic and medieval geography. According to Deuteronomy 8:8, the land of Israel is blessed with seven species, but only two of these are grains. Rabbinic literature refers to five species of grain from which bread is normally produced: wheat, barley, oats, spelt, and rye. Modern scholarship has questioned this identification, pointing out that oats and rye did not grow in the land of Israel in ancient times. In the biblical period the "five species" likely consisted of the following: hard (bread) wheat; rice wheat; spelt wheat; six- and four-rowed barley; and two-rowed barley. See Feliks, *EJ*, "Five Species."

The reason given in JT *Berakhot* 6:1, 10a, for the unusual form *ha-motsi* in the blessing over bread is to

facilitate articulation of the consonants. Here, the young husband explains that the unusual use of the definite article *ha-* emphasizes that the bread is coming from God, in the land called *Tevel*—and not from angelic beings elsewhere.

On the seven lands, see above, [note 249](#). On the five grains, see M *Hallah* 1:1; *Pesahim* 2:5; *Mekhilta, Pisha* 8; BT *Berakhot* 35b; *Zohar* 1:157a. On *ha-motsi*, see above, [note 559](#); cf. *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

578. neither a glutton nor a gorger... Being a glutton is not merely bad manners, it is the penchant of one who has the demonic serpent dwelling within. Personal comportment reveals the nature of one's soul: righteous or evil. One day, when Esau came back from hunting and saw that his brother, Jacob, had prepared a lentil stew, he said to him, *Let me gulp down some of this red red stuff, for I am famished*. Here, Esau represents the Other Side, which is characterized by gluttony. One who strives to eat in holiness must shun such behavior, which befits (and would attract) the demonic force.

On gluttony, see above, [note 560](#). The full verse in Proverbs reads: *A righteous one eats, sating his soul, but the belly of the wicked is [or: will be] in want*—that is, the wicked are never satisfied and always crave more.

579. Words of Torah... See M *Avot* 3:3, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on: "If three have eaten at one table without speaking over it words of Torah, it is as though they have eaten of sacrifices to the dead, as is said: *Surely all tables are full of filthy vomit, without the Omnipresent* (Isaiah 28:8). But if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of Torah, it is as if they have eaten from the table of the Omnipresent, as is said: *He said to me, 'This is the table that is before YHVH'* (Ezekiel 41:22)."

The verse in Isaiah reads: *Surely all tables are full of filthy vomit, without מקום (maqom), a place [or: a space]*. The rendering *without the Omnipresent* reflects the rabbinic

use of *maqom* as a designation of God, apparently connoting immanence.

On reciting words of Torah at the table, see *Zohar* 2:153b-154a, 168b; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 159-62. On the term *maqom*, see Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:66-79. On the phrase “sacrifices [offered] to the dead,” see Psalms 106:28.

580. praise and laud... Lacking words of Torah signifies the absence of acknowledgment and appreciation of God’s gifts. The angels sing and praise above; and when the people of Israel below exchange words of Torah, or recite Grace after Meals, they are considered part of the angelic company.

581. Final waters... This dirty water is offered to the Other Side (called “prosecutor” and “Attribute of Evil”) to appease him and prevent him from dominating. One should offer a portion to the Other Side, consisting of the water with which he washes off the remnants of food from his fingers. “Attribute of Goodness” signifies *Shekhinah*, who takes the pious adoration those reciting Grace after Meals.

By providing a portion to the Other Side, one ensures that the demonic force will be occupied, assuaged, and deterred from interfering in the realm of holiness. On this theme, see *Sifra, Shemini, Millu’im* 1:3, 43c; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 46; Nahmanides on Leviticus 16:8; Moses of Burgos, *Ammud ha-Semali*, 158-59; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a-65a, 89b (*ST*), 113b-114b, 138b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b, 247b; 2:33a, 111b, 130a, 141a, 152b, 154b, 157a-b, 169a, 181b, 184b-185a, 203b, 227a-b, 237b-239b, 242b, 266b (*Heikh*), 269a (*Heikh*); 3:63a-b (*Piq*), 101b-102a, 202b-203a, 224a-b, 258b-259a; *ZH* 20c, 46c, 67b (*MhN, ShS*), 86c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 165-67; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 124-27; idem, *She’elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:453-54, 3:890-95, 959.

582. he had recited the blessing after his meal... In his recitation of Grace after Meals, Boaz directed his

intention toward *Shekhinah*, signified by Heart.

On this verse, see above, [notes 540-41](#). On Heart as signifying *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 2:128b, 218a.

583. Final waters is a חובה (*hovah*), obligation... In his homily, the young husband plays with the Hebrew *hovah*, “obligation,” and the Aramaic *hovah*, “sin.” The “final waters” are an obligatory practice (*hovah*), and their purpose is not to pay homage to Divinity, but rather to satisfy “Sin” (*Hovah*).

The exclamation “wondrous mystery” may be a response to Nahmanides’ conservative formulation in his commentary on Leviticus 16:8: “Now the intention in our sending away the goat to the desert was not that it should be an offering from us to it—Heaven forbid! Rather, our intention should be to fulfill the wish of our Creator, who commanded us to do so.”

584. Cup of blessing... See BT *Berakhot* 51a: “Ten things were said with regard to a cup of blessing. It requires rinsing and washing; undiluted, and full; adorning and wrapping; he takes it in his two hands and places it in his right; and he lifts it one handbreadth from the ground; he fixes his eyes upon it. And some say: He also sends it as a gift to members of his household.” See *Zohar* 2:43a (*RM*).

585. three or more... When three or more have eaten a meal together, they are required to participate in a *zimmun*, literally “an invitation.” The *zimmun* is a responsive liturgical unit in which the leader invites the others present to recite (or listen to) the Grace after Meals. If less than ten men are present, one does not include God’s name in the *zimmun*.

See M *Berakhot* 7:3: “How do we recite the *zimmun*? If three are present, one says, ‘Let us bless [Him of whose bounty we have eaten].’ If three besides himself, he says, ‘Bless [Him of whose bounty we have eaten]!’ If ten [men] are present, one says, ‘Let us bless our God [of whose bounty we have eaten].’ ...It is the same where there are

ten, or ten myriads. If a hundred are present, one says, ‘Let us bless *YHVH*, our God...’”

While the blessing is obviously directed toward God, here the young husband draws attention to the apparently anonymous recipient of this blessing.

On the cup of blessing with three, see *Beit Yosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 182; *Nitsotsei Zohar*. On anonymous references to God, cf. *Zohar* 1:102b, 115a, 138a, 142b, 144b, 173b; 2:60b, 125b, 131a, 138a, 157a; 3:4b, 53b, 56a.

586. cup of blessing poised before him... One gazes upon the cup of blessing—signifying *Shekhinah*—in imitation of God, who constantly has His eyes upon Her. She receives nourishment from *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*—who are represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively; and once She has been infused, She brings the divine overflow down to the angelic and human realms. This ritualized attention upon the cup clarifies that the *zimmun* blessing is directed toward the entire cluster of *sefirot* that convey food into this world. Cf. *Hadrat Qodesh; Matoq mi-Devash*.

See BT *Berakhot* 51a, in the name of Rav AḤa son of Ḥanina: “one fixes one’s eyes upon the cup, so that his attention will not be distracted from it.”

587. Blessed is He... By saying ברוך (*barukh*), “Blessed,” the respondents have referred to one of God’s names, and the previous anonymity is erased. Because the adjective *barukh*, normally translated as *blessed*, can also be a name, the young husband suggests that it could be interpreted as part of King Solomon’s name: “King Solomon Barukh.” Since King Solomon symbolizes *Binah*, it is now clear that the *zimmun* is directed toward *Binah*, whom one cannot mention directly.

In the *Zohar*, the phrase “the King who possesses peace” can refer to the entire male realm extending down from *Binah*—who “possesses” *Yesod*, known as “peace.”

On *Barukh* as a name, see ZH 67a (*ShS*); above, [note 519](#); cf. ZH 86a (*MhN, Rut*). On “the King who possesses peace,” see above, [note 490](#).

“Let us be of common conviction” renders נסכים דעתא (*naskim da’ata*); alternatively, “let us join our intentions.”

588. two cherubs below Her... The three people who have formed the company to recite the *zimmun* symbolize *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, all emerging from *Binah*. Once they have responded with *Barukh*, they have registered *Binah* as the origin of nourishment’s pathway. This joins them with the twelve tribes, who are camps within *Shekhinah*. The leader, representing *Tif’eret*, proceeds with the next line: ‘Blessed is He of whose bounty we have eaten and by whose goodness we live.’ The term ‘good’ or ‘goodness’ signifies *Yesod*, which is the point from which all nourishment emerges from the male aspect of Divinity and is absorbed by *Shekhinah*.

On twelve supernal tribes, see *Bahir* 82 (113); *Zohar* 1:155a–b, 159b; 2:229b; 3:134b; ZH 76d; (*MhN, Rut*).

589. ‘And by whose goodness’—and not ‘from whose goodness’... The wording “by whose goodness” refers to *Yesod*, who bestows bounty and goodness upon the lower world, *Shekhinah*. She is signified by the alternative wording “from whose goodness,” since She derives from *Yesod*. Ultimately, all nourishment for the worlds below flows from His Goodness, *Yesod*.

See BT *Berakhot* 50a: “From one’s blessings it is obvious whether or not he is a Torah scholar. How so? Rabbi says, ‘[If he says] “and by whose goodness,” he is a Torah scholar. [But if he says] “and from whose goodness,” he is an ignoramus.’” See Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *u-mi-tuvo harei zeh bur*.

On “by whose goodness” as opposed to “from whose goodness,” see ZH 87c (*MhN, Rut*); cf. *Zohar* 2:168b.

The verse in Hosea actually reads: ופחדו (*u-faḥadu*), and they will tremble, before YHVH and His goodness. For other

instances of a difference between the Masoretic spelling or wording and the *Zohar's* reading, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

[590. ten...](#) When ten are present at a meal, all the *sefirot* from *Keter* to *Malkhut* are in harmony, so the leader of the *zimmun* says 'Let us bless our God.' Even with more than ten people, the same formula is used.

The version of the *zimmun* here reads נברך לאלהינו (*nevarekh le-loheinu*), which means literally "Let us bless to our God." There was some dispute in the medieval liturgical practice regarding the addition of the preposition *le-*, "to." See *M Berakhot* 7:3 and Alfasi, ad loc.; Sa'adia Gaon, *Siddur Rav Sa'adia Gaon*, 105, 107; Amram Gaon, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 45; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot* 5:4-5; *Tosafot* on *Berakhot* 49b, s.v. *nevarekh Eloheinu garsinan*; *Zohar* 3:246a (RM); *Nitsotsei Zohar*.

[591. on the land...](#) The *zimmun* and the first of the four blessings of Grace after Meals are directed toward the upper world—*Binah* through *Yesod*. The second blessing offers thanks for the land of Israel, covenant of circumcision, and the Torah, but its focus is on "land," signifying *Shekhinah*. Thus the trajectory of the blessing is from the upper realm to the lower realm.

[592. Great Name...](#) Presumably יה' (*Yah*), normally signifying *Hokhmah* and *Binah* and the entire flow of emanation—but here emphasizing *Binah*, called World that is Coming. The *Qaddish* proceeds to talk about "the world," alluding to *Shekhinah*, the lower realm. According to this pattern, blessings directed toward the highest spheres facilitate the drawing down of divine blessing below. The exceptions are in the statutory prayer; of its 19 blessings, both the first (*Avot*) and the seventeenth (*Hoda'ah*) begin and end with bowing—which signifies the direction of blessing from below upward.

On *Qaddish*, see above, [note 549](#). On the Great Name, see *Zohar* 2:165b; Vol. 5, p. 458, n. 759. On bowing in the

statutory prayer, see Ehrlich, *The Non-Verbal Language of Prayer*, 29–63.

593. Blessing for the land... The second blessing of Grace after Meals begins with a reference to “the land,” then proceeds to refer to “covenant [of circumcision] and Torah, life and food.” Here, “covenant and Torah” symbolize *Yesod* and *Tif’eret*, respectively, while “life and food” signify the flow of blessings from *Binah* down to *Yesod*, who conveys it to *Shekhinah*.

On the need to include “covenant and Torah” in the second blessing of Grace after Meals, see BT *Berakhot* 48b–49a; *Zohar* 2:168b.

594. Women... are obligated in Grace after Meals... Women, who lack the sign of circumcision and are not commanded to study Torah, are therefore unable to recite Grace after Meals on behalf of others or to lead others in reciting it.

On the question of women’s reciting (or enabling others to fulfill their obligation to recite) Grace after Meals, see M *Berakhot* 3:3; 7:2; BT *Berakhot* 20b and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *nashim*; 45b and Jonah Gerondi, ad loc. (on Rif); *Arakhin* 3a and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *mezammenot le-atsman*; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot* 5:1, 7; *Zohar* 2:190a; 3:19b, 191a; *Sha’arei Teshuvah (Teshuvot ha-Ge’onim)*, 345; Joseph Caro, *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 186:1; 199:6; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 44–45, 128, nn. 107–8. On this passage, see *Sullam*; Mopsik; Englander; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

595. Women are obligated... “The *Megillah*” refers to a scroll inscribed with the book of Esther, which is read aloud on the holiday of Purim. See BT *Megillah* 4a, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi: “Women are obligated in the public reading of the *Megillah*, for they too were involved in that miracle.”

On women’s ability to read the *Megillah* on behalf of others, see *Tosefta Megillah* 2:7; BT *Megillah* 4a, and ad

loc.: *Tosafot*, s.v. *nashim hayyavot*; Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba); Yom Tov ben Ishbili (Ritva); and Asher ben Yeḥiel (Rosh); *Arakhin* 2b-3a and Rashi ad loc.; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Megillah* 1:1-2; Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Roqeaḥ*, 236; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:1-2.

With regard to women's obligation for Grace after Meals, the text is somewhat knotty. It appears to be talking about a woman who is unable to recite Grace after Meals on her own and so is dependent upon someone else. The comment about a husband's being obligated to wait for his wife might suggest that she was otherwise occupied with responsibilities connected to the meal or the household.

Cf. the position ascribed to Rabbenu Jonah Gerondi: "Women who do not understand the holy tongue must recite Grace after Meals for themselves, and they cannot be exempted through the blessing that they hear from men." See *Peirush Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah, Berakhot* 33a (Alfasi's pagination).

596. does not utter the Divine Name... This refers to the *zimmin* in which the Divine Name is invoked when ten men are present—but not for women, regardless of the number. On the *zimmin*, see above, [note 585](#). On women's ineligibility to join a *zimmin* with men, see BT *Berakhot* 45b.

597. Building of Jerusalem... The third blessing of Grace after Meals concerns the building of Jerusalem, implicitly pertaining to the Temple. The previous two blessings applied to the divine realm; this is the first reference to the earthly realm.

On the land of Israel as the source of the world's nourishment, see the sources cited above, [note 290](#).

598. Everything is comprised within Grace after Meals... Although each of the blessings is directed to a different place, ultimately Grace after Meals is germane to all of Divinity and the material world. If one brings joy to *Shekhinah* (signified by "Attribute of Goodness") through the

recital of the blessing, one merits eternal, divine nourishment. See *Sullam*; cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The full verse in Proverbs reads: *All the days of the poor are wretched, but a good-hearted person has a continuous feast*. On this verse, see *Zohar* 2:128b, 197b, 259b (*Heikh*).

599. inviting... The narrative echoes the theme of *zimmun*, the liturgical 'invitation' that played an important role in the young husband's homily. In this way, the social setting broadens the performance beyond the limitations of the ritual of Grace after Meals.

600. He went to lie down... The verse in Ruth reads in full: *Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was glad, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down*.

601. consuming heavenly life... Boaz, signifying *Yesod*, draws supernal nourishment from the *sefirot* above and conveys it to *his heart*, signifying *Shekhinah*. This leads to full consummation of the heavenly union as he lies down by the grain pile, which symbolizes the celestial adornments of the “holy throne,” representing *Shekhinah*. Its *lilies* (here called “jewels”) signify angels and other holy beings in the retinue of *Shekhinah*, who is signified by *heap of wheat*.

On jewels surrounding the celestial throne, see *Zohar* 1:107b (*Tos*), 149b (*ST*).

602. after midnight Ruth lies down at Boaz’s feet—but he is unaware of her presence until midnight, when God strolls with the righteous in the Garden of Eden. On God and the righteous at midnight, see above, [notes 76](#), [546](#). On the image of Ruth uncovering Boaz’s feet (or legs), see Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, “‘Va-tagel Margelotav.’”

603. all souls ascend... When people go to sleep, their souls depart their bodies; those souls’ ascent configures *Shekhinah*. The voice and fire that emerge from the north, signifying *Gevurah*, cause the archangel *Gavriel*, “Gabriel”—also known as the supernal *gever*, “rooster”—to crow. The entire celestial realm exists under the auspices of the Left, frightful with its fire of Judgment from above. This explains why Boaz, representing *Yesod*, was shaken with fright when he found Ruth, representing *Shekhinah*, at his feet.

On souls ascending at night, see Moses de León, *Maskiyyot ha-Kesef*, 11; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70–71 (88–89). On the rooster, see Rashi on BT *Eruvin* 53b, s.v. *maggidei ba-alatah*, according to whom the rooster’s crows mark the various divisions of the night. See *Pereq Shirah*, 2:57 (s.v. *tarnegol*): “When the blessed Holy One comes to the righteous in the Garden of Eden, all the trees of the Garden sprinkle spices before Him, with song and praise. Then [the rooster], too, is aroused and praises.”

See 3 Baruch 6:15–16; Naḥmanides on Job 38:36; *Zohar* 1:10b, 77b, 92b, 218b; 2:195b–196a; 3:22b–23b, 52b,

171b-172a; *ZH* 13c (*MhN*), 47d, 88a (last two *MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 12-13; Liebes, *Pulḥan ha-Shaḥar*, 168-97.

604. three watches of the night... See BT *Berakhot* 3a, in the name of Rav: “The night consists of three watches; and over each and every watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion, saying, ‘Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My House, and burned my Sanctuary, and exiled them among the nations of the world.’”

On the three divisions (or watches) of the night, see BT *Berakhot* 3a-b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *i qa-savar*; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 1; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 184-85; *Zohar* 1:122a (*MhN*), 188b-189a, 230b-231b; 2:18b (*MhN*), 143b, 173a-b, 195b-196a; 3:64b; *ZH* 5d-6a, 17d, 47c (last three all *MhN*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Rosh ha-Shanah* 24b, p. 17a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 403; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70-71 (88-89). On the image of the roaring lion, see Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination*, 22-40.

605. Who shall ascend... When people go to sleep, their souls leave their bodies, hoping to be deemed virtuous enough to enter the Garden of Eden. The angels’ song reflects their desire.

606. some false, some true As is characteristic of dreams. The 365 palaces may be a reference to the 365 biblical prohibitions that worthy ones have guarded against. See *Matoq mi-Devash* on *Zohar* 3:172a; cf. *ZH* 82d (*MhN*, *Rut*).

607. Mourners of Zion... This phrase originates in Isaiah 61:3. It is used to designate a historical group of Karaites who adopted ritual practices to lament the fallen state of Jerusalem. See *Pesikta Rabbati* 34 (158-59). The *Zohar* reimagines them as a particular subset of angels. See *Zohar* 2:195b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70-71 (89); Liebes, “*Zikkat ha-Zohar*,” 40-41.

608. the rooster crows... When Gabriel (the supernal rooster) crows, the heavenly flame licks at the wings of terrestrial roosters, who then give forth their cry—which is a call to human beings and angels to lament the destruction of the Temple.

On the rooster's cry, see Isaiah 33:7: *Behold, the Erelin cried outside; angels of שְׁלוֹם (shalom), peace, weep bitterly.* *Shalom* in the verse may be a reference to Jerusalem, which is sometimes called *Shalem*. See Genesis 14:18; Psalms 76:3. On the verse in Isaiah, see *Zohar* 1:120a, 182a, 210a-b; 2:2b, 195b-196a; *ZH* 37d; 93a (*MhN, Eikhah*).

On the custom of rising in the middle of the night to lament the fallen state of Jerusalem, see *Sefer ha-Yashar ha-Meyuhas le-Rabbeinu Tam*, 46-47; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 146-150; Magid, "Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah"; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 308-20; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi*, 140-41.

609. 370 firmaments The numerical equivalent in *gimatriyyah* of the word שְׁלֵם (*Shalem*), "complete." This may also be an allusion to the *sefirot*, wherein the number 300 stands for the three highest *sefirot*, and the number 70 signifies the seven lower *sefirot*. See *Zohar* 1:4b; 2:14a-b (*MhN*); 3:133b-134a, 135b (last two *IR*). Cf. *Zohar* 3:154a.

610. the blessed Holy One split them... During the first half of the night, Judgment prevails and God also mourns over the destruction of the Temple and Israel's exile. The forcefulness of His grief splits apart the camps of heavenly beings who had gathered to weep over Jerusalem.

See BT *Berakhot* 59a: "When the blessed Holy One remembers His children, who are plunged in suffering among the nations of the world, He sheds two tears into the Great Sea, and His voice [or: its sound] resounds from one end of the world to the other.... The Rabbis say, 'He kicks the firmament.'" See *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 30 (28), p. 148; *Zohar* 1:4a, 231a; 2:18a (*MhN*), 195b-196a; *ZH* 53b-c;

Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70–71 (89).

The verse in Jeremiah concludes: *He roars mightily over His abode*. The verses in Psalms 79 read in full: *God, nations have come into Your estate, they have defiled Your holy temple. They have turned Jerusalem to ruins. They have given Your servants' corpses as food to the fowl of the heavens, the flesh of Your faithful to the beasts of the earth.*

611. lying in the dust... Why was Boaz so frightened? It is because of the downtrodden nature of the woman lying in the dust of his feet. Ruth signifies *Shekhinah*, Assembly of Israel, who lies “in the dust” while in exile. Boaz, representing *Yesod*, inquires after Her condition in exile.

On the questions that Boaz asks Ruth, see *Rut Rabbah* 6:1: “He began to feel her hair, and said, ‘Spirits do not have hair!’ He said to her, ‘Who are you, a spirit or a woman?’ She said, ‘A woman.’ ‘A free woman or married?’ ‘A free woman.’ ‘Are you impure or pure?’ She replied, ‘Pure.’ *Behold! There was a woman—purer than all women...* as is said: *He said, ‘Who are you? And she replied, ‘I am Ruth, your handmaid.’* See *Rut Zuta* 3:8; Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

MT Ruth 3:9 reads: *He said, ‘Who are you? And she replied, ‘I am Ruth, your handmaid. Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeemer [or: a redeeming kinsman].* On discrepancies between verses cited in the *Zohar* and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

612. I am רות (Rut), Ruth... מרוות (meravvat), brimming... Ruth, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, speaks of her anguish over the condition of the Jewish people, suffering in exile. Moreover, She too endures the agony of banishment and abuse.

Rabbi Shim'on engages in wordplay, associating רות (*Rut*), *Ruth*, with מרוות (*meravvat*), “overflowing” (or “brimming”), as in Psalms 23:5: *my cup רויה (revaya), overflows*. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 7b as quoted above, [note 486](#).

613. Your latest deed of loyalty... Rabbi Shim'on interprets Boaz's effusive appreciation to Ruth as an utterance from the blessed Holy One, signifying *Tif'eret*, to *Malkhut*. He explains it in the context of King David's behavior, who also symbolizes *Malkhut*, when he was sent out of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Shim'on puns on the word בחורים (*baḥurim*), *younger men*, in the verse from Ruth, for it is also the name of the town from which (several generations later) Shimei emerges to curse David. That locale becomes associated with temptation or evil. Yet Rabbi Shim'on also seems to connect its name to the root בחר (*bḥr*), "choose," which plays prominently in the midrashic tradition that God chose David even though the Sanhedrin had excommunicated him for the sin of Bathsheba.

In the story's simple sense, Ruth's first act of *ḥesed*, *loyalty*, is her returning to Canaan with Naomi or—as *Targum* emphasizes—her conversion to Judaism. Her *latest* (second) act of *ḥesed* probably refers to her seeking out a levir or, as in the midrash, to her desire to join him rather than younger men. See *Targum; Rut Rabbah* 6:2; Rashi; Ibn Ezra; Sasson; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

Shimei was a relative of King Saul who held David responsible for various deaths in Saul's family. When David was fleeing Jerusalem, Shimei cast curses, stones, and dirt at the king and his cohort. David is advised to kill Shimei, but he spares him, insisting that God instructed Shimei to curse.

On *baḥurim*, see 2 Samuel 16:5, 18; Psalms 78:70; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 3:2; *Midrash Shemu'el* 8:2; Sasson on Ruth 3:10. On Shimei and David, see 2 Samuel 16:5–13. Verse 10 reads: *If he curses, it is because YHVH told him, "Curse David"; and who can say, "Why have You done this?"* See *Zohar* 2:107b.

614. Even now in exile... The blessed Holy One commends *Malkhut* for Her fortitude and fidelity during the

long years of exile. Like David who did not react to Shimei's viciousness, so too did *Malkhut* remain steadfast in passive response to the abuses that She suffered in Jewish history, neither responding with violence nor falling into despair.

Titus Flavius Vespasian came from an undistinguished family and rose through the ranks in the military. Ultimately he led the Roman army's subjugation of the Jewish revolt in Judaea, which culminated in the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. under his son Titus's command. Vespasian ruled as emperor of Rome from 69–79 C.E. and his son was the first son of an emperor to serve as Roman Emperor. See BT *Gittin* 56a.

Nebuchadnezzar succeeded his father to the throne and ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C.E. In 588 he laid siege to Jerusalem, ultimately capturing it and laying waste the Temple in 586. In rabbinic tradition, Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as having turned himself into a god. See BT *Sanhedrin* 96a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:5; *Shemot Rabbah* 8:2.

615. Solomon's wisdom regarding Shimei... In contrast to Shimei's scorn, driving David out of Jerusalem, Solomon calmly warns Shimei that he will be a prisoner there, in Jerusalem, risking death should he step out. David signifies *Malkhut* who is forced to leave Her Temple twice, in accordance with Shimei's doubled curse—*get out*.

The verses in 1 Kings 2 read in full: *Then the king summoned Shimei and said to him, 'Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there—do not ever go out from there hither and yon. For on the very day that you go out and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you will surely die; your blood will be on your own head.*

616. stay now in exile... *Malkhut's* faithfulness during the first exile at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar was impressive, but not nearly as much as during the long exile after the destruction of the second Temple. The blessed

Holy One asks Her to remain patient as the exile continues, and to persist in leading the Jewish people in piety and faith. If their actions do not lead to redemption, though, God promises that He will bring salvation at the end of *the night*, nonetheless.

In the verse, the grammatical subject is unstated—being implied by the inflection of the verb יגאלך (*yig'alekh*): *if [he] will redeem you*. In its simple sense, this refers to the kinsman mentioned in the previous verse. Here, Rabbi Shim'on construes the subject midrashically, yielding: *if [Israel] redeems you*.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 98a, where Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi discusses Isaiah 60:22, describing Israel's redemption (*I, YHVH, will hasten it in its time*): "It is written *in its time*; yet it is written *I will hasten it*. If they prove worthy, *I will hasten it*; if not, *in its time*." See Rashi and Radak on Isaiah 60:22; *Zohar* 1:117b; 3:66b; *Hadrat Qodesh*.

The full verse in Ruth reads: *Stay for the night. Then in the morning, if he will redeem you—good, let him redeem! But if he does not want to redeem you—I myself will redeem you, as YHVH lives! Lie down until morning*. See Sasson.

617. to delight with the righteous... On God's delight with the righteous in the Garden of Eden at midnight, see above, [notes 76](#), [546](#).

618. joining Redemption to Prayer... In the daily morning liturgy, the blessing "Blessed are You, YHVH, who has redeemed Israel" immediately precedes the *Amidah*, the "standing" prayer—so central that it is known simply as "prayer." According to BT *Berakhot* 4b and 9b, there should be no pause between this blessing and the beginning of the *Amidah*. (In the evening liturgy, the 'redemption' blessing also precedes 'prayer,' but other blessings intervene.) According to Kabbalah, *Shekhinah* is adorned during the sitting prayer in preparation for Her union with *Tif'eret*, which takes place during the *amidah*. When Israel does this,

they too have bonded with *Shekhinah*, signified by “Holy Land.”

On the juxtaposition of Redemption and Prayer, see Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 9b, p. 5b: “Know well that Prayer is above, the beginning of waters that have no end; and Redemption is below, end of the supernal ones, from which begins the emanation of all individual created entities. The reason for juxtaposing Redemption to Prayer is in order to unify everything up to *Ein Sof*, drawing down and bonding it to Tent—making all one. Then it is like ‘its end is fixed in its beginning,’ since as there is Wisdom above, so is there Wisdom below, and Redemption receives in place of Prayer.”

See BT *Berakhot* 10b; *Zohar* 1:132b, 205b, 228b; 2:128b, 138b, 156a, 216b; 3:195b; Moses de León, *Sefer Maskiyyot ha-Kesef*, 30–31; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 78–79; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 75–76 (96).

619. closer to the redemption... Boaz refers to the *close redeemer*, the relative whose proximity of kinship gives him precedence as a potential levir for Ruth. Here, he is referring to the ultimate redemption that derives from *Binah*, signified by the World that is Coming, and from *Hesed*, the first *sefirah* to emanate from *Binah*. Boaz, in contrast, symbolizes the redemption of *Yesod* and is thus further removed from the source of redemption.

620. Why is he called *Ploni Almoni*?... Why is the redeemer unnamed? It is because *Hesed* has been concealed, as educed from the verse in Lamentations. The reason for this hiddenness is that until the ultimate redemption comes from there, *Malkhut* will lie in the dust of exile. Her degraded state corresponds to the anonymity of Her redeemer. According to the Targumim, the term *ploni* means “hidden” or “one whose ways are concealed.” The term *Almoni* can also signify a widower, one whose wife “lies down on the earth.” *Qets ha-yamin*, “End of the right” (from Daniel 12:13), alludes to *Malkhut*, who is the consummation of the divine

flow, characterized by the grace of *Hesed* on the right. The hidden redeemer is identified with the light of *Hesed* hidden away at the time of creation.

On *Ploni*, see *Targum Onqelos*, Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Radak on Genesis 18:14; *Targum Onqelos*, Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 17:8; *Targum Yonatan* on 1 Samuel 21:3; *Targum* on Ruth 1:4; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On *Almoni*, see Mopsik; Englander. On *qets ha-yamin*, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:7; *Zohar* 1:54a-b, 62b-63a, 75a (ST), 210b, 233b, 234b-235a; 2:33a-34a, 181b; 3:142b (IR); ZH 63c (ShS), 83b (MhN, Rut); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 73-75, 368-71; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 80-81 (102-3); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 158. On the light hidden away for the righteous, see above, [note 478](#).

The verse in Lamentations reads: *He has withdrawn His right hand in the face of the enemy* [thereby enabling them to defeat Israel]. See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 5; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:6; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petihta* 24; 2:6; *Tanhumah, Beshallah* 15; *Zohar* 1:163b; 2:57a-b, 143b, 203a, 254a (*Heikh*); 3:74a, 201a, 237a; ZH 47b (MhN, Rut), 61b-c (MhN, ShS), 74d (ShS).

[621. two messiahs...](#) Rabbinic and medieval Jewish works attest to a tradition of two messiahs: Messiah son of Joseph, who would be oppressed and suffer, ultimately dying in battle; and Messiah son of David, who would bring the ultimate historical redemption.

On the two messiahs, see BT *Sukkah* 52a: “What is the cause of the mourning [mentioned in Zechariah 12:12]? Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis disputed the matter. One explained that it refers to the slaying of Messiah son of Joseph, and the other explained that it refers to the slaying of the Evil Impulse. It is understandable according to him who explains that it refers to the slaying of Messiah son of Joseph, since that well accords with the verse *And they shall look upon Me concerning the one they have stabbed*,

and they shall mourn for him as one mourns over an only child (Zechariah 12:10).” See above, [note 157](#).

On Joseph as Righteous One, see above, [note 94](#).

622. the right—which is behind... The right, signifying *Hesed*, is hidden; and until it is revealed and comes to the fore, Messiah Son of David cannot redeem the world.

The full verse in Psalms reads: *That those whom You love might be rescued, deliver with Your right hand and answer me.*

623. Son of Joseph will arrive and redeem first... The Messiah Son of Joseph, representing *Yesod*, will redeem first through union with *Malkhut*. Subsequently, the light of *Hesed* (identified here also as Righteous One), which had been stored away for the righteous, is revealed. Then the two Righteous Ones—*Hesed*, deriving from the upper world, and *Yesod*, redeemer of the lower world—unite, emanating divine overflow onto the universe. *Yesod* is now empowered by *Hesed* and unites with “the world,” signifying *Malkhut*, to produce new souls. The words *Acquire for yourself* represent the bonding of *Malkhut* with *Hesed*, and by extension with the upper world, *Binah*.

On the light hidden away for the righteous, see above, [note 478](#).

624. he took off his sandal... Removing the sandal signifies the unsheathing of the divine phallus *Yesod* in preparation for union with *Malkhut*. Thus, when the first redeemer hands over his sandal to Boaz, it is a sign that he has transferred access to *Malkhut* and enabled the redemption from the right, manifest through Moses, to appear.

In Ruth 4:7, the noun *ישׁ* (*ish*), *man*, midrashically alludes to Moses, in that he was told to remove his sandals upon encountering the burning bush (Exodus 3:5), and because the Torah refers to him conspicuously as “the *ish*” (Exodus 11:3; 32:1; Numbers 12:3; cf. Deuteronomy 33:1).

See *Zohar* 3:148a, 180a, 308b (*Tosafot*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 145–46; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 253; Wolfson, “Images of God’s Feet,” 166–67. Cf. *ZH* 72d (*ShS*).

625. lamp of light *Shekhinah* Herself has come to hear Rabbi Shim’on’s teachings, since he is the very source of Her light.

626. to validate any transaction... The simple meaning of the verse refers to a ritual form of validating legal transactions. As noted by Ibn Ezra (on 4:8), a sandal was commonly available and thus easy to use. It is not entirely clear in the original context who gave his sandal to whom, though it is clarified in the subsequent verse. The sandal practice in Ruth does not carry the disgrace that is depicted in the *halitsah* ritual of Deuteronomy 25:9.

On לְפָנַיִם (*le-fanim*), *of old*, as a reference to the hoary past, see 1 Samuel 9:9; cf. 1 Chronicles 9:20. On the verse, see BT *Bava Metsi’a* 47a; *Rut Rabbah* 7:12; Ibn Ezra; Rashi; Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky.

627. He created it based... upon the Torah... According to a midrashic tradition, the verse in Psalms 102 is spoken by the Torah, which served as God’s blueprint for Creation, or as His architect. Midrashic tradition also notes that one thousand years is like a single day for God, as indicated in Psalms 90:4: *For a thousand years in Your eyes are like yesterday gone, like a watch in the night.*

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1, in the name of Rabbi Osha’ya: “I was by Him as אָמוֹן (*amon*), a nursling.... אָמוֹן (*amon*)—אֹמָן (*umman*), an artisan. Torah says, ‘I was the artistic tool of the blessed Holy One.’ According to the custom of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace, he does not build it by his own skill but rather by the skill of an architect. And the architect does not build it out of his own knowledge, but rather has parchments and tablets [with plans and diagrams] to know how to make the rooms

and doors. Similarly, the blessed Holy One gazed into Torah and created the world.”

See M Avot 3:14; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 29, p. 160; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 5:11; *Bereshit Zuta* 1:1; *Zohar* 1:5a, 47a, 134a-b; 2:161a-b, 200a, 221a; 3:35b, 61b, 152a, 178a; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 2; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:242-45, 266-74.

On Torah’s preceding the world by two thousand years, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:2; *Va-yiqra Rabbah* 19:1; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 12:24; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:11; *Midrash Shemu’el* 5:2; *Tanḥuma, Vayeshev* 4; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Yitro* 16; *Midrash Tehillim* 25:8; 90:12, 17; *Bahir* 4 (5), 37 (55); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 3-4, 77; *Zohar* 2:49a, 84b, 99a; 3:128a (IR), 159a; *ZḤ* 5a (MhN), 29c, 49b.

The full verse in Proverbs (spoken by Wisdom) reads: *I was by him as אָמוֹן (amon), a nursling [or: intimate, confidant, artisan]; I was a delight day after day, playing before Him at all times.* The simple meaning of *amon* is obscure; it appears only one other time in the Bible, in Jeremiah 52:15. Cf. Song of Songs 7:2.

628. He stabilized the Torah... To fully exploit the Torah’s potential, God consolidated, examined, and investigated it. The context in Job describes how God prepares wisdom for humankind and transmits it to them. According to midrashic sources, this biblical passage alludes to God’s careful preparation for His revelation at Sinai.

The simple sense of the word אָדָם (*adam*) here is “man,” but the homily understands it as referring to Adam.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:5; *Tanḥuma, Yitro* 15, *Vayaqhel* 4; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 5; *Shemot Rabbah* 40:1; cf. *Sefer Yetsirah* 6:4.

Job 28:28 reads in full: *He said to man, “See! Fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and the shunning of evil is*

understanding.”

629. all the letters arose... This legend appears first in medieval midrashim. Here we see what is apparently the first version in the Zoharic corpus; it is couched in Hebrew. A fuller account appears in Aramaic in *Zohar* 1:2b–3a.

See *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva*, ver. 2 (*Battei Midrashot* 2:396–404); *Midrash Aseret ha-Dibberot* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:62–63); *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* (ed. L. Greenhut) 5:11; *Zohar* 1:205b; *TZ, Haqdamah*, 16a; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 562–67; Oron, “Sippur ha-Otiyyot u-Mqorotav.” Cf. BT *Berakhot* 55a, in the name of Rav: “Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which heaven and earth were created.” On letters in inverted order, see below, [p. 418, n. 170](#).

630. Your name is אמת (emet), Truth... According to BT *Shabbat* 55a, in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina, God’s seal is אמת (*emet*), “truth,” the final letter of which is ת (*tav*). The notion that God’s name is truth derives from Jeremiah 10:10: יהוה (YHVH) is the God of truth.

631. destined to die... See Ezekiel 9:3–4: *He [YHVH] called to the man dressed in linen with the scribe’s kit at his waist, and YHVH said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, marking a mark upon the foreheads of the people who moan and groan over all the abominations being committed in it.”* In the old Hebrew script, the ת (*tav*) was shaped like an X, the simplest mark of intention. Its purpose in Ezekiel was to distinguish the righteous from the rest of the population: only those bearing the mark escape death (*ibid.*, 6). However, according to the legend in BT *Shabbat* 55a, recorded in the name of Rabbi Aḥa son of Rabbi Ḥanina, even the marked righteous were killed: “The blessed Holy One said to [the angel] Gabriel, ‘Go and inscribe a *tav* of ink on the foreheads of the righteous so that the angels of destruction will not have dominion over them. And on the foreheads of the wicked a *tav* of blood so that the angels of destruction will have dominion over

them.’ The attribute of justice said before the blessed Holy One, ‘Master of the Universe, how are these different from those?’ He replied, ‘These are full-fledged righteous people and these are full-fledged wicked people.’ [The attribute of justice] said to Him, ‘Master of the Universe, it was in the hands of the righteous to protest—and they did not protest! [Therefore, they too are culpable!]’... Rabbi Shmu’el son of Nahmani said, ‘[The letter *tav* teaches] that these are people who fulfilled the entire Torah from *alef* through *tav*.’”

See BT *Shabbat* 55a; *Avodah Zarah* 4a; *Tanḥuma*, *Mishpatim* 7, *Tazri’a* 9; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tazri’a* 13; *Zohar* 1:2b, 205b.

632. Your Name שדי (Shaddai) begins with me See BT *Hagigah* 12a, where Resh Lakish interprets this name as alluding to God’s original command to limit the expansion of the universe: “I am the one ש (she), who, said to the world: די (dai), Enough!”

633. joined together... In other versions of the story, ש-ק-ר (shin, qof, resh) all come together and are rejected because they form the word שקר (sheqer), “falsehood.”

See *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva*, ver. 2 (*Battei Midrashot* 2:397–98); *Midrash Aseret ha-Dibberot* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:62–63); *Zohar* 1:2b, 205b.

634. descended from הכתר (ha-keter), the crown... כ (kaf) is the first letter of כתר (keter), “crown,” and thus represents it in its entirety.

635. thousands of Jews will stumble... God is probably alluding to Exodus 32:28, which reads: *The Levites did according to the word of Moses, and from the people בשלשת (kishloshet), about three thousand, men fell on that day.* The presence of the letter kaf as the prefixed modifier כ (ke-), *about*, entangles kaf in that massacre, and she is thus tainted as an instrument for creation.

636. letter of ברכה (berakhah), blessing... ב (Bet) stands for ברכה (berakhah), “blessing,” and the Torah begins with it: בראשית (bereshit), *In the beginning.*

See JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77c; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:10; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 109a; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 5; *Bereshit Zuta* 1:1; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 1:1; *Bahir* 5 (4).

637. My name אהד (eḥad), One Which begins with א (alef). א also represents the number one, a numerical representation of the blessed Holy One.

On the blessed Holy One's being called "One," see *Zohar* 1:33a; 2:134a, 161b; 3:7b, 16b, 56a, 77b, 93b; *ZḤ* 43d.

638. fashioned ב into a kind of secret wardrobe of treasures... All the letters of the alphabet shone through the letter *bet* like trophies in a display case, so that when the blessed Holy One contemplated the Torah—which begins with *bet*—He was actually gazing upon both the letter *bet* and the entire Torah with all the letters.

"Secret wardrobe of treasures" renders קומטרא דאסקופא (*qumtera de-isquppa*). The word *qamtera* generally refers to a clothes-chest or wardrobe, while *isquppa* can mean "yard" (of a ship) or "threshold" (of a doorway). In *ZḤ* 3a (*MhN*), *isquppa* refers to the "threshold" beneath which household valuables were buried. On *qamtera*, see *M Kelim* 16:7; *Ohalot* 9:15; *Targum Yonatan* on 2 Kings 10:22. On *isquppa*, see *BT Berakhot* 18b; Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls from Nippur*, 147, 161; Rashi on *BT Mo'ed Qatan* 11a, s.v. *tsinnor*; idem on *Joshua* 24:26; *Zohar* 1:46b, 67a; 2:83b; 3:69a and *Derekh Emet*, ad loc.; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 173; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 47; *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. אסקופה (*asquppah*); cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 3:3 (and Buber's note there).

Medieval illuminations depict wardrobes (or "clothing-chests") as containers that could hold treasures, particularly in paintings in Haggadot depicting the Israelites taking valuables from their Egyptian neighbors, deriving from Exodus 12:35: *The Israelites had done according to Moses' word, and they had asked of the Egyptians objects of silver and objects of gold, and cloaks.*

See the fifteenth-century *The Second Nuremberg Haggadah*, fol. 18b; Isaac ibn Sahula's *Meshal Haqadmoni*, fol. 12b; *Golden Haggadah*, fol. 13r.

On "actually," see above, [note 303](#).

639. the blessed Holy One does not withhold reward... God rewards the initiative shown by the last three letters (who came first), by fusing them with the letter ב (*bet*) to form the word בראשית, simultaneously restoring them to their proper order.

640. And through the Torah... Based on the association both of letters and of Torah with the phrase *of old*, Rav Huna offers another explanation of how the blessed Holy One created the world both through individual letters and through the Torah.

The full verse in Ruth reads: *Now this was done of old in Israel in cases of redemption or exchange: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to his fellow. Such was testimony in Israel.*

641. Israel arose in His mind... See *Tanḥuma, Naso* 11: "Seven things were created before the world was created. They are: the Throne of Glory, the Torah, the Temple, the world's patriarchs, the people of Israel, the name of the messiah, and repentance."

Rabbi Ḥanina interprets the scriptural terms from Ruth sefirotically, seeing "Torah" as a reference to *Ḥokhmah*, and "Israel" as a reference to *Tif'eret*. (Other textual versions explain that the Torah is inscribed upon the people Israel. See *Hadrat Qodesh*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Englander.)

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:5, in the name of Rabbi Avin: "The unripe fruit of heavenly wisdom is the Torah."

On items created before the creation of the world, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 37; BT *Pesaḥim* 54a, *Nedarim* 39b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4, p. 6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 19; *Midrash Tehillim* 90:12; 93:3; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 3; *Midrash Mishlei* 8:9; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 31, p. 160; *Zohar* 1:113a (*MhN*); *ZḤ* 5a (*MhN*). On Israel as arising in

God's thought before Creation, see *Zohar* 1:24a (TZ), 118b; 2:108b, 119a (RM).

642. the letters ה' (Y, H)... The letters ה' represent *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, the recondite realms of divine thought from which letters concretize and emerge, ultimately assuming the form of Written Torah in *Tif'eret*, represented by "Israel."

On the sefirotic origins of primal Torah, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 2-4, 77, and Tishby's n. 5; *Zohar* 1:15b, 16b, 47b, 156b (ST); 2:61b-62a, 85a, 121a, 161b, 200a; 3:81a, 182a, 192b, 261a, 290a (IR); ZH 15b (MhN); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 336, 369; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 106-8, 326-30; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 293-94, 1085-86.

The simple sense of the phrase in Ruth reads: *Now this was done of old בִּישְׂרָאֵל (be-yisra'el), in Israel.* Here, Rabbi Hanina hypostasizes *Israel* and interprets the preposition ב (be-) to mean that the Torah was inscribed upon him.

643. Jerusalem Talmud... The Torah that pre-exists the world by two thousand years includes both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds. The former is more authentic, however, since it was composed in the land of Israel, whereas the latter, written in Babylonian Aramaic and incorporating different interpretations of Torah and different practices, is a distortion.

The Zoharic authorship represents itself as writing in the land of Israel in the second century, sometimes polemicizing against the Jews in Babylon, criticizing them for being excessively reticent regarding esoteric lore.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 24a: "Rabbi Oshaya said, 'What is the meaning of the verse *I took for myself two staffs; one I called נֹעַם (No'am), Pleasantness, and the other I called חֹבְלִים (Hovelim), Bonds (Zechariah 11:7)? No'am—these are the scholars in the land of Israel, שְׂמַנְעִימִין (she-man'imin), who treat with graciousness, each other when engaged in halakhic debates. Hovelim—these are the scholars of Babylon, שְׂמַחְבְּלִים*

(*she-meḥabbelim*), who injure, each other when discussing halakhah...’ What does [the name] בבל (*Bavel*), Babylon, connote? Rabbi Yoḥanan said, ‘בלולה (*Belulah*), Mixed-up, scripture; mixed-up Mishnah; and mixed-up Talmud.’ *In dark places He has made me dwell, like those dead for eternity* (Lamentations 3:6). Rabbi Yirmeyahu said, “This refers to the Babylonian Talmud.”

On criticism of Babylon, see Jeremiah 13:13; BT *Pesaḥim* 87a, *Yoma* 57a, *Zevaḥim* 60b, *Menaḥot* 52a, *Bekhorot* 25b; *Zohar* 1:96b, 224b–225a; *ZH* 91a–93d (*MhN, Eikhah*); Liebes, “Ziqqat ha-Zohar le-Erets Israel”; Huss, “Ḥakham Adif mi-Navi,” 41–42 and n. 126. Liebes suggests that the Jerusalem Talmud is a cipher for the *Zohar* itself. See Liebes, 42–44.

The citation from Ruth represents a small discrepancy from MT. On the *Zohar*’s divergences from MT, see above, [p. 5, n. 6](#).

The simple meaning of Isaiah 8:16 reads: *Bind up the testimony; seal Torah among My disciples*.

[644. covenant of circumcision ...](#) *To firm up* renders לקיים (*le-qayyem*), whose simple meaning in the verse is *to validate*. In the *Zohar*, however, the root *qym* often refers to the covenant of circumcision or to *Yesod*. See Liebes, *Peraqim*, 358, 361–62, 368, 371–79.

On circumcision as equivalent to all the commandments of the Torah, see JT *Nedarim* 3:11, 38b; *Zohar* 2:92a.

[645. commandment of ḥalitsah...](#) According to the biblical custom of levirate marriage, if a married man dies childless, his brother should marry the widow and then father a child who will be considered the offspring of the deceased. Posthumously providing the dead man with offspring prevents his name from being blotted out. If the brother refuses, he and the widow perform the ceremony of *ḥalitsah* (release): before a religious court, his shoe is removed and she spits in his presence (or his face). As a consequence, he is freed of his obligation and she is free to

marry another man. Rabbinic tradition indicates that men began to choose to marry their late brother's widows for base reasons and so began to prefer *ḥalitsah* over *yibbum*.

See M *Bekhorot* 1:7: "The commandment of *yibbum* takes precedence over the commandment of *ḥalitsah*—this was in olden days, when they acted for the sake of fulfilling a commandment. But now, when they do not act for the sake of fulfilling a commandment, they have ruled that the commandment of *ḥalitsah* takes precedence over the commandment of *yibbum*." BT *Yevamot* 39b supplies another opinion that this preference was reversed yet again. The privileging of *ḥalitsah* over *yibbum* reflects the Ashkenazi practice, while the Sephardi practice privileges *yibbum*. The reading here is not found in V6, O17, O18, L39, MS3, N55, CH1, Th, V, or *Hadrat Qodesh*, but it is found in some of the manuscripts (MS4, V22, and in L38 in a later hand) and some of the printed texts preserve it as an alternate reading (Or *Yaḡar*; Munkacz; Margalioṭ).

On levirate marriage, see above, [note 430](#). On the legal context of *ḥalitsah*, see Rashi on *Bekhorot* 13a, s.v. *akhshav*; *Tosafot* on *Yevamot* 39b, s.v. *amar rav ein kofin*; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yibbum*, 1:2; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah Turim, Even ha-Ezer*, 165; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Even ha-Ezer* 165:1. On *ḥalitsah* in Zoharic Kabbalah and subsequent ramifications, see *Zohar* 3:180a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 359; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 252–54; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishḡal*, 145–46; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 258–62; Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah*, 62–65, 127–74; idem, *Divine Law in Human Hands*, 45–49. On *yibbum* with wrong intent, see *Zohar* 3:177a.

On the loss of wisdom after the destruction of the Temple, see BT *Megillah* 12b: "From the day when the Temple was destroyed and we were exiled from our land, counsel has been taken from us and we do not know how to judge capital cases." See BT *Sotah* 49a–b; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Traditional interpretation of this verse treats the shoe ceremony as a form of symbolic acquisition called *halipin*. See JT *Qiddushin* 1:5, 60c; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 47a, *Niddah* 45a; *Rut Rabbah* 7:11; *Midrash Shmu'el* 18:5; Rashi; Ibn Ezra; El'azar of Worms.

646. partner with the blessed Holy One... As the blessed Holy One prevented the cessation of life, so does the man who performs *yibbum*, for he continues his brother's lineage.

647. man astray in the desert... This parable represents the soul of a man who dies childless, for despite all his pious actions during his lifetime, his soul cannot ascend to benefit from the heavenly reward he had earned. Without siring children, he is like one beset by thugs. Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

648. His friend... His brother came and performed *yibbum*, marrying his brother's widow. The deceased was like one who had performed no religious acts, but when a child was born of the new union—the deceased reincarnated—he was like one who had been given a new house and new clothes. Through pious action, he soon accrued new deeds in his name. Thus the transfer of *his sandal* represents the entire cycle of one brother giving his deceased brother a new lease on life, by allowing him to come back into the world to rectify his defective condition.

In *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 138, Moses de León says that the redeemer saves him from the hands of “destroyers,” presumably angels of destruction.

649. other nations... The doubled formulation in the two verses indicates that they are like the dead in this world, nor will they be rejuvenated at the time of resurrection.

The full verse in Jeremiah reads: *Thus shall you say to them: Let the gods, who did not make heaven and earth, perish from the earth and from under these heavens.*

650. *like Rachel and like Leah...* Through much of the book of Ruth, she is referred to as a Moabite. At this point, the people of the town approve of and bless her union with Boaz, expressly welcoming her into the people, while bypassing the prohibition against marrying Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:4). *Do [something] mighty... and perpetuate your name* implies success in procreation. See Sasson; Zakovitch; Eskenazy/Frymer-Kensky.

651. *for a virgin only...* In a standard wedding ceremony, seven blessings are recited to honor and gladden the bride and groom. In cases involving widowers and widows, however, only one is recited. While there are several statements within the simple sense of the people's invocation (Ruth 4:11), here they are understood as all part of a single utterance and as one blessing.

Rabbi Ḥanina contradicts the Talmudic teaching, in which the number of days on which blessings are recited differs for virgins and widows, not the number of blessings. See BT *Ketubbot* 7a, in the name of Rav Huna in the name of Rav: "A virgin as well as a widow requires a blessing.' But did Rav Huna say so? Did not Rav Huna say: 'A widow does not require a blessing?' There is no contradiction. Here it refers to a young man who marries a widow, while there it refers to a widower who marries a widow. And when a widower marries a widow, [a blessing] is not required? Did not Rav Naḥman say: 'Huna son of Nathan said to me, "A *Tanna* taught, 'From where is it derived that the blessing of bridegrooms has to be said in the presence of ten? As is said, *Then he took ten men from the elders of the town and said, 'Be seated here'; and they sat down* (Ruth 4:2).'" And yet Boaz was a widower, who married a widow! What is the meaning of the 'she does not require a blessing' that Rav Huna said? She does not require a blessing all seven days, but on one day she requires a blessing."

On the restriction of one blessing for a widow, see the remarks of Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa* 1:1175: “Regarding your statement that you had seen a certain prayer-book that distinguishes the wedding blessings conferred when a widower marries a widow and those for a young man who marries a virgin, that the widower marrying a widow receives only one blessing... I have never heard such a thing, and there is no suggestion of such in the Talmud at all. On the contrary, the words of the Talmud prescribe the opposite.... I have not seen a single authority who has written those, nor have I seen anyone conduct himself in this way.... Nobody knows who wrote these words.” Ta-Shma indicates that this practice is first recorded in late twelfth-century France.

On the seven blessings, see BT *Ketubbot* 7b-8a; *Zohar* 2:169a-b. On limiting the blessings of the widower and widow, see *Zohar* 3:266b; *Sha’arei Teshuvah* (*Teshuvot ha-Ge’onim*), 344; *Sefer Kol Bo*, 75; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-be-Nistar*, 33. On Boaz as a widower, see BT *Bava Batra* 91a.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *As a youth espouses a virgin, Your sons shall espouse you; And as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, So will your God rejoice over you.* Since the verse parallels the term *virgin* with *bride*, one can infer that only a virgin is called “bride.”

652. A semblance of the seven blessings... The root principles of the normative seven blessings are present within this one benediction conferred by the people.

653. In honor... The three days of rejoicing that the Talmud prescribes for the widower and widow are reconceived here as three blessings. Jewish holidays are sanctified and ceremonies are often introduced with wine and its accompanying blessing. The second blessing is the one bestowed by the people upon Boaz and Ruth. The third is a version of the final wedding blessing: “Blessed are You, *YHVH* our God, King of the world, who has created jubilation

and happiness, groom and bride, love, companionship, rejoicing, exultation, peace, and fellowship. Soon, *YHVH* our God, may there be heard in the cities of Yehudah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, the sounds of jubilation and happiness, the sounds of the groom and bride, the joyous sounds of grooms from their wedding canopy and of young people at their feasts of song. Blessed are You, *YHVH*, who causes the groom to rejoice with the bride.” The version of this blessing in BT *Ketubbot* 8a (and in the standard liturgy) includes twelve synonyms of, or nouns related to, joy, rather than the ten listed here—where Rabbi Ḥanina wishes to parallel the ten utterances used to create the world and, most likely, the ten *sefirot*.

On the “ten utterances,” see M *Avot* 5:1: “By ten utterances the world was created.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:1; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 32a, *Megillah* 21b; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 108a-b (and Ish Shalom’s n. 138); 40, 169a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; B, 36; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3 (and Luria’s n. 73); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 506; *Zohar* 1:16b, 30a; 2:14b (*MhN*), 34b, 67a, 75b, 156b, 169b, 178b (*SdT*s), 200a; 3:11b-12a, 73a; *ZH* 4b (*SO*). Cf. BT *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Sefer ha-Bahir* 96 (141-46).

654. seven... Rabbi Yehudah disagrees with Rabbi Ḥanina, contending that there are only seven distinct terms within the blessing.

655. five voices... In the penultimate line of the final blessings, the repeated term קול (*qol*) means “sound(s)” in its simple sense. Rabbi Ḥanina construes each iteration of the word in its related meaning as “voice,” yielding five “voices”: of jubilation; of happiness; of the groom; of the bride; and “of grooms from their wedding canopy and of young people at their feasts of song.”

656. Great Sanhedrin... BT *Bava Qamma* 60b (and Rashi, ad loc.) cites the verse from 2 Samuel, interpreting *the gate* to refer to the Sanhedrin. See *Targum*.

On Boaz as Ibzan, see BT *Bava Batra* 91a; above, [note 80](#).

[657. one's soul in this world...](#) The full verse in Exodus reads: *If you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets.* God, too, follows this rule, in restoring a person's soul after its nightly ascent.

On the soul's nightly ascent, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:1: "New every morning; great is Your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23). Rabbi Shim'on son of Abba said, 'Before you renew us each and every morning, we know that you are immensely faithful to redeem us.' Rabbi Alexandrai said, 'Before you renew us each and every morning, we know that you are immensely faithful to resurrect the dead.'" See *Zohar* 2:213b-214a; *ZH* 18b (*MhN*).

The words *And he was given to them* are not found in MT. On discrepancies between the *Zohar's* rendering of verses and those in MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

[658. a verse evoking compassion...](#) During sleep, the soul ascends to heaven. If we took into account one's daily sins, the soul should not be restored in the morning. However, by consciously delivering the soul as a pledge to God before sleep, one ensures that God will return the pledge.

See BT *Berakhot* 5a, in the name of Abbaye: "Even a scholar should recite one verse evoking compassion [before going to bed], such as: *Into Your hand I entrust [or: commend, commit, deposit] my spirit; You redeem me, YHVH, God of truth* (Psalms 31:6)." Traditionally, this verse is included in the nightly recital of *Shema* before sleep.

See *Zohar* 1:11a, 36b; 3:119a, 198b, 260a; *ZH* 18b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 11; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 53.

[659. in accord with His attributes...](#) This statement is somewhat fragmentary and probably refers to the

individual's obligation to return a neighbor's pledge before the end of the day. See Exodus 22:25–26; Deuteronomy 24:6, 12–13, 17; *Zohar* 3:119a, 198b (and *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 8); *ZH* 18c (*MhN*); Vol. 8, pp. 267–68, n. 63. Cf. Ezekiel 18:16; Amos 2:8; Job 22:6; 24:3.

660. He seizes his soul Exodus 22:25 reads: *If תחבל חבל (ḥavol taḥbol), you should indeed take in pledge, your neighbor's garment.* Here, Rabbi Ḥanina interprets the doubling of the verb to signify two events: if one ruins one's soul through sinful behavior, he will die—and God will seize his soul as a pledge.

On this reading, see Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Englander. The simple meaning of the verse from Nahum reads: *Why will you plot against YHVH? He wreaks utter destruction: No adversary opposes Him twice!*

661. his pledge is in the hand of the Omnipresent... The widow's *garment* refers to the child born of the marriage of the widow and the brother-in-law. For the infraction of not siring children, the deceased's soul was taken by God as pledge—and will not be taken again for this transgression. Alternatively, it will not meet an early demise on any account. Cf. Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 324–25; *Hadrat Qodesh*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

662. All souls Ultimately, all souls will receive their just deserts.

663. blemished the covenant... These tortured souls wander without respite, until they are reincarnated into another body.

See BT *Bava Batra* 116a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: "Whoever does not leave a son to succeed him incurs the full wrath of the blessed Holy One."

On punishment for not engaging in procreation, see *Zohar* 1:228b; 2:105b–106a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 224, 241–44; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 138; Recanati, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, 33c. Some kabbalists distinguish between those who do not marry or procreate

intentionally and those who make every effort but are unsuccessful. See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 353 ff. and Scholem's n. 183; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 249-52; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 141-45; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 254-55. See also Asher ben David, *Sefer ha-Yihud*, 129; *Zohar* 1:90a, 187b. On the significance of procreation, see BT *Yevamot* 63b; *Zohar* 1:115a; *ZH* 59b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 137-38; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 23; Mopsik, "Creation and Procreation"; below, [note 666](#).

664. uproots it and transplants it... One who fails to procreate will be given further opportunities through reincarnation to do so, up to a maximum of three chances.

See *Bahir* 135 (195 and Margaliot's nn. 5 and 7, ad loc.); *Zohar* 1:48a, 186b-187a; 2:109a; *ZH* 59a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 358; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 248; *ZH* 114b (*Tiq*); *TZ* 6 (22b), 28 (72b), 69 (103a).

Job 33:29-30 reads: *Truly, God does all these things two or three times to a man, To bring him back from the Pit, that he may bask in the light of life.*

665. Four portals in the heavens... Rabbi Neḥuniah son of Yose explains the references in Amos to *three* and *four* as signifying groups of angels who meet the soul after its successive deaths. Though the text says that they are appointed over doorways in the heavens (following its literary model in *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 15), in context it is clear that they are appointed over openings to Hell. One who fails to procreate is given three opportunities to avoid Hell, but if he fails to marry and sire children after all those chances, the fourth group is no longer merciful—and prevents him from leaving. Alternatively, even if he fails to procreate but repents of this unintentional transgression, he is forgiven and saved from Hell.

See BT *Yoma* 86b, in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Yehudah: "If a person commits a transgression once, he is

forgiven; twice, he is forgiven; a third time, he is forgiven; a fourth time, he is not forgiven, as is said: *Thus says YHVH: For three transgressions of Israel; for four, I will not reverse it* (Amos 2:6)."

On this passage, see *Hadrat Qodesh; Matoq mi-Devash*. See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 15 and Luria's note 12; ZH 59a-c (*MhN*), 89c (*MhN, Rut*).

666. diminished the image... Building on the foundational notion from Genesis 1:26 that the human being is created in the image of God, Genesis 5:3 reads: *Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and he engendered in his likeness—according to his image—and called his name Seth*. In Zoharic Kabbalah, procreation signifies the continuous manifestation of the image of God; the failure to procreate signifies a failure to continue the chain of the divine image. Moreover, by causing a blemish within his own point of circumcision, he produces a defect in *Yesod* above.

On "diminishing the [divine] image," see *Bereshit Rabbah* 34:14: "Rabbi El'azar son of Azariah expounded, 'Whoever abstains from procreation is as though he diminished the image. What is the explanation? *For in the image of God He made the human* (Genesis 9:6), and written afterward: *As for you, be fruitful and multiply* (ibid., 7).' Ben Azzai expounded: 'Whoever abstains from procreation is as though he spilled blood and diminished the [divine] image.'"

See *Tosefta Yevamot* 8:7; BT *Yevamot* 63b; *Mekhilta, Baḥodesh* 8; *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:2; *Zohar* 1:13a, 66a, 186b; ZH 59a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 353-55 and n. 183, ad loc.; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 241-43; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 137-38; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 23, 58; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 152, 243-44, 250-51, 256, 262; David ben Judah he-Ḥasid, *The Book of Mirrors*, 28, and introduction, 34, n. 238; Heschel,

Heavenly Torah, 261–64; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1362–63.

The verse in Isaiah concludes: *nor their fire be quenched, and they will be a horror to all flesh*. On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:13a; 2:85b, 106b, 214b.

667. fills his quiver... See BT *Ḥagigah* 15a, in the name of Shemu'el: "Any emission of semen that does not shoot forth like an arrow does not fructify." See *Zohar* 1:6a, 88a. On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:115b, 188a.

For what his hands have perpetrated is frequently interpreted as a reference to masturbation, the one sin in the *Zohar* for which repentance does not avail. See BT *Niddah* 13a: "Rabbi Yitshak and Rabbi Ammi said, '[Whoever emits semen fruitlessly] is as though he sheds blood.'"

Cf. *Zohar* 1:56b–57a, 62a, 69a, 100b, 188a, 219b; 2:103a, 214b, 263b (*Heikh*); 3:90a, 158a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 353; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 230; idem, *Orḥot Ḥayyim*, par. 58; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 59; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1365–66; Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 246–64; Pachter, *Shemirat ha-Berit*; idem, "Ḥet she-ein alav teshuvah."

668. cannot be ruled by angels of destruction... Children's good deeds and merit protect their parents from harsh judgment in the hereafter.

See *Zohar* 1:115b, 188a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 110; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 138.

669. abstain from procreation... One must always persevere in the commandment of procreation, since Torah learning and good deeds alone do not secure salvation.

On learning and good deeds as insufficient to procure salvation if one has not procreated, see BT *Berakhot* 10a; *Zohar* 1:228b. On the salvific quality of good deeds, see BT *Shabbat* 32a: "These are a person's advocates: repentance and good deeds. And even if nine hundred and ninety-nine argue for his guilt, while one argues in his favor, he is

saved, as is said: *If he has an angel over him, an advocate, one among a thousand to vouch for his uprightness, then He is gracious to him and says, 'Spare him from descending to the Pit...'* (Job 33:23-24). Rabbi Eli'ezer son of Rabbi Yose the Galilean says, 'Even if nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of that angel are in his disfavor and one part is in his favor, he is saved, as is said: *an advocate, one among a thousand* (ibid., 23).'" See *Zohar* 1:13a, 174b; 2:32b, 249a, 252a (last two *Heikh*); *ZH* 14c (*MhN*), 47a, 75c, 77d (last three all *MhN, Rut*); above, [note 11](#).

[670. one of our companions...](#) The reference to a companion refers to the story of Rabbi Yoḥanan below. See BT *Berakhot* 5a-b, *Bava Batra* 116a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 141; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 250-51.

According to rabbinic tradition, Hezekiah had not fathered children when Isaiah warned him that he was doomed to die. See BT *Berakhot* 10a; *Zohar* 1:66a, 228b.

[671. I am dead to the World that is Coming...](#) According to BT *Berakhot* 5b, Rabbi Yoḥanan buried ten children and wondered whether such suffering would bring atonement.

See BT *Yevamot* 62b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a: "If [a man] had children in his youth, he should also have children in his old age, as is said, *In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not hold back your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both are equally good* (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

See also *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* 24: "... Rabbi Yoḥanan wept as death approached. His students said to him, 'If you cry, Master, what will befall us?' He replied, "My children, I do not weep because I will be brought to judgment and my actions will be presented before me and I will be judged for them. Rather, because they will tell me, "[You will receive your judgment] because your children died in your lifetime and you did not merit to repair the world."...' From here one learns that one whose children die during his lifetime,

his teeth are blunted, his eyes dimmed, and his strength dissipates.”

See *Qohelet Rabbah* 11:6; *Zohar* 1:187b (and Scholem’s note there), 188a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 140-42; *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 250-51.

672. how many descendants... Rabbi Yoḥanan’s students contended that they counted as his children because of all the Torah that they had learned from him.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 19b: “Rabbi Ḥanina says, ‘...*And he was given to them, and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, ‘A son is born to Naomi!’* (Ruth 4:17). Did Naomi give birth? It was Ruth who gave birth! This comes to teach that Ruth gave birth and Naomi raised the child and therefore the birth was ascribed to her’... Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, ‘Whoever teaches Torah to the son of his fellow, scripture ascribes to him as if he had engendered him.’”

673. Rabbi Hizkiyah, who is impotent... On Rabbi Hizkiyah, see *Zohar* 1:187b. On the expression “Put your mind to rest—as you have put my mind to rest,” see BT *Shabbat* 152b, *Pesaḥim* 32b, *Yoma* 66b, *Sanhedrin* 30b, *Menahot* 45a, 100a.

Isaiah 56:5 concludes: *An everlasting name I will give them, which will not be cut off.*

674. how many graves will be empty... If a person’s soul is reincarnated in a new body to have another chance to engender children, what will happen to the first body at the time of resurrection? Surely, the soul will be resurrected in the last body it inhabited! In such cases, the first bodies are ultimately useless, their graves considered empty.

The biblical meaning of being *cut off* (or *excised*) is interpreted in a range of ways; the cutting off of one’s line is the simple meaning. Here, Rabbi Beroka’s interpretation is ironic, probably intentionally so. He explains it in the context of the continuity of the soul through

metempsychosis and the potential end of the usefulness of the individual's first body.

On the fate of the first body, see *Zohar* 1:131a; 2:100a; 3:308a-b; *TZ* 31 (76a); Scholem, *Shedim Ruhot u-Nshamot*, 191, 197. Cf. Matthew 22:23-33; *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, 1:418.

On "excision," see *M Karetot* 1:1; *Sifrei Bemidbar* 112; *Mekhilta Pisha* 8; *BT Mo'ed Qatan* 28a; Rashi on *BT Shabbat* 25a, s.v. *ve-karet*; Ibn Ezra on Genesis 17:14; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:1; Nahmanides on Leviticus 20:3; Levine, *Leviticus*, 241-42; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 457-60.

In its simple meaning, the verse in Leviticus reads: *Say to them, 'To your generations, any man of all your seed who draws near the sacred donations that the Israelites consecrate to YHVH with his uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from before Me. I am YHVH.*

675. from this earth... According to medieval renderings of Ptolemaic cosmology, there are seven earths, one of which is called *Neshiyya*. That name derives from the root נשׁי (nshy), "forget"—and may also bear an echo of its meaning "dislocate." While God would not destroy these bodies, He does leave them abandoned in *Neshiyya* for ages.

On the seven earths, see above, [note 249](#). On *Tevel*, see above, [note 251](#).

676. oblivious to the covenant... Since these bodies abandoned the covenant through their failure to procreate, so does God forsake them. Rabbi Beroka answers his own question by saying that those bodies have not disappeared and so the graves were not dug in vain—they are markers for these condemned bodies.

In Zoharic Kabbalah, forgetfulness is directly linked to the demonic, while memory is associated with fidelity to the covenant of circumcision. This latter association is based partly on the assumed link between the words זכר (*zekher*), "memory," and זכר (*zakhar*), "male."

On remembering and forgetting, see BT *Berakhot* 32b; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:8; in connection with the covenant, see *Zohar* 1:72b, 159b-160a, 193b; 2:92b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 363-64; Wolfson, “Re/Membering the Covenant,” 202-5. Cf. Radak, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *zakhar*; Ba'al ha-Turim on Deuteronomy 7:18; Mandelkern, *Concordance*, s.v. *zakhar*; Ben-Yehudah, s.v. *zakhar*, 1337.

According to the *Zohar*, the wicked in Hell forget their names. See *ZH* 49a, 84c (*MhN*, *Rut*); cf. *Massekhet Hibbut ha-Qever* 2 (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:150).

677. נָשִׁי (*nashei*), women... Rabbi Beroka plays on the similarity of the name *Neshiyah* to the term נָשִׁי (*nashei*), “women,” which is not etymologically related. In this womanless world, men’s bodies engage in a sterile and entirely self-involved existence. The word זָרַעִי (*zar’ei*), “sow,” here implies “ejaculate,” meaning that the men’s primary activities are masturbation and accidental emissions—fruitless endeavors. Their own obliviousness evokes a punishment of being consigned to oblivion.

678. שְׂכִינֹת (*shekheilot*), ‘dwellers,’... When a redeemer comes to perform *yibbum* (levirate marriage), these souls are called *shekheilot*, “dwellers,” because the children borne of such a marriage are inhabited by souls that were looking for a place to reside. See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 357-58.

In Ruth 4:17, the simple meaning of *shekheilot* is *women neighbors*, and it functions as the grammatical subject rather than as an object.

On God’s land being called *Tevel*, see Proverbs 8:31. On this body’s returning to *Tevel*, see *Zohar* 2:100a. On wandering souls being called *dwellers*, see *ZH* 37b (*RR*).

679. die... These people apparently die before they actually repent.

The following passage discussing the ten martyrs is rather opaque, perhaps in accord with the esotericism prescribed. See Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 44:17;

Alqabets, *Berit ha-Levi*, 44a-b; Mopsik; Englander; below, [note 681](#).

[680](#). **Torah does not receive impurity...** Rabbi Azariah thinks that Rabbi Yudai's blanching arises from shame regarding some infraction. He assures Rabbi Yudai that even one who is impure is allowed to engage in Torah or read it publicly.

The interchange draws on a story involving Rabbi Yehudah son of Beteira in BT *Berakhot* 22b: "Words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity. There was a story of a disciple who was [reciting teachings] hesitantly [because he had had a seminal emission] before Rabbi Yehudah son of Beteira. He said to him, 'My son, open your mouth and let your words shine, for words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity, as is said: *Is not My word like fire* (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as fire is not susceptible to impurity, so too words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity.'"

See JT *Berakhot* 3:4, 6b-c; BT *Berakhot* 22a, *Hullin* 136b.

[681](#). **sale of Joseph** According to rabbinic tradition, the brothers' sin of selling Joseph was finally requited by the martyrdom of ten prominent rabbis at the hand of the Romans during the Hadrianic persecution in the second century. Rabbi Yudai wonders why these deaths were required, given that Joseph's brothers had certainly repented and died after their sin.

See *Midrash Mishlei* 1:13, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi, and the statement attributed there to Rabbi Avin, according to which ten martyrs in each generation suffer on account of the brothers' misdeed, "and still that sin lingers."

See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §108; *Elleh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:64-72); *Midrash Tehillim* 9:13; *Midrash Elleh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:64-72); *Ma'aseh Asarah Harugei Malkhut* (in *ibid.*, 6:19-35); *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*), 106a, 202a; 2:8b, 33a; *ZH* 46a; 93b (*MhN*,

Eikhah); Musaf Yom Kippur Liturgy; Stern, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 143-65; Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*; Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic*, especially 51-60, 71-98; Meroz, "R. Yosef Angelet u-Khtavav ha-Zohariyyim," 329-33; above, [note 79](#).

The verse in Psalms reads: *The counsel [or: secret] of YHVH is for those who fear [or: revere] Him, and to them He reveals His covenant*. In midrashic and Zoharic literature, this verse is used to refer primarily to circumcision—associated in the *Zohar* with Joseph—or to God's destruction of large numbers of people. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:2; *Tanḥuma*, *Lekh Lekha* 19, *Vayera* 5-6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Lekh Lekha* 23, *Vayera* 6; *Midrash Tehillim* 25:13; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 526; *Zohar* 1:37b, 73a, 95a, 236b; 2:75a, 237b; 3:43b (*Piq*), 91b-92a, 127b (*IR*) 141b (*IR*), 294b (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 339; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 226.

682. Phinehas is Elijah... Rabbi Azariah explains to Rabbi Yudai: 'Do not be troubled by the fact that there is a link between Joseph's brothers and the martyred sages, since we know that Phinehas returned as Elijah.' In other words, sometimes reincarnation occurs for obscure reasons. Commentators resolve this cryptic response by suggesting that the deaths of the rabbis procured for them different kinds of spiritual purification, achieved various forms of divine unifications, or resulted from a far more venal crime by Joseph's brothers than mentioned in the text.

See *TZ* 69 (110a): "Rabbi Yose said, 'With this *yod* Joseph sinned, as is written: *Yet firm remained his bow, his arms ever-moving* (Genesis 49:24). What is *ever-moving*? He discharged a drop—which is *yod*—from between his fingers, and it split up into ten sparks, shot from the bow, which is covenant. Where did they get discharged? Into the ten martyrs of the empire.' [Rabbi El'azar] replied, 'But I heard that the ten martyrs were the sons of Jacob!' He said,

‘God forbid! Rather they had their appearance.’ He replied, ‘Who caused them to be discharged there?’ He said, ‘It was on account of the image of his father—who had the image of Primal Adam—who appeared there. This caused them to be discharged there, and he dug his fingernails into the ground. Then he fled, so that they were not ejaculated into that harlot.’ For if the image of his father had not been displayed before him, this discharge would not have occurred... Thus it was not a transgression, but rather beneficial...” See BT *Sotah* 36b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 87:7; Recanati, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, 33b-c; Alqabets, *Berit Ha-Levi*, 44a-d; Sullam; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Pachter, *Shemirat ha-Berit*, 189 and nn. 81-82.

On Elijah and Phinehas, see above, [note 451](#).

683. Rabbi Akiva did not have ancestral merit Why did Rabbi Akiva suffer this fate, given that he was the descendant of converts—and thus not descended from the ten tribes? What benefit could his death provide?

See BT *Berakhot* 27b. On ancestral merit, see *Mekhilta*, *Pisha* 1; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 6:2; *Bereshit Rabbah* 60:2, 70:8, 71:9, 74:12, 87:5; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:34, 28:2, 40:4; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:7, p. 676; 36:5-6; JT *Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27d; BT *Shabbat* 55a, 129b; *Bava Batra* 91a; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 8:9, 9:45, 11:2, 19:26; *Devarim Rabbah*, *Egev* 15; *Ki Tetsei* 5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2, 9; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petihtah* 23; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:11, 12:7; *Midrash Zuta* on *Qohelet* 4:3, 12:5; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 3, 5:8, 23:7; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 4, 13b; 15, 71b, 73b; 34, 159b; 40, 169a; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayetse* 13; *Bo* 5; *Ki Tissa* 4, 20, 30, 32; *Bemidbar* 14; *Huqat* 21; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 9; *Huqqat* 48; *Balaq* 14; *Midrash Tehillim* 7:6; 27:7; 28:2; 94:5; 106:9; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* (Higger) 47; *Zohar* 1:66a; *ZH* 35d (RR).

684. Of the descendants of Issachar... See BT *Yoma* 26a, in the name of Rava: “You will not find any rabbinical scholar offering rulings unless he is a descendant from the

tribe of Levi or Issachar. ‘Levi,’ as is written: *They shall teach Your laws to Jacob* (Deuteronomy 33:10). ‘Issachar,’ as is written: *Of the descendants of Issachar, men who knew how to interpret the signs of the times, to know what Israel ought to do* (1 Chronicles 12:33).” Thus Rabbi Akiva was a descendant of Issachar, earning him his woeful place among the other martyrs.

The assumption that Torah scholars descend from Issachar derives from the pseudo-etymological breakdown of his name into יש שכר (*yesh sakhar*), *there is reward*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 72:5, 98:12, 99:9 (and nn. there); *Vayiqra Rabbah* 25:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:17; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 7:14; *Tanḥuma, Va-yehi* 11; Rashi on Deuteronomy 33:17; Radak on Genesis 49:15; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* on Genesis 30:18, n. 64.

685. יששכר (*Yesh s’khar*), ***There is reward...*** From Jacob and Leah’s intercourse on the evening that she hired him, יששכר (*Yissaskhar*), “Issachar,” was born—his name punning on the root שכר (*skr*), “hire,” and on the doubled letter ש (*sin*), which is written but not pronounced. The apparently superfluous letter warrants explanation. Here, the doubled *sin* in Issachar refers to reward at two different times: when the tribe first settles in the land of Israel, and in a future incarnation as “sheep for the kingdom of heaven”—rabbinic martyrs “sacrificed” to God. The bodies of the ten elders remain in this world even though they had previously encased righteous souls descended from Issachar.

On the double *sin* in Issachar, see Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on Genesis 30:18; see previous note.

The verse in Genesis reads: *All these are the tribes of Israel, twelve, and this is what their father spoke to them, blessing them; each according to his blessing, he blessed them*. On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:241a, 248a; 3:62a.

686. **Rabbi Yudai fell prostrate...** Overwhelmed and humbled by the revelation of this secret lore. Celestial beings displayed the same verse from Ecclesiastes that was

assigned to the heretical Elisha son of Avuyah, whose sin was to articulate his understanding of his vision from above. Rabbi Yudai retreats to pious reticence, affirming God's kindness even in the most confounding situations.

V24, O17, L39, MS4, V, and Th all include a gloss at this point that explains that the souls of Joseph's ten brothers were infused into the bodies of the ten martyrs. Consequently, the justice meted out was directed precisely at those who had committed the infraction, rather than at innocents. This translation has omitted the passage since it is clearly interpolated by a later hand (and is not found in O18 and MS3), but the comment does reflect a relatively early interpretation. See Munkacz; *Sullam*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 1; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

687. His concealed, hidden matters... Issues such as the nature of the soul, reincarnation, and sainted individuals are the most recondite—and must be kept secret, out of concern for the dignity of God and of those figures.

On ambivalence about revealing secrets, see *Zohar* 3:74b: "Rabbi Shim'on clapped his hands and wept. He exclaimed, 'Woe is me if I speak and reveal the secret! Woe is me if I do not speak, for the Companions will be deprived of the word.'" See M *Kelim* 17:16; *Tosefta Kelim (Bava Metsi'a)* 7:9; BT *Bava Batra* 89b; *Zohar* 1:11b; 2:123b, 257b; 3:127b (*IR*).

The tension about concealing and revealing the secrets of the soul and reincarnation are most pronounced in the *Sava de-Mishpatim* section. See *Zohar* 2:95a, 100b. On reticence regarding the souls of exalted figures, see above, [note 447](#).

688. Lost object she had lost... Why does the verse say *A son is born to Naomi*, rather than to Boaz? The explanation is that Naomi had lost her son Mahlon (Ruth 1:5), but she now regained him—reincarnated in the offspring of Boaz and Ruth. Even though he has reappeared

in this world, he emerges as an infant rather than at the peak of his powers.

See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 358; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 138.

689. name... This term signifies the soul that has been wandering, waiting to re-enter the world in a new body. It is not literally the name that can suffer excision, but rather the soul. Once a new body was formed for the soul of Mahlon, other souls (*dwellers*) had to call for Mahlon's soul to return from roaming in the world.

Moses de León explains that these *dwellers* are other souls who likewise await redemption through levirate marriage and reincarnation. See *Shushan Edut*, 357-58. On the identification of "name" with soul, see Radak on Psalms 24:4; cf. *Bahir* 54 (80, and Margalio's note there); Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 418; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 139; Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa* 4:30; *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 4.

690. When will is aroused... When the divine will is aroused to cause a soul to transmigrate, the soul travels to the graves of the ancient ones, to beseech them on its behalf. Here, Boaz becomes the designated route through which the soul of Mahlon would come to reenter the world. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

691. If he sets his heart upon him... Why does the soul need to be summoned, when this verse says that mere thought is enough to draw the soul into the body produced by the levirate marriage? The answer is that in the case of a close redeemer such as a brother, his spiritual intention alone will draw the soul to its proper place; however, if the redeemer is a more distant relative, other souls are required to prompt the reincarnating soul back into the world. See *Hadrat Qodesh*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On intention and reincarnation, see Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 140: "This is the mystery regarding the

establishment of the name of the deceased and the mystery of intention, concentration, and correct thought regarding the one deceased. He will be gathered in to him, to his home, and *He will return to the days of his youth* (Job 33:25). This is the mystery of *If he sets his heart upon him, his spirit and soul he will gather to him*, because intention, concentration, and spirit's thought draw the spirit, as we have said. And this is the mystery of intention of prayer: thought draws supernal spirit in the mystery of the person's spirit and thought, because spirit is drawn with spirit." See *Zohar* 1:155b (ST); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 357; cf. *Zohar* 3:177a.

692. preventing their demise... Even souls who do not procreate are not necessarily condemned forever.

693. subterranean Erets... Avadon... The two rabbis differ as to which region of Hell is the destiny for souls decreed to perish. Rabbi Simai says they go to subterranean *Erets*, while Rabbi Yose says they are condemned to the lowest level of Hell: *Avadon* (or Perdition).

According to rabbinic tradition, there are seven divisions of Hell. See *Sotah* 10b; *Midrash Tehillim* 11:6; *Zohar* 1:40a (*Heikh*), 62b, 237b; 2:150b, 263a-68b (*Heikh*); 3:178a, 285b-86a; *ZH* 25b (*MhN*); *Massekhet Geihinnom* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:149); *Gan Eden ve-Geihinnom* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 5:50); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:20, n. 56. BT *Eruvin* 19a lists seven names for Hell. On *Avadon*, see Proverbs 15:11; Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; *Zohar* 1:62b (*Tos*); 3:54b. Cf. Revelation 9:11, where *Avadon* is the name of "the angel of the bottomless pit."

694. a body does not rest in its place... Until a body is buried, the person's soul roams restlessly, unable to ascend to its rightful place in heaven. On the unburied body, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7; *Zohar* 3:88b; *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 8.

695. He took care of the burial... According to rabbinic law, if one comes across a corpse who cannot be

identified, one is obligated to ensure that all the requirements for burial and the seven-day mourning period are provided for and observed. This type of case is called a *met mitsvah* (מת מצוה), “orphan corpse” (or “commandment regarding the [unattended] corpse.” See BT *Shabbat* 152a: “[In the case of] a deceased person who has no comforters, ten people should go and sit in his place. A certain person died in Rav Yehudah’s neighborhood who did not have any comforters. Every day, Rav Yehudab would take ten people and sit in his place. After seven days, [the deceased] appeared to Rav Yehudah in his dream and said to him, ‘Put your mind to rest—for you have put my mind to rest.’” See BT *Eruvin* 17b, *Yevamot* 89b, *Nazir* 43b, *Sanhedrin* 35a-b, *Zevahim* 100a; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Evel* 13:4; Joseph Caro, *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah* 376:3.

On the significance of this commandment, see BT *Megillah* 3b, in the name of Rava: “[In a conflict between] Torah study and the commandment of the unattended corpse, the commandment of the unattended corpse takes precedence, since it is taught in a *baraita*: Torah study is deferred to take out the dead and for welcoming a bride.” See M *Nazir* 7:1; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el, Neziqin*, 4; *Sifra, Emor*, 1:3, 93c; 2:2, 94d; *Sifrei, Numbers* 26; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 26:8; BT *Yevamot* 7a, *Nazir* 47b-48b; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:41; *Tanhumah, Emor*, 3; *Tanhumah (Buber), Emor* 5; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 10:11; *Midrash Shemu’el* 24:8; *Midrash Aggadah, Vayiqra* 21:1.

“Withered tree” renders אילן חריב. See Scholem.

“Mitsvah-windings” renders כריכין דמצוה (*kerikhin de-mitsvah*) and signifies either tefillin (wound about the forearm), or tzitzit (ritual tassels that are tied with a series of knots and twists). See *Sullam*; Scholem; Mopsik; Englander; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

696. A certain man... Presumably the reincarnated soul of the man whose corpse Rabbi Peraḥiah had buried.

On engaging in Torah for monetary gain, see *Zohar* 1:88b (*ST*); cf. Scholem.

697. *the dead know nothing* The verse continues: *and they no longer have recompense, for their memory is forgotten.*

698. *The living—the righteous...* The righteous, although physically dead, are considered as living, while the wicked, though physically alive, are considered dead.

See BT *Berakhot* 18a-b, in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya: “The righteous are called ‘living’ even in their death, as is said: *Benayahu son of Yehoyada, son of a living man* (2 Samuel 23:20)... Do you mean to say that all other people are sons of dead men? Rather, *son of a living man*—for even in his death he was called *living*.”

See *Zohar* 1:131b-32a, 207b; 2:106b; 3:182b, 287b; *ZḤ* 18b, 20b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 252; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Tsedeq*, 7a.

699. *prepared to give account...* The righteous are conscious that their actions in this world bear consequences for eternity, so they conduct themselves accordingly. The wicked know that judgment awaits, but their villainy lies in their refusal to repent. Thus the righteous who are physically living in this world are considered as if they are dead to this world, a world dominated by material concerns.

See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 32, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince: “Do you want not to die? Die before you die. Do you want to live? Do not live until you live. You are better off to die in this world (for you will die inevitably), than to die the death of the time to come. For if you wish, you shall not die.” See BT *Tamid* 32a, where Alexander the Great poses a question to the elders of the south: “‘What shall a person do to live?’ They replied, ‘Let him kill himself.’” Cf. BT *Berakhot* 63b, *Shabbat* 83b, *Gittin* 57b; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13, p. 257; *Tanḥuma*, *Noaḥ* 3.

On the wicked and their awareness of impending judgment, see BT *Berakhot* 18b; *Zohar* 1:81b (ST); 3:70b.

The full verse in Ecclesiastes reads: *Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of carousing. For that is the end of all men—let the living take it to heart.*

Midrash ha-Ne'lam on Ruth ends at this point in V24, O17, O18, L39, MS3, MS4, Th, and V. Only *Or Yaqar* and subsequent printed versions supply the following material. This translation has followed these latter versions because they provide a plausible continuation of the text, whereas the manuscripts and other early printed editions end abruptly.

The following passage is an example of Zoharic textual phenomena as elaborated by Daniel Abrams. See Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, 384–85: “‘The Zohar’ is not the text hidden within the transmission history that contains the dynamic quality of the text, but should be conceived as the textual process itself that began with the earliest textual formulations and continues on as a living phenomenon and text (or more precisely, multiple phenomena and texts)” (emphasis in original).

700. resemble their previous appearances... In the next world, souls adopt ethereal bodies that are similar to their forms in this world. They have knowledge of what is preordained for this world, and with their new garments—woven from their virtuous acts in this world—they are better suited to comprehend Divinity. Parallels appear in Islamic and Iranian eschatology—and in Mahayana Buddhism, according to which the Buddha enjoys *sambhogakaya* (“a body of bliss”), generated by merit accrued over eons.

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 66a, 81a–b (ST), 82b, 91a, 224a–b, 225a, 226b, 233b; 2:11a, 150a, 210a–b, 229b, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:70b, 101a, 174b–175a, 214a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 404; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 56; idem, *Seder Gan Eden* (*Beit Midrash*, 3:133); idem, *Sefer*

Mishkan ha-Edut, 135; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 61; Scholem, "Levush ha-Neshamot"; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158–59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 264–65; David Snellgrove, in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Jones, 2:1077–78.

Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:35; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; Matthew 22:1–14; Romans 13:12; Galatians 3:27; Revelation 3:4–18; 6:11; 7:13–14; 19:8; 22:14.

701. a particular field Where Rabbi Peraḥiah had buried the man's body.

702. orchard... The biblical image of an orchard (Song of Songs 4:13) came to signify a realm of mystical experience and understanding, beginning in rabbinic literature and pervasively in medieval kabbalistic literature. See *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:3; BT *Hagigah* 14b; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §597.

703. paths of souls... On the two paths, see the prayer of Rabbi Neḥuniah son of Haqanah as formulated by the sages at BT *Berakhot* 28b: "Upon his exit, what did he say? 'I give thanks before You, YHVH, my God, that You have placed my lot among those who sit in the study hall, and that you have not given me my portion among those who sit idly on street corners. I rise early, and they rise early. I rise early for words of Torah, and they rise early for useless matters. I toil and they toil. I toil and receive a reward, and they toil and do not receive a reward. I run and they run. I run to the life of the world to come and they run to the pit of destruction.

See Deuteronomy 30:15–20; Psalms 1:1; 2 Baruch 85:13; *Testament of Abraham* 11; *Testament of Asher* 1:3, 5; M *Avot* 2:9; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 53; Matthew 7:13–14. A description of the tour of both Paradise and Hell appears in *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 3; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad*; and *Hibbut ha-Qever*.

704. Open for me The full verse in Psalms reads: *Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter them and praise Yah.*

705. Who permitted one born of woman... See BT *Shabbat* 88b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Levi: "When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels said before the blessed Holy One, 'Master of the Universe! What is one born of woman doing here among us?... *What is a human that You are mindful of him, a human being that You take note of him?*' (Psalms 8:5)."

See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20, 96b; *Ma'yan Hokhmah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:58-59); *Zohar* 1:5a; 2:58a, 156b; 3:78b.

706. body from that world... The soul is robed in a special garment when it descends to this world, which it doffs when it returns to the upper realms.

See *Zohar* 1:7a, 81a (*ST*), 115b (*MhN*), 227b; 2:11a, 13b, 150a, 161b; 3:13a; *ZH* 10b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 30 (35-36); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 702; above, [notes 293](#), [373](#).

707. Four paned windows... "Paned windows" renders חלונֵי משקופֵי (*halonei mashqofei*). The Hebrew term משקוף (*mashqof*) generally means "lintel," but here the plural *mashqofei* connotes "window openings, recessed windows, window frames," apparently based on שקפֵים (*shequfim*) in 1 Kings 6:4; 7:4. See *Zohar* 2:143a, 172a, 181a, 241b; *ZH* 15c (*MhN*), *ZH* 76c, 82d (last two *MhN*, *Rut*). On this firmament with its four windows, see *Zohar* 2:209b, 212a-b; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 147.

708. three letters for each and every one... The later printed editions include a gloss from the seventeenth-century kabbalist Moses Zacuto that offers two explanations. The first option is that each and every letter of the tetragrammaton is written out with three letters: יוֹד (*yod*), הֵיָא (*he*), וָאוֹ (*vav*), הֵיָא (*he*). The other possibility is that the four letters of the tetragrammaton are distributed three times each among the four window openings.

709. on New Moons and Sabbaths... On these holy days, souls of the deceased reunite with bodies in the grave, and these resurrected individuals prostrate themselves before God.

Usually in the *Zohar*, the New Moon and Sabbaths mark the ascent and worship by the soul alone. For this worship as based on the verse in Isaiah, see *Zohar* 1:115b-116a (*MhN*); 2:156b-157a; 3:144b-145a (*IR*), 159b, 182b; *ZH* 18b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 30 (35-36). Cf. *Zohar* 1:62b (*Tos*), 134b (*MhN*); 2:142a.

The name יְעֹזְרֵאל (*Ye'azriel*) means "God will help me." See *Zohar* 3:303b (*Tosafot*); *ZH* 53a; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 67-68. On the activity of the soul on the new moon, see *Zohar* 1:81b (*ST*).

710. Shema... The central prayer declaring God's oneness. According to Kabbalah, by reciting the *Shema* with full intention, one stimulates and effects sefirotic union.

On the significance of the *Shema*, see *Zohar* 1:12a, 18b; 2:43b (*Piq*), 133b-34b, 160b-162a, 216a-b; 3:162a, 195b, 203b-204a, 236b, 262b, 263a, 264a-b, 268a; *ZH* 48a (*MhN*, *Rut*), 56d-58a (*QhM*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:971-74.

711. Ana'el... The name אֲנֵאֵל (*Ana'el*) means "God answers." See *Midrash Tehillim* 68:10; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 37 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:40); *Zohar* 1:108a (*ST*), 149b (*ST*); 2:202a; *ZH* 38d.

On the "sixty angels," see *ZH* 25d (*MhN*): "Whoever recites the bedtime *Shema* as prescribed—his soul ascends, soaring through the Land of Life, as is written: *Sixty warriors surrounding her* [the bed of Solomon], *of the warriors of Israel* (Song of Songs 3:7)... In the recitation of the *Shema*, there are sixty letters until *and in your gates* (Deuteronomy 6:9); and on every single letter, mystery of the glory of holy kingship, of the supernal ruler." On the bedtime *Shema*, see BT *Berakhot* 5a, in the name of Rabbi Isaac: "Whoever recites *Shema* on his bed, it is as if he holds

a double-edged sword, as is said: *Exultations of God in their throat, a double-edged sword in their hand* (Psalms 149:6)... [and he taught] Whoever recites *Shema* upon his bed, demons stay away from him."

Here the "bedtime *Shema*" could refer to the first paragraph of the *Shema*, which contains many more than sixty letters, or to a unit of the entire liturgical composition called "bedtime *Shema*." See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:3: "*Sixty warriors surrounding it* [the bed of Solomon] (Song of Songs 3:7)—these are the sixty letters in the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24–26)." The fuller context in Song of Songs 3:7–8 reads: *Behold, the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel, all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night*). This is cited in rabbinic literature as a reference to the sixty letters contained within the priestly blessing. In the bedtime liturgy accompanying the *Shema*, Song of Songs 3:7–8 is followed immediately by the priestly blessing. Both the warriors surrounding Solomon's bed and the individual reciting *Shema* bear swords for protection; thus the likely intention of the reference to sixty letters is to the priestly blessing within the liturgy of the bedtime *Shema*.

See BT *Berakhot* 5a; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:21; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:7; *Tanḥuma*, *Naso* 9; *Qoraḥ* 12; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 16; *Midrash Birkat Kohanim* (in *Battei Midrashot* 2:112); *Midrash Ḥaserot vi-Yterot* (in *Battei Midrashot* 2:273–74); Isaac ibn Sahula, "Peirush Shir ha-Shirim," 440; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 40–41, 127, nn. 94–95; cf. *Zohar* 1:101a (ST).

712. four paragraphs Usually one speaks of the *Shema* as consisting of three paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21; and Numbers 15:37–41, with the rabbinic formula "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever," inserted after the opening verse. Here the enumeration excludes the last section (regarding

tzitzit), following the comments of Eli'ezer ben Joel Halevi, a German rabbi of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. See *Sefer Ra'avayah, Berakhot*, 33.

On the division of paragraphs of the *Shema*, see BT *Berakhot* 16a; *Zohar* 3:228a (RM); TZ 10 (25b); Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 39-40.

713. two unifications in twelve words... The six words of the opening line of the *Shema* symbolize the unification of *Tif'eret* with the five *sefirot* surrounding Him (*Hesed* through *Yesod*). The six words of the following line symbolize the unification of *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* (Kingdom), with Her angelic retinue, the lower unity that corresponds to *Tif'eret's* sefirotic retinue. Cf. Mopsik; Englander. On the first two lines of the *Shema*, see *Zohar* 1:12a, 18b; 2:139b; 3:264a.

On the sixfold unification, see BT *Berakhot* 13b, where the recitation of the first line of *Shema* is described as enthroning God "above, below, and over the four directions of heaven."

714. Name of Forty-Two Letters This divine name is mentioned in the name of Rav, though not recorded, in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. According to Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam), this name consists of the first forty-two letters of the Torah, from the ב (bet) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning*, through the ב (vet) of בהו (*vohu*), *empty* (or *void*) (Genesis 1:2). By this complex divine name, the world came into being. Hai Gaon indicates that the Name of Forty-two Letters consists of the letters: שְׁקוּצִית, יְגִלְפוּק, חֲקִבְטוּנֶה, בְּטִרְצָתָהּ, אֲבִגְיָתָן, קִרְעֵשְׁטָן, נִגְדִיכֵשׁ, which are also the initial letters of the forty-two words constituting the prayer *Anna be-Khoah* ("Please, with the Strength [of Your Right Hand's Greatness]"). See above, [note 136](#).

715. right contained in left... This paragraph contains elements both of love, or *Hesed* (*to love YHVH your God*), and of judgment, or *Gevurah* (*Then the anger of YHVH will flare up against you...*). Containing both aspects, this

paragraph signifies a harmonization and unification of these two opposing aspects of divinity. See *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Zohar* 2:162b.

On the seventy-two words in this paragraph of *Shema*, see above, [note 140](#). On the Name of Seventy-Two Names, see above, [note 44](#).

716. fifty words... There are fifty words following *You shall set* until the end of the paragraph from Deuteronomy.

The trope of “fifty gates of Understanding” is based on a statement attributed to Rav and Shemu’el (BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, *Nedarim* 38a): “Fifty gates of *binah* (understanding) were created in the world, and all were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).” See above, [note 344](#).

On the fifty words in this paragraph of *Shema*, see above, [note 140](#).

717. tzitzit—comprised of them all... Numbers 15:39 reads: *You will see it* [the tzitzit] *and remember all of YHVH’s commandments*. Rashi explains: “The numerical value of צִיצִית (*tsitsit*) is 600, plus eight threads, plus five knots equals 613.”

See *Tanḥuma, Qedoshim* 6, in the name of Rabbi Mani: “Do not look askance at the recital of *Shema*, for there are 248 words in it like the sum of limbs in a human body.... The blessed Holy One said, ‘If שמרת (*shamarta*), you are vigilant, regarding Mine [i.e., My 248 words]—reciting *Shema* as prescribed—then אשמר (*eshmor*), I shall guard, yours [i.e., your 248 limbs].” See above, [note 129](#).

718. site of unification... The recital of the *Shema* is supreme among all other passages in the Torah, as it is the only one that expresses the absolute unity of masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity.

719. directing intention to these paragraphs... If one directs one’s mind to the unifications described above regarding each of the *Shema*’s sections, one will merit to

view these celestial panes and the heavenly visions that lie beyond them.

720. Yofi'el... See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 34:6, where Yofi'el is among the angels participating in the burial of Moses. See *Zohar* 1:108a (*ST*); 2:247b (*Heikh*); 3:2b (standard editions); *ZH* 36b (*RR*), 64a, 68c (last two *ShS*).

721. Primal Adam sniffs it... Through smelling, one can ascertain the spiritual quality of people, particularly with regard to their performance of commandments. A faulty recitation of the *Shema* results in a deficiency in the 248 Adamic limbs that are ideally constituted by proper recitation. The three paragraphs of the *Shema* actually contain only 245 words, so the last three words (*I am YHVH, your God*) are repeated on the congregation's behalf by the prayer leader.

In the *Zohar*, kissing is often a mark of approbation after someone offers a homily, but sometimes—as in this instance—it is a mark of acceptance for prayers.

On the sense of smell as a barometer for spiritual or ethical worthiness, see BT *Ta'anit* 29b, *Sanhedrin* 93b, *Niddah* 20b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 30:12; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:3, 12; 2:2; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 27:9; *Tanḥuma, Toledot* 11; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Margalioth), 1129; *Zohar* 1:142b-143a, 208b, 224b; 2:20a (*MhN*), 39a-b; 98b; 3:35b, 186a; Benarroch, *Sava ve-Yanuqa*, 35-39; Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness*, esp. 147-59.

On the 245 words of *Shema* and the three repeated words, see above, [notes 129-31](#). On kisses bestowed upon words of prayer or Torah, see *Zohar* 1:4b; 2:201b-202a.

722. twice daily... Whenever Jews recite the *Shema* twice daily at its specified times, the souls of the deceased who had recited it properly in this world are seated in the heavens alongside the patriarchs—a scene of overwhelming joyousness. “Dew... from the head of the King” is one of the most rarefied forms of divine overflow, signifying an

extraordinary reward for the one who has recited *Shema* with the correct devotion and intentions.

723. food eaten by celestial angels... Psalms 78:25 refers to the manna, miraculous food that descends from on high, as *bread of the angels*. Here, Rabbi Peraḥiah explains that the soul who has been punctilious in his recitation of the *Shema* consumes this food, and it confers profound understanding of reality and of the future. One continues in this exalted state until the resurrection, when souls will be returned to their bodies, restored here on earth.

On the manna and heavenly food, see Septuagint on Psalms 78:25; *Wisdom of Solomon* 16:20; BT *Yoma* 75b, *Hagigah* 12b; Naḥmanides on Exodus 16:4, 6; *Zohar* 1:157a-b, 226b, 246a; 2:40a, 61b-63a, 88a-89a, 101b, 153a, 156b-157b, 183a-b, 213b; 3:95b-96a, 97b, 128b (*IR*), 155b, 156a, 196a, 208a, 272a, 292b (*IZ*); *ZH* 48c, 86c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She'eilot u-Teshuvot*, 63; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 132-33, 135; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 135; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 308-9; idem, *Sefer Toledot ha-Adam*, 57b, 62b; idem, *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Mitsvot*, 221-23; Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 616-17; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 82-115.

724. װ (shin) See next note.

725. markers of the paragraphs of Shema... The letter *shin* is written with three vertical strokes, as if three instances of the letter *vav*. *Matoq mi-Devash* says that the letter *shin* signifies the first letter of the word שמע (*Shema*), *Hear*, and that the three *vavs* refer to the first letters of the second, third, and fourth paragraphs (as divided above): ואהבת (*ve-ahavta*), *And you shall love*; והיה (*ve-hayah*), *And it shall be*; ושמתם (*ve-samtem*), *And you shall place*.

726. window on the northern side... The “northern side” and the name *Elohim* are both associated with *Gevurah*, the divine aspect of Judgment. The five letters appointed around the window spell the divine name *Elohim*.

In *Hadrat Qodesh*, the four letters are distributed to the four sides of the window, with one letter suspended above.

727. *Tsurtaq* and *Gazri'el*... According to the *Zohar*, the angel *Gazri'el* conveys the divine גזר דין (*gezar din*), “decree of judgment.”

On *Tsurtaq*, see Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§204, 302, 332; *Zohar* 108b (ST); ZH 68c (ShS); Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 170–71. On *Gazri'el*, see *Zohar* 1:108a (ST); 2:248b, 251b (both *Heikh*); 3:3a (standard editions), 78b; ZH 68c (ShS); Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 46.

728. Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom... At the beginning of the morning and evening worship services, the leader calls the congregation to prayer: “Bless YHVH, who is blessed!” They respond: “Blessed be YHVH, who is blessed forever and ever.” Subsequently, the daily morning service includes three instances of the “threefold sanctification,” the *Qedushah* prayer, whose central formulation is: *Holy, holy, holy is YHVH of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory* (Isaiah 6:3). They are: *Qedushah* of *Yotser* (pertaining to the blessing “who forms the luminaries,” recited before the *Shema*), in which Israel describes the angels’ act of sanctification; the *Qedushah* of the *Amidah*, when Israel sanctifies God along with the angels; and *Qedushah de-Sidra* (Sanctification of the Scriptural Section), a version in Hebrew and Aramaic near the end of the service.

On the significance of the threefold sanctification formula, see BT *Sotah* 49a, and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *a-qedushah de-sidra*; *Hullin* 91b; El'azar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Roqeah*, *Hilkhoh Qaddish*, 362; *Bahir* 89 (128); Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 56–57; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 149–52; *Zohar* 1:18b, 40a (*Heikh*), 90a (ST), 189a, 231a–b; 2:18b (*MhN*), 52a, 129a–b, 132b–133a, 164b, 217a, 247b (*Heikh*); 3:93a (*Piq*), 190b, 297a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 72–73, 85, 90–91 (and Wolfson’s

notes); idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 103–5 (131–34); idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 14; Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, *Peirush Qabbali*, 143; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 59–61, 70–71; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:969; Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 254–56, 259–68, 327–28.

729. chamber... “Chamber” renders הֵיכְלָא (*heikhala*), “palace, tabernacle, temple,” as in the verse from Jeremiah—where the repeated term is הֵיכָל (*heikhal*).

730. eating over their blood... According to BT *Berakhot* 10b, Rabbi Eli’ezer son of Ya’akov interpreted *You shall not eat over the blood* (Leviticus 19:26) to mean “You shall not eat before you have prayed for your blood [i.e., your life].” Here, the man explains to Rabbi Peraḥiah that until one has completed the morning prayers, one’s soul remains hovering within the nostrils, not released to infuse the body.

The full verse in Leviticus reads: *You shall not eat over the blood. You shall not divine nor interpret omens.* Its original, simple meaning apparently relates to a pagan rite of divination, in which a ritual meal was consumed over a pit or large receptacle containing blood, perhaps with the idea that spirits of the dead could be conjured up from the blood. On the verse, see Naḥmanides; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1685–86; Alter.

On the link between blood and soul, see Deuteronomy 12:23: *For the blood is הַנֶּפֶשׁ (*ha-nefesh*), the life.* On the prohibition against eating before morning prayers, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Tefillah* 6:4; *Zohar* 1:207b; 2:215b; 3:241b, 307b (*Tosafot*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 304; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba’ah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 89; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 89:3. On the verse in Leviticus, see *Sifra, Qedoshim* 6:1, 90b; BT *Sanhedrin* 63a; Ibn Ezra; Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam); Radak on 1 Samuel 14:32; *Zohar* 2:122a. On the verse from Isaiah, see below, [notes 731–32](#).

731. He is worth nothing... The conclusion of the verse from Isaiah (*of what account is he*) emphasizes the contingency of a person's existence before prayer.

732. forbidden to bless one's fellow... One may not bless one's friend using God's name before the morning prayers. Once prayer has begun, holiness can reside among the congregation, expressed with the liturgical formula of *qedushah*.

See BT *Berakhot* 14a: "Rav said, 'Whoever greets his fellow before praying [the *Amidah*] has, as it were, made him into a cult site, as is said: *Desist from a human, whose breath is in his nostrils, for* וַמֶּה (*va-meh*), *of what, account is he?* (Isaiah 2:22). Do not read וַמֶּה (*va-meh*), *of what*, but rather בַּמַּה (*bamah*), *a cult site.*' Samuel said, 'Why have you esteemed this person and not God?'" For Rav, by greeting a human being before acknowledging God, one is, in effect, idolizing that person, who *is accounted as a cult site*. For both Rav and Samuel, one should *desist from a human* until after praying.

See *Zohar* 1:207b, 228a, 248a; 2:182a, 226b; 3:190b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 343; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 35; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 42 (50-51); idem; *Maskiyyot Kesef* 22; idem, *Orḥot Ḥayyim*, 16. In several of these sources, a distinction is drawn between a standard greeting and a greeting using the name of God.

On the term *bamah*, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 3:2316-18. On the responsive blessing chanted at the commencement of prayer, see *Zohar* 2:135b.

733. Once they have praised him... See BT *Berakhot* 32a, in the name of Rabbi Simlai: "A person should always offer praise of the blessed Holy One, and then pray." According to Rashi (on BT *Avodah Zarah* 7b, s.v. *yesadder adam*), "praise" refers to the first three blessings of the *Amidah*, while "prayer" refers to various requests that follow. Here, Rabbi Peraḥiah interprets "praise" as the call-and-

response between cantor and congregation that initiates the morning prayer.

See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 1:2; *Zohar* 1:169a, 244a; 3:260b, 285a; cf. JT *Berakhot* 4:4, 8b; BT *Avodah Zarah* 7b–8a; *Midrash Tehillim* 102:2.

734. five names... The congregation's five-word rejoinder to the cantor's invocation not only paves the way for prayer, but it also provides the framework that reciprocates God's reconstitution of the individuals' fivefold soul.

Rabbinic literature identifies five names for the soul, which medieval thought turns into a hierarchy of different parts of the soul. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9: “נשמת חיים (nishmat ḥayyim), *breath of life* (Genesis 2:7)—It has five names: *nefesh*, *neshamah*, *ḥayyah*, *ruah*, *yeḥidah*. *Nefesh* is the blood: *For the blood is the nefesh, the life* ‘ (Deuteronomy 12:23). *Ruah* [is so called] because it ascends and descends [like the wind], as is written: *Who knows the ruah of the sons of men...* (Ecclesiastes 3:21)? *Neshamah* is the breath; as people say, His breathing is good. *Ḥayyah* [literally: living]: because all the limbs are mortal, whereas this is immortal in the body. *Yeḥidah* [literally: unique, singular]: because all the limbs come in pairs, whereas this is singular in the body.”

See *Devarim Rabbah* 2:37; Saadiah Gaon, *Emunot ve-De'ot* 6; Kallir, *Qerovah* for second day of Passover; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 406–8. Much more common in medieval philosophy and Kabbalah is a tripartite understanding of soul. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ve-ruḥot u-nshamot*; *Sefer ha-Bahir* 35 (53); Maimonides, *Shemonah Peraqim* 1; Radak, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *yḥd*; *Zohar* 1:62a, 79b–81a (*ST*, standard editions), 83a–b, 109a–b (*MhN*), 206a, 224b–225a; 2:95a–b, 141b–142b, 182a; 3:16a, 24b–25a, 70b–71a, 91b; *ZH* 6d (*MhN*), 9a (*MhN*), 14b (*MhN*), 75a–c, 78d, 82c, 83a (all *MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 38–47; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 305; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 28–30 (33–

36); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 83–85; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:684–722, 761–64.

In Zoharic Kabbalah, blessing does not rest upon an empty place; rather, it requires a foundation upon which to rest. Here, blessing rests upon prayer, and holiness rests upon blessing. See Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 158–62.

On the requirement of ten men, see BT *Berakhot* 21b, in the name of Rav Adda son of Ahavah: “From where is it derived that an individual may not recite *Qedushah* alone? As is said: *I will be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel* (Leviticus 22:32). Any expression of sanctity may not be recited with fewer than ten.” The phrase “expression of sanctity” refers to the three liturgical units of *Barekhu* (the call to prayer), *Qedushah*, and *Qaddish*. There are three *Qedushot* recited in the daily morning service. On the three types of *Qedushah*, see above, [note 728](#).

Here, the author is apparently weighing in on a medieval halakhic dispute regarding the *Qedushah* of *Yotser*. Most authorities, based on the teaching in BT *Soferim* 16:9, restrict its reading to a group of ten, but in Ashkenaz and Spain that practice began to change in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

On the general requirement for ten men, see M *Megillah* 4:3; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 8:6; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba’ah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 55; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 55:1; *Zohar* 1:253b (*Hash*); 2:129b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 91. On the requirement for ten for *Qedushah*, see BT *Berakhot* 21b, *Megillah* 23b. On *Qedushah* of *Yotser*, see Natronai Gaon, *Responsa, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 39; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 7:17; idem, *Responsa* 219; Rabbenu Yeruḥam, *Toledot Adam ve-Ḥavah*, 3:2, 24d; *Haggahot Maimoniyot, Hilkhot Tefillah* 7:17, n. 90; Jonah Gerondi on *Berakhot* 21b (13a in pages of Alfasi); Naḥmanides, *Hiddushei Ramban* on *Berakhot* 11b; Ibn Adret, *Responsa*

1:7; Abraham ben Nathan, *Sefer ha-Manhig, Dinei Tefillah*, 63; *Shibbolei ha-Leqet*, 13; *Zohar* 2:129b, 132b-133a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 72-73 (and Wolfson's n. 12); idem, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 24-25; Angelet, *Livnat ha-Sappir*, 32c; Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh), on *Berakhot* 21b; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 59; *Beit Yosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 59; Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 59-61, 402, n. 20. Cf. *Sha'arei Teshuvah (Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim)*, 55.

735. wicked dimensions are suppressed... North is associated with *Gevurah*, "Judgment," and so it is a fitting location for a chamber in which evil is subjugated.

736. garments On the spiritual forms of souls once they ascend to the heavenly realms, see above, [note 373](#).

737. meals of powerful celestials Manna and other ethereal foodstuffs. See above, [note 723](#). On righteous souls recognizing each other in heaven, see Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden ver. 2 (Bet Midrash 3)*, 137.

738. He showed me... *Or Yaqar*, Venice (1658), and the later printed versions of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth end here abruptly. This line is virtually identical to the line that preceded the previous section that is contained only in *Or Yaqar* and the later printed editions. Sometimes that phenomenon indicates that a scribe has inserted (or written) material from another location, while other times it indicates a lacunae in the other sources that lack this material. See above, [note 699](#).

739. [46d] The material reproduced here is found in few surviving manuscripts, and it has been printed (at the end of the section of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on *Lekh Lekha*) in *Zohar Ḥadash* in the Salonika and Cracow editions, 48a-49b. As confirmed by the manuscripts, I have adopted the view of *Sullam* (91b), who suggests that this material continues where the text ended abruptly at the end of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth. See Scholem at the beginning

of this section, who doubts that it is part of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* as titled.

There is thematic continuity from *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth for the first part of the section. Afterward, the text offers short treatments of a number of the themes treated throughout *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth. As printed, the passage appears to be missing some earlier (possibly connecting) material.

740. When they were created... Two luminous garments are prepared for souls that are about to leave heavenly realms and emerge into the world. “Upper Garden of Eden” and “Lower Garden of Eden” respectively signify *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, two points of departure for the soul. *Matoq mi-Devash* suggests that the two different garments shine in the two different gardens. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 748–54.

741. entire Garden of Eden... The soul gets a complete tour of the Garden of Eden as inducement to behave righteously and perform commandments in this world, in order to receive these rewards after death.

Descriptions of tours of both Paradise and Hell appear in *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 3, 6; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad*; and *Ḥibbut ha-Qever*. On the individualized rewards for the righteous in the Garden of Eden, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 27:1: “*They will be sated with the fare of Your house, and from Your stream of delights You give them drink* (Psalms 36:9). Rabbi El’azar son of Menahem said, ‘It is not written עֲדֹנֶיךָ (*adanekha*), *Your delight* [singular], but rather עֲדֹנֶיךָ (*adaneikha*), *Your delights* [plural].’” The Hebrew term can also be construed as *Your Edens*—that is, one for each individual. From here we learn that each and every righteous one has an Eden for himself.” See above, [note 12](#).

Of the individual portions, the text reads literally: “each and every portion that a righteous one receives.” Throughout the following descriptions of Heaven and Hell, the text alternates between present and past tenses. In the

interest of readability, I have translated consistently in the present tense.

742. Whoever recites the *Shema*... One should direct mystical intention regarding the Name of Forty-Two Names toward the first paragraph of the *Shema*, beginning with *You shall love*, for it contains forty-two words. See above, [notes 139, 714](#).

743. *Shema* with the Name Of Seventy-Two Words... The second full paragraph of *Shema* (Deuteronomy 11:13 until the first word of 11:18) comprises seventy-two words. See above, [notes 44, 140, 715](#).

744. *Shema* with the Name of Fifty Words... The remaining words of the second paragraph of *Shema*, concluding with Deuteronomy 11:21, comprises fifty words. See above, [notes 140, 716](#).

745. *Shema* with the Name of Seventy-Two Words... The final paragraph of *Shema* (Numbers 15:37–41) contains seventy-two words. See above, [note 140](#).

746. How can I earn this? How can I earn all the magnificent rewards that you have shown me here in the Garden of Eden?

747. doing through virtuous actions... Exerting oneself in the performance of commandments and the study of Torah constitutes the *painful toil*. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Talmud Torah* 3:12: “The Torah is not fulfilled by one who treats commandments casually, nor by those who study amid luxury and in the midst of eating and drinking. Rather, only through one who kills himself over it—constantly afflicting himself, ceding neither sleep to his eyes nor rest to his eyelids. The sages alluded to this: ‘*This is the Torah: When a person dies in a tent* (Numbers 19:14)—the Torah is fulfilled only by one who kills himself in the tents of the sages.’” See BT *Berakhot* 63b, *Shabbat* 83b, *Ketubbot* 111b, *Gittin* 57b; *Avot* 6:4; *Midrash Aggadah, Bemidbar* 19:14; Joseph Caro, *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah* 246:21.

748. traveling with him to Hell... After conducting the soul through Heaven, the angels escort him around Hell, showing him its terrors. The journey is designed to instill terror and provide incentive to behave piously in this world.

On the tour of hell, see sources cited above, [note 741](#). On the dog's evil nature, see *Tanḥuma*, *Yitro* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Yitro* 4; *Pesiḳta Rabbati* 12, 52a; *Pesiḳta de-Rav Kahana* 3, s.v. *zakhor*, 3:8-9; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 44; *Zohar* 1:242b; 2:65a, 121b, 163b; 3:25a, 32b, 63a-b (*Piq*), 197a, 211a; 3:80a, 259b; *ZḤ* 43b, 92d (*MhN*, *Eikhah*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 313. Cf. *Shemot Rabbah* 26:2. On the dog as the fiercest animal, see BT *Beitsah* 25b. On the dog as the most impudent animal, see *Shemot Rabbah* 42:9. Cf. *Zohar* 2:121b.

The simple meaning of the verse in Isaiah is *The dogs are greedy* [or: *fiercely ravenous*]; *they never know satiety*.

749. Forty-two chambers of gloom... The converse of the forty-two luminous chambers in the Garden of Eden. Sinners arrive here on account of their failure to recite *Shema* while cognizant of its paragraph as corresponding to the Name of Forty-Two Names.

“Chief Warden of prisoners” renders בעל האסורין (*ba'al ha-asurin*). SP has the variant בעל היסורין (*ba'al ha-yissurin*), “Master of Afflictions.”

750. chains around the necks... On the punishment of the various limbs, see also *Zohar* 2:199b; *ZḤ* 83d (*MhN*, *Rut*); *Ḥibbut ha-Qever* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:151); *Ḥibbut ha-Qever*, ed. Higger, 259.

751. hands... bound to chinks in house-doorposts... Passages in the Torah that command the placing of *mezuzot* on doorways also give instructions regarding tefillin. See Deuteronomy 6:7, 9; 11:18, 20.

752. even those who are exempt... During the thirty days following death, even a soul destined for the Garden of Eden is punished for whatever sins were committed by

the person on earth. According to various traditions, it shares some of the punishment suffered by the corpse in the grave, known as *hibbut ha-qever* (beating in the grave), which is administered by the Angel of Death or other heavenly or demonic beings.

See 3 Enoch 28:10; *Hibbut ha-Qever* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:150–52); *Hibbut ha-Qever*, ed. Higger, 258–59; *Gan Eden ve-Geihinnom* (in: *Beit ha-Midrash*, 5:49); *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Margaliot, par. 30; *Zohar* 1:185a, 225a; 2:141b, 151a, 210a, 211b, 220b; 3:126b–127a.

On the verses from Psalms, see Ibn Ezra; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:18, 51; *Zohar* 3:184a; Moses de León, *Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 49 (60).

753. bestows an angel... Even those who have performed commandments in this world must spend some time in Hell, but they are protected by angels that they have accrued.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 2a, 4b (referring to the testimony of *mitsvot* in the afterlife); and M *Avot* 4:11, in the name of Rabbi Eli'ezer son of Ya'akov: "A person who performs a single *mitsvah* acquires one defender; a person who commits a single transgression acquires one accuser." See *Tanḥuma, Mishpatim* 19; *Va-Yaqhel* 1; *Zohar* 3:83b, 118a, 268b.

On "Night" and Hell, cf. BT *Sanhedrin* 107b. On the different compartments in Hell, see BT *Sotah* 10b; *Midrash Tehillim* 11:6; *Midrash Kohen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:30, 35–36); *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 28 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:34); *Zohar* 1:40a (*Heikh*), 62b (*Tos*), 237b; 2:150b, 263a–68b (*Heikh*); 3:178a, 285b–286a; *ZḤ* 25b (*MhN*); *Massekhet Geihinnom* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:149); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:20, n. 56.

754. you need not fear this place... Joshua 1:9 concludes: *do not be terrified or dismayed, for YHVH your God is with you wherever you go*—even in Hell.

755. He will not command His angels... Based on Psalms 91:11 (*For His messengers [or: angels] He will*

command for you, to guard you on all your ways), there is a rabbinic tradition that two angels accompany a person every day.

On angelic accompaniment, see BT *Ta'anit* 11a and *Hagigah* 16a; *Zohar* 1:12b, 144b, 165b, 174b; 2:106b; *ZH* 47a, 84d (both *MhN*, *Rut*); above, [notes 11](#), [669](#). Cf. *Berakhot* 60b, and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *hitkabbedu*; *Shabbat* 119b.

[756. two angels...](#) On the two impulses, see the interpretation of the biblical command *You shall love YHVH your God with all your heart* (Deuteronomy 6:5) in M *Berakhot* 9:5: “*With all לבבך (levavekha), your hearts—with both your impulses: the good impulse and the evil impulse.*”

See above, [note 191](#). On the adjuration of the soul, see BT *Niddah* 30b; *Seder Yetsirat ha-Velad*, 157; *Zohar* 1:76b (*ST*), 233b; 2:161b; 3:13a, 43a.

[757. emerges from his mother's womb...](#) On Torah in the womb and birth, see BT *Niddah* 30b, in the name of Rabbi Simlai: “It is also taught the entire Torah, as is said: *He taught me and said to me: ‘Let your heart hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live’* (Proverbs 4:4)... As soon as it emerges into the world, an angel approaches and slaps it on its mouth, causing it to forget all the Torah completely, as is said: *At the opening crouches sin* (Genesis 4:7).”

[758. Learn much Torah...](#) See M *Avot* 2:15–16, in the name of Rabbi Tarfon: “The day is short, the work is much, the workers are lazy, the reward is abundant, and the master of the house is insistent... You are not obligated to finish the work, yet you are not free to desist from it. If you have studied much Torah, you are given much reward, and your employer can be trusted to pay you the reward of your labor, and know that the grant of reward to the righteous is for the time to come.”

[759. Within man is יהוה \(YHVH\)...](#) Since the human being is created in the image of God, the human soul has

four aspects that derive from the four letters of the tetragrammaton. These four can be mapped onto a binary division of the *sefirot*, with \aleph (γH) manifesting *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, while η (νH) manifests *Hesed* through *Shekhinah*. The four letters also correspond to four primary characters in the story of Ruth.

These unnamed aspects possibly correspond to those identified at the start of this work: *nefesh* (soul), *ruah* (spirit, breath), *nishmeta* (highest soul; Hebrew *neshamah*, “breath, soul”), and *nishmeta de-nishmeta* (soul of soul). See above, [note 3](#).

[760](#). **Naked of the holy name $\gamma H \nu H$...** Upon departing this world, the wicked lose the spiritual garment that they were given at birth—their holy soul—and are left naked.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 14; *Bahir* 141 (200); *Zohar* 1:224a–b; 2:150a, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:174b–175a, 214a; *ZH* 78d (*MhN, Rut*). Cf. *JT Kil’ayim* 9:4, 32b.

“What does the holy name say” is the reading found in the early printed editions and SP. It appears to imply a permanent inscription of the divine name upon the individual’s soul, although the latter’s connection to Divinity is nonetheless contingent upon the person’s conduct in this world. Alternatively, *Mk* reads more straightforwardly: “what does the holy soul say.”

[761](#). **places His name within him...** When a person comes into the world, he is given three names that provide different faculties. The name $\gamma H \nu H$ gives the impetus to behave piously. The name that is bestowed by the Jewish demon enables one to acquire wealth, ideally for the sake of performing commandments. The last of the three names, which comes from the side of evil, tempts people into wickedness.

“Serpent” alludes to Samael’s consort, who is often identified as Lilith.

On Jewish demons, see above, [notes 204–5](#). On Samael as the archon of Esau, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Tanḥuma, Vayishlah* 8; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:6; *Midrash Aggadah* on Genesis 32:27; Rashi on Genesis 32:27; Hosea 12:5; *Sukkah* 29a, s.v. *eloheiha*; *Zohar* 1:144a, 146a, 166a, 170a–b; 2:105a, 163b; 3:45a, 192b, 199b; *ZH* 14d, 23d (both *MhN*). On Samael and the Serpent, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13. On Serpent as the archon of Ishmael, see *Zohar* 3:124a, 246b (both *RM*).

762. Yod and Vav abandon him... If a person fails to fulfill his commitment to righteousness, the first and third letters of the tetragrammaton, two aspects of the human soul that correspond to masculine aspects of Divinity—namely *Hokhmah* and *Hesed*—withdraw.

The full verse in Ezekiel reads: *As I live—declares YHVH Elohim—I do not delight in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, that you may not die, O house of Israel.*

763. upper He flies off with Vav and Yod... People are given multiple opportunities to repent, but without repentance at this stage, the first ה (H) of the tetragrammaton withdraws as well, joining ך (Y) and ם (V). Together they form the sorrowful groan הוי (Hoy), *Alas*. If sinners refuse to repent after that, all the letters of the divine name are jumbled, and God removes all protection from Israel, freeing their enemies to attack. At each stage, repentance could have restored the divine name that rests within the individual, while persistent sinfulness creates havoc in the holy soul bestowed in each person.

See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 5: “Your right hand, O YHVH, glorious in power; [Your right hand, O YHVH, smashes the enemy] (Exodus 15:6). When the Israelites perform the will of the Omnipresent, they make His left hand like His right, as is said: *Your right hand, YHVH ... Your right hand, YHVH*—twice. And when the Israelites fail to perform the will of the Omnipresent, they make His right hand like His left, as is

said: *He has withdrawn His right hand.*" See *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:6; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petihta* 24; 2:6; *Tanḥuma*, *Beshallah* 15; *Zohar* 2:143b, 203b.

SP1, S, and C are missing material from here until near the top of 47d.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, seed of evildoers, destructive children! They have forsaken YHVH, spurned the Holy One of Israel, turned their backs.*

764. The land—body... When evil descends upon the world because of spiritual impoverishment, one can combat it through learning Torah. Otherwise, Samael and his consort arrive, bringing affliction. *Sullam* and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that since the demonic couple could not overcome the highest level of soul, represented by Elimelech, they attacked the next level, signified by Naomi.

On *the land* as body, see BT *Sanhedrin* 91b. On Torah study in the battle against evil, see *Sifrei Devarim* 43, 45; *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:8; BT *Sukkah* 52b, *Qiddushin* 30b; Satlow, "And on the Ground You Shall Sleep"; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 20–25. On Samael riding the serpent, see above, [note 161](#).

765. If one avoids her... Job chastises his wife, contending that one must avoid the goading of Samael and the serpent, for following their incitement leads only to death. This was the fate of Mahlon and Chilion, representing aspects of the soul that succumbed. When they *died*, only Naomi and Ruth—the two remaining faculties of the soul, represented by the two *hes*—survived.

The context in Job 2:9–10 reads: *His wife said to him, "Do you still cling to your innocence? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You talk as one of the base women would talk. Shall we accept good from God, too, and evil we shall not accept?." In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.*

766. וַי וַי וַי (vay, vay, vah), **Woe, woe, ahh!**... Each of these defective forms of the divine name reflects the

absence of ה (he), which symbolizes *Binah*, and Repentance. That upper *he*, represented by Naomi, pleads with the lower aspects of soul to return, but only Ruth responds as desired.

On these expressions of woe, see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 10:4; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:31; *Zohar* 1:238b; 3:74b-75a; cf. *Esther Rabbah, Petihta* 6.

767. Elimelech will appear... Repentance leads to the full reconstitution of the human soul with all the letters of the tetragrammaton. Failure to repent causes the withdrawal of all components of the soul.

768. [empty of] the holy name... Each individual comes into the world with the divine name suffused within, but the sinner leaves the world bereft of that name. At that juncture, the soul is taken over by the Other Side for servitude. Cf. *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The simple meaning of the phrase in Ruth is: *YHVH ענָה* (*anah*), *has dealt harshly, with me*, but the author construes the word as a different verb with the same letters, yielding *testified* [literally: *answered*].

MT Ruth 1:19 reads *The whole city hummed with excitement because of them* (plural). The misreading here (as a singular pronoun) may be intentional, to conform with the sense of the teaching. On discrepancies with MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

769. ו' (v) and י (y) remained poor and downtrodden... Hope remains for these male aspects of the wicked soul, which were not overtaken. If the deceased had fathered a pious son—dedicated to Torah study—he will be saved from Samael and the serpent, who will then be dispatched.

The full verse in Zechariah reads: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king is coming to you: righteous and having salvation is he; poor and riding on an ass—on a donkey, foal of a she-ass.*

770. Jacob was not yet in the world... The verse is perplexing: how could Jacob rescue his grandfather Abraham from the Chaldean furnace when he had not even been born?

Parallels to this whole passage appear in *Zohar* 3:57a; *ZH* 76d (*MhN, Rut*). The passage in *Zohar* 3:57a appears in the section of *Aḥarei Mot*. Perhaps for that reason this whole section was placed in *Zohar Ḥadash, Aḥarei Mot*.

771. they hurled Abraham into the blazing furnace... The verse is usually understood as *Thus says YHVH, who redeemed Abraham, to the house of Jacob*. The speaker here reads it hyperliterally, based on the midrashic tradition that Jacob's (future) merit *redeemed Abraham* from Nimrod's fiery furnace. As Abraham was cast into the furnace on account of having destroyed his father's idols, the heavenly court debated whether he should be saved. The angels opposed rescuing Abraham because Ishmael was destined to issue from him—Ishmael being the ancestor of the Muslims, who in the future will oppress the Jewish people.

This tradition partially derives from Genesis 11:31, which relates the departure of Terah, Abraham, Sarah, and their household from אור כשדים (*Ur Kasdim*), Ur of the Chaldeans, en route to Canaan. There were several cities in Mesopotamia named Ur, but because "Ur" can also denote "fire," the name contributed to the rabbinic legend about Abraham and the furnace. See above, [note 68](#).

772. he will stretch out his neck... Isaac's example of extreme devotion should outweigh Ishmael's cruelty.

773. But Esau... will destroy the Temple Esau is considered to be the progenitor of Rome, and the Romans destroyed the second Temple.

On the reprobate natures of Ishmael and Esau, see above, [note 70](#).

774. perfect throne Unlike Abraham and Isaac, who each fathered a corrupt child, Jacob is considered to have

begotten only righteous offspring. See above, [note 63](#).

[775. on the merit of Jacob...](#) The prosecuting angels are forced to concede that Jacob and his progeny are worthy to redeem Abraham from the furnace's flames.

[776. When they bound Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah...](#) As Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were about to be cast into the furnace, each one proclaimed a verse (or verses). Rabbinic sources describe these three heroes as proclaiming parts of verses in Psalms 115 or 117.

See above, [note 72](#).

[777. his children...](#) Mishael trusts that his willingness to sanctify God's name through martyrdom will redeem him, just as Jacob's righteousness redeemed Abraham.

Isaiah 29:23 concludes: *For when he sees his children, the work of My hands in his midst, they will sanctify My name. And they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel.*

[778. This is Hananiah...](#) The verse in Isaiah identifies three different characters, and these are mapped onto the three heroes of the story—based on the verses that they recite as they prepare for their deaths. The first says, "*I am YHVH's,*" which matches Hananiah's verse: *YHVH is with me, I will not fear.* Similarly, *Another will call himself by the name of Jacob* matches Mishael's verse: *Do not fear, My servant Jacob.* The conclusion of the verse in Isaiah—*Another will write on his hand, "YHVH's," and adopt the name of Israel*—corresponds to Azariah's verse: *Hear, O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one.*

The verse from Deuteronomy begins the *Shema*, declaring God's oneness and the obligation to love God with all one's soul, and a martyr is enjoined to recite the *Shema* when death is imminent.

See M Berakhot 9:5; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; BT *Berakhot* 61b; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 5:7; *Zohar* 1:12a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 43-44.

[779.](#) **Their mockery...** The Chaldeans ridiculed the notion, expressed by Mishael, that linear time could be reversed and that Jacob could redeem Abraham. In response, God commands that the three heroes should be saved by the very *shame* (as expressed in Isaiah 29:22) that the Chaldeans had invoked. As with Abraham, Jacob redeems Daniel's three friends, as well.

The fuller context in Isaiah 29:22-24 reads: *No longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer his face grow pale. For when he sees his children, the work of My hands in his midst, they will sanctify My name. They will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and stand in awe of the God of Israel. And the confused of spirit shall acquire insight, and grumblers accept instruction.*

[780.](#) **my name was like that of his god...** In Daniel 1:7, Nebuchadnezzar's chief officer gave Babylonian names to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar praises Daniel's dream interpretation and pays him homage. In chapter 4, when Nebuchadnezzar calls on Daniel to interpret his dream, he calls him by the name Belteshazzar, noting that this is the name of one of his deities. Here, Daniel becomes aware of the fiery furnace and God's injunction from Deuteronomy and, fearful that he will be mistaken for one of the idols to be consigned to the fire, he bolts.

See above, [note 74](#). The full verse in Daniel reads: *Finally there came before me Daniel—whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and who is endowed with the spirit of the holy gods—and before him I related the dream.*

[781.](#) **Guard my life** The full verse in Psalms reads: *Guard my life, for I am pious [or: faithful, steadfast]. Rescue Your servant who trusts in You—You, my God.*

[782.](#) **They asked him...** The frogs in the river questioned David's assertion of his piety. On the frogs' competitiveness with David, see *Pereq Shirah*,

Introduction; Beit Arié, *Perek Shirah*, 2:22-26 and nn. ad loc.

783. Am I not pious... King David affirms his righteousness by referring to his efforts to assess the status of blood that women have discharged—so as to determine whether they are sexually permitted to their husbands; and by referring to his nocturnal rising at midnight to study Torah.

See BT *Berakhot* 4a: “[A prayer] of David... Keep my soul, for I am pious (Psalms 86:1-2). Levi and Rabbi Isaac [offered different interpretations]: One said, ‘So said David before the blessed Holy One: “Master of the Universe, am I not pious? As all of the kings of the East and the West sleep until the third hour [of the day], but I, at midnight I rise to praise You (Psalms 119:62).”’ The other said, ‘David said the following before the blessed Holy One, “Master of the Universe, am I not pious? For all the kings of the East and the West sit in groups befitting their honored status, while my hands become soiled with the blood [of menstruation], with a miscarried fetus, and with placenta, in order to render a woman ritually pure for her husband.”’” The rabbinic teaching and the Zoharic recasting of it appears to be a reinterpretation of 1 Chronicles 22:7-8, in which David recounts that God forbade him from building the Temple because he had too much blood on his hands.

On the three “watches” (divisions) of the night, see above, [note 604](#).

According to BT *Sukkah* 26b (in the name of Abbaye), David’s sleep was like that of a horse, which lasts for sixty breaths. See BT *Berakhot* 3b; *Zohar* 1:206b-207a; *Nitsotsei Zohar on Zohar* 1:206b, n. 8.

On David’s nighttime study, see BT *Berakhot* 3b, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on the Ḥasid: “There was a harp suspended above [King] David’s bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind came and blew upon it, and it played by itself. He immediately arose and engaged in Torah until

the break of dawn.” Here, David’s harp symbolizes *Shekhinah*, who is aroused by the wind of *Gevurah* (symbolized by the north). See above, [notes 76, 546](#).

[784. we incinerated ourselves ...](#) In Exodus 7:28, God instructs Moses to warn Pharaoh: *The Nile will swarm frogs and they will come up and come into your house, into your bedroom, onto your bed, into your servants’ houses, upon your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls*. In some of the rabbinic legends from which this story derives, an inference is drawn from Exodus 8:9: *the frogs died out from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields*; that is, excluding those that jumped into the ovens. See above, [note 75](#).

[785. Let us act like the frogs](#) Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah concluded that if frogs decided to jump into the ovens so as to honor God, all the more so should they allow themselves to be martyred to sanctify God.

[786. roars like a lion...](#) See BT *Berakhot* 3a, in the name of Rav: “The night consists of three watches; and over each and every watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion, saying, ‘Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My House, and burned my Sanctuary, and exiled them among the nations of the world!’”

[787. The leech has two daughters...](#) The leech subsists on the blood of others; and her daughters, too, are characterized by greed. Here the names of the two daughters—*הב הב* (*Hav, Hav*)—resemble the sound of insatiable dogs barking.

In Proverbs, this saying refers to a greedy person or to someone constantly leeching off others. It may also be a warning that a greedy parent engenders greedy children. Anatomically, a leech has two suckers, one at each end, which are pictured in this verse as *two daughters*. In rabbinic literature, it is associated with Hell. See BT *Avodah Zarah* 17a; *Shemot Rabbah* 7:4; *Midrash Mishlei*

(Buber) 17:1, 30:15 (in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai).

On the signs of the earthly watches, see BT *Berakhot* 3a.

788. *an ox and a donkey together...* The Torah forbids yoking these two animals together because they are different species entirely. Balaam defied this basic rule and committed bestiality with his donkey, the method by which he attained prophecy.

On Balaam and his ass, see Numbers 22:21–35, recounting how his ass sees an angel of *YHVH*, yet the great wizard sees nothing. See above, [note 194](#).

See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 357: “*Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses—in Israel none arose, but among the nations of the world, one did! Who is this? Balaam son of Beor.*” See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:20; *Zohar* 1:10a; 3:193b; *ZH* 47c (*MhN*, *Rut*). See also *Tanḥuma*, *Balaq* 1; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:13; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 10.

On the prohibition of plowing with an ox and donkey together, see above, [note 192](#).

789. *in the same breath...* Moses and Balaam are exemplars in their respective domains.

790. *Come and see...* The commandment to shoo away the mother bird from her nest when one wants to take the fledglings and eggs instructs that one should be dedicated to Torah study, and to teach Torah to the young. This brings about the unification of *Tif'eret* (symbolized by Torah and the Tree of Life) and *Shekhinah* (symbolized by Israel and Land). The land of Israel metonymically represents the people of Israel, as in Malachi 3:12. Cf. *Zohar* 2:50a.

On the commandment of shooing away the mother bird, see above, [notes 92–107](#).

The remainder of what the printed edition calls *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Ruth shows a dramatically different

style. See Meroz, “R. Yosef Angelet u-khetavav ha-zohariyyim,” 320.

The full context in Deuteronomy (22:6–7) reads: *If a bird’s nest happens to be before you on the way, in any tree or on the land [or: ground]—fledglings or eggs—and the mother crouching over the fledglings or over the eggs, you shall not take the mother together with the offspring. Surely send off the mother, and the offspring you may take for yourself, so that it will benefit you, and you will prolong your days.*

The full verse in Proverbs reads: *A tree of life is she to those who grasp her, and those who hold her are deemed happy.*

791. mother always refers to Torah... *Matoq mi-Devash* explains that situations arise in which one needs to set aside one’s Torah study in order to perform a commandment. Nonetheless, one’s length of days is assured.

792. If one proceeds contrarily... The simple meaning of the phrase is *If it happens*; here, it is interpreted as deliberate disobedience. In such a case, God punishes both the people of Israel and *Shekhinah*, who is signified by *seven*. Even when God tries to reconcile with Her—now symbolized by Rachel—She remains dedicated to Israel in their exile.

The word קרי (*qeri*) derives from the root קרה (*qrh*), “meet; encounter; happen to.” In Leviticus, *qeri* implies “hostile encounter; opposition.” In rabbinic usage, *qeri* means “accident; mishap; pollution; nocturnal emission.” On the biblical term *qeri*, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 3:2309–10.

The context in Jeremiah (31:15–17) reads: *Thus says YHVH: A voice is heard in Ramah [or: on a height]—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, for they are no more. Thus says YHVH: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your labor, declares*

YHVH: they will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares YHVH: children will return to their land.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:10: “Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrath... (Genesis 35:19). What prompted Jacob to bury Rachel on the road to Ephrath? He foresaw that the exiles [carried off by the Babylonians] would pass through there; therefore he buried her there—so that she would pray for mercy for them, as is written: *Rachel weeping for her children.... Thus says YHVH: Restrain your voice from weeping.... There is hope for your future.*”

On *Shekhinah's* persistent accompaniment of Israel, see BT *Megillah* 29a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: “Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah* accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.”

The rabbinic term בעל קרי (*ba'al qeri*), “master [or: owner] of mishap,” means one to whom a mishap happens, particularly one who experiences a nocturnal emission. See M *Berakhot* 3:4-5.

On Mother Rachel as the Divine Mother, *Shekhinah*, see *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* 24; *Zohar* 1:134a, 175a-b, 181b, 203a, 209b-210a, 228b; 2:29b; 3:20b, 187a; *ZḤ* 92a-b (*MhN*, *Eikhah*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66 (83); Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 126-29. On *Shekhinah* as going into exile, see above, [notes 98](#), [153](#).

793. supernal angels... lower angels... Angels are sometimes described in terms of upper and lower, or male and female, to describe the direction of influence from above to below. Here, the “large faces” (or “face”) signifies the higher group, while the “small faces” (or “face”) signifies the lower group. Both sets of angels are part of *Shekhinah's* retinue that goes into exile.

The image of large and small faces derives from a Talmudic discussion of the cherubim. See BT *Sukkah* 5b: “Rabbi Aḥa son of Ya’akov said, ‘We have learned that the face of the cherubim was no less than a handbreadth....’ What is a כְּרוּב (*keruv*), cherub? Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘כְּרַבִּיא (*keravya*), Like a child, for in Babylon they call a child רַבִּיא (*ravya*).’ Abbaye said to him, ‘If so, how do you explain the verse *The face of one was the face of a cherub, and the face of the second the face of a human* (Ezekiel 10:14), seeing that [the faces of] a cherub and a human are the same?’—‘A large face and a small face [i.e., *The face of a human* is large, while *the face of a cherub* is small].” See *Zohar* 2:4b (*MhN*); above, [note 526](#). Cf. *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

794. Lengthened faces... On account of *Shekhinah*’s willingness to accompany Israel, God bestows compassion upon Her and Israel, as expressed through אֲרִיכוֹ דְאַנְפִּין (*arikhu de-anpin*), “lengthened faces.” Sometimes the highest *sefirah*, *Keter*, is identified as the Holy Ancient One—who is characterized by pure compassion and is described as אֲנַפִּין אֲרִיךְ (*Arikh Anpin*), “long-suffering, slow to anger, taking a long time for his nostrils to flare.” This expression derives from Exodus 34:6: *YHVH, YHVH! A compassionate and gracious God, אֲרִיךְ אַפַּיִם (erekh appayim), slow to anger [or: long-suffering], and abounding in kindness and faithfulness.* Here, the central six *sefirot* (*Hesed* to *Yesod*) constitute “lengthened faces” (or “smooth nostrils”). When divine anger cools, God’s anger is distanced; but when the fury is in full force, one can see only the divine back, and the other *sefirot* withdraw.

See Ibn Ezra (short), ad loc.; *Zohar* 2:175b; 3:129a-b (*IR*).

795. Song of Songs is holy of holies... Song of Songs is the absolutely superlative song, as famously described by Rabbi Akiva in M *Yadayim* 3:5, “All of Scripture is holy, but Song of Songs is holy of holies.” See Ibn Ezra, Introduction: “This book is glorious, entirely delightful; and there is none

other among the 1005 songs of King Solomon that is like it. Thus it is written: *The Song of Songs of Solomon* (1:1), for this song is superior to all other songs of Solomon. Within it is a secret, concealed and sealed from the days of Abraham until the coming of the messiah.” See above, [pp. 19–20](#), [n. 50](#).

[796](#). a single flame... flares beneath the wings of the rooster... The celestial rooster (identified above as the angel Gabriel), is aroused by a flame emitted by *Gevurah*, and in turn he arouses the righteous to learn Torah. His crowing laments that many remain spiritually dulled while the blessed Holy One descends to the Garden of Eden and mates with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the doe.

On the rooster, see above, [note 603](#). On *Shekhinah* as a doe, see *Zohar* 1:4a; 2:7b, 8b, 10a–b, 36b, 46a, 52b, 56b, 119b (RM), 219b–220a; 3:21b, 25a–b, 68a, 249a–b; Liebes, *Pulhan ha-Shaḥar*, 153–67.

[797](#). those who rise at midnight... Through midnight Torah study, the kabbalists enable the doe to unite with her mate.

On the custom of studying Torah at midnight, see BT *Berakhot* 3b: “Rabbi Shim’on the Ḥasid said, ‘A lyre was suspended above [King] David’s bed. As soon as midnight arrived, a north wind would come and blow upon it, and it played by itself. He would rise immediately and engage in Torah until the first rays of dawn.’” In the *Zohar*, midnight is the time that the blessed Holy One descends to the Garden of Eden to delight in the righteous and the learning of those on this earth. See above, [notes 76](#), [546](#), [783](#).

On the filament of love (or “thread of grace”), see BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish: “To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of grace by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love* (Psalms 42:9). Why? Because *in the night His song is with me* (ibid.).” *His song* is the song of Torah.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13, pp. 254–55; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17, p. 22; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:15; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 92a, 104a, 178b, 194b, 207b; 2:46a, 57a, 149a; 3:22a, 23b, 25a–b, 36a, 44a–b, 64b–65a, 68a, 76a, 213a; *ZH* 122a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 54.

798. To graze in the gardens... The plural *gardens* signifies more than one—namely “supernal Garden of Eden,” signifying World that is Coming, and “lower Garden of Eden,” signifying This World, which symbolize *Binah* and *Malkhut*, respectively.

799. even in the grave they are astir... The *roses* are scholars taken before their time.

On scholars' lips moving in the grave, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:10: “Rabbi Yoḥanan said, ‘Even when a scholar [reading בן תורה (*ben torah*), “son of Torah,” instead of בן תורתה (*ben tortah*), “son of Tortah”] is dead, his lips move in the grave. Why? *Stirring the lips of sleepers* (Song of Songs 7:10).” See above, [note 425](#).

800. untimely deaths... This section is clearly fragmentary, as neither the speakers are identified, nor is there previous mention of untimely deaths.

On the gathering of roses as a metaphor for children's deaths, see *Zohar* 3:263a–b (*Piq*); *ZH* 20a–b (*MhN*); Benarroch, “The Mystery of Unity,” 246–49. On removing a person from the world while he is innocent (or righteous), see *Wisdom of Solomon* 4:10–11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 25:1 (and Theodor's note); BT *Ḥagigah* 5a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 6:2; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 7:15; *Zohar* 1:56b; 2:10b, 96b; *ZH* 20a–b (*MhN*), 36b. Cf. M *Sanhedrin* 8:5; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 218.

801. Jeroboam... A promising leader in King Solomon's civil service, whom God chose to become ruler over the northern tribes, with the promise of establishing a lasting dynasty (1 Kings 11:26–40). However, as king of Israel, he

appointed an unauthorized priesthood and set up golden calves for his subjects to worship, rather than going to the Temple in Jerusalem (12:26-31)—thus earning God’s condemnation (13:33-34).

See BT *Berakhot* 35b: “What is the meaning of *He is partner to a destroyer* (Proverbs 28:24)? Rabbi Hanina son of Papa said, ‘*He is partner to Jeroboam* son of Nebat—who destroyed Israel’s [faith in] their Father in Heaven.’” See 1 Kings 12:26-33; M *Avot* 5:18; BT *Sanhedrin* 101b-102a; *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a.

On Jeroboam’s childhood righteousness, see *Nitsotsei Zohar* on *ZH* 56a, n. 6. *ZH* 20a-b (*MhN*) has a similar homily about Jeroboam.

802. Metatron would have taught him Torah On an angel teaching Torah to children’s souls, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b (and Rashi, s.v. *gemulei me-ḥalav*); *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:24; *Kallah Rabbati* 2:9; *Sefer Hanokh* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:115-16); *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:353); *Zohar* 1:41a (*Heikh*); 2:169b; 3:186a; *ZH* 36b; Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 134-35; Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 98-100; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 163-65. Cf. *Zohar* 2:113b; 3:77a.

803. the blessed Holy One has gone down... to gather roses Since the episode with the angels and Jeroboam, God sometimes takes children from the earth before their time, to prevent their spoiling.

1. The residents of Babylon... Titling this work as *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on Lamentations appears to originate with the 14th-century kabbalist Joseph Angelet, who used the title *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* for all Zoharic-style writings that he knew. A more specific body of literature has since come to be known as *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, which Isaiah Tishby has characterized as follows: featuring multiple rabbinic personages; written in Hebrew or a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic; and lacking theosophic symbolism regarding *sefirot*, evil, or the soul. Yet this particular text is written almost entirely in Aramaic and is familiar with the theosophic myths of the *Zohar*. Thus, it is more likely written in the later stages of composition of Zoharic literature. The title *Midrash ha-Ne'lam* has been retained here in keeping with the printed editions.

See Angelet, *Livnat ha-Sapir*, 69c; Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov, *Sefer ha-Emunot*, 7:8; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 297 n. 5; Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, 90–95. On the characteristics of *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 181–86; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi'a*, index s.v. *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*; Oron, “*Midrash ha-Ne'lam*—Muqdam u-Me'uḥar”; Asulin, “*Midrash ha-Ne'lam* li-Vreshit—Bein Ivrit le-Aramit”; Vol. 10, pp. xi–xiv.

“Residents of Babylon” renders בני בבל (*benei bavel*), literally “sons” or “children” of Babylon (and similarly for “residents of the Holy Land,” below). Unfortunately, residents loses the resonance of the family drama that ensues between the blessed Holy One (father), *Shekhinah* (mother), and the people of Israel (children).

2. sent a missive... The residents of Babylon contend through correspondence with the residents of the land of Israel, to determine which group is more worthy to offer eulogies for the destruction of the Temple and to interpret the book of Lamentations. Each group claims that it has suffered the greater loss, with the Babylonian exiles

positing that being scattered among the nations renders them tragically comparable to idolaters. The “alphabetic acrostic” apparently refers to Lamentations, whose first four chapters are written using acrostic forms. According to tradition, the work was written by Jeremiah, but it is ascribed here to God.

Midrash ha-Ne'lam on Lamentations has a distinctive structure in Zoharic literature. It is composed with two main conceits: the first, a narrative frame that is integrated into the homily, in which the two groups debate their worthiness to eulogize. The denizens of the land of Israel apparently prevail and then produce the second style, an exegetical treatment of verses from Lamentations.

This trope of competitive suffering derives from ibn Gabirol, “Shomeron Qol Titten,” in which the two kingdoms referred to in Ezekiel 23 are represented in competitive dialogue: “[Samaria answered], ‘You cannot equate your plight to mine! Can your downfall compare to my collapse and infirmity?’ ... [Jerusalem, Judah] screamed in response, ‘The palace is in flames!’... And Zion cried, ‘YHVH has abandoned me!’” See *Shirei Shelomo ben Yehudah ibn Gabirol*, 3:223-33.

Historical rivalry between the Babylonian and Palestinian communities continued for more than a millennium after the destruction of the Temple. On the phrase “House of our God,” see Ezra 4:24 as cited in BT *Arakhin* 13a.

“Idol-worshippers” renders כמאן דפליח טעוון אחרנין (*ke-me'an de-palah ta'avan aḥaranin*), literally “like one who worships other follies.” This phrase is omitted in the later printed editions.

On living outside the land, see BT *Ketubbot* 110b: “Whoever lives in the land of Israel is like one who has a God; whoever lives outside the land of Israel is like one who has no God. This is as is said, *To give you the land of Canaan, to be your God* (Leviticus 25:38). Has one who does not live in the land no God! Actually, the verse comes

to tell you that whoever lives outside the land may be regarded as one who worships idols.” See *Or Yaqar*, where Cordovero writes that “even in her destruction, the land of Israel is holy; and its air is holy air.”

See *Sifra, Qedoshim* 11:14, 93b; *Behar* 5:4, 109c; T *Avodah Zarah* 4:5; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 26; BT *Avodah Zarah* 8a; Nahmanides on Leviticus 18:25; idem, “Homily on Ecclesiastes,” 200–202; idem, “Homily for Rosh ha-Shanah,” 249–52; *Zohar* 1:95b, 153a, 177a; 2:9a, 33a; 3:72b; 266b; Idel, “Some Conceptions of the Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought,” 124–41; idem, “On the Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Mysticism”; Hallamish, “Some Characteristics of the Land of Israel in the Kabbalistic Literature”; Pedaya, “Erets shel Ru’ah ve-Erets Mamash”; Yisraeli, “Erets Israel—Bein Qedushat ha-Maqom le-Taharat ha-Adamah.” Cf. *Mekhilta, Pisha* 1; BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 25a, and Rashi s.v. *bavel garmah lo*; Halevi, *Kuzari*, 2:12–14, 23; 4:17; Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa* 1:548; *Zohar* 1:36a; 2:25b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 336, 343–44.

On *Lamentations* as an acrostic, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:20: “Why is the *Scroll of Qinot* composed as an alphabetic acrostic? Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Nehemiah, and the Rabbis suggest answers. Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘Since it is written *All Israel has violated תא (et) Your Torah...* (Daniel 9:11), which is written [with all the letters] from *alef* to *tav*; therefore this scroll is composed as an alphabetic acrostic, one [lament] corresponding to the other [sin].” See Gordis, 123–24; Hillers, 24–30; Berlin, 4–5.

On *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on *Lamentations*, see Brody, *Rabbi Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona*, 147–206; Mopsik, *Le Zohar: Lamentations*; Liebes, “Ziqat ha-Zohar le-Erets Israel,” 37–44; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 297–300, 321–24; Pedaya, “Ve-hashta imma leit lan”; Asulin, “Galut ha-Shekhinah be-Zohar Eikhah.” On the authorship of *Lamentations*, see superscription of *Lamentations* in Septuagint; Targum; BT *Bava Batra* 15a;

cf. 2 Chronicles 35:25; *ZH* 92b (*MhN, Eikhah*); Gordis, 124–28; Hillers, 10–15; Berlin, 30–36.

3. weep for yourselves... But not for Jerusalem, or the Temple. You chose your own fate, in not leaving Babylon—a place of darkness—in order to return to the land of Israel. Your self-concern took priority over your concern for the Temple and the land, so you should “weep for yourselves” and your own sorry state. We are like children of *Matronita* (a name for *Shekhinah*), and on a higher spiritual rung than you who are like slaves. Thus, we should be the ones who eulogize Jerusalem and interpret Lamentations. We are orphans, since *Shekhinah* has gone into exile and our “Father,” signifying *Tif’eret*, has retreated above.

On Babylon as a place of darkness, see BT *Pesaḥim* 34b in the name of Rabbi Yirmeyah: “The Babylonians are fools! Since they dwell in a land of darkness they engage in dark [obscure] discussions.” See BT *Yoma* 57a; *Zevaḥim* 60b; *Menahot* 52a. This teaching is probably based on Jeremiah 13:16: *Give honor to YHVH your God before He brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the mountains in shadow—when you hope for light, and it is turned to darkness and becomes deep gloom.* Cf. Job 18:18; BT *Bava Batra* 158b.

On the superiority of residing in the Holy Land rather than in Babylon, see *Zohar* 1:96b, 224b–225a (and *Derekh Emet*, n. 1); 3:158a, 231b, 259a; *ZH* 88d (*MhN, Rut*); Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 41–42; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 181–87. On this line of argumentation and the Karaite critique of the Rabbanites, see Liebes, op. cit., 40–42.

מטרוניתא (*Matronita*) is an aramaized form of Latin *matrona*, “matron; married woman; noble lady,” and is often applied in the *Zohar* to *Shekhinah*, the divine wife.

On the distinction of children vs. servants, see BT *Bava Batra* 10a in the name of Turnus Rufus (who is said to have plowed the Temple Mount after its destruction): “You are

called both sons and servants. When you carry out the desires of the Omnipresent you are called 'sons,' and when you do not carry out the desires of the Omnipresent, you are called 'servants.'" See *Zohar* 3:7b, 29a, 109a (last two *RM*), 111b-112a (*Piq*), 224b (*RM*); *ZH* 88d (*MhN, Rut*); *TZ* Introduction, 5a; Rosh ha-Shanah Musaf liturgy. Cf. Galatians 4:7: "So through God you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son then an heir." See Hebrews 3:5-6.

The image of orphans derives from Lamentations 5:3. Here, "Father" signifies *Tif'eret* while "Mother" signifies *Shekhinah*. The *Zohar* rarely refers to *Tif'eret* as "Father," and nowhere in classical rabbinic literature are the people of Israel referred to as orphans. See Mopsik.

The image of suckling appears commonly in kabbalistic literature to signify the flow of emanation from higher *sefirot* to lower ones, or from *Shekhinah* to the people of Israel. See Isaac the Blind, "Commentary on *Sefer Yetsirah*," 1, 13; Ezra ben Solomon, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 504-5, 513-14; *Zohar* 1:64a, 203a; 2:65b, 122b, 256b-257a (*Heikh*); 3:17a, 65b, 68a, 150b; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Tsedeq*, 4b-5a; Haskell, *Suckling at My Mother's Breasts*.

On this passage, see the interpretations of *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. The context in Isaiah (66:10-11, 13) reads: *Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all you who love her! Rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her. That you may suck and be sated from her breast of consolation. That you may nurse with delight from her bosom of glory.... Like a man comforted by his mother, so I will comfort you; and you shall find comfort in Jerusalem.*

4. bang our heads against the walls... After the destruction, only the Western Wall remains, a survival celebrated in rabbinic literature. See *Eikhah Rabbah* (Buber) 1:5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:9; *Shemot Rabbah* 2:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:2; *Midrash Tehillim* 11:3.

On the *Shekhinah* defending the Jewish people, see *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*), 64a; 2:189b; *ZH* 62c (*ShS*).

5. She would... receive the flogging... The residents of the land of Israel contend that they feel and see the loss of *Shekhinah*'s presence so directly that they are best suited to eulogize.

The context in Isaiah (53:4-5) reads: *Yet it was our sickness that he was bearing, our pains that he endured—though we considered him plagued, stricken by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our sins, crushed for our iniquities; he bore the chastisement that made us whole, and by his bruises we were healed.* This entire chapter of Isaiah was interpreted in Christianity as referring to Jesus. Naḥmanides argued against such a Messianic interpretation, whereas *Or Yaḡar* adopts it here and extends its application to the suffering of the righteous. Here, uniquely in Zoharic literature, it is *Shekhinah* who suffers on account of Israel's sins, suggesting an intentional reconstitution of the divine family and its dynamics.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 98b; *Rut Rabbah* 5:6; *Midrash Shemu'el* 19:1; *Midrash Kohen* (in *Beit ha-Midrash* 2:29); Naḥmanides, "Disputation," 323-26; *Zohar* 2:212a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 191, n. 209; Mopsik, "Introduction," 16-18; cf. *Zohar* 3:218a, 231a. On corporal punishment in the family drama, see *Zohar* 2:190b; Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 132-34; Hellner-Eshed, "Temunot me-Ḥayyei Mishpaḥah" 427-33. The imagery of "experts in ululation" derives from Jeremiah 9:16: *Summon the dirge-singers, let them come; send for the skilled women, let them come;* M *Ketubbot* 4:4, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: "Even the poorest man in Israel should not hire [for his wife's funeral] fewer than two flutes and one professional wailing woman."

6. Mother's bed... The holy of holies. The residents of the land of Israel offer personifications of all the places where the people of Israel used to encounter *Shekhinah*, but She cannot be found amid the ruins.

7. We ask the rooftop... "Rooftop" here appears to refer to high balconies (near buildings' summits), from

which people leapt to their deaths during the horrors of Jerusalem's destruction. The rooftop is also one of the stages that the *Shekhinah* mounts as She leaves Jerusalem.

On *Shekhinah* weeping for Her children, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:10; *Zohar* 1:134a, 175a-b, 181b, 203a, 209b-210a, 228b; 2:12b, 29b; 3:20b, 187a; *ZH* 92a-b (*MhN, Eikhah*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66 (83); Hillers, 34, and n. 45; Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 126-29.

On people scaling the Temple's heights, see JT *Sheqalim* 6:3, 50a; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 19:6; BT *Ta'anit* 29a; *Zohar* 1:202b-203a. Cf. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 4; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 26. On *Shekhinah's* mournful travels, see *Eikhah Rabbah* (Buber), *Petihta* 25; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34.

The context in Isaiah (22:1-2, 4) reads: *Oracle of the Valley of Vision: What has happened to you now, that you have gone, all of you, up on the roofs? Full of commotion, tumultuous city, exuberant town—your slain are not slain by the sword nor the dead of battle [i.e., they are executed, not dying in war].... Therefore I say, "Look away from me, let me weep bitterly. Do not insist on comforting me for the devastation of my beloved people."* Cf. *ibid.*, 15:3; Psalms 102:8. On *Shekhinah's* weeping, cf. Jeremiah 31:15: *Thus says YHVH: A voice is heard on a height [or: in Ramah]—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, for they are no more.*

8. we see this every day... The residents of Jerusalem get the last word and apparently win the rivalry, based on their daily viewing of Jerusalem.

On kissing the dust, see Isaiah 49:23: *Kings shall tend your children; their queens shall serve you as nurses. They shall bow to you—face to the ground—and lick the dust of your feet. And you shall know that I am YHVH—those who trust in Me shall not be ashamed.* See Lamentations 3:29; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 22:1; *Zohar* 1:6a; 3:296b (*IZ*). Cf. *M Avot* 1:4; *ZH* 85c (*MhN, Rut*). See Mopsik.

9. איכה (Eikhah), Alas! She sits alone... The blessed Holy One, here signifying *Binah*, possesses one Day, *Tif'eret*, that encompasses the six central *sefirot*—*Hesed* through *Yesod*. When sins multiplied among the people of Israel, *Tif'eret* and the surrounding *sefirot* soared upward to pristine refuge in “the realm of the World of Life,” probably signifying *Binah*.

In Zoharic kabbalah, the six days of creation symbolize the central six *sefirot*, while the seventh day, Shabbat, represents *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:35a, 247a, 261b; 2:89b. On the withdrawal of the masculine aspect of Divinity, see *ZH* 61c (*MhN*, *ShS*), 69d (*ShS*); Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, 101–9. On the “realm of the World of Life,” see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The word איכה (*Eikhah*), Alas [or: How], is the longer, poetical form of איך (*eikh*), “how.” Both forms are found as the paradigmatic expression of grief in Hebrew elegiac poetry. See Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:21; Psalms 73:19; Lamentations 2:1; 4:1–2; Gordis; cf. Obadiah 1:5.

“His most beloved” renders רחמיא דנפשיה (*reḥima denafsheih*), literally “love of his soul” or “love of his life.” See Song of Songs 1:7; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:7; 3:1, 3–4; *Zohar* 3:68a; 148b. On the verse from Isaiah, see *Zohar* 3:270a.

10. Day of Bitterness, Day of Weeping... Once *Tif'eret* departs, the forces of evil arise from beneath the שפולי משכנא (*shipulei mashkona*), “skirts (or nether regions) of the dwelling,” to raze the undefended Temple. At that point, *Shekhinah*, signified by “Master of the dwelling,” is forced to flee to the “mountain outside... demolished mountain,” representing the lair of the *Sitra Aḥra*, the Other Side. Often in the *Zohar*, the banished *Shekhinah* is represented as impure or adulterous, but in the *Zohar* on *Eikhah*, She retains Her upright status.

See BT *Shabbat* 98b: “The school of Rabbi Yishma’el taught, ‘To what may the tabernacle be compared? To a woman walking in the marketplace with her skirts

following after her.” Rashi comments that the curtain “dragged on the ground.” The image reflects a hyperliteral interpretation of Lamentations 1:9: *Her impurity is in her skirts*. See *Zohar* 2:74b (*Mat*); *ZH* 67a (*ShS*).

On the mountain outside, see Jeremiah’s description of the Babylonian mountains (13:16), quoted above, [note 3](#). On crying to the mountain, cf. Jeremiah 9:9.

11. celestial Day that had departed... After the Temple is destroyed, *Tif’eret* returns, inquiring after it and after *Shekhinah*, represented by קיר (*qir*), “Sovereign.” Despondent at Her absence, He begins to roar like a lion, or moan like a rooster.

See BT *Berakhot* 3a in the name of Rav: “The night consists of three watches; and over each and every watch, the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion, saying, ‘Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My House, and burned my Sanctuary, and exiled them among the nations of the world.’” In the *Zohar*, the destruction of the Temple and exile of *Shekhinah* are often associated, leading to the roaring of *Tif’eret*. See *Zohar* 3:17a-b; 74b-75a; *ZH* 47c, 77b, 88a (last three *MhN*, *Rut*), 92b (*MhN*, *Eikhah*); Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 160-64, 297-300.

In Isaiah, the expression מקרקר קיר (*meqarqar qir*) is ambiguous; it may mean *shouting a shout* or *battering down a wall*. See Rashi on BT *Ta’anit* 29a, s.v. *meqarqar*; *Zohar* 1:228b; 2:44a, 133a. Here, the text associates קיר (*qir*) with Greek *kyrios*, “lord.” On rabbinic knowledge of this Greek word, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 11b; *Hullin* 139b.

On the rooster, see Rashi on BT *Eruvin* 53b, s.v. *maggidei ba-alatah*, according to whom the rooster’s crows mark the various divisions of the night.

See 3 Baruch 6:15-16; *Pereq Shirah*, 2:57 (s.v. *tarnegol*); Naḥmanides on Job 38:36; *Zohar* 1:10b, 77b, 92b, 218b; 2:195b-196a; 3:22b-23b, 52b, 171b-172a; *ZH* 13c (*MhN*),

47d, 88a (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Maskiyyot Kesef*, 12-13; Liebes, *Pulḥan ha-Shaḥar*, 168-97.

12. כה (k h), twenty-five, letters of unification... The word אֵיכָה (*eikhah*) is interpreted as a *notariqon*, “word-compound,” consisting of the words אֵי (*ei*), “where,” and כה (*khoh*), “thus.” The numerical value of כה according to *gimatriyyah* is twenty-five, corresponding to the twenty-five letters in the first line of the *Shema*, the liturgical affirmation of divine unity. *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the Dwelling, is called כה (*koh*), “thus,” indicating consummation and unity. *Shekhinah* is in exile both from Her Husband, *Tif’eret*, above, and from the Temple below.

On the significance of כה (*koh* or *khoh*), see *Zohar* 1:90b, 96a, 152b, 174b; 2:23b, 37b, 79b, 139b, 143b; 3:145b-146a; *ZḤ* 86a (*MhN, Rut*); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 12a-13a. On *Shekhinah*’s exile above and below, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 73-74.

The expressions of love are derived from different biblical verses. On “my turtledove, my perfect one,” see Song of Songs 5:2. On “my only one,” see Psalms 22:21; 35:17. A number of places in this composition contrast the joy of Song of Songs with the misery in Lamentations. See below, [notes 57, 99](#).

On the expression, “My sister, my daughter, my mother,” see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11: “Rabbi Yoḥanan said, ‘Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai asked Rabbi El’azar son of Rabbi Yose, “Perhaps you have heard from your father the meaning of *upon the crown with which his mother crowned him* [on the day of his wedding, on the day of his heart’s delight] (Song of Songs 3:11)?”... He replied, “Like a king who had an only daughter whom he loved lavishly, calling her ‘my daughter.’ He did not budge from his devotion to her until he called her ‘my sister.’ He did not budge from his ardor until he called her ‘my mother.’ So the blessed Holy One loved Israel lavishly and called them ‘My daughter,’ as is written: *Listen, O daughter, and*

consider (Psalms 45:11). He did not desist from loving them until He called them ‘My sister,’ as is said: *Open to me, my sister, my love* (Song of Songs 5:2). He persisted in loving them until He called them ‘My mother,’ as is said: *Listen to Me, My people, and give ear to Me, O* וְלֵאמֹרִי (ul-’ummi), *My nation* (Isaiah 51:4). It is written: וְלֵאמֹרִי (ul-’immi), *My mother.*” Here, the residents of the land of Israel represent those endearments as part of an anguished cry from the blessed Holy One.

13. from the day that the world was created... The serpent signifies the feminine consort of the demonic *Sitra Aħra*, personified as Samael, expelled from the Garden of Eden after deceiving Adam and Eve. Since then, the serpent has harbored vicious mendaciousness toward “*the woman*,” that is, *Shekhinah*. The rabbis erected “fences,” legal stringencies designed to protect the inner core of the commandments, but the serpent loiters near those fences—where people are likely to be lax in observance—and pounces when they slacken. By pounding *Shekhinah* down to the ground, the serpent foists onto Her the curse that was laid upon it. See Genesis 3:14: *Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all beasts of the field. Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.*

“The visionary” renders הַזֹּאֵה (ħoza’ah), which plays on the surname “from Maħoza,” a large trading town on the Tigris river. In rabbinic literature, one Rabbi Ĥanina comes from Maħoza, whereas Rabbi Levitas comes from Yavneh. See M *Avot* 4:4; BT *Shabbat* 130b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B, 34; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer*, 23, 51–52; *Zohar* 1:68b. Cf. *Zohar* 2:103b. *Sullam* suggests that the forthcoming homily derives from Levitas’ prophetic vision.

On the “incitement of the serpent,” see BT *Shabbat* 55b: “Four died through the incitement of the serpent, namely: Benjamin the son of Jacob, Amram the father of Moses, Jesse the father of David, and Chileab the son of

David.” According to this view, these four individuals did not sin on their own but died only because of the sin of Adam and Eve, who were enticed by the serpent. Here, Rabbi Shim’on specifies Joshua, who did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. See *Zohar* 1:57b, where Levi is substituted for Chileab. See *Zohar* 2:194b. Cf. *Arukh*, who explains that לטו (etyo), “incitement,” derives from לטו (eto), “his pen,” meaning that the decree of death was inscribed with the serpent’s quill. See *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Genesis 1:23.

See Ecclesiastes 10:8: *He who breaches a wall [or: fence]—a snake will bite him*, which provides the prudent warning that when dismantling a stone wall, one should be cautious—for its cavities may well conceal a snake’s lair. See Rashi; Fox; Alter. See *Va-yiqra Rabbah* 26:2 (Vilna): “Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥman said, ‘The serpent was asked, ‘Why are you generally to be found among fences?’” He replied, “Because I made a breach in the fence of the world.”” Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai taught: The serpent was the first to make a breach in the world’s fence, and so he has become the executioner of all who make breaches in fences.”

See Rashi on BT *Avodah Zarah* 27b, s.v. *ḥivyah de-rabbanan*: “If one is bitten by a snake on account of transgressing the words of the sages, no remedy will help—and he will die. And even if he convalesces from this bite, in the end he will die from the bite of his companions, for one who transgresses the words of the sages is liable for death.” On rabbinic fences, see M *Avot* 1:1; BT *Shevu’ot*, *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 2; *Midrash Mishlei* 24.

Although the serpent has been identified as the female consort to Samael, the text continues to refer to it with male pronouns and verbs. On the serpent’s gender, see Mopsik, 137–38.

On lying in ambush, cf. Lamentations 3:10. On the image of *Shekhinah* lying in the dust, deriving from Isaiah

52:2, see *Zohar* 1:4a, 116b; 2:9a–b, 11a; 3:6a, 42a, 89a, 118a; Scholem. Cf. *Zohar* 1:170a; 3:22a.

14. first letters... Applying the technique of *notariqon*, which uses the first letters of a sequence of words to derive another word, the first words of Lamentations yield איבה רעה (*eivah ra'ah*), “wicked hatred.” The mournful word איכה (*eikhah*), *alas* [or: *how*], associated with *Shekhinah*, is echoed by its associate איבה (*eivah*), “hatred,” associated with the serpent. Similarly, the first letters of the rest of the first verse’s words, read in inverse order, yield the result of that enmity: *Shekhinah*’s downfall, and Her union with the serpent.

In the *Zohar*, the union of *Shekhinah* with *Sitra Aħra* is usually precipitated by human sin, but in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on Lamentations, sinfulness is largely absent and replaced by profound sadness.

15. These cry out איכה (eikhah), How... Two choruses, one angelic and the other demonic, call out opposing cries: *eikhah* and *eivah*. The serpent’s enmity for *Shekhinah*—who is signified by *Koh*, the latter part of the word איכה (*eikhah*), *alas*—persisted from the time of humanity’s first sin. Thus the destruction of the Temple is one more manifestation of the curse God promulgated in Genesis 3:15: *Enmity I will set between you and the woman, between your seed and hers*.

ES1 reads “he calls,” apparently referring to Samael or the serpent, rather than “they call.” On the angels weeping, see Isaiah 33:7: *Behold, the Erelim cried outside; angels of peace, weep bitterly*. On *koh*, see above, [note 12](#).

16. banished through divorce... The expulsion in Genesis 3:24 refers to the blessed Holy One’s divorce of *Shekhinah*, the King’s throne, symbolized by the word אַת (*et*).

This radical interpretation depends upon the tiny word אַת (*et*), which is technically an accusative particle with no clear independent sense. Already in rabbinic times, Naħum of Gimzo and his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that the presence of *et* in a biblical verse amplifies the apparent meaning. Here, as often in the *Zohar*, אַת (*et*) becomes a

name of *Shekhinah*, who comprises the totality of divine speech, the entire alphabet from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*).

See BT *Pesahim* 22b, *Hagigah* 12a-b; *Zohar* 1:15b, 29b, 53b, 60a, 112b, 120b, 164b, 178b (*SdT*s), 247a; 2:81b, 82b, 90a, 126a, 135b; *ZH* 66a (*ShS*). Cf. the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: “I am *alpha* and *omega*.”

On the biblical word ויגרש (*vaygaresh*), *He drove out*, in the sense of גירושין (*geirushin*), “divorce,” see *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 1: “*He drove out Adam*—this teaches that the blessed Holy One divorced him like a wife.” See *Midrash ha-Gadol* on this verse. Cf. *Zohar* 3:75a, which insists that *Shekhinah* was never actually divorced, just exiled. See Isaiah 50:1: *Thus says YHVH: Where is your mother’s bill of divorce by which I sent her away?*

Harkinas apparently is the grandfather of the famous first-century wonder-worker Hanina son of Dosa, but there are no teachings in rabbinic literature ascribed to him. On *Shekhinah*’s fall, cf. Lamentations 5:16.

17. He who rules upon the Throne... The *man* who is removed from his post in the Garden of Eden is identified as the *man* sitting upon the chariot in Ezekiel’s vision, the sefirotic *Adam*, signifying *Tif’eret* and the five surrounding *sefirot* above *Shekhinah*. Since the throne (*Shekhinah*) provides the basis for divine interaction with our world, once She is degraded with the destruction of the Temple, virtually the entire sefirotic structure loses its stature. This is an unusually radical assertion of the impact of the demonic Other Side upon Divinity. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that since the supernal *Adam* attains completion through the throne, He is impaired as well.

18. He who banished... established a different post... When the blessed Holy One, represented by “Supernal Glory,” banished *Shekhinah*, He diminished His own image as well. In place of *Shekhinah*, He appointed *flame of the whirling sword*, signifying Lilith, the feminine consort of the Other Side. Now Lilith reigns over the Garden of

Eden and is sustained by the waters of *Tif'eret*, symbolized by Tree of Life.

“Diminishing the image” renders אַזְעִיר דִּיקוּנָא (*az'eir deyoqna*), possibly a reference to the name *Ze'ir Anpin*, which in other strata of the *Zohar* signifies the complex of *sefirot* surrounding *Tif'eret*. Some commentators explain that *Binah*, as the source of the roots of Judgment, is the subject of the sentence, executing punishment upon the *sefirot* below. On this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; Brody; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

On the term כְּבִיכּוֹל (*ki-v-yakhol*), “as it were,” see Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 325–401.

NC1, N22, N53, and the printed editions read: “When the Temple was destroyed, He flew upward to Supernal Glory....”

19. Slave-girl inside, Mistress outside... The concluding phrase of the verse is understood as referring to Lilith supplanting *Shekhinah*. Like the leper excluded from the camp, *Shekhinah*, too, sits alone.

On Lilith as a slave-girl supplanting *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:122a–b, 131b, 204a; 2:60b–61a, 96a–b, 117b–118b (RM); 3:69a, 266a, 279b (RM); *TZ*, intro, 2a. See also *Zohar* 2:32a (printed editions), 114b (RM); Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 120–22. Cf. *Zohar* 3:72a. On the association with the disease of scaly affliction, see *Zohar* 3:47a.

The context in Proverbs 30:21–23 reads: *At three things the earth trembles, four it cannot bear: a slave becoming a king, a scoundrel sated with food, a loathsome woman getting married, and a slave-girl supplanting her mistress.*

The full verse in Leviticus reads: *All the days that the affliction is on him, he shall remain impure. Impure is he; alone shall he dwell; outside the camp is his dwelling.*

20. He took him with words... What kind of spiritual instrument was used to convey Primal Adam to the Garden of Eden? Rabbi Ḥaninai teaches that God coaxed him verbally, whereas the rabbis indicate that it was a

supernatural wind—like the one that swept Elijah into heaven (2 Kings 2:11): *As they [Elijah and Elisha] were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind to heaven.*

Rabbinic sources often construe ויקח (*va-yiqqah*), *he took*, as connoting the use of words to coax or seduce another party. See *Mekhilta*, *Beshallah* 1; *Sifra*, *Tsav*, *Millu'im* 1:2, 40d; *Sifrei*, Numbers 92, 141; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5, 45:3; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:2; *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qoraḥ* 2; Rashi on Genesis 2:15, 16:3, Leviticus 8:2, and Numbers 16:1; *Zohar* 1:79a, 119b; 3:183a; *ZḤ* 71c (*ShS*).

The name Ḥaninai does not appear in classical rabbinic literature, but does appear among the Babylonian Geonim. In some of the manuscripts and printed editions (J1, N22, ES1, *Or Yaqar*), the name Ḥakhinai is recorded instead, the latter being the father of a *tanna* named Ḥanina. Other sources cite a Rabbi Ḥananiah son of Ḥakhinai who is a companion of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai. See, e.g., *M Kil'ayim* 4:8; *Makkot* 3:9; *Avot* 3:4; *Tosefta Tohorot* 11:3; *Bereshit Rabbah* 61:3; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 21:8; *BT Ketubbot* 62b; *Menahot* 62a; *Niddah* 52b.

21. The blessed Holy One taught Torah to Primal Adam... In its simple meaning, Job 28:28 reads in full: *He said to man, "See! Fear of the Lord—that is wisdom; and the shunning of evil is understanding."* Here, the word האדם (*ha-adam*), *man*, is construed as a reference to Adam: God wanted him to know that the most essential wisdom was the awe that leads to the avoidance of sin.

On God's teaching the Torah to Adam, see *Tanḥuma*, *Yitro* 15; *Zohar* 1:199a; *ZḤ* 88c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 353. On Adam's knowledge of wisdom—meaning Kabbalah—see *Zohar* 2:55a, 193b; *ZḤ* 79d (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 17 (22). On the verse from Job, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:5; *Tanḥuma*,

Vayaqhel 4; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 5; *Shemot Rabbah* 40:1; cf. *Sefer Yetsirah* 6:4.

22. ministering angels were lauding him... When Samael—the personification of the *Sitra Aḥra*—descended, he linked up with the serpent, signifying Lilith. He assumed the form of the serpent’s shadow, but he himself was the source of evil influence.

On the angels’ adoration of Primal Adam, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:10: “Rabbi Hoshaya said, ‘When the blessed Holy One created Adam, the ministering angels mistook him and sought to recite in his presence: *Holy!*’” See *Zohar* 1:36b, 38a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 79d (*MhN, Rut*).

Adam’s exalted rank aroused Samael’s envy. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13: “Samael... took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined there was none as cunningly evil as the serpent, as is said: *Now, the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made.* It looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode it.”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 59b in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Tema: “Adam was reclining in the Garden of Eden, while the ministering angels roasted meat and strained wine for him. Thereupon the serpent peeked in, saw his glory, and became envious of him.”

See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 1; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21; *Bahir* 141 (200); *Zohar* 1:35b, 52a, 64a, 137b, 145b–146a, 153a, 160b, 169b, 228a; 2:236a, 242b–244a; *ZH* 69a (*ShS*); Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 249 n. 4; Mopsik.

23. The serpent sidled up to the woman... The serpent, signifying the feminine consort of Samael, approached Eve first. The serpent’s first word was אַף (*af*), whose simple meaning in this context is *though* (or *indeed*), but elsewhere means *wrath* (or *rage, anger*), as in Deuteronomy 7:4: וַחֲרַה אֵף (*ve-ḥarah af*), and [YHVH’s] *wrath will flare...*

“Easily swayed” renders דעתה קלה (*da'atah qallah*), literally “Her mind is light,” or “A woman is light-headed.” See BT *Qiddushin* 80b, in a sexual context: “Women are light-headed [i.e., easily swayed].” See BT *Shabbat* 33b; *Zohar* 2:218a; 3:170a.

On opening with אף (*af*), see *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:2: “Rabbi H̄inena son of Sansan said, ‘Four opened with אף (*af*) [which has a range of meanings] and perished in אף (*af*), wrath: the serpent, the chief baker [Genesis 40:16], Korah’s band [Numbers 16:14], and Haman [Esther 5:12].’” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 88:6; *Zohar* 1:35b.

The full verse in Genesis reads: *Now, the serpent was most cunning of all the beasts of the field that YHVH Elohim had made, and he said to the woman, “Though God said [or: Did God really say], ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden.’”*

24. she opened with the letter מ (*mem*)... The serpent wanted the woman to produce the instruments of her own demise—the letters spelling מות (*mavet*), “death.” When she spoke the letter מ (*mem*), the serpent fastened it like *tefillin* to its left arm, the left symbolizing the side of judgment.

In MT, the woman’s statement in Genesis 3:2 reads: *From the fruit of the garden’s trees we may eat.* On discrepancies between the *Zohar*’s citation of Scripture and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

25. with a protracted, powerful cantillation note... The cantillation notes for the word ותרא האשה (*va-teire ha-ishah*), and the woman saw, are called *munaḥ pazer*: מַנְחָה, which are chanted as an ascent up the musical scale, followed by a descent; and the letter מ (*mem*) “rose and fell” like those notes. The first two letters of the word ותרא (*va-teire*), together with the letter מ (*mem*) captured before, spells the word מות (*mavet*), “death.” The serpent aimed to have the woman articulate her own death sentence by uttering the word, even fragmentarily, while the fluttering of the letters

indicates their efforts to evade participation in the serpent's plot.

The grammarian Aharon Ben Asher describes *pazer* as “up and down, scattered with the tongue.” See Ben Asher, *Sefer Diquḏei ha-Te’amim*, 18. Cf. ZH 105d (*Tiq*).

26. delivering ו (vav) and ת (tav) four times... Once inveigled, the woman uttered the letters ו (vav) and ת (tav) in succession, enabling the serpent to create a foursided square of death. See *Zohar* 1:12b; TZ 60 (93a), 69 (100a).

In the medieval period, Samael came to be identified with the planet Mars, construed here as one of the celestial portals. See Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 34:25; *Sefer Razi’el ha-Mal’akh*, 4b, 17b, 34b; Margalioṭ, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 256, n. 61. On the verse in Psalms, see *Zohar* 2:263a (*Heikh*).

The full verse in Genesis reads: “*The woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes and the tree was desirable to contemplate [or: to look at]. She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband beside her, and he ate; and the eyes of the two were opened, and they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.* The full verse in Jeremiah reads: *For death has climbed through our windows, has entered our fortresses, to cut off babes from the streets, young men from the squares.* The full verse in Psalms reads: *What man alive will never see death, will save his life from the grip of Sheol? Selah.*

27. infusing her with slime... See BT *Shabbat* 145b–146a, in the name of Rav Yosef: “When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lust].”

See *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 4:1 (per British Library MS 27031, ed. Clark); BT *Yevamot* 103b; *Avodah Zarah* 22b; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21 (and Luria’s n. 7); *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 3:12; *Zohar* 1:36b–37a, 52a, 54a–55a, 63b, 122b, 126a–b, 145b, 228a; 2:167b, 193b,

231a, 236b; 3:14b, 76b, 79a, 87a; ZH 8c, 63c (*ShS*), 83a-b (*MhN, Rut*); Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 38-53; Koren, *Forsaken*, 89-92.

28. a crown upon their heads... Before their sin, the intent of the blessed Holy One was for *Shekhinah* to dwell on earth. After their offense, She was weakened—and withdrew. When God descends to the Garden of Eden, seeking Adam and Eve, He asks, 'איכה (Ayekkah), *Where are you?*' (Genesis 3:9). Here, Rabbi Ḥaninai plays on the fact that the consonants of this word are identical to (*Eikhah*), *Alas*, the recurrent expression of grief in Lamentations. Alternatively, in both instances God is asking אי כה (*ei khoh*), *where is koh*—whose numerical equivalent is twenty-five—signifying the twenty-five letters of the first line of the *Shema*. See above, [note 12](#).

The image of the crown on their heads derives from BT *Berakhot* 17a: “A pearl in the mouth of Rav: ‘In the world that is coming... the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads, basking in the radiance of *Shekhinah*.’” Apparently Adam and Eve enjoyed this felicity before their transgression.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7, in the name of Rabbi Abba son of Kahana: “The root [or: essence] of *Shekhinah* was in the world below. Once Adam sinned, She withdrew to the first heaven. Cain sinned; She ascended to the second heaven. The generation of Enosh sinned; She ascended to the third. The generation of the Flood sinned—to the fourth. The generation of the Dispersion—to the fifth. The Sodomites—to the sixth. The Egyptians in the days of Abraham—to the seventh.”

See 3 Enoch 5; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:1, 13:11; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5, 18b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:1; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 6, *Be-ḥuqotai* 3, *Naso* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 24; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan A* 34; ZH 80d (*MhN, Rut*); Mopsik; idem, *Les Grands Textes de la Cabale*, 60-62; cf.

Nahmanides on Exodus 29:46. On the sin of Adam and the destruction of the Temple, see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 15:1.

It is a general principle in Kabbalah that human sin weakens *Shekhinah*. See BT *Sanhedrin* 74a (in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai); *Zohar* 2:26b, 85b, 162b, 165b; 3:8a, 16b, 66a, 78a, 79a, 297a-b; *ZḤ* 78c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon* 298-99; Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Or*, 2a-3a; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 294, 427-29; idem, *Sefer Tashak*, 18; idem, *Sefer Toledot Adam*, 86b-87a; Meier, "Introduction" to *A Critical Edition of the Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 23-26; Idel, *New Perspectives*, 184-87; Wolfson, "Mystical Rationalization," 230-35. On the concept of weakening and strengthening God, see BT *Shabbat* 89a; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 319, 346; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 23:12; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:33; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 12:6, 25:1; *Zohar* 1:57b, 234b; 2:32b, 64a, 65b; 3:22a, 75b. On the comparison of Genesis 1:9 and Lamentations 1:1, see *Zohar* 1:29a (*TZ*); *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; above, [note 12](#).

29. voice went forth... In the hope that the merits of the Jewish people's hoary ancestors could intervene on behalf of their descendants.

The following passage is an adaptation of *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥtah* 24; *Eikhah Rabbah* (Buber), *Petiḥtah* 24; *Eikhah Zuta* 26. See Stern, "Imitatio Hominis." On the souls of the righteous interceding, see Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §63; BT *Sotah* 34b; *Bava Metsi'a* 85b; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 10:10; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Margalioṭ), pars. 450, 452; *Sefer Ḥasidim* (ed. Wistinetzki), par. 270; *Zohar* 1:225a-b; 2:16b (*MhN*), 141b; 3:70b-71a. On the Slumberers of Hebron, see Rashi on BT *Menaḥot* 100a, s.v. *Matitya ben Shemu'el*; Maimonides on M *Tamid* 3:2; *Zohar* 2:151b; 3:70b-71a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 90. On the image "hands trussed behind their backs," see *Zohar* 2:2b, 218b (*RM*); 3:20b.

30. I apportioned the land... by lottery... See Numbers 33:54: *You shall settle the land by lot according to your clans. For the many you shall make their estate large and for the few you shall make their estate small. Wherever the lot falls, there it will be his. By the tribes of your fathers you shall settle.* The tribal areas, bearing on fertility or barrenness of the land, were to be decided by lot, while the size of the land apportioned would be divided according to clan.

On this method of dividing the land, see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 480-82.

31. My beloved ones The simple sense of the verse in Jeremiah reads *Why should לִי־יָדִידִי (li-ydidi), My beloved, be in My house* (etc.) but here the word is vocalized as *li-ydidai*, in the plural.

32. Ten times You tested me... According to rabbinic tradition, Abraham withstood ten tests of faith.

See BT *Menaḥot* 53b, in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: "When the Temple was destroyed, the blessed Holy One found Abraham standing there. He said to him, '*What is My beloved doing in My house?*' (Jeremiah 11:15). He replied, 'I have come concerning my children.' He said, 'Your children sinned and have gone into exile.' 'Perhaps,' said Abraham, 'they sinned only in error?' And He answered, '*Who executes vile designs*' (ibid.). He asked, 'Perhaps only a few sinned?' God replied, '*So many*' (ibid.). 'But you should have remembered on their behalf the covenant of circumcision.' And He replied, '*Holy flesh they have caused to pass away from you*' (ibid.). 'Perhaps had You waited for them, they would have repented,' he pleaded. And He replied, '*For you exult while performing your evil deeds*' (ibid.). At that point he put his hands on his head and wept bitterly, crying, 'Perhaps, God forbid, there is no hope for them.'..."

On Abraham's ten tests, see *Jubilees* 17:17; 19:8; M *Avot* 5:3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 33; B, 36; *Midrash*

Tehillim 18:25; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 26–31.

33. They have forsaken the covenant... In the *Zohar*, the cited verse's reference to *flesh* is understood as indicating the site of circumcision. Abandoning ritual circumcision, in turn, is the Zoharic idiom signifying sexual promiscuity and miscegenation—frequent targets of attack. In the Bible, בָּשָׂר (*basar*), *flesh*, can be a euphemism for “phallus”; see Leviticus 15:2; Ezekiel 16:26; 23:20.

On sexual transgression, symbolized by forsaking the covenant of circumcision, see above, [p. 12](#), [n. 29](#).

The full verse in Jeremiah reads: *Why should My beloved be in My house, who executes so many vile designs? Holy flesh will pass away from you, for you exult while performing your evil deeds.*

34. may all their sins be extinguished... According to rabbinic tradition, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all concurred with God's decision to send Israel into exile. See BT *Shabbat* 89b in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: “What is the meaning of that which is written *For You are our Father: though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us, You, YHVH, are our Father; our Redeemer from of old is Your name* (Isaiah 63:16)? In the time to come, the blessed Holy One will say to Abraham, ‘Your children have sinned against Me.’ Abraham will reply, ‘Master of the Universe, if so, let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name.’ God said, ‘I will tell this to Jacob. Since he experienced the travails of raising children, perhaps he will ask for mercy on their behalf.’ He said to Jacob, ‘Your children have sinned.’ Jacob replied, ‘Master of the Universe, if so, let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name.’ The blessed Holy One said, ‘There is no reason in elders and no wisdom in youth.’ He said to Isaac, ‘Your children have sinned against Me.’ Isaac replied, ‘Master of the Universe, are they my children and not Your children?...” Rashi (ad loc., s.v. *yimaḥu*) explains, “Your name is sanctified in the world when You execute judgment upon

those who defy Your word.” Here in the *Zohar*, Abraham frames the exile as a means of purifying the nation.

On Abraham’s lack of compassion for Israel, see *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 50:21; *Zohar* 1:205b; 2:32a (printed editions, but printed in volume VIII, p. 94); 3:173b.

35. Rachel, why are you weeping? On Rachel, usually symbolizing *Shekhinah*, weeping for the people of Israel, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:10; *Zohar* 1:134a, 175a-b, 203a, 209b-210a; 2:12b, 29b; 3:20b, 187a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66 (83). Cf. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash*, who read the text throughout in terms of sefirotic correspondences.

36. My rival They brought an idol into My Temple!

37. secret tokens... In the biblical story, Laban had promised to give Jacob his younger daughter Rachel in marriage, but he tricked Jacob by substituting his older daughter Leah. See Genesis 29:18-28.

On the exchanges of tokens, see BT *Megillah* 13b; Rashi on Genesis 29:25, 30:22, and especially Jeremiah 31:14; *Zohar* 1:222b.

38. You should overlook their transgressions Rachel asserts that God should forgive Israel their sins on account of His attributes of mercy.

According to rabbinic tradition, the blessed Holy One has thirteen attributes of mercy, derived from Exodus 34:6-7: *YHVH, YHVH! A compassionate and gracious God, long-suffering, and abounding in kindness and faithfulness, keeping kindness for the thousandth generation, bearing crime, trespass, and sin...* This formula is deduced in BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17b and is recited on the Day of Atonement, fast days, and other occasions of supplication for God’s mercy.

39. She refused to be comforted... The word אֵינְנָהּ (*einennu*) is in the grammatical singular; in the simple meaning of the verse in Jeremiah, it refers distributively to *her children*, so it can be rendered *they are no more*. Rabbi

Pinḥas, however, reads the word literally: *he is no more*—referring to the blessed Holy One, who has retracted His protection, leading to Rachel’s despondence on behalf of her people.

See *Zohar* 1:210a; 2:29b; 3:20b. The context (in Jeremiah 31:16–17) reads: *Thus says YHVH: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your labor, declares YHVH: they will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares YHVH: children will return to their land.*

40. As did Rachel, so did Shekhinah above... Vast swaths of the angelic realm break out in tears on account of *Shekhinah*’s despair.

As noted above, Rachel often serves in the *Zohar* as a symbol of *Shekhinah*. See Mopsik, “Introduction,” to *Le Zohar: Lamentations*, 19–24.

The line ascribed to the Targum, “A voice from the heights of heaven,” is an amplification of the phrase קול ברמה (*qol be-ramah*), *a voice in Ramah* [or: *in the height*]. This form of the Targum does not exist in versions available today, but it is found (and similarly ascribed) in Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66 (83). Cf. *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 28; *Bereshit Rabbati* on 1:1 (p. 47).

41. firmament of Aravot... *Aravot* is the highest of the seven firmaments. See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish.

The full verse in Ezekiel reads: *An image above the heads of the living being: an expanse like awesome ice, spread out above their heads.* “Expanse” renders רקיע (*raqi’a*), “expanse, firmament, heaven.”

42. Once Mother was revealed to Her Daughter... At the moment that *Binah*, signified by “Mother,” offers the assurance that ultimately Israel would be forgiven and returned to their land, *Shekhinah*, signified by “Daughter,” sets off into widespread exile, accompanied by Her bands of angels.

On the theme of Mother and Daughter, see *Zohar* 1:2a, 48b, 156b (ST), 183b; 2:126b, 135a; 3:65b, 187a. The personification of *Shekhinah* as daughter in the (*Midrash ha-Ne'lam* on *Eikhah* echoes the many biblical references to *daughter of My nation* in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations.

43. Alas! Who said this... *Binah* inquires after Her Daughter, *Shekhinah*, signified by קיר (*qir*), “wall.” She intones the word איכה (*Eikhah*), comprised only of guttural and palatal consonants—which originate in the highest *sefirot* and thus signify the word’s rarefied spirituality. Guttural letters enunciate breathy sounds that rise from the throat. In contrast, the labial, dental, and lingual consonants—which do not appear in this word—derive from the lower *sefirot*.

On the consonantal distinctions, see *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:3; *Zohar* 1:80a (ST); 2:123a; 3:227b–228a (RM), 295b (IZ); ZH 111c (Tiq); TZ, *Haqdamah* 13b, 19 (41b), 70 (132a); *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On קרקורא דקיר (*qirqura de-qir*), “shouting about the wall,” derived from Isaiah 22:5, see above, [note 11](#).

The name Neḥumiah, signifying ‘consolation of God,’ appears in J1, N29, N22, and *Or Yaqar*, whereas it is written as Neḥuniah in the printed versions and other manuscripts. In rabbinic literature, Rabbi Neḥumiah appears only in JT *Berakhot* 3:1, 6a.

44. Sits—not standing... *Shekhinah* sits like one in mourning, as contrasted with angels—who stand praising God, ready to receive blessing. She is also compared to a leper who must dwell outside the camp, and Her place has been coopted by Lilith, called “slave-girl.”

On sitting as a rite of mourning, see BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 23a. On the significance of standing, see Isaiah 6:2; *Zohar* 2:133a; *Or Yaqar*. On the associations with the leper and the displaced mistress, see above, [note 19](#).

45. place of Her bed upended in mourning... With the Temple destroyed, *Shekhinah*’s “bed” is overturned, a

ritual sign of mourning. See BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 15a-b.

46. She is with us in exile... *Shekhinah* goes into exile with the people of Israel. Normally, according to rabbinic teaching, prophetic vision occurs only in the land of Israel, yet Ezekiel has his vision of the chariot while sitting by the Chebar canal in exile. The residents of Babylon contend sardonically that since the *Shekhinah* is among them, they should rejoice. In truth, *Shekhinah's* presence is limited, as She is unable to provide comfort or aid.

On this paragraph, see *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*. On the exile of *Shekhinah*, see *Mekhilta, Pisha* 14, in the name of Rabbi Akiva: "Wherever Israel went in exile, *Shekhinah*, as it were, went into exile with them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And when in the future they return, *Shekhinah*, as it were, will return with them."

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 84; JT *Ta'anit* 1:1, 64a; BT *Megillah* 29a; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:54; *Zohar* 1:68b-69a, 120b, 134a, 149a, 159b, 182a, 211a; 2:2a-b, 41b (*Piq*), 82a, 2:189b, 216b; 3:2b, 6a-b, 74a-b, 114b-115a, 297b; *ZH* 47d (*MhN, Rut*), 65b (*ShS*), 80d, 84a (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 122-23; idem, *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, 58; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 73-74 (92-93); Urbach, *The Sages*, 54-57; Tishby, *Wisdom* 1:382-385.

On Ezekiel's vision in exile, see Ezekiel 1:1-3; *Zohar* 2:2b. On prophecy outside the land of Israel, see *Mekhilta Pisha* 1; BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 25a and Rashi ad loc., s.v. *bavel garmah lo*; *Zohar* 1:149a-b; *ZH* 37c-38a; Moses de León, *Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, 58; Mopsik, "Introduction" to *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 6-8; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, 332-39. On the Babylonian exiles' sense of abandonment, see BT *Sanhedrin* 105a.

"Jackals" renders תנינא (*tanina*), "snake, serpent, crocodile, dragon, jackals." The entire phrase is derived from Micah 1:8, which evokes howling animals: *I will*

lament as sadly כתנים (*ke-tanim*), *as the jackals*; *as mournfully as the ostriches*. See also Isaiah 43:20; Jeremiah 9:10; Job 30:29. Cf. Lamentations 4:3, where תנין (*tanin*), *snake*, is the *ketiv* (written) form of the word, and תנים (*tanim*), *jackals*, is the *qere* (vocalized) form; “ostriches” also feature in the *qere* form of the verse. Cf. Feliks, *Hai ve-Tsome’ah ba-Torah*, 24, who identifies the bird as an eagle owl, a creature more likely to be found in urban ruins than an ostrich.

47. woman gone mad... “Gone mad” renders בלא דעתא (*be-la da’ata*), literally “unconsciously, mindlessly.” See, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:42; Job 38:2. See *Zohar* 3:172b.

Liebes views the image of the suffering mother as an internalization of the Christian imagery that represents Mary weeping. Mopsik sees it as a polemical response to Christianity amid a Jewish reconstitution of the relationship of Father, Mother, and Israel. He contends that *Shekhinah* suffers in this formation—rather than Jesus—and as such She is the messianic figure, raised to divine heights. See Liebes, “*Studies in the Zohar*,” 160; Mopsik, “Introduction,” 14, 16–31. See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 110–14.

48. desert foxes running in and out... With the Temple Mount desolate, it became a habitat for wild animals. *Shekhinah* visits there nightly (during the three nighttime watches), raising the spirits of those remaining. But Her visits are fleeting, leaving the Holy Land’s residents listless and despondent.

See Lamentations 5:18: *On Mount Zion, which lies desolate, foxes prowl about*. The image of foxes prowling appears frequently in Babylonian lament. See *Curse of Agade*, 1. 257: “May foxes that frequent ruined mounds sweep [the ground] with their tails!” See also BT *Makkot* 24b.

On the three watches of the night, see BT *Berakhot* 3a–b; Rashi on BT *Berakhot* 3a, s.v. *i qa-savar*; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 1; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 184–85; *Zohar* 1:122a (*MhN*), 159a,

188b-189a, 230b-231b; 2:18b (*MhN*), 143b, 173a-b, 195b-196a; 3:64b; *ZH* 5d-6a, 17d (last two *MhN*), 47c (*MhN*, *Rut*), 61c (*MhN*, *ShS*), 88a (*MhN*, *Rut*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Rosh ha-Shanah* 24b, p. 17a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 403; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 70-71 (88-89).

On *Shekhinah* visiting the Temple in ruins, see *Zohar* 1:134a.

49. a voice... can be heard... The verse in Jeremiah concludes: *He roars mightily over His abode*, and the verse's three iterations of the word שׂאג (*sha'ag*), *roar*, are understood in the rabbinic tradition to refer to the three watches of the night. See BT *Berakhot* 3a in the name of Rav: "The night consists of three watches; and over each and every watch the blessed Holy One sits and roars like a lion, saying, 'Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My House, and burned my Sanctuary, and exiled them among the nations of the world.'"

On God's roaring in heaven, see the references cited above, [note 11](#). On the voice wailing from Zion, see Jeremiah 9:18.

50. outer altar... The divine roar reaches from the highest heights to the outer altar below. In the Temple there were two altars, one for animal sacrifices in the courtyard, and an inner altar for incense. The sacrificial offerings provide sustenance for both *Shekhinah* and the various classes of angels, and the distribution of portions mirrors the activities of the priests in the earthly Temple.

On the outer altar, see BT *Yoma* 45a-b, 58b-59a; *Me'ilah* 11b-12a. On *Shekhinah* and angelic beings being sustained by sacrificial offerings, see *Zohar* 1:70a, 81a (*ST*), 164a-b; 3:241b-242a; *ZH* 64c (*ShS*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 889-90. On Israel sustaining God by sacrifices, see *Sifrei Zuta*, Numbers 28:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1:15; *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim*, 27-28; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Exodus 418; cf. *Tosefta Menahot* 7:9. All of these rabbinic

sources are based on Numbers 28:2: *My offering, My bread, for My fire offerings, My pleasing aroma, you shall take care to offer to Me at its fixed time.*

“Angelic personages” renders גבריין (*govrin*), an Aramaic form of אִשִּׁים (*ishim*), designating a particular class of angels. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:7–8, 4:6; *Zohar* 1:70a, 81a (*ST*); 2:4a (*MhN*); 43a (*RM*); 3:110a (*RM*), 258b; *ZH* 5a (*MhN*), 33b; *Sullam*; Fishbane.

51. corpses of holy saints... Referring to martyrs killed among the atrocities committed during the Temple’s destruction. In their deaths they are considered to have sanctified the name of God.

52. holy Erelim... In Isaiah, the meaning of the term אֲרֵלִים (*er’ellam*) is unclear; it has sometimes been translated: “their valiant ones, their brave men,” referring to the Judeans withstanding Sennacherib’s onslaught. (See Isaiah 29:1–2; *ABD*, s.v. “Ariel.”) In rabbinic tradition, the word *er’ellam* is transformed into אֲרֵלִים (*er’ellim*), meaning “angels” or a group of angels, whereas in medieval angelology they constitute one of ten such classes. Here, the written form of the name is treated as if it has lost a ך (*yod*), the first letter of the tetragrammaton. The departure of *yod* is a response to the destruction and signifies the withdrawal of the Divine Presence from the midst of the Erelim. As a result, they too begin to sob.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:5; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:23; *BT Hagigah* 5b, *Ketubbot* 104a; *Midrash Aggadah*, Exodus 33:22; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:7; *Zohar* 1:120a, 182a, 210a; 2:2b, 43a (*RM*), 195b–196a; *ZH* 37d; 88a (*MhN, Rut*); *Orhot Tsaddiqim*, 26; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:23, n. 64; 5:417, n. 117. The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Behold, the Erelim cried outside; angels of peace weep bitterly.*

On the doleful doubled cry “My altar, My altar,” cf. Isaiah 29:1: *Ariel, Ariel*, a term sometimes used to refer to the altar (see Ezekiel 43:15–16).

53. Where is your fire... The fire on the altar was supposed to burn constantly. See Leviticus 6:2: *the fire of the altar shall keep burning on it.*

54. Six thousand holy warriors... All angelic beings, both holy and demonic, received spiritual sustenance from the altar's beneficence. Spirits "who stand outside," namely from the side of impurity, benefited from the vestiges of the sacrifices that were allowed to burn overnight. Those demonic figures, often represented by the image of the ass, mourn for their own loss as a result of the Temple's destruction. The figure of "six thousand holy גברי (gavrei), warriors (or dignitaries, personages)," may derive from Song of Songs 3:7: *Behold, the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her...*

The donkey calling at night is a sign of the onset of the reign of demonic forces in the world. See BT *Berakhot* 3a, in the name of Rabbi Eli'ezer: "In the first watch [of the night], a donkey brays; in the second, dogs bark; in the third, a child sucks from its mother's breast, and a woman converses with her husband." See *Zohar* 1:166b, 172b; 2:64b-65a; 3:86b, 207a; *ZH* 47c (*MhN, Rut*); Vol. 10, pp. 569-70.

"Who has witnessed the howling below" appears to be a reference to midnight lament vigils that became a distinctive feature of the spiritual mood in 16th-century Safed but, based on this evidence, may have begun earlier. NC1 and *Or Yaqar* read: "Who has witnessed the howling replicated below...." See Mopsik.

"Lambs" renders אימורין (*eimurin*), which is consonant with the martyrdom theme; but *Or Yaqar* reads אברים (*eivarim*), "limbs," which accords with the limbs and fats that were burned overnight. See BT *Yoma* 45a-b.

On the theme of sacrifices being offered to the demonic side, see *Sifra, Shemini, Millu'im* 1:3, 43c; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; Moses of Burgos, *Ammud ha-Semali*, 158-59; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a-65a,

89b (*ST*), 113b-114b, 138b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b, 247b; 2:33a, 111b, 130a, 141a, 152b, 154b, 157a-b, 169a, 181b, 184b-185a, 203b, 227a-b, 237b-239b, 242b, 266b (*Heikh*), 269a (*Heikh*); 3:63a-b (*Piq*), 101b-102a, 202b-203a, 224a-b, 258b-259a; *ZH* 20c, 46c, 67b (*MhN*, *ShS*), 87b-c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 165-67; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 124-27; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:453-54, 3:890-95, 959.

On midnight vigils lamenting the destruction of the Temple, see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 146-50; Robinson, "Messianic Prayer Vigils"; Magid, "Conjugal Union"; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 308-20.

55. Point of Zion... holy of holies... "Point of Zion" signifies the center of the world, the site from which the world was created—and, as the holy of holies, the location of intimate union between the blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah*. The rapid rise and fall of Her cries suggest a sense of confusion and panic. The cherubim stood over the Ark of the Covenant and are identified in the rabbinic tradition as one male and one female—their embrace as a manifestation of love.

The following passage is the only place in the Zoharic corpus that explicitly identifies the holy of holies as a conjugal bed.

On the cherubim, see BT *Yoma* 54a, in the name of Rabbi Katina: "When Israel ascended [to Jerusalem annually] for the Festival, the curtain would be rolled open for them and the cherubim revealed, their bodies intertwined. They [the people] would be addressed: 'Look! God's love for you resembles the love of male and female.'"

On the pose of the Temple cherubim, see 1 Kings 6:23 ff.; 2 Chronicles 3:10 ff. On their loving embrace, see BT *Bava Batra* 99a; *Zohar* 2:152b, 277b; 3:59b.

On "Point of Zion," see *Tosefta Yoma* 2:14; JT *Yoma* 5:2, 42c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 20:4; BT *Yoma* 54b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:4; *Tanḥuma*, *Qedoshim* 10; *Pirgei de-Rabbi*

Eli'ezer 35; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:4; *Midrash Konen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:24-25); *Zohar* 1:71b-72a, 231a; 2:211a, 222a; 3:65b-66a; *ZH* 28a (*MhN*), 61a (*MhN, ShS*), 76a-b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 333; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 74-75 (95); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 372-73; Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah*, 4:772-73; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:14-16, n. 39. On this paragraph, see Mopsik.

On the Temple as a site of intimacy, see *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 16; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:3; *Zohar* 1:84b, 116a; 2:170b-171a; 3:42a-b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 359.

56. place of precious jewels... The holy of holies and its furniture were places of unusual beauty and adornment, fitting for the bedchamber of *Shekhinah* and the blessed Holy One. The entire structure facilitated *Shekhinah*'s rule in this world. The precious stones and gems signify angels constituting the divine retinue.

The biblical description of the Tabernacle, Ark of the Covenant, curtain, and cover is found in Exodus 25-26. On the precious stones as angels, see *Zohar* 1:149b (*ST*). On the pomegranates, see 1 Kings 7:42: *four hundred pomegranates for the nets, two rows of pomegranates for every net, to cover the globes of the capitals that were on the pillars.*

The full verse in Song of Songs reads: *On my bed at night, I sought him whom my soul loves—I sought him, but did not find him.* On this verse, see *Zohar* 3:42a-b.

57. leaving His domain... The blessed Holy One resides primarily in the heavenly realms but would descend to the holy of holies to unite with *Shekhinah*. This lovemaking recalls the affections in Song of Songs.

See Song of Songs 1:13: *A cluster of myrrh is my love, lying between my breasts.* On the contrast with Song of Songs, see above, [note 12](#).

58. youths... Signifying cherubim. The association of cherubim and youths derives from BT *Sukkah* 5b: "What is

כרוּב (*keruv*), cherub? Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘כרביא (*Ke-ravya*), Like a child—for in Babylon they call a child רביא (*ravya*).’” On childlike cherubim, see BT *Hagigah* 13b; *Zohar* 1:1b, 18b, 172a, 228b; 2:176a, 278a; 3:60b, 217b, 274a; *ZH* 43c, 86a (*MhN, Rut*). The plump childlike angels of Christian art conceivably derive from the Talmudic tradition, but more likely from the Greco-Roman *Erotes*, “Loves,” winged boys in the company of Aphrodite.

Alternatively, *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* identify these “youths” as Metatron and Sandalfon. In Zoharic literature, “the youth” is often construed as a reference to Metatron; see below, [note 65](#). The angel Sandalfon is implicitly identified with Metatron in *Zohar* 1:21a; see Vol. 1, p. 160, and n. 416 there.

On the Temple as providing nourishment for the entire world, see Rashi on BT *Ketubbot* 10b, s.v. *mezin*: “In the merit of the sacrifices the world is nourished, for the sacrifices originate from food and generate blessing for it.” See *Zohar* 1:164a, 206b; 2:154b; *ZH* 61b (*MhN, ShS*), 87d (*MhN, Rut*).

59. numerous saintly youths... When the divine couple prepares for romance, they are accompanied by souls of the righteous, signified by “saintly youths,” and angelic “maidens.” Like a celestial priest, the blessed Holy One has bells affixed to His garment alerting His lover to His approach. Ultimately, the throngs depart because it would be unseemly for anyone else to be present when they unite.

“Clappers of the bells” renders זוגין דפעמוני (*zogin de-fa’amonei*), to avoid redundancy, since the singular זוג (*zog*) itself means “bell” in Aramaic. The “bells” and their sounds derive from those worn by Aaron the high priest on the hem of his robe: *A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, on the hem of the robe all around. It shall be upon Aaron when he serves, so that its sound be heard when he comes into the sanctuary before YHVH and*

when he goes out, that he shall not die (Exodus 28:34–35). *Targum Onqelos* translates פֶּעַמְנֵי זָהָב (*fa'amonei zahav*), *bells of gold*, as זָגִין דְּדָהְבָּא (*zaggin de-dahba*), which is adopted by the *Zohar*. Here the *Zohar* appears to have misinterpreted the use of *zogin* in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:9, drawing ostensive support from Numbers 6:4 where the word זָג (*zag*), *grape skin*, has sometimes been interpreted as *grape seed*. See *Targum Yerushalmi* and Milgrom, ad loc., n. 13. Cf. M *Nazir* 6:2, where the word is interpreted both as “grape seed” and compared to a bell’s “hood,” in explicit contrast to its clapper. Alternatively, the author here intends זָגִין דְּפֶעַמְנֵי as *zugin de-fa'amonei*, “pairs of bells.” See *Zohar* 2:95a; 3:170b; Brody; Fishbane.

In rabbinic literature the bell appears as a symbol of revelation and inspiration. See BT *Sotah* 9b, in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: “*Shekhinah* was ringing before him כְּזֹג (*ke-zog*), like a bell”; and *Vayiqra Rabbah* 8:2, in the name of Rabbi Neḥemiah: “When the Holy Spirit rested upon him, his hairs reverberated like a kind of זֹג (*zog*), bell.”

On the “saintly youths” as souls, see *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*. On the “maidens” as angels, see *ZH* 64a (*ShS*). The solitude of the divine couple echoes Leviticus 16:17: *No person shall be in the Tent of Meeting...* See *Zohar* 3:66a. Cf. 1:208b.

60. engraved with Your image... *Shekhinah* yearns for the indelibility of Her image embossed upon Her lover, even after the destruction of the Temple. The imagery of the seal derives from Song of Songs 8:6 (*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm*), and conveys the love enjoyed between *Shekhinah* and the blessed Holy One when the Temple still stood. She hopes that the memory of Her former self will rouse the blessed Holy One to restore Her.

On the vow, see *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5. On the right and left arms, see *Zohar* 1:244b–45a; 2:11a, 114a;

3:54b; TZ 22, 65b; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Brody; cf. Fishbane.

61. Light of My eyes... “Light of My eyes” derives from Psalms 38:11: *My mind reels, my strength forsakes me; and the light of my eyes, too, is gone from me.* The imagery of left and right arms derives from Song of Songs 2:6: *His left hand beneath my head, his right hand embracing me.* On the verse from Psalms, see Alter.

Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, many of the terms here would signify *sefirot*: םלש (*shelam*), “consummation,” signifying *Yesod*; the “left arm,” signifying *Gevurah*; and the “right,” *Hesed*. The author may assume this knowledge on the part of the reader, but sefirotic symbolism is mostly subdued in the entirety of the *Zohar* on *Eikhah*. See *Or Yaqar*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

62. sixty myriad perfect ones... Six hundred thousand is the paradigmatic number signifying the population of the people of Israel during their wandering in the desert. Their extraordinary promise of faithfulness led *Shekhinah* to be crowned by their piety (or perhaps by the Israelites themselves). Many of the Israelites sinned on account of the temptations laid out by “the maidservant”—signifying the feminine consort of the Other Side, Lilith. According to the book of Numbers, those Israelites died of plague, serpents, or the earth’s splitting open (in the case of Korah’s band). Ultimately, nearly all adults who left Egypt died in the desert, and a new generation came to settle in the land of Israel. Here, blame for the deaths is placed upon Lilith, rather than upon the Israelites themselves for having rebelled in various ways.

On the figure six hundred thousand, see Exodus 12:37; Numbers 11:21. On the Israelites accepting divine sovereignty and their subsequent fall from grace, see *Shemot Rabbah* 42:1. “Followed after You” derives from Jeremiah 2:2: *Thus says YHVH: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride—how you followed Me in*

the desert... On the crowning of *Shekhinah* by the actions of Israel, see, e.g., *ZH* 64a (*ShS*); cf. Brody; Mopsik. On the maidservant as representing Lilith, see above, [note 19](#).

“Young shoots” renders ענפין זעירין (*anfin ze'irin*), as found in the printed editions and most manuscripts; alternatively, “small branches.” But *Or Yaqar* has עופין זעירין (*ofin ze'irin*), “fledglings; young birds.”

“Kept... apart” renders בדילנא (*badilna*). But N22 and *Or Yaqar* read: גדילנא (*gadilna*), “I raised them.”

63. Is it fitting for You Cf. Abraham’s protest to the blessed Holy One regarding the threatened destruction of Sodom: *Far be it from You to do such a thing—to put to death the innocent with the guilty, making innocent and guilty the same. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do justice?* (Genesis 18:25).

64. dogs did not bark... Dogs represent demonic forces in the world. When the Temple was functioning, even the demonic side benefitted, so the “dogs” were tranquil.

On the demonic nature of the dog, see *Tanḥuma*, *Yitro* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Yitro* 4; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 12, 52a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 3, s.v. *zakhor*, 3:8–9; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 44; *Zohar* 1:242b; 2:65a, 163b; 3:25a, 32b, 63a–b (*Piq*), 121b, 197a, 211a; 3:80a, 259b; *ZH* 43b, 46d (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 313. Cf. *Shemot Rabbah* 26:2. Cf. Isaiah 56:11: *The dogs are greedy [or: of fierce appetite]; they never know satiety.* On the angels lamenting the destruction of the Temple, see *ZH* 88a (*MhN*, *Rut*).

65. incense altar... *Shekhinah* seeks out the incense altar because when the incense was burned on this inner altar in the holy of holies, it was especially potent in subduing wrath and eliciting mercy from the blessed Holy One. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that “the youth” signifies Metatron.

Normally, at the third watch—as described in *BT Berakhot* 3a (quoted above, [note 54](#))—“a woman converses

with her husband.” In this case, however, *Shekhinah* cannot find Her Husband.

On the power of incense to banish demonic forces, see *Targum* on Song of Songs 4:6; *Zohar* 1:230a; 2:218b–219a; 3:151b; *ZH* 43d, 67d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 87; cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:45. On the atoning power of incense, see Numbers 17:11–12; BT *Yoma* 44a, *Zevaḥim* 88b; *Zohar* 2:218b; Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness*, 73–77. Cf. Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66–67 (83).

The shift from two cherubim to one cherub as a result of the destruction probably emerges from the contrast between 1 Samuel 4:4 (*They bore from there the Ark of the Covenant of YHVH of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim*) and Ezekiel 9:3 (*Now, the Glory of the God of Israel had moved from the cherub on which it had rested to the platform of the House*). On the pair of cherubim connected to the Temple, see *ZH* 43a–b. On the disappearance of one of the cherubim, see *Zohar* 3:162a; *ZH* 86a (*MhN, Rut*), 93c (*MhN, Eikhah*). On Metatron as *youth*, see 3 Enoch 4:10; BT *Yevamot* 16b and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *pasuq zeh*; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:12; *Zohar* 1:95b, 124b–125a, 126a (*MhN*), 143a, 162a, 179b, 181b, 223b; 2:66a, 143a, 164a, 169b, 179a (*SdT*s); 3:65a; *ZH* 42d, 69b (*ShS*), 85c (*MhN, Rut*); Vol. 5, p. 350, n. 453; above, [p. 199](#), [n. 494](#).

66. a woman converses with her husband As a sign of His compassion, the blessed Holy One descends to provide comfort to *Shekhinah*, fulfilling the words of the Talmudic teaching (BT *Berakhot* 3a) about the third watch. The woman conversing with her husband signifies the loving reunion of *Shekhinah* and the blessed Holy One, and takes on a Messianic valence.

On the erotic connotation of “converses,” see BT *Nedarim* 20b, and pseudo-Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *eino mesapper*. See *Zohar* 1:178a; 2:46a; 3:45a, 64b–65a, 108a; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Berakhot* 3a, p. 3a.

The context in Jeremiah reads: *Thus says YHVH: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your labor, declares YHVH: they will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares YHVH: children will return to their land.* On discrepancies between the Zoharic citation of a verse and the version in MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

At this point, the printed editions, *Or Yaqar*, and most manuscripts read: “Up to this point. From here onward is the beginning of this scroll.” Only ES1 does not record this line, but it seems quite clearly to be a later addition. See Fishbane.

[67.](#) ***Recall your Creator...*** The upcoming homily interprets Ecclesiastes 12 in depth.

In rabbinic literature, the enigmatic quality of this biblical chapter has led to multiple styles of interpretation: allegorical, literal, and eschatological. See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 23; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7; Targum; BT *Shabbat* 151b-152a; Ibn Ezra; Rashi; Rashbam; *ZH* 61b-d (*MhN, ShS*); Fox.

[68.](#) ***desired you more than all other nations...*** The blessed Holy One chose the people of Israel at Mount Sinai when, according to rabbinic tradition, they accepted the Torah whereas other nations refused it. Days will come when Israel transgresses, and they will be punished with exile.

On the association of *days of evil* with “days of old age,” see BT *Shabbat* 151b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:1; *Midrash Zuta, Qohelet*, on 12:1; Rashi on Ecclesiastes 12:1; Ibn Ezra on Psalms 49:6; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Radak on Psalms 49:46; Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 33:25. Cf. Radak on Psalms 129:1.

[69.](#) ***Adar, Nisan, Iyyar, Sivan...*** Miracles were performed for Israel in each of these four months. In Adar, the Jews were saved from Haman’s treachery; in Nisan, they were redeemed from slavery in Egypt; in Iyyar, they

were fed manna from heaven; and, in Sivan, they were given the Torah at Mount Sinai. At those times, *Shekhinah* (signified by “Assembly of Israel”) is adorned by *Tif’eret* (represented by “Her Husband”). Here the sefirotic symbolism becomes more pronounced.

The text elicits the homily regarding בַּחֵר (baḥar), “chosen,” from word-play on the verse’s use of the term בְּחֹרֶתֶיךָ (beḥurotekha), *your youth*.

On good and bad months, see BT *Pesaḥim* 111b; *Tsava’at Rabbenu Yehudah ha-Ḥasid*, 41, and Margaliot’s note there; *Zohar* 2:12a, 78b; 3:174a (RM), 259a; *ZḤ* 36d (RR).

Crowning is frequently used in kabbalistic literature to represent intimacy. See *Zohar* 1:87a; 2:49b, 135b, 206a, 213b, 225a, 238b; 3:12a, 96b; Ginsburg, *Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, index s.v. “Coronation or crowning of divinity on Shabbat”; Idel, “Universalization and Integration,” 34–37; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 357–68.

70. days of evil, actually... These months are actual manifestations of the demonic side. The months of Tammuz, Av, and Tevet are all characterized by harsh Judgment. Traditionally, on the seventeenth of Tammuz, the walls of Jerusalem were breached; on the ninth of Av, the First and Second Temples were destroyed; on the tenth of Tevet, the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began. Regarding שֶׁבֶט (*shevat*), Shevat, the use of the verse from Proverbs indicates the injunction that one does not respond to rebuke until one has received the שֶׁבֶט (*sheivet*), *rod*.

71. last coin from the purse will be no more... The days of exile reach their nadir when people sink into abject poverty. Those days provide no חֶפֶץ (*ḥefets*), *delight*—interpreted as having no חֶפֶץ (*ḥefets*), “object,” to sell.

See BT Sanhedrin 97a: “The son of David will not come until... the [last] coin has gone from the purse.” See *ZḤ* 60a.

72. face of *Shekhinah*... The glory or power of the rabbis is described in figurative terms to mean that they can break through textual obscurities. Alternatively, it is described literally: they resemble the *Shekhinah* and can transform nature.

According to rabbinic tradition, “whoever welcomes [literally: receives the face of] the wise is considered as if he welcomes *Shekhinah*.” See *Mekhilta, Amaleq (Yitro)* 1. The *Zohar* sometimes transforms the rabbinic simile into an actual description of the righteous, who are called the face of *Shekhinah* “because *Shekhinah* is hidden within them: She is in concealment and they are revealed” (2:163b).

See JT *Eruvin* 5:1, 22b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:6; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:5; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:2; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 27; *Zohar* 1:9a, 94b; 2:5a (*MhN*), 38a, 50a, 94b, 198a, 225a; 3:6b, 59b, 148a, 201b, 298a; *ZḤ* 11c (*MhN*); Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 370. Cf. Genesis 33:10.

On the image of smashing mountains and grinding rocks, see BT *Sanhedrin* 24a.

The term “Masters of Mishnah” appears rarely in the main body of the *Zohar*, but quite frequently in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* and in the later works, *Raya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*. “Masters of Mishnah” appears to signify a group (though never formally defined) of sages possessing esoteric wisdom. In some ways, the Masters of Mishnah are a forerunner to the *ḥavrayya*, the companions headed by Rabbi Shim’on, found in the main body of the *Zohar*. Significantly, however, Rabbi Shim’on does not always occupy a privileged position in this group. The Mishnah of which they are masters is not the Mishnah of the rabbinic sage Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, but rather a body of esoteric knowledge often relating to the soul and the structure of the cosmos. See *Zohar* 1:123b (*MhN*, though mistakenly labeled as *Tosefta*); 1:127a-b, 129a-b, 130a, 135a, 138a, 139b; 2:5a, 14a (all *MhN*); *ZḤ* 10c, 12c, 13a, 14c, 15b-c,

16a, 59b (all *MhN*); Scholem, "Parashah Ḥadashah," 443, 444 (see Vol. 10, Addendum 1); Liebes, "Ziqat ha-Zohar," 44; Meroz, "Va-Ani Lo Hayiti Sham?," 168 (see Vol. 10, Addendum 3). Cf. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:15, 23:12.

73. Jerusalem Talmud... The superiority of the land of Israel (and of its residents) to Babylon (and its residents) can be seen in the different Talmuds that emerged from each location.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 24a: "Rabbi Osha'ya said, 'What is the meaning of the verse *I took for myself two staffs; one I called נועם (No'am), Graciousness [or: Delight, Favor], and the other I called חובלים (Hovelim), Destroyers (Zechariah 11:7)? No'am—these are the scholars in the land of Israel, שמונעימין (she-man'imin), who treat each other graciously, when engaged in halakhic debates; Hovelim—these are the scholars of Babylon, שמהבליים (she-mehabbelim), who injure each other when discussing halakhah....' What does [the name] בבל (Bavel), Babylon, connote? Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'בלולה (Belulah), Mixed-up, Scripture, mixed-up Mishnah, and mixed-up Talmud.' *In dark places He has made me dwell, like those dead for eternity (Lamentations 3:6)*. Rabbi Yirmeyahu said—this refers to the Babylonian Talmud."*

On criticism of Babylon, see Jeremiah 13:13; BT *Pesaḥim* 87a; *Yoma* 57a; *Zevaḥim* 60b; *Menahot* 52a; *Bekhorot* 25b; *Zohar* 1:96b, 224b-225a; *ZH* 88d (*MhN, Rut*); Liebes, "Ziqat ha-Zohar le-Erets Israel"; Huss, "Ḥakham Adif mi-Navi," 41-2 and n. 126. On the superiority of the Jerusalem Talmud, see Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot ha-Torah*, 13; idem, *Ma'amarei ha-Re'iyah*, 78-80; idem, *Iggerot ha-Re'iyah* (#103), 123-28. Liebes suggests that the Jerusalem Talmud is a cipher for the *Zohar* itself. See Liebes, op cit., 42-44.

Since the traditional commentators assume that the *Zohar* was written by Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai, they are forced to suggest that the references to the different

Talmuds here signify varying approaches to Mishnah study. See *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

74. baraitot *Baraitot* comprise one of the bodies of Tannaitic teaching that were not included in the Mishnah. The teaching here may be building upon the similarity to the word *barir*, “polished, bright.” See Mopsik.

75. enlightened ones... The *Zohar* frequently draws on Daniel 12:3: וְהַמְשַׁכְּלִים (*ve-ha-maskilim*), *The enlightened, will shine like the radiance of the sky; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever*. In the book of Daniel, this term apparently designates the community of those who shared the prophet’s vision. In medieval literature, it can refer to either philosophers or, as here, kabbalists. In astrology, the stars are used to foretell the future, but here the “enlightened ones” themselves are identified with the stars and through charismatic vision can foretell the future.

The retrospective reference to *tanna'im* and *amora'im* indicates that the author here was not concerned about projecting an ancient date as the time of writing.

On the “enlightened ones,” see *Bahir* 95 (139); *Zohar* 1:15a-16a; 2:2a, 23a; *ZH* 58c (*QhM*), 93d-94b, 105a-105c, 106b (last three all *Tiq*); Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 224; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 379, 383-84; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 73-75; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 75-80.

76. shining upon Her... In Zoharic symbolism, the sun signifies the masculine *Tif'eret* (or *Yesod*), who shines upon the feminine moon, representing *Shekhinah*.

The text proceeds to interpret Ecclesiastes 12 as a key to understanding the celestial events associated with the destruction of the Temple.

77. light... created in the act of creation... On the first day of creation, light was created, deriving from *Hesed*, associated with the right side. It bonds with “the moon,” signifying *Shekhinah*, to indicate the initial harmony among

the *sefirot*. In rabbinic teaching, that light was hidden away during creation, but here that concealment occurred with the destruction of the Temple, as indicated by the verse from Lamentations. *He has withdrawn His right hand* contrasts with Song of Songs 2:6: *his right hand embracing me*.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7 in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon: “With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One foresaw the corruption of the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, He hid it away from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). Where did He hide it? In the Garden of Eden. *Light is sown for the righteous, joy for the upright in heart* (Psalms 97:11).”

On the ray of light, see BT *Hagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish: “To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of love by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love* (Psalms 42:9). Why? Because *in the night His song is with me* (ibid.).’ And there are some who say that Resh Lakish said: ‘To one who engages in Torah in this world—like nighttime—the blessed Holy One extends a ray of love in the world that is coming—like daytime—for it is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love*. Why? Because *in the night His song is with me*.’” *His song* is the song of Torah.

See BT *Megillah* 13a, 15b; *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13, pp. 254-55; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17, p. 22; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:15; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 92a, 104a, 178b, 194b, 207b; 2:46a, 57a, 149a; 3:22a, 23b, 25a-b, 36a, 44b-45a, 64b-65a, 68a, 76a, 213a; *ZH* 69d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 54.

On the hiding away of the first light, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; BT *Hagigah* 12a; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1;

Tanḥuma, Shemini, 9; *Bahir* 97–98 (147); *Zohar* 1:7a, 31b–32a, 45b–46a, 47a, 59a, 121b (*MhN*), 131a, 203b; 2:35a, 78b, 127a, 147b, 148b–149a, 220a–b; 3:88a; *ZH* 66a (*ShS*), 85a (*MhN, Rut*).

On the verse in Lamentations, see *Mekhilta, Shirta* 5; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:6; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petiḥta* 24; 2:6; *Tanḥuma, Beshallah* 15; *Zohar* 1:163b; 2:57a–b, 143b, 203a, 254a (*Heikh*); 3:74a, 201a, 237a; *ZH* 47b (*MhN, Rut*), 61b–c (*MhN, ShS*), 74d (*ShS*), 88b (*MhN, Rut*).

78. moon... Justice... When the Temple was destroyed, *Gevurah*, symbolized by *Justice*, displaces *Ḥesed*, prevailing through *Shekhinah*.

79. ministering angels... In the *Zohar*, stars frequently symbolize angels. The *angels of peace* are masters of compassion, without any judgment at all.

On the rain and weeping, see BT *Shabbat* 151b: “*And the clouds come back after the rain*—this is the light of a person’s eyes, which dwindles after one cries as if covered by clouds.”

On the stars and angels, see *Zohar* 2:18a (*MhN*); *ZH* 61b (*ShS*), 76a (*MhN, Rut*). Cf. Isaiah 40:26. On the angels weeping in response to the destruction, see *Zohar* 1:182a, 210a. On this verse in Isaiah, see *Zohar* 1:120a, 182a, 210a–b; 2:2b, 195b–196a; *ZH* 37d, 61c (*MhN, ShS*); Vol. 6, 113–14, n. 20.

80. three courts... See M *Sanhedrin* 11:2: “Three courts of law were there [at the Temple]: one situated at the entrance to the Temple Mount, another at the door of the [Temple] court, and the third in the Chamber of Hewn Stone....” The *mishnah* proceeds to describe the third court as “the Great Court that was in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, from which the Law goes forth to all Israel, as is written: *From that place which YHVH chooses* (Deuteronomy 17:10).” The Chamber of Hewn Stone was built into the north wall of the Temple Mount, half inside the sanctuary and half outside, with doors providing access both to the

Temple and to the outside. The name presumably arises to distinguish it from the buildings in the Temple complex used for ritual purposes, which had to be constructed of stones unhewn by any iron implements.

According to the Mishnah, these courts are listed in ascending authority, with twenty-three members in the first two and seventy in the last, the Great Sanhedrin. Here, all three courts sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, teaching Torah. Alternatively, the notion of three courts may refer to three sefirotic sources of judgment: *Binah*, *Gevurah*, and *Malkhut*.

On the Temple courts and the Chamber of Hewn Stone, see BT *Sanhedrin* 88b; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 1:3. Cf. *Zohar* 3:161b; *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the three sources of judgment, see *Zohar* 3:65a.

On the verse from Ecclesiastes, see *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7.

81. Great Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin See M *Sanhedrin* 1:6: “The Great Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one [judges] and the Lesser Sanhedrin of twenty-three.” While there was only one Great Sanhedrin, based in the Temple, each city in biblical Israel was permitted to have its own Lesser Sanhedrin.

This teaching may derive from comparison with Jethro’s advice to Moses regarding the appointment of judges offered in Exodus 18:21–22: *As for you, you shall select from all the people men of caliber, revering God, men of truth, hating bribery; and you shall set chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens over them. And they shall judge the people at all times; and so, every great matter they shall bring to you, and every small matter they themselves shall judge; and it will be lighter on you, and they will bear it with you.*

82. maids who grind... Literally, *grinders*—interpreted here as molars, referring to the teeth of the priests who

used to receive much of their food from Temple offerings. See Targum; BT *Shabbat* 152a; Rashi; Rashbam.

83. those who look... A reference to visionary seeing.

Traditional commentators explain these as the dimming eyes of the elderly. See Targum; BT *Shabbat* 152a; Ibn Ezra; Rashi; Rashbam.

84. all the gates were locked... The gates of heaven were shut, with no entry for the people's prayers.

See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 59a in the name of Rabbi El'azar, "Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been locked.... Yet even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not, as is said: *Hear my prayer, O YHVH, to my cry hearken; to my tears be not deaf!*"

See BT *Berakhot* 32b; *Zohar* 1:132b; 2:12b, 19b-20a (*MhN*), 165a, 245b (*Heikh*); 3:20a; *ZH* 61c (*MhN, ShS*); *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Ecclesiastes 12:4 reads in full: *The double doors close in the market as the sound of the mill quiets [or: grows faint], and the sound of the bird arises, and all the songstresses are bowed.*

85. incense grinders, who used to call aloud... See BT *Karetot* 6b in the name of Abba Yose son of Yoḥanan: "While [the incense] is being beaten, he calls out: 'Pound well, well pound.' ...This supports Rabbi Yoḥanan, for Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Just as speech is harmful to wine, so it is beneficial to spices."

86. singing... During the Temple service, the Levites used to perform music and sing—and the angels would sing in the heavens above. The angelic watches parallel the Levitical watches, with different groups rotating in service on a monthly basis. With the destruction of the Temple, singing ceased both below and above. Not only the human Levites were brought low, but also apparently the celestial angels were cowed, in that they were frightened of the

conquering foe, Nebuchadnezzar—described in rabbinic sources as a dwarf.

On angels singing, see BT *Ḥagigah* 14a; *Ḥullin* 91b; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §§30, 58, 161, 185–88; *Zohar* 1:159a, 1:189a, 231a–b; 3:64b; *ZH* 5d–6a (*MhN*), 82b (*MhN*, *Rut*). On Nebuchadnezzar as a dwarf, see *Pesiqta Rabbati* 31, 144a (and Ish-Shalom’s note there); *Midrash Tehillim* 137:4–5.

The verse in Ecclesiastes reads in full: *Of the very height they are afraid, and terror is in the road. And the almond blossoms, and the locust tree is laden, and the caper-fruit falls apart. But man is going to his everlasting house, and the mourners turn round in the market.*

87. 80,000 Levites This story derives from a midrashic expansion upon Psalms 137:1–6: *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the poplars there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors had asked of us words of song, and our plunderers—rejoicing: “Sing us from Zion’s songs.” How can we sing a song of YHVH on foreign soil? Should I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither! May my tongue cleave to my palate if I do not recall you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my chief joy!* See *Pesiqta Rabbati* 31, 144a; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:4–5.

88. Jeremiah gathered them... Traditional commentators wrestle with the description of Jeremiah’s collecting limbs because, according to Jeremiah 1:1, he was a priest, making it forbidden for him to have contact with a corpse or body parts. See *Or Yaqar*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the description “with millstones round their necks...,” see Lamentations 5:5, 13; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* 24; *ibid.* 2:6; 5:13; *Zohar* 2:2b, 118b (*RM*); 3:20b, 45b. On this story, see *Pesiqta Rabbati* 28, 135a; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* 34. On Jeremiah and burial of body parts, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 4:1.

Jeremiah 13:16 reads in full (according to MT): *Give honor to YHVH your God before He brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the mountains in shadow—When you hope for light, and it is turned to darkness and becomes deep gloom.* On discrepancies between MT and the Zohar's citations, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

89. And the almond blossoms... Twenty-one days elapsed from the time that the walls of Jerusalem were breached until the Temple was destroyed, corresponding to the duration from the almond's first blossom until it produces fruit. In traditional Jewish practice, these twenty-one days are observed as a period of incremental mourning, culminating on the Ninth of Av, which commemorates the destruction of the two Temples. Once these days pass, the tree produces fruit, a hopeful symbol of messianic redemption.

On the almond's maturation, see *EJ* (1:683): "The almond can be regarded as having two periods of ripening. It is edible together with its rind a few weeks after the tree blooms, while the fruit is still green. Its second ripening is three months later, when the outer rind has shriveled and the inside cover has become a hard shell."

On the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Ninth of Av, see M *Ta'anit* 4:6: "Five things befell our ancestors on the seventeenth of Tammuz, and five on the Ninth of Av. On the Seventeenth of Tammuz, the Tablets [of the Ten Commandments] were broken, the daily offering ceased, the city was breached, Apostomus burnt the Torah, and an idol was erected in the Sanctuary. On the Ninth of Av it was decreed against our ancestors that they would not enter the land [of Israel], the Temple was destroyed the first and the second time, Beitar was captured, and the city was plowed. When Av comes in, joy must be diminished."

JT *Ta'anit* 4:8, 68c; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petihtot* 23, 1:29; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7; *Pesiqta Zutarta* on Lamentations 1:3; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhhot Ta'anivot*, 5:2-3,

6 (and *Haggahot Maimoniyot*, ad loc.); Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Roqe'ah*, 309; Yeḥiel ben Asher, *Tur*, *Orah Hayyim*, 551; Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim*, 551.

90. grasshopper is laden... In Numbers 13:31 the spies report: *We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.* Sullam explains that since David was the smallest of his brothers, his diminutive stature elicits the comparison to the grasshopper. As the grasshopper gets laden down with food, so were the descendants of David burdened in exile.

See Joseph Kara. *Or Yaqar* suggests that the connection to David arises since Rabbi Shim'on son of Gamli'el, one of the ten martyrs that soon become a topic of analysis, descended from David.

Grasshopper renders חגב (*ḥagav*), which in its simple sense in Ecclesiastes is often construed as *locust tree*, since its pods resemble the insect. Cf. Leviticus 11:22; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

91. caper-fruit falls apart... *Caper-fruit* renders אביונה (*aviyyonah*). Vocalized differently, it reads *evyonah*, *indigent* [or: *destitute, impoverished*]. With the cessation of service in the Temple, signifying *Shekhinah*, She is beggared like a poor woman. Alternatively, following the traditional Bible commentaries, the word derives from אבה (*avah*), “desire.” Thus, *Shekhinah*'s desire flags with the cessation of Temple worship.

See Rashi; Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. NJPS; Fox.

92. man is going to his everlasting house... *Man* signifies *Tif'eret*, who has withdrawn above—ascending to *Binah*, symbolized by *house*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. *Sullam*.

93. priests מקטיר קטורת (maqtir qetoret), burn incense... Both *silver* and the priest signify *Ḥesed*. The residents of the land of Israel associate the Hebrew word קטרת (*qetoret*),

“incense,” with the Aramaic root קטר (*qtr*), “to tie, bind,” indicating that the offering of incense unites the *sefirot*.

On incense as binding, see *Zohar* 1:230a; 2:218b-219a; 3:11b, 30a-b, 37b, 58b, 151b, 177b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 86-87. On silver representing *Hesed*, see *Bahir* 35 (52); *Zohar* 1:217a, 250a; 2:90b, 138b, 147a, 197b. On the priests signifying *Hesed*, see *Zohar* 1:87a, 95b, 112a, 176a, 217a; 2:49b, 67b, 79b, 189b, 231a, 232b, 239a, 259b (*Heikh*); 3:27a, 30a, 32a-b, 34b, 88b-89b, 146a, 151b, 242a, 296b (*IZ*).

94. holy of holies... The *golden bowl* symbolizes the holy of holies, which in turn signifies *Shekhinah*. She used to rest upon the golden cherubim that adorned the Ark of the Covenant, stationed in the holy of holies.

95. Kingdom of the House of David Symbolizing the ruin of *Shekhinah*. Cf. *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

96. Spirit... *Spirit* signifies *Shekhinah*, vanished from the world with the destruction of the Temple.

See *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petihta* 23: “*Spirit will return to God who gave it*—this refers to holy spirit. Since holy spirit departed from Israel, they were exiled; and since they were exiled, Jeremiah lamented over them: *Alas, she sits alone.*” See *Zohar* 1:210b; 2:97b, 140b; cf. *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:7.

See BT *Bava Batra* 12a-b: “Rabbi Avdimi from Haifa said, ‘Since the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise.’ ... Rabbi Yoḥanan said, ‘Ever since the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to fools and children.’” Here in the *Zohar*, the focus is on the complete disappearance of prophecy. See *Zohar* 1:7b, 183b, 194b; 3:35a.

On “spirit of prophecy,” see *Targum Onqelos* on Genesis 41:38; Numbers 24:2; *Zohar* 2:45a.

97. protect the world... Instead of “protect the עולמא (*alma*), world, while in the land of Israel,” ES1, V, and

Margaliot read: “protect the אַמָּה (*amma*), people, of the land of Israel.”

98. sin of the sons of Jacob... This introduces the legendary connection between the sin of Jacob’s ten sons—selling Joseph—and the deaths suffered by The Ten Martyrs during the Hadrianic persecutions. Although Jacob’s sons repented of their sin, ultimately receiving atonement through their deaths, Samael—personified here in the form of his consort, the serpent—cruelly pursued their souls a second time when they were reincarnated in the bodies of the rabbinic luminaries.

Judgment is left totally in the hands of the serpent, and the condemnation of the lack of justice here is an unusually harsh indictment. It is most striking that the verse from Job, generally read as a rhetorical question, is read here as a proclamation. See below, [note 114](#).

The upcoming treatment of the martyrdom legend is the most explicit identification of the brothers and the ten martyrs in the *Zohar*.

See *Midrash Mishlei* 1:13, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi, and the statement attributed there to Rabbi Avin, according to which ten martyrs in each generation suffer on account of the brothers’ misdeed, “and still that sin lingers.”

On the sale of Joseph, see Genesis 37:12–36. On the brothers’ repentance, see Genesis 42:21; 50:17. On the ten martyrs, see Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §108; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:13; *Elleh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:64–72); “Ma’aseh Asarah Harugei Malkhut” (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 6:19–35); *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 28; *Zohar* 1:106a, 202a; 2:33a, 254b (*Heikh*); *ZH* 46a, 76d, 89c (last two *MhN*, *Rut*); Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 38:1, 44:17; Yom Kippur Musaf liturgy; Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*; Liebes, “How the Zohar was Written,” 134–35; Stern, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 143–65; Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, especially 51–60, 71–98; Meroz, “R.

Joseph Angelet,” 329–33, 373–75 (and sources cited in n. 68); Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, 66–90, 107–17.

The full verse in Job reads: *Would God pervert justice; would Shaddai pervert what is right?*

99. like one who weeps from afar... The residents of the land of Israel resume their critique of the exiles in Babylon, who have distanced themselves from the continuing religious persecutions against their brethren and the pervasiveness of idolatry in the Holy Land. See *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:3: “*I have bathed my feet—from the filth of idolatry.*” There, idolatry surrounds the exiles, whereas in the *Zohar*, the dilemma is that the demonic Other Side dwells in Israel. In the Song, the female lover’s delay in rising from her bed results in her lover’s departure; here, the price is much higher. See *Tanḥuma, Vayeshev 2*.

100. once they passed on to that world... Usually, death suffices to procure atonement for sins, and particularly if accompanied by repentance. Here, the serpent perseveres, seeking judgment against the brothers in their new incarnations as esteemed rabbis living under Roman rule. The serpent’s refusal to accept the atonement granted to the brothers is a sign of his wickedness. For those who suffer from this villainy, it denotes a basic injustice in the world.

101. He scrutinized the verse See *Heikhalot Rabbati* 5:5 (in *Battei Midrashot* 1:74): “The Attribute of Judgment stood before the blessed Holy One and said, ‘Master of the World! You wrote in Your Torah: *One who steals a man and sells him... [will surely be put to death]* (Exodus 21:16). Now, the sons of Israel [Jacob] who stole their brother Joseph and sold him—what has happened to them?’ Immediately permission was granted to Samael to

annihilate ten heroes in their place.” Cf. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur*, §108.

The simple sense of the verse is *One who kidnaps a man and sells him, or he is found in his hands, will surely be put to death.*

102. Joseph was not a man The blessed Holy One contends that the verse is inapplicable to the brothers’ sale of Joseph since he was only seventeen years old (Genesis 37:2) when they sold him. In biblical and rabbinic literature, the age of full majority is twenty years. Alternatively, God’s denial that Joseph was *a man* derives from the rabbinic legends that depict him as a cherub.

On the age of majority, see Exodus 30:14; 38:26; Leviticus 27:3, 5; Numbers 1; 14:29; 26:2, 4; 32:11; M *Yevamot* 10:9; *Arakhin* 4:4; *Niddah* 5:9; *Midrash Tanna’im*, Deuteronomy 24:16; BT *Shabbat* 89b, *Gittin* 65a, *Qiddushin* 29b, *Bava Batra* 119a, 155a; *Hullin* 24b; *Tanḥuma*, *Qorah* 3; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:4; *Bahir* 135 (195); *Zohar* 1:118b–119a; 2:97b–98a, 186a, 248b (*Heikh*); 3:293b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 20a (*MhN*). On Joseph as a cherub, see *Zohar* 1:263a (*Hash*); 3:162a; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 37:2.

103. found in his hands The serpent raises another claim.

104. he was not found in their hands The blessed Holy One replies that the brothers no longer had Joseph in their control.

105. that thief shall die... The serpent cites another scriptural rendition of the laws regarding kidnaping, unsusceptible to the objections God raised previously.

The verse from Deuteronomy concludes: *and you shall root out the evil from your midst.*

106. Woe to one who receives punishment... Eight hundred years marks the period from the death of Joseph’s brothers until the destruction of the second Temple. Since the brothers were going to die as punishment for their sale of Joseph, any extra suffering during their lifetime was

excessive. Further punishment in a subsequent lifetime is surely a perversion of justice!

See *Bahir* 135 (195): “[Rabbi Reḥumai said,] ‘Why are there wicked who prosper and righteous who suffer? It is because the righteous one had been evil in the past and is now being punished. And is one punished for youthful days? Did not Rabbi Simon said that punishment is only meted out from age twenty and above! Well, I am not speaking of the [present] life, but of that which was in the past. His companions said to him, ‘How much longer will you conceal your words?’ He replied, ‘Go and see. This can be compared to one who planted a vineyard hoping to grow grapes, but they turned out inferior. When he saw that his planting had failed, he hacked, and cut, and cleared the vines from the inferior ones and replanted. He saw that he was unsuccessful, so he cut and replanted.’ ‘How many times will he do so?’ He replied, ‘For a thousand generations, as is written: *He charged this matter for a thousand generations* (Psalms 105:8).”

See *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 38 in the name of Rabbi Yannai: “The tribes [i.e., Jacob’s sons] did not receive atonement for the sale of Joseph until they died, as is said: *Then YHVH Tseva’ot revealed Himself to my ears: This iniquity shall not be purged from you until you die* (Isaiah 22:14).” Targum Yonatan explains *until you die* as “a second death.”

On two punishments, see M *Sanhedrin* 9:4. On death procuring atonement, see M *Yoma* 8:8; BT *Yoma* 85b. On punishments in a subsequent lifetime, see Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod on Berakhot* 7a, p. 5a. On reincarnation in Kabbalah, see above, [pp. 178–79](#), [n. 430](#).

107. Roman emperor... Samael infused malign spirit into the Roman emperor, who then exacted judgment against the ten martyrs, the rabbis who bore the reincarnated souls of Jacob’s sons. Their gruesome deaths, as depicted in rabbinic and liturgical literature, became the paradigms of martyrdom. See above, [note 98](#).

108. pillars of the world... Jacob's sons were the supporting columns of the world and of the entire sefirotic structure, but Samael insisted on further punishment against them. Consequently, they were reincarnated into the bodies—"foreign garments"—of the great rabbis and violently dispatched.

On the righteous as pillars of the world, see Proverbs 10:25; BT *Yoma* 38b. On "garments" as a symbol for reincarnations, see *Bahir* 86 (122, and Margaliot's notes there).

109. trees of the garden screamed... A reference to the righteous souls residing in the Garden of Eden. They joined in a chorus together with all the angelic beings to lament the terrifying departure of the saintly luminaries. In the next world, souls adopt ethereal bodies—woven from their virtuous acts in this world—that are similar to their forms in this world. The souls of the sons of Jacob had these garments stripped off them, in preparation for their descent into the bodies of the ten martyrs.

On the soul as jewel, see JT *Kil'ayim* 9:6, 32c; *Ketubbot* 12:3, 35b. On the cherubim guarding the Garden of Eden, see Genesis 3:24: *He drove out the human and placed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.*

On garments woven from acts in this world, see *Zohar* 1:7a, 66a, 81a-b (ST), 82b, 91a, 224a-b, 225a, 226b, 233b; 2:11a, 150a, 210a-b, 229b, 247a (*Heikh*); 3:70b, 101a, 174b-175a, 214a; ZH 90b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 404; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 56; idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 276; Scholem, "Levush ha-Neshamot"; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158-59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 264-65.

Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:6; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:35; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; Matthew 22:1-14; Romans 13:12; Galatians 3:27; Revelation 3:4-18; 6:11; 7:13-14; 19:8; 22:14.

In the celestial geography of the *Zohar*, the Garden of Eden is surrounded by walls. See *Zohar* 1:80b–81a (*ST*); 2:89b, 212a; 3:203b; *ZH* 68d (*MhN*, *ShS*); Moses de León, *Seder Gan Eden*, 264–276 ; Scholem.

For a different reading of this paragraph, see *Sullam*.

110. accompanied by one cherub After the destruction of the Temple, *Shekhinah* was accompanied by just a single cherub. See above, [note 65](#).

111. Flame of the Whirling Sword... The fiery sword here symbolizes the demonic forces that ravage the Garden's gates.

See *Zohar* 1:44a (*Heikh*), 53b, 165a (*ST*), 232a, 237a; 2:253a–b and 264a (both *Heikh*); 3:19b, 73b–74a (*Mat*).

112. luminaries and lamps Signifying masters of kabbalistic lore. See *Zohar* 1:147a (printed editions); 2:209a; 3:178a; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 143–5, 151–2, 156–8.

113. Once he forgave them... Joseph was the one who suffered from the brothers' crime, but once he abandoned his claim, there is no court on earth or in heaven who can press a suit against them. The atrocities against the martyrs are so horrifying because they did not serve the cause of justice. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

See *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Margalioṭ, par. 11 (cf. ed. Wistinetzki, par. 1579): "One is only truly pious if one relinquishes his attributes. If people present themselves—those who have acted improperly against him, but are now regretful—requesting forgiveness... When such a person sees... that he can reciprocate against them, but he forgives them with a full heart, he is called pious... So it occurred with the sons of Jacob who sinned against Joseph—he forgave them and did not reciprocate against them. This is the root of piety: one must act beyond the letter of the law in all respects, as is said: [*Righteous is YHVH in all His ways*] and *magnanimous in all His deeds* (Psalms 145:17)." See *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 2.

The context of Genesis 50:16-17 reads: *They sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father left a charge before his death, saying, 'Thus shall you say to Joseph, "We beseech you, forgive, pray, the crime and the offense of your brothers for evil they have caused you. And so now, forgive, pray, the crime of the servants of your father's God."'"*

114. Mother's banishment... *Shekhinah* was sent off, as will be explained below, for Israel's sins; and in Her absence, Samael stepped into the void, in the guise of the serpent. In *Shekhinah's* absence, the demonic Other Side could act against the righteous, "her embellishments."

On acting beyond the letter of the law, see BT *Berakhot* 7a in the name of Rav: "[God says,] 'May it be My will that My Mercy will overcome My anger, and may My mercy prevail over My attributes, and may I conduct myself toward My children with the attribute of mercy, and may I enter before them [in judgment] while stopping short of strict justice.'" See Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 37.

On Jacob's sons as "embellishments" (or "jewels, adornments"), see *Zohar* 1:246a-247a, 248a.

115. slaughtered in vain... The harsh assessment of the lack of justice is unusual for the *Zohar*. The martyrs died, not because of previous sins of the brothers or Israel's sins more generally, but on account of *Shekhinah's* absence. The residents of the land of Israel reinterpret the word **ובפשעיכם** (*uv-fish'eikhem*), *for your crimes*, to mean *at your trials* or *when crimes are ascribed to you*.

This rejection of guilt appears to be a polemical thrust against the contemporary Christian theology in which the Jews were deemed culpable for their denigrated status. See Mopsik.

116. all the garments, save one... Reuben was not as culpable as the other brothers because he had tried to save Joseph by placing him temporarily in a pit, and was not

party to the sale. Consequently, when Rabbi Eli'ezer—apparently bearing the soul of Reuben—was captured, he was jailed, but not put to death. See *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 3.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 16b: “Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Eli'ezer was arrested on a charge of heresy they brought him to the court tribunal to be judged. The governor said to him, ‘How can a sage like you occupy himself with those idle things?’ He replied, ‘The Judge will act faithfully toward me.’ The governor thought that he referred to him—though he really referred to his Father in Heaven—and said, ‘Because I act faithfully toward you—released! You are acquitted.’” Cf. Rashi and Tosafot ad loc.; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:8.

The *Zohar* on *Eikhah* ends abruptly and many of the manuscripts and printed editions note the sudden break. The scribe of ES1 writes after adding fragments from other unrelated parts of the *Zohar*: “Whoever finds a mistake here and corrects it, may the Lord aid him and have compassion upon him, since this has been uprooted from a faulty version.” See Scholem.

1. Song of Songs... *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim* has a distinctive literary structure, comprising a dialogue between Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai and the prophet Elijah, while running a sustained commentary on Song of Songs 1:1-11. It is one of the largest coherent units in the Zoharic corpus, leading Moses Cordovero to say: "The commentaries in the *Zohar* on the *parashot* were composed casually, as they [the *havrayya* (Companions)] would interpret the Torah during breaks in their study of Jewish law, in the give-and-take of the Torah's laws. [*Tiqqunei Zohar*], however, [as well as] *Ra'aya Meheimna*, *Shir ha-Shirim*, *Piqqudin*, and the *Idra* entailed a full-fledged commitment to compose the work" (Moses Cordovero, *Tiqqunei Zohar im Peirush Or Yaqar*, 1:15).

On *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim*, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 162-326.

2. He opened, saying... Namely, Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai, the hero of the *Zohar*. The dialogue format later implies this, although the text does not indicate the speaker at the outset.

Grammatically speaking, the expression *shir ha-shirim* is a construct chain containing two instances of the same noun, in which the construct term is singular and its genitive term is definite and plural. Such a construction indicates the superlative, e.g., *king of kings*, namely the emperor (Daniel 2:37; Ezra 7:12), *prince of princes*, namely the head prince (Numbers 3:32), *God of gods*, namely the supreme deity (Deuteronomy 10:17). The style is exemplified in Exodus 26:33: *and the curtain shall divide for you between the Holy and the qodesh qodashim, Holy of Holies*. Here, *shir ha-shirim* signifies the absolutely superlative song, as echoed by Rabbi Akiva's statement of M *Yadayim* 3:5, "All of scripture is holy, but Song of Songs is holy of holies."

On the divine quality of Solomon's wisdom, see 1 Kings 3:28. On the superlative quality of the Song, see Ibn Ezra, Introduction: "This book is glorious, entirely delightful, and

there is none other among the 1005 songs of King Solomon that is like it. Thus it is written *The Song of Songs of Solomon*, for this song is superior to all other songs of Solomon. Within it is a secret, concealed and sealed from the days of Abraham until the coming of the Messiah.”

See the comments of Joshua ibn Shuaib (*Drashot Yehoshu'a ibn Shuaib*, 42a): “The author of the Targum translated this verse to mean that it is superior to the ten songs that had been uttered in the world... [namely] the song of Adam;... the song of Moses at the sea; the song *Ha'azinu*; the song of Israel at the well; the song of Joshua; the song of Deborah; the song of Hannah; the song of David; and this song—which is the song of the Messiah.”

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:1:11; Rashbam; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Buber) 9 and notes 32, 34; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (Schechter) 53 and notes; *Bahir* 117 (174); *Zohar* 2:18b, 98b (both *MhN*), 143b, 145b; *ZH* 47d (*MhN*, *Rut*), 61b (*MhN*, *ShS*). On the angelic response to this revelation, cf. *Zohar* 2:3a.

“The generation” refers to that of Solomon, who, according to rabbinic tradition, authored Song of Songs. The *Zohar* idealizes this generation because they lived when God’s presence filled the newly built Temple. On this generation, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 85–104, especially 93–99.

“The Name” refers to the tetragrammaton, while “holy names” refers to the other names of God, all understood as derivative of *YHVH*.

On revelation to human beings that is concealed from celestial beings, cf. *Midrash Elleh Ezkerah* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:65), where the angel Gabriel says to Rabbi Yishma’el after the latter has been informed about the impending martyrdom of the ten elders: “Happy are you, children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the blessed Holy One revealed to you that which He did not reveal to the ministering angels.” See *Zohar* 3:144a.

3. Here are mysteries... Concealed within the first four words of Song of Songs are mysteries of the four names, four *sefirot*, and four lights. Here the “upper chariot” is comprised of four *sefirot*—*Shekhinah*, *Yesod*, *Tif’eret*, *Binah*—with the highest *sefirot*, and possibly *Ein Sof* as well, riding upon them.

Elsewhere the upper chariot most often consists of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah*, with *Binah* as the rider. Cf. *Zohar* 2:144a: “Here is the Holy Chariot, for the patriarchs constitute the Chariot; King David joins them and they are four, mystery of the holy supernal Chariot. Thus, four words in this first verse—mystery of the complete Chariot.”

In its form, רזא דרזין (*Raza de-razin*), “mystery of mysteries,” echoes שיר השירים (*shir ha-shirim*), Song of Songs, and קדש קדשים (*Qodesh qodashim*), Holy of Holies. The word *raza* is often translated as “mystery,” indicating an entryway into mystical experience of Divinity; it can also mean “secret”—signifying discrete, esoteric content.

On the significance of each gradient’s being referred to as זהרא (*zohara*), “radiance,” and the authorial self-consciousness in adding to the literature known as זהר (*Zohar*), “Radiance,” see Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah*, 125. On the term *zohar*,” see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 261-65.

Joseph of Hamadan explains the four words’ significance differently: “Four words here correspond to the four letters of *shem ha-meyuḥad*, “the unique name,” four creatures of the chariot, and the four patriarchs who carry the chariot (upper ones and lower ones)—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, called “upright ones,” for they sing this song before the blessed Holy One” (*Sefer Tashaq*, 7-8). Cf. *ibid.*, 50-51.

4. Dark-and-Not-Dark... This first radiance, *Shekhinah*, is dark because She has no light of Her own; but She is not entirely dark like the shells of *Sitra Aḥra*. She is both dark and not dark because She receives illumination from above

inconsistently. When the mystic gazes upon this radiance, its shadow dissipates, such that it becomes increasingly luminous in response to kabbalistic visualization practices. (For other interpretations, see *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*. Cordovero notes the paradox of the four lights blended together and then spoken of in their individual identities.)

On the four radiances, see *Zohar* 2:23b; Gikatilla, *Commentary on the Chariot*, 67. On *Shekhinah* having no light of Her own, see *Zohar* 1:20a, 31a, 132b, 179b, 181a, 233b, 238a, 249b; 2:43a (*Piq*), 90b–91a, 142a, 145b, 218b; 3:113b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 338; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 113, 188, 257; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68–69 (85–86); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381. Cf. BT *Shabbat* 156a.

The rhetorical style of affirming-then-denying an action or an attribute is called *apophasis* and is commonly applied to God in mystical literature cross-culturally. Its use signifies the limits of language to describe mystical phenomena and mystical experience. See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*. Its use is pervasive in the *Zohar*; see, e.g., 1:15a, 16b, 65a; 2:72a, 268b; 3:164b; *ZH* 35d (*RR*); 73b (*ShS*).

5. seventy-two sparks... Corresponding to the seventy-two names of God, a complex divine name derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19–21). Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads (“words”), according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse—forming the first triad, וַו (vav, he, vav); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse—forming the second triad, וָו (yod, lamed, vav); etc.

The first radiance, *Shekhinah*, acquires Her name through union at this stage. Throughout the homily, the acquisition

of a name is a mark of completion. Before full consummation of the union, She is known as שר (Sar), “Prince,” ruler over the world; with complete union She receives the letter י (yod) from *Yesod* and is transformed into שיר (shir), “Song.” It is called Song of Rungs because it receives praise from the hosts of angelic powers arrayed below the *sefirot*. The name אדון (Adon), “Master,” is also transmuted—becoming אדוני (Adonai), “Lord,” with the addition of this *yod*. The last conversion that the *yod* promotes is from שיר השרים (Shir ha-Sarim), “Song of the Princes,” to שיר השירים (Shir ha-shirim), “Song of Songs.” The song shifts from being sung by the angels to being issued from sublime radiances above.

The letter *yod* is transmitted from *Yesod*, but it is the perfection and completion of everything because its origin is in the highest reaches of Divinity, as the first letter of the tetragrammaton.

On the seventy-two names, see above, [pp. 42–43](#), [n. 44](#).

The earthly Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one members (seventy and the presiding officer). The number seventy-two may allude to seventy members plus two scribes. See M *Sanhedrin* 4:3; Nahmanides on Numbers 11:16; *Zohar* 1:43b (*Heikh*), 229a; 2:6a, 51b, 251a (*Heikh*); 3:236b; *ZH* 5b (*SO*). *Zohar* 2:51b associates the three verses with *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. For each of these it suggests a division of seventy plus two: for *Hesed*, the additional two are witnesses; for *Gevurah*, the two are scribes; and for *Tif'eret*, the extra two are for glorification.

On the significance of *yod*, see *Zohar* 3:65b, 92a; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 266–67, 282.

6. second radiance... Corresponding to *Yesod*. This radiance comprises the totality of all colors. It is too brilliant to look upon; indeed, its name חי (*hai*), “Life” (or “Vitality”), affirms the verse *no human can see me חי (ve-hai), and live!* (Exodus 33:20). *Yesod* receives from all of the upper *sefirot* and then emits the souls of the righteous, in

accord with its cognomen, *Tsaddiq*, “Righteous One.” (See *Or Yaqar*.) When *Yesod* receives lights from above it is called *Hai*; upon sending these souls below, its name changes to *Hei ha-lamim*. *Yesod* is called Life of the Worlds because it receives divine overflow from the upper world, *Binah*, and distributes it to the lower world, *Shekhinah*. Both with this radiance and the first one, each new function brings a change in nomenclature.

The inability to gaze upon the coalition of all colors reflects the rabbinic prohibition against gazing at the rainbow, often treated by the kabbalists as a symbol for *Yesod*. See BT *Hagigah* 16a: “Whoever has no concern for the honor of his Maker deserves to have never come to the world. What [demonstrates that lack of concern]? Rabbi Abba said, ‘This is one who looks at a rainbow... as is written: *Like the appearance of the bow in the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the radiance all around—the appearance of the semblance of the glory of YHVH* (Ezekiel 1:28).” See *Tosefta Berakhot* (Lieberman) 6:5; JT *Berakhot* 9:2, 13d; BT *Berakhot* 59a; *Tanḥuma, No’ah* 6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *No’ah* 6; *Zohar* 1:71b, 247a; 2:66b; Idel, *New Perspectives*, 227; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 334, n. 30; 337–38, n. 40; 386–87.

Yesod “takes all supernal, concealed radiances, casting sparkling radiances below.” This mediating position for the word כּל (*kol*), “All”—developed below—originates in Abraham ibn Ezra, who observes that in the Bible, it can refer both to the totality of created things as well as “an entity that comprises all things within itself in an ideal or archetypal form.” See Wolfson, “On the Usage of the Word *Kol*,” 78. Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:26 (short); Exodus 33:21 (long); Numbers 20:8; 22:28.

In emanating all these forms of luminosity, the second radiance is a manifestation of *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. That is why it is called by the plural *Tseva’ot*. See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 20:12.

7. the totality is called השירים (ha-shirim), Songs... The second word of the first verse, *Songs*, is plural because it signifies *Yesod* and *Shekhinah* together.

Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:10 (on 1:1) derives a different enumeration from the biblical wording: “Rabbi Aibu said: *Song* indicates one, *Songs* two, making three in all.” There, “three” refers to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

On the union of these four radiances into a single *zohar*, “radiance,” that itself composes Song of Songs, see Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 79. On the identity of these four radiances with the aspects of human souls united in a kiss, see *ibid.*; Hecker, “Kissing Kabbalists,” 189–93.

8. Well... Symbolizing *Shekhinah*, who is filled by the waters of Vitality flowing from *Yesod*. These שרים השרים (*sarim ha-sharim*), “singing princes,” are the patriarchs, symbolizing *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*—who channel the flow of emanation into *Shekhinah*. The princes attain their expression as singers when they transform the *Shekhinah* in Her guise as שר (*Sar*), “Prince,” into שיר (*Shir*), “Song.” The *sharim*, singers, dig the Well with *Yesod*, represented by the word השירים (*ha-shirim*), *songs*.

See Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah*, 125. Compare the teaching attributed to Rabban Gamliel on authorship of Song of Songs in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:12 (on 1:2): “The ministering angels said it; שיר השירים (*shir ha-shirim*), Song of Songs—שיר (*shir*), ‘song,’ uttered by the שרים (*sharim*), ‘singers,’ on high.” On the word play between *shirim*, “songs,” and *sarim*, “princes,” see *Zohar* 2:18b (*MhN*), 143b.

9. third radiance... Namely, *Tif’eret*, who comprises emanations from *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and its own light—corresponding to the letters יהו (YHV). The three letters יהו are normally associated with *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Tif’eret* but are apparently represented here via their lower manifestations in *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob correspond to these three *sefirot*; their respective light is blended and balanced within *Tif’eret*.

Ezekiel 1:14 reads in full: *and the creatures darting to and fro like the appearance of lightning*. The creatures support the divine chariot, yet in their continual movement they cannot be pinpointed.

10. heritage from concealed radiances... *Tif'eret* receives the supernal flow of emanation from the top three *sefirot*, namely *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah*, who are beyond cognition. The first three letters of *YHVH* themselves constitute a holy name: יהו (YHV). The ם (yod) symbolizes the primordial point of *Hokhmah*, while its upper stroke symbolizes *Keter*. The ה (he), often a feminine marker, symbolizes the Divine Mother, *Binah*. The ו (vav), whose numerical value is six, symbolizes *Tif'eret* and the five *sefirot* surrounding Him (*Hesed* through *Yesod*), all of which gestate within *Binah*. The fourth letter of the tetragrammaton, ה (he), corresponds to *Shekhinah* who collects the supernal flow from all of the *sefirot* above.

On the name יהו (YHV), see *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:13; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 31-33; *Zohar* 2:90b. On the four letters of the ineffable name representing the entirety of the *sefirot*, see Asher ben David, *Peirush Shem ha-Meforash*, 112; *Zohar* 1:162a (*Tos*); 2:123b, 126b-127a; 3:10b, 65b, 267b; *ZH* 1b (*SO*); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 43b-45b.

11. This radiance itself is the darting to and fro... *Tif'eret* is connected with both *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, both receiving from above and conveying below. In the tetragrammaton, the letter ו (vav) stands between the two he's; its vertical form orthographically signifies its role as transmitter. The vav functions semantically as well, since when prefixed to a word it can serve as a conjunction. The *creatures darting to and fro* are a fitting symbol for this mysterious ability to be in two places at once.

12. This radiance is like the eyeball... The third radiance is represented by the word אֲשֶׁר (*asher*), *which is*. It is "stationed here and there"; that is, standing between *Shekhinah*, represented by the word שִׁיר (*shir*), *Song*, on one

side, and *Binah*, symbolized by לשלמה (*li-shlomo*), *Solomon's*, on the other. The “hidden way” apparently refers to a mystical technique described by Moses de León, in *Mishkan ha-Edut*: “The creatures darting to and fro like the appearance of lightning (Ezekiel 1:14). From here is the mystery of the supernal chariot, the speculum that shines, the splendor devoid [of form], which is not comprehended by mental vision, except in a concealed manner, in the hidden depth, in the manner of the splendor and radiance of that which is comprehended in the concealment and rotation [of the eye]. When the eye is closed and rolls around, a concealed splendor is seen momentarily, for it does not settle down to be seen [in a fixed way]. So it is with regard to the supernal creatures—they are the splendor of the speculum that shines, which does not settle down to be seen, but rather *darts to and fro*, as the revolving of the water in a plate when placed against the light of the sun.” See MS Vatican 283, 170a, as cited in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 381. Here, “in a hidden way” refers to both the esoteric nature of the vision and the closed-eye technique. See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 96 (123), where *Binah* is described as “concealed and hidden, like a brilliant light visibly rotating in the revolving of the splendor before the closed eye—invisible, if revealed.” On the technique of gaining mystical vision through rolling one’s eyeball, see *Zohar* 1:42a (*Heikh*), 43a (*Heikh*), 97a–b (*ST*); 2:23b, 43b (*Piq*), 69a, 247a (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 96–97 (123–24); idem, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 67; Scholem, “Colours and Their Symbolism,” 66–67; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 291–93; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 380–83. See below, [note 53](#).

The passage in *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* continues, 96–97 (123–24), discussing the four radiances perceived by the closed eye. There, the four radiances correspond to *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 2:23b; Moses de

León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 67; Mopsik, *Le Sicle de Sanctuaire*, 275 n. 973.

Or Yaqar explains the passage by aligning the experience of the mystical vision with the physiology of optics: “This matter can be explained by reference to the method elaborated by the scientists. The power of vision projects outward from the eye drawing the light of the seen object, then returning to the eye... The haste does not allow for even a moment’s delay since its emergence [from the eye] and [its] return are one.” Cordovero appears to be following approaches of Pythagorus, Plato, and Ptolemy, as mediated through the medieval writings of Abraham bar Hiyya or Shem Tov ibn Falaquera. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 45; Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, *Reshit Hokhmah*, 44; Sack, “The Simile of the Three Lights”; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, 1–17; Smith, *Ptolemy’s Theory of Visual Perception*, 21–32.

This translation usually renders Song of Songs 1:1 as *Song of Songs of Solomon*, to retain the alliteration found in the Hebrew (*Shir ha-shirim asher li-shelomo*), though a more precise translation would be *Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s*. When the text interprets the latter two words individually, as it does here, the latter rendering is used.

13. fourth radiance... Signifying the name *Ehyeh*, apparently in turn signifying *Binah* (*Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik).

Usually in the *Zohar*, as well as in the writings of Moses de León and Joseph Gikatilla, the name *Ehyeh* corresponds to *Keter*. See, e.g., *Zohar* 1:15a, 100b–101a (*Mat*); 2:49b, 261a (*Heikh*); 3:11a, 65b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 98–99 (125–126); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 8, 24, 45, 74, 198, 199.

In medieval philosophical and mystical writing, the term “heart” signifies the imaginative faculty. It refers to that capacity of the mind in which Divinity is envisioned. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, index, s.v. “heart.”

The last radiance cannot be envisioned since it transcends the other radiances that are susceptible to sight. While *Binah* cannot be apprehended on its own, *Shekhinah* longs for it and is aware of it because *Binah* is the source from which it emanated.

14. to render praise... In conclusion, there are four stages in *Shekhinah*'s ascent: song, ascent, containment, and vision. The *Shekhinah* ascends ecstatically in a manifestation of Her desire to be restored to Her source within the transcendent realms of divinity. The desire is uttered by King David, human symbol of *Shekhinah*. The religious longing expressed in his Psalms verse merges with the passage's eroticism, yielding a unique blend of mystical desire. It is not only King David who yearns for visionary ecstasy, but also the Song itself—singing as the expression of that ardor and as the medium of ascent. See Ezra of Gerona, "Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim," 485; *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the identification of Song of Songs with *Shekhinah*, see *Sefer ha-Bahir* 117 (173–75); Nahmanides, *Derashah al Qohelet*, 180–81. Joseph of Hamadan says, in contrast, that the song is sung by *Tif'eret* to *Shekhinah*. See his *Sefer Tashaq*, 8.

Regarding the King who possesses peace, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:1 (on 1:2), in the name of Rabbi Nathan: "The blessed Holy One in His glorious majesty said it [Song of Songs], as is written: *Song of Songs, which is li-shlomo...*—of the King who possesses peace," interpreting *Shelomoh* (Solomon) as *shalom* (peace) with the possessive suffix: "His peace." See also BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim'on son of Halafta refers to the phallus as "peacemaker of the home." On the phrase "the King who possesses peace," see *Sifra*, *Shemini*, *Millu'im*, 15, 44c; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:2, 3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:11 (on 1:1), 1:12 (on 1:2); *Zohar* 1:5b, 29a, 184a, 226b, 248b; 2:5a (*MhN*), 14a (*MhN*), 127b, 132a–b, 143b–144b, 145b, 164a; 3:10b, 20a, 60a, 73b, 284b; *ZH* 85b, 87c (both *MhN*, *Rut*).

15. behold a lampstand all of gold... The menorah in Zechariah's vision bears features described for the Dwelling (or Tabernacle) as well as those described for the Temple. The single lampstand derives from Exodus 25:31-35 and 37:17-21, while the multispouted lamps are features of the stands during the monarchy (see 1 Kings 7:49). Each of the seven lamps probably had seven pipes, that is, spouts or notches for the wicks that drew the oil, yielding 49 flames in all—a number signifying completion, as in the Jubilee year. See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 232-38.

The configured lampstand corresponds to *Shekhinah*, prepared to receive light from above, while the illuminating lampstand represents all of the upper *sefirot*, which bestow luminosity upon *Shekhinah*. The configured lampstand is engraved with the name *Adonai*, illuminated by the praises of colors which descend from the upper *sefirot*.

16. All of gold... Gold usually symbolizes *Gevurah* (Judgment). Characteristically, here the *Zohar* is describing *Shekhinah* in its aspect of Judgment, which is associated with the name *Elohim* and with the tribunal. The world is also “nourished with Judgment” because, following rabbinic tradition, the world was created with the attribute of Judgment tempered with Mercy, for otherwise the world could not endure. *Shekhinah* is normally inclined toward the side of *Gevurah*, but when united with *Tif'eret*—identified in this case with the right side—She is completed. At such times She is depicted as the bride under the wedding canopy.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:15: “The blessed Holy One said, ‘If I create the world by the quality of Compassion, its sins will abound; by the quality of Justice, the world will not endure. Rather, I will create it by both the quality of Justice and the quality of Compassion. O that it may endure!’” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:4; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 40; *Midrash Tehillim* 1; Rashi on Genesis 1:1. The midrashic texts respond to the

desire to reconcile the apparent conflict between Genesis 1:1 and 2:4. In the former, *Elohim*—a divine name associated with Judgment—is said to have *created heaven and earth*. In the latter, *YHVH Elohim made earth and heaven*, while the name *YHVH* is classically linked with Compassion. Cf. *Shemot Rabbah* 30:13; *Zohar* 1:58b, 148a, 180b; 230b; 3:38a; *Zohar Hadash* 3d (*MhN*).

In Zoharic symbolism, the binary pair from the rabbinic tradition of Compassion and Judgment are associated with *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, respectively. Thus, even though the word רחמים (*raḥamim*), “Compassion,” is associated with *Tif’eret*, and the word דין (*din*), “Judgment,” is not semantically identical with גבורה (*Gevurah*), “Power,” the tension in the Midrash’s pairing is transposed onto this kabbalistic pair.

On the association of gold with the side of Judgment, see *Bahir* 35, 38 (52, 56); *Zohar* 2:24a, 138b, 148a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 33, 36, 39, 94–95 (40, 42, 46–47, 120–122). *Zohar* 2:148a refers to two different qualities of gold, associating the lower one with Judgment. Cf. BT *Yoma* 44b, which lists 7 types of gold.

Cordovero explains the three adjectives בחדוא ברחימו ברחמי (*be-raḥamei be-ḥedva bi-rḥimu*), “in love and delight, in the love,” as corresponding to *Tif’eret*, *Gevurah*, and *Hesed* all united with the single bond,” representing *Shekhinah*.

17. It is written: גלה (*gullah*)... The verbal root גלה (*glh*) signifies uncovering or revealing, indicating that the bowl—representing *Yesod*, the male organ—is revealed in the concealed union with *Shekhinah*.

This river symbolizes the flow of emanation issuing from *Hokhmah*, conveyed by *Binah* through *Yesod*, entering *Shekhinah*, who is designated as *the City of God*. The oil flowing from the bowl into the wicks is reimagined as a river irrigating Jerusalem erotically. *Yesod* is newly designated as *Tseva’ot* when it produces fruit within *Shekhinah*—the moment in which it fulfills the function of continuity.

“Boundaries” renders תְּחוּמֵי (teḥumin), “boundaries, limits, dominions.” The phrase “twelve boundaries” recalls the twelve גְּבוּלֵי אֶלְכָסוֹן (gevulei alakhsan), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1. It refers to the twelve boundaries deployed to establish the twelve constellations and the twelve primary organs of the human body, which are associated with the twelve simple letters of the Hebrew alphabet. See *Bahir* 64 (95); Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 33:6; idem, *Derashah le-Ḥatunah* in *Kitvei Ramban* 1:135; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 511–12; *Zohar* 1:76b (ST), 159b, 199a, 241a; 2:2a, 58b, 62b, 64b, 66b, 104b–105a, 229b; 3:78a, 96b, 118b, 134b, 138a (last two IR), 148b, 209a; ZH 2b (SO), 55a, 62a, 63d (last two ShS); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:917, n. 56.

Psalms 46:5 reads in full: *There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, the holy dwelling of the Most High.*

18. mystery of seventy names... On the seventy names of God, see *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12; Naḥmanides, *Kitvei Ramban*, 1:135; *Zohar* 1:5b. For various lists of these names, see *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:350–51); *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1:1; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Genesis 46:8; *Ba'al ha-Turim* on Numbers 11:16; *Or Yaqar*.

The configured lampstand symbolizing *Shekhinah* receives divine overflow and is supported by the seven pillars, representing seven *sefirot*. There are seven upper ducts corresponding to the *sefirot* that flow into *Shekhinah*—either *Ḥesed* to *Shekhinah*, or *Binah* to *Shekhinah*—and seven below, reflecting those above.

Cordovero records a different version of the verse, שִׁבְעָה בְּשִׁבְעָה (*shiv'ah be-shiv'ah*), *seven within seven*, rather than שִׁבְעָה וּשְׁבַע (*shiv'ah ve-shiv'ah*), *seven and seven*, thus yielding a total of 49 ducts, seven within each of the seven (*Or Yaqar*).

19. Further... The previous interpretation considered the seven ducts opening into the lamps (representing *Shekhinah*), whereas this one treats the seven within the

illuminating lampstand (representing *Tif'eret*). To explain Scripture's confusing formulation—*seven and seven*—the *Zohar* suggests that each of seven *sefirot* (*Binah* through *Yesod*) is paired with a fellow (*Hesed* with *Gevurah* and *Gevurah* with *Hesed*, etc.). The problem arises that *Binah* has no clear opposite to pair with other than itself. If Scripture had indicated *six and six*, each of *Hesed* through *Yesod* would have a mate, yielding twelve, with none left over. *Binah* stands over them all, giving a sum of thirteen, an odd number. However, *Binah*, has a partner in the supernal point, *Hokhmah*, resolving the problem of the odd number. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

20. they are two rungs... In this interpretation the two lampstands symbolize *Binah* (known as “the World that is Coming”) and *Yesod* (known as Righteous One); seven *sefirot* extend from *Binah* to *Yesod*. The scriptural links demonstrate the intrinsic relationship between the number seven and the particular *sefirah*: *Binah* via wordplay with the word *ויבנהו* (*va-yivnehu*), *He built it seven years*; and *Yesod* through its symbolic association with the word *tsaddiq*, Righteous One. On *Yesod* as seven, see *Zohar Hadash* 8a, 29a.

These two *sefirot* are distinct in that it is *Binah* through which all divine efflux flows (and then to the middle *sefirot* toward *Shekhinah*), while *Yesod* serves as the lower point of the light's emergence. Each is thus a receptacle for seven lights, waiting to pour forth its effulgence.

עלמא דאתי (*Alma de-atei*) is the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic Hebrew *העולם הבא* (*ha-olam ha-ba*), “the world that is coming.” This concept is often understood as referring to the hereafter and is usually translated as “the world to come.” Alternatively, however, “the world that is coming” already exists, occupying another dimension. See *Tanḥuma*, *Vayiqra* 8: “The wise call it *ha-olam ha-ba* not because it does not exist now, but for us today in this world it is still to come.” See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:8; and Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 37: “The

world to come' does not succeed 'this world' in time, but exists from eternity as a reality outside and above time, to which the soul ascends."

In Kabbalah "the world that is coming" often refers to *Binah*, the continuous source of emanation. See *Zohar* 3:290b (*IZ*): "the World that is Coming, constantly coming, never ceasing." Cf. *Bahir* 106 (160); Asher ben David, *Peirush Shelosh Esreh Middot*, 293; *Zohar* 1:83a, 92a, 141b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 26 (30); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 375.

21. all united above... As in Rabbi Shim'on's previous homily, this one concludes with the ascension of *Shekhinah*, represented by the word *Song*, upward to union within *Binah*.

In ancient Jewish mysticism, all of reality and God Himself are defined in terms of song: "He is His Name and His Name is He; He is in Himself, and His Name is in His Name; Song is His Name and His Name is Song." See Schäfer, *Synopse* §588; Grozinger, "Tradition and Innovation in the *Zohar's* Conception of Song."

22. Uttered by Elijah... That is, what follows is an explanation by Elijah of the phrase *Song of Songs*; alternatively, it is a unique assertion that Elijah is the one who revealed the book *Song of Songs*. See Mopsik; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 358. "Uttered" (literally: "enunciated, decreed") renders אִתְּגַזַּר (*itgezar*). While this locution is unusual in the *Zohar* in general, it is common in certain Zoharic passages as a generic term signifying the teaching of concealed, ancient secrets. See *Zohar* 1:125a (*MhN*); 3:127b (*IR*), 203b; *ZH* 14a, 15b (both *MhN*); Scholem, *Parashah Ḥadashah*, 443, n. 178; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 234-36; Vol. 10, 563, n. 58.

The biblical prophet Elijah is a wonder-worker who was miraculously fed in a cave after his flight from murderous oppressors (1 Kings 17:6). His life ended supernaturally, as

he *ascended in a whirlwind to heaven*, in a fiery chariot drawn by horses of fire (2 Kings 2:1-11). In the Talmud, Elijah occasionally visits mortals and reveals knowledge of the heavenly realm (BT *Berakhot* 3a, *Ta'anit* 22a, *Ḥagigah* 15b, *Gittin* 6b, *Bava Metsi'a* 59b, 85b. Based on the promise of Malachi 3:23, Elijah came to be regarded as the forerunner of the messianic era. In the midrashic collection *Tanna de-vei Eliyahu* (27-44), rabbinic figures have mystical communion with Elijah to enhance their study. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:217-23; 6:331-34.

Elijah's sojourn in a cave is echoed in the rabbinic story in BT *Shabbat* 33b of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai who takes refuge, with his son El'azar, from the Romans in a cave: "A miracle occurred and a carob-tree and a spring were created for them. They would strip off their clothing and sit up to their necks in sand. The whole day they studied; when it was time for prayers they dressed, covered themselves, prayed, and then cast off their clothes again, so that they should not wear out. Thus they dwelt twelve years in the cave. Then Elijah came and stood at the entrance to the cave and exclaimed, 'Who will inform the son of Yohai that the emperor is dead and his decree annulled?' So they emerged."

In the early Kabbalah of 12th-century Provence, leading figures experienced revelations of Elijah, who thus served as the authenticator of the new lore. Provençal mystics Rabbi Abraham ben Isaac, head of the rabbinical court in Narbonne (d. around 1179); his son-in-law Abraham ben David of Posquières (d. 1198); his colleague, Jacob the Nazirite; and Isaac the Blind, son of Abraham ben David, were all said to have had encounters with Elijah during which he transmitted secret wisdom. A similar tradition recorded in Recanati says: "For he [Elijah] revealed himself to Rabbi David, head of the rabbinical court and taught him the science of the Kabbalah. He transmitted it, for his part, to his son, the Rabad, and he also revealed himself to him,

and he transmitted it to his son, Isaac the Blind and to him, too, he revealed himself” (cited in Scholem, *Origins*, 37, n. 61). Cf. Yehudah bar Avraham Kureit, *Ma’or va-Shemesh*, 35b; Shem Tov ibn Gaon, *Sefer ha-Emunot*, 36b. See Scholem, *Origins*, 35–39; 238–43. On the significance of Elijah in Kabbalah, see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 19–21.

In the *Zohar*, Elijah is neither human nor angelic, but rather *sui generis*. See *Zohar* 2:197a–b; 3:88b; *ZH* (*MhN*, *Rut*) 84c. When Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai and his son El’azar are hiding in the cave, Elijah comes to visit them twice a day (*ZH* 69c, *ShS*); cf. the parallel text in Joseph Angelet, *Sefer Livnat ha-Sapir*, Jerusalem 1913, 100–1. Elijah’s primary role in the *Zohar*, however, is to reveal secrets to the sages. See *Zohar* 1:1b–2a, 100b (*MhN*), 151a, 217a; 2:210b, 216b; 3:221a, 231a, 241b; *ZH* 59d. On Elijah in the *Zohar*, see Mopsik, “Introduction” to *Le Zohar: Cantique des Cantiques*, 8–10; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 65–68; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 232–36.

The “King who possesses peace” signifies *Binah*; see above, [note 14](#). Elijah’s statement “Neither rage nor judgment abides there” contrasts *Binah* to the lower realms, which are liable to be contaminated by anger and judgment. Indeed, his Zoharic homilies often express the vulnerability of the sacred to profanation by the demonic realm, and the need to purify and redeem aspects of holiness from those lower sefirotic realms.

23. its portent, תתרו (*tatru*), 1006... The number of songs that King Solomon composed. According to 1 Kings 5:12, *his songs numbered one thousand five*. This number plus Song of Songs yields 1006 (*Or Yaqar*, *Matoq mi-Devash*). Alternatively, the Vilna Gaon taught that when the letters of השירים (*ha-shirim*), *of Songs*, are spelled out, its numerical value is 1005, indicating that Song of Songs

stood distinct and supreme above the rest (*Qol Eliyahu* #144).

“Quaking” renders רתותא (*retuta*), which is a permutation of the Hebrew numerical inscription for 1006 (תתרו"ו), plus the letter *alef*, often discounted in *gimatriyya* calculations.

The “expansion of the spirit” is the spiritual efflux that ascends from the recital of the Song (cf. Mopsik). It is so powerful a force that it settles the world’s terrors.

A divine name of twelve letters is mentioned but not identified in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. Later it was associated with the three occurrences of *YHVH* in the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26). See *Bahir* 80 (111): “... numbering three, numbering twelve.” See *Zohar* 1:16a, 19b; 2:58a, 201b; 3:78a-b, 172b; *ZH* 78a (*MhN, Rut*); Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 92, 290, n. 32. On Elijah’s use of the Holy Name of Twelve Letters, see *Bahir* 80-81 (111). In *Zohar* 1:16a, Elijah seeks refuge in a cave and receives the Holy Name of Twelve Letters which gives him the ability to fly. Cf. *Zohar* 1:262b (*Hashmatot*); 2:201b. The association with twelve letters may come from the three citations of the tetragrammaton in 1 Kings 19:11-12: *There was a great and mighty wind ...but YHVH was not in the wind. After the wind—an earthquake; but YHVH was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake—fire; but YHVH was not in the fire* (*Nitsotsei Orot* on *Zohar* 1:16a, n. 3).

24. Zevul... “Loft,” the name of the fourth of the seven heavens. See BT *Hagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘There are two רקיעים (*raqi'im*), firmaments [or: expanses, heavens]...’ Resh Lakish said, ‘Seven, namely וילון (*Vilon*), Curtain; רקיע (*Raqi'a*), Expanse; שחקים (*Sheḥaqim*), Heaven; זבול (*Zevul*), Loft; מעון (*Ma'on*), Dwelling; מכון (*Makhon*), Site [or: Foundation]; ערבות (*Aravot*), Clouds.’”

The full verse in 1 Kings reads: *I have now built for You a stately House, a place where You may dwell forever.*

25. 1006 rungs... In the midst of all of King Solomon’s 1005 songs, the deepest and most rarefied praise arises

from love, and it ascends in the form of Song of Songs.

26. מסע (massa), journey... *Shekhinah* migrates toward *Tif'eret* for Her coupling with Him. See *Zohar* 1:74a, 83b.

In the biblical context, the simple meaning of *massa* is *at the quarry*. For *massa* as “journey,” see, e.g., Numbers 10:2; Deuteronomy 10:11.

The image of a couple being joined back-to-back and then sawed apart derives from *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1: “Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El’azar said, ‘When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him androgynous, as is said: *male and female He created them* (Genesis 1:27).’ Rabbi Shemu’el son of Nahmani said, ‘When the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He sawed him and gave him two backs, one on this side and one on that.’”

See Plato, *Symposium* 189d-191d; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 14:1; BT *Berakhot* 61a, *Eruvin* 18a; *Tanḥuma*, *Tazri’a* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tazri’a* 2; *Midrash Tehillim* 139:5; *Zohar* 1:2b, 13b, 34b, 47a; 2:55a, 176b, 178b (last two *SdTs*); 3:10b, 44b, 83b, 117a, 292b (*IZ*); *Zohar Ḥadash* 72b (*Shir ha-Shirim*); Giller, “*Nesirah: Myth and Androgyny in Late Kabbalistic Practice*,” 65-69; Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 53-103.

Scripture uses the verb בנה (*bnh*), *built*, to describe the separation of Eve from Adam, which is the same term used for the stone-cutting required for the Temple. The parallel words in Genesis 2:22 read: ויבן יהוה אלהים את הצלע (*va-yiven YHVH Elohim et ha-tsela*) *YHVH God built the side*. The motifs are linked further by the locution in 1 Kings 6:8, the verse immediately following the one cited here: פתח הצלע (*petah ha-tsela*), *the entrance to the side*. Further, the word בית (*bayit*), *house*, itself is used in rabbinic literature to refer to a married woman. See, e.g., M *Yoma* 1:1 in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: “*He will atone for himself and for ביתו (beito), his household* (Leviticus 16:6)—*his household* means his wife.”

27. No hammer, ax, or any iron tool... These trenchant implements are names for the demonic powers who afflict the *Shekhinah*. “The Temple” symbolizes the *Shekhinah*. Just as the Temple’s stones were not cut by incisive tools, so too was the *Shekhinah* unharmed.

The building of the earthly Temple corresponds to the loving union of Adam and Eve, who in turn correspond to *Tif’eret* and *Shekhinah*, respectively. Once this level of perfection has been attained, Song of Songs can be revealed, thus enabling the union of the earthly and the celestial Temples, namely *Shekhinah* and *Binah*, respectively. Regarding the revelation of Song of Songs, see above, [pp. 19-20, n. 50](#).

28. When Moses was in the wilderness... The desert is the domain of *Sitra Aḥra*, “the Other Side.” Moses’ placement in the wilderness signifies that his coupling with *Shekhinah* was flawed on account of Israel’s sins. His union with her is back-to-back, awaiting *nesirah*, “slicing away,” rather than face-to-face (*Sullam, Matoq mi-Devash*; Cf. *Or Yaqar*). The restoration occurs incrementally: first with Israel’s crossing from the desert into the Holy Land; then the establishment of the Dwelling (or Tabernacle) at Shiloh, where the *Shekhinah* is first invested; and finally with King Solomon’s building of the Temple in Jerusalem. At that point the Temple, which symbolizes the *Shekhinah*, is united with King Solomon, symbolizing *Binah*. The expression “Eternal House” also connotes the World that is Coming, the final resting place for souls of the deceased.

“Gathered in” reflects the common biblical phrase used to describe someone dying and being gathered in with his ancestors. See, e.g., Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Numbers 20:24; Deuteronomy 32:50.

See BT *Bava Batra* 99a, whose discussion of the cherubim above the ark lays the groundwork for the face-to-face imagery: “How did they stand? Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi El’azar [dispute the matter]. One says: *Their faces*

toward each other (Exodus 25:20); and the other says: *facing the House* (2 Chronicles 3:13). But according to him who says that they faced each other, [it may be asked]: Is it not written, *facing the House*? This is no difficulty: The former was at a time when Israel obeyed the Omnipresent's will; the latter was at a time when Israel did not obey the Omnipresent's will."

29. all demonic species and wicked spirits vanished... When the Temple was built, evil driven away, and *Binah* and *Shekhinah* joined in union face-to-face, then the Song could be revealed. The Song symbolizes *Shekhinah* and it becomes the Song *which is Solomon's* because it is fully bonded with King Solomon, here corresponding to *Binah*. This is the fulfillment of "its portent... 1006"; see above, [note 23](#). Elijah's homily emphasizes the purification that Song of Songs has to undergo, a journey away from the demonic influences in the world. Cordovero emphasizes that this is not these spirits' ultimate demise; rather, they lost all sovereignty only at that historical moment, driven away by the Temple's holiness. Their eternal downfall comes only in the messianic age.

30. Rabbi Shim'on rejoiced... The revelation of kabbalistic teachings gives joy to its recipients, and here Rabbi Shim'on and Elijah engage each other face-to-face. Elijah proclaims that authorization to reveal these secrets comes from the Most Ancient of All, the *sefirah Keter*.

The kabbalists in the *Zohar* frequently compare the stature of their respective teachings—sometimes competitively, and sometimes in appreciation. Here, Elijah concedes Rabbi Shim'on's superiority. The manuscripts P13 and PR13 have the noteworthy variant: "Your stature is superior, for I will write all your words above before the Ancient of Days, yet I will not write my words above..." Regarding the difference in status between Rabbi Shim'on and Elijah, Abraham Azulai writes, "I heard from my teacher [Moses Cordovero], may his memory be established

in the life of the world that is coming, that this is because the soul of Elijah was angelic from the outset.... He had no ability to innovate Torah novella nor does any angel have this capacity. Rather it was decreed from heaven that only that which has already been revealed in the supernal academy can be revealed by him below. This is as is written: ‘uttered by Elijah,’ whereas Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai and his companions from the outset opened up the source, revealing secrets that had never been revealed above or below” (*Zohorei Hamah*, 1a).

The term “Ancient of Days” appears in Daniel 7:9: *As I watched, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat—His garment like white snow, the hair of His head like clean fleece, His throne flames of fire, its wheels blazing fire.* In the *Zohar* this name designates the primordial *sefirah Keter*.

In BT *Pesahim* 119a, secrets of Torah are referred to as “matters hidden by the Ancient of Days.” See the rabbinic blessing in BT *Berakhot* 17a: “May your steps run to hear words of the Ancient of Days!” See also BT *Bava Batra* 91b; *Zohar* 1:4b, 8b-9a; 2:134b, 143a, 149a, 168a; 3:20a, 105b, 138b (*IR*), 232b.

31. when Israel are righteous... Israel’s righteousness impacts both the earthly and divine realms. It causes them to attain superiority above all the nations, ascending within God’s own glory—which, in turn, elevates Divinity Itself. While this rapturous homily revels in the glory of the divine bliss that Israel partakes of, such bliss is all dependent upon the arousal from below, generated by Israel’s righteousness.

“Actually” renders *ממש* (*mamash*), a technical term that signals the immanence of the supernal world in the mundane world; in other words, the presence of Divinity becomes more evident and pronounced, even within our lower realm. From a hermeneutical perspective, exoteric

and esoteric significations overlap. See Wolfson, "Beautiful Maiden," 80-88.

32. Throne of Glory... The *sefirah Shekhinah*. The Depth of the Rivers refers to *Binah*. *Binah* overflows toward all the other *sefirot*, the rivers that partake of divine rapture. Like Rabbi Shim'on's previous homily, this one explores *Shekhinah's* ascent to *Binah*; the central focus here, though, is the intimate intertwining of Israel in that ascent.

33. With this voice... Namely, *Shekhinah's* voice of advocacy and petition. The pathos of Rabbi Shim'on's teaching rests upon the abundant love that God feels for Israel, longing to hear their merits even when they are sinful.

In the continuing exchange between Rabbi Shim'on and Elijah, Rabbi Shim'on's homily implicitly echoes a rabbinic critique of Elijah's condemnation of Israel. *Tanna de-Vei Eliyyahu Zuta* 8 records the following tradition: "The blessed Holy One said to Elijah: 'Why are you here, Elijah?' Elijah should have replied to him: 'Master of the Universe, they are your children, descendants of those whom you have assessed, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who obeyed Your will in the world.' But he did not do so. Instead, he proclaimed: 'I am moved by zeal for YHVH, the God of Hosts, [for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant.]" God began to speak words of comfort to him.... He waited three hours for Elijah, and still he stood by his words: 'I am moved by zeal for YHVH, the God of Hosts.' At that point, the Holy Spirit said to Elijah: 'Go back by the way you came, [and] on to the wilderness of Damascus... and [anoint] Elisha son of Shaphat [of Abel-mehola to succeed you as prophet].'" See also *Mekhilta, Pisha* 1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:38; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 28; *Zohar* 1:93a, 209b; 2:190a; *ZH* 23b (*MhN*); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:200.

34. he pleaded their merits... It is specifically the act of advocating for the sinful that causes Moses' face to shine

and the Throne of Glory to rise up. Weeping is a key element of this pleading. On the efficacy of weeping in the *Zohar*, see Fishbane, “Tears of Disclosure.”

35. Who is *the bearer of the seed bag*?... *Shekhinah* receives the holy seed—the overflow of emanation from the *sefirot* above—causing the proliferation of offspring below. The “fruit” refers to the souls of the righteous who descend into the world. See *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

Israel’s voice, too, is advocacy for their cause when they turn in repentance from their state of sinfulness. Their prayers raise the Throne of Glory, the *Shekhinah*, so that *Tif’eret* turns toward Her, conferring beneficence upon Her.

36. When Solomon built the Temple... Then, the *Shekhinah* dwelled within Israel and that union corresponded to the image of the upper world. *Song* alludes to *Shekhinah* singing and ascending toward *Tif’eret*. The plural *Songs* corresponds to the energies from above and below uniting with *Shekhinah*. See *Or Yaqar*.

37. He created sublime שיתין (*shitin*), channels... This homily deals with the uppermost aspects within the divine mind. The שיתין (*shitin*), which could also be rendered “hollows” or “pits,” here designate the primordial foundations of the emanative forces in *Hokhmah* before they manifest themselves as discrete and cognizable *sefirot* below.

This imagery draws on a rabbinic tradition regarding the channels, located at the base of the altar, into which the wine flowed after the libation. See BT *Sukkah* 49a: “Rabbah son of Bar Ḥana, citing Rabbi Yoḥanan, stated: ‘The שיתין (*shitin*), channels, have existed since the six days of creation.’ ...The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught: ‘בראשית (*Bereshit*)—do not read *bereshit* but *bara shit*, created a hollow.’ It has been taught: Rabbi Yose says, ‘The cavity of the channels descended to the abyss, as is said: *Let me sing for my beloved, a song of my lover about his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a fruitful hill. He broke the ground, cleared it of stones, and planted it with the*

choicest vines. He built a watchtower inside it, he even hewed a wine press in it... (Isaiah 5:1-2). And planted it with the choicest vines refers to the Temple; *built a watchtower inside it* refers to the altar; and *even hewed a wine press in it* refers to the שִׁתִּין (*shitin*), channels.’”

“The Fount of Life” here signifies *Hokhmah* or *Keter* (*Or Yaqar*; Mopsik). See *Zohar* 1:227a-b; 2:238a, 260b, 261a (last two *Heikh*); 3:34b; ZH 87d (*MhN, Rut*). Cf. below, [note 186](#).

Deuteronomy 28:12 begins: *YHVH will open for you his goodly treasure, the heavens, to provide rain for your land in its set time.*

38. a single desire called Hidden Thought arose... At the very beginning of the creative process, desire that is rooted in *Keter* rises within *Hokhmah* and is called Hidden Thought. Everything that will be created is found there in potential, in undifferentiated form. Thus the six dimensions that will emerge as *sefirot* are ready to emerge and to take form in *Binah*. The “subtle flow” that emerges is *Binah*, containing all of reality in a state that cannot be fully grasped (*Or Yaqar*).

Because the Thought is so recondite, even when manifest in *Binah*, the perception of it by the wise of heart is only intellectual and not susceptible to actual vision. Further, even that perception cannot be further transmitted to others.

The notion of the “wise of heart” is derived from Exodus 35:10. Cf. *Zohar* 1:81a (*ST*). The apophatic expression “has been conferred—and not conferred” suggests the obscurity of the knowledge (see above, [note 4](#)). For a different explanation, see *Matoq mi-Devash*.

39. five founts emerged... Namely, *Hesed, Gevurah, Tif'eret, Netsah,* and *Hod*. *Yesod* is sealed until circumcision takes place above, removing the foreskin that blocks the flow (*Or Yaqar*). *Shekhinah* is the *sefirah* that receives the overflow from the six sources above, all of which had existed within *Binah*,

awaiting emanation. The “hollow” is the *Shekhinah* as receptacle, receiving from above and providing to this world.

40. they were sealed, entirely closed... Emphasizing the cosmic impact of the building of the Temple, Elijah explains that the divine overflow from the *sefirot* was blocked from reaching the world until that time. While one might object that before Solomon, many mighty and righteous figures lived who surely enabled an outpouring from above, nonetheless, we find recurrent episodes of famine and strife until the idyllic time of King Solomon. Each one of the figures corresponds to one of the *sefirot*, demonstrating that the divine flow was obstructed at every stage.

Joshua 5:12 reads in full: *On that same day, when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. The Israelites got no more manna; that year they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan.* Though the Israelites were not suffering from famine, the manna had ceased and they were obliged to eat produce from Canaan, which was not yet properly sanctified.

41. the world was nourished... Until the building of the Temple, the nourishment that reached the world was minimal and in a degraded form. Cf. below, [note 190](#).

When Solomon arrived and the Temple was built, *Shekhinah* received Her appropriate rectification; the stopped-up springs above coursed into Her, and then from *Shekhinah* down to the world.

42. crooked one that sat at its feet... This is Samael, identified with the serpent.

The curl at the lower left leg of the letter ת (*tav*) at the end of the word שִׁית (*shit*), “hollow,” suggests a demonic hook. When the Temple is built and the channels are opened up, that letter ת (*tav*) is transformed into a ר (*reish*), yielding the word שִׁיר (*shir*), “song.” The building of the Temple is the earthly manifestation of the utter banishment of Samael from the divine world above (*Or Yaqar, Sullam,*

Matoq mi-Devash). *Matoq mi-Devash* draws a correspondence to Proverbs 5:5, *Her feet go down to death*, interpreting that verse as a reference to *Shekhinah's* vulnerability at Her lower extremities. In the *Zohar* that verse is sometimes applied to the demonic realm. See *Zohar* 1:161b (*Tos*), 190a.

Cf. *ZH* 83a (*MhN, Rut*), where the revelation of Song of Songs dissipates the filth that the serpent injected in Eve.

“Storehouse of goodness” renders אוצר הטוב (*otsar ha-tov*), which derives from Deuteronomy 28:12. See above, [note 37](#). Here *storehouse* refers to *Shekhinah*, who receives *Yesod* (*goodness*) within Herself.

43. By whose strength?... The שיתין (*shitin*), “channels,” correspond to the *sefirot* that open up in response to the building of the Temple. These are the *sefirot* who surround *Tif'eret*, called *Heavens*. When the channels are opened they are transformed from שית (*shit*) and שיתין (*shitin*) into שיר (*shir*), *Song*, and שירים (*shirim*), *Songs*. Song itself is a manifestation of the open flow of blessing.

Though the meaning of שיתין (*shitin*) here refers to the channels at the base of the altar, the alternate meaning of “foundations”—as found in BT *Sukkah* 53a, in which King David was digging the *shitin*—is probably in the author’s mind as well: “Rabbi Hisda said... : Have you heard regarding the fifteen [Songs of] Ascent—in correspondence to what did David composed them? Thus... said Rabbi Yoḥanan: When David dug the שיתין (*shitin*), foundations, the deep rose up, threatening to submerge the world. David thereupon uttered the fifteen [Songs of] Ascent, causing its waves to subside.” An alternative version tells it thus: “When David dug the foundations, the deep arose, threatening to submerge the world.... [David] inscribed the [Ineffable] Name upon a potsherd, cast it into the Deep and it subsided sixteen thousand cubits. When he saw that it had subsided to such a great extent... he uttered the fifteen

Songs of Ascent and the Deep reascended fifteen thousand cubits, remaining one thousand cubits [below the surface].”

44. praise... ascends toward the King who possesses peace... When *Shekhinah* is receiving delicacies and joy through Her union with the six *sefirot* above, they all become bonded to *Binah*, known as “the King who possesses peace.” This process culminates in the fulfillment of the verse *Song of Songs of Solomon*. The opening verse represents the culmination of the process of emanation and purification of Divinity from creation until Solomon’s building of the Temple. On “the King who possesses peace,” see above, [note 14](#).

45. King David knew... David longed to build the Temple (2 Samuel 7:2) and knew that *Song of Songs*, signifying *Shekhinah*, would ultimately be revealed, but he was constrained from doing so himself. This is why he wrote in the psalm *A song to you is silent, praise...* with the awareness that, for the moment, the *song* could not be sung. In the end, there would be *God in Zion*, namely the *Shekhinah* dwelling in the Temple. At that moment, David’s vow would be fulfilled. Psalms 132:1-5 may be the vow that the *Zohar* had in mind: *Recall, O Lord, for David his extreme self-denial when he swore to YHVH, vowed to Jacob’s Champion: ‘I will not come into the tent of my home, I will not mount my couch, I will not give sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my lids until I find a place for YHVH, a dwelling for Jacob’s Champion.*

Psalms 65:1-2 reads in full: *For the leader. A psalm of David. A song. To You, praise is silent, God in Zion, and to You a vow will be paid.*

46. Then sang Israel השירה הזאת (ha-shirah ha-zot), this song... The word *song* in these two verses is in the feminine form, *shirah*, leading to the identification with *Shekhinah*, while in *Song of Songs*, it is שיר (*shir*), in the masculine form. The difference is construed here as two kinds of songs: one that is identified with *Shekhinah*, the other

with *Hokhmah* to *Yesod*. Thus the *shirah*, “song,” that is sung by Israel signifies *Shekhinah*, whereas *shir*, “song,” is sung by *Shekhinah*, then ascends to the upper *sefirot*, becoming identified with them (*Or Yaqar; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*).

47. mystery of body and spirit... Union here occurs between the masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity. Complete union depends on the joining of body with body, and spirit with spirit. This conjugation occurs in the movement from the first verse of Song of Songs to the second. Cf. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 352.

Kissing signifies the joining of spirit to spirit because of the exchange of breath in uniting mouth to mouth. On kissing and the intermingling of spirits, see *Zohar* 2:124b, 146a-147a, 253b-254a, 256b (last two from *Heikh*); *ZH* 60c (*MhN, ShS*), 63a, 64b (last two *ShS*).

Cf. Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 33: “By way of the true Kabbalah, every bridegroom and bride mentioned in Song of Songs, and all love, is between the King, *YHVH Tseva’ot*, and the Bride, Assembly of Israel—perfect in all perfection, comprised of all beauty. This is mystery of the cherubim, which are male and female.” See *ibid.*, 50-51, 103.

Song of Songs 1:2 reads in full: *Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth’s kisses, since your love is sweeter than wine.* With a change of vocalization, it can be translated as *Oh, let him give me some of his kisses to drink, since love is sweeter than wine!* See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2; cf. Gordis; Zakovitch; Bloch and Bloch; Fox, *Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 97; Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 514, 750, n. 23. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Honorius of Autun all play on the liquid connotation as well. See Norris, *Song of Songs*, 21-24.

48. Here is the mystery of unification... Rabbi Shim’on demonstrates that the opening verse of *Song of Songs* is esoterically linked to the unification in Deuteronomy 6:4, which Israel attests to twice daily in the

traditional liturgy. The plural *Songs* corresponds to the combination of the divine names *YHVH, Our God, YHVH*. King Solomon is signified by the last word of the verse, אֶחָד (*eḥad*), *one*, because he corresponds to *Binah*, representing the upper world, and thus the point of connection for the lower and upper *sefirot*. On the formulation “the King who possesses peace,” see above, [note 14](#).

Cordovero explains that when one entity cleaves to the other, there is no longer any differentiation between the two, a complete convergence of one in the other. He writes, “This is the esoteric meaning of *And you who cleave to YHVH your God*, since Divinity is comprised within the heart of the enlightened inasmuch as they have cleaved their thoughts to Him continuously and their contemplations cleave to Him in their worship.”

49. there is only one peace—and it is two... There are two aspects of peace: the first establishes the sefirotic tree’s vertical unity, while the second harmonizes on its horizontal plane. The first kind of peace, corresponding to *Yesod*, is its integration—and consummation of conjugal union—with the feminine *Shekhinah*. Here, as in the *Zohar* generally, masculinity is exemplified functionally as the activity of bestowing, while the feminine functions through receptivity. The second peace is exemplified by *Tif’eret*, who stands between *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, balancing and harmonizing their contrary dispositions.

See *Or Yaqar*; Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other.”

50. on its account, the King who possesses peace... *Binah* is the supernal king, possessing the peace that is achieved with the coupling of the divine male and divine female, through the bonding effects of *Yesod*.

The praise contained within the words *Song of Songs* signifies all of the *sefirot* in their unifying ascent to *Binah*. This why the verse reads *Song of Songs which is לשלמה* (*li-shlomoh*), *Solomon’s*, emphasizing that the Song is ultimately

incorporated within *Binah*, who possesses all peace. Once all sefirotic efflux is contained within *Binah*, it is properly called *One*. Then Song of Songs 1:1 and Deuteronomy 6:4 correspond completely.

51. Solomon, in the mystery of Holy Spirit... The homily closes by returning to King Solomon and the Holy Spirit, which were connected before the digression regarding the two different kinds of peace. The human King Solomon is able to effect the unification of all the *sefirot* when his aspiration is augmented by the Holy Spirit, identified with *Shekhinah*. At that moment, he composes *Song of Songs*, that is, he effects harmony above. Song of Songs becomes a literary manifestation of how human will in conjunction with Holy Spirit can establish confluence above.

“In complete devotion” renders ברעותא שלים (*bi-r’uta shelim*).

52. one wheel on the ground... Regarding this wheel, see BT *Hagigah* 13b in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “[It refers to] a certain angel, who stands on the earth with his head reaching unto the living creatures. It is taught in a *baraita*: His name is Sandalfon: he is higher than his fellows by a [distance of] five hundred years’ journey, and he stands behind the chariot tying crowns for his Maker.”

The identity of the Rabbi El’azar cited here is unclear, referring either to the talmudic Rabbi El’azar or to a contemporary (thirteenth-century) kabbalist. Elements of the description here of the chariot strongly resemble those in Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 67-68; see also Gikatilla, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 66-67. Scholem suggests that קיטורא (*qitura*), “circle” (or “conventicle”), here means צירוף (*tseiruf*), “combinations,” referring to letter combinations.

Israel the Elder corresponds to *Tif’eret*; thus the three intertwined inscriptions are *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*. “Linked” renders קפטירא (*qaftira*), a Zoharic neologism that

commentaries often gloss as “rope” or “chain” or construe as referring to a tight bonding. See *Zohar* 1:177a; 2:209a; 3:6b, 59b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 349–51; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 188, ns. 185, 190. This word may be related to the “tying” of crowns from the talmudic source.

53. But here, I saw!... Since Ezekiel opens by declaring that he has seen visions of God, we must account for the apparent contradiction when Ezekiel then says *As I gazed at [or: looked upon] the creatures* (verse 15).

“A light that does not shine” (or “dark luminary”) refers to the *Shekhinah*, the *sefirah* who has no light of Her own. The *Zohar* often contrasts prophecy through “a speculum that shines,” *Tif’eret*, and the vision through “a speculum that does not shine,” *Shekhinah*. Ezekiel and all other prophets, excluding Moses, saw through only the latter. In the *Zohar*, *Shekhinah* is a speculum that does not shine on its own but rather reflects and transmits the other *sefirot*. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face.” See BT *Yevamot* 49b, *Sanhedrin* 97a; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:14; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 33–34; Nahmanides on Exodus 6:2; idem, *Torat ha-Adam* in *Kitvei Ramban* 2:296; *Zohar* 1:33b, 120a, 183a; 2:23b, 129b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 69 (86–87); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:44–45, n. 242; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, index, s.v. “speculum”; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 17–21.

“Crystal” renders עששיתא (*ashashita*), “glass, glass lantern.” The description of looking at flickering lights through a crystal with eyes closed is obscure and paradoxical. The *ashashita* may be a coded reference to the technique of rolling one’s eyeballs (see above, [note 12](#)), or it could be a purely symbolic reference to contemplating the *Shekhinah*. On the *ashashita*, see Targum to Song of Songs 5:14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12 (and Theodor’s note); *Tanhuma, Va’era* 14. According to *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11, Rabbi Neḥemiah elaborates upon King Solomon’s

ability to reconcile disparate entities, explaining that the hail in Egypt was “like a light in a glass, where water and oil are mixed, but it goes on burning.” See *Shemot Rabbah* 12:4; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:33b and *Derekh Emet*; 2:23a, 82a, 130b, 186b, 221a; *ZH* 41c; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 97 (124); Ben-Yehuda, *Dictionary*, s.v. אֲשַׁשִּׁית (*ashashit*); *Sullam*; Vol. 4, p. 80, n. 36. See also *ZH* 122b (*Mat*), where the *ashashita* refers to the *Shekhinah*. On the possibility that the reference is purely symbolic, see Idel, “*Le-gilguleiha shel tekniqah qedumah*,” 4-7; cf. Liebes, *Peraqim*, 292.

Moses de León explains the fleeting quality of the vision as a protection for the prophet: “The eye is occluded from seeing so that one should not draw close to her corner [cf. Proverbs 7:12]. Thus, *I gazed and, behold! a stormy wind...* (Ezekiel 1:4), with a diminished perception. Here, because of the exalted rung of the supernal creatures and their elusiveness, it is said: *I gazed* (Ezekiel 1:15); he thought he would behold them and, behold, they were gone. For permission was not granted for the eye to gaze upon them and behold them” (Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 67). Cf. Joseph Gikatilla, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 66. See also *ZH* 94c (*Tiq*), where the inferior quality of Ezekiel’s vision is described as “looking through an *ashashit*.”

Compare this discussion of four radiances and the limits of physical vision with *Zohar* 2:23a-b.

54. One ascends and descends... The light ascends, receives illumination, and is strengthened above before its descent to its position below. The light ascended to the south, corresponding to *Hesed*’s source above in *Hokhmah*, signified by the letter ך (yod). See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. *Sullam* describes the light in terms of three lines.

Light ascends in the mystery of the letter ט (*tet*) because of that letter’s presence in the word טוב (*tov*), *good*. Jacob ha-Kohen notes that the words וָאֵרָא הַחַיּוֹת (*va-ere ha-hayot*), *I saw the creatures*, contain nine letters, numerically

corresponding to the letter *tet*. See *Peirushei ha-Merkavah le-R. El'azar mi-Verms u-le-R. Ya'aqov ben Ya'aqov ha-Kohen*, 116.

55. Happy is the one who sees it in a dream... On dreaming of the letter ט (*tet*), see BT *Bava Qamma* 55a, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a: "One who sees ט (*tet*) in a dream should regard it as a good omen. Why?... Because Scripture inaugurated it with goodness, for from *In the beginning*—until *God saw the light*, no ט (*tet*) occurs." In other words, since the first ט (*tet*) in Scripture begins the word טוב (*tov*), *good*, it is a good omen to see *tet* in a dream." See *Zohar* 1:30b, 230a.

The shape of the letter ט (*tet*) resembles an exedra or portico, closed on three sides and open on the fourth. See BT *Bava Batra* 25a-b in the name of Rabbi Eli'ezer: "The world resembles an exedra, and the north side is not enclosed." Cf. *Zohar* 1:145a where the letter ב (*bet*) is described in this fashion. If one writes the letter ט (*tet*) starting on the left, with the shape of the letter י (*yod*), continuing rightward, the orthography of the letter concludes with a curl, gathering back toward the middle (*Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*). See *Zohar* 1:3a.

56. upper chariot in its four sides... The lights that have ascended and descended, stand at last in relation to four *sefirot* that support the upper chariot: *Hokhmah* ("Father"); *Binah* ("Mother"); *Hesed* ("south"); and *Gevurah* ("north").

57. A light emanates from the east... The four sides of the upper chariot are said to emit a light from only three sides because two sides—Father and Mother—have coalesced as one. The other two lights emanate from *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. This light emanating from the east corresponds to *Tiferet* above. Alternatively, the upper chariot is represented by *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and the incipient sources of *Hesed* and *Gevurah* (*Or Yaqar*).

The description of the lower chariot begins with one face, *Shekhinah*, who stands prepared to receive light from the eastern side. Upon internalizing that light, She receives Her name *Adonai*. *Shekhinah* is present in both the upper and lower chariots; in the upper chariot, She stands receiving light from above, while in the lower chariot She is the Sovereign—and it is in Her domain that *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* become manifest in the world.

58. that face... is called *El*... Once illuminated from the southern light, the face receives its name, signifying the manifestation of *Hesed* within *Shekhinah*, constituting the lower chariot. Similarly, once the northern light illuminates the next face, it receives its name, signifying the manifestation of *Gevurah* within the lower chariot. Cf. *Or Yaqar*.

59. mystery of three... The upper and lower manifestations of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

Midrashic wordplay expands the normal meaning of the word או (*o*), “or”—derived here from the first two letters of the word אופן (*ofan*)—to include the question א (ei), “Where?”

Inquiring after the location of the *Shekhinah* recalls the question in the *Qedushah* unit of the daily liturgy, “Where is the place of His Glory?” See also *Sefer ha-Bahir* 90 (130–32). Her location is identified as earth, a cognomen for *Shekhinah* or, alternatively, a lower manifestation of *Shekhinah*.

As in Rabbi Shim'on's first homily on the chariot above, here too the praise coming from *Shekhinah* causes ascent and union from below to above. See Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 180–81. On this wheel on earth, see Jacob ha-Kohen, “Peirush ha-Otiyyot,” 209; Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 67.

60. tying this one with that one, endlessly... The continuity of ascending arousal implicitly interprets the word אצל (*etsel*), *next to*, of Ezekiel 1:15. It becomes a way of talking about the intimacy that joins the two faces, and that

stretches from this world through the highest reaches of Divinity—an intimacy aptly described as kissing.

“Endlessly” renders עַד אֵין סוֹף (*ad ein sof*). While *ein sof* can refer to the most recondite aspect of Divinity that exists beyond the *sefirot*, here it appears to mean simply an endless ascent.

The term אצל may be read as *atsal*, “emanated,” yielding “the wheel emanated the creatures” (Mopsik). The term אצל (*atsal*), and its variant forms, is a prominent medieval philosophical and kabbalistic term that is carefully scrubbed from the *Zohar* to mask its medieval origins. See Halevi, *Kuzari* (trans. ibn Tibbon) 1:1; 2:50; 3:11; Abraham ibn Ezra on Proverbs 20:27; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1:72; Nahmanides on Numbers 11:17; Jacob ben Sheshet, “Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon,” 409; Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, “Peirush Sefer Yetsirah,” 3a; Klatzkin, *Thesaurus Philosophicus*, 71–3; Scholem, *Origins*, 447–52.

61. Uttered by Elijah... This homily, including the story of Cain’s conception and the travails toward perfection of the alphabet, appears to be an elaboration and reworking of the version found in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* on *Ruth* 83b. In that version, the teaching is said to have been transmitted by a succession of teachers stretching back to Elijah. See above, [pp. 163–67](#) and nn. there. For a comparison of the two versions, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 248–62. On the themes of Adam, Eve, the serpent, and Cain, see Scholem, *Le-Heqer Qabbalat R. Yitshaq ben Ya’aqov ha-Kohen*, 160–62.

Elijah notes that the text specifies וְהָאָדָם (*ve-ha-adam*), literally *And the man* (or *human*), emphasizing the seemingly superfluous article הַ (*he*), *the*. By emphasizing that it is *the Adam*, the text indicates his noble form.

“Pattern” (or “template”) renders טְסִירָא, a Zoharic neologism that occurs more frequently in the form טְפִסִירָא. See *Or Yaqar; Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178, n. 59. Adam is a “pattern of subtle, sublime engravings,” meaning that

he is comprised of a matrix of spiritual code defining who he is and that underlies all of humanity.

The sexual coupling occurs face-to-face following the slicing apart of Adam and Eve. See above, [note 26](#). Cf. *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*.

62. the serpent copulated with Eve... This is the earthly Eve. See BT *Shabbat* 145b-146a, in the name of Rav Yosef: “When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lust].” See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21 (according to David Luria’s emendation, based on *Yalqut Shim’oni*, Genesis 35): “The serpent-rider [Samael] copulated with her and she conceived Cain. Afterward her husband, Adam, copulated with her and she conceived Abel.” Eve bears the slime deposited by the serpent and, through intercourse with Adam—created in the image of Divinity—Cain is born. She gawks at Cain, astonished that even though she bore the serpent’s slime, she conceived a child that incorporated Divinity as well.

Menahem Recanati explains the copulation, saying, “It seems to me that even though there is a double meaning... nonetheless [the serpent] performed an actual act of intercourse with her” (on Genesis 3:1, 12c).

On the serpent’s copulation with Eve and its role in engendering Cain, see 4 Maccabees 18:7-8; 1 John 3:10-12; *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 4:1 (per British Library MS 27031, ed. Clark); BT *Yevamot* 103b; David Luria, *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21, n. 8; Naḥmanides, “Torat ha-Adam,” in *Kitvei Ramban*, 296; Scholem, “Qabbalot R. Ya’aqov ve-R. Yitshaq benei R. Ya’aqov ha-Kohen,” 237; “Peirush Merkavat Yehezqel le-Rabbi Moshe mi-Burgos,” 184; Todros ben Joseph Abulafia, *Sha’ar ha-Razim*, 132; *Zohar* 1:36b-37a, 52a, 54a-55a, 63b, 122b, 126a-b, 145b; 2:94a, 167b, 178a (*SdTs*), 193b, 236b; 3:14b, 76b, 97b, 143a (*IR*); *ZH* 8c-9b, *ZH* 78c, 83b (last two *MhN Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 139, 369; idem, *Sheqel*

ha-Qodesh, 81 (103); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 12, 27-28, 30; Israel Knohl, “Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan?”

“Gawked” renders אֲשַׁגְחַת (*ashgahat*), “looked, peered,” reflecting Eve’s astonishment at the strange nature of the child. The word אֵת (*et*) is a direct object marker that is normally not translated. In some cases, as here, it means *with*.

63. it came from that side... Elijah contrasts a phrase from Genesis 4:3 that ends with יָמִים (*yamim*), “days,” with a similar phrase in Daniel 12:13 that ends with יָמִין (*yamin*). In the latter verse, *yamin* is an aramaized form of the Hebrew יָמִים (*yamim*), “days,” but Elijah now interprets it as the Hebrew יָמִין (*yamin*), “right,” thus distinguishing between יָמִים קֵץ הַיָּמִים (*qets ha-yamim*), *end of days*, and יָמִין קֵץ הַיָּמִין (*qets ha-yamin*), *end of the right*.

Qets ha-yamin, *End of the right*, alludes to *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut* (Kingdom), who is the consummation of the divine flow, characterized by the grace of *Hesed* on the right (as opposed to the Other Side, which derives from the left). She will eventually bring redemption, reigning as the Kingdom of Heaven throughout all the worlds. *Qets ha-yamim*, “End of days,” refers to the Other Side, who appears as the Angel of Death and ends all human life.

The full verse in Daniel reads: *As for you, go on till the end; you will rest, and arise for your share* לְקֵץ הַיָּמִין (*le-qets ha-yamin*), *at the end of days*. On *qets ha-yamin*, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:7; *Zohar* 1:54a-b, 62b-63a, 75a (ST), 210b, 233b, 234b-235a; 2:33a-34a, 181b; 3:142b (IR); *ZH* 83b, 88b (both *MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 73-75, 368-71; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 80-81 (102-3); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 158.

64. Abel’s power and potency were shattered... The Hebrew name הֶבֶל (*Hevel*), Abel, connotes “breath,” “vapor,” or “futility,” as in Ecclesiastes 1:2. It is as if his name were given either predicting his demise or after his death.

65. the world became stabilized and fragrant...

“Stabilized and fragrant” renders אַחַבְסָם עֲלֵמָא (*itbassam alma*), “the world was sweetened” or “the world was firmly established.” The verbal root בָּסַם (*bsm*) conveys both senses. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 66:2; *Midrash Shemu’el* 26:4; *Zohar* 1:30b, 31a, 34a, 37a, 56a; 2:143a, 168a, 227a; 3:18a; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 165, 388, n. 44; idem, *Kabbalah*, 228; Bronsnick, “Ha-Shoresh ‘Bsm’”; Mopsik, *Le Zohar: Genèse*, 3:164, n. 19. On the world becoming fully fragrant from the revelation at Sinai, see BT *Shabbat* 88b.

The name שֶׁט (*shet*), Seth, is composed of the final two letters of the alphabet. Their union in this form signals the perfection of the divine linguistic order. Since God spoke the world into being, the world is composed of letters; thus in consummating the alphabet, reality is perfected. See *Zohar* 1:55a.

The “Mystery of Letters” alludes to the letter pairings of *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:2, 4-5: “Twenty-two elemental letters. He engraved them, carved them, weighed them, permuted them, and transposed them—forming with them everything formed and everything destined to be formed... Twenty-two elemental letters. He set them in a wheel with 231 gates, turning forward and backward... How did He permute them? אַ (Alef) with them all, all of them with בּ ;א (bet) with them all, all of them with אַ; and so with all the letters, turning round and round.” (The “231 gates” represent the number of two-letter combinations that can be formed from the twenty-two letters, provided that the same letter is not repeated.)

On the combination and permutation of letters, see BT *Berakhot* 55a; Rashi on Job 28:23; *Zohar* 1:33b, 67b, 204a; 2:9a-b, 151b-152a, 159a-160b; *ZH* 8c-9b; 83b (*Mhn, Rut*); *Ketem Paz*, 1:100b-101a; Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 108-23.

66. commenced... with the letters initially forsaken... Once the concluding letters of the alphabet were used, new names began to incorporate letters that

had not yet been employed. א (Alef) is used again for Adam's grandson אנוש (Enosh)—as in אדם (Adam) but now with נ (nun), the letter that follows the last letter of Adam's name, מ (mem). Meanwhile אנש takes the letter ש (shin), which commenced the name Seth, thus using a letter from each of Adam and Seth. ו (Vav) corresponds to the central axis of Divinity and of Adam, thus standing metaphorically for the whole. Elijah emphasizes that Enosh is descended from Adam, in contrast to Cain. See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 22; *Zohar* 1:55b; 2:168a, 180b; *ZH* 5c (SO).

67. Thirty-two sets of the alphabet... From the birth of Enosh's son Kenan (Genesis 5:9) through the birth of the patriarch Israel's twelve sons, a perfect path of linguistic progression ensued. Cordovero writes that in the generations between Kenan and Terah (Abraham's father), one can find thirty-two pairings of letters representing progression and regression through the alphabet, the process culminating at Mount Sinai when all letters have been represented. Cf. *Zohar* 1:56a where the forward progression of letters alone perfects the linguistic stream.

"Boundaries" renders תחומין (tehumim), "boundaries, limits, dominions." The "twelve boundaries," mentioned already in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1, are identified here with the twelve tribes, thereby demonstrating that the alphabet is complete—linguistically, cosmically, and historically.

The two letters ה (het) and ט (tet) appear dramatically in the proclamation that *Israel* אטח (hata), *has sinned*, by violating a ban on looted goods when conquering the town of Ai. These two letters are absent from the names of the twelve tribes, indicating their purity. On the missing letters, see *JT Yoma* 7:5, 44c; *BT Yoma* 73b; *Zohar* 1:3a; 2:152a, 230a; 3:188b. *BT Yoma* 73b specifies ט (tet) and צ (tsadi).

Regarding the virtuousness of Jacob's sons, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31, 312; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; *BT Pesahim* 56a; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 4.

The full verse from Joshua reads: *Israel has sinned! They have also violated my covenant that I commanded them. They have taken of the proscribed. They have stolen and they have lied. They have also placed it in their vessels.*

68. until Solomon arrived... The letters ה (het) and ט (tet) are positively reintegrated as linguistic, cosmic, and historical harmony is established with the building of the Temple. This is indicated by 1 Kings 5:5, which reads in full: *All the days of Solomon, Judah and Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba dwelt לבטח (la-vetah), securely, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree.*

In the version of this homily found in *Midrash ha-Ne'lam on Ruth*, it is the revelation of Song of Songs that restores linguistic purity. See ZH 83a-b (*MhN, Rut*).

69. no contention at all... Elijah emphasizes that harmony reigns among the letters because, in the *Zohar*, letters generally reflect an aspect of Judgment, as expressed in the alphabetic acrostics of Lamentations 2-4 and in the liturgical formula of *viddui*, "confession" (*Or Yaqar, Matoq mi-Devash*).

The letters "above" appear to be associated with *Tif'eret*, while the letters "below" are associated with *Shekhinah*. Below, the *Zohar* will develop a doctrine related to large letters and small letters; see below, [note 169](#).

70. Cherubim spread their wings... See BT *Yoma* 54a, in the name of Rabbi Katina: "When Israel ascended [to Jerusalem annually] for the Festival, the curtain would be rolled open for them and the cherubim revealed, their bodies intertwined. They [the people] would be addressed: 'Look! God's love for you resembles the love of male and female.'"

On the pose of the Temple cherubim, see 1 Kings 6:23-28; 2 Chronicles 3:10-13. On their loving embrace, see BT *Bava Batra* 99a; *Zohar* 2:152b, 277b; 3:59b; ZH 43c; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 33, 50-51, 103. Cf. ZH 4c (*SO*).

71. Why פיהו (*pihu*), *his mouth*? It should be פיו (*piv*)...

Elijah remarks on the unusual pronoun form, in contrast to the Bible's prevailing form פיו (*piv*). Physically, uttering the word *piv* puckers the lips, a visual performance that demonstrates the female's readiness for a kiss. Linguistically, the extra letter ה (*he*) enables the word to implicitly include the feminine possessive form פיה (*piha*), "Her mouth." Theosophically, this form juxtaposes the letter ה (*he*), representing *Shekhinah*, with the letter ו (*vav*), representing *Tif'eret*—thereby signifying the union of the masculine and the feminine potencies within Divinity.

In his commentary, Yitshaq ibn Sahula says, "I have heard that there is an awesome secret in the word פיהו (*pihu*)." See Green, "Peirush shir ha-shirim le-Rabbi Yitshaq ibn Sahula," 410.

Regarding the noun *pe* with a suffixed third-person masculine pronoun, the form *piv* appears 77 times in the Hebrew Bible, while *pihu* appears 22 times. From a linguistic perspective, such a difference may be a matter of dialect.

72. you might suggest that these kisses are transcendent... Movement from the distant third person—פיהו...יִשְׁחַנֵּנִי (*yishaqeni... pihu*), *Let him... his mouth*—to the more intimate second person—דדך (*dodekha*), *your caresses*—suggests the increasing closeness of the couple. Kissing is the prelude to a fuller consummation of love.

Regarding the mystery attending the third-person form הוא (*hu*), 'He,' Joseph Gikatilla writes: "Because the *sefirah Keter* is hidden and concealed, no one can contemplate it other than through hearing about it, nor can it be known through the intellect... Because of its great concealment it is called הוא (*hu*), 'He,' in the Torah, like one who is absent." See Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 101b. See also *Zohar* 1:49a; 2:177b (*SdTs*); 3:171a, 290a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 20 (24); idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 44.

The term *nistar* (“hidden”) is also a grammatical term meaning “third person,” which reinforces the homily’s intent.

In his “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim” (485), Ezra of Gerona explains the third-person form of the verse: “*Oh, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.* These are the words of the Glory, which desires like one who longs to ascend, to cleave to the light in the transcendent light that has no image, ascending in thought and ideation, and thus it speaks דרך נסתר (*derekh nistar*), in the third person. The kiss is a parable for the joy of the conjunction of the soul in the source of life and for the supplement of the holy spirit.... When he speaks with the Glory, gate to the supernal entities, he speaks in the third person.” It is not uncommon in biblical style for a proposal’s operative wording to be couched in the third person (as an expression of deference), before the speaker shifts to second-person language. See, e.g., Genesis 27:31; 31:35; 1 Samuel 19:4; 26:19; 2 Samuel 14:11–17; Song of Songs 1:4; Esther 1:19; 3:8–9; Ezra 5:17; 9:8; Gordis, 78; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 297. On the blurring of identity that accompanies kissing, cf. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Act IV, Scene V: “In kissing, do you render or receive?”

On the word *dodim* as a term signifying *love* or greater physical intimacy, see Ezekiel 16:8; 23:17; Proverbs 7:18.

73. Good comes solely from the side of Primal Light... Wine, normally associated with *Gevurah* and the Left, has been perfected by the blending from the Right, associated with *Hesed*. Thus טובים (*tovim*), *better* (or *sweeter*), now comes from the rectified Left, called Wine of Torah. Thus, the Left Side was elevated—in keeping with Elijah’s approach of redeeming holiness from the side of the demonic or from Judgment.

On the association of wine with the Left Side and *Gevurah*, see *Sefer ha-Bahir* 93–94 (137); *Zohar* 1:88a, 238a,

239b; 3:12b; ZH 64c (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 11 (13); idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 47.

74. uniting with one another through those kisses

The intimacy of Written Torah and Oral Torah signifies the deep intertwining of Scripture and its interpretation within the Talmud and Midrash. Conceived as the union of *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, Jewish study and practice are given the ultimate justification.

75. her maidens' dispute... The “maidens” are rabbinic sages debating the proper interpretation of the law. The *Zohar* values these disputes—which make up the bulk of Oral Torah as found in the Talmud—representing them as the jewelry and ornamentation with which bridesmaids bedeck the bride. In speaking of קשות (*qishut*), ornament, an allusion to קשות (*qeshot*), “truth,” may be intended, hinting at the significance of the rabbinic rivalries.

76. Mishnah—crown of the head... The three categories of legal materials (*mishnah*, *baraita*, and talmudic discussion) are each associated with a region of the Bride's body: head, legs, and trunk. A *mishnah* is from the canonized legal corpus composed during the period of the *tanna'im*, which serves as the basis for the talmudic discussion of law; ברײתא (*baraita*) derives from the Aramaic word ברא (*bara*), “outside,” designating a legal teaching emerging from the same circles but excluded from the *mishnah* corpus. The connotation of laws standing beyond the core leads to a symbolic association with the legs of the beloved, Oral Torah. On the correspondences of these different parts of the body to texts, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

The rabbinic terms meaning “permissible,” מותר (*mutar*), and “forbidden,” אסור (*asur*), literally denote loosening and securing, respectively, which enables the homiletic interpretation. The words פסול (*pasul*), “ritually unfit,” and כשר (*kasher*), “ritually fit,” have similarly dual meanings.

77. as long as they beautify... Although one might have thought that the disputations would be viewed negatively, in fact what adorns Oral Torah is the practice of vigorous debate. She sits “among them” or “between them,” that is, between those on the right who rule to permit, and those on the left who rule to prohibit. The “hundred-fold” enhancement is perhaps related to a teaching in BT *Ḥagigah* 9b ascribed to Hillel: “He who repeated his chapter a hundred times is not to be compared with one who repeated it a hundred and one times.”

PR13 reads אַחַדִּין בַּהּ (*aḥadin bah*), “unite with Her,” rather than אַחַדִּין לָהּ (*aḥadin lah*), “unite Her,” signifying the rabbis’ mystical absorption into the *Shekhinah* in the course of decorating Her.

On kissing as the paradigm of love, see above, [note 47](#).

78. Those maidens who adorned Her... Ultimately, it is the sages themselves who facilitate the union of masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity, namely Written Torah and Oral Torah. Their reward for enabling this bonding comes from the World that is Coming, corresponding to *Binah*. This is corroborated by the verse from Proverbs, where the term וְשׁוֹר (*yesh*), *substance*, symbolizes *Binah*. Thus the reward is magnified for those who know esoteric lore.

In rabbinic literature the verse in Proverbs is applied to the heavenly reward of the righteous. See *M Avot* 5:19; *Uqtsin* 3:12; *BT Sanhedrin* 100a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, nispaḥim, Vezot Haberakhah*, 451; *Zohar* 1:4b, 88a, 156b (last two *ST*), 206a, 242b; 2:166b.

79. Seven words... The seven words of the second verse of Song of Songs correspond to the seven *sefirot* that stand above *Shekhinah*, and to the seven “maidens” (angels) that serve Her from below. “Life of the Worlds” signifies *Yesod*; “Acts of Love for David,” *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*; “Israel the Elder,” *Tif’eret*; “Primal Light,” *Ḥesed*; “beloved one from the womb,” *Gevurah*; and, “transcendent wine, constantly guarded,” *Binah*.

“Polished” renders שׁוֹר (shufin), “smooth,” “rubbed,” from the verb שׁוֹר (shuf). In rabbinic literature, certain instruments or utensils are completed through an act of smoothing or polishing. Only at that point of perfection do such instruments become susceptible to impurity. See, e.g., *M Kil’ayim* 14:5; *JT Berakhot* 3:5d.

According to *BT Shabbat* 137b, the blessing over circumcision includes the phrase “who sanctified the beloved one from the womb.” Rashi interprets this as a

reference to Isaac, based on Genesis 22:2. See *Zohar* 1:96a; 3:39b; *Ba'al ha-Turim* on Genesis 17:21.

80. Seven maidens chosen for her... Seven angels—corresponding to the *sefirot* above—adorn the *Shekhinah* in preparation for Her union with those *sefirot*. For suggestions of possible matches of angels with *sefirot*, see *Or Yaqar*. The angels Tsadqiel, Raziel, and Yofiel are also grouped together in *Zohar* 3:2b although that passage is not generally considered Zoharic material and is missing from most manuscripts, Cremona, and the large printed version of Mantua. See Vol. 7, p. 1, n. 1. Cf. *Zohar* 3:154a.

81. Three verses here, all with numerical secrets... Each of the first three verses of Song of Songs is comprised of an esoterically significant number of words. The first verse's four words signify the four creatures supporting the chariot, symbolizing in turn *Shekhinah*, *Yesod*, *Tif'eret*, and *Binah*. See above, [note 3](#); *Zohar* 2:144a. Seven words in the second verse correspond to the seven *sefirot* above *Shekhinah*, namely *Yesod* to *Binah*. See above, [note 79](#).

Song of Songs 1:3 reads in full: *As for scent, your precious oils are fragrant, poured oil is your name—that is why maidens love you.* The ten words designate all ten *sefirot*, and the *Zohar* echoes the teaching in M *Avot* 5:1: “The world was created with ten מאמרות (*ma'amarot*), ‘utterances.’” A teaching in the name of Rav in BT *Hagigah* 12a provides a link between the “utterances” of the Mishnah and the *sefirot* of medieval Kabbalah: “By ten things [or: words] was the world created: by wisdom, by understanding, by knowledge, by power, by rebuke, by might, by righteousness, by justice, by loving-kindness, and by compassion.” On possible ancient Christian and Gnostic links, see Idel, *New Perspectives*, 112–22.

The “praise of Sabbath” alludes to the hymn אל אדון (*El Adon*), “God, Master,” recited during the Sabbath morning prayers. The first two lines of the hymn consist of a total of ten words. The last two lines of the hymn consist of six

words each, corresponding to the *sefirot* that emanate from *Binah*, namely *Hesed* through *Yesod*. On this hymn see *Zohar* 2:132a; 2:205b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 124; Vol. 5, pp. 227–28, nn. 107–110. On earlier sources regarding the significance of the number of words in the various lines of *El Adon*, see Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 30, 67. See *Zohar* 2:92b (*Piq*).

82. Nard and saffron... Song of Songs 4:14 lists seven different kinds of spices, corresponding to the seven words of 1:2. The verse concludes: *with all the finest spices*.

Seven rungs refers to the seven *sefirot* (*Binah* through *Yesod*) that Jacob, representing *Tif'eret*, confers upon Rachel, who signifies *Shekhinah*. “From each rung one kiss” indicates that union occurs between each of those seven *sefirot* and *Shekhinah*, and not merely that all the kisses are funneled through *Tif'eret*. These seven kisses are further aligned with the seven words of Genesis 29:11.

83. Tears... correspond to the word... The word ויבך (*va-yevk*), *and wept*, is the seventh word of the verse, and so it corresponds to the seventh word of Song of Songs, מִיין (*mi-yayin*), *wine*. Jacob cries out of joy upon seeing his cousin Rachel (David Kimhi, ad loc.). The *Zohar* compares Genesis 29:11 and Song of Songs 1:2, reading them both hyperliterally, here assuming a literal chronology and causality within the verses. Thus, joy derives from the love expressed in Jacob’s kiss, while wine (associated with joy) generates love. This is indicated in the phrasing דוּדֵךְ מִיין (*dodekha mi-yayin*), *your kisses from love*, construing the prefixed preposition *min* hyperliterally as *from*, rather than according to its simple meaning as *more than*, and associating that wine with either *Gevurah* or *Binah*.

Bathsheba was King David’s wife and is associated with the *Shekhinah*, but here the focus is on the literal sense of her name, “Daughter of Seven,” to signify *Shekhinah* as the recipient of overflow from seven *sefirot* above. On Bathsheba as “Daughter of Seven,” see *Zohar* 3:6a, 37a, 160a, 266b.

On the re-reading of שובע שמחות (*sova semahot*), *Fullness of joys*, as שבע שמחות (*sheva semahot*), “seven joys,” see BT *Arakhin* 13b.

84. Of all those kisses of love... The praise for the request for kisses from the beloved, Assembly of Israel, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, establishes Song of Songs 1:2 as the paradigmatic expression in Scripture regarding kissing. The verse reads: *Oh, let him kiss me* מנשיקות (*mi-neshiqot*), *with* [literally: *from*] *the kisses of, his mouth*. The speaker construes the preposition *min* in its partitive sense (“part of...”), as in Exodus 16:27 and Leviticus 5:9. Logically, “some of” two kisses can only be one kiss. The *Zohar* reads the verse hyperliterally to quantify the kisses, and the minimal number of kisses—one, two, or three—is marshaled to demonstrate divine generosity. Even though the solicitation *from the kisses of his mouth* could signify as little as one kiss, *Tif’eret* bestows many more.

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2; *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Pope, *Song of Songs*, 298; Fox, *Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 97.

85. This is necessary... The call for kisses must be only partial in order to convey the homiletical point of God’s largesse. Once God has responded to the petitioner’s request, the flow of blessings proceeds, and then one can take freely.

86. Four spirits join and are made one... In the exchange of breath that occurs through kissing, spirits join—as each one gives of his own spirit while partaking of the spirit of his fellow. This engenders four spirits, united as one.

The trope of “four spirits” is expounded variously in several passages in the *Zohar*. It can be understood as referring to the union of human male and female, resulting in messianic offspring, as well as to *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah*. See Ezekiel 37:9; *Zohar* 1:235a; 2:146b; 3:130b (*IR*); *ZH* 60c (*MhN*, *ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 2:254a (*Heikh*).

87. from those lofty kisses, kissed before... The paradigm for kisses of love are those exchanged between upper and lower aspects of Divinity. Human kisses are deemed “love of delight” if they partake of that primordial sefirotic union. On the motif of mystical union through kissing, see *Zohar* 2:254a-b; *ZH* 60c-d (*MhN, ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 396; Fishbane, *Kiss of God*; Kosman, “Breath, Kiss, and Speech”; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 296–300; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 348–52, 361–62; Hecker, “Kissing Kabbalists.”

88. invitation to the World that is Coming... The relatively uncommon ה (he) in the word פִּיהוּ (*pihu*) (see above, [note 71](#)) serves as an invitation from *Shekhinah* to *Binah*, the World that is Coming, who is symbolized by the first ה (he) of the tetragrammaton. Love in the lower world is authentic when it seeks to ascend and be absorbed within a higher stratum of being. “All praises arouse the lower world toward the upper world” indicates the significance of the songs and prayers from the liturgy, all serving to elevate *Shekhinah*.

89. Your caresses... The *Zohar* is playing on the ambiguity of דודִךְ (*dodekha*), which can mean either “your caresses” or “your beloved.” Following the latter reading, the upper *sefirot* are illuminated and gladdened by (literally: from) the ultimate wine, symbolizing *Binah*. Cf. *Zohar* 2:147a.

Psalms 104:15 begins: [*You make*] *wine that gladdens the human heart, to make faces shine brighter than oil*. Here, the heart signifies *Shekhinah*, elated from the upper *sefirot* that have provided illumination from *Binah*.

90. rejoicing in the delight of fine wine... Wine usually symbolizes *Gevurah*, or *Din* (Judgment), and its dregs nourish *Sitra Aħra*. In contrast, the wine that Israel enjoys is tranquil, preserved since the six days of creation; it is untainted by the dregs below, whereas the feast of the nations is exclusively from those lees. Cordovero contends

that the dregs symbolize judgments to be consumed by the other nations, whose annihilation at the end of time will lead to their destruction (*Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*).

Wine was the “fruit” of the primordial sin (Genesis 3:6), according to *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:5 in the name of Rabbi Aibu: “She squeezed grapes and offered them to him.”

In rabbinic literature, a primordial vintage awaits the righteous in the world that is coming. See BT *Berakhot* 34b (in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi); *Sanhedrin* 99a. In the *Zohar*, this wine symbolizes the deepest secrets of Torah awaiting the righteous—but also the rich emanation stored within, or flowing from, *Binah*, who is known as “the World that is Coming.” This emanation is stored in the grapes, namely the six *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*; hence דודיק מ״ן (*dodekha mi-yayin*), *loved ones* [literally: *caresses*] *from wine*.

Regarding the various approaches to wine, see Jeremiah 48:11; Psalms 75:9; BT *Megillah* 12b; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 46; *Zohar* 1:36a, 135b (*MhN*), 192a, 238b; 2:147a, 169b, 191a, 246b–247a (*Heikh*), 267b (*Heikh*); 3:12b, 39b, 40a, 93b, 100a (*RM*); *ZH* 28a–b, 64c (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 130, 319; idem, *She’elot u-Tshuvot*, 22; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 11 (13); David Luria, *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer*, 23, n. 51.

91. One who sees grapes in a dream... Consistent with a manuscript variant of BT *Berakhot* 56b (MS M, as noted in Soncino): “One who sees grapes in a dream: if white, whether in season or not, a good sign; if black—in season, good; if not in season, bad—he should offer supplication. If [he dreamt] that he had eaten these, he can be assured that he has attained a place in the world to come.” Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 128:4; *Zohar* 2:144a.

White grapes represent the *sefirot* imbued with compassion from above. Red grapes represent Judgment; their harshness is overcome if the dreamer eats them. See *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*. Rabbi Shim’on has explained

the “black” grapes as if they were red, since red is the color more commonly associated with Judgment. The *Zohar* does not explain why eating red grapes should be efficacious whereas drinking their wine is damaging. See *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*. Regarding the eating of black grapes as engagement with evil, see *Zohar* 2:144a.

92. Isaac... needed to be gladdened with fine wine... Jacob, who symbolizes Compassion (*Tif'eret*), brings the joy of wine—whose origin is in *Binah*—to Isaac, who symbolizes Judgment (*Gevurah*). *Binah* is referred to as remote because it is located in the transcendent upper three *sefirot*. When the flow from *Gevurah* is sweetened it is assimilated into *Tif'eret* harmoniously. This is a rectification of the red grapes, now no longer associated exclusively with *Gevurah*. Newly sweetened, Isaac can now give Jacob a fitting blessing (*Matoq mi-Devash*).

93. those דוידים (*dodim*), loved ones... Representing the six *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*, these “loved ones” are luminous because of the emanation received from the “wine” above, *Binah*. The word יין (*yayin*), “wine,” has a numerical value of seventy and perhaps is associated here with the Name of Seventy-Two Letters. In the clause *ki tovim dodekha mi-yayin*, the prefixed preposition *mi-*points toward the place whence the lovers originate: *from wine*, in contrast to its simple meaning as “more than,” which yields *sweeter than wine*. See above, [note 84](#).

On the Name of Seventy-Two Letters (sometimes called Seventy-Two Names), see above, [note 5](#); *Zohar* 2:51b-52a, 132b; Vol. 4, pp. 257-64 and esp. nn. 216, 221-26. “Supernal wine” refers to *Binah*. Cf. Ezra of Gerona, “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 485.

See BT *Berakhot* 34b: “What is the meaning of *No eye has seen, O God, but You* (Isaiah 64:3)? Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi said, “This is the wine that has been preserved in its grapes from the six days of Creation.” Cf. BT *Sanhedrin* 99a.

94. For fragrance, your oils are sweet Hebrew טובים (le-rei'ah shemanekha tovim), in which the preposition *le* has been interpreted in different ways. The Septuagint reads it as a conjunction, akin to *ve-*, *and*, while Syriac, Ibn Ezra, and King James read it as akin to למען (*le-ma'an*), *because*, connecting it with the *therefore* of the next phrase. Pope connects it to the previous phrase, yielding *Sweeter is your love than wine, than the smell of your precious oil*. The translation here takes *le* as a *lamed* of reference, following the *Zohar's* interpretation: *for* [or: *regarding*] *fragrance*. See Pope, *Song of Songs*, 299–300.

95. I have gazed upon this verse... “I have gazed upon [or: I have contemplated] this verse” reflects the mystical practice of gazing upon a verse in order to derive esoteric meaning or mystical experience. On reading as mystical praxis, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 383–92.

The sacrificial offering unites the *sefirot*, which then together ascend to the beyond. Maimonides had relativized the importance of the sacrificial offerings, explaining them as a concession to the primitive nature of ancient Israel. The *Zohar* counters by emphasizing their vital role in unifying and sustaining divinity. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:32; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:878–80.

Clusters ascend, uniting in a single nexus, thus emphasizing the role of the sacrificial offering in promoting union above. *Sefer ha-Bahir* 78 (109) first states this principle through its interpretation of the word קרבן (*qorban*), “sacrifice”: “Why is it called *qorban*? Because the word implies that it מקרב הכחות הקדושות (*meqarev ha-kohot ha-qedoshot*), draws the holy powers together, as is written: וקרב אותם (*ve-qarav otam*), *Bring them close to each other* (Ezekiel 37:17).” The following accounts by Azriel of Gerona appear to have influenced the author of the *Zohar*: “It is called *qorban* because it draws the powers together through ascent, blessing them with an addition of spirit” (Vatican MS 211,

8b, as cited in Tishby, *Wisdom*, 3:881—with minor modifications). There the drawing together is effected by the ascent as in the *Zohar*. Similarly, “It is also called *qorban* because it draws together the upper powers in a perfect unification, for the Will receives first of all power to ascend from one stage to another up to the highest level, and then *Tif’eret*, *Hesed*, and *Paḥad* receive power; and as they ascend, the names of the blessed Holy One ascend, uniting together in a perfect unification” (MS Oxford 2456 [Christ Church, 198], 12b, as transcribed in Tishby, *ibid.*; with minor modifications).

On sacrifices as the union of all *sefirot*, see Naḥmanides on Leviticus 1:9; *Zohar* 1:65a; 3:4b–5a, 5b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:878–90.

96. Another fragrance—King Messiah... Symbolizing *Shekhinah*. On this association, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 71 (90); *idem*, *Shushan Edut*, 343. Cf. *Zohar* 1:84a, 238a; 3:19b.

Isaiah 11:3 literally reads: וְהָרִיחַו (ve-hariḥo), *His sensing, will be with the fear of YHVH: he shall not judge by what his eyes behold, nor decide by what his ears perceive*. The simple meaning of the term וְהָרִיחַו (ve-hariḥo) is uncertain (so NJPS), but for the *Zohar* the apparent presence of the verbal root רִיחַ (*rei’ah*) suggests the sense of smell. Smell is considered to be the sense that detects the truer nature of things. See BT *Sanhedrin* 93b; *Zohar* 3:186a; ZH 90d (*MhN, Rut*).

King Messiah, *Shekhinah*, is one fragrance ascending together with the fragrance of the sacrifice, the collectivity of the other *sefirot*.

97. אֵשׁ (Ishēh), A fire-offering, outside the cluster... The word אֵשׁ (*ishēh*), *fire-offering*, is treated as if composed of the units אֵשׁ (*esh*), “fire,” and הֵ (he)—the final letter of the tetragrammaton—representing *Shekhinah*. The fire stands outside (or envelops) the ascending fragrance, nourishing and illuminating fiery angels. Supernal forces are gathered

together in the afternoon, and *Shekhinah* is illuminated and perfumed by all the spices that aggregate in the holy covenant, *Yesod* (*Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*). For a different explanation, see *Sullam*.

On angelic beings as being sustained by sacrificial offerings, see above, [p. 320](#), [n. 50](#).

98. *like the fragrance of spices* No verse in Scripture reads *like the fragrance of spices*, but perhaps the reference is to Song of Songs 4:10, [*How much sweeter*] *your oils than any spice!*

99. *Pleasing...* Medieval kabbalists relate the term נִחְוֶה (*niḥo'ah*), *pleasing*, to the word נָחָה (*naḥah*), “descend,” explaining that after the sacrificial fragrance ascends, there is a subsequent downward flow of divine energies. See *Bahir* 78 (109): “*Niḥo'ah* always implies descent, as is written: *and came down* (Leviticus 9:22). This has been translated as וְנָחָה (*u-neḥat*), descending: the spirit descends and unites with those holy forms and מִתְקָרֵב (*mitqarev*), is brought close, by means of the קֶרְבָּן (*qorban*), sacrifice. Hence it is called *qorban*.” See Naḥmanides on Leviticus 1:9. Baḥya ben Asher on Leviticus 1:9 explains that after the sacrificial fragrance rise up, they descend to *Tif'eret*, as it descends here to *Tif'eret Israel*, rendered as “Beauty of Israel.” Beautiful in receiving all colors from above and magnificent in its bestowal of beauty below. Rabbinic sources already indicate that the pleasing savor is intended to provide comfort to *YHVH*. See *Sifra*, *Vayiqra* 4:6, 7c; BT *Zevaḥim* 46b.

100. *For YHVH—for the King of all...* *Binah* is the King of all, as seen above. Everything is concentrated within *Binah*, who stands above all the lower *sefirot*. The completion of joy occurs when the sacrificial fragrance has ascended, joining all the *sefirot* together, expressing the meaning of a *fire-offering*. The second part of the verse, *fragrance pleasing to YHVH*, marks the descending fragrance, bringing an overflow back onto the *sefirot* below. See *Or Yaqar*. “Everything is tied together” signifies all the words of the

Scriptural phrase, representing all the *sefirot*, bound as one in the upward-and-downward dynamics.

101. this fire, contracted outside, is that very fire...

This second explanation comes to clarify the nature of the fire described above. At first, the fire is explained as external to *Shekhinah*, the fragrance within. Here, the fire appears to be identified as *Shekhinah*, itself a place where fiery angels can come for restoration after completing their tasks in the name of Judgment.

Biblical imagery portrays God's anger as emerging from his nostrils, e.g., *Smoke rose from his nostrils* (Psalms 18:9), and *then God's nostrils will smoke* (Deuteronomy 29:19).

102. they return in their glow to bind within that ה (he)... The final *he* of the word הַשֶּׁחַיִּי (*isheh*), *fire-offering*, represents *Shekhinah*, which reabsorbs all forces of judgment. Thus integrated, שֶׁחַיִּי (*esh*), *fire*, is viewed as productive and soothing, rather than destructive. *Shekhinah* is also seen as the point of coalescence for the *sefirot* above.

103. point within the mystery of Holy Covenant...

This is *Shekhinah*, often described as contained within *Yesod*. Located at the bottom of the *sefirot*, She receives the "aroma of supernal hidden spices, unrevealed"—the overflow from the other *sefirot*, which are more concealed.

On the feminine as contained within the phallus, see *Bahir* 116 (172); *Zohar* 1:117a; 2:204a; 3:18b-19a, 250b, 296a (*IR*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 115; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 363-64; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 357-360; idem, "Woman—the Feminine as Other"; idem, "Coronation of the Sabbath Bride."

Shekhinah is the "fragrance" that emerges from myrtle. In the *Zohar*, "myrtle" usually corresponds to *Tiferet* or *Yesod*, though here Cordovero contends that it symbolizes *Binah*. See *Zohar* 2:208b; 3:24b; *Derekh Emet* on 2:208b.

Myrtle is also the aroma wafting from the garments that Jacob wears when receiving the blessing from Isaac. See *Zohar* 2:208b and below, [note 114](#).

104. Pleasing—the place where upper spirit rests... “Upper spirit” is *Tif’eret*, who finds its proper lodging in *Shekhinah*. This derives from the verbal link of נִיחֹאֵה (niḥo’ah), “pleasing,” to נָחָה (naḥah), “descend.” Together they form the chariot, constituted by the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God. When the word נִיחֹאֵה (niḥo’ah) is spelled without the vowel-letter ך (yod), its numerical value (*gimatriyya*) is seventy-two, supporting this interpretation. See *Or Yaqar*.

On the relationship between *niḥo’ah* and *naḥah*, see above, [note 99](#). On the seventy-two-letter name of God, see above, [note 5](#).

105. For fragrance—transcendent point abiding in concealment... This is the third explanation of the word *fragrance*. Previously identified with the sacrifice and *Shekhinah*, *fragrance* is now identified with *Hokhmah*, often becoming manifest as a point and deriving from *Keter*, the most recondite of the *sefirot*. Instead of the fragrance wafting upward as from a flower or oil to the nose, this fragrance flows down, imbuing with light the *sefirot* below—called “oils and spices.” They are called *good ones* when they have taken in illumination from *Hokhmah* and *Keter* above. This fragrance wends its way to those lower *sefirot* through the “deep river,” *Binah*. Thus, the Scriptural phrase *For fragrance, your oils are good ones* is read sequentially: *From [or: due to] fragrance your oils are good ones*. In this instance, both *fragrance* and *pleasing* indicate a downward flow (whereas in the previous interpretation, *fragrance* moves upward from either the sacrifice or *Shekhinah*, while *pleasing* retains the downward meaning). Some commentators identify the “most hidden of all concealments” as *Ein Sof*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

106. These are the days called tovim, good ones... Rabbi Shim’on cites a teaching from Rav Hamnuna Sava.

“Good days” is a literal translation of *yamim tovim*, normally translated as “festivals.” The *Zohar* links the word *good* of Song of Songs 1:3 with the festivals, *yamim tovim*. The tefillin (phylactery) of the head has a superior level of sanctity (compared to the tefillin of the “hand”) and is therefore matched with *Tif’eret* and the festivals. The moon, *Shekhinah*, here represented by the mundane days, has no light of its own; hence those days are not called *yamim tovim*.

Tefillin (“phylacteries”) consist of two black leather boxes containing passages from the Torah (Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21) written on parchment. They are bound by black leather straps on the left arm (by those who are right-handed) and on the head, and are worn during weekday morning services. Each of the biblical passages indicates that the Israelites should place a “sign” upon their hand and a “front-let” (or reminder) between their eyes. In practice, there is no distinction between the days on which one wears “tefillin of the hand” and “tefillin of the arm,” and the text uses them interchangeably.

The idea that the blessed Holy One wears tefillin derives from BT *Berakhot* 6a: “Rabbi Avin son of Rabbi Adda said in the name of Rabbi Yitshak, ‘How do we know that the blessed Holy One puts on tefillin? For it is said: *YHVH has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength* (Isaiah 62:8). *By His right hand*—this is Torah, as is said: *At His right hand was a fiery law unto them* (Deuteronomy 33:2). *And by the arm of His strength*—this is tefillin, as is said: *YHVH will give strength to His people* (Psalms 29:11). How do we know that tefillin are a strength to Israel? For it is written: *All the peoples of the earth will see that the name of YHVH is proclaimed upon you, and they will fear you* (Deuteronomy 28:10), and it has been taught: Rabbi Eli’ezer the Great says: This refers to tefillin of the head.”

On Rav Hamnuna Sava, see below, [note 150](#). On tefillin of the head representing *Tif'eret* and tefillin of the hand representing *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:13b-14a, 168b; 3:269b; *ZH* 85a (*MhN, Rut*).

The commandment of tefillin was widely disregarded in France and Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Zohar*, seeking to reinforce commitment to it, emphasizes its mystical significance. See *Tosafot*, BT *Shabbat* 49a, s.v. *ke-elisha ba'al kenafayim*; Baer, *History*, 1:250, 302; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1161-65.

“Mundane days of the festival” renders חולו של מועד (*holo shel mo'ed*), literally, “profane” or “earthly” days of the festival. Both Passover and Sukkot are celebrated with *yamim tovim* (festival days) at their beginning and end, with “mundane days” in between. These days in the middle are semi-holidays during which certain activities are curtailed, but without the same level of restriction as festival days. See Leviticus 23:37, 39; BT *Hagigah* 18a; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Yom Tov* 7:1.

[107. mundane days of the festival...](#) In actuality, most kinds of work that are proscribed on the festivals are permitted during the mundane days, provided that such work is undertaken for the sake of the festive period. The rhetorical overstatement here reflects a perennial rabbinic concern that the mundane days of festivals were not being observed with the proper level of reverence or adherence to Jewish law.

Tefillin are not worn on the Sabbath or on the main days of festivals, as taught in the name of Rabbi Akiva in BT *Eruvin* 96a: “Is it possible that a man shall wear tefillin on Sabbaths and festivals? Scripture says, *And it shall be for a sign for you on your hand* (Exodus 13:9), which denotes: only on those days that require a sign [should tefillin be worn]; but these, since they themselves are a sign, are excluded.” See also *Menahot* 36b; cf. JT *Mo'ed Qatan* 3:4, 82a; BT *Mo'ed Qatan* 19a; Moses ben Jacob of

Coucy, *Sefer Mitsvot Gadol*, Positive Commandments 22; Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, *Or Zaru'a, Hilkhhot Tefillin*, 589; Abraham ben Azriel, *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. E. Urbach, 2:84, n. 3; Jacob Katz, *Halakhah ve-Qabbalah*, 102-24.

108. mundane days of the holiday—how shall we grasp it... Rabbi El'azar's question reflects the experience of the lesser sanctity ascribed to the mundane days of the festival, lacking many of the positive and negative commandments associated with holy days.

The question rests upon the lesser sanctity of the tefillin of the hand and the use of the term "dull hand," as well. "Dull hand" renders יד כהה (*yad keheh*), the term used to refer to the left hand, the one on which tefillin of the hand is worn. See BT *Menahot* 37a: "From where does Rabbi Yose ha-Horem learn that it [tefillin] must be put on the left hand?... [Rav Ashi] said, 'He derives it from ידכה (*yadkha*), *your hand* (Exodus 13:16), written with the letter ה (*he*) at the end, indicating the weaker [hand].'" Though the Talmud uses the word כהה to mean "weak," its primary meaning is "dim" or "dull," and as such it can stand for *Shekhinah*, often symbolized by the moon, having no light of its own.

109. forbidden to do work... Inducing joy... Building on the typical Zoharic association of positive commandments with *Tiferet* and negative commandments with *Shekhinah*, Rabbi Shim'on answers the question by explaining that abstaining from work is the primary expression of the festival's mundane days, while the expression of joy corresponds to the festival's holy days. Wearing of the two tefillin supports the two sides.

110. cast off the King's noble seal... Although wearing tefillin is an emulation of the image of the Divinity, one must not wear them on the festivals or their mundane days because on those days God's tefillin rest upon Israel. In the parable, the king's signet ring signifies the divine tefillin, which he subsequently replicates for the servant's use, representing the mundane tefillin. "Seizing" the seal

by wearing tefillin during the festival is an assault on the king's glory.

111. Sabbath of Sabbath eve... The distinction in sanctity between Sabbath eve and Sabbath day resembles that of the tefillin of the hand and the tefillin of the head. While mundane tefillin adopt the form of the tefillin of the Master of the Universe, these are removed on the Sabbath in favor of the actual tefillin of God.

112. One who wears tefillin is required to rejoice... This is an ironic reversal of BT *Berakhot* 30b, which reads: "What is meant by *rejoice with trembling* (Psalms 2:11)? Rav Adda bar Mattena said in the name of Rabbah: 'Where there is rejoicing there should also be trembling.' Abbaye was sitting before Rabbah, who observed that he seemed very cheerful. He said, 'Is it not written *rejoice with trembling*?' He replied, 'I am putting on tefillin.' Rabbi Yirmiyah was sitting before Rabbi Zeira, who saw that he seemed very cheerful. He said to him, 'Is it not written *In all sorrow there is profit* (Proverbs 14:23)?' He replied, 'I am wearing tefillin.'

BT *Shabbat* 153a links tefillin and oil: "*Let oil on your head not be lacking* (Ecclesiastes 9:8)—this is tefillin."

Poured oil is your name renders שמן תורק שמה (shemen turaq shemekha), literally *your name is Turaq oil*. The enigmatic phrase has led to other interpretations, such as *your name is oil wafted about*. See *Bemidbar Rabbah*, *Naso* 13:14; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; ibn Ezra; Zakovich; Fishbane; Pope; Fox; Norris, *Song of Songs*, 29, 31-34.

Your oils stands in contrast to *your name*, with the former symbolizing the tefillin of the head and the latter representing the tefillin of the hand.

In contrast, in the biblical context a name is often synonymous with one's identity, collapsing the referential distance that the *Zohar* builds upon. See Pope; Gordis; Bloch and Bloch; Fishbane.

On the phrase שמן תורק שמך (*shemen turaq shemekha*), see *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* on 1:3.

113. on the last day of the festival, when tefillah of the hand is complete... During the seven days of the festival, the tefillin of head and hand are united; and at the end, the relationship is consummated. Afterward, during *Shemini Atseret*, the festival following Sukkot, *Shekhinah* directs divine overflow to the seven *sefirot* above and to forces below, both groups represented by the word עלמות—construed first as *alamot*, *young women*, and then as *olamot*, *worlds*.

On *alamot* and *olamot*, see *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* on 1:3.

114. his garments actually... There is an apparent discrepancy between Rebekah's giving Esau's clothing to Jacob as a disguise and the statement that Isaac smelled *his garments*—that is, Jacob's garments. According to legend, these garments had originally belonged to Adam, were passed down to Noah, and ultimately were acquired by Nimrod, king of Babylonia and Assyria (see Genesis 10:8-12). Nimrod's spectacular success as a hunter derived from the fact that he wore those magic clothes originally fashioned by God for Adam. Seeing Nimrod in these clothes, Esau coveted them and killed him for them.

In contrast, in *Zohar* 2:39a-b Rabbi Shim'on maintains that the garments of Adam and Eve were never worn again by anyone else. On the garments, see Genesis 3:21; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 27:15; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:13; 65:16; *Leqah Tov (Pesiqta Zutarta)* on Genesis 27:15; *Sekhel Tov* on Genesis 27:15; Rashi on *BT Pesahim* 54b, s.v. *bigdo shel adam ha-rishon*; *Midrash Aggadah* on Genesis 27:15; *Zohar* 1:73b, 142b; 2:208b.

115. the well where Jacob sat... Genesis 29 and Exodus 2 describe the heroic acts of Jacob and Moses—easing access to wells, and drawing water for thirsty flocks. On waters rising to Jacob, see *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 28:10, 29:10; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 36;

Regarding Moses, see *Shemot Rabbah* 1:32. See also *Zohar* 1:152a; 2:13b. Regarding the embezzlement of the wells by “others,” see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

116. garments restored to their paradigm... See BT *Bava Metsi'a* 84a: “The beauty of our father Jacob resembled the beauty of Adam.” The *Zohar* transforms the Talmudic comparison into an affirmation of identity. Jacob manifested Adam’s beauty so fittingly that he wore the garments fashioned by God for Adam in the Garden of Eden. Now their original fragrance was emitted once again.

On Jacob’s beauty being similar to Adam’s, see BT *Bava Batra* 58a; *Zohar* 1:21b, 35b, 142b, 168a; 2:111a-b (SA; see Vol. 5, p. 99), 141b, 169b, 275b (*Tosafot*); 3:244a; *ZH* 37c (*RR*); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 128.

117. Three fragrances emitted here... The *Zohar* identifies the three fragrances exuded by Jacob’s garments with the three elements of Song of Songs 1:3. The two sets of fragrances in the two verses are equated, pointing to the deeper spiritual identity underlying both.

118. Mystery of sacrifice... All three verses relating to fragrance are linked together in one nexus. For an explanation of the correspondences, see *Matoq mi-Devash*.

119. משכני (Moshkheni), Draw me ... The *Zohar* engages in wordplay with four words: משכני (*moshkheni*), *Draw me* (Song of Songs 1:4); משכני (*mishkani*), *my dwelling* (Leviticus 26:11); שכנתיה (*Shekhinteh*), His *Shekhinah*; and משכונא (*mashkona*), a “pledge”—all to express the intimate quality of God’s commitment to Israel. שכנה (*Shekhinah*), literally “indwelling,” serves as the guarantee of God’s providential protection, regardless of Israel’s behavior or location—in Israel or exile. She is the site of God’s presence in Israel’s midst. Cf. *Zohar* 3:114a.

Shekhinah’s persistent accompaniment of Israel is first indicated in BT *Megillah* 29a: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai says, ‘Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of the blessed Holy One! Wherever they went in exile, *Shekhinah*

accompanied them. When they were exiled to Egypt, *Shekhinah* was with them.... When they were exiled to Babylon, *Shekhinah* was with them.... And even when they are destined to be redeemed, *Shekhinah* will be with them.”

See *Mekhilta, Pisha* 14; *Sifrei, Numbers* 84; JT *Ta’anit* 1:1, 64a; *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:54; *Zohar* 1:68b-69a, 120b, 134a, 149a, 159b, 182a, 211a; 2:2a-b, 41b (*Piq*), 82a, 189b, 216b; 3:2b, 6a-b, 74a-b, 114b-115a, 199a, 297b; ZH 47d (*MhN, Rut*), 65b (*ShS*), 80d, 84a (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 122-23; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 73-74 (92-93); Tishby, *Wisdom* 1:382-85.

The image of *Shekhinah* crouching over Israel derives from Deuteronomy 22:6: *Should a bird’s nest chance to be before you on the way, in any tree or on the ground—fledglings or eggs—and the mother is crouched over the fledglings or over the eggs, you shall not take the mother together with the children.* The *Zohar* has woven its teaching out of this verse and a homily in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:23 in the name of Rabbi Me’ir: “When Israel stood before Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the blessed Holy One said to them, ‘Truly, shall I give you the Torah? Bring me fine deposits as guarantee that you will keep it, and then I will give it to you.’ ...They said to him, ‘Our children shall be our deposits.’ To which God replied, ‘Ah, these are truly good pledges; for their sake I will give it to you.’”

Song 1:4 is parsed to yield a new reading; instead of *Draw me after you, let us run!*, it is now interpreted as *My dwelling [or: My pledge], we will run after you.* In this reading, *dwelling* (or *pledge*) corresponds to *Shekhinah*, and *we* refers to the Jewish people.

120. Draw me... “Aspiration” renders רְעוּתָא (*re’uta*), “desire, favor, acceptance, goodwill, Will.” This aspiration rises within inner depths of *Shekhinah* (or perhaps from the Jewish people). She uses the words of Song of Songs 2:6, *His left hand beneath my head, his right embracing me*, to

express the dynamic of drawing close. In the process of *Shekhinah's* desire to merge with Her Beloved, She beckons to the right side, *Hesed*, saying *Draw me*, asking to be entwined through desire from the Left, *Gevurah*, and then clasped by the Right, *Hesed*. She directs her petition to *Hesed* so that its influence will oversee the embrace.

The sacrificial offering is configured as an activity of great love, as the words of Leviticus 1:9—speaking the endearments of Song of Songs 2:6—draw closer to each other: *fire-offering* speaking them to *fragrance, fragrance* to *pleasing*, and *pleasing* to *for YHVH*.

121. *May we be favored...* Three different words containing the letters רצ (resh tsadi) are treated as being related to the word רצון (*ratson*), “aspiration, favor, desire.” These words are נרוצה (*narutsah*), whose simple meaning is *let us run* (Song of Songs 1:4), explained here as *may we be desired*; ונרצה לו (*ve-nirtsah lo*), whose simple meaning is *it will be acceptable for him* (Leviticus 1:4), read here as *he will be accepted*; and ויריצהו (*va-yeritsuhu*), whose simple meaning is *they hurried him*, read as *they solicited him*. *Shekhinah* encourages Her male partner to unite with Will, corresponding to *Keter*, and then enfold Her and Her maidens through the functioning of Will—all incorporated within the singular dynamic of aspiration, goodwill, acceptance, and desire.

רצון (*ratson*) is the Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic רעוא (*ra'ava*) or רעותא (*re'uta*), translated variously in this passage as “aspiration,” “favored,” “acceptance,” and “will.”

On the words of goodwill directed to Joseph, see *Zohar* 1:194b.

122. *favor and blessings are found only where male and female are joined as one...* In order for Will, *Keter*, to provide overflow onto *Hokhmah* and *Binah*—and from there onto the lower *sefirot*—the male potency of Divinity must first draw *Shekhinah* toward Him. The union of male and female is the beginning of all convergence and overflow.

With unusual assertiveness, *Shekhinah* admonishes Her Beloved that He will not receive blessing from *Keter* should He not draw Her close.

See BT *Yevamot* 62b in the name of Rabbi Ḥanilai: “Any man without a wife is without joy, without blessing, without goodness.” See *Zohar* 1:55b, 165a, 182a; 3:5a, 74b, 148a, 296a (*IZ*); cf. BT *Sotah* 48a; *Zohar* 1:134a.

123. mystery of א (alef)... The *Zohar* thinks of the letter *alef* as being written with two *yod*'s that mirror each other astride the letter ו (*vav*). One ׀ (*yod*) forms the upper right of the א, the ו (*vav*) forms the diagonal line in the middle, and the second ׀ is situated on the bottom left of the *alef*. The symmetrical *yod*'s symbolize the continuity and identity of aspiration between the fire-offering below and its mate Will (*Keter*) above, as well as between feminine and masculine, below and above. This is why *alef* is the first letter of the word אֶחָד (*ehad*), *one*, referring to the perfect unity of the *sefirot*, as attested in the declaration of the *Shema*. Cf. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash*, who explain the masculine and feminine parallel in terms of the utterance of the first line of the *Shema*, and the following line in the liturgy, “Blessed be the name of His Kingdom’s Glory, forever and ever,” each of which contains six words. There may be an allusion to the lower *yod*'s flame-like appearance, which corresponds to the fire-offering.

124. At the moment this letter bursts into the air... Referring to the glottal stop that is represented by the letter *alef* of the word אֶחָד (*ehad*), *one*, during the recitation of the *Shema*. The number 1,100 is derived using the following kabbalistic technique: the letter א can be spelled out as אֶלֶף (*alef, lamed, feh*) whose numerical value according to *gimatriyyah* is 111, which is written out in Hebrew as קיא. Multiplying the first letter ק (100) by the second letter י (10) yields 1000; multiplying the first letter, ק (100), by the third letter, א (1), yields 100. The sum of these two equals 1,100. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

After the first letter *alef*, the letters ך ם (*het, dalet*) follow to produce the word *eḥad*. The letters are first inscribed and then, with greater force, engraved.

125. Oneness—א (*alef*)... All unity is contained within the letter *alef*. Its shape manifests the meaning of Leviticus 1:9. The tip of its bottom *yod* represents realms below the *sefirot*, corresponding to angelic legions.

Parsing Leviticus 1:9, *fragrance* corresponds to the body of the lower *yod*, signifying *Shekhinah*. *Pleasing* stands for the middle column *Tif'eret*, the expansion of the middle six *sefirot*, and “supernal spirit dwelling upon it” represents *Binah*. *TO YHVH* represents the upper *yod*, signifying *Ḥokhmah*. Implicit is the notch at the top of the upper *yod*, which represents *Keter*. In this way, the letter *alef* signifies the unity of all *sefirot*, as it manifests the aspiration (rising from below) to be joined as one cluster with Supreme Will, *Keter* (above).

126. The one behind the middle says... This is *Shekhinah* proclaiming Her desire to be joined with *Tif'eret*, who receives blessing and favor from *Binah*, *Ḥokhmah*, and the tip of the upper *yod*, *Keter*, above. Then, angelic forces below, represented by the tip of the lower *yod*, will follow *Shekhinah*, manifesting the verse *we will run after you*.

127. if only it were in our hands to reveal sublime secrets... The *Zohar* frequently refers to the generation of Rabbi Shim'on as one of the most exalted in history, particularly well-suited for revealing the most esoteric secrets.

On the uniqueness of this generation and its fitness for revealing secrets, see *Zohar* 1:226a; 2:86b, 144a; 3:79a, 105b-106a, 159a, 167b, 179b, 236b, 298a; Liebes, “Mashiaḥ shel ha-Zohar,” 143-44; Matt, “New Ancient Words,” 184; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 49-50, 102-4.

128. words of connection are missing in this verse... The verse's first part has the past tense (*has*

brought me), followed by the future tense (*We will delight and rejoice*). Rabbi Shim'on suggests that the biblical text would flow more logically if it read *Bring me*, in order to conclude with *We will delight and rejoice*.

129. even though She is below Him... The letter *alef* manifests the relationships of the *sefirot*. Although *Shekhinah* stands in the position of the lower branch of the *alef*, She is untroubled by Her seemingly inferior position, while She is rapturous in Her connection to the King, *Tif'eret*. When *Shekhinah* says *The king has brought me into his chambers*, She is exulting in Her fortunate status. Regarding the shape and construction of the *alef*, see above, [note 123](#).

Shekhinah asks rhetorically about the location of the King's chambers, answering that they are in the letter ה (he), meaning the second letter of the tetragrammaton, associated with *Binah*. The tetragrammaton יהוה (yod he vav he) represents the entire structure of the *sefirot*: the tip of the letter י (yod) corresponds to *Keter*; י (yod) itself represents *Hokhmah*; ה (he), *Binah*; ו (vav), *Tif'eret*, stands for the six middle *sefirot*, namely *Hesed* through *Yesod*; and the final ה (he), symbolizes *Shekhinah*. *Binah*, represented as "chambers," is the site of spatial expansion of *Hokhmah*, represented by *yod*. *Shekhinah* ascends to these chambers through Her relationship with *Tif'eret*, symbolized by the *vav* that is present in the tetragrammaton, as well as by the middle shaft of the letter א (*alef*).

She also explains implicitly the exegetical difficulty posed by the transition from the singular form *The King has brought me* to the plural form of *We will delight*, indicating that it is Her legions, the angels, who are all brought into the King's presence. In the biblical text's simple sense, the plural could refer to the two lovers or to the beloved and her friends, present in reality or as if in a dream. See Pope; Zakovitch; Bloch and Bloch.

"There is only delight and pleasure for a woman with her husband, mother, and father" expresses *Shekhinah's*

desire to be brought into union with Her husband *Tif'eret*, Her mother *Binah*, and Her father *Hokhmah*. These three are symbolized by the middle shaft of the ׀ (*alef*) and the ׀ (*yod*) above, as well as by the first three letters of the tetragrammaton. The printed text reads: "There is only delight and pleasure for a woman with her husband, and not with Her mother and father," but the translation follows CM10, CT3, P13, PR13, S, and OY. While father and mother are the sources of divine overflow, ultimately *Shekhinah* receives this emanation through the conduit of Her husband, *Tif'eret*.

The depiction of *Shekhinah* as being happy in Her subordinated state appears to resolve the tension between the Bible's two interpersonal instances of the term *teshuqah*, "desire": Eve's curse from Genesis 3:16, *Your desire will be for your man, and he will rule over you*; and the sentiment expressed in Song of Songs 7:11 (read according to the *Zohar's* understanding), *I am my beloved's, and my desire for him is upon me*. On the historical treatment of the curse, see Grossman, *Ve-hu Yimshol Bakh*.

130. She Herself is Garden of Eden... In Zoharic symbolism, *Shekhinah* is identified with Garden of Eden, making it difficult to understand how She can both be named Garden of Eden and be brought into the chambers of Garden of Eden. The resolution is that *Shekhinah* derives from upper chambers, identified with *Binah*, that are the actual chambers in the Garden of Eden. These four chambers constitute the upper chariot—*Binah*, *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*—themselves.

Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim on Song of Songs 1:4 says: "The king has brought me into his chambers—this teaches that in the future, the blessed Holy One will show Israel the secret places on high: the chambers in the heavens. Rabbi Yaakov said, 'This can be learned from [God's directive to] Jacob: *Arise! Go up to בית אל (Beit El), House of God [or: Bethel], and live there* (Genesis 35:1). This teaches that the

blessed Holy One showed level above level and showed him heavenly chambers. These are the chambers of the Garden of Eden....” Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:28 (on 1:4); *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* (on 1:4); *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* (on 1:4); Eleazar of Worms, *Yein ha-Roqeah*; Nahmanides, *Torat ha-Adam*, 297; cf. Ezra of Gerona on Song of Songs, ad loc.; Origen, in Norris, *Song of Songs*, 35. On *Shekhinah* as Garden of Eden, see *Zohar* 1:57b, 219a; 3:3b; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 4b, 33a, 44a, 60b, 98a-b, 103b.

131. First chamber—ה' (yod he)... These chambers manifest the stages of disclosure of the divine gradients. The first chamber within *Binah* contains the first two letters of the tetragrammaton, corresponding to *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. In the initial stages of extension of Divine Being, Spark of Darkness measures them out in space and color, which vanish after a fleeting appearance because of conflicting impulses in this chamber toward revelation and hiddenness. The four letters of the divine name אהיה (*Ehyeh*) are ultimately revealed, serving as spatial coordinates in relation to *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Shekhinah*, corresponding respectively to south, north, east, and west.

“Spark of Darkness” (or “Hard Spark”) renders דקרדינותא בוצינא (*botsina de-qardinuta*), radiating from *Ein Sof* and delineating the stages of emanation. This *botsina* is also known as קו המדה (*Qav ha-Middah*), “Line of Measure,” which gauges the flow of emanation, giving shape or measure to the *sefirot*.

The word *qardinuta* recalls a phrase in BT *Pesaḥim* 7a: קורדניתא חיטי (*ḥittei qurdanaita*), “wheat from Kurdistan,” which, according to Rashi, is very hard. In the *Zohar* the hardness of the lamp (or spark) may allude to its phallic quality. In *Zohar* 1:15a, several witnesses record the variants קרדינותא (*qadrinuta*) or קדרוניתא (*qadrunita*), “darkness.” See *ZH* 2a (*Mat*), where קרדנותא דסיהרא (*qardenuta de-sihara*) means “eclipse of the moon,” corresponding to Hebrew קדרות הירח (*qadrut ha-yare’ah*), “darkening of the moon.” Alternatively, “plumb-line of the

moon,” an instrument measuring the span from *Ḥesed* to *Malkhut*.

The “Spark of Darkness” or “Dark Light” is so potently brilliant that it overwhelms comprehension. Many mystics record similar paradoxical images: “a ray of divine darkness” (Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1:1); “the luminous darkness” (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2:163); “the black light” (Iranian Sufism; see Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, 99–120). Prior to the *Zohar*, Azriel of Gerona and the author of *Ma’yan ha-Ḥokhmah* mention “the light darkened from shining.” See Azriel ben Menahem of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Tefillah*, 197; *Ma’yan ha-Ḥokhmah*, 77–80; Scholem, “Te’udah Hadashah,” 29–30; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 336; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 59–61, 158–59. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:59: “We are dazzled by His beauty, and He is hidden from us because of the intensity with which He becomes manifest, just as the sun is hidden to eyes too weak to apprehend it.”

On *botsina de-qardinuta*, see *Zohar* 1:15a, 18b, 86b; 2:133b, 233a, 254b, 260a; 3:48b–49a, 135b, 139a (last two *IR*), 177a (*SdT*s), 292b, 295a–b (last two *IZ*); *ZH* 57a–58d (*QhM*); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 145–51. On the phallic quality of the hard lamp, see Wolfson, “Woman—the Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah,” 178–82; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 60–62, and index, s.v. “hardened spark”; Liebes, “*Zohar* ve-Eros,” 73–80. On contemplating emanation through the use of the *botsina de-qardinuta* as a means for the kabbalist to measure the divine form, see Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 117; cf. Liebes, *Peraqim*, 146–47; idem, “Messiah,” 199–200.

132. poised to be revealed... This first chamber is now called *Ehyeh*, *I will be*, describing potentiality in linguistic terms, rather than visually as before. The future tense of the name *Ehyeh* signifies latent potential, the expectancy of waiting to be revealed. This is the nature of

Binah, who will contain all future emanations within Her once She has been filled by *Hokhmah*. The four chambers delineate the progression of God's being from inscrutability to vocalization.

God communicates this name to Moses when Moses confronts the burning bush, a time when the Israelites and *Shekhinah* are both in exile. Moon, representing *Shekhinah*, has not yet been illuminated by Sun, symbolizing *Tif'eret*. While *Shekhinah* is in exile, Supernal Fragrance (*Hokhmah*) ascends above into Concealed of all Concealments (*Keter*), precluding manifestation below.

In *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 98 (125–26), Moses de León explains that Moses' initial prophecy is murky because of the concealed nature of the name *Ehyeh*: “The first name *Ehyeh* is the mystery of the unique name.... Indeed, the mystery of the pure air, beyond cognition... has no known name nor defined state, nor any feature that one can apprehend.... Thus, the mystery of His unique name is *Ehyeh*, that is to say, ‘I will yet draw mystery of Being into mystery of my reality.’ In other words, ‘I will be and I will construct my reality, drawing the extension of Being into reality.’ This is the mystery of the first name spoken to Moses at the bush, in the mystery of the onset of Moses' prophecy. Indeed the first channeling [of prophecy] came about this way, through the mystery of this name, and since Moses—peace be upon him—had not yet received the flow of prophecy, his mind was not settled until the mystery of being and mystery of the unique name יהוה (*YHVH*) was revealed to him.”

Cf. *Zohar* 3:11a, 65b; Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 58–59; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 380. On the different levels of Moses' prophecy, cf. below, *ZH* 72d–73a (*ShS*).

On the meanings of the divine name *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, see *Midrash Alpha-Beitot*, 423; “Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva,” 363–64; Ibn Ezra on Exodus 3:15; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:63; Jacob ben Sheshet, “Sha'ar Shamayim,”

156; Isaac ibn Sahula, “Peirush Shir ha-Shirim,” 469; Naḥmanides on Exodus 3:13; idem, “Peirush Sefer Yetsirah,” 1:1 (p. 403); Asher ben David, “*Peirush Shem ha-Meforash*,” 254; Ezra of Gerona, “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 477-78; Azriel of Gerona in Scholem, “Seridim Ḥadashim,” 217-19; idem, *Qabbalot Rabbi Ya’aqov ve-Rabbi Isaac*, 231-32; Gottlieb, *Ha-Qabbalah be-Khitvei Rabbenu Baḥya*, 80-81; Jacob ha-Kohen, “Peirush ha-Merkavah,” 85; *Zohar* 1:15a; 3:11a, 65a-b; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 100a-101a; N. Séd, “L’interprétation kabbalistique d’Ex. 3,14,” 25-46; Goetschel, “Ehyeh asher Ehyeh”; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 173-75. Cf. the comments of Meister Eckhart on Exodus 3:14, 16.

133. Once it returns to its place... When fragrance descends again to its proper place, the chamber takes on the fuller name אֲשֶׁר אֵהְיֶה (*asher ehyeh*), *who I will be*, and it is ready to be illuminated, occurring through the union of “one slender path.” At this point, *Binah* is filled, ready to send its overflow beyond to the “lamps” (*sefirot*) below. At that point, the name *Ehyeh* is uttered a third time: *Thus shall you say to the Israelites: אֵהְיֶה (Ehyeh) sent me to you* (Exodus 3:14). When *Ehyeh* is mentioned this time, it is in connection with the mission, indicating full preparedness to proceed with the illumination of lamps below. Thus the name *Ehyeh* evolves until it emerges from potentiality to actuality. Its letters represent both vowel and consonant sounds, allowing for this dynamic.

134. enhancement of the shofar, blasting Voice... Voice signifies *Binah*, receiving its initiating force—like the force behind the blast of a shofar—from *Hokhmah*, associated with beginning. Because this beginning requires intensity, Voice takes on the name יְהוֹה (*YHVH*) with the unusual vocalization of *Elohim*, signifying rigors of the left side. Subsequently, when *YHVH* is aligned with *Tif’eret*, which is in a harmonizing position, it takes on its normal vowel pointing,

signifying a more temperate array of divine energies. On the role of Voice, see Mopsik, “Pensee, Voix et Parole.”

On the shofar as a designation for *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:29b, 114b; 2:81b, 184b, 250b (*Heikh*); 3:38b, 216a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 370; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 26 (31); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 96, 143; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 120; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 88a–89a.

On the vocalization of *YHVH* as *Elohim*, see *Zohar* 1:15b; 3:10b, 11b, 65a; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 83b–84b. On the range of opinions regarding the vowel pointing of the name *YHVH* here, see *Or Yaqar*; Cracow 1603; Venice 1658; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Words are apparently missing at the end of the paragraph in all available manuscripts. The printed edition (ed. Margaliot) reads “Few are those who know this name.” While plausible, none of CM1, CM10, CT3, P13, PR13, PR14, M5, V23, *Or Yaqar*, and Venice 1658 attests to this reading. This translation follows the printed text for the sake of readability.

135. the vowels and cantillation signs are a tradition... Through contemplative vocalization and chanting of the Torah, the mystics sustain “designs above”—referring, as seen below, to the drawings of the Dwelling, *Shekhinah*, and of the Temple, *Binah*.

In reading the biblical text, cantillation marks serve three different functions simultaneously: musical, instructing the reader in a ritual context regarding the customary tune; phonetic, indicating where a word is accented; and punctuative-syntactic, indicating the internal syntactical relations within the verse.

The notion that the vowels are the “soul” of the consonants is common in medieval philosophical and mystical sources. On the relationship of vowels to letters, see *Bahir* 83 (115): “[The vowels] in the letters resemble the breath of life in the human body.” In *Sha’ar ha-Razim* (75), Todros Abulafia says: “I have seen written in the name

of Rabbi Elhanan of Corbeil... 'We have a tradition from ancient elders that the vowel is the world of movement, arousing the world of letters, like a king arousing his great ones, legions, and crowns....'" Isaac ha-Kohen writes similarly about the lore of vowels and cantillation signs in "Peirush Ta'amei ha-Neguddot" (265): "A tradition was passed down from sages to sages, and from elders to elders, that the cantillation signs and vowels all teach about the crowns and emanated powers. The transgressions of each and every generation have caused the dwindling of masters of this wisdom, leaving no more than two or three remnants. Those who knew passed on to eternity, this wisdom dying along with them. There is not a single individual in our generation who has received any of this, other than an individual here or there who has received a tradition from ancient ones, or who has been graced by the blessed Creator, leaving concealed, hidden traces in his hands, with the assistance of the Master of the worlds. He knows my intention and from Him I supplicate for aid to explain the vowels according to the tradition that few sages have received." See Joseph Gikatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* (413): "Know that the vowels and the consonants instruct us about the form of the entire world, the mystery of all the properties, and the order of the chariots."

For similar formulations, see Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 4:3; Abraham ibn Ezra on Exodus 20:1; *Bahir* 83 (115); Nahmanides, *Penimiyyut ha-Torah*, 469; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 487; Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 73-76; *Zohar* 1:15b, 100b (*Mat*); *ZH* 73a-c (*ShS*); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 5 (20b), 69 (108a); Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 413-16; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 328; Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, 87-89, note 5; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 174-76; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, 83-88, 512-513 notes 17-19, 22; Wolfson, "Dimmui Antropomorphi," 170-71, n. 102; idem, "Biblical Accentuation," 13, n. 25; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 227, n. 149. In

ascribing the antiquity of these traditions to Moses, the *Zohar* appears to be following the anti-Karaite position set out by Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 3:31.

136. large, supernal letters and small, tenuous letters... Certain letters in a Torah scroll are written large—for example, the ב (*bet*) of בראשית (*be-reshit*), *In the beginning* (Genesis 1:1). Others are written small—for example, the א (*alef*) of ויקרא (*va-yiqra*), *And He called* (Leviticus 1:1). Here, the entire small set is associated with *Shekhinah* (the lower world), and the large set with *Binah* (the upper world). After the destruction of the First Temple, Ezra and others came back to Jerusalem to build a Second Temple, using the knowledge of letters that they had received by transmission. See *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the small and large letters, see “Midrash Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef al Otiyyot Qetanot ve-Gedolot ve-Ta’ameihen,” 478–488; *Zohar* 1:3b, 159b; 2:132a, 174a, 180b, 205b, 228b; 3:2a, 165a, 220a; *ZH* 66c (*ShS*), 74c–d (*ShS*); Yitzhak Ratzhabi, “Meqorot Ketivat ha-Ottiyot ha-Meshunot,” 120–23. Scholem suggests that the passage on 2:228b is the basic statement of this teaching. See Scholem *ad loc*. On the significance of letter symbolism in medieval Jewish mysticism, and in the *Zohar* in particular, see Wolfson, “Letter Symbolism.”

BT *Berakhot* 55a associates the biblical architect Bezalel’s mastery of knowledge of the letters with the building of the Dwelling: “Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created.”

137. The movements of the cantillation signs were entirely fulfilled by Moses... While “the wise-hearted” knew how to appoint vowels to letters, only Moses could elicit rhythmical notes from above. Thus, once construction of the Dwelling was completed, *They brought the Dwelling to Moses* so that he could supply the missing punctuation. See *Or Yaqar; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*.

The signs (or accents) used for chanting the Torah in public readings were established by the Tiberian Masoretes from the end of the eighth century and crystallized in the first half of the tenth century. There is strong reason to believe that an oral tradition existed before final concretization in writing, since already in the rabbinic period there existed a practice of chanting the Torah with a melody. See BT *Megillah* 32a; Halevi, *Kuzari* 2:72. See Abraham ibn Ezra, *Sefer Tsaḥut be-Diqduq* 2b: “The notes... correspond to the signs of the zodiac.”

The system of written *te'amim* (notes) is interpreted here as symbolic representations of dynamics occurring within the divine realm. The superiority of the *te'amim* to both vowels and letters indicates the supremacy of phrasing and rhythm to language. They are given mystical meaning by Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen in *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 277: “This power [of using the ineffable name] was given only to the prophets garbed with the Holy Spirit, and to the holy priests. Indeed, those who served in our glorious Temple were expert in the subtleties of the musical notes that went out from their mouths when music was made.... At the moment that [the melody] emerges from their mouths, in fear and trepidation, in holiness and sweetness, the voice rises and falls, extending and shortening, by means of the Holy Spirit.... The meter, the images, and the pleasant notes of the voices are all established upon and directed toward the inner, spiritual gradations. Then Holy Spirit is aroused, sparkling and yearning.” Cf. Isaac ibn Sahula, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 408; ZH 73c (*ShS*).

138. King Solomon did not need the vowels and the signs... He did not need to draw down the vowels and notes, but rather they filled the Temple plans automatically. Because the Temple is associated with *Binah*, and because the vowels and notes derive respectively from *Hokhmah* and *Keter*—all three *sefirot* being intimately bound together—Solomon did not need to make the same effort as Moses.

Since the vowels and signs originate within the highest gradients of Divinity, beyond Voice, they proceed secretly and in a whisper.

“In its being built, precisely” recalls the tradition from *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:3 in the name of Rabbi Berekhiah: “It is written: *The House, in its being built* (1 Kings 6:7). It is not written *that they were building* but rather *in its being built*, signifying that it was built on its own. *Built only of stone complete* מסע (massa), *for its journey* (ibid.). The expression *massa (for its journey)* teaches that the stone מסע (massa’at), would convey itself, rising up and placing itself in position in the wall.” Here, the vowels and notes—like the stone in the earlier midrash—placed themselves in position. The biblical text uses the *nif’al* verb form, which is often reflexive; on that basis it is understood here as *when it built itself*. See *Zohar* 1:74a.

139. Stone complete, not deficient with tenuous letters... The supernal Temple, symbolizing *Binah*, is constituted of large letters and thus is described as *stone complete*—unlike the deficiency of the supernal Dwelling, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, constituted of small letters. The iron tools, representing demonic shells, have no access to the upper realm, and therefore are *not heard in the Temple*.

On the difference between the First Temple and the Second, see *Zohar* 2:258a.

140. the Torah scroll... It is ritually written with letters only; the vocalization and cantillation melody are concealed within. This resembles Solomon’s Temple above, which does not have an overt representation of the vowels and notes, depending instead on their automatic transmission from higher realms. In the symbols of the *sefirot*, the Torah scroll represents *Tif’eret*, which emerges with the image of *Binah*, representing the First Temple. Regarding the vowels and cantillation, see above, [note 135](#).

Because the Torah scroll appears without vocalization or cantillation signs, it is pregnant with an infinite number

of significations, each one shifting the meaning of the Torah itself. Here, the vowels and cantillation signs are transcendent; in contrast, in much of late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century Castilian Kabbalah, any particular vocalization and melody was understood to concretize and limit the semantic range. Thus, Jacob ben Sheshet of Gerona writes in *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon* (370): “It is well-known that each and every word of the Torah will change [its meaning] in accordance with the change of its vocalization, even though its consonants will not be changed.” Similarly, Bahya ben Asher comments on Numbers 11:15: “The scroll of the Torah, which is [written] without vowels, enables one to read [in various ways]... for the consonants without vowels bear numerous interpretations, and may be divided into abundant sparks. This is the reason we have been commanded to omit vowels from the scroll of the Torah, for the significance of each and every word is in accordance with its vocalization. When vocalized, it has only one meaning, whereas without vowels one may understand many wondrous, great, and glorious matters from it.” See Kasher, *Torah Shelema* 19:376, n. 2; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, index, s.v. “Torah: written forms of,” “Torah reading: vocalization of Torah text.”

141. Stress, from exertion at the commencement of Voice... At the outset of emanation into the first chamber, the force expended elicits the divine name יהוה (*YHVH*) with the vocalization אלהים (*Elohim*), thus revealing that chamber’s identity as אלהים חיים (*Elohim Hayyim*), Living God. The vowels for that first vocalization came from below, *Binah*, and were brought upward into the tetragrammaton that derives from *Hokhmah*. At other times, vowels are conveyed from above, from *Keter*, descending below.

142. Letters and vowels in one pattern... Ideally, each of the vowels of the tetragrammaton corresponds to its respective letter, yielding harmony and compassion. The first three letters correspond to the three lines of

emanation, from the right, left, and middle. The final ך (he) is like Moon, having no vowel just as Moon has no light of Her own. A range of vocalizations for the tetragrammaton referred to here can be found in the commentaries. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On ך having no light of its own, see *ZH* 66d (*ShS*); *Nitsotsei Zohar* 2:228b, n. 1.

When the letters and vowels, represented as body and soul, are perfectly aligned, the name is entirely one of compassion. On the letters and vowels as body and spirit, see above, [note 135](#).

Harmony between letters and vowels has an impact on the efficacy of prayer as well. See Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, 370: “If one knows how to build the structure he should have [kabbalistic] intention [during prayer] regarding the tetragrammaton with the appropriate vocalization. If he has [kabbalistic] intention regarding the structure signified by its vocalization, his prayer will be received and he will be answered from heaven.”

[143](#). When letters and vowels are twisted away from each other... If letters are “inverted” or “reversed,” the Divine Name manifests Judgment rather than Compassion—all the more so if letters and vowels are misaligned.

Exodus 14:20 is one of the three verses (Exodus 14:19–21) used to construct the 72-letter name of God and the reference to the engraved letters on three sides most likely reflects a concern regarding the improper fashioning of that holy name. See Scholem on *ZH* 66a (*ShS*). On the Name of Seventy-Two Letters (or seventy-two triads), see above, [p. 43](#), [n. 44](#).

[144](#). unless She is made a messenger... When final ך (he), *Shekhinah*, is needed to perform a duty in the world, the upper powers lend Her vowels, energizing Her and enabling Her to act. Regarding lending to *Shekhinah* from above, see *Zohar* 1:2a.

145. Second chamber: לַאֵל (EI)... This is the second chamber within *Binah*. The divine name *EI* signifies *Hesed*, but because its letters are the first two letters of the name אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), associated with *Gevurah*, it also represents the union of those two *sefirot*. On the first day of creation, light was created, deriving from *Hesed*, but that light was hidden away.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7 in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon: “With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One foresaw the corruption of the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, He hid it away from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). Where did He hide it? In the Garden of Eden. *Light is sown for the righteous, joy for the upright in heart* (Psalms 97:11).”

On *EI* signifying *Hesed*, see *Zohar* 1:16b, 17b, 94a; 2:98a; 3:11a, 23b, 30b, 31a, 65a, 119b, 222a; *ZH* 45a, 50d, 63b (*ShS*); *Gikatilla, Sha'arei Or*, 76b–78b. Cf. *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:2; *Zohar* 1:91a; *ZH* 30c; *Nitsotsei Zohar, ZH* 30c, n. 1.

On the hiding away of the first light, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:6; 41:3; BT *Hagigah* 12a; *Shemot Rabbah* 35:1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini*, 9; *Midrash Tehillim* 27:1; *Bahir* 97–98 (147), 106 (160), 131 (190); *Zohar* 1:1a, 7a, 21a, 30b, 31b–32a, 45b–46a, 47a, 59a, 121b (*MhN*), 131a, 203b; 2:35a, 78b, 127a, 147b, 148b–149a, 166b–167a, 220a–b, 224b, 230a; 3:34a–b, 88a, 93a, 225b, 231b; *ZH* 1a, 15a (*MhN*), 66a (*ShS*), 85a (*MhN, Rut*), 122a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 183; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 140; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

146. אֵל (Alef)—mystery of the first light, contained within two lights... The structure of the אֵל, with its branches to the right and left, or above and below, invites interpretations signifying union of right and left, or male

and female. This first light, *Hesed*, is “contained within” the recipients of *Hesed*’s overflow, *Gevurah* and *Tif’eret*. See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 20:6; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Mopsik. Since light begins its emanation from א, it is the first of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

147. Totality of three that are one... All three of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret* are comprised within the *alef*, numerically signifying the number one. The three components of the *alef*—central shaft and two arms—are symbolized further by the elements “fire,” representing *Gevurah*, encapsulated within the letter י (yod) below the central shaft; “water,” standing for *Hesed*, and represented by the yod above the central shaft; and “spirit,” signifying *Tif’eret*, symbolized by the letter ו (vav) in the middle. *Tif’eret*, represented by vav, receives influx from the two *sefirot* above, harmonizing and balancing them. Its dimensions must correspond to these two in order to encompass the properties of both.

148. א spreads out—pervasive principle... The letter א (*alef*) actually encompasses all of the *sefirot*. Union with *Hesed* and *Gevurah* occurs subsequent to arousal from *Shekhinah*, the female below which, in turn, induces arousal within *Tif’eret* toward Her. The *alef* changes its orientation such that the lower yod now represents the *Shekhinah*, which the vav in the middle faces. At that point, the upper yod—comprising the “Supreme” or “Upper Point,” namely *Hokhmah*, and the “Upper *Shekhinah*,” namely *Binah*—will settle on that site of loving union below.

149. four alefs. Male and female... in four words... Demonstrating the pervasiveness of א (*alef*) and subsequent union of male and female, Rabbi Shim’on teaches that each of the first four words of the Torah contains the letter *alef*—understood as male—and a letter that signifies the female: in בראשית (*Bereshit*), the letter ת (*tav*); in ברא (*bara*), the letter ב (*bet*); in אלהים (*Elohim*), ה (*he*); in את (*et*), ת (*tav*) (*Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*). On *alef* as male and *bet* as

female, see *Zohar* 1:200a; 2:234b; *ZH* 74c (*ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 2:228a. On the division of letters into masculine and feminine, see *Zohar* 3:221a; *ZH* 74d (*ShS*).

150. book of Rav Hamnuna Sava... The *alefs* in the first four words correspond to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while one of the other letters in those words signifies their wives: ב (*bet*) in בראשית (*Bereshit*) for Eve; ב (*bet*) in ברא (*bara*) for Sarah; ה (*he*) in אלהים (*Elohim*) for Rebekah; and ת (*tav*) in את (*et*) for Rachel.

Historically, Rav Hamnuna Sava (the Elder) was a Babylonian teacher who lived in the mid-third century. Generally in the *Zohar*, Rav Hamnuna Sava appears as a contemporary of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai (who lived in the second century). In the Talmud, Rav Hamnuna occasionally transmits teachings of Rabbi Shim'on (e.g., BT *Hullin* 21a; *Temurah* 15a), and several prayers are attributed to him (BT *Berakhot* 11b, 17a, 58a). In the *Zohar* roles are reversed and Rabbi Shim'on cites Rav Hamnuna. Throughout the *Zohar*, Hamnuna is greatly revered, and several original ritual acts are attributed to him; the Book of Rav Hamnuna Sava is cited frequently as well.

151. את (*et*) is always female!... Since the word את (*et*) regularly signifies the feminine *Shekhinah*, how can the individual letters of the word be assigned different genders? The answer is that because the word את (*et*) comprises the first and last letters of the alphabet, it signifies *Shekhinah* in Her role as recipient of the totality of divine speech—the entire alphabet from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). Since this gives greater weight to the female component in the word, in fact *Shekhinah* remains ensconced within the broader masculine structure.

See the Christian parallel in Revelation 1:8: “I am *alpha* and *omega*.”

Grammatically, the word את (*et*) is very often an accusative particle with no clear independent sense. However, already in rabbinic times, Naḥum of Gimzo and

his disciple Rabbi Akiva taught that the presence of *et* in a biblical verse amplifies the apparent meaning. Here, as often in the *Zohar*, תא (*et*) alludes to *Shekhinah*, who comprises the totality of divine speech, the entire alphabet from א (*alef*) to ת (*tav*). See BT *Pesahim* 22b; *Hagigah* 12a–b. On *et* as a symbol for *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:15b, 29b, 53b, 60a, 112b, 120b, 164b, 178b (*SdTs*), 247a; 2:81b, 82b, 90a, 126a, 135b; *ZH* 91c (*MhN, Eikhah*).

152. Kiriath-arba, City of Four... Kiriath-arba is the earlier name of the city of Hebron, site of the Cave of Machpelah. See Genesis 23:2. Abraham had purchased the cave as a burial site for Sarah (Genesis 23), and eventually all the matriarchs (except for Rachel) and patriarchs were buried there. According to rabbinic tradition, Adam and Eve were buried in this cave as well. Based on this tradition, the *Zohar* teaches that the Cave of Machpelah leads to the Garden of Eden.

On the Cave of Machpelah, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:4; BT *Eruvin* 53a; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 20, 36; *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 57b, 81a (*ST*), 127a–129a, 219a, 250b; 2:151b; 3:164a; *ZH* 21a (*MhN*), 79d (*MhN, Rut*).

153. ל (Lamed)—tower that flew into the air... Returning to explicate the significance of the name לא (*El*), Rabbi Shim'on identifies the tall letter ל with an arcane talmudic trope of the “tower flying into the air.” Both “lamed” and the “tower” signify *Binah*. The name *El* thus signifies “upper and middle,” *Binah* and *Hesed*; as the first of the lower seven *sefirot*, *Hesed* stands at the onset of providential care for this world. The name *El* is constructed when *alef-Hesed* is brought aloft by *lamed-Binah*, acquiring and ascending to that name. The text may also be playing with the fact that *alef* is the first (or “upper”) letter of the alphabet, while *lamed* is twelfth, in the middle.

On “the tower that flew into the air,” see BT *Hagigah* 15b, *Sanhedrin* 106b (and Rashi ad loc., s.v. *be-migdal ha-pore'ah ba-avir*); Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush al ha-Otiyyot*, 213;

Zohar 1:6a 2:91a; 3:164b, 209a; *ZḤ* 58a (*QhM*), 70a (*ShS*), 122a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 90 (113-14); *Arukh*, s.v. *migdal*.

154. Thirty-two paths... According to *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1-2, God created the world by means of “thirty-two wondrous paths of חכמה (*ḥokhmah*), wisdom,” namely the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and ten “*sefirot*.” Here, the thirty-two paths emerge from the Torah, ultimately deriving from *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom), the Supernal Point. “Ten utterances” emerge from *Binah*, identified with “mystery of Torah,” “Supernal King,” “Mystery of Written Torah,” and “World that is Coming.” Written Torah usually signifies *Tif’eret*; thus, “Mystery of Written Torah” corresponds to *Binah*. “Primordial Point” signifies *Ḥokhmah*, from which the twenty-two letters emerge, in *Ḥokhmah*’s union with *Binah*. It is there that *alef*, the first letter of the name *El*, is raised up. As the first letter of the alphabet, *alef* signifies the number one, and it contains all the *sefirot* (see above, [note 125](#)); therefore, it symbolizes the “mystery of all letters.”

In rabbinic literature, God is said to have created the world with ten utterances. On the “ten utterances,” see *M Avot* 5:1: “By ten utterances the world was created.” See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; B, 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:1; *BT Rosh ha-Shanah* 32a, *Megillah* 21b; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3 (and Luria’s n. 73); *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 108a-b (and Ish Shalom’s n. 138), 40, 169a; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 506; *Zohar* 1:16b, 30a; 2:14b (*MhN*), 34b, 67a, 75b, 156b, 169b, 178b (*SdT*s), 200a; 3:11b-12a, 73a. Cf. *BT Ḥagigah* 12a; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, 96 (141-46). On the significance of the number ten in ancient Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic sources, see Idel, *New Perspectives*, 112-22.

155. Third chamber: אלהים (*Elohim*)... This chamber provides nourishment for Garden of Eden (*Shekhinah*). The divine name אלהים (*Elohim*) corresponds primarily to *Gevurah*,

but it refers as well to *Binah* and *Shekhinah*. *Gevurah* is Judgment, symbolized by the color “red” and by “gold.” It has two different aspects, contingent upon whether it is encompassed within the right side or not. When *Gevurah* receives influence from *Hesed* it is tempered, “sparkling like gold... desiring and good.” When that flow is blocked, because of sins in this world, *Gevurah* manifests as Hard Judgment, darkness, gloom, and dross. Cf. Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 377.

156. Even though it is entirely Judgment... The union of male and female within the Divinity relies upon arousal from *Gevurah*. This poses an apparent difficulty, since one might have assumed that arousal must come from the right side—given that *Yesod*, the point of juncture of male and female, is on the right side. Nonetheless, *Gevurah* is considered male, and when it operates under the influence of *Hesed*, it stimulates arousal toward the female.

157. gold’s snare... Adam’s sin consists of his abandoning *Gevurah* (in its pure form), and attaching himself to the dross of its gold instead. “Gold’s snare” (or “gold’s fetters”) renders טופסרא דדהבא (*tufsera de-dahava*). In the *Zohar*, the neologism *tufsera* can mean “form, mold, configuration,” based on טופסא (*tufsa*), derived from Greek *tupos*, but here it takes on the meaning of “imprisonment or chain, in the sense of clutching.”

See *Zohar* 1:20b, 30b, 96b, 157a, 241b, 242b, 243b; 2:235b (*Tos*); 3:120a, 270b (*Mat*); *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178–80, 185; Scholem, *Sefer ha-Zohar* 1:30b.

The left side is linked to the demonic force, which is the source of iniquity and evil, pictured as the dross left behind by the refining process of emanation. On the dross of gold, see *Zohar* 1:48a, 52a, 73a, 118b, 193a, 228a; 2:24b, 203a, 224b, 236b. Cf. *Zohar* 1:30a, 71b; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 389, n. 54; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 336–38, 348; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 182. Scholem discusses its alchemical associations in *Alchemy and Kabbalah*, 38–40.

158. א (*alef*)—male; להים (*lamed heh yod mem*)... The name אלהים (*Elohim*), signifying both *Gevurah* and *Shekhinah*, is divided into component parts of א and להים to demonstrate how the union between these two *sefirot* occurs. The letters of להים can be rearranged to yield מילה (*milah*), “circumcision.” Rabbi Shim’on specifies the second part of the ritual of circumcision, *peri’ah*, identified with *Shekhinah* and associated with the arousal of Righteous One (*Yesod*). Genesis 50:24 is probably added because it is part of Joseph’s final words to his brothers. Joseph is associated with *Yesod*, the phallic organ of Divinity; thus his words of assurance—that *Elohim*, the divine name representing Judgment, will remember the brothers—signals the unbroken covenant with the Children of Israel.

In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is cut and removed, disclosing a mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the corona. The act of tearing and pulling back the membrane is called פריעה (*peri’ah*), “uncovering,” the corona. See M *Shabbat* 19:6: “If one circumcises but does not uncover the circumcision, it is as if he has not circumcised.”

See BT *Shabbat* 137b; *Zohar* 1:13a, 32a–b, 93b, 96b, 98b (*ST*), 238b; 2:3b, 40a, 57b, 60b–61a, 66b, 125b; 3:91b, 95b, 163a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 228. On *peri’ah*, see Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other,” 186–87.

159. On the Other Side, the Torah attests to its Judgment... *Shekhinah* takes on the name *Elohim* when She receives overflow from *Sitra Aħra*, the demonic Other Side. This occurs when sinfulness prevails below. In that case, *Shekhinah* judges the world in the Hard Judgment aspect of *Elohim*, a manifestation of foreskin—the absence of *peri’ah*.

“State of *peri’ah*” signifies the absence of demonic husks oppressing *Shekhinah*. In that state, the divine phallus *Yesod* is revealed in its union with *Shekhinah*.

See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67): “Understand: the mystery of the covenant is the path of the basic principle of faith. When the foreskin is removed from the covenant—this is the Mystery of Faith. Yet the removal of the foreskin to enter into the Mystery of Faith is possible only once one performs *peri’ah* (uncovering) revealing the corona. When one reaches the corona one enters into the mystery of the Path of Faith and is bound to Faith.”

160. Elohim—three names... *Elohim* becomes manifest in three *sefirot*: *Binah*, symbolized by the name *Elohim Hayyim*; *Gevurah*, represented by the name “Fear of Isaac”; and *Shekhinah*. Subsequently, the name *Elohim* continues to express its influence below, possibly in the form of demonic *kelippot* (shells). See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The printed editions and *Or Yaqar* have a different version of the last line, yielding “Last *Elohim—Elohim* of Fear of Isaac spreads out His providence there.” The effect of this reading is that there is no demonic expression of *Elohim* below. See also *Sullam*; Mopsik.

In Genesis 31:42, Jacob invokes *the God of Abraham and the Fear [or: Terror] of Isaac*.

161. half of it toward the First Sea... The name *Elohim*, in its primary manifestation in *Gevurah*, directs attention to *Elohim* above (*Binah*) and *Elohim* below (*Shekhinah*). The *Zohar* engages in wordplay, dividing the name אלהים (*Elohim*) into two words: אל הים (*el ha-yam*), “to the sea.” The two seas in Zechariah 14:8 explain *Gevurah*’s divided attention: *half of it toward the First Sea (Binah)*, *half of it toward the Last Sea (Shekhinah)*.

According to the simple meaning of the biblical text, the two seas appear to refer to the Dead Sea in the east and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. Cf. Joel 2:20. On these two seas, see *Zohar* 3:171a. On “sea” as *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:29b, 48b, 197b, 237a, 241a, 243b; 2:31a-b, 215a; 3:171b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 341; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Or*, 12-13, 76, 81,

119. On sea as *Binah*, see *Zohar* 2:42b (RM); 3:279a; *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21, 42b.

162. Since He receives from above... The name *Elohim* has several permutations. Since *Elohim*, representing *Gevurah*, has absorbed influence from *Elohim* above, representing *Binah*, it can be sweetened by receiving overflow from the right side, *Hesed*. Only after the harmonization of *Hesed* and *Gevurah* can *Elohim*, symbolizing *Gevurah*, enjoy union with Last Sea, *Elohim* below—*Shekhinah*. In erotic union, *Elohim* reaches its apex and can be truly called *Elohim*.

The *Zohar* frequently cites Song of Songs 2:6 to indicate that arousal must begin on the left, afterward joined by the right, ultimately leading to the bonding of male and female. See *Zohar* 1:49a-b, 133a, 136a, 151a, 244a, 245a, 250a; 2:30a, 154b, 169b, 238b; 3:55a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 63.

163. This is the chamber... Concluding the discussion of the third chamber.

164. Fourth Chamber... Of the chambers that nourish Garden of Eden. This one signifies *Tif'eret* (called here “Old Man Jacob”), represented by the divine name יהו (YHV). *Tif'eret* is symbolized primarily by the letter ו (vav), but this name bears the imprint of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, signified by the letters י (yod) and ה (he). These three *sefirot* are configured as a family: *Hokhmah* as Father, *Binah* as Mother, and *Tif'eret* as Son. Since vav is the last letter, it is construed as “setting out before” the others (as if they were proceeding leftward, one after the other).

165. The universal practice of modesty... The arrangement of the letters of the tetragrammaton reflects prevailing practice of men toward women. The letter ה (he) stands before the letter י (yod), indicating that male *Hokhmah* maintains a loving, watchful, and loyal eye upon his mate, *Binah*. The letter ו (vav), representing the Son, *Tif'eret*, goes before them, protecting his mother from unwanted gazes.

166. Joseph in front of his mother... In the procession of Jacob's wives and children setting out to meet Esau (Genesis 33:1-2, 6-7), the wives generally precede the children. In contrast, Joseph walks before his mother, to guard her from Esau's evil eye and evil designs. Similarly, Jacob, namely *Tif'eret*, as represented by the letter ו (vav) of the tetragrammaton, "took his wife," namely *Shekhinah*, signified by the second letter ה (he) of the tetragrammaton, placing Her before Him to watch over Her.

In its simple sense, Genesis 49:22 seems to mean *A fruitful בן (ben), sprout, is Joseph, a fruitful sprout by עין (ayin), a spring.* The word *ben* can also mean "son," while *ayin* can also mean "eye"; in the Midrash and the *Zohar's* citation, this verse (spoken by Jacob in retrospect) refers to Joseph's watchful protection from Esau's leer.

Neither CM1, CM10, CT3, P13, nor PR13 includes the word "Jacob"; it appears to be an addition in *Or Yaqar* and the printed editions for the sake of clarification.

The simple sense of Genesis 33:6-7 reads: *The maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed. Leah too and her children drew near and bowed. Afterward Joseph and Rachel drew near.* The Midrash and the *Zohar* draw attention to the word order in 33:7, noting that Joseph is preceding Rachel. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:10: "The fact is that Joseph said, 'This evil one has a haughty eye; let him not look at my mother,' whereupon he drew himself up to his full height and covered her. Hence it is written of him: *A fruitful son (ben porat) is Joseph, a fruitful son before the eye* (Genesis 49:22). '*Ben porat*' means 'You have swelled greatly, Joseph.' ...Rabbi Berekhiah interpreted in the name of Rabbi Simon: 'It is upon Me to reward you for that eye.'" See also *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 33:7; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 12; *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis 33:7; Rashi on Genesis 33:7; *Zohar* 1:175a; 3:202b. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 55b.

In the verse in Deuteronomy, *upon her* means upon the land of Israel, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 1:107a, 199a, 250b; 2:157b; 3:245b; *ZH* 87c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 105.

167. These letters... issued out with force and power of Shofar... This sums up the emergence of God's name from concealment to revelation within the four chambers that nourish Garden of Eden, namely *Shekhinah*. Shofar, signifying *Binah*, is the point from which the first three letters of the tetragrammaton—י (yod), ה (he), ו (vav)—issue. The stress inducing their departure produces a sound, comprising “fire, spirit, and water,” which symbolize *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Hesed*. These three *sefirot* are associated with *he*, *vav*, and *yod*, respectively. Subsequently, they take on substantial, graphic form, each assuming its own countenance and rightful place. This process entails the revelation of letters in accord with the higher animating mystery of the vowels—a secret residing within the first chamber. They have moved from potential to actuality, in keeping with the meaning of the divine name *Ehyeh*, *I will be* (Exodus 3:14), the subject of the first chamber.

On the concretization of letters, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 88 (111).

168. Has brought me—into the midst of those letters... *Shekhinah* declares Her longing to be surrounded by the letters in the hidden chambers within *Binah*. Following Scholem, “in a nexus” renders the strange word גופטרא (*guffera*). “In You” renders בך (*bakh*), which has the numerical value of twenty-two, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, *Shekhinah* proclaims her desire to be erotically ensconced within the fount of linguistic creativity.

See Targum; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4. On the letter mysticism here, see Mopsik, 15–18; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 185–88. On *guffera*, cf. *Or Yaqar*, *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Edri.

169. 'Happy are those'... This describes the emanation of the male and female aspects of Divinity. According to the rabbinic understanding of Genesis 1:27, the original human was created as a single being with both male and female; for the kabbalists, that creation is in turn a reflection of God's own being. Here, the creation of Male and Female is described as a function of two groups of letters. Certain letters in a Torah scroll are written large, for example, ב (bet) of בראשית (*bereshit*), *In the beginning* (Genesis 1:1). Others are written small, for example, the א (alef) of ויקרא (*va-yiqra*), *And He called* (Leviticus 1:1). See above, [note 136](#).

On the alphabet imagery in this homily, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 271-77. On the small and large letters, see *Zohar* 1:3b, 159b; 2:132a, 174a, 180b, 205b, 228b; 3:2a, 165a, 220a; *ZH* 74c-d (*ShS*). Cf. *ZH* 60c-d (*MhN*, *ShS*). On creation based on the upper and lower letters, or male and female letters, see *Zohar* 1:38a (*Heikh*), 159a; 2:134a, 228a. On gendering of letters, see *Sefer Yetsirah* 3:5-8; *Bahir* 56-58 (83-86); *ZH* 74c-d (*ShS*); Wolfson, "Dimmui Antropomorphi," 173-75.

"Happy are those" draws on the teaching of Rabbi Akiva in *M Avot* 3:14: "Beloved is the human being, having been created in the image [of God]. Superabundant love, in that the human was informed of being created in the image [of God], as is said: *for in the image of God He made the human* (Genesis 9:6)." On the creation of the human with two faces, see *BT Berakhot* 61a. On its significance in Kabbalah, see Idel, *Eros and Kabbalah*, 53-103.

170. Supernal, large letters... toward the Male... The two alphabets are arranged with male letters in the proper sequence, proceeding toward *Tif'eret*, and female letters in reverse sequence, toward *Shekhinah*. She is identified with the divine back, which is associated with the knot of the tefillin of the head.

See BT *Berakhot* 7a: “*I will take away My palm and you will see My back.* Rav Ḥana son of Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shim’on the Ḥasid, ‘This teaches us that the blessed Holy One showed Moses the knot of tefillin [at the back of God’s head].’”

In the *Zohar*, tefillin of the head symbolizes *Tif’eret*, while the knot of tefillin symbolizes *Shekhinah*. On Moses seeing the knot of God’s tefillin, see BT *Berakhot* 6a; *Zohar* 2:43b (*Piq*), 230a; 3:263a. On letters in inverted order, see *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva*, Version 2 (*Battei Midrashot* 2:396–404); *Midrash Aseret ha-Dibberot* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:62–63); *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* (ed. Greenhut) 5:11; *Zohar* 1:205b; *ZH* 66a, 66c (both *ShS*); *TZ*, *Haqdamah*, 16a. The full verse in Exodus reads: *I will take away My palm and you will see My back, but My face will not be seen.*

171. supernal King ornamenting Her... Supernal King, namely *Binah*, prepares *Shekhinah* for union with *Tif'eret* by setting all letters in appropriate position. Then female letters arouse toward male letters inciting bonding between them. אַחֲרֶיךָ (*Aḥareikha*), *After you*, plays on the same root—אָחַר (*aḥr*)—as used above, signifying “back.”

On the adorning of Eve, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 18:1: “*YHVH Elohim fashioned the rib* (Genesis 2:22)... It was taught in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: ‘He adorned her like a bride and brought her to him.’” Cf. BT *Berakhot* 61a.

172. perfected in the mystery of א"ת ב"ש (alef, tav; bet, shin)... This refers to a technique of letter permutation known by the acronym *at bash*: the first letter of the alphabet, א (*alef*), is substituted by the last letter, ת (*tav*); the second by the penultimate, and so on. Here, the interest is not in substitution, but in the formal matching of letter pairs: one sequence is identified as male, the other as female. The joining of the two within the King's chambers results from the will of Mother, namely *Binah*; it is the mark of divine bliss. See *Zohar* 2:132a-b; *ZḤ* 68b (*ShS*), 87a (*MhN, Rut*).

173. twenty-two letters... בך (Bakh), in you... The word בך (*bakh*), *in you*, is numerically equivalent to twenty-two and alludes to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which express the divine essence. *Shekhinah* expresses the delight that She and *Tif'eret* will enjoy in the erotic union of linguistic restoration. The letters constitute the essence of Divinity. God's promise is vouchsafed by these primordial foundations of language.

Exodus 32:13 begins: *Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel Your servants, to whom You swore by Your Self and said to them....*

174. let us give a portion to each and every one... Following the blissful union above, the lovers distribute delight to adherents below. Joy will come from wine above,

namely the wine that originates in *Binah*. On wine, see above, [notes 90-91](#).

175. Upright ones love you... מ נ צ פ ך (*mem, nun, tsadi, pe, kaf*)... These five letters of the alphabet have different forms at the end of words, but they normally are not counted as separate letters in the alphabet. They are thus considered secrets, concealed among the twenty-two letters. Here, the primary forms and final forms are joined together in pairs like the male and female letters above. They are called מִישָׁרִים (*meisharim*), *upright ones* (or *straight ones*), because the final letters have more straight lines than their initial-or-medial counterparts. On the significance of these five, see *Or Yaqar*.

See BT *Shabbat* 104a in the name of Rabbi Yirmiyah (others, in the name of Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba): “[The double form of] מנצפ״ך (*mem, nun, tsadi, pe, kaf*) was declared by the prophets. But is that reasonable? Surely it is written: *These are the commandments* (Leviticus 27:34), meaning that a prophet may henceforth make no innovations! Rather, they were in existence, but it was not known which were [to be used] in the middle of words and which at the end, and the prophets came and fixed their usage. But still, *these are the commandments* [teaches] that a prophet may henceforth make no innovations? Rather they had forgotten them, and they reinstated them.” Cf. Naḥmanides on *Sefer Yetsirah* (87).

On the final letters, BT *Megillah* 2b-3a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:11; *Zohar* 1:101a (*Mat*); 3:156b; ZḤ 74d (*ShS*), 84a-b (*MhN, Rut*). On the bent, medial letters contained within the straight final letters, cf. *Bahir*, 56-58 (83-86). The simple meaning of the last phrase from Song of Songs 1:4 is *Truly, they love you*. Fox reads the verse as: *We will be glad and rejoice in you; we will praise your caresses. More than smooth wine do they love you.*

176. When the primal light was concealed, these letters were concealed... These letters are identified with

the primal light, hidden from the wicked at the beginning of time. They came to be known by righteous ones over the course of history. On the hiding away of the first light, see above, [note 145](#).

177. Once they sinned... Standing at Sinai, the Israelites regain the wisdom of the five hidden letters originally apprehended by Adam; however, they promptly lose it with the sin of the Golden Calf. The idealized figures—Moses, Joshua, and elders—never lose this lore and use it to enable their entry into the land of Israel. Finally, these letters become entrenched in the biblical alphabet with the composition of Song of Songs and the erection of the Temple. Jewish history is thus reconceived in terms of the oscillating history of the letters מנצפך (*mem, nun, tsadi, pe, kaf*).

On Israel's ornaments, see *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Shelah*, add. 1, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai: "He adorned them with weapons engraved with the Ineffable Name [YHVH]; and as long as they possessed these, no evil could touch them, neither the Angel of Death nor anything else. As soon as they sinned [with the Golden Calf], Moses said to them: *Now take off your ornaments, and I will know what I should do with you* (Exodus 33:5). At that moment, *The people heard this evil word, and they mourned, [and no one put on his ornaments]* (ibid., 4). What is written? *The Children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments.*"

See *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 33:4, 6; *Targum Shir ha-Shirim* 2:17; *Eikhah Rabbah*, *Petiḥta* 24; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 47; BT *Shabbat* 88a; Naḥmanides on Exodus 33:6; *Zohar* 1:52b, 63b; Green, *Keter*, 70–71. On the writing of Song of Songs as the spiritual zenith of history, see above, [note 2](#).

178. It was You who established upright ones... Both of these verses refer to the mystery of the five final letters. These letters originate in fine wine, located in the World that is Coming, namely *Binah*, though their most

recondite essence originates in *Hokhmah*, here called Thought. Because of this elevated origin, the final forms of the letters are considered masculine in relation to their medial counterparts. Furthermore, they have a quality of union that surpasses the bonding between masculine and feminine letters described above.

179. Another explanation... The word מִשְׁרִים (*meisharim*), *upright ones*, signifies the first two letters of the tetragrammaton—יָ הָ (yod, he)—which, in turn stand for *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. They are both straight in their orthography as well as united—thus *upright*—in their mutual love for וָ (vav), signifying *Tif'eret*. The three-letter name יָהוָה is holy by virtue of its numerical equivalence to the name אֱהִיָהּ (*Ehyeh*). *Shekhinah* stands below, represented by הָ. Since She has no light of Her own, She longs to be drawn into union with the letters above. This interpretation explains the whole verse as an expression of *Shekhinah's* love: She says, *Draw me after you... [because] upright ones love you (Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash)*. On *Shekhinah's* having no light of Her own, see above, [note 4](#).

180. Let Us saturate everyone, providing joy... *Shekhinah* urges *Tif'eret* that together they should shower the righteous below with joy from “wine that gives joy to all,” signifying *Binah*. *Shekhinah* reminds *Tif'eret* that they can do this because He receives constant blessing from *upright ones*—*Hokhmah* and *Binah*—above. Cf. Mopsik. On wine originating in *Binah*, see above, [note 93](#).

181. The One who is completely unknown... cannot be called You... A logical problem arises from the identification of *upright ones* with *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. Since Psalms 99:4 uses the second-person form in its address—*It was You who established upright ones*—this implies that the entity being approached can be addressed as “You.” Since the subject of the verse has *established upright ones*—namely *Hokhmah* and *Binah*—and is therefore more elevated than them, *You* must be directed toward *Keter*. Signified by

“Ancient of the Ancients,” *Keter* transcends human cognition so completely that this address is impossible.

182. letters do not have a visual appearance as they concretize... Elijah explains that the word *You* in the verse refers to *Tif'eret* (or possibly *Hesed*), the site in which the letters *yod* and *he* attain a concrete form. Thus, *Tif'eret* facilitates a level of manifestation for *Hokhmah* and *Binah* that was unavailable beforehand. Consequently, the letters *yod* and *he*, normally entirely recondite, can now be cognized and addressed.

On the various referents of “You”: as *Tif'eret*, see Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 68b-69b, 102b; *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; as *Hesed*, see *Zohar* 1:104a; 3:193b; cf. Scholem; *ZH* 67c (*ShS*); as *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:15b, 37a, 138b, 154b, 158b, 169a, 198a, 205b; 2:23b, 70a (*RR*), 104a, 140a, 179b, 221a, 261a (*Heikh*); 3:199a, 290a.

183. Her desire is to join with those letters... Once *yod* and upper *he* become concretized within *Tif'eret*, signified by the letter *vav* of the tetragrammaton, *Shekhinah*, too, represented by the final *he*, wants to become integrated into the ineffable name. She joins them only once “Her sides” and “Her adornments,” namely Her accompanying angels, have been reinforced within Her. The name אלהים יהוה (*YHVH Elohim*) represents the full name of God when *Shekhinah* has joined the *sefirot* above (*Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*).

On the name אלהים יהוה (*YHVH Elohim*) as the full name of God, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:3; cf. 12:15; see also *Zohar* 1:12a; 2:260a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 73a (*ShS*).

On angels as an integral aspect of the *Shekhinah*, Joseph of Hamadan writes in his commentary on the divine chariot: “Holy angels... are the 248 limbs of *Matronita*, and they are the holy angels with which *Matronita* clothes Herself. They never deviate from Her because they are Her limbs.” Cited in Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, 63. Cf. Joseph of

Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Mitsvot*, 304; idem, *Sefer Toledot Adam*, 95a.

184. there is nothing more!... When the letter ה (*he*), signifying *Shekhinah*, ascends, this should complete the divine name in the form of the tetragrammaton. Yet the assertion had been made that the newly completed name was *YHVH Elohim*. Elijah explains that the ascent of ה completes the divine name above in the form of the tetragrammaton, while perfecting it in relation to the world below through the addition of the name *Elohim*.

185. King Solomon ברוך (Barukh)... Because the adjective *barukh*, normally translated as *blessed*, can also be a name, Elijah suggests that it could be interpreted as part of King Solomon's name: "King Solomon Barukh." Sometimes Scripture refers to King Solomon simply as המלך (*ha-melekh*), *the king*, and sometimes, more fully as המלך שלמה (*ha-melekh Shelomo*), *the King, Solomon*. The word "*ha-melekh*" by itself refers to "House of David," namely *Malkhut* (Kingdom), while *the King, Solomon* signifies "the King who possesses peace," namely *Binah*. The term *barukh* is understood as referring to the flow that proceeds from *Binah*. Assembled, the phrase explains the flow of blessings that proceeds into *Binah* from *sefirot* above, from *Binah* to *sefirot* below, and from *Malkhut* (*Shekhinah*) to worlds below Her. Wordplay links the term *barukh*, *blessed*, and the word *bereikhah*, "cistern," leading to an explanation involving the "flow" of blessings. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:11.

Joseph of Hamadan ascribes ritual significance to the identification of the name *Shelomo* in *Sefer Tashaq* (51): "Whoever erases any *Shelomo* in Song of Songs, other than [the simple citation that merely signifies the human king],... it is as if he has actually erased the divine name."

On the King who possesses peace, see above, [note 14](#).

This section begins a homily about the inter-relationship of letters—first within the divine name and

then within the Hebrew alphabet as a whole. For other alphabet-based narratives, see BT *Shabbat* 104a; *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*; Oron, “Sippur ha-Otiyyot.”

186. final letter of the holy name inherits this name... The final *he* of the tetragrammaton, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, is the beneficiary of the name *Barukh*, thus receiving blessing from above. This is proven with the scriptural verse *Blessed be YHVH, God... my father David* since “*my father David*,” signifying *Shekhinah*, is connected to *Barukh*, a name for *Binah*. “All worlds,” the *sefirot*, are then “blessed in Fount of Life,” signifying *Binah*, because they are all ultimately rooted there. The verse demonstrates the interconnectedness of the complete divine name—*YHVH Elohim*—and thus, all the *sefirot*.

On “Fount of Life” as *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:227b; 3:34a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 8 (10); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 6; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 375 and note 29 ad. loc.; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 17b, 73b, 87a; cf. Asher ben David, *Peirush Shem ha-Meforash*, 225. See above, [note 37](#).

1 Kings 8:15 reads: *Blessed be YHVH, God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David...*

187. joining of the letters of the Holy Name... This sequence of linguistic unification through the esoteric technique of *at bash* (see above, [note 172](#)) begins with the bonding of the last two letters of the tetragrammaton, ם (*vav*), with ה (*he*). This generates the subsequent pairings of letters—letters associated with the male, such as א (*alef*) and ש (*shin*), bond with letters associated with the female, such as ת (*tav*) and ב (*bet*).

188. She enters into the chambers of the King... three points... As a result of the union of the first two pairs of letters, *Shekhinah* enters into the “chambers of the King,” namely *Binah*. Those chambers, represented as three points on top of the letter ש (*shin*), are *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*. The three “exedrae” are the internal aspects of the

three *sefirot* within *Binah*, and are represented by the three branches of ψ . See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Nitsotsei Zohar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

189. ג (*gimel*) comes to cleave to ר (*resh*)... The letter *gimel* signifies גומל (*gomel*), “bestowing,” as in the prominent liturgical phrase *gomel hasadim*, “bestowing kindnesses.” The letter *resh*, in turn, signifies רש (*rash*), “poor.” Thus, *gimel* bestows upon *resh* as the masculine does to the feminine. Perhaps the ר (*resh*) can be considered to have uncovered its head when compared to the next letter in the pairing sequence—ד (*dalet*)—identical except for the small additional stroke at the top of the *dalet* (Mopsik). The union of giver and recipient is marked by the proclamation of *Let us rejoice and delight* בך (*bakh*), *in you*, where the word *bakh* is written with the letters whose numerical value is twenty-two, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

Cf. the teaching in BT *Shabbat* 104a (ascribed to the children in the study hall): “*Gimel dalet*, show kindness to the poor [*gemol dallim*]. Why is the foot of the *gimel* stretched toward the *dalet*? Because it is the habit of the benevolent to run after the poor. And why is the foot of the *dalet* stretched out toward the *gimel*? To make himself available to him [the benefactor]. And why does *dalet* turn its face away from the *gimel*? So that he will give him secretly, lest he be ashamed of him.” See also JT *Megillah* 1:8, 71d.

On the *dalet* signifying “poor one” or “lowly one,” see *Zohar* 1:3a, 234b, 244b; 2:104a; ZH 72c (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 340; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 229.

190. *Let us recount your caresses, from wine...* When *Shekhinah* wishes to share with Her angelic entourage the supernal delight that comes from *Binah*—signified by wine—She recalls that Samael, personification of the demonic Other Side and called here “foreskin,” has at times infiltrated their ranks. Samael seeks the delight of קדושה (*qedushah*), “holiness,” exemplar of the letter ק (*qof*).

Though he has gained access to the Temple, namely *Shekhinah*, She gives him as little as possible.

Samael is represented here by the letter ק (*qof*), which alludes to the demonic realm, perhaps because it begins the words קליפה (*qelippah*), “husk,” קללה (*qelalah*), “curse,” or קוף (*qof*), “ape”—or conceivably because its numerical value (one hundred) is equivalent to ס"מ (*samekh, mem*), an abbreviation of סמאל (*Sama'el*), another name for Satan.

On the “edges of the Temple,” see BT *Shabbat* 98b; *Zohar* 2:74b (*Mat*); *ZH* 91b (*MhN, Eikhah*). On the letter *qof*, see also *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, 2:398; Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush ha-Otiyyot*, 218–219; *Zohar* 1:2b, 253b (*Hash, ST*); 2:148b, 152a, 167b, 180b; 3:251b–252a; *ZH* 8c; Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, “Peirush ha-Alef-Bet le-R. Ashkenazi,” 28; David ben Judah ha-Ḥasid, “Alef-Bet shel Rabbi Akiva,” 30, 33.

191. incumbent upon the Holy Bride to provide to that impurity... ד (*Dalet*) signifies דלות (*dalut*), lowliness. *Shekhinah* diminishes Herself to provide to *Sitra Aḥra* only as much as required. Jacob admonishes his sons for displaying themselves ostentatiously, enjoining them to adopt a more modest appearance as this will ward off envious attention from surrounding enemies. Jacob’s reproach demonstrates that if one is encountering the dangers of famine, that is, the *Sitra Aḥra*, one should not comport oneself haughtily, or as sated, for this will invite investigation and judgment from the Other Side. Notwithstanding Her self-constricted state, *Shekhinah* is able to present Herself as joyous.

By providing a portion to the Other Side, one ensures that the demonic force will be occupied, assuaged, and deterred from interfering in the realm of holiness. On this theme, see *Sifra, Shemini, Millu'im* 1:3, 43c; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 16:8; Moses of Burgos, *Ammud ha-Semali*, 158–59; *Zohar* 1:11a, 64a–65a, 89b (*ST*), 113b–114b, 138b, 145b, 174b, 190a, 210b, 247b; 2:33a, 111b, 130a, 141a, 152b, 154b, 157a–b, 169a, 181b,

184b-185a, 203b, 227a-b, 237b-239b, 242b, 266b, 269a (last two *Heikh*); 3:63a-b (*Piq*), 101b-102a, 202b-203a, 224a-b, 258b-259a; *ZH* 20c, 46c, 86d, 87b-c (last two *MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 165-67; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 124-27; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 49; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:453-54, 3:890-95, 959.

On this reading of Genesis 42:1, see *Targum Onqelos*; BT *Ta'anit* 10b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 91; *Tanḥuma* 8 (Buber); *Tanḥuma* 8 (Higger).

The translation follows the text as recorded in CM1, CM10, CT3, P13, PR13, S, *Or Yaqar*. An alternate version recorded in the Munkacz edition (1911) and followed by *Sullam* reads: "Since this Bride is holy, She must not provide for the impure one..." This latter version is in greater accord with the context, particularly because of Jacob's admonition to his sons, in which (according to the *Zohar's* interpretation) he cautions his sons not to give any opening to the enemy.

192. serpent... extending his tail... The top part of the letter ק (*qof*) is similar to the letter ט (*dalet*); and when the Evil One ("serpent") sees *dalet*, namely *Shekhinah*, he extends his tail, the lower part of the letter. This is his corruption of the letter ק (*qof*), ideally representing *qedushah* (holiness). The lower extension of the letter appears to be a graphic representation of both the serpent's phallus and of *Her feet descend to death* (Proverbs 5:5). To protect oneself from the powers of *Sitra Aḥra*, one must fortify oneself on both joyous and sad occasions, as these are times of vulnerability. On this self-fortification, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

193. invoking one letter from among those upright ones... In response to the harassment from the Other Side, *Shekhinah* invokes the letter ׀ (final *tsadi*)—one of the final letters of the alphabet, referred to as *upright ones*, above. These letters are located in *Binah* who has fifty gates, signified by the fifty-cubit-high gallows, mentioned in

Esther 5:14. The letter *tsadi* is often called *tsaddiq* and here alludes to Mordecai and to *Yesod*. This reminder of the righteous one (Mordecai) who helped instigate the demise of Haman, representative of the demonic side, suffices to drive Samael away. *Sullam* identifies the fifty cubits of the gallows used to execute the demonic Haman with the five *sefirot*, *Hesed-Hod*, between *Binah* and *Yesod*, as well as the five letters which have different final forms and are associated above with the term *upright ones*. *Or Yaqar* suggests that the demonic ׀ (*qof*) with its lower extension is transformed into righteous final letter ׀ (*tsadi*) with its lower extension.

On the fifty gates of *Binah*, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, *Nedarim* 38a; Naḥmanides, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, introduction, 3-4; *Zohar* 1:3b. On the association of *tsadi* with *tsaddiq*, see JT *Megillah* 1:8, 71d; BT *Shabbat* 104a; *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, Version 2, 398, 413; “*Midrash ha-Otiyyot*,” 464; “*Midrash Alpha-Beitot*,” 442-52; Jacob ha-Kohen, “*Peirush ha-Otiyyot*,” 217-18; Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, “*Peirush al ha-Alef-Bet*,” 28; “*Midrash Alfa-Beta de-Rabbi Akiva*,” ver. B (according to Krakow and Amsterdam MSS), in *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:57.

The fuller context of Esther 5:14 reads: *Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him [Haman], ‘Let a gallows be put up, fifty cubits high, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hung on it’...*

194. departing from ׀ (dalet), entering ׀ (he)... Once the serpent departs, *Shekhinah* takes off the impoverished form of the letter ׀ (*dalet*) and assumes the consummated form of ׀ (*he*), as indicated by the addition of a ׳ (*yod*) at the bottom of the letter. Then, She can unite with Her lover, receiving influx from “all sides” (the other *sefirot*). This is the fulfillment of the *at bash* pairing of ׀ ׀ (*he-tsadi*). On *at bash*, see above, [note 172](#).

195. When She says *Draw me*... With each phrase that *Shekhinah* utters, She and the male aspect of Divinity

take on successive alphabetic forms of representation, expressed through the permutations of *at bash*.

This commences a further elaboration of the *at bash* exchange.

196. when She says *Draw me*,... Union between male and female begins on the right side, with *Hesed*, the site of Primal Light. Thus, the beginning of illumination coincides with the initiation of language. *Shekhinah* ultimately derives light from all the upper *sefirot* and from all the letters of the alphabet, so She responds as ט (tav), last letter of the alphabet. This homage leads to arousal above.

Cf. *Zohar* 2:123a, where *alef* corresponds to *Keter*: “*Alef*—radiance of the Holy Ancient One, Concealed of all concealed.” On the formula “the right is always drawing near,” see BT *Sanhedrin* 107b.

197. all Her internal legions... This explains the second phrase of the verse in relation to the letter-pair שׁׁ (bet-shin). *Shekhinah* gathers Her angelic forces into Herself, as if into a “house,” so that they may all run to the King. The letter שׁ is spelled out as בית which also spells *bayit*, “house.” The three upper points of the שׁ are conceptualized as upper chambers of the King, namely *Binah*. While the King signifies *Binah*, the male partner who opens up the palaces above is constituted by the grouping of *Hesed* to *Yesod*.

“Internal legions” follows the rabbinic and Zoharic understanding of Psalms 45:14: *All the princess’s honor is internal*. The simple meaning of this first part of Psalms 45:14 reads: *All the princess’s treasure is pearls*.

198. delight of Righteous One, poised to bring Her delight... The letter pair גׁׁ (gimel resh) was explained above as the beneficence of the righteous toward the poor. Here, this relationship is cast in sexual terms, in terms of Righteous One—namely *Yesod*, signifying the divine phallus—giving to *Shekhinah*, who appears naked before Him.

See the explanation of the letter *gimel* by Jacob ha-Kohen in his “Peirush ha-Otiyyot” (207): “*Gimel* signifies

251a-b (*Hash, Mat*); 2:123a; ZH 121d (*Mat*); below, [p. 581, n. 100](#).

202. Where the authority of the supernal king proceeds... Elijah explains that God's authority and providential influence extend downward through all realms. The words *let us run* are thus reinterpreted to signify an automatic—rather than willed—response by lower entities. Cf. *Sullam*.

In Zoharic stories involving concealed kabbalists, and here with Elijah, the exchange of words of Torah is often characterized as warfare, and the homilies themselves as weapons. See *Zohar* 2:98a, 100b, 109a, 110a-b; 3:188a-189a, 190b-191a; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 85-93; Benarroch, *Saba ve-Yanoqa*, 15-17.

203. When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers... According to Rabbi Shim'on, King David understands that the movements of the stars are all guided by God, reflecting the *Zohar's* theistic approach to astrology.

On astrology in Kabbalah, see Kiener, "The Status of Astrology"; Daphne Freedman, "Astral and Other Neologisms in the *Zohar*."

204. What is the explanation?... How does David's observation invite God's favor? Sleep is considered to be one-sixtieth of death; while everyone else was somnolent, David avoided sleep, remaining piously attentive to God's rule and craftsmanship in the universe. According to BT *Sukkah* 26b (in the name of Abbaye), David's sleep was like that of a horse, which lasts for sixty breaths.

On sleep being one-sixtieth of death, see BT *Berakhot* 57b; *Zohar* 1:36a-b, 53b, 169b, 184b, 207a; 2:173a, 215b; 3:119a, 120b, 156b, 234b, 260a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 52-53.

"Fearfully reverent" renders דָּחִיל (*dahil*), also meaning "awestruck" or "afraid."

205. he fled from his father-in-law... David fled from Saul—and later from his son Absalom. Through all of his tribulations, he remained constant in his prayerful dedication to God. On David's hiding from Saul, see 1 Samuel 19–24, 26–27. On his flight from Absalom, see 2 Samuel 15.

206. אתה אלי אלהים (Elohim eli attah), God, You are my God... Rabbi Shim'on draws attention to the apparent redundancy of three forms of address: *God*, *my God*, and *You*. The first term, *Elohim* signifies *Shekhinah*, associated with David. *Eli* signifies *Yesod*, positioned above *Shekhinah*. *Attah* refers to *Hesed*, aligned with the right side, also symbolized by the priest.

For a different explanation of these three divine names, see *Zohar* 2:140a.

207. In a parched and weary land... Describing the Judean desert, where David was hiding from King Saul. Since the empty desert lacks holiness, it has *no water*—no flow of emanation. In the next verse, David yearns to behold God *in the sanctuary*.

On the desert as an abode of demonic forces, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Deuteronomy 32:10; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 17:7; *Zohar* 1:14b, 126a, 169b, 178b, 228a; 2:21a (*MhN*), 60a, 157a, 184a, 236b–237a; 3:63b.

208. let us run... all long... Rabbi Shim'on plays on the word נרוצה (*narutsah*), *let us run*, and נחרעי (*nitra'ei*), “all long,” which evokes the Hebrew cognate נחרצה (*nitratseh*), thus equating erotically charged running with spiritual longing.

209. He took dust from the Temple... This is based on the tradition in *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 12: “He created him from a pure, holy site. From where did He take him? From the site of the Temple.... He made ten wedding canopies for Adam in the garden of Eden, all made of precious stones, pearls, and gold. Is it not the case that only one wedding canopy is made for every bridegroom,

while three wedding canopies are made for a king? But in order to bestow special honor upon the first man, the blessed Holy One made ten canopies in the garden of Eden, as is written: *You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone [was your adornment: carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst; beryl, lapis lazuli, and jasper; sapphire, turquoise, and emerald; and gold...]* (Ezekiel 28:13). Behold, ten canopies! The angels were playing upon timbrels and dancing like women, as is written: *timbrel-work and your women, for you* (ibid.).”

See JT *Nazir* 7:2, 56b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8 (and Theodor’s note); BT *Bava Batra* 75a, *Sanhedrin* 38a-b; *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 3; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 2:7; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Beit ha-Behirah* 2:2; *Zohar* 1:34b, 94b, 130b, 205b; 2:23b-24b, 55a; 3:46b; ZH 79d (*MhN*, *Rut*). Cf. *Zohar* 83a (*Piq*): “Even though Adam’s body was composed of dust, it was not from this dust [of this world], but rather from the dust of the Supernal Temple [*Shekhinah*].” See Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 344.

210. the blessed Holy One caused all those spirits and souls to pass before him... See BT *Avodah Zarah* 5a: “Did not Resh Lakish say: ‘What is the meaning of the verse *This is the book of the generations of Adam...* (Genesis 5:1)? Did Adam possess a book? Rather, this teaches that the blessed Holy One showed Adam every generation with its expounders, every generation with its sages, every generation with its leaders.’”

See *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:2 (and parallels discussed in Theodor’s note); BT *Bava Metsi’a* 85b-86a, *Sanhedrin* 38b; *Tanḥuma*, *Ki Tissa* 12; *Shemot Rabbah* 40:3; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Zohar* 1:55a, 90b, 227b; 2:70a; ZH 16d (*MhN*); 37b (*RR*); 69a (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

According to a midrashic tradition, King David was destined to die at childbirth, but Adam offered him 70 of his

own 1000 allotted years, so David lived for 70 years and Adam for 930.

See Genesis 5:5; Jubilees 4:30; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 19, and David Luria, ad loc., n. 31; *Midrash Tehillim* 92:10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12; *Bereshit Rabbati* 5:5; *Zohar* 1:55a-b, 91b, 140a, 168a, 233b, 248b; 2:103b, 235a; ZH 81a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 68 (85); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 383.

211. When those letters protruded... The letters of the tetragrammaton, יהוה (*YHVH*), are engraved in upper and lower realms, possibly indicating *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*. When the lower ones “protrude,” expressing their longing to join with those above, all angelic forces are pulled along with the momentum. This explains the verse *Draw me after you, let us run!* The appropriate emotions for a subordinate to feel before a superior are shame and fear.

212. All those brazen-faced among Israel... “Brazen-faced” renders מצחא תקיף (*taqqif mitsha*), literally “of harsh forehead,” associated here with the *tsits* worn on the high priest’s forehead (Exodus 28:36). The ציץ (*tsits*), *medallion* (or *plate, rosette*), was a gold plate worn on the forehead of the high priest over his turban, bearing the inscription ליהוה קדש (*qodesh la-YHVH*), *Holy to YHVH*.

On the *tsits* atoning for being brazenfaced, see JT *Yoma* 7:5, 44c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 10:6; BT *Zevaḥim* 88b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:1; *Zohar* 2:217b, 218b; 3:174b-175a (*Piq*).

The word *tsits* is related to the verbal root ציץ (*tsuts*), “to look, peek, peer, gaze,” provoking the idea that one is supposed to look at the *tsits*. On *tsits* and *tsuts*, see Ibn Ezra (long) on Exodus 28:37, and Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) and Baḥya ben Asher on Exodus 28:36, all of whom cite Song of Songs 2:9: מציצ (*metsits*), *peering* [or: *gazing, peeking*], *through the lattice*. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:78.

On the inscription *Holy to YHVH*, see JT *Yoma* 4:1, 41c; *Megillah* 1:8, 71d; BT *Shabbat* 63b, *Sukkah* 5a, *Gittin* 20a-b; Sarna, *Exodus*, 141-42.

This section appears with variations in *Zohar* 2:218b-219a. See *Nitsotsei Zohar* on *ZH* 68a n. 2.

213. Letters of the mystery of the Holy Name YHVH... Merely looking at the letters of God's name was enough to strike terror in people's hearts.

214. Similarly, incense... The incense offered in the Temple in Jerusalem eliminated the evil impulse, eliciting repentance.

"Smoke-raiser" is the name of an ingredient of the incense that caused the smoke to rise straight. See *Sifra*, *Aḥarei Mot* 3:11, 81b; *Tosefta Yoma* 1:8; 2:6-7; JT *Yoma* 1:5, 39a-b; 3:11, 41a; BT *Yoma* 38a, 53a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 3:4 (on 3:6).

On the power of incense to banish demonic forces, see *Targum* on Song of Songs 4:6; *Zohar* 1:230a; 2:218b; 3:151b; *ZH* 43d; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 87; cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:45. On the atoning power of incense, see Numbers 17:11-12; BT *Yoma* 44a, *Zevaḥim* 88b; *Zohar* 2:218b-219a; Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness*, 73-77.

The description "leaving him with only one heart toward his Father in heaven" derives from BT *Berakhot* 57a. Here it recalls an interpretation of the biblical command *You shall love YHVH your God with all לבבך (levavekha), your heart* (Deuteronomy 6:5). Why does the verse read *levavekha*, containing a double ב (*vet*), instead of לבך (*libekha*) with one ב (*bet*)? According to the Mishnah, the doubling signifies "with both your impulses: the good impulse and the evil impulse." Ideally, one should serve God not only with the good impulse but also with the evil impulse—by subduing it, or by sublimating and channeling one's passions into virtuous action, thereby contributing the raw power of the evil impulse to the good. Here, once

the evil impulse has been eliminated, a person is left “with only one heart toward his Father in heaven,” namely the good impulse. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 61a.

215. Take the fire-pan... Following the death of the rebel Korah and his followers, the Israelites murmur against Moses and Aaron. The context in Numbers (17:12-13) reads: *Aaron took as Moses had spoken, and he ran into the midst of the assembly, and, look, the plague had begun among the people! He put in incense and atoned for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was halted.* Similarly, incense can eliminate evil forces from the home; all the more so, the holy incense offered in the Temple eliminated the power of the Other Side.

According to BT *Shabbat* 89a (in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi), the Angel of Death himself transmitted the secret of incense to Moses.

216. Whoever contemplates and reads *Pittum ha-Ketoret*... Reciting this formula for compounding the Temple’s incense (as found in JT *Yoma* 4:4, 41d; BT *Kareitot* 6a) had become customary among Jews in certain regions; see *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 39-40; Abraham ben Nathan ha-Yarḥi, *Sefer ha-Manhig*, 31, 120; *Maḥazor Vitri*, 5, 79; *Siddur Rashi*, #14; *Siddur Rabbenu Shelomo of Worms*, 178-79; Abudarham, 124; Jacob ben Asher, *Arba’ah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 133, 237; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-be-Nistar*, 59-60. Many of these texts are from France and Germany of the eleventh or twelfth centuries, and they indicate that it was not widespread practice to read this passage daily.

217. Rabbi Shim’on said... The reiteration that Rabbi Shim’on is the speaker follows the parallel text in *Zohar* 2:218b and suggests either that this passage borrowed from that one, or that scribal copyists “corrected” this version according to the one there.

“Another kingdom” refers to the demonic Other Side, or the kingdom of the Gentiles. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the*

Zohar, 3:933; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

218. In that incense... The priest would see the letters of the name *YHVH*, and then angelic chariots would escort the column of smoke above. The fragrance of the incense delighted *Shekhinah* and linked the *sefirot* to one another. The upper *sefirot*, “limbs descending,” raise up the “lower rung,” namely *Shekhinah*. For different interpretations, see *Sullam*, *Matoq mi-Devash*.

Rabbi Shim'on associates the Hebrew word קטר (qetoret) with the Aramaic root קטר (*qtr*), “to tie, bind.” See *Zohar* 1:230a; 3:11a–b, 30b, 37b, 58b, 103a, 151b, 177b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 86–87.

On the delight provided by incense, see Proverbs 27:9: *Oil and incense rejoice the heart*.

219. You shall make a מזבח (*mizbeah*), altar... The altar for burnt offerings stood in the courtyard in front of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), whereas the incense altar was placed within the Tabernacle (and the Temple), just outside the curtain that veils the Holy of Holies.

On the three different kinds of incense offered in the Tabernacle, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1025–26.

220. Why is it called *mizbeah*, a slaughter-site... Why is the latter called מזבח (*mizbeah*), *an altar*—literally, *a slaughter-site*—since no animals were sacrificed on it? The answer is that the incense binds the evil powers, just as an animal is bound before being slaughtered. The Other Side was overwhelmed by the incense and could not approach *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the Dwelling. In the words of *Or Yaqar*, it is called *a slaughter-site* because it “slaughters and nullifies the entire side of foreign entities.”

221. no other mingling in that joy... Once the *Shekhinah* is purified and the Other Side prevented from approaching, the blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah* can be alone in intimate union. Whereas the Other Side partakes of certain sacrificial portions and fat, only God savors the

incense. On providing sacrificial portions to the Other Side, see above, [note 191](#).

222. Limb binds with limb... The limbs of the blessed Holy One and those of the *Shekhinah* are properly arrayed among themselves. The incense altar—the site of blessing—is concealed within the sanctuary, concealed from the evil eye of the Other Side (*Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*).

See BT *Ta'anit* 8b: “Blessing is not found in anything weighed, measured, or counted, but only in that which is hidden from the eye.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 64:6; BT *Bava Metsi'a* 42a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 10:6; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 25, 127b; *Tanḥuma, Re'eh* 14; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Re'eh* 12; *Zohar* 1:5a, 64b, 202a; 2:187b, 219a, 221b, 225a, 227b; 3:117b. On the incense being offered in secret, see BT *Zevaḥim* 88b.

223. pestilence cannot rule... The incense wards off various kinds of danger. See *Zohar* 1:100b-101a (*MhN*); 3:151b.

224. he purged refuse from the Temple, setting his own portion apart... Jacob undertook two actions to establish Israel's distinct status: the removal of foreign elements—demonic and human; and the separation of Israel from inappropriate mixing with other nations. This activity enabled the angelic chariots below the *Shekhinah* to assemble as well.

The two clauses in Genesis 30:40 are synonymous, but Rabbi Shim'on construes them as referring to two different things.

Connected flocks renders צאן המקשרות (*tson ha-mequsharot*), understood here as referring to the Children of Israel, who are *connected* to *Shekhinah*. The simple sense of the term is *the vigorous of the flocks*, or *the sturdier animals*, or *the fittest sheep*.

Genesis 30:40-41 reads, in its simple sense: *The sheep Jacob kept apart: he placed them facing the spotted and all the dark-colored in Laban's flocks. He set his own herds*

apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock. And so, whenever the vigorous of the flocks went into heat, Jacob put the rods in full sight of the flocks in the troughs for them to go in heat by the rods.

225. Incense follows the same pattern... The performance of the incense ritual effected the same functions of purification and unification as enacted by Jacob in his magical breeding of the sheep: unifying the array of upper limbs with the array of lower limbs; angelic chariots joining in the supernal nexus.

226. All those camps of the other nations are scattered... Israel is defined by its internal unity and its bond with God, while the other nations are inherently divided.

The verse in 2 Samuel reads: *Who is like Your people Israel, a nation unique on earth.* Cf. 1 Chronicles 17:21.

227. It is forbidden to burn incense in another place This warning emphasizes the exclusivity of the incense rite.

228. One who is pursued by judgment... One who is being punished by Divine Judgment can be saved if he turns back to God in repentance and devoutly and regularly recites *Pittum ha-Qetoret*. The incense offered in the Temple sustained the world and united the *sefirot* above; now that the Temple no longer exists, the recitation of the Preparation of the Incense does the same.

The context (Exodus 30:7-8) reads: *Aaron shall burn upon it aromatic incense morning after morning; when he tends the lamps he shall burn it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before YHVH throughout your generations.*

229. surpassing all other rituals On incense being more important than all animal sacrifices, see *Zohar* 3:11a, 58b, 59a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 86.

230. full name, YHVH Elohim... *Shekhinah* calls to *Tif'eret*: "Draw me with the letters of Your holy name." *Shekhinah*,

symbolized by the name *Elohim*, longs to be drawn into union with *YHVH*, namely *Tif'eret*. When they are joined, Divinity is complete and identified by the dual name *YHVH Elohim*. On *YHVH Elohim* as the full name of God, see above, [note 183](#).

231. let us run, and not I will run... If the name *Elohim* signifies *Shekhinah*, why does the verse use the plural *let us run*, rather than the singular *I will run*? The explanation is that the name *Elohim* (a plural form, although usually construed as singular) frequently signifies the populous world of angels and other heavenly figures. Consequently, *Elohim* here refers to all those celestial beings who long to be united with the blessed Holy One.

232. supreme, holy King... Namely, *Binah*. The chambers and chariot vaults below signify the lower seven *sefirot*, *Hesed* through *Shekhinah*, which serve as chariots for *Binah*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; *Mopsik*; cf. above, [note 129](#).

233. First chamber... Referring to *Hesed*, who is also known as *Gedullah* (Greatness). It is a four-colored light because it encompasses the *sefirot* below, each of which is represented by a color: *Hesed*, white; *Gevurah*, red; *Tif'eret*, green; *Shekhinah*, black. The divine name *YHVH* usually signifies *Tif'eret*, but here it designates *Hesed*, which is at the beginning of the manifestation of *YHVH* below.

“Light that takes first” alludes to M *Yoma* 1:2: “The high priest is first in offering a portion and has first place in taking a portion.”

On the four colors representing four *sefirot*, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Tishby, *Wisdom*, 1:290-92.

234. Light of darkness... Signifying *Gevurah*. It emanates from *Hesed*, so it manifests its predecessor's light; but it also initiates Judgment and, consequently, is represented by “darkness” and the color red. When *Hesed* and *Gevurah* are united, harmony reigns above; together, they are prepared to bond with *Shekhinah*.

On *Gevurah* as darkness, see *Zohar* 1:16b, 112b, 133a, 136a, 142a, 168b, 180a; 2:129b, 164b, 260b (*Heikh*).

235. Lower light unites with them... Once *Hesed* and *Gevurah* have joined together, *Binah*, the supreme King, brings *Shekhinah* into the juncture of those two chambers. Then *Shekhinah* and her entourage of angels and chariots anticipate linguistic delight in the letters contained within *Binah*. The word בך (*bakh*), *in you*, has the numerical value of twenty-two, corresponding to the number of letters in the alphabet (see above, [notes 168, 173](#)).

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* (1:31 on 1:3): “Rabbi Avin opened: ‘*This is the day that YHVH has made, we will delight and rejoice* בו (*bo*), *in it* (Psalms 118:24).’ Rabbi Avin said: ‘We do not know in which we are to rejoice: in the day, or in the blessed Holy One. Solomon, however, came and explained it: *We will delight and rejoice* בך (*bakh*), *in you*—in the blessed Holy One. *In you*: in Your salvation. *In you*: in Your Torah. *In you*: in fear of You.’ Rabbi Isaac said: ‘בך (*bakh*), *in you*—in the twenty-two letters that You have written for us in the Torah. ב (*Bet*)—two; כ (*kaf*)—twenty; yielding בך (*bakh*), twenty-two.”

236. permuted in twenty-two alphabets... Apparently referring to the method of permutation of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet into 231 gates, a primary method of kabbalistic contemplation. The 231 gates represent the number of two-letter combinations that can be formed from the twenty-two letters, provided that the same letter is not repeated. Here, each of the divine names can undergo similar permutations. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; and see above, [note 65](#).

237. all letters partake of this holy covenant... All the letters emerge from *Yesod*, and *Shekhinah* and Her cohort long to receive them, for they express the divine essence, in loving union with Him.

238. ... אשכ alef shin bet... A technique of letter permutation. Pairs of triplets are formed, beginning with

the first two letters of the alphabet—א ב (*alef, bet*)—as first and third letters of the triplet and the second-to-last letter of the alphabet—ש (*shin*)—between them. The next triplet is constructed using the third and fourth letters of the alphabet—ג ד (*gimel, dalet*)—in the first and third positions, with the last letter of the alphabet—ת (*tav*)—in the middle. This sequence proceeds in a forward direction for the first and third letters, reverse direction for the middle letter, until the sequence arrives at the only letter not yet cited, ו (*ayin*). The letters ז ר (*zayin, resh*) are added on, completing the triplet, and forming the word “aid” or “help.” This array of letters is the base for the letter permutations of the four columns supporting the throne, below, and may be the permutation corresponding to the third column, functionally associated with *Tif’eret*, as the right and left columns below are associated with *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. Each of the succeeding sequences reflects a negotiation between the impulses to move forward and backward in the alphabet.

On the various permutations of the four columns, see *Or Yaqar; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*.

239. Akhtariel Yah Tseva’ot, seated on a high and lofty throne... This begins a description of the Throne of Glory using combinations of letters and divine names.

See BT *Berakhot* 7a, in the name of Rabbi Yishma’el son of Elisha: “I once entered into the innermost part [of the Sanctuary] to burn incense and saw *Akhtariel Yah YHVH Tseva’ot*, seated upon a high and lofty throne. He said to me: ‘Yishma’el, My son, bless Me!’ I replied: ‘May it be Your will that Your mercy conquer Your anger, and that Your mercy prevail over Your other attributes, so that You deal with Your children according to the attribute of mercy—and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice!’ And He nodded to me with His head.”

On *Akhtariel*, see Margalio, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 12–13, n. 1; Abrams, “From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career

of Akatriel in Jewish Literature.” On the angels on God’s right and left, see 1 Kings 22:19: *I saw YHVH sitting upon His throne, with all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right and on His left.* On the image of life on God’s right and death on His left, see *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 4 and Luria’s note 21, ad loc.; *Zohar* 3:296a (IZ). On this vision of the throne and its similarity to descriptions of the divine chariot, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 188–91.

240. The right column upon four blazing letter-flames... Each of the four columns is comprised of four sets of letter-triplets—three triplets per set. In order to arrive at the number twelve, an additional set of three letter-triplets composed of permutations of יהו (YHV) is added on. In the right column, one arrives at this permutation by exchanging the first and third letters of the triplets and exchanging the middle letters of the first and second triplets. This sequence continues across the columns until the end, and then the letters ז י (zayin, resh) are added onto the final letter; the divine name יהו (YHV) completes the first nine triplets. This technique recalls, though is not identical to, the formation of the Seventy-Two Letter Name of God (see above, [note 5](#)).

The legs of the throne are represented as a linguistic construct, expressing the relationship of right and left, male and female.

Cf. the description of the throne in *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 4: “Four classes of ministering angels exult before the blessed Holy One: the first camp [led by] Michael on His right, the second camp [led by] Gabriel on His left, the third camp [led by] Uriel before Him, and the fourth camp [led by] Raphael behind Him; and the *Shekhinah* of the blessed Holy One, is in the center. He is seated on a high and lofty throne.... The appearance of His throne is like a sapphire [throne] with four legs, and four holy creatures affixed to each leg, each one has four faces and each one

has four wings, as is said: *each had four faces and each had four wings* (Ezekiel 1:6). These are the cherubim.” Cf. *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*, Version A, 365.

241. תאש רבך צגפ עדס נהם לוך כזי טחי הוי... This list is written in the margins of most of the manuscripts, including CM1, CM10, P13, PR13, as well as *Or Yaqar* and Saloniki. The sequence started by the first and third letters proceeds in the alphabet’s reverse order תשרק (*tav, shin, resh, qof*) as a consequence of being on the left side. See also *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 1.

242. behold, there are only nine... Each of the four columns only has nine triplets rather than ten, so each column takes on an additional three triplets—three permutations of the divine name יהו (*YHV*). Sometimes the permutation has the letters in their normal order, as blessing descends from the sefirotic י (yod) to ה (he) to ו (vav), and sometimes in the reverse order, when ascending.

243. יהו יוה היו (*YHV YVH HYV*)... This version of the three permutations follows *Or Yaqar*. *Sullam* and Mopsik have יהו יהו יהו (*YHV YHV YHV*). Most of the manuscripts include four-letter permutations, which would not fit the scheme.

244. completing the throne in mystery of twenty-two letters... The letters of the alphabet constitute the essence of the holy throne, and once all four supporting arrays of flaming letters columns are completed, the throne is complete. “Covenant” signifies *Yesod*, who takes in all twenty-two letters, conveying them to *Shekhinah* in intimate union.

245. wine of Torah... Signifying *Binah*, and derived from *Hokhmah*. The word יין (*yayin*), “wine,” has the numerical value of seventy; it is understood here to refer to seventy *lovers*, namely angels, surrounding God’s throne. *Gevurah* is associated with wine and is the primary location of Judgment, though Judgment has its roots in *Binah*. Seventy “deputies” (appointed over camps of angels) surround the

Holy Throne, namely *Shekhinah*, and receive their forces of judgment—*spiced wine*—from *Binah*.

On the wine of Torah, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 35a: “What is the meaning of the words *For your lovers are better than wine* (Song of Songs 1:2)? When Rabbi Dimi came [from Palestine] he explained: ‘The Assembly of Israel declared to the blessed Holy One: “Master of the Universe! The words of דודיק (*dodekha*), your lovers, are sweeter to me than the wine of the Torah.”’”

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 30:1; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:1; 27:1; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 2:3; *Tanḥuma, Vayḥi* 10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:4; *Zohar* 2:124b; 3:39a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 319; cf. BT *Ta’anit* 7a. On supernal wine coming from *Binah*, see above, [notes 92-93](#).

On the seventy angels surrounding the Throne of Glory, see *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 24; *Zohar* 3:231a; *Zohar Ḥadash* 25c; cf. *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 11:7-8; Deuteronomy 32:8. On *spiced wine*, cf. *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

[246](#). **Mikhael, Gavriel, Refael...** This list has only 64 angels. Some of the names are repeated, perhaps reflecting different vocalizations. Printed editions supply a second list that provides a full seventy, often corrected to reflect a series of acronyms corresponding to the names of vowels. Thus, the names *Qedumiel, Malkiel, Tsadqiel* begin with the letters קמץ (*qof, mem, tsadi*), spelling the vowel name *qamats*; the names *Pedael, Tumiel, Ḥasdiel* begin with the letters פתח (*pe, tav, het*), spelling the vowel name *pataḥ*; and so forth. Some of the names have also surely been corrupted in the course of transmission. Because of the rarity of many of these names, vocalizing them poses a unique challenge. See Mopsik; Schwab, *Vocabulaire de l’Angelologie*; Davidson, *A Vocabulary of Angels*.

After identifying some of the better-known names, Cordovero says the following: “Beyond all this confusion,

there is more. Some of their names conclude with [the theophoric element] לָא (*El*) and some with יָהּ (*Yah*), with no clear order. Some of their names can be understood, such as *Ḥakhmi'el* and *Ḥasdi'el*, from *ḥokhmah* (wisdom) and *ḥesed* (grace), and the like. And some of them cannot be explained at all, such as *Tatrosiah*, *Tasuriah*, and the like. Here is the [interpretative] principle: They are wondrous, beyond my comprehension, and I cannot grasp them." He then proceeds to give lengthy explanations of most of the names. See *Or Yaqar*, vol. 17, 110-17.

On these seventy angelic names, see *Zohar* 1:108a-b (*Tos*) and, ad loc. *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *YN*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

247. Their shining and sparkling, from your lovers above... The angels' luminosity originates in the seventy lights contained within the seven lower *sefirot*, *Ḥesed* through *Shekhinah*. *Your lovers* now refers to those upper lights, who come from wine, namely *Binah*.

On preserved wine, see above, [note 90](#).

248. called 'secret creatures, darting to and fro'... The seven lower *sefirot* bridge the gap between *Binah* above and *Shekhinah* below, ferrying light and blessing back and forth. In this respect they resemble the creatures of the divine chariot in Ezekiel's vision.

249. These are the seventy names of the blessed Holy One... Like the seventy angels, there are seventy names of God; they are manifested esoterically through permutations of the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. The letters are divided into two groups, one more elevated and immutable than the other, though even the latter group is said to be unchanging, existing in a prelinguistic state. Once the letters emerge in the linguistic forms of the Torah, that is, within *Tif'eret*, symbolically named Written Torah, a flux in meaning ensues.

On God's seventy names, see *Baal ha-Turim* on Numbers 11:16. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:15 teaches that the

Torah has seventy faces. On the permutation of letters, see above, [note 65](#).

250. It does not emerge from those letters... The Torah's letters proceed in nongraphic, fluid form from *Hokhmah*, only taking on discrete, congealed design within the secret palace, namely *Binah*. Upon emerging from *Binah* they assume their full linguistic capacity in names, words, and sentences.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:2 in the name of Rav: "The works of Creation [i.e., the heavens] were fluid, and on the second day they congealed. *Let there be an expanse [in the midst of the waters]* (Genesis 1:6)—Let the expanse be firm!"

In Zoharic Kabbalah, the act of inscription is typically performed by a masculine agent upon a feminine substrate. The former is more ethereal and abstract; the latter, concretizing and delimiting.

On writing (or inscription and engraving) as a metaphor for emanative and creative processes, see Isaac the Blind, "Peirush Sefer Yetsirah," 5; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 412; *Zohar* 1:15a, 16b, 37b, 156b (*ST*); 2:167b, 200a; 3:40b, 128a (*IR*); *ZH* 41b-c; 121d-122b (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 88 (111); Wolfson, "Erasing the Erasure."

251. holy name is engraved in mystery of letters... that created heaven and earth... The first linguistic expression of God's name is in the form of forty-two letters. The Forty-Two Letter Name is mentioned in the name of Rav, though not recorded, in BT *Qiddushin* 71a. According to Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam), this name consists of the first forty-two letters of the Torah, from the ב (bet) of בראשית (*Be-reshit*), *In the beginning*, through the ב (vet) of בהו (*vohu*), *empty* (or *void*) (Genesis 1:2). By this complex divine name, the world came into being. Hai Gaon indicates that the Name of Forty-Two Letters consists of the following letters: אבגיתזן, קרעשטן, נגדיכש, בטרצתג חקבטנוע, יגלפזק, שקוצית,

which are also the initial letters of the forty-two words constituting the prayer *Anna be-Khoah* (Please, with the Strength [of Your Right Hand's Greatness]).

Cordovero (*Or Yaqar*) describes how the name *YHVH* can be permuted into a forty-two-letter name; cf. *Zohar* 2:260a (*Heikh*). In *Zohar* 1:9a, Moses' staff is described as "radiating the engraved name in every direction with the radiance of the wise, who engraved the explicit name in forty-two colors."

See Lewin, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim, Hagigah*, 23; *Tosafot, Hagigah* 11b, s.v. *ein doreshin*; *Zohar* 1:1a, 15b, 30a-b; 2:92b (*Piq*), 130b, 132b, 175b, 187a, 234a-b; 3:78a, 172b; *ZH* 42a; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 21:12-13; *Ketem Paz* 1:46c-d; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 94-96; Idel, "Al ha-Peirushim shel Rabbi Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi," especially 161-62, n. 24; 167-68, n. 52. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:62.

Both the Forty-Two- and Seventy-Two-Letter Names of God serve as garments for God's ineffable name. Rabbi Shim'on does not explain the correspondence of the seventy-two names of God as derived from Exodus 14:19-21 and the seventy names corresponding to the numerical value of the word יין (*yayin*), wine. Perhaps *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, the sites of origin of the letters, should be added to the seventy names. For explanations of the additional two letters, see *Zohar* 1:108b; *ZH* 61d (*ShS*); *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

[252.](#) והו ילו סיט... This is the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God. This complex divine name is derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea: Exodus 14:19-21. Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads (or "words"), according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second

verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad); etc. See above, [note 5](#).

Rabbi Shim'on's homily on the linguistic conception of the throne culminates with the Seventy-Two Letter Name of God. See Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 190-91.

[253.](#) **Black am I, but beautiful...** In the Song, the maiden asserts unapologetically that even though her skin is black, she is beautiful nonetheless. White skin, as opposed to black, denotes beauty and health in biblical literature. Suntanned skin suggests outdoor work and implies a lower class. See Song of Songs 5:10; Lamentations 4:7; Rashi.

The conjunctive ׀ (*ve-*) can be translated as both “*but*” and “*and*.” For the contrastive meaning, see Genesis 4:4-5; Proverbs 11:22; Song of Songs 5:6; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:5. On the verse, see commentaries by Gordis; Pope; Bloch and Bloch; Fishbane; cf. Falk. See also Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 79-83.

The *Zohar's* use of the verse indicates the dual nature of the *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by the color black, but illuminated by the whiteness of her partner, *Tif'eret*.

[254.](#) **how beautiful in that white light!...** “Lamp of the West” signifies *Shekhinah*, who is beautiful and reigns over the lower world when She stands in relation to “Lamp of the East,” signifying *Tif'eret*. *Shekhinah* may be associated with the color “black,” but She is *beautiful* when illuminated by the white of *Tif'eret* above. “Light of a lamp” refers to a flame, necessarily composed of two colors, black near the wick, and white at the top. The beauty of *Shekhinah* does not rely exclusively on Her relationship with *Tif'eret*, as she is also embellished by adoring entities below.

[255.](#) **wick, lamp, and oil...** These are the angelic beings below *Shekhinah* who support and beautify Her. Thus, when She stands in the white light, She is already beautiful. *Daughters of Jerusalem* also refers to these

angelic forces, who are both black *like the tents of Kedar*, and white *as the tapestries* [or: *pavilions*] *of Solomon* (ibid.). Like *Shekhinah*, they are black on their own, but white when illuminated from above.

On the opposition between the black tents and lavish tapestries, Rashi writes, “If I am black *like the tents of Kedar*, blackened by the rains... I am easily rinsed, becoming like *the tapestries of Solomon*.”

Kedar refers to an ancient Arabic tribe who probably used the black hair of goats for their tents, like other tribes in the region. The root קדר (*qdr*) also connotes blackness or darkness. See Gordis; Pope; Bloch & Bloch; Zakovich.

256. He created him according to the transcendent image... That image was modeled on the divine archetype, that is, the ten *sefirot*, which are depicted as arranged in the form of a human-like body—a premise of Zoharic Kabbalah.

See Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 35: “One who intends to enter the royal palace must first know his own soul, the rules of soul contained within his body. What is its essence and fate? With this method, he will be able to penetrate innermost matters, because its secrets are patterned after its Creator.... Therefore, when one knows the eminence and nature of the soul, his thoughts and understanding will spread from there to the secrets of royal matters.”

See Genesis 1:26–27. On the human being as a microcosm, see Plato, *Timaeus*, 29–47; Philo, *On the Creation* 27.82; *Tanḥuma*, *Pequdei* 3; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:4; *Aggadat Olam Qatan*, in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 5:57–59; Donnolo, *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, 63d–66b; Joseph ibn Tsaddiq, *Sefer Olam ha-Qatan*, 20–42; Bahya ibn Paquda, *Hovot ha-Levavot*, 2:4; Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 4:3; Maimonides, *Guide* 1:72; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 268; *Zohar* 1:90b, 134b, 140a–b, 186b; 2:23b, 76a; 3:141b (*IR*); Altmann, “Delphic Maxim.”

“Smooth members” renders two senses of one term, שׂיפוי (*shaifoi*), which derives from a verbal root meaning “to smooth, rub, slip.” In the *Zohar* the word signifies “limb,” perhaps based on the Talmudic expression על איבריה לשפא (*al eivreih le-shafa*), “each limb entered its socket [from which it “slips”]” (BT *Sotah* 7b).

On *shaifoi*, see *Arukh*, s.v. *shaf*; Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *la-shappa*; idem on Job 33:21, citing *Hullin* 42b; *Zohar* 3:170a; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 227; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, s.v. *shappa*.

257. in the image and pattern of the one above...

There are two Gardens called Eden: one, in the upper world, and a second, on earth. The lower one is constructed according to the pattern of the upper, so that when the Torah refers to the *Garden of Eden* without denoting upper or lower, it means both simultaneously—as together they comprise “one mystery.”

258. You might say that in the upper Garden of Eden... Is there really a verisimilitude between the two Gardens? The upper one is heavily guarded by angelic beings and the souls of the deceased, whereas souls do not exist to protect the terrestrial Garden before the creation of humans and the advent of the righteous.

259. how many boundary-walls of angels... Multitudes were already present in the Garden of Eden before the creation of Adam and Eve, performing the role of guardianship, thus maintaining the parallel nature of the two Gardens. *Or Yaqar* explains that once the righteous came into the world and achieved their elevated status, they moved into the position of protectors of the Garden.

260. spirits and souls, ascending and descending... The *neshamah* and *ru'ah* reside in the upper Garden of Eden and take on a garment—an etherealized body—upon descent into the lower Garden of Eden. This etherealized body resembles the physical form of the body that the individual soul is destined to receive in this world. Some

commentators indicate that this garment is the *nefesh* (soul), lowest component of the tripartite soul. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The particular Torah that the righteous study in the Garden of Eden before taking residency in this world is the contemplation of this ethereal garment. By virtue of its resemblance to the physical qualities of its body in this world, this garment provides insight into God's Glory. Cf. *Sullam*, Margaliot, *Matoq mi-Devash*, and Mopsik, who explain that each soul receives the garment that is destined for it, based on the quality of Torah study it achieves.

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot* (p. 39): "All these [things that existed before the creation of the world] were stored up in Thought; and when they arose in Thought, light was made to suit their characteristics, and it was concealed. Some of them were above the Torah, some in the Torah, some in the Throne of Glory, some below, some in the place of the Temple—each one's place of concealment corresponded to the characteristic that it was later to have. For all the souls were created, and at the appropriate time, they were placed in the body that was fitting for them."

On the primordial form of human souls and their descent into lower Garden of Eden before coming into the world, see *Zohar* 1:7a, 38b (*Heikh*), 66a, 81a (*ST*), 90b, 91b, 115b; 2:11a, 13b, 96b, 98b, 99b, 150a, 156b, 160d, 161b; 3:61b; *ZH* 10b (*MhN*); cf. *Zohar* 1:219a; *ZH* 16d (*MhN*), 82d (*Rut*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 27 (32); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 350–351; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 59; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:698–703, 749–51. Cf. Rashi on BT *Hagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruhot u-nshamot*; above, [note 209](#). On the ethereal body, representing the ideal form of the human being, see below, [note 498](#).

On the inborn nature of Torah that one is destined to learn, see *Midrash Mishlei* 2: "From the time that a person is formed in his mother's womb, the Torah that he will learn

in the future is stored away for him. Thus it is written: *He conceals wisdom for the upright* (Proverbs 2:7).” Cf. *Zohar* 3:61b; *ZH* 69b (*ShS*).

261. they raise him above... If a spirit dons a garment (a body) that will be devoted to proper worship of God, it is taken up before the “Holy King” for accolades. This is the meaning of the phrase *I stood*—I already merited to stand before Him. See *Zohar* 3:68b.

262. the body ultimately abandons holy spirit... Or: “is destined to abandon holy spirit.” If a spirit will be inclined to sinfulness in the future, the “garment,” namely the ethereal body, leaves the holy spirit aside. That “garment” is then seized by the evil spirit, which leads to the “garment” being thrust beyond the Garden of Eden. This happens particularly on the second and fourth days of the week because they are particularly susceptible to predations from the Other Side. Once the person—that is, the one who inhabits the “garment” in this world under the influence of the evil spirit—dies, he descends to Hell, where daily judgment for that “garment” awaits.

In the Torah’s account of Creation, the statement *God saw that it was good* (or a variant) is included in the description of each of the six days except for the second—the day on which the waters were divided and Hell was created. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:6: “Why is *that it was good* not written concerning the second day? Rabbi Yoḥanan said..., ‘Because on that day Hell was created....’ Rabbi Ḥanina said, ‘Because on that day conflict was created: *and let it divide water from water* (Genesis 1:6).’...”

Furthermore, in the description of the fourth day, the word מארת (*me’orot*), *lights*, is written without *vavs*, the vowel letters. Such variant spelling is common in the Bible and affects neither the pronunciation nor the simple meaning of the words. As construed here, however, this deficient spelling alludes to a lack: the light of *Shekhinah* (symbolized by the moon) had diminished, and Her union with *Tif’eret*

(symbolized by *vav*) was disrupted. The void was filled by demonic evil or “curse”: מארה (*me'erah*). (The form מארת [*me'erat*] can be read as “curse of,” as in Proverbs 3:33.) On the moon and its curse, see BT *Hullin* 60b as cited below ([note 275](#)).

See JT *Ta'anit* 4:3, 68b: “On the fourth day [of the week, Wednesday] they would fast for infants, so that diphtheria not enter their mouths. *God said, 'Let there be מארת (me'orot), lights' (Genesis 1:14)—spelled מארת (me'erat), curse.'"*

See BT *Pesaḥim* 112b: “One should not go out alone at night, neither on the eve of Wednesday [fourth day of the week] nor on the eve of Sabbath, because Agrat daughter of Maḥalat [Queen of Demons] goes out together with 180,000 angels of destruction, each empowered to wreak destruction independently.”

On the second day of the week, see BT *Pesaḥim* 54a; Ezra of Gerona, “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 506; *Zohar* 1:18a, 33a, 46a, 257a; 2:144b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 41 (49). On the fourth day of the week, see BT *Ta'anit* 27b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:1; *Soferim* 17:5; Rashi on Genesis 1:14; *Zohar* 1:1a, 12a, 19b, 33b–34a, 146a, 166a, 169a–b; 2:35b, 167b, 205a, 264b (*Heikh*), 276a (*Tosafot*); 3:28b, 234a (*RM*); *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 1:14.

The phrase *woman of whoredom* refers here to Lilith, the female demon, wife of Samael. See *Zohar* 1:5a (*MhN*), 11a, 147b–148a (*ST*); 2:11a, 245a (*Heikh*); 3:231b. On the daily punishment in Hell, see *ZH* 84c (*MhN, Rut*).

263. until that sinner begets a son or offspring... This refers to the doctrine of reincarnation. Once the sinner fathers a son or other worthy descendant, the holy spirit that had fled earlier, descends again into this new body. This provides completion to the spirit whose previous mission was aborted, and it affords relief to the sinner. He then squeals from his abode in Hell, receives a new

garment, and ascends to the Garden of Eden. At the gate, he surveys how great was his loss.

On ascent from Hell, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b-17a, in the name of the House of Shammai: "There are three groups at the Day of Judgment: one of the completely righteous, one of the completely wicked, and one of the intermediate. The completely righteous are written and sealed immediately for life; the completely wicked are written and sealed immediately for Hell...; the intermediate go down to Hell ומצפצפין (*u-mtsaftsefin*), and squeal [or: chirp, twitter, squawk] [on account of their punishment], and rise." See *Zohar* 2:150a; 3:178a; *ZH* 33d.

On reincarnation in Kabbalah, see *Bahir* 86 (121-22), 104 (155-56), 126-27 (184), 135 (195); Naḥmanides on Genesis 38:8; Deuteronomy 25:6; Job 33:30; *Zohar* 1:48a, 131a, 186b-188a, 239a; 2:75a, 91b, 98b-106a, 108b-109b; 3:7a, 88b, 182b; *ZH* 59a-c (*MhN*), 89b-90a (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 358-360; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 240-247; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, *Yevamot* 62a, p. 25a, c-d; *Ketubbot* 111a, p. 27c; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 242-43; idem, *Kabbalah*, 344-50; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 188-94, 237-38, 456-60; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 197-250; idem, *Shedim Ruḥot u-Nshamot*, 186-214, 298; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1362-63; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 370-96; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 291-327; Elior, "Torat ha-Gilgul be-Sefer Galya Raza"; Oron, "Qavvim le-Torat ha-Nefesh ve-ha-Gilgul," 283-89; Schwartz, "Ha-Biqqoret al Torat Gilgul ha-Neshamot"; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 113-29.

264. He brought him into the Garden of Eden in a garment... Adam is the paradigm of the human being created with a luminous body, completed with both *neshamah* and *ru'ah*. The supreme delights of the Garden of Eden included viewing of all future souls and all forms from both higher and lower realms. Adam was able to see all this via the luminosity of a supernal light.

On the pleasures of the Garden of Eden, cf. Maimonides, "Introduction to Chapter *Ḥeleq*." On Adam's viewing of all future generations, see above, [note 210](#).

265. Woman of whoredom... Namely, Lilith, here in the form of the serpent. Samael, the personification of the demonic Other Side, rides upon her, and the two of them seek to seduce and corrupt humanity. Lilith tempts Eve and Adam and, when they sin, their supernal garments of light depart.

On the expression חסר לב (*ḥasar lev*), "heartless one," see, e.g., Proverbs 6:32, 7:7, 9:4, 15, 10:13, 21.

On Lilith, see *Sippurei Ben Sira*, ed. Yassif, 231–32, 234; *Zohar* 1:19b, 34b, 122a–b, 131b, 148a–b (*ST*), 190b, 204a; 2:60b–61a, 96a–b, 231b, 242b–244a, 267b (*Heikh*); 3:19a, 69a, 76b–77a, 224a–b, 231b, 266a; *ZḤ* 16c (*MhN*); Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 36–37; Margalioṭ, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 235–41; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:464–65, 531; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 221–54; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 356–61; Hutter, "Lilith"; Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 120–22.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13: "Samael... took his band and descended and saw all the creatures created by the blessed Holy One. He determined that the most cunningly evil was the serpent, as is said: *Now the serpent was slier than any creature of the field that YHVH Elohim had made*. He [the serpent] looked like a camel, and he [Samael] mounted and rode him."

On Samael riding Lilith, see *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21; *Bahir* 141 (200); *Zohar* 1:35b, 55a, 64a, 137b, 145b–146a, 153a, 160b, 169b, 228a; 253b (*Hash, ST*); 2:236a, 242b–244a; *ZḤ* 8c (*ST*), 81a (*MhN, Rut*), 91d (*MhN, Eikhah*).

266. fashioning other garments for him... According to Genesis 3:21, after Adam and Eve sinned, God fashioned garments for them: *YHVH Elohim made כתנות עור (kotnot or), coats of skin, for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them*. The simple sense of *kotnot or* is "coats of animal skin, hides," but

a variant reading recorded in midrashic literature is אור כתנות (*kotnot or*), *coats of light*, alluding to Adam and Eve's original aura or their garments of splendor. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12: "In the Torah [scroll] of Rabbi Meir, it was found written: 'כתנות אור (*kotnot or*), *garments of light*.' These are the clothes of Adam...." As a result of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve lost their lustrous *coats of light*, fell into mortality, and from then on needed another garment, and so, *YHVH Elohim made coats of skin [that is, normal human skin] for Adam and his wife.*" Notwithstanding their lower grade, those garments held some measure of divine overflow, enabling Adam to father children.

On *kotnot or, coats of skin [or: of light]*, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:6; 20:12 (and Theodor's note); *Zohar* 1:36b, 224a; 2:179a (*SdTs*), 208b, 229b; 3:83b (*Piq*), 261b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 404; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 404, n. 87. For Gnostic parallels, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4:40; *Apocryphon of John* 23:31-35; *Hypostasis of the Archons* 90:15-17; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1:5:5.

On Adam's repentance, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 22:13; BT *Avodah Zarah* 8a; *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 20; *Zohar* 1:55b.

267. concealed in a treasury called Body... "The Body" is the heavenly treasure-house of unborn souls located in the Garden of Eden, though sometimes identified with *Shekhinah* as the point from which souls emerge, and sometimes with *Tif'eret*. Adam's soul returned to that treasury until a worthy figure was born into whom that soul would descend. Enoch receives an expansion of luminosity because of his righteous behavior.

See BT *Yevamot* 62a, in the name of Rabbi Assi: "The Son of David [i.e., the Messiah] will not come until all souls in the body have been depleted."

The verse from Genesis concludes: *and he was no more, for God took him*. This enigmatic wording probably reflects a fuller narrative that was expurgated. In

postbiblical literature the statement was understood as alluding to Enoch's miraculous ascension alive to heaven, where he learned God's mysteries and was transformed into the angel Metatron, the "youth." His journey is recorded in the pseudepigraphic Enoch literature. Here, Enoch's ascent serves as evidence of his worthiness to receive the supernal radiance once held by Adam.

On "the Body," see 3 Enoch 43:3 (and Alexander's notes there); Rashi on *Yevamot* 62a, s.v. *mi-shum*; idem on *Yevamot* 63b, s.v. *guf*; idem on *Avodah Zarah* 5a, s.v. *ad sheyikhlu*; *Bahir* 126 (184); *Zohar* 1:119a, 181a; 2:95b, 157a, 161b, 174a, 253a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 10b-c (*MhN*), 60b, 85c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 93; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:696, 701-2; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 179-80, 226.

On Enoch's inheritance of Adam's soul, see *ZH* 42d; Joseph of Hamadan, *Fragment d'un Commentaire sur la Genese*, 20 (Hebrew), 92-93 (French). Cf. Idel, *Hanokh hu Metatron*, 156. On Metatron, see below, [notes 269-70](#).

268. the blessed Holy One needed to take him from this world... Enoch was taken from this world in order to serve as a central depot for holy souls from above and below. He was taken at this time because of the impending flood, or perhaps because he was destined to deviate from his righteousness—and because once his potential was realized, he had a crucial role to fill in the upper realms. Adam had served initially as the focal point of all *neshamot* (super-souls), but he was removed from that position, and Enoch replaced him. Thus, all beings were arranged again according to their appropriate species, including the souls of all the righteous being gathered within Enoch's new angelic capaciousness. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On Enoch's enigmatic death, *Bereshit Rabbah* 25:1 records a tradition in the name of Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hoshaya: "[And he was no more means] that he was not inscribed in the roll of the righteous but in the roll of the

wicked. Rabbi Aibu said: ‘Enoch was a hypocrite, acting sometimes as a righteous man, sometimes wicked. Therefore the blessed Holy One said: “While he is righteous I will remove him.”’”

On Enoch’s ascent, see Yisraeli, *Pithei Heikhal*, 78–100.

269. Whenever righteous and saintly ones are in the world... The collectivity of righteous and pious souls in this world vivify Enoch’s paradigm in this world, inducing a downward flow of renewal. This, in turn, newly recasts Enoch as נער (*na’ar*), “youth, lad, servant,” one of the names of Metatron. Rabbi Shim’on alludes to the identification of Enoch with Metatron by citing the statement from Proverbs: חנוך לנער (*Hanokh la-na’ar*), *Train the youth*, which is understood to mean that *Hanokh* (Enoch) was transformed *la-na’ar*, *into the youth*, namely Metatron, who both ages and is continually rejuvenated. This angelification is identified as Renewal of the Moon, namely *Shekhinah*. Thus, Metatron serves as the pinnacle of human potential, achieving transformation from mundane earthly existence to supernal being, and maintaining youthfulness through the perdurance of the righteous in this world.

In its simple sense, Proverbs 22:6 reads: *Train the youth, according to the way he ought to go. Even when he is old, he will not swerve from it.*

The Armenian Apocryphal work “The Words of Adam to Seth,” records the following tradition: “When God created our father [Adam] and he placed him in the Garden, he also gave him a command of which fruit to eat and of which not to eat. But he, not having observed the commandments, having been stripped of the divine light, and having been thrown outside of the Garden, became an equal of the dumb beasts. And Enoch considered these things, and for forty days and for forty nights he did not eat at all. And after this he planted a luscious garden, and he planted in it all fruit bearers. And he was in that garden for 542 years, and after that, in body, he was taken up to heaven, and was

found worthy of the divine glory and light.” See Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha*, 12-13.

Baḥya ben Asher writes on Genesis 5:24: “Enoch cleaved to the supernal light from which the luminaries were created and drawn on the fourth day [of creation].... Half of [the numerical value of] this name is bound to half of [the numerical value of] Metatron [חַן (*Ḥan*) of Enoch = 58 = מֵטָט (MeṬaṬ) of Metatron]. As a consequence of his exertion to know him and to grasp his nature, he apprehended him and cleaved to him. Once he cleaved to him, his name and body were transformed—his flesh transmuted into a fiery torch; he was called by the name Metatron. When one cleaves to something he is called by that thing to which he cleaves, it is as if he and the other are one.”

On Enoch and his transformation into Metatron, see 3 Enoch 4:1-10; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 5:24; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 5:24; BT *Yevamot* 16b and *Tosafot* ad loc., s.v. *pasuq zeh*; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva A (Battei Midrashot*, 2:354-355); *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:12; ibn Ezra on Psalms 73:24, 101:2; *Zohar* 1:37b, 56b, 223b; 2:179a (*SdT*s); 3:83b (*Piq*), 217b; *ZḤ* 42d-43a; 85c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:156-64, nn. 58-61; Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 73-108; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 626-32; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377-81; Idel, “Enoch is Metatron”; idem, *Olam ha-Mal’akhim*, 74-104; idem, *Ben*, 645-670; Alexander, “From Son of Adam to a Second God: Transformation of the Biblical Enoch.”

270. Even when he is old... When the righteous behave piously in the world they renew Metatron’s youthful appearance. As long as the entirety of perfected human souls resides within Metatron and receives continuous reinforcement, blessing and nourishment will descend from his station into the world.

On the aging of Metatron, see BT *Yevamot* 16b: “Rabbi Shemu’el son of Naḥmani said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, ‘This verse was uttered by the Prince of the

World: *I have been a youth, I have also been old* (Psalms 37:25). Who said it? If you suggest it was the blessed Holy One, does old age pertain to Him? So David must have said it. But was he so old? Rather you must conclude that the Prince of the World uttered it.”

Rabbi Shim'on argues implicitly against some of the medieval Jewish rationalists who sought to mitigate the strange and miraculous nature of Enoch's disappearance.

On the aging of Metatron, see *Zohar* 1:95b, 124b-125a, 126a-b (*MhN*), 143a, 162a, 179b, 181b; 2:143a, 164a, 169b, *ZH* 85c (*MhN, Rut*). On the mitigation of Enoch's ascent, see Abraham ibn Ezra on Genesis 5:24; Psalms 49:16; 73:24; Kimchi on Genesis 5:24; Yisraeli, *Pithei Heikhal*, 86-88.

271. Black am I—from the side below... *Shekhinah* attests that Her natural color is black, but that She receives illumination, hence beauty, from above. “Side of totality” appears to signify *Yesod*, also known as *Tsaddiq* (Righteous One), the *sefirah* who mirrors above the satiating activity ascribed to Metatron below.

272. when I see how many sinners anger the Master of All... *Shekhinah* clarifies that Her blackness is not merely from a lack of innate light, but rather because of the darkness of sinners below and Her continued nourishing of them. She reaffirms Her innate darkness while attesting that Her beauty comes from *YHVH*, namely *Tiferet*, to whom She and the collectivity of angels are attached.

273. Temple is one, Jerusalem is one, and Holy of Holies... Corresponding to three levels within *Shekhinah*, one more inward than the other. Jerusalem is outermost, then the Temple, followed by the Holy of Holies. “*Daughters of Jerusalem*” signify the angels who adorn the *Shekhinah*.

274. renewed, all established as before... The *Zohar* frequently employs the paradox of “new-ancient words,” to signify simultaneously the novel interpretations that its authorship evokes, and the esoteric assertion that the

secrets being revealed have always been latent within the biblical text. See, e.g., *Zohar* 1:243a; 2:183b; 3:166b, 168a, 171b, 197b; *ZH* 70d (*ShS*), 85b (*MhN, Rut*); Matt, “New Ancient Words.” Cf. the conservative and non-paradoxical explanation of *Or Yaqar*.

275. why is it written thus on the fourth day... On the fourth day of Creation, the word מארה (*me'orot*), *lights*, is written without *vavs*, the vowel letters. This deficient spelling alludes to a lack: the light of *Shekhinah* (symbolized by the moon) had diminished, and Her union with *Tif'eret* (symbolized by *vav*) was disrupted. The void was filled by demonic evil or “curse”: מארה (*me'erah*).

Rabbi Shim'on wonders why the defective spelling of *me'orot* is used on the fourth day when it would have been more logical on the second day, which is marked by the onset of the influence of *Gevurah* (Judgment) and by the creation of Hell. These events certainly signal the potential for oppressing the *Shekhinah*.

The reference to the diminishment of the moon derives from the story in BT *Hullin* 60b: “Rabbi Shim'on son of Pazzi pointed out a contradiction. ‘It is written: *God made the two great lights* (Genesis 1:16), and it is written [in the same verse]: *the greater light... and the lesser light*. The moon said before the blessed Holy One, “Master of the Universe! Can two kings possibly wear one crown? [i.e., How can both of us be *great*?]” He answered, “Go, diminish yourself!” She said before Him, “Master of the Universe! Because I have suggested something proper I should make myself smaller?” He replied, “Go and rule by day and night.” She said, “But what is the value of this? What good is a lamp at noon?””

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 6:3; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 6, 51; Nahmanides on Genesis 1:14; *Zohar* 1:19b-20a, 181a-b; 2:138a, 144b, 147b-148a, 219b; *ZH* 70d-71a (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 189; idem; *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 91; Solomon ibn Adret in *Peirushei ha-Aggadot*, on BT

Hullin 60b; Todros Halevi Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, 31c; Liebes, “*de Natura dei*,” 47-54; Pedaya, “Shabbat, Shabtai, u-mi’ut ha-yare’ah,” 157-158, 182-84; idem, *Ha-mar’eh ve-ha-dibbur*, 234-35.

276. a virgin should be married only on the fourth day... How can the law instruct that a virgin marry and attain consummation on the fourth day, a day in which *Shekhinah*—Virgin of Israel—is disgraced and separated from Her Husband?

See M *Ketubbot* 1:1: “A virgin is married on the fourth day [of the week] and a widow on the fifth day, for the courts of justice sit in the towns twice a week—on the second day [of the week] and on the fifth day—so that if he [the husband] had a claim as to the virginity [of the purported virgin-bride] he could go early [on the morning of the fifth day of the week] to the court of justice.”

See BT *Sanhedrin* 22b in the name of Rav: “A woman [before marriage] is a shapeless lump, and concludes a covenant only with him who transforms her into a [useful] vessel, as is written: *For He who espouses you, makes you—His name is YHVH Tseva’ot* (Isaiah 54:5).”

On the term “Virgin of Israel,” see Deuteronomy 22:19; Jeremiah 18:13; 31:4, 20; Amos 5:2.

277. when Hell was created, it did not attain full existence... The problem is resolved by considering the trajectory of Hell’s development, starting on the second day and completed on the fourth. The verse from Job indicates that there will be a conclusion to the development of Judgment and Hell. Though the fourth day would normally be associated with *Netsah*, here it is associated with *Shekhinah*, fourth leg of the royal chariot-throne for *Binah* (the other three being *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*). Therefore the Torah describes Moon’s, namely *Shekhinah*’s, diminution on the fourth day—Hell is complete when Moon complains.

See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. For a different understanding, cf. Mopsik’s translation.

Job 28:3-11 is traditionally understood as referring to God's penetration of the mysteries of nature, though more likely it refers to human mining operations in remote volcanic regions.

278. day of falling signifies rising... The law is for a virgin to marry on the fourth day because that is the day on which *Shekhinah* attains her position as fourth leg of the chariot-throne. Thus the human woman below demonstrated the fulfillment above through her own completion below. The verse *though I sit in darkness, YHVH is my light*, construed as spoken by *Shekhinah* and Her consummated relationship with *Tif'eret*, echoes the contrast of *Black am I, but beautiful*, interpreted above as reflecting *Shekhinah's* ambivalent nature—embodying both intrinsic darkness and the light She receives from above.

On the simultaneity of catastrophe and redemption, see *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:5 in the name of Rabbi Samuel: "On the very same day [that the Temple was destroyed] *Menaḥem*, [namely the Messiah] was born, and on that same day Israel received a reversal of their sins."

279. like the nut whose shell covers the kernel on all sides... Another explanation of the meaning of the deficient spelling of *me'orot*. The diminishment of *Shekhinah* ceded ground for the rule of *Sitra Aḥra*, who interposes himself between *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*. *Sitra Aḥra* is compared to the hard shell of a nut, blocking access to the kernel inside, and to the foreskin covering *Yesod* (corona) of the divine phallus, preventing sexual union.

In Jewish mysticism, the nut symbolizes the divine kernel surrounded and protected by demonic shells. The description of the divine chariot as a four-chambered walnut containing the kernel was first used by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

"Kernel" renders the word *moḥa*, literally "brain" or "mind."

On the image of the nut, see *Zohar* 1:19b-20a, 44b (*Heikh*); 2:15b (*MhN*), 140b; *ZH* 1b (*SO*), 70d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 156-60; Altmann, *Studies*, 172-79; Farber-Ginat, “Tefisat ha-Merkavah be-Torat ha-Sod”; Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*.

280. Daughters of Jerusalem... Directed to the angels who neither study Torah nor perform commandments, hence not engaged in preparing *Shekhinah* for union with the blessed Holy One. To Her intimate ones (either Israel’s righteous or the kabbalists), She exults in the adornment that they have bestowed upon Her.

On the contrast between angels and humans, see below, [note 282](#).

281. To those outside... She says that She is black... *Shekhinah* misleads the angels by speaking of Herself as “black,” when in fact She is “beautiful.” She does so in order to protect Israel’s righteous—the lower collectivity—from angelic jealousy. The second part of the phrase, *but beautiful*, is spoken as a stage whisper.

This is an example of the *Zohar*’s tendency to ascribe esoteric rhetoric to Scripture. The story of the “beautiful maiden” expresses this as a principle of the Torah’s style. See *Zohar* 2:99a; cf. Maimonides, *Guide* 3:32.

282. For they are jealous only of lower ones... The angels are jealous of humanity and hostile to human encroachments upon higher realms—what the angels regard as their territory. Among the angels themselves, however, there is no jealousy.

On the lack of envy among the angels, see BT *Shabbat* 89a; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 12. On the hostility of angels toward mere mortals, see *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20: “When Moses ascended on high... a band of angels of destruction... sought to scorch him with the breath of their mouths. What did the blessed Holy One do? He spread over him some of His splendor.”

See BT *Shabbat* 88b: “Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi said, ‘When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels said before the blessed Holy One, “Master of the Universe! What is one born of woman doing here among us?” He answered, “He has come to receive Torah.” They said, “That precious treasure—hidden by You for 974 generations before the world was created—You desire to give to flesh and blood! *What is a human that You are mindful of him, a human being that You take note of him?*” (Psalms 8:5). “Answer them,” said the blessed Holy One to Moses. “Master of the Universe,” he replied, “I fear they could scorch me with the breath of their mouths.” He said, “Grasp My throne of Glory, and answer them....”” Rabbi Naḥman observed, ‘This teaches that the Almighty spread some of the luster of His *Shekhinah* and His cloud over him.’” See *Zohar* 1:5a; 2:58a, 156b; 3:78b.

283. She removes them... *Shekhinah* prevents the angels from seeing Israel, thus protecting them from hostile glances. In so doing, She makes Herself appear “*pitch-black*.” According to this reading, *Do not look at me, for I am pitch-black* means “Do not imagine that you are seeing beauty from below—in fact, *I am pitch-black*.” Rabbi Shim’on reads שְׁחַרְחֹרֶת (*sheḥarḥoret*), *pitch-black*, as a modification of שְׁחֹר (*shaḥor*), “black,” that signifies an alteration in Israel’s visibility, enacted by *Shekhinah* for their own sake.

On the anomalous reduplicated noun *sheḥarḥoret*, often translated as *dark* or *swarthy*, see Isaac ibn Sahula on Song of Songs, 415; Pope; Bloch and Bloch; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:787–88; Zakovitch; Fishbane. Cf. ibn Ezra who suggests that the reduplication conveys a diminishment of quality, like *yeraqraq*, “greenish,” as in Leviticus 13:49.

Or *Yaqar*’s version of the text has מְכַעֵרָא (*mekha’ara*), “disfigures,” instead of מְבַעֵרָא (*meva’ara*), “removes,” to describe *Shekhinah*’s methods for protecting Israel. According to Cordovero, *Shekhinah* enfolds Israel within *qelippot* to

conceal the true beauty She attains through them. The thirteenth-century anti-Christian polemical work, *Sefer Nitsaḥon*, refers to the Jews as “black and ugly,” repeating one of the Christian taunts. It proceeds to give an allegorical explanation, but the Jewish self-perception as black and ugly is well-founded in ancient and medieval Jewish texts.

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:11: “Rabbi Yehudah explained the verse as a reference to sages. ‘*His locks wavy, black as a raven* (Song of Songs 5:11)—These are the sages; for even though they are ugly and black in this world, in the time to come, *their appearance like torches; they race like flashes of lightning* (Nahum 2:5).’” See *Shemot Rabbah* 23:10; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:5; *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* on 1:5; *Midrash Aggadah* on *Shemot* 26:7; Rashi, ad loc. and on Isaiah 52:14; Berger, *Sefer Nizḥon* #238, p. 159; Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture*, 33–43. Cf. BT *Sanhedrin* 100a.

On stratagems to shield Israel from angelic envy, *Tosafot* on BT *Berakhot* 3a, s.v. *hayah lekha le-hitpalel*, cites an opinion saying: “We recite *Qaddish* in Aramaic because it is a beautiful prayer and grand praise. Thus, it was composed in Aramaic so that the angels would not understand and be jealous of us.”

284. no embellishment so ravishing... facilitating ascent toward holiness... There is no agent whose devotion is like Israel’s, enabling union of *Shekhinah* and the blessed Holy One.

In contrast to Elijah’s negative assessment of *Shekhinah*’s blackness, Rabbi Shim’on sees it as a mark of virtue, the sign that She is protective of Her children and thus worthy of love from the blessed Holy One.

285. My adornment—through you... This explanation of the verse is also concerned with protecting Israel but proceeds in a different direction. *Shekhinah* asserts that the angels are the primary camp through whom She receives

beautification, and they should not attend to the sins of Israel which cause Her to be darkened. By emphasizing the darkening effect of their transgression, She aims to distract the angelic legions from Israel's merits.

286. All of this... A mother will defend her children by any means available. Similarly, *Shekhinah* goes to considerable rhetorical lengths to conceal from jealous angels Israel's dearness to Her and their role in Her ascent for unification with *Tif'eret*.

287. like the tents of Kedar... Rabbi Shim'on uses the contrasting images of the black *tents of Kedar* and the white *tapestries* [or: *curtains*] of *Solomon* to refer to Israel's sins and the purity of the angelic legions, respectively. *Shekhinah* is critical of Israel to protect them, contending that it is their transgressions that cause *Tif'eret* (symbolized by the sun) "to scorch" Her. Moreover, the ensuing blackness leads the "patriarchs," namely *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, to be enraged, withholding their overflow from Her.

"Solomon" renders שלמה (*Shelomo*), following MT, while the original vocalization is probably *Salmah*, the name of another ancient Arabian tribe. *Tapestries of Salmah* is a closer parallel to *tents of Kedar*.

On the *Salmah*, see Onkelos on Genesis 15:19; Numbers 24:21; Targum Yonatan on Judges 4:17; JT *Shevi'it* 6:1, 36b; BT *Bava Batra* 56a; Pope; Zakovich; Fox. On Israel's "dark" appearance, see *Zohar* 3:59b, and above, [note 283](#).

288. Is it appropriate to speak this way... Is it appropriate to speak slander against Israel, drawing attention to their sinfulness? The answer given is that for the sake of peace—to protect the Jews—one can represent the truth selectively. Further, interference from the angelic legions will impede divine unity above and this must be counteracted. Lastly, as the repository of everything, the

Moon, namely *Shekhinah*, contains blackness within Her as well. See *Or Yaqar; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*.

289. She veils the light of the moon... *Shekhinah* does so as part of Her sheltering of Israel—willing to sacrifice Her union with the sun, namely *Tif'eret*, in order to safeguard Israel. In this interpretation, *Shekhinah's* darkness is identified as foreskin, namely *Sitra Aḥra*, and Her “beauty” is aligned with the persistence of *Ḥesed* which shines through the obstruction, sustaining *Shekhinah's* innate beauty.

Cf. the interpretations of *Sullam, Matoq mi-Devash*, and Mopsik, who explain that the obstruction originates with *Sitra Aḥra*.

On the ray of transcendent love, see BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish: “To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of love by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love* (Psalms 42:9). Why? Because *in the night His song is with me* (ibid.).’ And there are some who say, Resh Lakish said: ‘To one who engages in Torah in this world—like nighttime—the blessed Holy One extends a ray of love in the world to come—like daytime—for it is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love*. Why? Because *in the night His song is with me.*” *His song* is the song of Torah.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13, pp. 254-55; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17, p. 22; *Midrash Mishlei* 31:15; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Talmud Torah* 3:13; *Zohar* 1:82b, 92a, 104a, 178b, 194b, 207b; 2:46a, 57a, 149a; 3:22a, 23b, 25a-b, 36a, 44a-b, 64b-65a, 68a, 76a, 213a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 54.

See BT *Megillah* 13a, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu'a son of Korḥah: “Esther was greenish, but a thread of grace was drawn upon her.”

290. from the side of transcendent darkness... An alternate origin for *Shekhinah's* blackness is from *Gevurah*. When *Shekhinah* suckles from *Gevurah*, the side of Judgment,

She is darkened, but She is simultaneously beautified from the primal light of *Hesed*.

291. *You cannot look at me...* In this interpretation of the verse, its meaning shifts from its simple sense—*Do not look upon me*—to *You cannot look at me*. *Shekhinah* commiserates with Her angels and their confusion that suddenly they cannot see Her when *Sitra Aḥra* has sheathed Her in darkness.

292. *My mother's sons were incensed at me...* *Shekhinah* speaks these words, lamenting that *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, emerging from *Binah* (symbolized by their “mother”), have abandoned Her. These three withdraw from *Shekhinah* when She is subjugated by *Sitra Aḥra*. In that situation, the sun, symbolizing *Tif'eret*, retreats to the transcendent security of *Binah*.

293. *imparting to legions...* *Shekhinah* bemoans that when *Sitra Aḥra* subjugates Her, he distributes Her nourishment to his legions, the angelic princes of the other nations. This prevents Her, in turn, from providing sustenance to Her angelic troops.

294. *how can one engaged with song...* Rabbi Shim'on wonders how *Shekhinah*, the singer of Song of Songs, can launch into grievances such as *They made me guardian of the vineyards*, and rebukes such as *Do not look at me, for I am pitch-black*, so close to the beginning of a hymn of praise! He offers two answers: first, Her utterance *Oh, let him kiss me with his mouth's kisses* (Song of Songs 1:2) is the essence of the homage. Second, Scripture is a repository of all of reality, so it is perfectly appropriate to include these other remarks.

295. *beauty of נופא (nofa), boughs, of the Tree of Life...* Elijah uses Psalms 48:3, describing beauty, to explain the verse from Song of Songs. The beauty of the Tree of Life (symbolizing *Tif'eret* and associated with the Written Torah) is comprised of the collectivity of the entire alphabet, a totality expressed in *Yesod*. All of the letters

ascend and are contained within one essential letter; after being contained, that letter sends them forth.

For a slightly different explanation, see *Sullam*. The full verse in Psalms reads: *Beautiful in loftiness, joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, summit of the north, city of the great King*. See also *Zohar* 1:206b on this verse.

296. no other mark beyond itself... This letter, as yet unidentified, is supreme for being orthographically self-sufficient, not visibly containing any other letters within it.

297. All other letters have some other mark... Most letters attain their visible form through the interplay of black script and the white space within or surrounding them. In its essence, ׳ (*yod*) is unique, conceived as a simple point of blackness. Thus, *yod* is the paradigmatic kabbalistic symbol expressing the paradoxical unity of the many and the one.

This passage on the distinctiveness of ׳ exhibits a strong parallel with *Zohar* 3:191a. On this letter as closed and self-contained, see *Zohar* 3:92a; and as black with no whiteness, see 3:191a; *ZH* 71b (*ShS*).

298. This point, inherited by the Bride... When *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the Bride, looks upward, She receives the letter ׳ (*yod*), symbolizing *Hokhmah*, within. Internalizing the letter signifies a new identity, mirroring *Hokhmah*, and She is now called *yod*. In this capacity, She is oriented entirely upward, with no ability to embrace those below.

In Kabbalah, *Shekhinah* is often called Lower (or Small) *Hokhmah*; see *Bahir* 43 (63), 44 (65); *Zohar* 1:141b; 2:235b; 3:61a, 290a, 296a (last two *Idra Zuta*). On *Shekhinah*'s inability to care for those below when She is in mystical union above, see Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 89-91.

299. like the preeminent embellishment... In Her new identity, *Shekhinah* is like *Hokhmah*, which is normally

signified by the letter *yod*. Identified with *yod* there is only blackness, rendering Her essentially invisible.

300. concealed and hidden in the mystery of a single point... *Shekhinah* identifies with the properties of a point: occupying no space, utterly inapprehensible.

On the difficulty of perceiving the letter *yod*, see Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush ha-Otiyyot*, 111. Elsewhere, the *Zohar* emphasizes the three-dimensionality of the letter *yod*. See, e.g., *Zohar* 2:180a.

301. a point in the midst of Her legions Even when *Shekhinah* is in the midst of Her legions, She can be utterly unseen when She is identified with *yod*.

302. They are six and they are five... The six *tapestries* [or: *curtains*] of *Solomon* signify the central six *sefirot*: *Hesed* through *Yesod*. *Tif'eret* is the overarching principle, so the six can be construed as five with one element hidden. The letter ם (*vav*), whose numerical value is six, also lacks any white space within it and is thus orthographically and conceptually an extension of the letter ך (*yod*). *Shekhinah*, represented here by the point-like letter *yod*, absorbs the influx of the six *sefirot* above.

See *Or Yaqar; Sullam; Mopsik*. On the letter *vav* as six *sefirot* in relation to the tapestry, see *Zohar* 2:164b.

By associating these tapestries with those of the Dwelling, Rabbi Shim'on emphasizes the link between Song of Songs and the Holy of Holies. On their identification, see above, [note 2](#).

303. the letter ז (*zayin*)... ז (*Zayin*) has the numerical value of seven, signifying the lower seven *sefirot*. Despite the slight over-hanging at the top of its form, it remains essentially a straight line with no whiteness incorporated into it. The word "*zayin*" means "weapon," and is thus construed as a reference to the militant Kedar nation.

On the association of the letter *zayin* with warfare, see *Zohar* 1:3b. On the association of the Kedar tribe with

violence at the end of days, see BT *Kallah Rabbati* 4:12; *Sefer Zerubavel*, 503–5.

304. Black am I... This expression applies to the letter *yod* as seen above. Rabbi Shim'on recaps the common features of the letters *yod*, *vav*, and *zayin*: all three lack white space, and all three include the sum of divine influx within them.

305. none is as concealed and hidden as ' (yod)... Even though *vav* and *zayin*, represented by *tents of Kedar* and *tapestries of Solomon* respectively, are similar to *yod* as represented by *Black am I*, they do not match the utter compactness and hiddenness of *yod*.

306. What about ׀ (final nun)?... One might have expected the linear final *nun* to have been included in this group of letters that contain no space. The explanation is that the final *nun* is written simply as an extension of the letter *vav*. Even though it comprises the feminine *yod* in this extension, it does not count as an independent expression of concealment and blackness.

On the relation between ׀ (*vav*) and ׀ (final *nun*), see *Zohar* 3:66b, 285b. On ׀ (final *nun*) symbolizing the union of male and female, see *Bahir* 56 (83); *Zohar* 1:18b–19a, 147a (*Tos*); 3:155a, 156b, 285b. Cf. *ZH* 38c and *Nitsotsei Zohar*, ad loc., n. 3.

Elsewhere, the *Zohar* indicates that the letter ׀ (*nun*) symbolizes the female, *Shekhinah*. Since the letter ׀ (*vav*) symbolizes the male, *Tif'eret*, the full spelling ׀׀ (*nun*) signifies male and female as one whole. On ׀ (*nun*) as a symbol of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:147a–b (*Tos*); 2:91a, 139a, 215a, 235b; 3:66b, 155a; *ZH* 41c.

307. beauty of the Tree of Life... Representing *Yesod* which proceeds from the “Tree of Life,” signifying *Tif'eret*, also symbolized by the letter *vav*. Blessings are encapsulated in *yod*—which first symbolizes *Yesod*, but then incorporates *Shekhinah* as well. In their union, signified by *yod*, “the earth,” symbolizing *Shekhinah*, experiences great joy.

That union is expressed as well in the words *Har Tsiyon* (*Mount Zion*).

On the association of the letter *vav* with life, see *Zohar* 1:12b, 33b, 241b; 2:137a; 3:176b. On *yod* as the mark of union between *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, see sources cited in Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God," 35-48; idem, *Through a Speculum*, 336-45, 357-77, 384-92. On Mount Zion, see *Zohar* 2:211a.

308. Despite Her diminutiveness... In a different formulation of the contrast of *Shekhinah* being *black... but beautiful*, She is small yet capable of serving as *city* for *the great King*, signifying *Binah*. *Binah's* "troops" are the other *sefirot*—from *Hesed* through *Yesod*—who fill Her with divine efflux. Her "diminutiveness" is as perceived remotely by the entities below Her who cannot gain access to Her; She is capacious, however, in relation to the *sefirot* above.

309. A great king came to it... the letter ל (lamed)... The "great king" signifies *Binah*, who merges with *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the "little city." The "great king" is associated with ל (*lamed*), which is written with two separate parts: the upper part is a ך (*yod*), signifying *Hokhmah*, while the main body of the letter symbolizes *Binah*. *Lamed* is a soaring tower, straddling the apprehensible ether, indicating *Hokhmah*, and the lower realm. The inapprehensible ether signifies *Keter*, who is unknowable.

On *lamed* as a flying tower, see above, [note 153](#). The term אַוִּירָא אַחְרָא דְּלֵא אַתְפַּס (*aveira aħra de-la itpas*), "a different ether that cannot be grasped" originates in *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:6: "Out of chaos He formed substance, making what is not into what is. He hewed enormous pillars מֵאִוִּיר שְׂאִינוּ נִתְפַּס (*me-avir she-eino nitpas*), out of ether that cannot be grasped." The word *avir* is a Hebraization of the Greek primal element *aèr*. See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 33.

On the "pure ether that cannot be grasped," see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 107 (and Tishby's note 1); *Zohar* 3:2a; *ZH* 73b, 74b (both *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer*

ha-Rimmon, 5 (and Wolfson's note), 26; idem, Commentary on the Ten *Sefirot*, 365b-366a, 372a; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 52; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 374; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 4-6 (6-8) (and Mopsik's note 28); Altmann, *Studies*, 173-74; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 153-56; "Peirush Shem ben Arba Otiyyot," in *Kitvei ha-Iyyun*, 191. On the "pure ether," see *Zohar* 2:50a (*Mat*); 3:135b (*IR*), 292b (*IZ*); *ZH* 70a (*ShS*); Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 31-47; Verman, *The Circle of Contemplation*, 153-56. On the sexualized relationship of the "Spark of Darkness" and the "pure ether," see Wolfson, "Erasing the Erasure," 62-70.

The full verse from Ecclesiastes in its simple sense reads: *There was a little city, and few people within it, and a great king came against it and went round it and built great siege works against it.*

310. Even though this letter is king... The relationship of *lamed* and *yod*, and by extension, of *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, is characterized by paradox. ל (*Lamed*) is the largest of letters, yet it enters into י (*yod*), the smallest of letters. Subsequently, ל (*lamed*) undergoes a rotation, using the *yod* to transmute into the letter ט (*tet*), which symbolizes the divine phallus, *Yesod*. The self-enclosing motion of *Binah* from the form of a *lamed* into the form of a *tet*, enables union with *Shekhinah* by way of *Yesod*.

On *tet* as a symbol for *Yesod*, see *Bahir* 57 (84), 87 (124); Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 374; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 174-75.

311. Upon Her—trapping and plucking one who deserves Her snare... The simple sense of the verse refers to a king laying siege against a city. Elijah flips the meaning of the preposition עלֶיהָ (*aleiha*), from *against* to *for*, explaining here that the siege is located at the site of the city, signifying *Shekhinah* (represented here as a "point"), but its traps protect the *Shekhinah*'s honor, by punishing sinners, those who have transgressed against Her. These are the

ones who “deserve” (or “desire”) her snares, referring to those who have sought out seductive misdeeds.

312. King Solomon lost his kingship... By marrying many wives, amassing great wealth, and acquiring many horses, Solomon violated the restrictions on royalty in Deuteronomy 17:16-17, where the key word, beginning with the letter י (yod), is ירבה (yarbeh), [*he shall not*] *amass many* [wives or horses or excessive silver and gold]. According to 1 Kings 11, Solomon’s wives lured him into idolatry, and as a result God decreed that his entire kingdom except for one tribe (Judah) would be torn away from his son, becoming the northern kingdom of Israel. According to midrashic tradition, Solomon himself was supplanted by the demon Ashmedai (or by an angel), and he was forced to wander as a commoner for years.

The poetic echoing of the ל (lamed) and י (yod) in the repetition of לא ירבה (lo yarbeh), *he shall not amass*, magnifies Solomon’s sins. Since *lamed* represents “the Great King” and *yod* the *Shekhinah*, Solomon demonstrates his unworthiness through his violation of the verses that emphasize this pairing.

On Solomon’s violations, see JT *Sanhedrin* 2:6, 20c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 19:2; BT *Sanhedrin* 21b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 26:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 5:12; *Qohelet Rabbah* 2:4; *Shemot Rabbah, Va’era* 6:1; *Tanḥuma, Aḥarei Mot* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Aḥarei Mot* 2. On the question of whether he violated two or three biblical prohibitions, see Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitsvot*, #363-365; idem, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:26; *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 10.

313. ק (qof) decamped... The name of the letter ק (qof) is spelled out fully here as קוף (qof). The word קוף (qof) means “monkey” and is written out because of Solomon’s unmaking or as a reference to the usurpation of his crown by a demon or other impostor.

On Solomon’s dethronement, see the sources in the previous note (except for *Va-yiqra Rabbah* and *Shemot*

Rabbah); BT *Gittin* 68a-b; *Rut Rabbah* 5:6; *Midrash Tehillim* 78:12; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:3; *Midrash El Yit'halel* in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 6:106-7; *Zohar* 1:53b, 199a, 250a; David ben Judah ha-Hasid, *Book of Mirrors*, 21; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:299-300, n. 86. On the demonic associations of the letter *qof*, see above, [note 190](#).

[314.](#) He built great siege works on her behalf... Traps have been set for the sake of *Shekhinah's* honor. For that same reason, She is black and hard to apprehend.

[315.](#) My mother's sons... they constricted me into this point... The *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod* will only bond with *Shekhinah* when She is not attached to angels and humanity below. Those *sefirot* compress Her into the single-dimensionality of a point to prevent access to Her. She laments that they can manifest themselves fully, in sharp contrast to the limitations they have imposed on Her.

י (Vav) has the numerical value of six and signifies the six *sefirot*, *Hesed* to *Yesod*. The three prongs of the װ (*shin*) stand for the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who symbolize respectively the triad of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. See *Zohar* 1:2b, 224a; 2:54a, 119b, 143b, 204a; *ZH* 60c-d (*MhN*, *ShS*).

Or *Yaqar*, *Matoq mi-Devash*, and *Sullam* indicate that the letter ם (final *nun*) represents a combination of נ and ך (yod), signifying the union of masculine and feminine. They explain the significance of ם (final *tsadi*) in terms of the medial ץ (*tsadi*): as a combination of the letters נ (*nun*) and ך, which signify *Shekhinah* and *Yesod* respectively. On *tsadi* as a combination of *nun* and *yod*, see *Bahir* 42 (61); *Zohar* 1:2b.

[316.](#) written with me... All letters begin and end with a single point, manifesting the critical role of *Shekhinah* in relation to the other *sefirot*. There is no position within any letter that does not reflect the centrality of this point.

[317.](#) My own vineyard I did not guard... Elijah explains the maiden's apparent disregard of her vineyard in terms of *Shekhinah's* not tending to Her own angelic retinue.

Instead of using the imagery of the point and the line, here Elijah uses vegetation imagery to indicate *Shekhinah's* lack of expansion beyond Herself. Thus, guarding one's vineyard implies encouraging appropriate growth.

318. House of Israel... The letter *yod*, signifying *Shekhinah*, emanates ultimately from the transcendent point, representing *Hokhmah*. In the course of Her downward procession, She is a legacy for all the *sefirot*, thus impeding attachments to other, lower entities. For other explanations, see *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

319. casting forth and extending branches to all letters... Though *Shekhinah* has not extended Herself to those below, She is the ground from which all other letters, that is *sefirot*, are sustained. They are *the vineyards* that She guards. Thus, Her invisibility is not solipsistic but rather reflects exclusive connections with those above.

320. She is ה (he), constituted within Her own unity... The letter ה (*he*) signifies the *Shekhinah* in her completed state, a completion achieved with the presence of the letter ׳ (*yod*), the "legacy" that She received from above. With that consummation, *Shekhinah* says *Do not look upon me*, making Herself inaccessible to those below, preferring Her union with those above. See *Sullam*.

321. Upon ascending upward, She says to Her lover... Elijah explains the transition from Song of Songs 1:6 to 1:7. In 1:6, *Shekhinah* is speaking to her angelic attendants below, explaining Her withdrawal from them and ascent above. In 1:7, She turns Her attention to Her male lover above, expressing Her longing to be with Him.

322. let the one who began this discourse finish it... Since Elijah began to discourse upon Song of Songs 1:7, Rabbi Shim'on encourages him to conclude his thoughts upon the verse.

323. Wherever it is written, הגד (hagged), tell... Rabbi Shim'on interprets the beloved's request, "*Tell me*," as an appeal for revelation of particularly recondite secrets.

This understanding of the Hebrew verb may be associated with the Aramaic verb נגד (*ngd*) which means “pull, draw out.” “Words of evocation” renders מלי דאגדה (*milei de-aggadah*), itself a play on these associations.

The verb הגיד (*higgid*), “to tell,” implies a word of wisdom, as opposed to the root אמר (*amr*), “to say,” which pertains to normal or profane speech. On the sense of *higgid* as revealing something concealed or mysterious, see Genesis 3:11; 21:26; 31:20; 32:30; 41:25; Judges 14:12, 15–16; 1 Kings 10:3; Job 11:6; Daniel 2:2; *Zohar* 1:86b, 234b, 249a; 2:80a; 3:50b, 161a, 292b–293a (*IZ*), 298b.

324. how did Samuel know... The narrative in 1 Samuel 10:1–8 describes Samuel’s anointing of Saul and Samuel’s foretelling a series of imminent events. Now, Samuel’s demonstrated knowledge of the future can be understood only as prophetic, drawing on deep sources of understanding.

325. Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place... The beloved’s beckoning can be explained by referring to the creation of the earth and the gathering of the waters. Desire arises within “Will,” signifying *Keter*, to create “the earth,” which symbolizes *Shekhinah*. To do so, the blessed Holy One takes “snow,” signifying efflux from beneath *Binah*, represented by the throne of Glory. He places the snow into “the water,” symbolizing *Hesed*. “Darkness” is a place of Judgment, *Gevurah*, where the overflow cools into an icy mass, congealing into earth.

Pirgei de-Rabbi Eliezer 3 records the following: “From what place was the earth created? He took some snow from beneath His Throne of Glory and cast it upon the waters. The waters congealed, becoming the dust of the earth, as is said: *For to the snow He says, ‘Be earth!’* (Job 37:6).

On the earth being created from snow, see JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77a; BT *Yoma* 54b; *Midrash Konen*, 24; *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:12 (Long and Saadyanic recensions); Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:26; *ZH* 45b, 61b (*MhN*, *ShS*).

The verse in Genesis concludes: *and let the dry land appear. And it was so.*

326. *Let the waters... be gathered to one place...* Namely, *Yesod*. Divine overflow streams from the *sefirot* above into *Yesod*—and from there alone, into *Shekhinah*. Once established, *Yesod* can be a foundation for Earth, that is, *Shekhinah*.

Tosefta Ta'anit 1:4 associates the earth with the lower waters, which respond to the upper waters. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: “Rabbi Shim'on son of El'azar said, ‘Every single handbreadth [of water] descending from above is met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep...* (Psalms 42:8).’ Rabbi Levi said, The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, “Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers.” They immediately receive them, as is written: *Let the earth open* (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.”

See JT *Berakhot* 9:2, 14a; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:25); *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 29b, 32b, 46a, 60b, 62a, 159a, 235a, 244a-b, 245b; 3:223b; *ZH* 1d.

327. *then, let the dry land appear...* The earth could not be viewed until there had been appropriate preparations. For the *Zohar*, this process of the male being present before the female can appear serves as a model for human social practice.

328. *Once perfected... She was called arets (earth)...* The receiving of overflow from above facilitates the change in *Shekhinah*'s nomenclature from *yabashah* (*dry land*) to *arets* (*earth*).

329. *Eikhah, eikhah (where, where)...* This word's repetition in our verse alludes to the historical destruction of both Jerusalem Temples. (According to rabbinic tradition, both Temples were destroyed—more than six hundred years apart—on the ninth of the month of Av.) For

it is famously also the first word in the book of Lamentations, as well as its Hebrew title. Here, *Shekhinah* asserts that since She and *Tif'eret* currently enjoy deep love and attachment, a powerful opportunity exists for prayer for mercy regarding the two calamities. The destruction of Upper and Lower Temples correspond to the stoppage of divine overflow from *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, respectively.

In its simple sense in Song of Songs, *eikhah* means *where*, which is its lexical meaning in Aramaic and apparently also in Israelian (Northern Israelite) Hebrew. See Rendsburg and Noegel, *Solomon's Vineyard*, 18. In its simple sense in Lamentations it means *alas*, referring to the catastrophic destruction of the First Temple.

See BT *Ta'anit* 29a; *Zohar* 3:197a; *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

330. *I would be at peace like one enrobed...* *Shekhinah* says that if not for the two calamitous ends to the Temples, represented by the dual utterances of *eikhah*, *alas*, peace would have reigned above and below. She exhibits no haughtiness despite the glory of being *enrobed* from above.

The simple meaning of this fragment of Song of Songs 1:7 is *Lest I be like one who wanders* or *Why should I be like one who wanders*. Most English translations here follow the Septuagint, Peshitta, Symmachus, Vulgate, which render $\text{וַיִּטְוּ} (otyah)$ via metathesis as *to'ayah*, *a wanderer*. See Gordis; NJPS; Pope; Bloch and Bloch; Zakovitch; Fishbane; cf. Targum; Fox.

331. enclosed in a transcendent, holy wrapper—the holy name $\text{יה} (Yah)$... When *Shekhinah* is harmoniously integrated with the *sefirot* above, She is garbed and protected with the divine name *Yah*, signifying *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. The “holy rungs” signify the six *sefirot*, *Hesed* to *Yesod*, modeled after the three above or, perhaps, the angelic realm as patterned after the *sefirot*. For these different interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

332. Know the reason: by the tents of the shepherds... In the rabbinic tradition, “tents” usually signify the study hall. God answers *Shekhinah*’s question, explaining that the Temples were destroyed because of the violation of the Torah, normally studied in “the tents.”

On “tents” signifying houses of study, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:10; BT *Sanhedrin* 105b; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:1; *Leqah, Tov, Balak* 129a; on Genesis 25:27: *Targum Onqelos; Targum Yerushalmi*; Rashi; David Kimḥi; *Zohar* 2:112b, 175b; on Numbers 24:5, see *Targum Yerushalmi*. On the abrogation of the Torah as the cause of the destruction of the Temples, see BT *Nedarim* 81a; *Eikhah Rabbati, Petiḥta* 2.

The full verse reads: *If you do not know, O loveliest of women, go forth in the tracks of the sheep, graze your kids by the tents of the shepherds.*

333. אֵי כְדֵין תִּרְעָה (Ei ke-dein tir’eh), Where do You desire... Rabbi Shim’on plays on the similarity between the Hebrew *tir’eh, do you pasture*, and the Aramaic *tir’eh, “do you desire.”* *Shekhinah* tells Her Male lover that when She will be intimately joined with Him, She will be like the fruit of a nut, filling up all its nooks and crannies. Those crevices are signified here by the heavenly palaces whom *Shekhinah* fills with light. At that moment there will be a full union of *Tif’eret* (signified by the divine name *YHVH*) and *Shekhinah* (represented by the name *Elohim*).

The walnut has frequently served in Jewish mysticism as a symbol of the divine realm. See above, [note 279](#).

334. in order to learn the wisdom of their Master... This is an unusually bold statement of the need to learn esoteric secrets in order to gain access to the world that is coming. The purpose of existence is to study the Torah, with the aid of esoteric secrets, in order to learn the mysteries of Divinity. It is precisely this kind of knowledge that redeems one from suffering in Hell. With this knowledge, “thirteen gates of mysteries of pure balsam,”

corresponding to the thirteen attributes of mercy that reside within *Keter*, from which *Hokhmah* emerges, open up for him. God rewards this individual by hewing his likeness upon both the garment of this world, signifying *Shekhinah*, and the garment of the next world, signifying *Binah*.

“Happy” renders the Aramaic זכאי (zaka’in), corresponding to the Hebrew word *Ashrei*. On this understanding of the term, see Liebes, “Zaka’in inun Ysrael.”

On Torah study as a reference to knowledge of theosophic kabbalah or its theurgic application, see, e.g., *Zohar* 1:189b-190a; 2:61b-62a, 95a; 3:22a, 36a, 73a, 96a, 153a (*Piq*); *ZH* 70d (*ShS*).

Thirteen rivers of balsam await the righteous in the world that is coming. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 62:2; BT *Ta’anit* 25a. In the *Zohar*, the rivers of balsam often represent the fragrant flow of emanation from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*. See *Zohar* 2:127b; 3:181a; *ZH* 76c (*MhN, Rut*); cf. *Zohar* 3:139a (*IR*).

On knowledge of Torah as a means of protection after death, see BT *Hagigah* 27a in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “The fire of Hell has no dominion over scholars.” See *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 1; *Midrash Mishlei* 10; *Zohar* 1:88a (*ST*), 132a; 2:123b; 3:144a (*IR*), 196b; *ZH* 2c (*SO*), 8d (*MhN*), 70d (*ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 1:4a; 2:134b; 3:205b. On the divine purple robe, see *Midrash Tehillim* 9:13; *Zohar* 1:39a, 41a (last two *Heikh*), 61b, 224b; 2:8b; 3:140b (*IR*); Baḥya ben Asher on Exodus 13:11; Yuval, *Two Nations*, 95-99; Liebes, “Porphoryata shel Helena mi-Troya ve-Qiddush ha-Shem,” 269-88. On this section, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1131-33.

335. to understand his body... The call for a programmatic self-assessment is a reworking of M *Avot* 3:11, in the name of Akavia son of Maḥalalel: “Reflect on three things and you will not come into the grip of sin. Know from where you came, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give account and

reckoning. From where did you come? From a fetid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, worms, and maggots. And before whom are you destined to give account and reckoning? Before the King of kings, the blessed Holy One.”

See Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 3 (5): “Let me make you aware and cognizant of the truth that He, may He be blessed, the radiance of His transcendence and grandeur of His essence and power cannot be apprehended. However, through the structure of the human body, one can comprehend it, within the parameters of his thought.” The human body is structured according to the pattern of *sefirot* and thus, knowledge of the former provides insight into the latter. See above, [note 256](#).

[336.](#) to know and contemplate mysteries of his soul... Rabbi Shim'on emphasizes that the answers to these classic questions are all to be found in the esoteric meanings of the Torah.

On the need for self-knowledge, Abraham ibn Ezra writes on Exodus 31:18: “It is impossible for a person to know God without knowing his own soul (*nafsho*), super-soul (*nishmato*), and body, for without awareness of one's own make-up, what wisdom has he?”

On knowledge of the soul as a basis for apprehending God, see Moses de León, *Sefer Or Zaru'a*, 249; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 3 (5); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 35–37; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 4; see previous note. On the phrase “here today, tomorrow in the grave,” see BT *Berakhot* 28b.

[337.](#) even if he has many good deeds... This is intended as a different interpretation of Song of Songs 1:8: *If you do not know, O loveliest of women, go forth*. Even one with “many good deeds,” that is, the *loveliest of women*, “will be ejected” without the requisite esoteric lore. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

338. speak to me of mysteries of wisdom... To avoid the shame of banishment from the upper world, the soul beseeches God to teach her the necessary wisdom.

339. Gain awareness בעקבי (be-iqvei), in the tracks, of the sheep... In response to the soul's plea, Rabbi Shim'on offers an explanation of what God might say. Before being permitted entry, the soul will have to learn mysteries of wisdom from mystical initiates who often go unnoticed.

The self-knowledge advocated by the *Zohar* here (in its interpretation of *If you do not know*) resembles the reading in the Septuagint and Vulgate: *If you do not know yourself*. The Church Father Jerome wrote the following concerning this verse: "Unless you know yourself, and keep your heart with all watchfulness, unless you fly from the glances of youth, you shall go forth from My chamber to feed the goats, which are to stand on My left." See Pope, 336.

On concealed kabbalists in the *Zohar*, see Oron, "Simeni ke-Ḥotam," 21; Liebes, "Zohar ve-Eros," 89-92; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 114, 146-50; Yisraeli, *Parshanut ha-Sod*, 54-65; Benarroch, *Sabba ve-Yanoqa*, 14-15.

340. these are the children... studying Torah... On the value of children learning Torah, see BT *Shabbat* 119b in the name of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince: "The world endures only for the sake of the breath of schoolchildren."

See *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* on 1:8; *Zohar* 1:1b, 47a, 146b (*ST*); 2:39a; 3:17b. On *kids* (that is, young goats or sheep) as children, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:8; *Shemot Rabbah* 2:4.

Moses Cordovero suggests that this passage has been interrupted prematurely, although the manuscript evidence (from the sixteenth century) does not support his speculation. See *Or Yaqar*.

341. in the beginning, the two lights were equal... The sun and moon, signifying *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*, were

originally united, of the same size, in perfect harmony and equal radiance.

BT *Hullin* 60b is the source of this story about God, the sun, and the moon: “Rabbi Shim’on son of Pazzi pointed out a contradiction. ‘It is written: *God made the two great lights* (Genesis 1:16), and it is written [in the same verse]: *the greater light... and the lesser light*. The moon said before the blessed Holy One, “Master of the Universe! Can two kings possibly wear one crown? [i.e., How can both of us be *great*?]” He answered, “Go, diminish yourself!” She said before Him, “Master of the Universe! Because I have suggested something proper I should make myself smaller?” He replied, “Go and rule by day and night.” She said, “But what is the value of this? What good is a lamp at noon?””

See sources cited above, [note 275](#). On the original unity of the two luminaries, see *Zohar* 1:20a; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 90.

[342](#). **It is not the case...** Rabbi Shim’on emphasizes that the moon, representing *Shekhinah*, is not luminous and equal to the sun independently. It is only when *Shekhinah* and *Tif’eret* are united in one bond that the term *great* from Genesis 1:16 is applicable.

343. head of the foxes... In Her diminished stature, *Shekhinah* will rule only over the angels below, or perhaps the humans below.

See *M Avot* 4:15, in the name of Rabbi Matya son of Heresh: “Be a tail to lions, and not a head to foxes.” This maxim is often understood to mean: Associate with those greater than you, rather than those beneath you.

Here Rabbi Shim'on applies the Mishnaic saying to *the two great lights*. At first, *Shekhinah* was joined with World of the Male, and even though She was “the tail” of the *sefirot*, She shared the designation *great*. When She complained about Her status, God made Her *lesser*, placing Her as “the head” of lower realms. See *Zohar* 2:148a.

344. two crowns at once... Since the sun and the moon, signifying *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, manifest the seemingly opposing traits of mercy and judgment, *Shekhinah* questions the possibility of the world being conducted with both at once.

345. how shall I be enwrapped at noon... *Shekhinah* questions how She can be present during the day when the sun, signifying *Tif'eret*, is so powerful.

The meaning of *shallamah*, *lest*, is uncertain. The rendering assumes that this is the sense referenced by *Shekhinah's* expressed concern “I am veiled in shame before Him.” Alternatively, the *Zohar* might be adopting a looser approach, construing the term as *how* [*shall*], as reflected by Her question “How shall I be enwrapped at noon?”

346. If you do not know... for you have asked: How is it possible... This fragment from Song of Songs 1:8 is actually part of God's response to *Shekhinah's* expression of incredulousness about the possibility of Divinity's acting with two opposing traits as one.

347. tracks of the sheep... *Sheep* here is interpreted to refer to the lower realms, inferior to the *sefirot* that *Shekhinah* might have ruled over, had She been able to maintain Her prior position. *Shekhinah* will rule at night,

which is the time of judgment, one of Her attributes—and thus a fitting appointment.

348. Happy is your portion... “Happy” renders זכאה (zaka’ah). See Liebes, “Zaka’in inun Yisrael.”

349. Once She ascended upward... Sometimes *Shekhinah* enjoys union with Her male partner above when He descends below to join Her, and so She awaits, ornamented and aroused. Here, however, She leaves Her legions behind, ascending to seek Him out. In doing so, She is contracted, like a ך (yod). The compressed graphic form of the yod expresses her aloneness, a condition of being closed to those above and below.

350. A great king... Signifying *Tif’eret*.

The verse in its simple sense reads: *There was a little city, and few people within it, and a great king came against it and went round it and built great siege works against it.*

351. from the day the Temple was destroyed... As a sign of His love, God takes an oath that until Israel returns to Jerusalem and God (*the Holy One*) is present once again with them there (*in your midst*), He *will not enter* the heavenly Jerusalem (*the city*). The heavenly city of Jerusalem symbolizes *Shekhinah*, with whom the blessed Holy One will reunite only when Israel returns from exile.

See BT *Ta’anit* 5a: “Rav Naḥman asked Rabbi Yitshak, ‘What is the meaning of *The Holy One is in your midst and I will not enter the city?* [Surely it cannot be that] because *the Holy One is your midst I will not enter the city!*’ He replied: ‘Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The blessed Holy One said, “I will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until I can enter the earthly Jerusalem.” Is there then a heavenly Jerusalem? Yes; for it is written: *Jerusalem built as a city שחברה (she-ḥubbrah), that is bound, together* (Psalms 122:3).” Rabbi Yoḥanan adduces via wordplay that Jerusalem has a חברה (*ḥaverah*), “companion,” (or prototype) in heaven.

See Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *lo avo* and *Yerushalayim*; *Tanḥuma*, *Pegudei* 1; *Midrash Tehillim* 122:4; *Zohar* 1:1b, 231a; 2:55b, 224b; 3:15b, 68b, 147b–148a, 262b. Cf. Revelation 21:2; *Targum Yonatan*, Psalms 122:3.

352. Why should I be as one veiled... *Shekhinah* laments Her isolation and longs for companionship and union with *Tif'eret*, which would give Her the ability both to absorb overflow from above and to distribute it to the worlds below.

Why renders שלמה (*shallamah*), though its simple meaning is *lest*. See above, [note 345](#).

353. extend Yourself in all directions... When *Tif'eret* unites with *Shekhinah*, He encourages Her to manifest the efflux that She has received from above and to spread out. The orthography of the letter ה (*he*) is itself the symbolic expression of this broadening.

354. go for yourself... *Shekhinah* should expand Herself, for Her own benefit. When *Tif'eret* tells Her to *graze your kids*, the intention is that She can now receive overflow from above and then transfer it to entities below.

On *yod* as a “small, black point,” see *Zohar* 3:191a; *ZḤ* 69d (*ShS*).

In its simple sense, Song of Songs 1:8 reads: *If you do not know, O loveliest of women, go forth in the tracks of the sheep. Graze your kids by the tents of the shepherds.*

355. Supernal King descended to penetrate Her... Elijah now details how *Shekhinah* transforms from Her contracted state as י (*yod*) to Her expanded state as ה (*he*). “Supernal King” signifies *Binah*, who descends to meet *Shekhinah* when She rises up. *Binah* “strikes” *Shekhinah*, denoting the moment of sexual union, and it is that joining that allows for *Shekhinah*’s expansion.

356. loveliest of women... If י (*yod*) is essentially a small, black point, how can it be represented as the “loveliest of women?” This recalls the dilemma of Song of Songs 1:4: *I am black, but beautiful*. Here, Elijah explains

that the *yod* is the very essence of all letters. Graphically, all letters begin with a point; thus, none can be written without her. Whatever beauty they have can be ascribed to her. *Yod* has its origins in the most recondite regions of Divinity, in the sense that *Shekhinah* emanated from above and in the sense that it resembles the first letter of the tetragrammaton, most commonly associated with *Hokhmah*, called Supernal Point. The phrase could now be read as *loveliness in women*.

357. in the letters that are female... It is through the expansion of *Shekhinah* from the form of *yod* to *he* that *yod's* beauty can be disseminated to all the letters, which are female, and then to the legions below. See the second interpretation of *Or Yaqar*.

Or Yaqar and *Matoq mi-Devash* offer a different explanation in which “the letters that are female” refers to the two instances of *he* within the tetragrammaton, in contrast to the *yod* and the *vav*, which are male. In that case, the second *he*, signifying *Shekhinah*, is the *loveliest*—superior because She expands and distributes. According to the interpretation of *Sullam*, some letters are female, such as *bet*, *dalet*, and *zayin*, while others are male.

Genesis 12:1 begins: לך לך (*lekh lekha*), *Go you forth, from your land*. The *Zohar* appears to be echoing Rashi's explanation of the apparently extra word לך (*lekha*) to mean: “for your own benefit and your own good.”

On *he* as female, see *Zohar* 1:94a, 96a; 3:183b; *ZH* 72b (*ShS*). On letters as male or female, see *Zohar* 1:94a, 96a; 3:183b; *ZH* 74d (*ShS*).

358. Great King comes toward Her... “Great King” signifies *Binah*, who descends to meet and unite with *Shekhinah*. “Striking” renders the word *batash*, commonly used to indicate the initiation of sexual union and the consequent developments. Through that “striking,” *Shekhinah* expands from *yod* into *heh*, marked by the “opening of palaces” in which *Binah* can reside and, thus, be revealed.

This is the meaning of *Elohim (God) in Her citadels*—*Binah* is apprehended when housed in the “palaces” or *citadels* of *Shekhinah*. Through this process, transcendent *Binah* comes to be known in lower realms.

359. *Elohim Hayyim (God of Life), taking that name...* *Elohim* (God), representing *Binah*, adopts the name *Hayyim* (of Life) to signal to those below that ultimately, She is responsible for the distribution of nourishment and sustenance of life. The dissemination of blessing to entities below then corresponds to apportioning of nourishment from *Binah* to the seven *sefirot* below Her.

The phrase *Elohim Hayyim* appears in Deuteronomy 5:23; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; Jeremiah 10:10. Here, it is a name of *Binah*, the source of life and emanation. See *Zohar* 1:31b, 46a, 74a, 151a; 2:68b, 140a, 147a, 257a (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 39 (46), 100 (127).

360. a singular, concealed point, poised in a thought... To create “the world,” signifying *Binah*, all emanations—only latent at this stage—had to be condensed into a single point, called Thought, signifying *Hokhmah*. It is compared to a point because a point bears neither dimension, temporality, nor direction; and thus it is unknowable. This is like the origin of a thought, because before a thought is developed it is also undefined. This indeterminate quality allows *Hokhmah* to expand into *Binah*, and from there, in whatever directions are necessary. For varying interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

361. fashioning one extension on this side... *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), also known as Thought, is the primordial point of emanation, totally concealed. When *Hokhmah* begins to emanate outward, three-dimensionality is opened up. This process marks the emergence of *Binah*, which is more comprehensible, though still concealed.

On Divine Thought and the process of emanation, see *Bahir* 134 (194); *Zohar* 1:21a, 65a, 74a; 3:5b–6a.

362. Not revealed in the sense of knowing... The emanation that has emerged no longer resides in *Ḥokhmah*, but rather in *Binah*, marking a greater degree of disclosure while remaining mysterious and unsusceptible to apprehension. It becomes manifest as the second letter of the tetragrammaton, *he*, an aspirant letter, producing a sound no louder than a whisper. All subsequent emanations reside in *Binah*, more concretized than in *Ḥokhmah* above. On *Binah* as the beginning of voice, see *Zohar* 1:246b.

363. inverse of the paradigm below... Elijah draws attention to the inverted functions of *yod* and *he* above, in contrast to the *yod* and *he* below. “The Great King,” signifying *Binah* and identified with *heh*, comes through the agency of *vav*, representing *Tif’eret*, to *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the condensed letter *yod*. As a result of *vav*’s intimate transfer of blessing to *yod*, She expands, becoming *he*. Thus, *Shekhinah* assumes Her new identity as a result of the striking and dissemination of sustenance from above. In order to construe the inversion, Elijah ascribes the source of *vav*’s striking to “the Great King,” that is, *he*. Consequently, *he* is the source of the striking and *yod* is the recipient.

364. the one who struck supernal *heh*... In contrast to the events below, *Ḥokhmah*, represented by *yod*, strikes the letter *he*, signifying *Binah*, causing Her to disgorge all matters that were latent within. Through that striking, *he* attains its full identity, and Thought comes to be known through revelation in *Binah*.

365. Similarly, when *vav* struck the point below... Just as *Ḥokhmah* struck *Binah*, causing emanation below, so when *Tif’eret* (signified by *vav*) strikes *Shekhinah* (symbolized by “the point below”), wondrous luminosity emerges. By the end of the process of emanation, the concealed content of Thought has been dispersed through the entire span of *sefirot* and even down to the angelic world below. The process is characterized by a concatenating series of

strikes and emissions. What was once entirely mysterious has become completely revealed, albeit through a process of recasting and translating.

366. they say to Her: Graze your kids... *Shekhinah's* camps encourage Her to apportion the illumination that She has received even farther down the ladder of emanation.

367. shepherds who conduct the world... Ultimately, divine overflow is distributed among the angelic forces who oversee the nations of the world and nature itself. Elijah marvels at the extent of the revelation of the most recondite aspects of Divinity.

368. I have compared you... The simple meaning of the word דימיתיק (dimmitikh) is *I have compared you*. The verb דמה (dimmah) can also mean “to imagine” or “to conjure up a mental image.”

On a reading of this term emphasizing the imagination, cf. Hosea 12:11; Psalm 50:21; Esther 4:13. See Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, 193; Bloch and Bloch. On the term רכבי (rikhvei), *chariots*, cf. Fox.

369. genius of the Egyptians... In the Talmud, Egypt is depicted as the world center of sorcery, and in the *Zohar*, Pharaoh is depicted as a master sorcerer.

See BT *Qiddushin* 49b: “Ten *kavs* [measures] of sorcery descended to the world; nine were taken by Egypt [and one by the rest of the world].” On Pharaoh’s expertise in sorcery, see *Zohar* 1:195a; 2:28a, 37b, 52b; cf. 3:70a.

The full verse in Exodus reads: *He took six hundred select chariots and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains [or: and teams-of-three] upon them all.*

370. he took everything through cunning... When Pharaoh “took” these warriors, it meant that he magically created them. He used words and charms to confect 600 magical warriors. The number 600 was intentional: one charioteer for every thousand male Israelites. His warriors were all equipped with optimal magical skills, just like the

heavenly archon appointed over Egypt, presumably Samael.

“Rummaging” [or: “turned everything over in searching] renders the word הִפֵּךְ (*hafakh*). “Defiling acts of seductive shattering” renders פְּגִימֵי פְּסִיסִין (*pegimin pesisin*). *Pegimin* is usually a plural adjective, meaning “defective,” or “blemished,” and is translated as such here even though it appears to be a noun. The unusual word “*pesisin*” may derive from the adjective פְּסִיס (*pesis*), meaning “broken.” It may also be the plural for פְּסִיס (*pasis*), meaning “persuasion, accommodation,” and could be an allusion to a legal ruse called a שֵׁטֶר פְּסִיס (*shtar pasis*), referring to a feigned transfer. The ancient magical work *Sefer ha-Razim* refers to the breaking of a vessel as part of a magical practice.

The number six hundred thousand derives from the figure mentioned in Exodus 12:37: *The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot, about six hundred thousand on foot—the men, aside from noncombatants.*

Regarding the ratio of one to a thousand, Deuteronomy 32:30 reads: *How could one chase a thousand.* On the correspondence of Egyptian chariotry to the number of Israelite men, see *Zohar* 2:46b. See also Joshua 23:10; 1 Chronicles 12:15.

Rabbinic sources often construe וַיִּקַּח (*va-yiqah*), *he took*, as connoting the use of words to coax or seduce another party. See *Mekhilta*, *Beshallah* 1; *Sifra*, *Tsav*, *Millu'im* 1:2, 40d; *Sifrei*, Numbers 92, 141; *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:5, 45:3; *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 10; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Qorah* 2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:2; Rashi on Genesis 2:15, 16:3; Leviticus 8:2; Numbers 16:1; *Zohar* 1:79a, 119b; *ZH* 91d (*MhN*, *Eikhah*).

371. וְשָׁלִישִׁים (*Ve-shalishim*), **and teams-of-three...** The technical term שְׁלִישׁ (*shalish*) apparently derives from שְׁלוֹשׁ (*shalosh*), “three.” Here it refers to magical triads, probably designed as demonic mirror-images of the seventy-two three-letter clusters that constitute the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God (see above, [note 5](#)), which is encoded in this

same biblical passage and was said to have been the instrument that eventually saved the Israelites at the Sea.

“Clusters” is a conjectured rendering of קסירין (*qesirin*), a Zoharic neologism whose meaning is uncertain. *Sullam* and *Matoq mi-Devash* both read it as a variant of קשירין (*qeshirin*). For an alternative translation, see Mopsik.

The simple sense of *shalishim* may be “team-of-three” or “third man in the chariot,” or else simply “officer, captain.” For midrashic interpretations, see *Mekhilta Beshallah* 2; *Zohar* 2:46b, 56b. On the letter triplets deployed by Pharaoh, see Scholem.

372. it is written על כלה (*al kulloh*)... *Minḥat Shai* notes that the *Zohar* appears to have a different version of the MT, for the standard version is כלו (*kullo*). This deviation from the normal spelling allows Rabbi Shim'on to creatively misread the phrase as *against the Bride*, meaning that Pharaoh engaged in sorcery: he fabricated magical chariotry to defeat Israel's defender who travelled before them, *Shekhinah*.

For other instances of a difference between the Masoretic spelling or wording and the *Zohar's* reading, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

373. What is ביד רמה (*be-yad ramah*), a high hand?... It is the same as the *great hand* of Exodus 14:31. Indeed, Israel's salvation came consistently from God's “hand”—signifying *Shekhinah* and aligned with *Hesed*, the latter often symbolized by the term גדולה (*gedullah*), Greatness. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

374. the blessed Holy One engraved upon that hand... Pharaoh and God are depicted as rival magicians, competing for control of magical military forces, on the battlefield of *Shekhinah*. God overtakes and defeats the powers that Pharaoh had conjured, through engraving images of that army on His *hand*. This technique explains, in hyperliteral fashion, how God's *hand* vanquishes the enemy. It also explains *dimmitikh*, *I have imaged you*, in

hyperliteral terms: God actually inscribes images of Pharaoh's horses and chariots upon the *Shekhinah*, the *you* of the verse.

In the ancient world, people inscribed divine names upon their bodies as part of magical practice and, in rabbinic literature, there are legends of the divine name being written upon Moses' staff and Israelite weapons. While Pharaoh used magic to draw divine power into his army, the blessed Holy One locates Pharaoh's power on His *hand*, i.e., the *Shekhinah*, thus limiting and containing it.

On God's disarming Pharaoh, cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:9. On inscriptions on hands as a method of protection, see *ibid.* On ancient tattooing of magical and divine names, see Bar-Ilan, "Magic Seals on the Body," 37-50.

375. Thus far... This formula marks the end of this interpretative approach to the verse. Rabbi Shim'on responds with puzzlement to his own course of interpretation, asking about the relevance of this material in the broader context of the love song.

376. As Pharaoh's horses and chariots were riding... The reference to Pharaoh's chariotry in the middle of Song of Songs is jarring and calls for explanation. The newly liberated *Shekhinah* (who is accompanying Israel in its Exodus from Egypt) exhibits an awkward sense of timing, beginning Her love song when the Israelites are most in danger.

377. The blessed Holy One did not want praise at that moment... God is uninterested in erotic love songs as destruction looms for the Egyptian forces. So the divine lovers, *Tiferet* and *Shekhinah*, stayed apart.

See BT *Megillah* 10b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "What is the meaning of the verse *One did not draw near the other all night*? The ministering angels [referred to similarly as *one* and *the other* in Isaiah 6:3] wanted to sing, but the blessed Holy One said, 'My handiwork is drowning in the sea, and you are singing?'"

The simple meaning of the verse is that the camps of Israel and Egypt *did not draw near [each] other all night*.

See *Eikhah Rabbah, Petihta* 24; BT *Sanhedrin* 39b; *Shemot Rabbah* 23:7; *Midrash Tehillim* 106:2; *Zohar* 1:57b; 2:170b.

378. Israel sung praises on earth for Her sake... Though the blessed Holy One would not accept *Shekhinah's* song at the sea, He does accept the Israelites' song, the first in a series of songs that pave the way for the divine reunion. In Joshua 10:12, Joshua sings to God after the Amorites are routed—the sun having stood still for hours. Judges 5 is the song of Deborah and Barak, sung after the defeat of Sisera and his army.

379. worlds were all evenly balanced... The building of the Temple signifies harmony above and below. Thus, *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* were properly aligned, prepared for union, and it was an appropriate time for *Shekhinah* to recommence Her song. See *Or Yaqar; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*.

The superiority of Song of Songs to all other songs is taught in *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1: "There are ten songs: the Song of Adam; the Song of Abraham; the Song at the Sea; Song of the Well; the Song of Moses; the Song of Joshua; the Song of Deborah; the Song of David; the Song of Solomon—Song of Songs; and the Song for the World that is Coming, as is written: *Sing to YHVH a new song* (Isaiah 42:10). Song of Songs is most exalted of them all, for all the songs either begin with praise and end in disgrace, or begin in disgrace and end with praise... whereas Song of Songs is the praise of praises, for all other songs were uttered by prophets, descendants of commoners, whereas Song of Songs was sung by a king [son of a king], prophet son of a prophet, chief son of a chief." See Targum; *Mekhilta Beshallah, Shirta* 1; *Tanhumah Beshallah* 10.

380. דמיתיק (dimmitikh), I silenced you... In this interpretation, the word does not mean *I imaged you*, as

above. Rather, it substantiates the narrative of the blessed Holy One's quieting *Shekhinah* from Her song at an inopportune moment.

Rabbi Shim'on's exposition here seems intended to counter the position of Rabbi Hinenah son of Papa in the Midrash that Song of Songs was sung at the sea. See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:2. On the word *dimmitikh* as a reference to silence, see *ibid.* on 1:9.

381. דומיה (*dumiyah*), **silent...** Several verses are cited as proof that דמיתך (*dimmitikh*) can be construed as deriving from the verbal root דמם (*dmm*) rather than דמה (*dmh*).

The third citation is rather strange, as its simple sense is *they meant to kill*. Presumably for this reason the printed edition replaces this verse with Joshua 10:12: *Be still, O sun*, from the very song that Joshua had sung after defeating the Amorites.

On דומיה (*dummiyah*), cf. Psalms 62:2. Regarding the citation from Judges 20:5, cf. Rashi on Song of Songs 1:9.

382. from then until now... Through that long stretch of history, there was not an ideal time for the unification of *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, until the building of the Temple by Solomon.

383. How lovely בתורים (*be-torim*), with Torahs... The divine couple are fully prepared now that *Shekhinah* is suitably adorned. The actual ornaments that embellish Her are the two forms of Torah, Written and Oral, actualized through the performance of the Jewish people. It was only with the building of the Temple that they were able to fulfill the commandments in the most complete way.

See Ezra of Gerona's "Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim," *ad loc.*: "We will make: compared to the giving of Written Torah and Oral Torah through Her agency, for these two are compared to gold and silver. *Better for me Your mouth's teaching than thousands of pieces of silver and gold* (Psalms 119:72). They are compared similarly to wine and milk, and to honey and milk: *wine and milk without*

cost (Isaiah 55:1); *honey and milk under your tongue* (Song of Songs 4:11), indicating that they all share the image and appearance.... Since red is closer to us, red takes precedence; but the blessed Holy One gives white precedence, as is written: *Mine is the silver and mine is the gold* (Haggai 2:8).

In its simple sense, the noun תר (*tor*) is uncertain (cf. Esther 2:12, 15; 1 Chronicles 17:17.), but the verb תור (*tur*) suggests “to go around,” possibly indicating a round piece of jewelry, such as a hoop earring. On תר (*tor*), see Pope; Bloch and Bloch; Fishbane. Coincidentally, it looks similar to the word תורה (*torah*), which derives from a different verbal root. On בתורים (*be-torim*) as a reference to the Written Torah and Oral Torah, see Targum; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:10; Ezra of Gerona, “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 487; Todros Abulafia, *Sha’ar ha-Razim*, 73.

384. since *You were still naked and bare...* Of the Torah. An additional reason that the blessed Holy One refused *Shekhinah*’s song was because She was not yet adequately embellished, which would happen only after the Jews had received and kept the Torah.

385. צוארך (*Tsavvarekh*), *Your neck... a Temple on earth...* *Shekhinah*’s neck signifies the earthly Temple, whose presence marks the zenith of existence. It is designed according to the pattern of the supernal Temple, meaning the array of *sefirot*. All the elite enter into this idealized dwelling place, suggesting mystical union with *Shekhinah* in Her most fulfilled state. Her ornaments—supernal lights—come from “all supernal founts, all rungs and limbs,” which symbolize all the *sefirot* from *Hokhmah* to *Yesod*. *Sullam* suggests that צוארך (*tsavvarekh*) corresponds to the “sublime ציורין (*tsiyurin*), forms,” that serve as the model for the Temple.

Based upon the apparently plural form for the word “neck” in Genesis 45:14, a teaching from BT *Megillah* 16b asks: “*He fell upon צוארי (*tsavverei*), the necks of, his brother*

Benjamin and wept—How many necks had Benjamin? Rabbi Eleazar said: ‘He wept for the two Temples that were destined to be in the territory of Benjamin and destined to be destroyed.’”

“Limbs” renders שׂיפין (*shaiphin*)—singular, שׂיפא (*shaipha*)—a frequent Zoharic neologism that may be based playfully on the Talmudic line (BT *Sotah* 7b): על איבריה לשפא (*al eivreih la-shappa*), “His arm [or: limb] entered the casket.” Or perhaps the Zoharic sense of *shaipha* derives from BT *Hullin* 42b: “This joint of the thighbone דשף (*de-shaf*), that slipped, out of its socket.”

On *neck* symbolizing the Temple, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3; Rashi on Genesis 45:14; *Zohar* 1:209b; *ZH* 28c.

386. We will make—actually... The song’s shift of speaker from singular to plural is intentional, for all the *sefirot* take part in endowing *Shekhinah* with their light—from *Keter* (signified by “the top of Supernal Point”) to *Yesod* (signified by “Foundation”). “Love is aroused” from *Gevurah*, symbolized by *gold*, then joined by *Hesed*, represented by *silver*. Divine lovemaking always entails arousal from *Gevurah* first and then from *Hesed*, very often represented by Song of Songs 2:6: *His left hand beneath my head, his right hand embracing me.*

In its simple sense, the full verse reads: *Earrings of gold we will make for you, with points of silver.*

On the association of gold with *Gevurah*, see above, [note 16](#). On the association of silver with *Hesed*, see *Bahir* 34–35 (52); *Zohar* 1:250a; 2:23b, 90b, 147a, 197b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 32–33, 95–96 (38–40, 120). On *Gevurah* preceding *Hesed* in the approach toward sexual intimacy, see *Zohar* 1:49a–b, 133a, 136a, 151a, 245a, 250a; 2:30a, 154b, 169b, 238b; 3:26a, 55a, 148b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 63.

387. until embellishments are set in this world first... Just as *Gevurah* must precede *Hesed* in the divine

romance, so does arousal from this world—through the performance of commandments—lead to arousal above. This emphasis on proper sequence is supported by construing the unusual noun תורי (*torei*) in terms of the more clearly understood noun תור (*tor*), *turn*.

On the relationship between *torei* here and *tor* in Esther, cf. Targum and Alexander's note 81.

388. Each and every one, uniquely Each and every *sefirah* emanated its own particular light onto *Shekhinah*.

389. This is how... This whole homily regarding the silencing of *Shekhinah*—from when Pharaoh's army gave chase, until after Israel had received the Torah, settled the land, and built the Temple—explains the relevance of the striking reference to Pharaoh's chariotry in the midst of a love song.

390. they resisted traveling... Exodus 14:21 says that God *turned the sea* לחרבה (*le-ḥaravah*), *into dry land*. But, here, the Israelites are tentative because the path before them appears "parched" and "desolate," not looking like a path to salvation.

391. What did the blessed Holy One do... To entice the Israelites, the blessed Holy One sent *Shekhinah*, in all Her glory, before them so that they would be lured onto the dried-up path. The Israelites' holy desire to view and contemplate *Shekhinah* impelled them into a region that had looked forbidding.

The blessed Holy One's desire "to be glorified in the midst of the nations of the world" reflects a midrashic tradition in *Mekhilta, Beshallah* 3: "All the waters in the world were split. From where can you prove that even the water in cisterns, ditches, and caves, and in jugs, cups, barrels, and flasks was split? As is written: ויבקעו המים (*va-yibaq'u ha-mayim*), *the waters were split apart* (Exodus 14:21). For it is not written here ויבקע הים (*va-yibaqa ha-yam*), *the sea was split apart* (Exodus 14:21), but rather ויבקעו המים (*va-*

yibaq'u ha-mayim), *the waters were split apart*. This teaches that all the water in the world was split apart.”

Shir ha-Shirim Zuta 1:9 records a tradition that Pharaoh's choice mare was uniquely multi-colored. On the waters of the world splitting, see *Shemot Rabbah* 21:6. On the holiness of the Israelites' desire, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. Mopsik.

392. so did Pharaoh devise similarly... Pharaoh placed the female horses in front of the males, so that they would race toward the Israelites as quickly as possible. Once again, Pharaoh mimics the divine model, this time using female horses as a lure for the males—much like the blessed Holy One, who had placed *Shekhinah* in front of the Israelites.

On Pharaoh's stratagem with the horses, see Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 1988, II: 233, no. 589; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1:9.

393. to fortify his chariotry... Pharaoh and God pursue analogous strategies when preparing for battle, each placing the female in the rear. For Pharaoh, it is the mares, for the blessed Holy One it is *Shekhinah*. However, for the Israelites, *Shekhinah* stands as protective barrier between themselves and the Egyptians, blocking the Egyptian munitions. As God follows Pharaoh's model, he utters to *Shekhinah*: דמיתיק (dimmitikh), *I have made you similar, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots*. He positioned Her behind the camp, just as Pharaoh placed his mares at the back of the team of horses.

On *Shekhinah* as *angel of Elohim*, see *Mekhilta, Shirta* 3; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 14:19; Nahmanides on Exodus 14:19; *Zohar* 1:61a; 2:50b (*Mat*), 51a-b; 3:25a, 150b, 269b-270a. On God's protection of Israel from various dangers at the sea, see *Mekhilta de-Rashbi* 14:19.

394. Israel was perfected in mystery of faith... Once the Israelites see God's powerful salvation, they attain true faith—and are thus prepared to receive both the Written

and Oral Torah. These two forms of Torah are signified by the word תורים (*torim*), whose simple meaning is *earrings* (see above, [note 383](#)). Thus, Song of Songs 1:10, with its description of the female lover's beautifully ornamented cheeks, is the culmination of 1:9, which describes the military tactics of Pharaoh and God.

395. all are seen in the face... Once all realms have been properly arrayed as a result of Israel's full faith and reception of the Written and Oral Torah, the beautiful face of *Shekhinah* reflects the rectified inner thoughts, desires, and emotions of all Israel. Each individual's face yields information about one's moral and religious stature, and each one is deemed fit. "Straightaway: *beautiful your cheeks*" indicates that the verse was uttered immediately upon Israel's attaining that spiritual stature.

A teaching in *Bereshit Rabbah* 73:12 attributed to Bar Sira says: "A man's heart changes [the look of] his face, both for good and for ill."

The understanding of the face's transparency rests on the prevalent medieval belief in the science of physiognomy, the explanatory framework for describing and predicting psychological, social, and moral conditions on the basis of facial features. See *Zohar* 1:96b; 2:70b-78a, 70a-75a (*RR*), 74b (*Mat*), 122b; 3:6a, 157a; *ZH* 31a-35b (*Tiq*), 35b-37c (*RR*). On physiognomy (and the related sciences of chiromancy and metoposcopy), see Lewin, *Otsar ha-Ge'onim*, *Hagigah* 11; Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni*, 64c-d (note); Halevi, *Kuzari* 3:65; *Sefer Hasidim* (ed. Margalio), par. 162; Nahmanides on Genesis 5:2; idem, "Torat ha-Shem Temimah," in *Kitvei Ramban*, 1:161-63; *Zohar* 1:55b; 2:70b-78a; 70a-75a (*RR*); 3:45b-47a; 75b-76a, 129a (*IR*); vol. 4, 392-93, n. 76; *ZH* 31a-35b (*Tiq*), 35b-37c (*RR*); *TZ* 70, 121a-138b; Scholem, "Cheiromancy in the Zohar"; idem, *Shedim Ruhot u-Nshamot*, 246-305; idem, "Ein Fragment zur Physiognomik"; idem, *Kabbalah*, 317-19; Licht, "Shoqayim Siman li-Vh'irah"; Allegro,

Discoveries in the Judaeen Desert, 90–91; Gruenwald, “Qeta’im Ḥadashim mi-Sifrut Hakkarat Panim”; idem, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 218–24; Fine, “The Art of Metoposcopy”; idem, *Physician of the Soul*, 153–64; Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, 84–95; idem, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 137–38; Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, 95–100; Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science*, 132–35; Alexander, “Physiognomy, Initiation, and Rank in the Qumran Community”; Liebes, “Hakkarat Panim ba-Qabbalah”; Margolin, “Ḥokhmat ha-Partsuf ve-Sirtutei Kaf ha-Yad.”

396. when the Temple stood... This is consistent with the general theme in *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim* that the ultimate perfection was attained when the Temple was built, and Song of Songs could be revealed. As a further explanation of the phrase *beautiful your cheeks*, it was at that moment in history when the divine countenances of *Tif’eret* and *Shekhinah* were perfected, aligned, and joined. This indicates that the refinement of *Shekhinah* began at the sea, but She was not fully perfected until the time of the Second Temple.

See *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*. On the description of erotic union as “face-to-face,” see *Zohar* 3:262a (*IR*); *ZḤ* 62c (*ShS*).

397. Your cheeks... This wording implies a single face—even though the plural might suggest otherwise—signifying the union of the masculine and feminine countenances of Divinity. “Chirping and speaking” refer to prayer and Torah study, both verbal activities enabled by the cheeks. Once these pre-eminent rituals are endowed upon Israel with the giving of the Torah, full contemplation of Divinity is possible, and worlds are united, above and below.

“Chirping” renders *tsiftsufa*, though in other contexts it can mean “screaming,” “shrieking,” or “squeaking”—signs of distress rather than contemplation. Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 6:10, where it takes on the meaning “to shine”

or “to be bright,” possibly informing Rabbi Shim’on’s choice here.

398. Is it possible that Abraham... was lacking faith... Astonishingly, the first patriarch—who is normally very trusting in God—seems to doubt God’s promises regarding his future offspring. In spite of God’s assurances in Genesis 12 and 15, Abraham gives voice to his confusion repeatedly in Genesis 15.

Genesis 15:5 reads in full: *He took him outside and said: “Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you can count them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your seed be.”* Genesis 15:2 reads: *Abram said, “אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (Adonai Elohim), My Lord God, what can You give me, seeing that I am going to die childless, and the steward of my house is Damascan Eliezer?”*

399. he had been gazing upon stars... Abraham was a master astrologer, and from his horoscope he concluded that he would not have children. *Or Yaqar* explains that Abraham did have faith, believing that since God had established the movements of the stars, they could be relied upon for oracular information.

“Bird-nest augury” [or: “horoscope nests”] renders the difficult formulation קִינֵי מְזֻלָּא (*qinei mazalaya*). Perhaps this association derives from the confusion that sometimes befalls sacrificial bird offerings, called *qinnim*. Much of M *Qinnim* takes up these problems. This term does not exist elsewhere in discussions of medieval astrology and so could either be a scribal error, present in all the manuscripts, or a fictive novelty on the part of the author, playing on the formula *tayyaro*—that does in fact refer to bird divination.

See BT *Shabbat* 156a in the name of Rav: “...וַיֵּצֵא (*va-yotse*), *He took him outside...* [Abraham] said before Him [God], ‘I have gazed at my horoscope, and I am not fated to engender a son.’ He replied, ‘אַצ (ṭse), Leave, your astrological speculations! Israel is immune from planetary influence.’”

On Abraham's expertise in astrology, see *Tosefta Qiddushin* 5:17; BT *Yoma* 28b, *Bava Batra* 16b; *Tanḥuma, Shofetim* 11; *Zohar* 1:78a, 90a-b; 3:148a; Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah*, 91-92.

400. He extracted him from horoscope augury... God removes Abram from the paradigm of astrology, reassuring him that his offspring will be as numerous as the stars, and changing his name. Then, Abraham comes to full belief: *He trusted in YHVH* (Genesis 15:6).

"Horoscope augury" (or "divination through horoscopes") renders ט"ירו דמזלי (*tayyaro de-mazalei*), a form of divination using birds, well known in Spain during the high Middle Ages. Though the term *mazalei* usually refers to stars, here it is used generically to signify divination. Birds were thought to foretell future events through their chirping and motion in flight. On bird divination, see *Vayiqra Rabbah* 32:2 (citing Ecclesiastes 10:20); *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 4:3; *Tanḥuma, Huqqat* 6; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Huqqat* 11 (and Buber's note); BT *Gittin* 45a; Rashi on 2 Chronicles 9:4; David Kimḥi on 1 Kings 5:10; Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 18:9; *Zohar* 1:126b-127a, 183b, 194b, 217b; 3:204b; Gikatilla, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 58; Baḥya ben Asher on Leviticus 11:13; and on Deuteronomy 18:14; Meroz, "Is the Taking of Damietta Alluded to in a Zoharic Story?" 37, n. 16.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:10 in the name of Rabbi Shemu'el son of Yitshak: "[Abraham said,] 'My constellation oppresses me, declaring: "Abram does not engender.'" The blessed Holy One replied, 'Just as you say: Abram and Sarai do not engender; Abraham and Sarah do engender!'" By changing the names of Abram and Sarai (Genesis 17:5, 15), God freed them from their astrological fate and enabled them to engender Isaac. See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 30:24; *Zohar* 1:90b.

401. This letter is better configured... The letter ה (*he*) is open near the top to receive influx from above, and

open below to disseminate.

On the letter ה (he) as the most suitable for engendering, see *Zohar* 1:96a; 3:298a; Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 17:5. On souls as fruit, see *Bahir* 14 (22); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 489, 504; *Zohar* 1:15b, 19a, 33a, 59b-60a, 82b, 85b, 115a-b; 2:223b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 51; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69). Cf. Ibn Ezra on Psalms 1:3.

402. since it is not his... Because the letter ה (he) is a grammatically feminine marker and symbolizes the divine feminine, *Shekhinah*, it befits Sarah, not Abraham.

On the letter ה (he) as a feminine marker, see *Zohar* 1:94a, 96a; 3:183b. On the addition of *he* to Abram's name, cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:11.

403. there are two hes... The two *hes* in the name יהוה (YHVH), signify *Binah* (also called "Upper World" or "World of the Male") and *Shekhinah* (also called "Lower World" or "World of the Female"), respectively. Abraham symbolizes *Hesed*, identified with Primal Light from the first day of creation. When *Binah* is attached to him, he is able to produce offspring, since his creative power comes from *Binah*, the upper *he*. Stepping beyond the procreative restrictions of his horoscope, Abraham is capable of settling into his position as earthly correlate to *Hesed*, in conjunction with *Binah*.

The entire configuration of *sefirot* from *Binah* (or *Hokhmah*) through *Yesod* comprises the World of the Male, ready to join *Shekhinah*. Although often depicted as the Divine Mother, *Binah* is also described as "World of the Male," deriving Her masculinity from *Hokhmah*.

On the two *hes* as representative of two worlds, see *Zohar* 1:17b, 96a; 2:177a (*SdT*s); 3:74b, 89b; Moses de León, *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot*, 375b. On the two worlds in general, see *Zohar* 1:147a-b, 149a, 160b, 183b, 200a, 246a-247b, 248b; 2:4a, 105b, 127b, 147b, 165b, 168b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 343; idem, *Sefer ha-*

Rimmon, 23 (and Wolfson's note 6); Scholem, *Le-Heger Qabbalat R. Yitshaq ben Ya'akov ha-Kohen*, 66-67; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Or*, 90b; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 357-58. On feminine entities being described as masculine, see Wolfson, "Crossing Gender Boundaries."

404. Two letters inscribed here... The final two letters of Abraham's name, ם ן (*he* and final *mem*) both correspond to Upper World, namely *Binah*. Why are two letters needed to express the nature of Upper World?

405. everything is concealed within transcendent Thought... Final *mem* is closed on all sides, representing the recondite quality of being in Upper World. "Transcendent Thought" and "point" signify *Hokhmah*, the hidden source of all emanation, including the "thirty-two paths of wisdom," referred to in *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1. The paths rooted in *Hokhmah* and the letters in *Binah*, though emanated, remain concealed, expressed in the sealed-up form of final *mem*. Desire within *Keter* for distribution of the divine overflow leads to the transformation of final *mem* into the open form of ן (*he*). Closed ם (final *mem*) thus expresses the continual dialectic within the *Zohar* to articulate Divinity's dialectical impulses for concealment and revelation.

See *Or Yaqar*; for alternative explanations, see *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik. On the tension between concealment and revelation, see Liebes, "Ha-Mashiah shel ha-Zohar," 138-57; idem, "Eros ve-Zohar"; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 42-48; idem, "Occultation of the Feminine," 113-54; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 155-88; Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*; Meroz, "Reqimato," 191-92, n. 89.

406. revealed with a whisper... The letters ם (final *mem*) and ן (*he*) represent different aspects of *Binah*. ם symbolizes *Binah* in Her closed capacity, receiving and holding the emanation that She has received from above. ן signifies *Binah* when She is turned outward and downward,

dispersing blessing to the *sefirot* below. Phonetically and graphically, these letters express the same teaching: ם concludes with the mouth closed and is orthographically closed, whereas ה ends with an open mouth, with orthographic openings on the side and below. ה retains its transcendent aspect in that it is little more than a whisper. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

407. it generates offspring with the letter ה (he) Once *Binah* is opened up, “the offspring,” signifying the lower six *sefirot*, can emerge. See *Sullam*. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that the ה here is the second ה of the tetragrammaton, signifying *Shekhinah*, and “offspring” refers to the sub-divine world. It is also plausible that this passage refers to two *he*’s in succession.

408. through a single limb... The emanation of *Hesed* through *Hod* is not expressed until it emerges through *Yesod*, the divine phallus. From *Yesod* it proceeds to “final ה (he),” signifying *Shekhinah*, who adorns *Yesod*. Represented by the letter ׀ (*vav*) in the tetragrammaton, *Yesod* is defined by His traversal of the distance between the upper female ה (*he*) who births Him, to the lower female, final ה (*he*), His mate.

409. this limb, Righteous One... is made firm with desire... When *Binah* is transformed from a closed to open state, changing from ם (final *mem*) to ה (*he*), *Yesod* is actualized in arousal. This state of desire leads to *Yesod* being ornamented by *Shekhinah*, symbolized by ה (*he*). When *Yesod* is not in a state of arousal, it is a sign that the upper *he* has closed the flow of emanation, appearing only as final *mem*.

410. Mystery of ם אבר (evar mem)... The foregoing esoteric meanings of final *mem* and *he* explain the meaning of the names Abram and Abraham. אברם (*Avram*) has to be parsed into two words: ם אבר (*evar mem*), signifying a stopped-up limb—the male member—that is, Abram’s inability to engender. When final *mem* opens up, becoming *he*, supernal flow through *Yesod* begins, engendering through

the adornment of lower *he*, signifying *Shekhinah*. When Abram's name is changed to Abraham with the addition of the letter *he*, through his attachment to *Binah*, he becomes newly potent. Changing his name on earth has theurgic impact on Divinity, which redounds upon him.

On the determinativeness of a person's name, see BT *Berakhot* 7b: "How do we know that a name determines destiny? Rabbi El'azar said, 'For Scripture states: *Go, gaze upon the acts of YHVH, who has brought שְׁמוֹת (shammot), desolation, on earth* (Psalms 46:9). Do not read שְׁמוֹת (*shammot*), *desolation*, but rather שְׁמוֹת (*shemot*), *names*.'" See *Midrash Tanḥuma, Ha'azinu* 7; *Zohar* 1:6a, 58b, 60a; 2:5a (*MhN*), 103a, 104a, 179b, 223a, 230a; 3:25a, 72a, 75b, 199b; *ZH* 73a (*ShS*); note by Margaliot on *Sefer Ḥasidim*, par. 244; idem, *Sha'arei Zohar on Berakhot* 7b.

411. when he was Abram... The patriarch, as Abram, had been uncircumcised, signifying blockage in both human and divine realms. Abram could not conceive and *Yesod* was unable to convey divine overflow toward *Shekhinah*. After ם becomes ה, Abram is renamed Abraham, he is circumcised, and overflow proceeds from above. Thus, the transformation in *Binah* of ם (final *mem*) to ה (*he*) leads to the perfection of *Yesod*. Abraham then impregnates Sarah, the symbolic embodiment of *Shekhinah*, represented by the *he* added at the end of her name. Once the opening of final *mem* occurs, foreskin, signifying the demonic Other Side, is removed in both human and divine realms. All this is implied in God's message to Abram in Genesis 17:1 that his new name and circumcision will render him complete: *Walk in My presence and be complete*. Before circumcision, the foreskin obstructs holiness from a man's body and soul; once circumcised, he is open to holiness. The idealized body of engenderment, both in the human and divine realms, is attained when the blockage of foreskin is removed and procreation is enabled.

On circumcision and the divine name, see *Midrash Tanḥuma, Tsav* 14; *Shemini* 8; *Peirush ha-Roqeah* on Deuteronomy 30:12; *Zohar* 1:13a, 56a, 89a, 95a–b; 2:3b, 36a, 59b, 87b, 216b; 3:13b–14a, 91a–b, 142a (*IR*), 215b, 220a, 266a; Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 159–160; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amei ha-Mitsvot*, 242; Baḥya ben Asher on Deuteronomy 30:12; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29–48; idem, “Circumcision and the Divine Name.” Cf. *Shemot Rabbah* 15:17. On the body of engenderment, see Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul*, 53–74. On the sterility of final *mem*, see *Bahir* 57 (84–85). On the obstruction of the foreskin, see *Zohar* 1:93b, 95a, 98b; 2:36a.

412. The lower rung abides... The stopped-up nature of *Binah*, as represented by final *mem*, is mirrored below in *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the letter \daleth (*dalet*). When *Shekhinah* is not united with the World of the Male above, She is symbolized by the letter \daleth (*dalet*), implying that She is דללה (*dallah*), “poor,” deprived of the flow of the emanation (see above, [note 189](#)).

On final *mem* as symbolizing *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:34b; 2:127a, 135a, 180a; 3:66b, 156b, 285b; *ZH* 5c (*SO*), 38c, 41d.

413. two letters depart and two other letters enter... Once the flow from *Yesod* is restored, two letters decamp from the structure of the divine name, replaced by two others. Final *mem*, signifying the blockage in *Binah*, is removed—and *he* takes its place. *Dalet*, symbol of *Shekhinah*’s impoverishment, departs—making room for *he*. The two letters that vacated spell דמ (*dam*), “blood,” signifying what must flow from the penis in the rite of circumcision. When the two *hes* take their place, the two feminine entities, *Binah* and *Shekhinah*, are restored—and the structure of the divine name is perfected, poised to engender offspring.

See BT *Shabbat* 137b: “Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and*

night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth.” Cf. Bereshit Rabbah 63:13 on Esau’s hatred for the blood of circumcision.

On *dalet* as a symbol of impoverishment, see *ZH* 67b (*ShS*). On the requirement for blood to be released during circumcision, see *Tosefta Berakhot* 6:18; *Shabbat* 15:9; *JT Shabbat* 19:2, 17a; *Yevamot* 8:1, 8d; *BT Shabbat* 134a; Rashi, ad loc.; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Milah*, 3:4–5. Contemporary Spanish *halakhah* ruled differently, however. See Alfasi on *Shabbat* 53b and Naḥmanides on *Shabbat* 137a, for whom, in the case of a Jewish-born male (as opposed to the similar case of a convert), blood is an inevitable byproduct of the surgery rather than a requirement of its own—as seen in the case of a child who is born “already circumcised.” Cf. Maimonides op. cit., 1:7.

414. mystery of לַמְרֵבָה הַמִּשְׂרָה (*le-marbeh ha-misrah*)... This verse proves that final *mem*, though usually signifying something sealed up, can be opened and enhanced to provide peace. David signifies *Malkhut* (*Shekhinah*), who will be the beneficiary of this heavenly overflow from *Binah*.

This is the only instance in the Bible that a final ם (*mem*) appears out of place, before the end of the word—a peculiarity that stimulated the rabbinic mind. This anomaly is best understood as a *Qere/Ketiv*, in which the *Ketiv* is two words: לַמְרֵבָה, while the *Qere* is one word: *le-marbeh*. See *BT Sanhedrin* 94a; *Soferim* 7:3; *Midrash Ḥaserot vi-Yterot* 185 (in *Battei Midrashot* 2:302); *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

On the esoteric nature of the ם (final *mem*), see *BT Shabbat* 104a: “The Rabbis told Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi: ‘Children have now come to the house of study and said things unparalleled even in the days of Joshua son of Nun... Open מ (*mem*) and closed ם (*mem*)—open saying and closed saying.’”

415. and of peace—it is that limb... The word שלום (*shalom*), “peace” (or “completion, consummation”), signifies *Yesod*. No end to “peace” signifies the removal of foreskin,

which is called *end of all flesh*, a term referring also to the demonic *Sitra Aḥra*. As a consequence of circumcision, *Sitra Aḥra* is eliminated and *peace* joins with *David's throne and kingdom*—signifying *Shekhinah*—in sexual union.

See BT *Shabbat* 152a, where Rabbi Shim'on son of Ḥalafta refers to the phallus as “peacemaker of the home.” On Solomon as the author of Song of Songs and signifying the King who possesses peace, see above, [note 14](#).

Genesis 6:13 reads more fully: *God said to Noah, “End of all flesh has come before Me...”* *Sitra Aḥra* is called *end of all flesh* because he appears as the Angel of Death and consumes all mortal creatures. See *Zohar* 1:35b, 54a, 58a, 62b-63a, 65a, 106a, 152b, 254b (*Hash*); 2:33a, 269a (*Heikh*).

[416](#). these two letters had to be removed from it Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, the blood that is dashed on the people from Exodus 24:8 signifies the second segment of the circumcision ritual, פְּרִיעָה (*peri'ah*) (uncovering). In Egypt, Israel had fulfilled only the first half of the procedure of circumcision: cutting and removing the foreskin to disclose the mucous membrane. That step corresponds to *Shekhinah*. The second step is to tear the membrane down the center and pull it back, revealing the corona. This act, *peri'ah*, “uncovering” the corona, corresponds to *Yesod*, the divine phallus. The two letters being removed refer perhaps to the two stages of the rite: *milah* (circumcision) and *peri'ah*. When the Israelites arrived at Marah on their way to Mount Sinai, they were instructed to perform *peri'ah* and reveal the “holy sign,” thereby fulfilling both aspects of circumcision, corresponding respectively to *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*.

On the understanding of the blood here as a reference to *peri'ah*, see *Zohar* 2:125b-126a. On *milah* and *peri'ah*, see above, [note 158](#).

The verse in Exodus 24 reads in full: *Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and he said, “Look, the*

blood of the covenant that YHVH has sealed with you over all these words.”

417. □ (final mem) has been opened up... Once this letter appears as ה (he), signifying *Binah* in a state of openness, *Yesod* can join “Lower World,” representing *Shekhinah*, in full intimacy.

418. according to the mystery of intercourse... Because Isaac is Abraham’s holy progeny, he emerges only after the taint of foreskin had been removed. This demonstrates how the pattern of conjugal relations above determines events in the world below. Even Abram’s original name, as well as his name change, reflects those supernal dynamics. Cordovero explains that God placed the name Abram, with the sealed final *mem*, in the mouths of his parents to indicate both Abram’s original, sterile state and the closed-up nature of the higher realm.

See *Maḥazor Vitri*, 507: “Until Abraham was circumcised, he did not engender holy seed.”

419. What is the reason... Why might Abram have thought that his servant Eliezer would be his heir? It is because Eliezer was *an enlightened servant*, and therefore worthy. Proverbs 17:2 reads in full: *An enlightened servant rules over a son who acts shamefully, and in the midst of brothers will share the inheritance.* In context, Abraham understands the verse to exclude Ishmael, leading him to wonder if Eliezer would not be his heir, who would?

420. Abraham pursued a different course... Once Abraham circumcised himself, he attained a higher grade of divine wisdom. Cf. the explanations of *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

421. only revealed to him in a vision... In Genesis 15:1 it is recorded: *The word of YHVH came to Abram in מַחֲזֵה (maḥazeh), a vision...*), whereas immediately after his circumcision it says merely *YHVH appeared to him* (Genesis 18:1), without qualifying the experience as “the word of YHVH,” or as only *a vision*. Before he was circumcised, God

spoke with him only on the rung of *Shekhinah*—without connection to the higher *sefirot*; whereas after his circumcision, *Yesod* participated as well. At this point, he is “opened up”—a reference to his *sitting at the opening of the tent*, representing his full intimacy with *Shekhinah*.

See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20: “Abram fell on his face [and God spoke with him] (Genesis 17:3). Until he was circumcised, whenever *Shekhinah* spoke with him, he fell down. Once he was circumcised, He spoke with him while he was standing, as is said: *Abraham remained standing in the presence of YHVH* (ibid. 18:22). Further, He revealed Himself to him even while he was sitting, as is said: *YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre [as he was sitting at the opening of the tent]* (ibid., 1).”

Medieval religious thinkers constructed hierarchies of prophecy, with stages ranging from the inferior form of the dream, to the most exalted revelation received by Moses. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:41-45; Nahmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar* 1:88b-89a, 95a-b, 98a, 149a-b. On the link between circumcision and divine vision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 29; *Zohar* 1:91a-b, 97b-98b; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29-48.

422. whenever righteous and pious ones abound in the world... As holiness entered the body of Abraham and the divine body when Abraham was circumcised, the same result is achieved with the proliferation of the righteous in this world, a state exemplified during King Solomon’s reign. Then divine overflow proceeds freely, and Song of Songs emerges, the pinnacle of revelation.

The formula “settled like wine upon its lees” derives from Jeremiah 48:11: *Moab has been at ease from his youth on—he is settled on his lees and has not been poured from vessel to vessel—he has never gone into exile. Therefore his fine flavor has remained and his bouquet is unspoiled.* Appropriating the phrase here for Israel, the *Zohar*

performs a textual correction of history. See BT *Megillah* 12b.

423. At that very moment... Verse 9, with its striking reference to Pharaoh's army, is actually symbolic of Abraham's circumcision. Just as Abraham had to take up a knife—an implement associated with violence—to sever the foreskin and the associated powers of judgment from *Sitra Aħra*, so too does Divinity arm *Shekhinah* with weapons to battle Pharaoh's army.

In the *Zohar*, circumcision often represents the preservation of the covenant, signifying sexual behavior that conforms to Jewish law.

"Imperial catapults" renders בלסטראין קסורין (*balistra'in qisurin*). The term *balistra'in* is fairly common in midrashic literature. קיסרין (*Qisrin*) usually means "Caesarean," that is, "Roman" or, more generically, "imperial."

On the mare as a symbol of *Shekhinah* armed for battle against Pharaoh's horses, see Ezra of Gerona, "Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim," ad loc.

424. But now... *Tif'eret* proclaims to *Shekhinah* that after the sinking of the Egyptian army, and Israel's receiving the Torah, entering the land, and building the Temple, then She is properly adorned. Then "everything" is opened to Her through the two *hes*, signifying the plenitude of divine overflow from all the *sefirot*.

"Sublime adornments" may reiterate the illumination from the *sefirot* or perhaps refers to celestial embellishments, below Divinity.

See *Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash*. On the two תורים (*torim*), *earrings*, signifying the Written Torah and Oral Torah, see above, [note 383](#).

425. This is how He spoke to Her... The love-talk of *Tif'eret* to *Shekhinah* in preparation for divine intercourse. In many instances, rabbinic and kabbalistic teachings encourage intimate discourse prior to sexual union.

The Sufi mystic al-Ghazali writes in his *Book on the Etiquette of Marriage* (cited in Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam*, 106–7) about a husband’s approach before sexual intimacy: “Let him proceed with gentle words and kisses. The Prophet said: ‘Let none of you come upon his wife like an animal, and let there be an emissary between them.’ He was asked, ‘What is this emissary, O Messenger of God?’ He said, ‘The kiss and [sweet] words.’” The kabbalistic work on sexual intimacy, *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, writes similarly: “Therefore engage her first in conversation that draws her heart, puts her mind at ease and gladdens her... speaking words that arouse her to desire, union, love, longing, and passion.”

On rabbinic and kabbalistic teachings on erotic love-talk, see BT *Berakhot* 3a, 62a; *Hagigah* 5b; *Nedarim* 20a–b and pseudo-Rashi, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:178a; 2:46a; *Iggeret ha-Qodesh*, 335–36 (91 in Mopsik); Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 107–25. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot De’ot* 5:4; *Hilkhot Ishut* 15:17; Abraham ben David of Posquières, *Sefer Ba’alei ha-Nefesh*, 40a–41a.

426. This verse has been established by the companions... On Mount Sinai, God gives Moses *the stone tablets* וְהַמִּצְוָה וְהַתּוֹרָה (*ve-ha-torah ve-ha-mitsvah*), *and the teaching and the commandments*. According to BT *Berakhot* 5a (in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Lakish), *ha-torah* refers here to the Five Books of Moses (the Written Torah), while *ha-mitsvah* refers to the Mishnah (the core of the Oral Torah). See below, [note 432](#).

Rabbi Shim’on argues that the locative ה (*he*) at the end of הַהָרָה (*Ha-harah*), *to the mountain*, is not strictly necessary, for the same simple meaning could be conveyed by הָהָר (*Ha-har*). The “extra” *he* here bears additional meaning: it signifies *Shekhinah*—the chariot to which God invites Moses. The word הַהָרָה is thus to be read as הָהָר הֵ (*ha-har he*), *to the mountain of he, Shekhinah*.

On Moshe's spiritual development and transformation here, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 223–26.

427. He commanded him to separate from his wife... According to a rabbinic tradition, as a consequence of Moses' direct encounter with God, he abstained from sexual relations with his wife. See *Sifrei*, Numbers 99: "How did Miriam know that Moses was abstaining from conjugal relations? She saw that Zipporah was not adorned with women's jewelry. She said to her, 'Your brother is not stringent in this matter.' From this, Miriam knew."

The word וַיֵּהְיֶה (*ve-heyeh*) contains the letters of the tetragrammaton, symbolizing *Tif'eret*. *Or Yaqar*, *Sullam*, and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that Moses has now attained the position of *Tif'eret*, mounted upon the chariot—signifying *Shekhinah*. Rabbi Shim'on explains that the esoteric meaning of the verse is contained within its simple meaning. When Scripture says "*And be there*," it signifies that at that moment and in that place Moses participated in the conjunction of *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*—*VHYH Shem*, *VHYH Name*. Moses had received prophecy by means of *Shekhinah* beforehand—when God first instructed him to remove his shoes—but not with this level of mastery. Now Moses has accomplished the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, being physically transformed, with the divine name *YHVH* inscribed within him.

The full verse reads: *Come no closer here. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground.*

On Moses' celibacy, see *Sifrei*, Numbers 100, 103; *Sifrei Zuta* 12:1; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 12:8; Deuteronomy 5:27–28; BT *Shabbat* 87a (and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *ve-qava*, *ve-attah*), *Yevamot* 62a (and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *ve-qava*, *di-khtiv*); *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 2; B, 2; *Devarim Rabbah* 11:10; *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 13; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 46; *Shemot Rabbah* 19:3; 46:3; Rashi on Numbers 12:8;

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Yesodei ha-Torah* 7:6; *Zohar* 1:21b-22a, 152b, 234b; 2:222a; 3:148a, 180a, 261b; *ZH* 59b (*MhN*).

On God's command *Remove your sandals from your feet* as implying sexual abstinence, see *Zohar* 3:148a, 180a; *ZH* 59b; Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah*, Exodus 3:5, n. 94. Cf. *Zohar* 1:8b, 112b.

428. God engraved the name *Elohim*... When Moses began his prophetic mission, God engraved the name *Elohim* within him, signifying that *Shekhinah* would dwell with him. After Moses attained a higher rung of holiness, probably by receiving the Torah, God inscribed the tetragrammaton within him, thus enacting a coupling of *YHVH* and *Elohim*, signifying *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*. Thus, Moses embodies the consummate name of Divinity, *YHVH Elohim*, manifesting the perfected union of Divinity on earth.

On the name יהוה אלהים (*YHVH Elohim*) as the full name of God, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:3; cf. 12:15; see also *Zohar* 1:12a; 2:260a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 67a (*ShS*). On the presence of the consummate name within the perfected human being, Judah Halevi writes in the *Kuzari* (4:15): "Penetrating light is like the name *YHVH*, a specific and unique name, that instructs about the relationship between God and His most consummate creatures on the face of the earth. These are none other than the prophets whose purified souls receive His light, which passes through them like the light of the sun through bdellium and rubies.... The God of these men of the heart is exclusively *YHVH*, but after the cleaving of the name *Elohim* to the human, there was an exchange after the completion of the creation, yielding *YHVH Elohim*. This is like the teaching of our sages: 'It is called a complete name over a complete world' (*Bereshit Rabbah* 13:3). Thus the fullness of the world occurs only with the creation of the human, the heart of all that preceded him." Cf. *ibid.* 4:3.

Early kabbalistic literature commonly held that one's appellation signifies the *sefirah* to which one cleaves

mystically. See Asher ben David, *Peirush Shelosh Esreh Middot*, 74, 77, 194-95, 197; Jacob bar Sheshet, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 397-98; idem, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 74-77. On kabbalistic embodiment of the divine name, see Hecker, *Mystical Bodies*, 7-15; Wolfson, "The Body in the Text"; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, 39-40; Afterman, *Devequt*, 93-99, 120-24, 216-22, 275-78.

In *Zohar* 2:22b, Moses commences his prophecy with the name *Adonai*—in contrast to here, where it begins with the name *Elohim*.

The hyper-literal sense of the verse is: *See, I have given you Elohim to Pharaoh*, that is, I have given you the name *Elohim* for your confrontation with Pharaoh.

429. His own mate... At the peak of his spiritual attainment, Moses stands in the position of *Tif'eret* and his mate is God's chariot, *Shekhinah*. Moses has become the fullest possible representative of God on earth. Presumably this is an implicit polemic against Christianity.

430. Moses ascended two rungs... The two rungs are the "king's throne," signifying *Shekhinah*, and "His Name," signifying *Tif'eret*.

431. give you the stone tablets... While *stone tablets* can be understood according to its simple meaning, the truth lies in knowing that the word אֶבֶן (*even*), *stone*, signifies *Binah*. The proof is in the word לָךְ (*lekha*), *you*, whose numerical value equals fifty. In other words, what Moses was "given" was the opportunity to attain this exalted rank. Having done so, he was crowned with *Binah*—thus, in his own being, manifesting the entire divine or sefirotic structure for the first time in human history.

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b or *Nedarim* 38a, in the name of Rav and Shemu'el: "Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world; and all were given to Moses except for one." See also Naḥmanides, *Peirush al ha-Torah*, Introduction, 3-4; *Zohar* 1:3b.

Or *Yaqar* explains that the word אֶבֶן (*even*), *stone*, signifies *Binah* on account of etymological relation. See *Nitsotsei Zohar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

432. *The Torah and the commandments...* Exodus 24:12 is a verbal code that identifies the Torah with the ten *sefirot* in anthropomorphic form. “Two arms” signifies *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, who are on either side of *Tif’eret*, signified by the tetragrammaton. “Two legs” corresponds to *Netsah* and *Hod*, and “singular Foundation” symbolizes *Yesod*. The musical notes for chanting the Torah originate in *Keter* and emerge through *Yesod*, causing “undulation below,” in *Shekhinah*. Thus when Moses is given the Torah, he is actually being endowed with the entire divine array.

The full verse reads: *YHVH said to Moses, “Go up to Me to the mountain and be there, that I may give you the stone tablets and the teaching and the commandments, that I have written to instruct them.”*

See BT *Berakhot* 5a, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Lakish: “What is the meaning of the verse: *that I may give you the stone tablets and the teaching and the commandments, that I have written to instruct them?* *Stone tablets*—these are the ten commandments; *the teaching*—this is the Written Torah; *the commandments*—this is the Mishnah; *that I have written*—these are the Prophets and the Writings; *to instruct them*—this is the Gemara. It teaches that all these things were given to Moses on Sinai.” Whereas the Talmudic passage revealed the verse’s exoteric meaning, Rabbi Shim’on reveals its esoteric meaning.

433. *gaze upon the acts of Elohim...* We can marvel at the wonder of God’s names being embodied on earth, in perfect consonance with the paradigm above.

“Two names” refers to a discrepancy in the manuscript tradition as to which divine name belongs in this verse. Rabbi Shim’on’s reading as *Elohim* is attested in some biblical manuscripts as well as the Septuagint (codex

Alexandrinus), whereas the Masoretic text reads *YHVH*. (Compare Psalms 66:5: *Come, gaze upon the acts of Elohim*.) The Zoharic authors are aware of both variants. See *Zohar* 1:58b: “Rabbi Hiyya said, ‘...whether it be one name or another, all is praise.’” Here, the discrepancy is the very essence of Rabbi Shim’on’s interpretation about names; by affirming the legitimacy of each tradition, the two names are understood as coexisting in the one verse.

On the variance in Psalms 66:5, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:8 (and Theodor, ad loc.); *Tanḥuma, Vayelekh* 1; David Kimḥi on Psalms 46:9; *Zohar* 1:60a, 157b (*ST*); 2:5a (*MhN*); *ZH* 12a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 288; *Minḥat Shai* on Numbers 23:9, Psalms 46:9, and 66:5; Menaḥem Azariah of Fano, *Yonat Elem*, 99; Margalioṭ, *Sha’arei Zohar, Berakhot* 7b.

434. Solomon sat upon the throne of YHVH... The phrase *throne of YHVH* symbolizes *Shekhinah*, throne for *Tif’eret* (known as *YHVH*). Once the Temple was built, Solomon’s throne signifies the supreme vessel for the *Shekhinah*, and She rises, empowered by Song of Songs to meet Her Lover, *Tif’eret*.

435. the King extended His right hand... Once *Shekhinah* ascends, the masculine potency of Divinity reaches for Her with his right hand, symbolizing *Hesed*, and embraces Her between both arms, the left symbolizing *Gevurah*. Then He instructs that *Shekhinah* be given gifts: the pausal signs and other cantillation signs (to be discussed, below). Pausal signs are cantillation signs that bring the melody to a halt. By indicating the appropriate pauses, they lead words to the correct syntax and phrasing.

On the pausal signs and other cantillation signs, see BT *Megillah* 3a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:8; *Bahir* 83 (115–116); Halevi, *Kuzari* 4:3; Abraham ibn Ezra on Exodus 1:20; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 487; Isaac ha-Kohen, “*Peirush Ta’amei ha-Nequdot ve-Tsuratan*”; idem, “*Ta’amei ha-Te’amim*”; *Zohar* 1:15b; *ZH* 73c (*ShS*); Todros Abulafia,

Sha'ar ha-Razim, 73–76; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 50; Isaac ibn Sahula, *Peirush Shir ha-Shirim*, 419; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 18:3. For an extended treatment of vowels and cantillation signs, see *Sefer Badei ha-Aron*, ascribed to Shem Tov ibn Gaon, 65–123.

The image of the two arms embracing *Shekhinah* is often derived from Song of Songs 2:6: *His left hand beneath my head, his right embracing me.*

436. Why are they called תורי (*torei*), earrings... The word תור (*tor*), “earring,” is interpreted in light of Esther 2:15: *When the תר (*tor*), turn, came for Esther.* At the appropriate time, each of the *sefirot* inscribes *Shekhinah*—the chanted Torah—with the appropriate cantillation sign. Each chanted word signifies the erotic union of *Shekhinah* with *Yesod*, and each time with a different melody.

On the cantillation signs, see above, [notes 135](#), [137](#), [140](#); Wolfson, “Biblical Accentuation.”

437. like *telisha*... The “large *telisha*” is a sign that is placed over (and extends in front of) the first letter of a word. It serves as a disjunctive, indicating a slight separation from the following word. The “small *telisha*” is placed over (and extends behind) the last letter of a word, and is a conjunctive, indicating a connection with the following word. Presumably, the *telisha* was chosen as an exemplar because it looks like a ring, extends beyond a word’s edge, has two forms pointing right and left, and these two serve complementary functions. It is also a nonmelodic sign, in accord with the author’s privileging of cantillation signs that contribute to phrasing and punctuation, rather than melody.

On *telisha*, see *ZH* 106a (*Tiq*); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 10 (24b), 21 (48b).

438. Words without cantillation signs, without vowels... “Vowels” renders the word תנועי (*tenu’ei*), a term that can also be translated as “movements,” as above, particularly when used as a noun phrase, such as תנועי דטעמי

(*tenu'ei de-ta'amei*), “movements of cantillation signs.” “Diadems and earrings” frame a woman’s ears, above and below, as cantillation signs stand both above and below the letters. While a woman may not be most fittingly adorned without her jewelry, without clothing she cannot go out into the world.

439. Gold... from the head of the king... Gold usually signifies *Gevurah*, but here it is used to refer to *Binah*, which is the root of Judgment found in *Gevurah*. The cantillation signs and vowels originate in *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah*, which together constitute “the head of the King.” Since the letters originate in *Binah*, the complete unit of letters, vowels, and cantillation signs abides within *Binah*.

Rabbi Shim’on is pushed to interpret the verse in this way because Scripture is clearly privileging gold over silver, cognomen for *Hesed*. On *gold* originating in *Binah*, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. Mopsik.

440. two rungs... The cantillation signs are superior to the vowels, with the former emerging perhaps from *Keter* and the latter from *Hokhmah*. The image of thirty-two paths of Wisdom is first found in *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1. On letters originating in *Hokhmah*, see Nahmanides, “*Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*,” 409; *Zohar* 1:15b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 88 (111).

441. inherited by Oral Torah... The letters are engraved in Written Torah, signifying *Tif’eret* in its paradigmatic form. Oral Torah, signifying *Shekhinah*, receives those letters and is the performed version of the Written Torah, aided by the vowels and cantillation signs. The other *sefirot* complete Her array by conducting the vowels and cantillation signs.

442. noble mysteries... The vowels and cantillation signs determine and limit the possible modes of chanting the Torah, serving as defining measures for it. The letters are called “body of Torah,” in contrast to the vowels and cantillation signs, which are its spirit. See Mopsik.

“Fathomers” renders ידעי מדין (*yade’ei middin*), “those who know *middin*,” apparently deriving from מוד (*mdd*), “to measure.” See Judges 5:10: *you who sit on middin*, where the word is variously rendered as “[extended, wide] carpets, blankets” or—based on דין (*din*), “judgment”—“the judgment seat.” See BT *Eruvin* 54b: “It was taught in the school of Rav Anan: What is the meaning of the verse... *you who sit on middin*?... You who render judgment in absolute truth.”

In the *Zohar* the expression may refer to kabbalists who know the מדות (*middot*), the divine “qualities, attributes” (*sefirot*), or who know שעור קומה (*shi’ur qomah*), “the measure of the [divine] stature.” See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §952: “Whoever knows this שייעור (*shi’ur*), measure, of our Creator..., concealed from creatures, is assured of life in the world that is coming.” See *Zohar* 1:133a, 241b; 2:34a, 71b, 130b, 134b, 161a, 163a; *ZH* 74b (*ShS*), 106b (*Tiq*).

443. from the mystery of brain... From *Hokhmah*. Mysterious are the processes by which letters take on semantic meaning: beyond cognition in the recesses of the divine brain.

On the primacy of vowels, see Gikatilla, “Sefer ha-Niqqud,” #1-2 (61-65, 87-88).

444. Spark of Darkness... Ultimately, Spark of Darkness constitutes the relationship of letters and their vowels through enigmatic, erotic processes. Striking here is a linguistic process of specification and differentiation. The term “Spark of Darkness (or Hard Spark, Lamp of Adamantine Darkness)” renders בוצינא דקרדינוחא (*botsina de-qardinuta*), which radiates from *Ein Sof* and delineates the stages of emanation. It merges from within *Ein Sof*, striking and not striking the brain’s “pure ether,” signifying *Keter*. Its paradoxical incomprehensibility is reflected here in the expressions of its movement.

Instead of בוצינא (*botsina*), “lamp,” *Or Yaqar* reads בוציצא (*botsitsa*), a Zoharic neologism that was apparently

influenced by the spelling and meaning of Hebrew ניצוץ (*nitsots*), “spark.” In *Zohar* manuscripts the two spellings often appear interchangeably.

On the *botsina de-qardinuta*, see above, [note 131](#). On the “pure ether,” see above, [note 309](#). On striking as a linguistic process, see Wolfson, “Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery,” 233.

[445](#). If you say that vowel points were established by later sages... On the contrary, vowel points were an integral part of Torah from the beginning.

Hebrew writing is mainly consonantal. While it can probably be assumed that there were oral traditions regarding the pronunciations of the biblical text, the current vocalization system was established by the Tiberian Masoretes in the seventh and eighth centuries, crystallizing in the first half of the tenth century. Abraham ibn Ezra, living in the eleventh century, affirms these positions. Reimund Martini and other Inquisition polemicists alleged that Jews fabricated the vowel points to obscure the Torah’s meaning when it might be construed to affirm Christian interpretation.

See *Maḥazor Vitri* (#120, p. 91): “Regarding your question about whether it is prohibited to vocalize a Torah scroll. We have not heard that the Torah given to Moses at Sinai contained vocalization, and vocalization was not transmitted at Sinai; rather the sages made annotations as signals, and it is forbidden for us to add [to the Torah] on our own accord, lest we transgress the prohibition against adding [to the Torah]. Therefore we do not vocalize a Torah scroll, even though the pausal signs and [other] cantillation signs are part of the tradition from Sinai.”

See BT *Nedarim* 37b; ibn Ezra, *Sefer Tsaḥut be-Diqduq*, 4a; Naḥmanides, “Introduction” to *Peirush al ha-Torah*; Yevin, “Niqudim,” 112-18; above, [note 135](#). Cf. *Zohar* 2:205b.

The various statements that suggest late dating for the cantillation signs formed part of the sixteenth-century argument regarding the dating of the *Zohar*. It could be that this controversy constrained Cordovero from commenting on this paragraph. See Or *Yaqar*; Penkower, *Al Zeman Hibburam shel Sefer ha-Zohar*, 9-63. On Christian polemics regarding the dating of vocalization, see Penkower, *The Dates of Composition*, 19-24 and n. 37. On this discussion as evidence of the medieval provenance of the *Zohar*, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 72-73.

446. Striking... is from the pure ether that can be grasped... The act of “striking”—understood as sexual contact—comes from that aspect of *Keter*, “the pure ether that can be grasped,” which stands in relation to *Hokhmah* and the other lower *sefirot*. It stands in contrast to the “pure ether that cannot be grasped,” an aspect of *Keter* that is beyond the cognition of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. The progeny of the conjugal union, expressed as “striking,” are the cantillation signs.

447. whatever the sign’s desire... The cantillation signs originate in the highest recesses of Divinity and are thus given the authority to determine the rhythm and melody for the ritual chanting of the Torah. “Proudly and humbly” probably indicates raising or lowering the volume of one’s voice.

“Bridle” renders the word *מתג* (*meteg*), also the name of a cantillation sign. As such it has no melody but indicates that its syllable is to be chanted slightly louder and/or slower. It has the same appearance as *siluq*, a cantillation sign that signals the last word in a verse. This similarity is probably the significance that the author has in mind.

On the image of letters as equine support for the vowels, directed by the cantillation signs, see *Zohar* 1:211b. On cantillation signs, see Yeivin, “Te’amim.”

448. Apples of gold in settings of silver... Vowel points and cantillation signs serve together to provide the

sound and dynamism for the reading of the Torah.

Maimonides sees this verse from Proverbs as biblical approbation for esoteric expression in biblical and rabbinic literature. See *Guide of the Perplexed* 1, intro, pp. 11–12.

On the *settings* (*maskiyyot*) as vowels (*nequddot*), see Eleazar of Worms, *Yein ha-Roqeah* on 1:11.

449. *Let us make a human in our image...* The similitude between Divinity and the human lies in their being constituted of letters, vowels, and cantillation signs.

This similitude exists in ancient Jewish mystical sources, particularly those associated with the *Shi'ur Qomah*. See Wolfson, “Anthropomorphic and Symbolic Image of the Letters”; Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 305–26.

450. *blessed Holy One said this to the celestial troops...* Before creating the first human, God consulted with the heavenly powers.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 38b, in the name of Rav Yoḥanan, explaining the plural phrasing *Let us*: “The blessed Holy One does nothing without consulting His Heavenly Court, for it is written: *This sentence by decree of the watchers, this verdict by order of the holy ones* (Daniel 4:14).” See also *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:3, 5–6; 31:12; *Zohar* 1:57a–b. Cf. *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 11; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 3; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis 1:26; *Zohar* 1:13b, 34b, 47a, 134a–b, 205a–b; 2:55a; 3:35b, 69b.

The verse in Genesis continues: *They shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals, the whole earth, and all crawling things that crawl on earth.*

451. *which mystery of Elohim above...* The term *Elohim* can refer variously to *Shekhinah*, *Gevurah*, and *Binah*. As part of his homiletical exploration, Rabbi Shim'on wonders whether the *Elohim* in whose image *Adam* is created is *Binah* of the upper world, or *Shekhinah* of the lower world; and if it is

the upper world, what are the sides with whom God consults?

452. from the secret of *Elohim*... What ever apparent multiplicity there may be in the androgynous human being, comprised of male and female when first created, nonetheless the couple has a single point of origin.

The verse in Genesis reads: *Elohim created the human in His image: in the image of Elohim He created him; male and female He created them.*

453. why two images... The term *image* appears twice in close succession in Genesis 1:27. The first instance refers to the male aspect of the human, while the second signifies the female. The divine name *Elohim* also appears twice: the first refers to the Upper or Male world, beginning with *Binah*; and the second, to the Lower or Female world, *Shekhinah*. This explains the plural form *Let us make* of Genesis 1:26: there are two worlds, but both are comprised within the single principle of the name *Elohim*. See *Zohar* 3:117a, 122b (*RM*).

454. At the moment that the human was created... The letters, vowel points, and cantillation signs that emanate from Divinity constitute the very foundation of the *sefirot* in their anthropomorphic structure and the human being. These three components correspond to three central human features: body, spirit, and mind, respectively. Without them, one is not truly human.

Rabbinic writings associate the cantillation signs with intellect or understanding, presumably because the same Hebrew word טעם denotes both an “accent” and a “reason.”

Nehemiah 8:8 reads *They read from the scroll of the Torah of God, explaining it and שום שכל (som sekhel), giving the sense, so that they understood the reading;* and in JT *Megillah* 4:1 (74d), *som sekhel* is explained as signifying the cantillation signs. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:8; BT *Megillah* 3a; Wolfson, “Anthropomorphic and Symbolic Image of the Letters,” 175–79. Cf. BT *Nedarim* 37b; *Zohar* 2:205b. In

broader terms, Ezra of Gerona writes: “The human being is composed of all the spiritual entities.” See *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 5; idem, “Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim,” 528.

455. Let your words shine... See BT *Berakhot* 22b: “Once a certain disciple was reciting hesitantly before [the study hall of] Rabbi Yehudah son of Beteira. He said to him: ‘My son, open your mouth and let your words shine! For words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity, as it says: *Is not My word like fire, says YHVH?* (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as fire is not susceptible to impurity, so words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity.’”

In the upcoming homily, the complexity of the treatment of letters, vowels, and cantillation signs bears similarities to *Tiqqunei Zohar* but its style appears Zoharic. Meanwhile, CM10, P13, PR13, V23, PR14, and M5 omit roughly half a folio below (74b-74c) where the content is most similar to that found in *Tiqqunei Zohar*. The missing material is then supplied at the end of those manuscripts. See Liebes, *Peraqim*, 174; Wolfson, “Dimmui Antropomorphi,” 175, n. 123.

456. But, come and see... We are about to transition from the familiar to something innovative. Our starting point is to recognize the antiquity of the vowel points (see above, [notes 135](#) and [445](#)).

In the *Zohar*, the word “but” often encodes the author’s and reader’s desire to ascend to a higher degree of understanding, often in relationship to the particular situation in which the author and his listener find themselves or, as here, as emphatic confirmation of a newly established interpretation. See Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 174-76.

457. all letters emanate... from a single, small point... It would be impossible for a prophet to innovate even one vowel point because the letters and vowels ultimately originate within *Hokhmah*, signified by the smallest of the letters, ם (*yod*). Both the divine body, construed as the

sefirot Hesed through *Shekhinah*, and the human body are constituted by the letters. The soul, divine and human, is identified with the highest of the *sefirot*, and it is by virtue of the vowel points that the letters abide (see above, [note 135](#)).

Here the *Zohar* textualizes both human and divine bodies by establishing the Torah, with its unwritten vocalization, as their paradigm.

Genesis 2:7 reads in full: *YHVH Elohim formed the human, dust from the soil, and blew into his nostrils נשמת (nishmat) the breath of, life, and the human became נפש חיה (nefesh hayyah), a living soul [or: a living being].*

[458.](#) **from the midst of the World that is Coming...** Letters crystallize further within the World that is Coming, namely *Binah*, and from there proceed into “the human,” signifying *Hesed* through *Shekhinah*. The letters are considered soul-less until the mysterious sexual union of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, generating vowel points, which ensoul and sustain the letters.

[459.](#) **Supernal Point, through which Elohim was created...** Proceeding through the opening words of Genesis, the first word, בראשית (*be-reshit*), should be understood as *With beginning* (rather than *In the beginning*), relying on an alternative meaning of the preposition ב (*be*). Next, the sentence’s grammatical subject is unnamed—as is perfectly appropriate because the true subject of emanation is unnameable. Then follows the verb ברא (*bara*), *created*. Lastly, אלהים (*Elohim*), *God* is the grammatical object. Read in this hyperliteral way, the passage yields: *With beginning* [by means of the point of *Hokhmah*], the ineffable source *created Elohim* [the palace of *Binah*]*—Elohim (God) is now created, rather than the Creator.*

Supernal Point, namely *Hokhmah*, is the source from which proceeds not only *Elohim* but also *heavens* (signifying *Tif’eret*) and then *earth* (signifying *Shekhinah*). Thus the first verse of the Torah represents the emanation of the entire

sefirotic structure, which is identified here with the letters and their adornment, as one whole.

The rabbis of the Talmud were aware of the danger of interpreting *Elohim* as the object of the sentence, which could promote Gnostic dualism (see BT *Megillah* 9a; Rashi and Tosafot, ad loc.). Various early kabbalists also adopt such a reading. See *Kiryat Sefer* 6 (1928–29): 415; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 139–41; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 402, n. 55; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 152–54. For Gnostic parallels, see Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, index, s.v. Autogenes, Self-begotten One.

On *reishit* signifying a noun, see *Targum Yerushalmi*; Nahmanides, ad loc.; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 81; *Zohar* 1:15a. On the syntax of Genesis 1:1, see Rashi; Abraham ibn Ezra; Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam); David Kimḥi; Gersonides.

460. With the power of this Point letters emerged... The Torah's first words can be understood in yet another manner, by construing the word ברא (*bara*) as the Aramaic adjective meaning *outside* or *external*. Thus *reishit* causes a propulsion of divine energy—that is, the letters—ברא (*bara*), outward, but in a diminished form, without soul.

Already in the ancient esoteric literature called *Shi'ur Qomah*, a strong link is forged between the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the anthropomorphic form of the divine body. Rabbi Shim'on's exegesis weaves together three layers of creation: the human form, the world (heavens and earth), and the letters and vowels.

See Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§29, 865; *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*, 364; Wolfson, “Dimmui Antropomorphi.”

In *Liqqutei Shilkheḥah u-Fei'ah* (27b), Abraham Abulafia writes: “Know that all of your body's limbs are combined in the same form as the combination of letters, this one with that one.” See Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv*

Devarim Nekhoḥim, 154; Azriel of Gerona, “*Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*,” 456.

461. shooting forth vowel points of soul... After creating the body, namely the letters and *sefirot*, *Ḥokhmah* infuses the letters with soul by impregnating *Binah* with vowel points. The creation of light in Genesis 1:3 thus signifies the vocalized illumination of letters.

462. first point to shine... Proceeding to explain the vowel points in terms of a sequentially proceeding hierarchy, we begin with the vowel point *ḥolem*: the only one that is positioned above the letters, and is thus interpreted as the most elevated of them all. Thus *ḥolem* is the first to radiate from Primordial Point, namely *Ḥokhmah*. (*Ḥolem* appears directly above the letter *vav* only; with other letters it likewise appears in the upper position, but immediately after the letter.)

Abraham ibn Ezra writes in his *Sefer Moznei Leshon ha-Qodesh* (2b): “There are seven kings. The first is *ḥolem*, king of kings because it alone is aloft, high up between two letters.” On 5b he says: “*Ḥolem* rides upon two letters.... Its connotation is complete and perfect.... It is complete since all the other kings [i.e., vowels] are deficient in comparison. Arabic grammarians call it loftiness and exaltedness.” Gikatilla explains in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* that *ḥolem* symbolizes the “beginning of emanation... supreme will... and the mystery of intellectual apprehension...” (22*). He says further: “There is no life external to it, because it is the Source of Life... as is said: *For with You is the source of life.... In Your light do we see light*. Light is the beginning of all existence, for it is the first of all utterances...” (79*). Cordovero compares its inapprehensibility to the dream-state: “Its name attests that it is hidden, inapprehensible other than for the dreamer who dreams, and thus sees” (*Or Yaqar*).

On *ḥolem*, see ibn Ezra, *Sefer Tsaḥut be-Diqduq*, 1a; *Bahir* 27 (40–41); *Zohar* 3:17a, 247b (both *RM*); *Tiqqunei*

Zohar 7a, 5 (20b), 18 (32a-b), 69 (104b); Gikatilla, *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (80*-82*); Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 228; Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream*, 236-44. On the vowels' mystical connotations, see Martini, *The Book of Punctuation*, 97-117.

463. five hundred parasangs... These symbolize the embryonic structures of the five *sefirot* clustered around *Tif'eret* (*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*). (Alternatively, they symbolize the five *sefirot* included in *Yesod*: *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, *Netsah*, and *Hod*.) Those five hundred reside within World that is Coming, namely *Binah*. On account of those five (hundred), the point of the *holem* shines five times in the five iterations of the word אור (*or*), *light*, in Genesis 1:3-5.

A parasang is a Persian mile, equaling just under 3.5 modern miles. In the Talmud, distances were measured by the time it would take to traverse them, and it was approximated that three parasangs would take three and a half hours to walk. The quantity five hundred is presumably related to the idea that *Binah* has fifty gates of understanding (see above, [notes 193](#), [431](#)). It usually denotes the measure of the Tree of Life; see *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 2:9; *Zohar* 1:18a, 35a, 76b, 78b (last two *ST*); 2:2a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69).

464. a different point, called שרק (*shuruq*)... The three vowel points *holem*, *shuruq*, and *hireq* are all represented by a single dot, distinguished by their position in relation to the letter they modify: above, middle, and below, respectively. Even though each is a single dot, it was necessary to have new vowels in distinct positions in order to symbolize the emanation that proceeds from concealment in *Hokhmah* above (*holem*—ו), to *Tif'eret* in the middle (*shuruq*—ו), to *Shekhinah* below (*hireq*—ו). (*Shuruq* appears as a single dot in the middle position only when it is in conjunction with a *vav*; otherwise it appears as three dots below the letter).

See Isaac ha-Kohen, *Ta'amei ha-Nequddot*, 265-66; *Zohar* 1:15b, 16b-17a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*,

328–30, 333 (and Wolfson’s notes on 329); Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 420–50; Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, *Peirush al Parashat Bereshit*, 138 (and Hallamish’s note 119); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21 (47a), 69 (104b). In all of these, except for the *Zohar* and Moses de León, *holem* signifies *Keter*, rather than *Hokhmah*.

465. to illuminate the body... Vowel points are the soul of the letters, referred to as “body,” but here “body” also refers to the anthropomorphic form of Divinity, composed of *sefirot*. The different vowel points shine their lights upon different parts of the divine corpus.

For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

466. from its envisioned loins and above... *Shuruq* is represented by the dot in the middle of the *vav* and shines its light within the upper torso and arms, corresponding to *Tif’eret*. See Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 238–42; idem, “Sefer ha-Niqqud,” 32*–37*.

467. Hireq—settles below... *Hireq* symbolizes the flow of radiance in the lower parts of the letter and the divine body. It completes the downward movement of the dot from upper to middle, and then to lower positions, and *Shekhinah*.

On *hireq*, see Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 442–50; idem, “Sefer ha-Niqqud,” 37*–47*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 231–32.

468. Separation always subsists within the left arm... Materiality, including the body, always needs to be redeemed through exposure to light. Here, the vowels shine through the entire corpus of the letters, entailing separation of light from darkness. The left arm signifies *Gevurah*, the source of judgment and division. The word *הבדלה* (*havdalah*), “separation,” recalls the Saturday night ritual that concludes the Sabbath, in which a cup of wine, signifying *Gevurah*, is held in the right hand. Holding the cup in the right hand, symbolizing *Hesed*, tempers the harshness of *Gevurah*, incorporating it within the economy of Loving-

kindness. Similarly, the vowel point $\dot{\text{v}}$ (*segol*) is represented by three dots, which symbolize the triad of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, in which *Gevurah* is contained within the others' harmonizing influences.

The word "weariness" renders לוֹאֵי (*lavo'i*) and is derived from לֵאֵה (*la'ah*), as found in Genesis 19:11; Isaiah 16:12; Proverbs 26:15; Job 4:2. See Targum on Genesis 19:11; Sokoloff, s.v. מְלִי. The available manuscripts give this reading, but *Or Yaqar* has preserved לֵלֹאֵי (*le-leva'ei*), "to the Levites," meaning that the light (being shone from the right side) empowers the Levites (who are based in the left side) to perform their music and sing.

On *segol*, see Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 453–55; idem, "Sefer ha-Niqqud," 50*–53*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 229–30. On the association of wine with the Left Side and *Gevurah*, see *Sefer ha-Bahir* 93–94 (137); *Zohar* 1:88a, 238a, 239b; 3:12b; *ZH* 63d, 64c (both *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh* 11 (13), 36–38 (43–45); idem, "She'elot u-Tshuvot," 47. On the *havdalah* ritual, see Elliot Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, 256–76.

469. tseire—shining and settling upon right arm... This vowel bestows its luminescence upon *Hesed*.

On *tseire*, see Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Ta'amei ha-Nequddot*, 104; Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 451–53; idem, "Sefer ha-Niqqud," 47*–50*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 228–29.

470. tseire becomes inverted... In the optimal state, the right and left sides are balanced and the Female, namely *Shekhinah*, cleaves to the Male through them both. This is represented by the horizontal vowel points *tseire* and *segol*. When *Shekhinah* is riven from the Male, the two dots of $\dot{\text{v}}$ (*tseire*), or the two upper dots of $\dot{\text{v}}$ (*segol*) are inverted vertically, yielding the vowel point $\dot{\text{v}}$ (*sheva*). The *segol* sometimes inverts as well, forming the three-pointed vowel $\dot{\text{v}}$ (*shuruq*). These various configurations of the vowel points

are the vehicles through which the Male shines His loving light within the Female.

In light of *sheva*'s dependence on the letter it serves, Gikatilla writes in *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (54*): "You will surely see that the form of *sheva*—principle of composition [of form and matter] appears like this , for this is a necessary feature among objects of the lower world, and so you will find within *sheva* the one who rides and the one who is ridden. And it [the *sheva*] is always like a servant running before kings.... Indeed, the master rides the servant, who goes on foot; and the servant serves, since the goodness of the master emanates upon him. Understand that this form cannot exist nor move."

On *sheva*, see Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Ta'amei ha-Nequddot*, 105; Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 455-59; idem, "Sefer ha-Niqqud," 53*-57*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 230-31; *Tiqqunei Zohar, Haqdamah* (15b), 56 (89b), 69 (104b). For a different interpretation of the episodic quality of the Male's love for the Female, see *Sullam*.

471. vowel point *pataḥ*, expanding the brilliance...

The second day of creation signifies *Gevurah* because it marks the establishment of the firmament, a dynamic entity responsible for separating and demarcating. The graphic appearance of the vowel *pataḥ* suggests an inverted form of the letter *vav* (*vav*), a symbol of masculinity, as well as the firmament or sky. Illumination "on the left" here indicates a subversion or substitution of identities, as right is contained in left and left is contained in right, even though this common trope is generally understood as a positive and appropriate harmonizing of these contrary forces.

In *Ginnat Egoz*, Joseph Gikatilla writes about the *pataḥ* (460): "In truth, since the *pataḥ* is an open entity, it appears simply as a straight line, progressing. The secret called *pataḥ* moves the hosts of the heavens, for the hosts of heaven have no subsistence without movement, since

movement is the cause of their endurance as individuals. From the beginning of movement, all material beings are sustained, as well as all measurable entities.”

On the connotations of *sheva*, see Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 460-61; idem, “Sefer ha-Niqqud,” 53*-57*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 226-27. On the interaction of left and right, see Wolfson, “Left Contained in the Right.”

472. Waters—on the right... *Or Yaqar* explains that water is a symbol for *Hesed*, on the right side, which is associated with *tseire*. The noun for water, מַיִם (*mayyim*), is in plural form, and the *Zohar* interprets it as signifying two separate sets of waters, corresponding to the Male and Female, commonly *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*. The two dots of *tseire* are based in *Hesed*, and prefigure their emergence. It is only as a result of disharmony between the Male and Female that these two dots take on the hierarchical form of *sheva*.

473. pataḥ... moves in between tseire's dots... While water originates in *Hesed*, it descends to this world only by passing first through *Gevurah*, symbolized by the *firmament* and the vowel *pataḥ*. When *pataḥ*, graphically represented by a horizontal line, steps in *between the waters*, namely the two dots of the vowel *tseire*, it appropriates water for *Gevurah*. This intervention marks the insertion of the quality of judgment, establishing a hierarchy of higher and lower waters. Once that hierarchy has been established, rain can fall from above to below. Thus, even though water originates in *Hesed*, it is ascribed to *Gevurah* because of the latter's instrumental role in bringing it down into the world.

The association of *Gevurah* with rain is based on the rabbinic expression גְבוּרוֹת גְּשָׁמִים (*gevurot geshamim*), “the power of rain,” which originates in the Mishnah (*Berakhot* 5:2; *Ta'anit* 1:1). In explaining the rationale for the reference to rain in the statutory prayer's second blessing, which is called *gevurot*, “powers,” BT *Ta'anit* 2a asks: “What is the meaning of ‘the power of rain’? Rabbi Yoḥanan explained,

‘Because they [the rain showers] fall בגבורה (*bi-gvurah*), powerfully....’ Rabbi Yoḥanan said: ‘Three מפתחות (*mafteiḥot*), keys, lie in the hands of the blessed Holy One and have not been handed over to any messenger, namely, the key of rain, the key of childbirth, and the key of resurrection. The key of rain, as is written: *יפתח יהוה* (*yiftaḥ*), *will open, for you his goodly treasure, the heavens, to provide rain for your land in its season.*” See *Zohar* 2:154b, 167a; 3:31b.

474. Firmament spread out farther from the right side... According to *Sullam*, once פ (pataḥ) had expanded to encompass the right and left, a further extension proceeded from the right. In this movement, it entered into segol (.), identified with the triad of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, and augmented the downward reach of the third dot, to form the vowel point *qamats* (.). Then, there was reciprocal intermingling of the right and left sides. This blending may have been suggested by the meaning of the word *qamats*: “to clench” or “to take a handful.” Cf. the explanations of *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The complexity of the interactions of the different vowels and their significations proved challenging to Cordovero (*Or Yaqar*), who writes: “How intensively I labored to explain this teaching, to harmonize it with all the expertise and teachings that Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai, peace be upon him, explained regarding the vowels in various ways, so that everything would cohere without contradiction, as the careful reader will observe.”

On the esoteric significance of the *qamats*, see Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 461–62; idem, “Sefer ha-Niqqud,” 62*–68*; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Tashaq*, 227; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *Haqdamah* (5a), 69 (104b, 107a).

475. Waters is written five times above... On the second day of creation, there are five iterations of the word מים (*mayyim*), *waters*. On the third day, as indicated in Genesis 1:9, all of those *waters* are gathered together. These five are symbolized by the five dots of the vowels

tseire (·) and *segol* (·), which correspond to *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, respectively. It appears that, singly, the five dots signify *Hesed* through *Hod*.

Genesis 1:7 reads in full: *God made the firmament and it divided the waters beneath the firmament from the waters above the firmament, and it was so.*

476. Female proceeds between right and left... Once all the *sefirot* have coalesced, *Shekhinah* advances to receive enlightenment from them. She is unable to absorb them in their fullest potency and so receives them in altered forms. Thus the two dots of *tseire* are transmitted in the form of the two dots of *sheva*, while the three dots of *segol* are transferred as the three dots of *shuruq*.

The diminished form of vowels within the Female resembles Elijah's homily above, in which he talks about "large letters" and "small letters," with the latter corresponding to the Female. See above, [page 417](#) and [note 169](#).

"In a lighter fashion" [or: "in a diminished way" or "degraded way"] renders באורח קליל (*be-orah kalil*).

477. a woman's mind is facile... This explains why the vowels need to be tempered before *Shekhinah* can absorb them: women's weaker temperament means that they have lesser intellectual abilities. As is the case with human women, so too with the *Shekhinah*, who needs more benign forms of the vowels in order to be able to absorb them.

On women's weak-mindedness, see BT *Shabbat* 33b.

478. without stability at all Even though both Male and Female are constituted by series of vowels, the composition of the Male is superior in terms of its stability and its clear expression of the ideal. According to *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash*, it is the introduction of hierarchy, as seen in the vertical orientation of dots in the *sheva* and three-dot *shuruq*, that characterizes the inferior formulation within the feminine, in contrast to the parallel structure within *tseire* and *segol*.

479. all five in one vowel—*hireq*... Ideally, all five iterations of the word *waters*, signifying five *sefirot*, converge in *one place*, namely the vowel *hireq*, which symbolizes *Shekhinah*. She resides beneath *firmament*, which signifies the compound of *Tif'eret* and *Yesod*; meanwhile, graphically speaking, *hireq* (.) combines with *patah* (.) to form *qamats* (.). This complex union illuminates *Yesod*, holy covenant, which fills up and bestows light from the *sefirot* above onto *Shekhinah*.

V23, CM1, CM10, CT3, P13, PR13, and *Or Yaqar* all have *hireq* here, but the printed editions have *shuruq*, which corresponds to *Yesod*. The upcoming sequence of transactions between *Yesod* and *Shekhinah* is somewhat unclear and a reading of *shuruq* here would clarify matters.

480. Once this one inherits them all... Once *Yesod* is illuminated, he conjoins with *Shekhinah*, impregnating Her, “producing fruits and greenery.” According to *Matoq mi-Devash*, these are the human souls coming into the world. Regarding the sequence of emanation to *Yesod*, see previous note.

Genesis 1:11 reads: *God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, fruit trees bearing fruit of each kind, that has its seed within it upon the earth.” And it was so.*

481. vowel point *hataf qamats*... *Hataf qamats* is comprised of the *qamats* (.), signifying the ideal union, and the *sheva* (.), whose vertically-aligned two dots represent a defective form of the relationship of the male and female potencies within Divinity. Phonetically, the *hataf qamats* makes the same “o” sound as the *holem*, suggesting the similarity between *Shekhinah*, represented by *qamats*, and *Hokhmah*, represented by *holem*. From this series of associations emerges a correspondence with the deficient *lights* from the fourth day of Creation. In the description of that day, the word מֵאֲרוֹת (*me'orot*), *lights*, is written without *vavs*, the vowel letters. This deficient spelling alludes to a lack: the light of

Shekhinah (symbolized by the moon) had diminished, and Her union with *Tif'eret* (symbolized by *vav*) was disrupted.

On the similarity between *Shekhinah* and *Hokhmah*, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:372. On the מארת (*me'orot*), *lights*, see above, [note 262](#). On the association of *Shekhinah* and *holem*, see *Zohar* 3:281b.

482. vowel point *sheva segol*... The phrase *swarm of* חיה נפש (*nefesh hayyah*) refers to the movement of נפש חיה (*nefesh hayyah*), *Living Soul*, signifying *Shekhinah*. This is represented by the vowel point *sheva segol*, a composite form of the *segol*. As seen above, the three dots of *segol* refers to the sefirotic triad of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, with the “water” of *Hesed* being subordinated to the “fire” of *Gevurah*, under the harmonizing aegis of *Tif'eret*. This inverted relationship of *Hesed* and *Gevurah* is reflected in the *sheva*, resulting in the imperfect transmission of light to *Shekhinah*. She ventures “forth into all vowel points” because composite forms entailing the *sheva* occur with *qamats*, *patah*, and *segol*.

Sometimes in the *Zohar*, *nefesh hayyah* means *soul of the Living Being*, alluding to a human soul that derives from *Shekhinah*. Here, the entire compound noun is construed as referring to *Shekhinah*. On *Shekhinah* as *Living Soul*, see Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 508–9; *Zohar* 1:12b, 16a, 46b–47a, 211a, 242a; 2:126a, 242a; 3:19a, 39b, 41a; ZH 9b (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 51; idem, *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot*, 338b.

In its simple sense, נפש חיה (*nefesh hayyah*) is a singular collective term, rendered here in the plural: *living creatures*.

When one of the guttural letters takes an audible *sheva*, its graphical form is usually as a composite *sheva*, one type of which is *sheva segol*.

483. *sheva* is called *swift for righteousness*... *Sheva* signifies *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* aligned in accord with judgment, while *Shekhinah* acts in judgment without tarrying. Another reason that it is described as “swift” is that the

sheva is pronounced with a quick elision into the next consonant.

Here the compound noun *nefesh ḥayyah* is broken down into its component parts, yielding “*soul of that living being*,” meaning that the vowel is the core spiritual essence of *Shekhinah*.

On the rapid pronunciation of *sheva*, see *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 3. On *nefesh ḥayyah*, see previous note.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *In love will a throne be established, and he will sit upon it in truth, in the tent of David, judging and seeking justice swiftly for righteousness.*

484. Three-pointed *shuruq*... The vowel *shuruq* is represented graphically in two forms: as a *vav* with a dot in the middle (וּ), or as three dots proceeding downward diagonally from left to right (ִ). In the former, *Shekhinah* is symbolized by the dot that is held close to the bosom of the *vav*, which symbolizes *Tif'eret* and *Yesod*. The latter form signifies the separation of the three *sefirot*, which occurs when *Tif'eret*, represented by *vav*, withdraws from *Shekhinah*. In that event, She loses the knowledge that She had gained, as well as Her connection to *Yesod*.

485. all vowel points exist for illuminating letters... Vowels have a vitalizing function: they provide the animating force for their letters, for this world, and for supernal worlds—as well as for the composition of the *sefirot* and of the human being. The mystery of the configuration of letters and vowel points was all transmitted at the Sinaitic revelation.

Rabbi Shim'on reiterates this teaching as the section concludes. On the antiquity of the vowel points, see above, [note 135](#).

486. upper world and lower world... Namely, *Binah* and *Shekhinah*. *Or Yaqar* explains the similarity and difference in terms of a single imprint on two different materials, such as gold and brass. *Matoq mi-Devash* uses the example of

the two instances of the letter ך (he) in the tetragrammaton, one symbolizing *Binah* and one *Shekhinah*. The first human is modeled upon these two worlds.

The theme of “this one patterned after that” is a cardinal principle of Kabbalah. See *Zohar* 1:38a (*Heikh*), 57b–58a, 129a, 145b, 156b, 158b, 205b; 2:15b, 20a (last two *MhN*), 48b, 82b, 144b, 251a (*Heikh*); 3:45b, 65b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:273.

487. Skull of the head... The previous paragraph seems to suggest that the human will be constructed according to the anthropomorphic pattern in the upper world, namely *Binah*, and following that of the lower world, namely *Shekhinah*. Here, however, “upper” and “lower” refer to higher and nether regions of a single anthropomorphic form. “Skull” signifies *Keter* through *Binah*; “body” represents *Hesed* to *Tif'eret*; and “thighs and feet” indicate *Netsah* through *Shekhinah*. The human being is thus modeled precisely upon the template of the divine body.

488. When the blessed Holy One is pleased by someone... When someone behaves piously and with righteousness, God smooths that person’s way in life, not only for religious matters but also for worldly matters.

489. He favors his way... When a person directs his full consciousness to following God’s way, God regards those efforts as if He had appointed them from the beginning.

See Psalms 145:19: *He performs the will of those in awe of Him*. A teaching in *M Avot* 2:4 ascribed to Rabban Gamliel son of Judah says: “Do His will as if it were your own will, so that He will do your will as He does His own will.” Jonah Gerondi in his commentary on *Avot* (marked as 2:5, p. 22) explains: “As a person performs his own will with vigor and desire, so shall the will of the blessed Holy One be performed for him. Do not separate the will of the blessed Holy One, may He be blessed, and his own will; rather pursue both of them equally. That is to say, his only

desire should be that which is in accord with the will of YHVH... If you merit to receive His favor, He shall perform your will even in your lowly, worldly needs, providing your income, for this is His will for all mortal creatures.” See Rashi ad loc.

490. gelling and taking form in the image of the human... Letters constitute the form of the human being, described by *Or Yaqar* as a transition from liquid to congealed form. The vowel points are the soul to the letters’ body, animating and sustaining them.

On the relationship of letters and vowels, and on the letter-based form of the human and divine bodies, see above, [note 454](#).

491. perdure with knowledge and understanding... The instilling of letters with soul from vowel points is not the final culmination. The inspirited letters continue to function with heightened consciousness, promoting acts of loving-kindness to those in need. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* interpret those “others” as subdivine beings. Given that these animate letters constitute the biblical text and the human individual as well, “others” may also refer to other elements of scripture and needy fellows.

Rabbi Shim’on began this homily with bold descriptions of the bodily similarity of Divinity and the human being; he now moves to more abstract interpretations of the formulas *in our image* and *according to our likeness*.

See *Tiqqunei Zohar* 47 (83b), 69 (116b). On the tension regarding the anthropomorphism here, see Asulin, *Ha-Parshanut ha-Mistit le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 318–320.

492. undulations of cantillation signs... Their melody signifies enlightened consciousness, perceiving the ultimate inability to comprehend Divinity’s most recondite aspects.

For alternate explanations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the cognitive role of the cantillation signs, see above, [note 454](#).

493. *in our image* The parallel terms *in our image, according to our likeness* (each of which comprises one word in Hebrew) provide another exegetical opportunity. This time, the first unit of the pair corresponds to the cantillation signs.

On the image of the wise king and the animation of letters, see above, [note 135](#).

494. they are called נקודי (*nequdei*), vowel points... The term נקודה (*nequdah*), “point,” refers both to *Hokhmah* and to the graphic form of vowels. This indicates the meaning of the formula *according to our likeness*, namely that while the vowels do not take on their form within the point that signifies *Hokhmah*, they derive from there, explaining their similarity in terminology and appearance. In this interpretation of the word pair *in our image, according to our likeness*, the first unit corresponds to cantillation signs, while the second symbolizes the vowels.

495. If you say letters... One might think—given that letters derive from *Hokhmah* as well—that they, too, are signified by *according to our likeness*. However, this is not the case, because letters do not attain their form until they emerge from Upper World, namely *Binah*. Thus, even though there is a common genealogy to vowel points and letters, the extent of graphic elaboration from the Primordial Point is too great for them to be considered *likeness*. Within *Hokhmah*, there is no image or form at all.

496. Beginning of revealed concealment... This signifies *Hokhmah*, which is the first *sefirah* that can be recognized as having emanated but is utterly beyond human comprehension. It is the paradoxical point that marks the first stirrings of emanation and yet, because it has neither form nor dimension, it remains entirely mysterious. *Or Yaqar* explains that while *Keter* is actually the first emanant, it cannot even be called Beginning. Even *Hokhmah* can be described only with the paradoxical formula “Beginning of revealed concealment.”

497. our likeness... our image... Corresponding to the vowel points and the cantillation signs, respectively.

498. images of a person... Another interpretation of the term בצלמנו (*be-tsalmenu*), *in our image*: It refers to the human being's most ethereal aspect, constituted by the cantillation signs used for chanting the Torah. Since the letters are identified with the corporeal body, and the vowel points with the soul that inhabits the body, what about the location of the cantillation signs? The answer is that the *image* resides both within a person, as the most recondite aspect of comprehension, and outside, as a custodian. The presence of the melodic notes signifies the idealized image of the human being.

In medieval Kabbalah, צלם (*tselem*), "image," often signifies an astral body, or angelic double. As commonly depicted in the *Zohar*, each soul is clothed in an ethereal body before entering a human body. This bodily garment resembles the physical body that it will inhabit on earth. A person is created "in that image," and as he proceeds through life, the image surrounds him as an aura, departing from him shortly before he dies. Here, Rabbi Shim'on combines with that protective external notion a more abstract internal representation of this entity.

Drawing on imagery from ancient Jewish mysticism, Eleazar of Worms (*Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, 381) explains the repetition of *image* in the next verse: "Each person has his form above, an advocate... an angel who is שר מזל (*sar mazal*), a person's guiding archon; when it is sent below, it has the form of the person below... Why twice: *in His image; in the image of* (Genesis 1:27)? One is the *image* of the human being, the other is the *image* of the angelic being, a 'star,' that is in the form of a human." See idem, 401-05, 422-27; *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*, (in *Batei Midrashot* 2:388; *Sefer Hasidim* (ed. Wistinetzky), #1514.

The *Zohar* draws on and employs diverse conceptions of the astral or ethereal body and its function. See

Nahmanides on Genesis 49:33; *Zohar* 1:7a, 38b (*Heikh*), 81a (*ST*), 90b-91a, 115b (*MhN*), 131a, 191a, 217b, 219a, 220a (standard editions), 224a-b, 227a-b, 233b; 2:11a, 13a-b, 96b, 141b, 150a, 156b-157a, 161b; 3:13b, 43a-b, 61b, 70b, 104a-b; *ZH* 10b-c (*MhN*), 68d-69a (*ShS*), 90b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 390; idem, *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; Scholem, *Shedim Ruhot u-Nshamot*, 215-38; idem, *Kabbalah*, 158-59; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251-73; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:770-73. Cf. Rashi on BT *Hagigah* 12b, s.v. *ve-ruhot u-nshamot*; Vol. 6, p. 197, n. 266.

“Fathomers” renders ידעי מדין (*yade’ei middin*), “those who know *middin*,” apparently deriving from מוד (*mdd*), “to measure.” See above, [note 442](#).

499. From YHVH... The paths of the righteous are comprised of the vowel points and cantillation signs—whose very being derives from Divinity—so the correct understanding of מיהוה (*me-YHVH*) is *from* YHVH. It is on account of those points and signs that the human below resembles the divine paradigm above.

The simple meaning of the term in question is *by* YHVH, indicating in context that God firmly lays out the paths of the righteous.

500. azla, maqef, shofar holekh... These three cantillation signs are named together because they are associated with movement—from either the semantic meaning of their names or their musical or syntactic functions. *Azla* derives from the verbal root *azl*, meaning “to go” or “to travel.” “*Maqef*” is not a musical note but a hyphen that, in effect, instructs the reader to rush the word along, joining it to the next. It is derived from the word *heiqef*, meaning “surrounding,” or here, “juxtaposed.” *Shofar holekh* is an alternate name for מנה (*munaḥ*) or עלוי (*illu’i*), which here might signify “rest” or “elevation.” The *munaḥ* in general is a conjunctive accent.

Rabbi Shim'on proceeds to enumerate six different kinds of movement, possibly referring to stations within *Hesed* through *Yesod*. All of these cantillation marks are responsible for the behavior of the *sefirot* and conduct of the world below.

On *azla*, see Isaac ha-Kohen, "Ta'amei ha-Te'amim," 269. On *maqef* and *shofar holekh*, see *ibid.*, 271. *Tiqqunei Zohar* 13 (29b) associates *shofar holekh* with *pazer gadol*, which itself is an alternate term for קרני פרדה (*qarnei farah*), "horns of a cow." On suggestions for sefirotic correspondences, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

501. Zarqa—joyous melody... The cantillation note *zarqa* has the appearance of the letter "s" on its side; graphically speaking, it appears to represent a complex extension from one place to another. Moreover, the name derives from the verbal root *zrq*, "to throw." In both ways it exemplifies the extended dissemination of divine overflow from *Ein Sof*, by means of the "Spark of Darkness" to the lower reaches below. Once below, the note resounds back upward to *Ein Sof*, "the One who is not known or grasped at all." The upper *sefirot*, where cantillation signs originate, totally defy human comprehension but are rendered more accessible through the music of cantillation. In *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21 (47b), *zarqa* is associated with *Yesod*, conferring an erotic meaning to the "casting." Cf. material appended at *ZH* 84b.

See *Bahir* 61 (89-90): "Rabbi Amorai sat and expounded... 'What is the meaning of *zarqa*? It is like its name... like something that is thrown (*nizraq*).... And why is it called *zarqa*? It is written: *Blessed is the glory of God from His place* (Ezekiel 3:12), because there is none who knows His place. We recite the name over the crown, and it rises to the head of the Owner.... When it ascends, it is as if it were thrown (*zarqa*).'" In the *Bahir*, *zarqa* signifies *Shekhinah*, while in the passage here it suggests a transcendent seminal flow. See Isaac ha-Kohen, "Ta'amei ha-Te'amim," 271; *Zohar* 3:205b; Mopsik.

For different interpretations of this passage, see *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash; Mopsik*. Cf. *ZH 97c (Tiq)*.

“Spark of Darkness” renders *botsina de-qardinuta*, the device that measures the grades of emanation. See above, [notes 131, 444](#).

502. limbs... apportioned among the letters... Having reviewed the relationship of the vowel points and cantillation signs to the letters that constitute the body, we now turn to the nature of the correspondence between letters and limbs. While there are only twenty-two letters in all and two hundred and forty-eight limbs, many limbs are animated by a single letter. Twelve letters correspond to the main limbs of the body, speaking here of both divine and human bodies. Once letters and cantillation signs are properly attuned to the body, the limbs become animated and great joy pervades upper and lower realms.

It is unclear which limbs are being referred to here. *Zohar* 2:201b refers to twelve limbs—apparently the two hands, two legs, two ears, two eyes, mouth, nose, penis, and head. *Zohar* 1:241a refers to twelve joints: three in each arm (shoulder, elbow, and wrist) and each leg (hip, knee, and ankle). Cf. *Zohar* 2:91b (*Piq*). For other explanations of correspondences, see *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

Sefer Yetsirah 5:2 teaches: “Twelve simple letters: ק צ ע ס ל נ י ט פ ז ה (he, vav, zayin, het, tet, yod, lamed, nun, samekh, ayin, tsadi, qof). He carved them and hewed them out, he weighed them, combined them, exchanged them, and formed with them the twelve constellations in the universe. Your mnemonic is... These are the twelve months of the year: *Nisan, Iyyar, Sivan, Tamuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei, Marḥeshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar*. These are the twelve guides of the soul: two hands, two feet, two kidneys, the spleen, the liver, the gall, the gullet, the stomach, and the intestines.”

503. Other letters remain—ten... Given the starting point of the twelve limbs, the corresponding twelve “simple

letters” are the essential ones. That leaves ten additional letters.

Compare *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:1: “The twenty-two letters are the foundation: three אמות (*imot*), primary, letters, seven double letters, and twelve simple letters. The three primary letters are ש מ א (*alef, mem, shin*)....” The seven double letters are ת פ ד כ ג ב (bet, gimel, dalet, kaf, pe, resh, tav).

504. some of the letters appear male... If all twenty-two letters are required to constitute the human body, how do we apply the fact that there are only twelve masculine letters? Because of the corresponding twelve limbs, twelve letters should suffice!

Orthographically, letters that consist primarily of a single line, or in combination with brief extensions, such as א ו ז י (alef, vav, zayin, yod) are regarded as masculine, while those with openings or spaces within are treated as feminine. Other factors, such as interpretations of letters’ names, also play a role in determining gender.

On the gendering of *alef* and *bet*, see *Zohar* 1:30a, 200b; 2:234b. Cf. 2:228a where Rabbi Shim’on says that all the letters are either male or female. On *gimel* and *dalet* as male and female respectively, see above, [note 189](#); *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21 (54a). The female and male identities of *he* and *vav*, respectively, are pervasive in the *Zohar*. On the gendering of letters in general, see above, [note 357](#).

See the list of letters in the note appended to ZH 74d-75a.

505. Regarding all limbs... Because they all have male and female components, the numerical discrepancy between letters and limbs is irrelevant.

Now the male-female eros that is such a prominent part of the *Zohar* is no longer between two persons, but operating on a micro-level, within the different segments of the body’s joints.

506. all letters ascend in the mystery of Male and Female... Since male and female letters are fully

intermingled and joined, they are all comprised in both the Divine Male and Divine Female.

507. small letters... When *Tif'eret* joins together with *Shekhinah* in erotic union, He cleaves to Her with the desire that is contained within all the letters, comprising His limbs. In their loving embrace, He deposits within Her the “mystery of letters,” the essence of divine creativity. These letters are the seminal efflux from *Tif'eret*, mingling with *Shekhinah's* waters, namely Her semen. Within *Shekhinah*, letters materialize in diminished form. The result is an alphabet below, mirroring the alphabet above (see above, [note 169](#)).

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: “Rabbi Shim'on son of El'azar said, ‘No handbreadth [of water] descends from above without being met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep ...* (Psalms 42:8).’ Rabbi Levi said, ‘The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, “Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers.” They immediately receive them, as is written: *Let the earth open* (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.’” See also *Tosefta Ta'anit* 1:4; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (*Battei Midrashot* 1:25); *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b–18a, 29b, 46a, 60b, 245b; 3:223b (*RM*).

According to the second-century Greek physician Galen, genital seed is generated by both male and female. See Leviticus 12:2: *When a woman brings forth seed*. Cf. Ibn Ezra, Nahmanides, Bahya ben Asher, and Sforino, ad loc.; BT *Berakhot* 60a; *Niddah* 28a, 31a.

On the similarity of the alphabet and semen, Abraham Abulafia writes in *Otsar Eden Ganuz* (64): “Know, with appropriate investigation, that the nature of semen is that it is similar in all ways to ink.... [The] father [during sexual intercourse] writes it with his hard quill... in the hard womb of [the] mother, and it congeals there.” See *Zohar*

1:156b (ST); Wolfson, “Dimmui Antropomorphi,” 157–58, 169 n. 98. Cf. *Zohar* 1:16b.

508. א (alef) is one... This letter illustrates the point that many limbs are apportioned to any given letter. *Alef* signifies the number one, as well as mystery of multiplicity within a single unity. *Alef* is the first letter and is a single letter but comprises three letters in total. The א (*alef*) is written as if with a ו (*vav*) on a slant, with one י (*yod*) above that diagonal stroke, and another י below. *Hesed* comprises *Gevurah* and *Tif'eret*, represented by “the left” and “the middle,” respectively. This trio is signified by the tripartite form of *alef* and is necessary for these three to be properly balanced. *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash* explain that *Hesed* is represented by the right hand—which contains other limbs within it, despite the fact that it remains a single limb.

“Situated” renders אשתכחו (*ishtakhehu*), “were present” or “came into being.” See Mopsik, *Le Sicle de Sanctuaire*, 39–40.

509. How did the blessed Holy One do it?... When letters began to emerge from *Binah*, they appeared through the advance led by *alef*. When God enwraps Himself in *alef*, signifying *Hesed*, it is a reference to Psalms 104:2, *Wrapped in light as in a garment*, where *light* is also understood as a symbol for *Hesed*. Then, Divinity proceeds to create “Heavens,” signifying *Tif'eret*, which harmonizes *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, a total of three *sefirot*.

The word שמים (*shamayim*), “Heavens,” is derived homiletically (based on wordplay) as referring to a unification of opposites. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:7, in the name of Rav: “The blessed Holy One took אש (*esh*), fire, and מים (*mayim*), water, mixed them with one another, and from them שמים (*shamayim*), heavens, were made.”

Or Yaqar explains that Rabbi Shim'on is interpreting the first words of Genesis 1:1: ברא אלהים את השמים (*bara Elohim et ha-shamayim*), *God created the heavens*. He reads the word

תא (*at*) as *at*, the Aramaic for “letter;” thus the verse indicates that the first entity created was a letter. The word following, שמים (*shamayim*), *Heavens*, represents the next creative act.

510. not yet congealed... The creation of *Heavens*, namely *Tif'eret*, is a process with a certain duration. It is represented in the letter *alef*, slowly congealing. Once that occurs, the diagonal ו (*vav*) within the א (*alef*) emerges and, as the central axis of the *sefirot*, is said to be anthropomorphic in appearance. Yet the derivation of *vav* in no way diminishes the *alef*, an implicit response to a question of the divisibility of Divinity. *Alef* can simultaneously symbolize *Hesed* and have one of its components represent *Tif'eret*. Cf. *Or Yaqar; Matoq mi-Devash*.

511. brilliance of that letter began to shine... The splendor of *alef*, namely *Hesed*, shone from the “beginning” of the world (*Binah*) to its “end” (*Shekhinah*). Rising out of a concern lest creation was not yet ready for that splendor, it was hidden away within the next letter, *bet*, first letter of the Torah. When the name of ב (*bet*) is spelled out (בית), it also yields the noun *bayit*, meaning “home,” signifying a place of concealment.

On the hiding of the light, see BT *Hagigah* 12a, in the name of Rabbi El'azar: “With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One foresaw the corruption of the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion [i.e., of the Tower of Babel], He hid it away from them, as is said: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). For whom did He hide it? For the righteous in the time to come.” See above, [note 145](#).

512. a single ray... The primal light animates the world, so it cannot be entirely hidden. Rather, it is sown away and daily emanates enough to sustain all life.

This ray (or “thread”) of light signifies the emergence of *Hesed* into the world and draws on a number of rabbinic traditions that speak of the significance of a ray of light. In Zoharic kabbalah, the teaching from BT *Hagigah* 12b in the name of Resh Lakish had great impact: “To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of חסד (*hesed*), love, by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains His love. Why? Because in the night His song is with me.*” *His song* is the song of Torah.

On the continual and vital role of the primal light, see *Zohar* 2:149a, 166b–167a. On the single ray of light, see BT *Megillah* 13a, 15b; *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Tamid* 28a.

513. smashing their enemies... The letter ס (*alef*), signifying *Hesed*, and represented in Scripture as the *right hand*, both protects Israel and refrains from protecting Israel, contingent upon their faithfulness.

See *Mekhilta, Shirta* 5: “*Your right hand, O YHVH, glorious in power.* When the Israelites do the will of God, they make His left hand as if it were His right hand, as is said: *Your right hand, O YHVH... Your right hand, O YHVH*—two times. And when the Israelites refrain from doing the will of God, they make His right hand to be like a left hand, as it were, as is said: *He has withdrawn His right hand.*”

See *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 15:6; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petihta* 24; 2:6; *Tanḥuma, Beshallah* 15; *Zohar* 2:143b, 203a; *ZH* 88b (*MhN, Rut*).

The verse in Lamentations reads: *He has withdrawn His right hand in the face of the enemy* [thereby enabling them to defeat Israel].

514. two other sides... Namely, *Gevurah* and *Tif'eret*, who are stabilized by *Hesed*. Cf. Mopsik.

V23, CM1, CT3, P13, PR13, and OY all have “like a woman entering into the midst of a male,” while CM1 and the printed editions have “like a woman penetrated by a man.” Yet, all of the commentaries, including *Or Yaqar*, explain it conventionally, according to the latter reading.

515. Taking two other rungs... Not only do letters get apportioned to limbs, they also get apportioned to other letters in the course of spelling their names. When spelled out, the letter א (*alef*) is written as אָלֶפֶת (*alef, lamed, final pe*), and it is complete in that form. Each of the letters, similarly, requires additional letters to spell their full names. This subsuming of letters within one chief letter is indicated by the parallel verses in Numbers, describing Israel's military encampment in the desert. Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan are the flag-bearers of four divisions, with each accompanied by two additional tribes. Just as each of the four flag-bearing tribes in the desert had two tribes on either side to attain its full stature, so do each of the letters in the alphabet require additional letters for full expression.

The census figures given in Numbers 2 are subtotaled by military division, rather than individual tribes. The wording cited by the *Zohar* appears in Numbers for only 3 out of the 4 divisions. (Compare verse 20.) The *Zohar's* correlation of the 3 instances with 3 primordial letters may implicitly account for why the anomalous wording of verse 20 differs from that of vv. 5, 12, 27.

Numbers 2:5 reads in full: *Those camped next to him, the tribe of Issachar, and the chieftain of the Issacharites, Nethanel son of Zuar.*

516. letters add up to sixty... When the letters are fully spelled out, they total sixty, corresponding to the figure sixty myriads, assumed to be the number of all the Jews who first constituted the Israelite nation. The divine body can now be seen to comprise not only all the letters, but also to be symbolically registered by the entirety of the Jewish people.

The number sixty myriads derives from the figure mentioned in Exodus 12:37: *The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot, about six hundred thousand on foot—the men, aside from noncombatants.*

517. seventy-two letters... In the Hebrew alphabet, the five letters מנצפך (mem, nun, tsadi, pe, kaf) take on a different form when they appear at the end of a word. When these letters are spelled out again, they yield twelve letters, delivering a total sum of seventy-two.

The Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God is a complex divine name derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea: Exodus 14:19-21. On this name, see above, [note 5](#).

518. Israel numbers seventy souls... Another support for the association of the Israelite tribes with the number seventy-two derives from Exodus 1:5: *The total number of souls that issued from the loins of Jacob were seventy souls, Joseph being already in Egypt.* These combine with the two letters of God's name יה (Yah), called a *testimony to Israel*, to comprise seventy-two. This numerical association combination can be seen as well in Numbers 26, where the tribes are referred to as הרעובני, השמעוני (ha-Reuveni... ha-Shim'oni), *Reubenites... Simeonites*, in which each tribe's membership uses the name of the tribe supplemented by ה (he) at the beginning and ם (yod) at the end. Thus the names of the tribes, whose membership totaled seventy upon entering Egypt, receives the addition of the name יה (Yah), yielding seventy-two.

On *the tribes of יה (Yah)*, see BT *Qiddushin* 70b. On הרעובני, השמעוני (ha-Reuveni... ha-Shim'oni), see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 4:12; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, Beshallah* (s.v. ganna'ul); Rashi on Numbers 26:5.

The full verse from Psalms reads: *There tribes ascend, the tribes of Yah, a testimony to Israel, to praise the name of YHVH.*

519. same paradigm... In summary, the letters of the alphabet, divine body, human being, divine chariot, and divine name, are all similarly patterned, each being a symbolic correlate of the other.

[520.](#) **fittingly** CM1 ends here, suggesting that the last sentence is a later addition. In that sentence, only CT3 and OY have the word “one”; V23, CM10, P13, PR13, M5, and S do not.

[521.](#) **everything becoming a single mystery...** *Zohar Shir ha-Shirim* concludes with the teaching that underlying all reality is a single mystery—which is manifest variously in the name of God, the human body, the divine body, the supernal chariot, and the nation of Israel. This is a fitting epilogue, uniting many of the central themes of the work: mystery of letters; creation; mystery of male and female; account of the chariot; and the names of God.

1. **MATNITIN ...** Literally, “Our Mishnah.” The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* of the *Zohar* consist mostly of anonymous enigmatic revelations. The terseness of these passages recalls the style of the Mishnah, and their oracular, grandiose style distinguishes them from that of the *Zohar’s* running commentary on the Torah. The primary areas of interest are: the process of emanation; the development of the soul; and the role of the forces of judgment and evil.

See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah*, 163-214; Pedaya, *Ha-Mar’eh ve-ha-Dibbur*, 120-33; above, [pages xiii-xiv](#).

This short passage of *Matnitin*—rendered here in two paragraphs—is embedded within the *Sitrei Torah* sections of the manuscripts, and the respective borders of *Matnitin* and *Sitrei Torah* are difficult to discern. See Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah*, 168.

2. **Celestial ones fly off from the right...** This enigmatic passage compares the relationship of the unwritten cantillation marks and vowels with the letters of the Torah scroll to that of soul and body. “Celestial ones” signify the letters and vocalization points, which originate in *Ḥokhmah* on the right. Nine vowel points are necessary for pronouncing the consonants: *qamats*, *pataḥ*, *tseire*, *segol*, *ḥiriq*, *shuruq* (in two forms), *ḥolam*, and *sheva*. Just as the vocalization points carry the consonants, so do the cantillation notes, originating in *Ein Sof*, carry the vowels. Only consonants are revealed in the Torah scroll, but their vowels and cantillation notes are not visible. Alternatively, since the letters originate within *Ḥokhmah* and the nine points above them, these nine may originate within *Keter* and correspond to a higher order of *sefirot*.

The notion that the vowels are the “soul” of the consonants is common in medieval philosophical and mystical sources. On the relationship of vowels to letters, see *Bahir* 83 (115): “[The vowels] in the letters resemble the breath of life in the human body.” In *Sha’ar ha-Razim*

(75), Todros Abulafia says: "I have seen written in the name of Rabbi Elhanan of Corbeil... 'We have a tradition from ancient elders that the vowel is the world of movement, arousing the world of letters, like a king arousing his great ones, legions, and crowns.'" Isaac ha-Kohen writes similarly in "Peirush Ta'amei ha-Nequddot" (265): "A tradition was passed down from sages to sages, and from elders to elders, that the cantillation signs and vowels all teach about the crowns and emanated powers. The transgressions of each and every generation have caused the dwindling of masters of this wisdom, leaving no more than two or three remnants. Those who knew passed on to eternity, this wisdom dying along with them. There is not a single individual in our generation who has received any of this, other than an individual here or there who has received a tradition from ancient ones, or who has been graced by the blessed Creator, leaving concealed, hidden traces in his hands, with the assistance of the Master of the worlds. He knows my intention and from Him I supplicate for aid to explain the vowels according to the tradition that few sages have received." See Joseph Gikatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* (413): "Know that the vowels and the consonants instruct us about the form of the entire world, the mystery of all the properties, and the order of the chariots."

In the biblical text, cantillation marks serve three different functions simultaneously: musical, instructing the reader in a ritual context regarding the customary chant; phonetic, indicating which syllable is accented; and punctuative-prosodic, indicating the phrasing within the verse.

Hebrew writing is mainly consonantal. While it can be assumed that there were oral traditions regarding the pronunciation of the biblical text, the current written vocalization system was established by the Tiberian Masoretes in the seventh and eighth centuries, and it crystallized in the first half of the tenth century. Abraham

ibn Ezra, living in the eleventh century, affirms these positions. In the thirteenth century, Reimund Martini and other missionary and Inquisition polemicists alleged that Jews fabricated the vowel points to obscure the Torah's meaning when it might be construed to affirm Christian interpretation.

See *Maḥazor Vitri* (#120, p. 91): "Regarding your question about whether it is prohibited to vocalize a Torah scroll. We have not heard that the Torah given to Moses at Sinai contained vocalization, and vocalization was not transmitted at Sinai; rather the sages made annotations as signals, and it is forbidden for us to add [to the Torah] on our own accord, lest we transgress the prohibition against adding [to the Torah]. Therefore we do not vocalize a Torah scroll, even though the pausal signs and [other] cantillation signs are part of the tradition from Sinai."

See BT *Nedarim* 37b; Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Tsaḥut be-Diqduq*, 4a; Naḥmanides, "Introduction" to *Commentary on the Torah*; Israel Yeivin, "Niqudim," 112-18. Cf. *Zohar* 2:205b.

The various statements in traditional rabbinic literature that suggest late dating for the cantillation signs formed part of the sixteenth-century argument regarding the dating of the *Zohar*. See Penkower, *Al Zeman Ḥibburam shel Sefer ha-Zohar*, 9-63. On Christian polemics regarding the dating of vocalization, see *ibid.*, 19-24 and n. 37.

On cantillation notes, vowels, and letters, see above, [pp. 404-5](#), [n. 135](#). For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Both Mantua and Cr read: עלאין טבין דימינא (*ila'in tavin de-yemina*), "lofty, upright ones from the right side," referring to the righteous kabbalists who can interpret mystical lore, rather than "Celestial ones fly off from the right."

The phrase "mystery of *Ein Sof*" may refer to *Ein Sof* itself, bringing *Ein Sof* into the same framework as the *sefirot*, or it may refer to the *sefirot* that will emerge from *Ein Sof*. The higher order of *sefirot* may refer to divine gradations within

Keter, or above. See below, [notes 72, 90, 92, 94, 100](#); Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 172–73; Valabregue-Perry, *Be-Nistar u-ve-Nigleh*, 87.

3. Nine names, engraved in ten... Ten divine names represent the ten *sefirot*, all comprised within the tetragrammaton, spelled out here. *Ehyeh* signifies *Keter*; at this point, the Hidden God is saying, as it were, *Ehyeh, I am, or I will be*. אֲשֶׁר (*Asher*), *That*, is an anagram of ראשׁ (*rosh*), head (or: beginning), symbolizing *Ḥokhmah*, the first of the *sefirot* that can be apprehended. The second *Ehyeh* signifies *Binah*, when conjoined with *Ḥokhmah*. YHVH with the vocalization *Elohim* represents *Binah* as the aspect of Divinity from which the rest of the *sefirot* emerge. *El, Elohim, YHVH, Tseva'ot, Adonai, Shaddai* represent *Ḥesed, Gevurah, Tif'eret, Netsah* and *Hod* (as a pair), *Shekhinah*, and *Yesod*, respectively. No explanation is offered for the reversal of the last two, or how this list demonstrates a significant containing of ten names in nine.

On lists of God's names and their sefirotic significance, see *Zohar* 1:15a; 3:11a, 65a–b, 269b. Rabbinic tradition enumerates certain especially holy divine names “that cannot be erased.” For various lists of these, see JT *Megillah* 1:8, 71d; BT *Shevu'ot* 35a–b; *Soferim* 4:1–2; *Sefer Torah* 4:1–2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah* 6:1–2. Cf. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan A*, 34.

The manuscripts and printed editions have a range of listings of names, and it appears that the list was corrupted at an early stage of transmission. The translation here follows T1 and V7. At this point, T1, V7, Mantua, and Cr include a passage (clearly interpolated at a later stage of redaction) treating the 27 letters of the first line of the *Shema*, the number of words in the different paragraphs of the *Shema*, and the correspondence of the number of words in the *Shema* to the limbs of the body. See *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Nitsotsei Orot*; Scholem.

4. Heavenly denizens... This series of epithets refers to the kabbalists, using the grand formulations characteristic of *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*. These passages frequently open with an oracular voice exhorting enlightened ones to listen to its message. “Bird” represents *Shekhinah*, who descends daily with forces of judgment, signified here by fiery wings and sharpened tools in its left claw. These symbolize the influence of *Gevurah*, enacting judgment upon sinners of the world. In the right claw is a key, which probably opens heavenly treasures from the side of *Hesed*. The number “three” may correspond to *Gevurah*, *Hod*, and *Shekhinah*—who are aligned on the left side of Judgment. The opposition between the promise of the key on the right and the frightening implements of the left, and the ruinous possibility of exchanging one side for the other, is typical in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*.

“Trowels” renders מגרופיין (*magrofyyan*), “spades, shovels, or ladles,” designed to scrape away the filth of sin. Galante describes them as implements of the Angel of Death. Ancient hoes have parts called “teeth” for digging, and a plow’s share—the part used for digging—was also called a חרב (*herev*), “sword.”

See Onkelos and NJPS on Exodus 27:3; *Bereshit Rabbah* 38:11; *Zohar* 1:62b (and *Derekh Emet*, ad loc., n. 2), 232a (*Tos*); 3:60b, 135a (*IR*), 270b; *ZH* 122a (*Mat*); *Arukh*, s.v. *magrofit*; *Sullam*; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1400; Scholem, “Card Catalogue”; Koller, *The Semantic Field of Cutting Tools in Biblical Hebrew*, 93–94, 98–100. Cf. below, [p. 615](#), and [n. 38](#); [p. 618](#), and [n. 44](#).

On the bird in the Garden, see *Zohar* 2:8a; *ZH* 61b (*MhN*, *ShS*); above, [p. 18](#), [n. 45](#). This translation follows T1 with its reference to a single “key,” but other manuscripts and early printed editions refer to מפתחון גניזין (*maftehan genizin*), “keys to treasures” or “hidden keys.” On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1400–1403.

M7, V16, P3, P5, T1, O2, and Mantua all present this passage under the headings *Sitrei Torah* and *Matnitin*, whereas Cr and *Or Yaqar* have only *Matnitin*. Both Gottlieb and Meroz indicate, based on stylistic characteristics, that *Matnitin* ends near the top of 155a, and that the latter section is a commentary on the former. See Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 169; Meroz, “R. Ya’aqov Shatz,” 265.

5. enters and exits... In the rabbinic account of four rabbis who enter the mystical orchard, only Rabbi Akiva “enters and exits” in peace. The phrase refers to the kabbalists who are physically and spiritually fortified by the side of holiness. Their success is ascribed here to their aversion to improper sexual thoughts, particularly thoughts of other women while having sexual intercourse with their wives. The correct stream of Jewish souls, transmitted through *Yesod* and then on earth through the circumcised penis, depends upon properly directed intention. Right thinking during sexual relations is thus presented as the criterion for evaluating mystical piety, and the person contemplating inappropriately is ultimately annihilated, with no life in the world that is coming. The tree, branches, roots, and fruit may be references to the different *sefirot* from which the kabbalists benefit.

On entering and emerging in peace, see JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77b: “Four entered פַּרְדֵּס (*pardes*), ‘an orchard’ [whence the English word “paradise”]... Ben Azzai gazed and went mad... Ben Zoma gazed and died... Aḥer [Elisha son of Avuyah] gazed and cut the shoots... Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and emerged in peace.” See *Tosefta Ḥagigah* 2:3; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4. In the *Zohar*, the phrase is a common trope in *Matnitin*, *Tosefta*, and *Sitrei Torah*. See *Zohar* 1:147b (*ST*); *ZḤ* 105a, 122a (both *Mat*).

The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* sections frequently feature heavenly voices, calling upon humanity to repent, to be aroused from their slumber, and to attend to the esoteric

wisdom concealed within Torah. On these passages, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 211: “[These passages] share conceptual, literary, stylistic, and linguistic features that bestow upon them their special character: Heightened, ornate, and terse language; short, pathos-laden sentences; dramatic repetition; and frightening, threatening rhetoric.”

6. Such a thought defiles his source... Improper thought alone can corrupt the source of semen, which has an impact on the individual’s offspring—and by extension his own continuity. The debauched male draws down a vile soul, deriving from the barren *Sitra Aḥra*, rather than from the fruitful Tree of Life. Thus, his fruit—signifying his offspring—will be bitter like Samael and Lilith.

On the importance and consequences of holy sexual union, see BT *Nedarim* 20a-b; *Shevu’ot* 18b; *Niddah* 70b-71a; *Kallah* 1:8-10; *Kallah Rabbati* 1:11, 13, 15; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 9:7; *Zohar* 1:54a, 90b, 112a (*MhN*), 130b, 222b; 2:11b; 3:49b, 56a, 77a, 80a-82a, 83b-84a; *ZH* 11a-b (*MhN*); *Iggeret ha-Qodesh* (in *Kitvei Ramban* 2:321-37); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1363-64; Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul*, 128-49.

The full verse reads: *He will be like a shrub in the desert, and will not see when goodness comes. He will dwell in scorched places in the wilderness—salty land, uninhabited.*

7. All matters of the world... In all affairs, not just sexual, upright thinking adheres to the side of holiness, evoking blessing, whereas corrupted thought adheres to the demonic realm.

The full verse in Jeremiah reads: *He will be like a tree planted by water, spreading its roots by a stream; it does not fear when heat comes and its leaves are fresh; in a year of drought it is not anxious and does not cease yielding fruit.*

The context in Leviticus 20 refers to one who gives *his seed to Molech* (20:4), with God warning in verse 5: *I Myself shall turn My face against that man and his clan, and I shall cut him off... from the midst of their people.*

Gottlieb and Meroz consider the material from “All matters of the world” until the end of the passage to be part of *Sitrei Torah*, serving as an interpretation of the *Matnitin* passage, but neither the manuscripts nor *Or Yaqar* indicate a break at this point.

8. directs his desire... toward another woman... See BT *Nedarim* 20a-b: “Imma Shalom was asked, ‘Why are your children so exceedingly beautiful?’ She replied, ‘[My husband] does not “converse” with me at the beginning nor at the end of the night, but only at midnight; and when he “converses,” he uncovers a handbreadth and covers a handbreadth, and he appears as if he were compelled by a demon. When I asked him, “What is the reason for this?” he replied, “So that I may not think of another woman, lest my children be as bastards.”” If a man thinks of another woman while having intercourse with his wife, just as he has exchanged women below, so does he exchange the flow from above, drawing down from the *Sitra Aħra*, rather than from the *sefirot*. Consequently, the child conceived derives its soul from that Other Side as well. This is the meaning of the warning above against abandoning the Tree of Life in exchange for the side of impurity.

“Changeling” renders בן תמורה (*ben temurah*), a biblical term referring to an animal that one has tried to exchange for another one already sanctified for the Temple. See Leviticus 27:9-10: *If [the vow concerns] any animal that may be brought as an offering to YHVH, any of which that may be given to YHVH shall be holy. He shall not exchange it and shall not replace it, whether good for bad, or bad for good; and if in fact he replaces one animal for another, both it and its replacement shall both be holy.* Cf. Malachi 1:13-14; Job 28:17; Ruth 4:7. According to rabbinic law, a person

who effects such an exchange is punished with lashes. See M *Temurah* 1:1; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Temurah*, 1:1.

On avoiding thoughts of another woman, see BT *Nedarim* 20a-b, *Yoma* 29a; *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Leviticus 12:2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Issurei Bi'ah* 21:12; ZH 61a (*MhN, ShS*); Joseph Caro, *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 240:1: “A man should not drink from one cup while glancing at another, even if both are his wives.” Cf. BT *Hagigah* 5b.

9. all his ways were truthful... Jacob had arranged with Laban to marry his younger daughter, Rachel; but Laban deceived him by substituting his older daughter, Leah. Because Jacob did not discover the true identity of his new bride until the morning after their first night together, in their act of intercourse his mind was naturally focused on Rachel. If Jacob had realized that he was having intercourse with Leah while thinking of Rachel, this would have been a horrible sin and the child conceived from this union (Reuben) would have been tainted—considered a demonic bastard—and not included as one of the twelve tribes. The integrity of his intention, however, enabled his semen to bypass the incongruity. Jacob was the most consummate of the patriarchs, and he (on the human level, and as signifying *Tif'eret*) is associated with “truth,” as stated in Micah 7:20: *You give truth to Jacob*.

On Jacob's desire for Rachel, see Genesis 29:15-30. On his status among the patriarchs, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1; *Zohar* 1:119b, 133a, 144b, 149b-150a, 152a (*ST*), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a, 26a, 48b. On his being complete, see *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 8:7, 112c; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31, 312; *Targum Onqelos*, Genesis 25:27; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; BT *Pesaḥim* 56a. On his perfect intention during intercourse with Leah, see *Zohar* 1:176b, 222b, 236a. On his truthfulness, see *Sekhel Tov*, Genesis

31:10; *Zohar* 1:138a-b, 160a; Moses de León, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 46-49, 55-57, 64-67.

10. ראו בן (*Re'u ven*), **Behold, a son...** In the biblical story, Leah names her son ראוֹבֵן (*Re'uven*), but here the utterance is put into God's mouth and understood as meaning simply ראו בן (*Re'u ven*), **Behold, a son!** His lack of a normal name reflects the fact that his father never intended to engender him from Leah but rather from Rachel. Since Jacob's intention was pure, Reuben was not conceived as a changeling.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 71:3 (and Theodor's note, ad loc.); *Shemot Rabbah* 8:2; *Zohar* 1:154b, 176b, 222b.

11. transferred the birthright... According to rabbinic tradition, Jacob had never experienced a nocturnal emission, so Reuben was actually conceived from his father's first drop of semen.

According to the verse in Chronicles (see end of note, below), the birthright was transferred on account of Reuben's misdeed. The interpretation here focuses on the relationship between mystical intention and procreative conception, while eliding the biblical reference to Reuben's unsavory act.

On Jacob's first drop of semen, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 49:3; *Bereshit Rabbah* 97 (on Genesis 49:3); 99:6; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayḥi* 9; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayḥi* 11; BT *Yevamot* 76a; Rashi on Genesis 49:3.

On the transfer of the birthright, see *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.) on Genesis 49:3; *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:11; 98:4 (and Theodor's notes on both); *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Toledot* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 176b, 222b, 235a, 236a.

The translation follows T1, which reads "אתמסר (*itmasar*), transferred, the birthright," though all other manuscripts (M7, V16, P3, P5, O2, *Or Yaqar*) and early printed editions (M, Cr) read "אסתמר (*istamar*), reserved (or protected), the birthright." Other translations and commentaries follow the

latter version, resulting in focused attention on Reuben's loss of the birthright. See *Sullam*; Mopsik; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1402; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The verse in Chronicles actually reads: *The sons of Reuben, firstborn of Israel—he was the firstborn; but when he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph.* On discrepancies between MT and the Zohar's citation of biblical verses, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

12. Her brother-in-law shall come to her... According to the biblical custom of levirate marriage, if a married man dies childless, his brother should marry the widow and then father a child, who will be considered the offspring of the deceased. Posthumously providing the dead man with offspring prevents his name from being blotted out. In Kabbalah, levirate marriage is understood in terms of reincarnation: not only the "name" of the deceased husband is preserved but also his soul, transmigrating into the embryo generated by the union of his widow and his brother. The emphasis here is on the requirement that the brother-in-law have the appropriate mystical intention that his seed will perpetuate his brother's name and soul. If performed properly, his brother's soul will be drawn into the newly conceived fetus.

In the simple meaning of the verse from Job, God is the subject, but here it is the brother-in-law.

The English term "levirate marriage" derives from the Latin *levir*, "husband's brother." The corresponding Hebrew term יבום (*yibbum*) similarly derives from יבם (*yabbam*), "brother-in-law." See above, [pp. 178-79](#), [n. 430](#).

The full verse in Deuteronomy reads: *Should brothers dwell together and one of them die and leave no offspring, the wife of the dead man shall not become wife outside to a stranger. Her brother-in-law shall come to bed with her and take her to him as wife and carry out a brother-in-law's duty to her.*

13. will and thought are required to direct On the significance of *kavvanah* (mystical intention) in prayer, see *Zohar* 1:169a; 2:57a, 69a, 198b, 200b, 210b, 244b, 262b (last two *Heikh*); 3:183b, 263a (*Piq*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:951–62 (esp. 951–55).

14. Jacob took The full verse reads: *Jacob took rods of fresh poplar, almond, and plane, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white of the rods.* On this story of Jacob's use of the rods, see *Zohar* 1:161a–b, 162a–b (*ST*); *ZH* 27d; Moses de León, "She'elot u-Tshuvot be-Inyanei Kabbalah," 57.

15. MATNITIN... Our Mishnah. M7, N23, V16, P3, P5, and Cr all label this passage with two names: *Sitrei Torah* and *Matnitin*. In the manuscript and printing traditions, both are sometimes used generically to designate passages that then came to be included in the main body of the *Zohar*. This passage, however, bears the characteristic features of *Matnitin*.

16. Will of the deed... *Matoq mi-Devash* explains the opening invocation to mean that the person of true faith directs mystical intention to attachment to the "clusters of faith," *sefirot* united above. The circle above probably refers to *Shekhinah*, who spreads Her influence to all Her troops, sometimes receiving greater influx from *Hesed*, sometimes from *Gevurah*.

The prelude to the *mishnah* contrasts the sleepers with those who are "open-eyed," an epithet that is used frequently in the *Zohar* to refer to the kabbalists, whose eyes are ever open to view God's glory. The celestial voice reiterates its stern rebuke of "slumbering ones," those who are inattentive to the divine call to behave piously, and to recognize the mysterious depths of Torah. The passage thus serves as both invitation to the spiritually aspiring and warning to the spiritually lazy. The sound of a heavenly sphere may allude to the ancient philosophical notion of the music of the spheres. See BT *Yoma* 20b; *Tanḥuma*, *Aḥarei*

Mot 9; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 3:9; *Zohar* 1:41b (*Heikh*), 233b (*Tos*); 2:196a, 211a; 3:165a, 209a. On the obtuseness of the sleepers, see Psalms 115:4-8; Baḥya ibn Paquda, *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, Introduction.

On heavenly voices, see *Zohar* 1:147a; 2:12b, 203b; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 209-15; above, [note 5](#). Cf. BT *Yoma* 9b. On the expression “voice of voices,” see *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*), 77a; Scholem. On the expression “who look but do not see,” see *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*); 2:4a (*Mat*). On this passage, see *Or Yaqar; Nitsotsei Orot; Mopsik; Matoq mi-Devash*; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 212.

17. to another domain... Genesis 28:10 reads: *Jacob departed from Beer-Sheba and went to Haran*, prompting the question of why Jacob would abandon the realm of holiness to go to the demonic realm of *Haran*. In the *Zohar*, חרן (*Ḥaran*), “Haran,” is associated with חרון (*ḥaron*), “wrath,” and demonic forces. Jacob’s elevated spiritual stature enabled him to withstand the impurity of the idolator Laban, and to leave with his wives and children, progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. His dedication to holiness while living amid the depravity in Haran sanctified God’s name.

The verse from Isaiah perhaps intends to serve as encouragement for the Spanish Jews of the time, who lived in challenging circumstances both within and from outside their community.

On Haran, see *Zohar* 1:78b (*ST*), 147a, 147b (*Tos*), 148a (*ST*).

18. MATNITIN The following passage comes from the *Hashmatot* (“Omissions”) section of the *Zohar*, which contains passages that were not included in the Mantua printing (1558). Some were added subsequently to the Amsterdam edition (1715) from the Cremona printing (1558), and some, containing material preserved in the

school of Rabbi Israel Sarug, were added in the Constantinople edition of 1736. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:98; Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscript and Textual Theory*, 242-43. On the opening of this passage, cf. *Zohar* 1:107b (*Tos*); 3:135b (*IR*); V5, 331a (*Mat*). See Scholem; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 186, n. 114.

19. Illustrious clusters... The oracular voice erupts in grand praises of the kabbalists. “Illustrious clusters (or exalted bonds)” renders קטורי רמאי (*qeturei rama’ei*), referring to the kabbalists, who tie the *sefirot* together, or alternatively, whose souls link up with Divinity.

On “illustrious clusters,” see *Zohar* 1:62a, 107b (both *Tos*). “Potent chosen ones” renders הורמני דבוריירי (*hormanei de-buryyarei*). Various forms of this phrase appear in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*, with meanings including “rulers over empty ones [or: boors, outlaws]” and “elite potentates.” See *Zohar* 1:107b, 147a (both *Tos*), 251a (*Hash, Mat*); V5, 303 (*Mat*); *Or Yaqar*, in Zack, *Be-Sha’arei ha-Qabbalah*, 361. One who “ascends and descends” is a classic reference to the mystical adept, modeled after Rabbi Akiva. See *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:3-4; BT *Hagigah* 15b.

20. impulse arose in the will of White Head... The process of emanation begins with the “White Head,” symbolizing *Keter*, who blows upon a “radiance,” signifying the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness or the Line of Measure, different names for the primordial source, or divine tool, that delineates the stages of emanation. A breath fans the spark into the splendid arched spaces representing *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. “Ascending and descending,” apparently in sexual congress, they become one. Alternatively, they rise to receive divine overflow, and descend to bestow it upon the *sefirot* below.

In the *Idra* sections of the *Zohar*, the “White Head” signifies several depictions of the highest reaches of Divinity: אריך אנפין (*Arikh Anpin*), “Long Face,” an alternate term for *Keter*, also called עתיק יומין (*Atiq Yomin*), “Ancient of

Days” (see Daniel 7:9), and Will of Wills; the three different aspects of the divine head; and the active dimension of *Keter*.

On the “White Head,” see *Zohar* 1:107b (*Tos*); 2:74a (*Mat*); 3:129b, 135a-b, 137b, 155a-b (all *IR*), 270b (*Mat*), 292b (*IZ*); V5, 330b (*Mat*), which appears below, [page 593](#); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 104b-105a; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 174-75.

“Dazzling vaults” renders קומרין טהירין (*qumrin tehirin*), which apparently signifies *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. See Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 212. Cf. *Zohar* 1:83a, 109a; Vol. 2, p. 30, n. 213; p. 157, n. 316.

21. אהיה (*Ehyeh*), I am... When the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness blew upon *Keter*, it attained brilliance and was called *Ehyeh*. At this point, the Hidden God is saying, as it were, *Ehyeh, I am, or I will be*. The sparks represent the first manifestation of judgment, which need to be purged before continuing emanation. אשך (*Asher*), *That*, is an anagram of ראש (*rosh*), head (or: beginning), symbolizing *Hokhmah*, which is the beginning of those *sefirot* that can be comprehended. The second *Ehyeh* signifies *Binah*, when She is conjoined with *Hokhmah*. With the formation of these two, the full potential of *YHVH* begins to be actualized.

On shooting sparks as an expression of judgment, see *Zohar* 1:107b (*Tos*); 2:34b, 254b (*Heikh*); 3:292b (*IZ*); V5, 331a (*Mat*); Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 179-81. On the generating of sparks as the cleansing of divine thought, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:289-90.

“Sparkling winds” renders זיקין (*ziqin*), singular *ziqa*, which means “wind (or shooting star, comet),” but in the *Zohar* also “spark.” See M *Berakhot* 9:2: “Over comets, earthquakes, thunder, winds, and lightning, one recites, ‘Blessed [...] whose strength and power fill the world.’” See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Exodus 20:2; BT *Berakhot* 40b; *Nedarim* 28b; *Avodah Zarah* 28b.

The full verse in Exodus (in which God responds to Moses' request to reveal the divine name) reads: *God said to Moses, "אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (Ehyeh asher ehyeh), I am that I am [or: I will be who I will be]."* He said, "Thus shall you say to the Children of Israel: 'Ehyeh, I am, has sent me to you.'" On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:15a-b; 2:49b; 3:11a, 65a-b. Cf. Ibn Ezra on Genesis 27:19; *Zohar* 1:167b; 2:85a; Vol. 4, p. 477, n. 400.

22. EI Signifying *Hesed*. Another expulsion of judgment-laden sparks occurs at this stage.

23. hidden splendid one blew... *Keter* causes a breath to fan the Line of Measure again, yielding *Gevurah* and its ambient conflagrations. Then *Gevurah* emits forces of judgment, some performing justly, some wantonly.

The number twelve hundred is derived from Song of Songs 8:12: *My own vineyard is before me, the thousand are yours, Solomon, and two hundred for those who guard its fruit.* Here the text conceives of the *thousand* affiliated with holiness, and *two hundred* with the harsh demonic entities associated with judgment.

24. force standing astride two powers... Designating *Tif'eret*, the torso of the divine anthropos, poised atop the sefirotic pair *Netsah* and *Hod*, often associated with prophecy and the divine name *Tseva'ot*.

On *Netsah* and *Hod* as the sources of prophecy, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 49, 78; *Zohar* 1:12b (*Mat*), 21b, 151b (*Tos*); 2:12b (*Mat*), 111b, 170a, 257b, 261b (last two *Heikh*); 3:35a, 36a, 61a, 90b, 91b; *ZH* 4b (*SO*), 27d, 45b-c; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 337; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 47-48 (57-59); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 378-79. Cf. Ibn Ezra on Isaiah 50:4.

25. We are open-eyed, and have seen... Through contemplative vision the kabbalists see the chariot and the supernal realms. In the celestial realm amid preparation for judgment from on high, angelic voices burst out in a

mysterious melody that oscillates between compassion and judgment.

On this paragraph, see *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On this entire passage, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 213-14; Pedaya, *Ha-Mar'eh ve-ha-Dibbur*, 120-24.

26. congregation congregating... Throngs of angelic beings (“masters of eyes”) respond to the song and gather on the right side, the side of compassion. These watchful angels can see all that happens in the world, but sometimes mercifully avert their eyes from wrongdoing. Two other classes of angels are drawn toward these compassionate ones. See *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The expression “masters of eyes” refers to angelic beings, surveying human behavior below. See *Zohar* 1:147a, 232a, 234a (all *Tos*); 2:50a (*Mat*), 50b, 68b (*Tos*), 74a, 202a (*Mat*), 245b, 251b (last two *Heikh*); 3:90b; *ZH* 32b, 62b (*ShS*), 105b (*Mat*); V5, 331a (*Mat*); Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 384, n. 210.

27. masters of trumpeting... In contrast to the first group of angels, the angels on the left side begin and end with judgment. According to rabbinic tradition, the heavenly court maintains a record of all human actions. See *BT Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the intermediate.”

The number 250,000 may be derived from the 250 men who took part in Korah’s rebellion. See Numbers 16:2; Azulai, *Nitsotsei Orot*, n. 5.

“Masters of trumpeting” renders מארי דיבבא (*marei de-yabbava*), “masters of trumpeting (or wailing).” See Onkelos on Leviticus 23:24; 25:9; Numbers 29:1; *Zohar* 1:92a; 2:50b, 122b; 3:4a, 60a, 64b, 132a, 133a, 135a, 136a (last four all *IR*), 231b, 258b, 293a (*IZ*). On the open books, see Daniel 7:10: *The court sat and the books were opened*.

28. along with 18,000 others... The number 18 corresponds to the Hebrew word חַי (ḥai), life. Thus, the 18,000 angels who accompany the compassionate “masters of eyes” are allies inclined toward granting life. When they blow the trumpets the sound lacks the mournful trills of the other trumpeters. Those angels from the side of judgment sound their trumpets again, but their trumpet blasts are simple, not tremolo, the power of judgment having been subdued.

See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b, in the name of Rabbi Abba: “What does [God] do at night?... He rides his light cherub and sails through 18,000 worlds, as is said: *The chariots of God, myriads upon myriads, even thousands* שְׁנַיִם (shin’an), repeated (Psalms 68:18). Do not read שְׁנַיִם (shin’an), repeated, but שְׁנַיִם (she-einan) [that are missing, i.e., two myriads (20,000) minus two thousands, equaling 18,000].”

29. The Patron arises from that throne... During a time of judgment, “the Patron” (namely God) is aroused to assess the world compassionately, and to do so He invokes His own name—which is guaranteed, according to rabbinic tradition, to elicit divine clemency. The name YHVH is spelled out in this fashion, bearing the numerical value of forty-five, specifying the invocation of that specific form of the divine name. The themes of mercy and the utterance of the ineffable name of God allude to the Yom Kippur rite in the Temple in which the High Priest would utter God’s name.

See the description of God’s daytime activity in BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b, in the name of Rav: “For the first three hours the blessed Holy One sits engaged in Torah. For the second [three hours] He sits and judges the whole world. Once He sees that the world deserves to be destroyed, He rises from the throne of Judgment and sits upon the throne of Compassion.” See BT *Shabbat* 107b; *Va-yiqra Rabbah* 29:3, 4; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 23:11; *Zohar* 2:170a.

On the invocation of the name YHVH, see Exodus 33:19, in which God says to Moses, *I shall make all My goodness*

pass in front of you, and I shall invoke the name of YHVH before you. And I shall grant grace to whom I grant grace and have compassion for whom I have compassion; and 34:5, in which God fulfills the pledge. See BT Rosh ha-Shanah 17b. On Exodus 33:19, see Rashi and Ibn Ezra. On 34:5, see Midrash Aggadah; Rashi; Ibn Ezra; Rashbam; Sarna; Alter. Cf. Exodus 20:21. On invoking God's ineffable name on Yom Kippur, see BT Yoma 39b. On this particular invocation of God's name, see Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash. Cf. V5, which has a different spelling of the name.

“Patron (or protector)” is an aramaized form of Latin *patronus*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:12; *Rut Rabbah*, *Petihta* 1; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*. “Blessed is the glory of God from His place” is the Targum (interpretive Aramaic translation) of Ezekiel 3:12.

30. garden that had been treasured away... “Garden of Eden” signifies *Shekhinah*, who comes to delight in the celestial scene after the heavenly tribunal has completed its proceedings. She radiates the divine overflow that She receives from the *sefirot* and that She proceeds to distribute to the four creatures or four wheels supporting the chariot. Alternatively, “the ancient ones” signifies Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David who represent *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Malkhut*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

31. He proclaimed a second time... There are two instances of the tetragrammaton, *YHVH*, in the litany of divine attributes in Exodus 34:6. Here, “the Elder, Patron of all” (possibly *Atiqa Qadisha*, the Holy Ancient One, identified with *Keter*) intones these two iterations at different stages in the sequence of judgment and forgiveness. After the second, all heavenly forces break out in the chanting of the thirteen attributes of compassion, apparently in praise rather than petition.

God’s “thirteen attributes of compassion” are derived from Exodus 34:6–7: *YHVH, YHVH! A compassionate and gracious God, long-suffering, and abounding in kindness*

and faithfulness, keeping kindness for the thousandth generation, bearing crime, trespass, and sin.... In kabbalistic thought these attributes of compassion are often associated with *Keter*, the realm of total compassion. On Exodus 34:6, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “This verse teaches us that the blessed Holy One drew His robe round Him like the prayer leader and showed Moses the order of prayer. He said to him, ‘Whenever the people of Israel sins, let them carry out this service before Me, and I will forgive them: *YHVH YHVH*—I am the Eternal before a person sins and the same after a person sins and repents. *A compassionate and gracious God.*’ Rav Yehudah said, ‘A covenant has been made with the thirteen attributes that they will not be turned away empty-handed.’”

On the “Holy Ancient One” characterized as pure compassion, see *Zohar* 2:89b, 122b; 3:15a-16a, 68b, 293a, 294a; *ZH* 46b. On the two iterations of *YHVH* in Exodus 34:6, see Rashi; Ibn Ezra (short and long); Naḥmanides; Joseph Bekhor Shor; *Tosafot* on *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17b, s.v. *shalosh*. Cf. *Midrash Tehillim* 93:8. On this paragraph, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Hamah*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

32. heavens and all their forces trembling... When all the angelic beings see God’s decisive compassion, they tremble in acceptance.

On the delight enjoyed by righteous souls, both living and dead, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 121-45. Jeremiah 10:7 reads in full: *Who would not revere You, O King of the nations? For it befits You, since among all the wise of the nations and among all their kingdoms, there is none like You.*

33. mystery of faith... That is, the mystery of the *sefirot*, which are the focus of kabbalistic faith. “Faithful cluster” refers to their unification.

On this reading, see *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; cf. *Or Yaqar*. This passage appears with some variation in *Zohar*

1:151b-152a as *Tosefta*. On this passage, see Vol. 4, pp. 61-63 (and notes there).

34. When two ascend... A veiled description of the sefirotic process. One interpretation would be: when *Hokhmah* and *Binah* ascend toward their unified source in *Keter*, they receive its emanation between their two arms, *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. Then, this sefirotic pair flows down, generating *Tif'eret*—who mediates between them. *Netsah* and *Hod* emerge as the sources of prophecy. *Yesod* mediates between *Netsah* and *Hod*, while it absorbs the entire flow of emanation, conveying it to *Shekhinah*.

On *Netsah* and *Hod* as the sources of prophecy, see above, [note 24](#). For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Miqdash Melekh*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Vol. 4, 62, n. 273.

35. holy well... Field of Holy Apples... *Shekhinah*, situated beneath *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, receiving the divine flow. In Kabbalah, the Apple Orchard symbolizes *Shekhinah*. She is filled with apple trees, namely the *sefirot* above. Moses tended the flock of Jethro (Exodus 3:1) and shepherded the Israelites in the wilderness, where they were nourished by *Shekhinah*. Jacob selected animals from Laban's flocks, and they multiplied (Genesis 30:25-43). Here, Jacob's flocks symbolize angels riding in chariots, nourished by *Shekhinah*.

Her name Field of Holy Apples derives from BT *Ta'anit* 29b, in the name of Rav: "[Isaac] said, 'See, the fragrance of my son [Jacob] is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH' (Genesis 27:27)... like the fragrance of a field of apple trees."

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35-37; *Zohar* 1:85a-b, 142b, 143b, 151b (*ST*), 152a (*Tos*), 224b, 249b; 2:61b, 84b, 88a-b; 3:74a, 84a, 133b, 135b (last two *IR*), 286b-287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365. Cf. *Tosafot* on *Shabbat* 88a, s.v. *piryo qodem le-alav*.

36. Three pillars... Namely, *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, who channel the flow of blessing to the well of *Shekhinah*, called

אדוני (*Adonai*), My Lord. As the last *sefirah*, *Shekhinah* is Lord, ruling over *all the earth*. She is also pictured as the *ark* housing *Yesod*, symbolized by *the covenant* and “holy spring,” called יהוה צבאות (*YHVH Tseva’ot*), “Lord of Hosts,” constantly flowing into Her. Reference to the destroyed *sanctuary* indicates the ultimate hope: that divine overflow will gush toward *Shekhinah*, manifest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The verse in Deuteronomy reads in full: *My Lord, YHVH, You Yourself have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand*. The verse’s opening phrase is customarily vocalized as *Adonai Elohim, My Lord God*, in order to avoid the confusing duplication *Adonai Adonai*. On the verse in Daniel, see *Zohar* 3:21b. On *Shekhinah* as ark, see *Zohar* 1:2a, 33b, 50b, 59b, 228b, 251a; 2:235b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 75 (95).

37. Before pure ether settled... With cryptic symbolism, this passage describes the beginning of the flow of emanation.

אווירא דכיא (*Aveira dakhya*), “pure ether” (or “air”), is a primordial divine potency, probably signifying *Keter*. Before this “pure ether” settled, the primeval stones through which waters of emanation would flow—already pierced for that future purpose—were sealed up. The two triads apparently allude to the triadic structure of the *sefirot*, not yet manifested (“sunken”). A possible interpretation of the “three winds (or spirits)” is that they signify *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod* that are latent (“enveloped”) within the upper triad of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*. Before emanation proceeds, everything is “sealed up” or “sunken.”

The word *avir* is a Hebraization of the Greek primal element *aèr*, with its first known Jewish use in *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:6: “Out of chaos He formed substance, making what is not into what is. He hewed enormous pillars מאויר (*me-avir*), out of ether, that cannot be grasped.” See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 33. Elsewhere in the *Zohar* a

distinction is drawn between two different kinds of ether: one that can be grasped, and another that is inapprehensible.

On the “pure ether,” see Azriel of Gerona, *Commentary on Talmudic Aggadot*, 107 (and Tishby’s note 1); *Zohar* 2:50a (*Mat*); 3:2a (standard editions), 135b (*IR*), 292b (*IZ*); *ZH* 70a, 73b, 74b (all *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 5 (and Wolfson’s note), 26; idem, *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot*, 365b–366a, 372a; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 52; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 374; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 4–6 (6–8) (and Mopsik’s note 28); Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 31–47; Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 173–74; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 153–56. Cf. Porat, *Kitvei ha-Iyyun*, 191, 193; *Zohar* 1:15a, 16b, 32b.

On water issuing from stones, see the definition of בְּהוּ (*bohu*), *empty* [or: *void*] (Genesis 1:2) in BT *Hagigah* 12a: “*Bohu*—the slimy stones sunk in the abyss, from which water issues, as is said: *He will stretch over it a line of chaos and plumb-stones of void* (Isaiah 34:11).”

See the tradition reported in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan (BT *Sukkah* 53a–b): “When David dug the hollows [beneath the site of the Temple], the abyss arose and threatened to drown the world... [David] inscribed the [divine] name on a potsherd and cast it into the abyss, and it subsided.”

See JT *Sanhedrin* 10:2, 29a; BT *Makkot* 11a; *Midrash Shemu’el* 26; Gaster, ed., *Sefer ha-Ma’asiyyot*, 113–14; *Zohar* 2:91b, 152a; 3:198b; *ZH* 76b (*MhN, Rut*); Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:258, n. 70; Sperber, “Sealing the Abysses”; Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 117–31, 311–17; Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 124–31; Liebes, *Torat ha-Yetsirah*, 177–89.

The verse introducing this passage (Exodus 14:19) is the first of three consecutive verses that each contain seventy-two Hebrew letters, forming part of the complex 72-Letter Name of God. The name is composed of seventy-

two triads (or “words”), according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad); etc.

Through the potency of these letters, the waters return to their places. The flint, engraved with the seventy-two letters, pierces the stones, facilitating the measured flow of emanation; then the waters gather together in a paradoxical unity of three spirits, three flows of water, and three verses. On the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God, see above, [pp. 42-43](#), [n. 44](#).

For a range of interpretations of this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; *Miqdash Melekh*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

38. world began to divide... The divine realm began to divide, apparently into male and female halves.

On the division of upper waters and lower waters, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:13: “Rabbi Shim’on son of El’azar said, ‘Every single handbreadth [of water] descending from above is met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth. What is the reason? *Deep calls to deep...* (Psalms 42:8).’ Rabbi Levi said, ‘The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, “Receive us! You are creatures of the blessed Holy One and we are His messengers.” They immediately receive them, as is written: *Let the earth open* (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening to a male.’”

See JT *Berakhot* 9:2, 14a; 1 Enoch 54:8; *Seder Rabbah di-Vreshit*, 10 (*Battei Midrashot*, 1:25); *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 23; *Zohar* 1:17b, 29b, 32b, 46a, 60b, 62a, 159a, 235a, 244a-b, 245b; 3:223b; *ZH* 1d.

39. another flint... Perhaps symbolizing *Binah*. As the waters issue from Her, they divide and then converge, before emptying into *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by “the

fiery blade of the whirling (or “turning”) sword.” Her “flaming coals” represent forces of Judgment within Her.

The divisions rising and falling signify respectively *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*; north and south symbolize respectively *Gevurah* and *Hesed*. On the image of the whirling sword, see Genesis 3:24, describing the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden: *He drove out the human and placed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame [or: blade] of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.*

40. single column is inserted... Extending from the sea of *Shekhinah* to the higher sefirotic realms. Through this column rises the rung of *Yesod* (messenger of *Binah*, who is represented as “supernal governor”), and He gazes out at the forces (ships and fish) populating *Shekhinah*, conveying Her power to the world. The stormy waves represent the roiling forces of judgment with which angelic forces and human souls must contend.

On the ships sailing the sea of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:34b, 40b (*Heikh*), 124a; 2:30a, 54a, 56a. On Her fish, see *Zohar* 2:12a, 30b, 48b. On the image of inserting a column into the sea, cf. the rabbinic tradition of Gabriel inserting a reed into the sea. See JT *Avodah Zarah* 1:3, 39c; BT *Shabbat* 56b, *Sanhedrin* 21b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:6.

41. When that rung descends... When *Yesod* descends through the sefirotic column, He is accompanied by a thousand forces of *Hesed* and a thousand of *Gevurah*, as He prepares to unite with *Shekhinah*, like a king sitting on his throne. Bonded together, They spread harmonious overflow through the world and then return to Their respective positions.

The final sentence may mean: When the ships and fish sail the sea of *Shekhinah*—conveying divine compassion and judgment—it is through the power of *Yesod* that She sets out

and returns. For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Miqdash Melekh*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

42. Let them raise their eyes... The herald addresses various groups of angels, including those whose eyes see all that happens in the world. These heavenly beings prepare for *Shekhinah* (known as both “sea” and *angel of Elohim*) to journey forth on behalf of the people of Israel, protecting them from forces of judgment.

On angels covering their faces, see Isaiah 6:2. On *Shekhinah* as *angel of Elohim*, see *Mekhilta, Shirta 3*; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 14:19; Nahmanides on Exodus 14:19; *Zohar* 1:61a; 2:51a-b; 3:25a, 150b, 269b-270a; *ZH* 72a (*ShS*). The verse in Exodus, which frames this passage of *Matnitin*, reads: *The angel of Elohim who was going before the camp of Israel journeyed [or: moved] and went behind them.*

43. masters of understanding... This epithet and many of the others here are characteristic monikers for the kabbalists in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*.

On “masters of understanding,” see *Zohar* 1:107b, 232a (both *Tos*); 2:235b, 268b (both *Tos*); 3:270b (*Mat*); *ZH* 105b (*Mat*); V5, 331a (*Mat*). On being “open-eyed,” see *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*), 161b (*Mat*); 2:4a (*Mat*), 68b (*Tos*), 74a (*Mat*); *ZH* 105b (*Mat*); Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 125–28. Cf. below, [p. 610](#), [n. 24](#). On the one who “ascends and descends,” see above, [note 19](#).

44. impulse arose in the will of White Head... Signifying *Keter*, who strikes the *Botsina di-Qardinuta*, Lamp of Adamantine Darkness—the divine instrument used to measure out the *sefirot*. This lamp strikes *Hokhmah*, designated as “a shining emanation,” causing the generation of *neshamot*, highest souls. In turn, *Hokhmah* strikes *Binah*, represented by a “mighty monolith,” so-called because it is the original source of Judgment, leading to the emergence of the multi-colored flame, representing the *sefirot*. Upon their formation, *Hokhmah* strikes *Binah* once more to stabilize

it. “Living spirit,” associated with *Tif’eret*, is the middle entity of the tripartite soul, and its paradigm above is fashioned from within the complex of the lower *sefirot*.

On the formulation “impulse arose in the will of the White Head,” see *Zohar* 1:251a (*Mat*); 3:270b (*Mat*); V5, 330b (*Mat*); cf. 1:232a (*Tos*). On “the White Head,” see above, [note 20](#). “Man” renders אדם (*Adam*), “humanity.” In Zoharic kabbalah, however, the paradigmatic anthropos, whether divine or human, is male. See Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 42–57. On the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness, see below, [note 90](#). On the origins of the different parts of the soul in Zoharic kabbalah, see *Zohar* 1:12b, 81a–b (*ST*), 187a, 206a; 2:12a, 95b, 99b, 142a, 174a; 3:170a, 174b; *ZH* 32c, 33a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 407; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 100 (127); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Or*, 86a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:684–98. On the tripartite soul in general, see below, [p. 640](#), [n. 37](#). For other interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 205–7; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

45. That spirit was bounded... When a spirit is first created it has no spatial definitions, but is delimited at this stage in preparation for its entry into a human body. On its journey down to this world, it draws celestial overflow from *Tif’eret* (represented by the sun) and from *Shekhinah* (represented by the moon). Then it continues to gather from the four central *sefirot* (*Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah*), mediated by the four creatures who bear the heavenly chariot, and by the four natural elements (water, fire, air, and dust). Cf. *ZH* 32c. On the four elements, see Vol. 10, p. 31, n. 94.

The description of the eagle derives from Ezekiel 17:3, which begins: *The great eagle with the great wings and the long pinions, with the full plumage and the brilliant colors*. On the last image, see *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 11: “He began gathering the dust of Adam [see Genesis 2:7] from the four corners of the earth.... He stood up on his feet....

his height equaled the distance from one end of the earth to the other... and he bore the likeness of God. The creatures saw him and were terrified, thinking that he was their creator, so they all came to bow down before him.”

46. spirit settled into the dust... When *ru'ah*, “spirit,” settles into dust—the lowest of the four elements—it becomes sealed within it, and the dust takes on the material, human form of Primal Adam. The process is completed when the *nefesh* that derives from *Malkhut*, manifested in dust, catalyzes the dust with a puff of air.

“Shook about (or rattled, churned, agitated)” renders *מכשכשה* (*mekashkesha*), a term signifying a disturbance. Here it refers to the traumatic impact upon the spirit as it enters a physical body. See *Zohar* 2:104b, 193a; 3:184b; *ZH* 63c (*ShS*), 83b (*MhN, Rut*).

47. Nefesh is the basis... *Nefesh* is the animating force within the physical body. The quality of its activities determines both the extent to which the higher *ru'ah* dwells within the body, and the details of one’s idiosyncratic facial features.

A teaching in *Bereshit Rabbah* 73:12 attributed to Bar Sira says: “A man’s heart changes [the look of] his face, both for good and for ill.” Cf. *BT Qiddushin* 31a, and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *mi-bein risei eineikha*.

The understanding of the face’s transparency rests on the prevalent medieval belief in the science of physiognomy, the explanatory framework for describing and predicting psychological, social, and moral conditions on the basis of facial features. See above, [pp. 491-92](#), [n. 395](#).

On the verse in Isaiah, see *JT Yevamot* 16:3, 15c; *BT Yevamot* 120a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:20; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 33:5; *Zohar* 75a (*RR*); 3:123a (*RM*); *ZH* 72a-b (*ShS*); *TZ*, intro, 13b; *Sod Hakkarat Panim*, 298, 300; Scholem, *Shedim Ruhot u-Nshamot*, 250-51. Actually, the simple meaning of the phrase *hakkarat peneihem* in Isaiah is probably

their partiality [in judgment]; for the idiom, see Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19.

48. measuring with a single green thread... The “green thread” apparently emerges from *Malkhut*, imprinting letters in inverted form upon a person’s hands. These inscriptions are further evidence regarding one’s misdeeds, and they are inverted from their proper form above to reflect that corruption. “Dwelling” signifies *Shekhinah*, and Her judgments extend even to a person’s physical appearance.

On the green line, see BT *Ḥagigah* 12a: “*Tohu*, Chaos—a green line that encompasses the entire world, from which darkness issued.” Cf. Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 89; *Zohar* 1:11b; *ZḤ* 35d (RR), 55a; Moses de León, *Or Zaru’a*, 268; Todros Abulafia, *Sha’ar ha-Razim*, 71; idem, *Otsar ha-Kavod* on *Ḥagigah* 12a, p. 44b; *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On inscriptions upon the hands, see *Nitsotsei Zohar*, n. 5.

“Dust of the Dwelling” renders שפולי משכנא (*shippulei mashkena*), literally “lower parts or skirts of the Dwelling.” See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Numbers 5:17; *Tiqqunei Zohar* 70, 126a; cf. *ZḤ* 91b (*MhN*, *Eikhah*).

49. THE SECTION OF SEXUAL LICENTIOUSNESS “Sexual licentiousness” renders עריות (*arayot*), the plural of ערוה (*ervah*), “nakedness, genitals.” The term *arayot* refers to various forbidden sexual relations, including incest, as listed in Leviticus 18 and 20. In rabbinic literature, Leviticus 18 is called פרשת עריות (*Parashat Arayot*), “The Section of Sexual Licentiousness.” See JT *Yevamot* 2:4, 3d; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 24:6. On *arayot* in Kabbalah and the *Zohar*, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1367–70; Idel, “Peirushim le-Sod ha-Arayot.”

50. Transmitting norms... This passage conveys a cryptic description of dazzling angels, including how they execute judgment upon the world for sinful behavior such as sexual immorality.

The description incorporates elements from Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot-throne, which is carried by four *hayyot* (living beings), each situated at one corner of the throne and each having four faces: a human face at the front, the face of a lion on the right, the face of an ox on the left, and the face of an eagle at the back. See Ezekiel 1:10: *The image of their face was a human face, and on the right the four of them had a lion's face, and on the left the four of them had an ox's face, and the four of them had an eagle's face.* According to Greenberg (*Ezekiel*, 45), the peculiar formulation of this verse reflects the sequence of observation. The onlooker (on any side) was confronted by a human face, flanked by two animal faces on its right and left. Finally, from what could be seen on the heads of the rest of the creatures, the onlooker inferred that in back of the human face confronting him was an eagle's face.

Here the four angelic beings (most likely Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael) are pictured as "sharpened keys," which open the storehouses of divine plenty and convey it to the world. Each one faces "in four directions," as described by Ezekiel, yet all four move "in one direction," conveying the throne on its path. The last sentence emphasizes the underlying unity of the essential natures underlying the four colors and the four angels, even as each individual being manifests one color more distinctly.

For various interpretations of this entire passage, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Vol. 7, pp. 495-98. "Dazzling beings" renders טהירין (*tehirin*), which derives from the Aramaic root meaning "brightness, noon." In the *Zohar*, *tehirin* often refers to demons, but here to dazzling angels who oversee or inflict punishment. The description "blue [or: violet], purple, crimson," derives from *Targum Onqelos* on Exodus 25:4. On the intermingling of the four creatures, see *Zohar* 1:18b-19a, 44a-b (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Peirush al ha-Merkavah*, 61; Gikatilla, *Peirush al ha-*

Merkavah, 59, 63–64. On the colors, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:290–92.

51. Four heads, rising as one... The four angelic heads join as they rise toward *Shekhinah*. Their unified head rises “out of a washing pool,” which may allude to the River of Fire, from which angels emerge daily.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 14a: “Every single day, ministering angels are created from a river of fire, chant song, and then cease to be.” See Daniel 7:10: *A river of fire was flowing and gushing from His presence, a thousand thousands serving Him, a myriad of myriads attending Him*. See also *Shemot Rabbah* 15:6; above, [p. 149](#), [n. 345](#).

The phrase “two does, identical in size” apparently refers to each of the four identical double אופנים (*ofanim*), *wheels*, which in Ezekiel’s vision are located below and alongside each *ḥayyah* (living being) and move in perfect unison with them. See Ezekiel 1:16: *The appearance of the wheels and their design were like topaz and all four had the same shape; their appearance and design were as of one wheel being inside the other wheel*.

The full verse in Song of Songs reads: *Your teeth are like a flock of הקצובות (ha-qetsuvot), newly shorn ewes [or: ewes similar in size], coming up from washing, all of them twinning [or: matching, identical] and none bereft among them*.

52. Four wings covering the body... According to Ezekiel 1:6, 8, each *ḥayyah* (living being) *had four wings... and human hands beneath their wings*. Here, the author adds that each hand was “engraved with five” fingers.

On the four wings, cf. Ezekiel 1:11. The description “beautiful in form, gorgeous in appearance” derives from *Targum Onqelos*, Genesis 29:17 (describing Rachel) and 39:6 (describing Joseph). See *Zohar* 2:99a, 163a; *ZḤ* 39b (relating to Ezekiel’s vision).

53. One youth, a boy... The chief angel Metatron, who is often called נער (*na’ar*), “youth, lad, (heavenly) servant.”

He ministers to *Shekhinah*, who is Herself sometimes pictured as a divine sword.

The image of the male and female sword derives from an interpretation of Genesis 3:24: *He drove out the human and placed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.* According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 21:9, whirling means “turning” from one aspect into another: “*Whirling—changing: sometimes male, sometimes female; sometimes spirits, sometimes angels.*”

See above, [p. 340](#), [n. 111](#). On *Shekhinah* as “sword,” see *Zohar* 1:53b, 66b, 237a, 238b, 240b; 2:26a, 28b, 54a, 66a; 3:12b, 19b, 30b, 52b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 69, 213.

The image of angels carrying an ephah (a measure of volume; by rabbinic tradition, 216 eggs) derives from Zechariah 5:9, where the prophet sees two winged female agents carrying an ephah—apparently a container of that capacity—*between earth and heaven*. In verse 6, the ephah is described as *their eye (their guilt in the Septuagint and Syriac versions) in all the land*. Here in the *Matnitin*, the ephah serves as a universal standard to determine whether human acts of measuring are accurate and fair, or to gauge whether human behavior is just. The verse in Leviticus begins: *Scales of equity, weights of equity, an ephah of equity, and a hin of equity you shall have.*

On Metatron, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:626–31; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377–81; Abrams, “The Boundaries of Divine Ontology”; above, [pp. 453–54](#), [nn. 269–70](#). On Metatron as *na’ar*, “youth,” see 3 Enoch 4:10; BT *Yevamot* 16b; Vol. 4, p. 359, n. 563. On Metatron and the ladder, see *Zohar* 1:149a (*ST*); *ZH* 28b–c; [Moses de León?], *Seder Gan Eden* 296 (*Beit ha-Midrash* 3:139).

[54](#). A vision of crystal poised atop one sword... The color red symbolizes harsh Judgment. The mighty warrior is Metatron, who embodies the power of *Shekhinah* and extends

through many worlds. The sword bears the imprint of all supernal powers, and of forces prepared to execute judgment, but it is wielded by Metatron—who traverses “thirteen worlds,” corresponding to the thirteen attributes of compassion.

The sixty other warriors execute judgment on behalf of *Shekhinah* and Metatron. The context in Song of Songs (3:7–8) alludes to them: *Behold, the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her [or: it], of the warriors of Israel—all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night.*

On *Shekhinah* as controlling the divine weapons, see *Zohar* 2:51a–b; 3:10b, 42b, 150a, 269b; *ZH* 7b (*SO*).

The “one worm who swims among fish of the sea” is a divine force roaming among the angelic “fish” within the ocean of *Shekhinah*. This worm possesses the power of the legendary worm *shamir*, whose name means “diamond.” The *shamir* was employed by King Solomon in building the Temple because it could cut through the hardest stone. Here, the worm causes all threatening rocks—harsh judgments—to split apart.

On the *shamir*, see BT *Gittin* 68a: “Why did Solomon want [the demons]? As indicated in the verse *The House, in its being built, was built only of stone complete for its journey, [so no hammer, ax, or any iron tool was heard in the House while it was being built]* (1 Kings 6:7). He said to the Rabbis, ‘How shall I manage [without iron tools]?’ They replied, ‘There is the *shamir* that Moses brought for the stones of the ephod.’ He asked them, ‘Where is it to be found?’ They replied, ‘Bring a male and a female demon and tie them together; perhaps they know and will disclose to you.’ So he brought a male and a female demon and tied them together. They said to him, ‘We do not know, but perhaps Ashmedai the prince of the demons knows....’” See M *Sotah* 9:12; *Tosefta Sotah* 15:1; JT *Sotah* 9:13, 24b; BT *Sotah* 48b, *Gittin* 68b; *Zohar* 1:74a, 223b; Ginzberg,

Legends, 5:53, n. 165. On the verse in Psalms, see *Zohar* 1:240b; 2:61a; 3:60a; *ZH* 52a.

The term *bedolah* appears only twice in the Bible, once in the context of the geographical setting of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:12) and once in the verse from Numbers 11:7. Originally, *bedolah* apparently designated an aromatic yellowish semitransparent resin of trees (similar to myrrh), but a number of ancient and medieval sources identify it as a precious stone. Rashi on Numbers 11:7 describes it as “crystal,” and in medieval Hebrew *bedolah* means “pearl” and “crystal.” Here, the *Zohar* adopts the sense of “crystal.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:2; *Zohar* 1:225b; 2:136b, 176b (*SdTs*); 3:49a, 135b (*IR*), 155b; *ZH* 48c.

55. a voice issuing... This voice issues from the angelic warriors, to warn humanity of the impending judgment and to stimulate them to *teshuvah*. But no one in the world heeds the warning or perceives the imminent danger. The structure of society is tottering—and the divine structure itself is unstable—because human wickedness weakens divine Love (on the right) and empowers harsh Judgment and demonic forces (associated with the left).

“Nakedness” renders עריין (*eryan*), the plural of עריטא (*aryeta*, *eryeta*), “nakedness.” The Hebrew equivalent—ערייות (*arayot*), the plural of ערוה (*ervah*), “nakedness, genitals”—refers to various forbidden sexual relations, including incest, as listed in Leviticus 18 and 20. Here *eryan* refers primarily to the consequences of such immoral behavior, including the disruption of the union of the divine couple, whose nakedness is thereby exposed.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:2, referring to the serpent’s advice to Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge: “A *whisperer separates an intimate...* (Proverbs 16:28). A *whisperer*—[this is the serpent,] for he whispered rebelliously against his Creator, saying: [If you eat from the Tree of Knowledge,] *you surely will not die* (Genesis 3:4).

Separates אלוף (aluf), *an intimate*—for he separated אלופו (alufo), Chief, of the world [that is, he caused the Divine Presence to depart from the world] and was immediately cursed.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7; *Zohar* 1:34a; 2:230b; 3:16b, 31a, 74a. On *Binah* being separated from Her children by human sin, see *Zohar* 1:219a; 2:85b; 3:15b. On *arayot* in Kabbalah and the *Zohar*, see above, [note 49](#).

56. none above are blessed... The flow of blessing and emanation—even within the divine realm—cannot proceed until the wicked are eliminated. The full verse in Psalms reads: *Let sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Bless, O my soul, YHVH, Praise Yah!*

57. masters of wisdom, masters of understanding... See Exodus 35:31: *He has filled him with a spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in every task.* This describes Bezalel, the architect of the Dwelling (or Tabernacle), signifying *Shekhinah*. According to rabbinic legend, Bezalel had mastery of the letters with which God created the world. By implication, the kabbalists are those who know how to configure *Shekhinah*, understanding Her secrets.

See BT *Berakhot* 55a. Cf. Onkelos on Exodus 31:3; 35:31. Instead of “a voice calls out,” M8 reads “a voice calls and does not call.”

58. When White Head enhanced... Signifying *Keter*, wholly white with mercy. He initiates creation with engravings of the *sefirot* beginning with *Hokhmah*, represented by “the head.” The troubling presence of the north side, symbolizing *Gevurah*, is tempered through the capping of its harmful effects with the crown of *Hesed*. That “tiara” is engraved with the “supernal abyss,” symbolizing *Binah*, in whom reside the roots of Judgment. *Yesod* is the concealed rung, conveying divine light below. The number 1500 appears in rabbinic discussions of the abyss, but may also correspond to the number 150, which is the total of the

length (100 cubits) and the width (50 cubits) of the court (or enclosure) of the Dwelling, signifying *Shekhinah*.

See the tradition reported in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan (BT *Sukkah* 53a-b): “When David dug the hollows [beneath the site of the Temple], the abyss arose and threatened to inundate the world.... [David] inscribed the [divine] name on a potsherd and cast it into the abyss, and it subsided 16,000 cubits. When he saw that it had subsided so far, he said, ‘The higher it is raised, the more the earth will be watered.’ So he recited the fifteen [Psalms of] Ascents (Psalms 120-134) and raised it 15,000 cubits, leaving it 1000 cubits [below the surface].” See JT *Sanhedrin* 10:2, 29a. On the dimensions of the Dwelling, see *Zohar* 2:233b.

On “White Head,” see above, [note 20](#). “Wreathed tiara” renders עטורא דקונאריתא (*ittura de-qonarita*). קונאריתא (*Qonarita*) may be a variation on קינטרון (*qinteron*), “centurion”; קונארי (*qonari*), “canary”; or, קונטרא (*quntera*), “knot or knotted web.” Traditional commentaries interpret עטורא דקונאריתא (*ittura de-qonarita*) as the crown of *Ḥesed* or *Yesod*, without identifying the meaning of the term. See *Zohar* 2:174b; *ZḤ* 2a (*Mat*), 16a (*MhN*); *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Derekh Emet*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Vol. 5, p. 519, n. 937. Cf. *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 317.

59. one beast of the field... Signifying *Shekhinah*, who is below the other *sefirot*. The ten קרנין (*qarnayin*), literally *horns*, are interpreted by the *Zohar* to mean the “rays” that *Shekhinah* absorbs from the ten *sefirot*. She is accompanied by two different groups of angels, forces of judgment: one represented as “spades (or rakes),” and the other by “sixty fiery lashes.”

The context in Daniel 4:7-9 actually reads: *In the vision of my mind in bed I saw a tree of great height in the midst of the earth. The tree grew and became mighty; its top reached heaven, and it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant; there was*

food for all in it. Beneath it the beasts of the field found shade, and the birds of the sky dwelt on its branches; all creatures fed on it. Here, the *Zohar* cites the verse with reference to just one beast. In the second verse cited, Daniel refers to the vision of one of the four terrifying beasts that are understood to represent conquering nations.

On the paradoxical style, cf. *Zohar* 1:232a (*Tos*); 2:95a, 100a. On spades, see above, [note 4](#). The image of “sixty... lashes” bearing swords derives from Song of Songs 3:7-8: *Behold the bed of Solomon! Sixty warriors surrounding her, of the warriors of Israel—all of them skilled with a sword, expert in war, each with his sword on his thigh because of terror in the night.* The image of “fiery lashes” derives from BT *Ḥagigah* 15a. Cf. Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *pulsei*; BT *Yoma* 77a; *Bava Metsi’a* 85b. The word *pulsei* apparently derives from the Latin word *pulsus*, meaning “a blow or hit.”

On discrepancies between Scriptural citations in the *Zohar* and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#). On Daniel 7:7, cf. *Zohar* 2:126b.

[60.](#) four sides of the world... According to rabbinic legend, Primal Adam was created from dust of the four corners of the earth. Here, the assembly occurs through the agency of *Shekhinah*, Herself symbolized by dust. Apparently the four elements are incorporated in the formation of the human, as represented by the four directions.

On the formulation “an impulse arose,” see above, [note 44](#). On Adam’s creation, see above, [note 44](#). “One upward, one downward” probably refers to east and west, according to medieval cartographic conventions.

[61.](#) great, mighty tree joined... *Tif’eret* unites erotically with *Shekhinah* through the phallic member *Yesod*, signified by *the earth* and the “beautiful branch,” respectively. Their union generates the *ru’ah*, “spirit,” that is then infused into Primal Adam.

The verse from Psalms here echoes Daniel 4:9 cited above ([note 59](#)). See *Zohar* 1:206b; 2:222a-b; 3:5a; *ZH* 69d-70a (*ShS*).

62. commanded regarding that tree... Namely, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. Some traditional commentators explain that God removed Primal Adam's *neshamah* but restored his *ru'ah*. The *neshamah* was then conveyed to Enoch, called here "another vessel," who was transformed into the angel Metatron and ensconced as chief of the angels.

In the *Zohar*, the neologism *tufsera* can mean "form, mold, configuration," based on טופסא (*tufsa*), derived from Greek *tupos*, or "royal dignitary" (based on טפסרא [*tafsera*], derived from biblical טפסר [*tifsar*], "marshal, scribe"), but here it takes on the meaning of military or administrative official based on the rare biblical noun טפסר (*tifsar*). See Jeremiah 51:27; Nahum 3:17.

On *tufsera*, see *Zohar* 1:20b, 30b (and Scholem, ad loc.), 157a, 241b, 242b, 243b; 2:30b, 235b (*Tos*); 3:150a; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 178-80, 185; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 211. On Enoch's inheritance of Adam's soul, see above, [p. 452](#) and [n. 267](#) there.

63. ensnared by their sins... After the original sin of Adam and Eve, people persisted with their own transgressions, and upon death their spirits departed from their bodies. According to rabbinic legend, resurrection will begin from a vertebra at the base of the spinal column, and the bodies will roll through tunnels underground until they arrive in the land of Israel. At that time, the human body will be revived free of taint, just as the Wadi at Shittim will be purified by the new divine spring.

The imagery of the burial and wadi clods derives from Job 31:32-33: *He is borne off to a sepulcher and on the grave-mound someone keeps watch. The clods of the wadi are sweet to him, and every man is drawn after him, and before him, beyond all number.*

A rabbinic tradition in *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:22 ascribes lewd behavior to the Wadi of Shittim: “*Israel stayed at Shittim and the people began to go whoring...* (Numbers 25:1). *Shittim*—they committed folly, for *He who commits adultery with a woman is senseless* (Proverbs 6:32). Some fountains foster strong men and some weaklings, some handsome and some ugly, some chaste and some steeped in lewdness. The fountain of Shittim—promiscuity.” See *Zohar* 3:165b; *ZH* 78b (*MhN*, *Rut*). On the rectification of Wadi Shittim, Rashi says that the river from the house of *YHVH* will atone for the sin of Peor. Cf. Zechariah 14:8.

On the particular vertebra (called the *luz* bone), see *Qohelet Rabbah* on 12:5: “Hadrian (may his bones rot and his name be obliterated!) asked Rabbi Yehoshua son of Hananiah, ‘From whence will a person sprout in the future yet to come?’ He replied, ‘From the *luz* of the spinal column.’ He said to him, ‘Prove it to me!’ What did he do? He brought a *luz* from a spinal column and placed it in water, but it did not dissolve; in fire, but it was not burnt; in a mill, but it was not ground. He placed it on an anvil and struck it with a hammer; the anvil split and the hammer was broken, but to no avail [it remained intact].” This motif is combined with the tradition in *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 34, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on: “All bodies crumble into the dust of the earth until nothing remains except a spoonful of decayed matter. This mingles with the dust like leaven mixed with dough. In the time to come when the blessed Holy One calls to the earth to return all the bodies deposited with it, that which has become mixed with the dust of the earth, like the yeast that is mixed with the dough, improves and increases, and it resurrects the entire body, without any blemish....” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 28:3; *Va-yiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Zohar* 1:69a, 113a, 116a, 126a, 137a (last four *MhN*); 2:28b; 3:222a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 271; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 87–89; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 204–5. On the resurrection imagery, see BT

Ketubbot 111a-b; *Zohar* 2:141b; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 349-50; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 130-31. Cf. BT *Berakhot* 17a.

The verse in Joel reads in full: *In that day, the mountains shall drip with wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the watercourses of Judah shall flow with water. A spring shall issue from the House of YHVH and shall water the Wadi of the Acacias.*

64. Those who are unworthy... Of all those who have died, the worthy ones will eventually be revived and rewarded with eternal life, bestowed by the pure Compassion of *Arikh Anpin*. Conversely, the wicked will be revived and punished, suffering the harsh Judgment of *Ze'eir Anpin*.

65. Ten sefirot belimah The wording here repeats the opening statements in *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:3-9, “Ten *sefirot* בלימה (*belimah*) [perhaps meaning ‘of nothingness, without substance’].” The extreme obscurity of the following passage (through the end of 2a) may be intended as a fulfillment of *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:8: “בלום (*Belom*), Restrain, your mouth from speaking and your mind [or: heart] from conceiving. If your heart races, return it to its place, as is said: *darting to and fro* (Ezekiel 1:14). Concerning this matter the covenant was established.” The passage treats the relationships of *sefirot* and letters, and it bears some of the enigmatic features of *Sefer Yetsirah*. These include repeated references to a “book” at the end of each section and the image of a letter completing it—as in *Sefer Yetsirah* (1:13; 3:2), in which each direction receives a seal.

Belimah derives from Job 26:7: *He stretches north* [meaning toward heaven], *over the void, suspends earth over* בלי-מה (*beli mah*), *nothingness*. See *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:12.

The following passage is extremely obscure and most probably quite corrupted in its transmission (see Scholem). It proceeds with a very enigmatic description of the ten

sefirot, allocating the nine letters ת (*tav*), ה (*he*), ו (*vav*), א (*alef*), י (*yod*), ו (*vav*), ד (*dalet*), ה (*he*), י (*yod*), respectively, to each of nine *sefirot*—a list and sequence that is entirely unfamiliar. The explanations that follow are largely speculative. The version of *Or Yaqar* is published in Sack, *Be-Sha'arei ha-Qabbalah*, 354, and the commentary in *ibid.*, 361–66. Cordovero views this *mishnah* (and the one published in *ZH* 121d–122a) as introductions to the *Idrot*.

66. One... A description of the first *sefirah*, *Keter*. “Four seasons” renders ארבע תקיפין (*arba taqifin*). Through teaching about the seasons and the “winds of the world” (literally “directions of the world” or “all directions”), the *mishnah* encompasses the entirety of time and space. Alternatively, *arba taqifin* could be translated as “four mighty ones,” referring to the four main *sefirot*: *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, and *Malkhut*. The “two sides,” signifying right and left, may be *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, or *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. “Fifty undulations” alludes to the fifty grades of understanding contained within *Binah*. The “one” here (*Keter*) is distinguished in its transcendence from the other *sefirot*, and is described as מה בלי (*beli mah*), “without substance.” The first three letters of the divine name יהו (*yod he vav*) are merely traced above on account of their sublimity, while below they attain greater substance. “One inscribed upon two” probably signifies *Keter* prevailing over *Hokhmah* and *Binah*.

Each of the “books” in this entire passage is sealed by a defining letter. Here, the last letter of the alphabet—ת (*tav*)—may signify that the entirety of potential language is contained within *Keter*, and yet commences from the end, as if language is sealed off. On the utter concealment of *Keter* in *Matnitin*, see *Or Yaqar*, 327; *ibid.*, vol. 8, 103; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 172–78.

“Fifty” renders חמשים (*hamshin*) following V, while V20 and *Or Yaqar* read שמשין (*shamshin*) and שמשוי (*shamshoi*), respectively, meaning “servants” or “its servants.” For

other interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

67. four letters inscribed... The second *sefirah*, *Hokhmah*, is the first place that all four letters of the tetragrammaton are included. “Two upon one” apparently refers to the usual kabbalistic representation of triads with the efflux of right and left flowing into a middle, synthesizing receptacle.

68. Spread upon the diminutive one... The third *sefirah*, *Binah*, encases the “diminutive one,” presumably referring to *Hokhmah*, signified by the miniscule letter ך (yod). Abiding within *Binah* in latent form are the rest of the *sefirot*, signified by “three sides” and by the letter ם (vav), which—as the sixth letter of the alphabet—represents the six central *sefirot*, *Hesed* through *Yesod*. The “north side” renders סטר צפון (*setar tsafon*), symbolizing *Gevurah*, which attains completion since *Binah* stands on the left side and is the root of *Gevurah*. Alternatively, it could be read as (*setar tsafun*), “hidden side,” indicating that with the completion of *Binah*, the hidden upper three *sefirot* are consummated.

See BT *Bava Batra* 25b, in the name of Rabbi Eli’ezer: “The world is like an *exedra* (closed on three sides and open on the fourth), and the north side is not enclosed...” See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3; *Zohar* 3:178b; *ZH* 60d (*MhN*, *ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 2:130a.

The verbs “emanating” (in the previous paragraph) and “spread” (as seen here) alternate from *sefirah* to *sefirah*. “Diminutive” renders קוטא (*quta*), probably derived from the root קוט (*qut*), to shrink or to abbreviate, both apt descriptors of ך (yod); it may also derive from קיטא (*qita*), an object held in the hand while taking an oath. See *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 5:1; *JT Sanhedrin* 3:2, 21a; Jastrow, s.v. *qaita*, *qita*; Sokoloff, “Dictionary of Babylonian Aramaic,” s.v. *qut*. Other versions have קונדא (*konda*) from the Greek word *kondos* or *kontos*, meaning short, often used to describe a dagger. See

Jastrow, s.v. *mekheirin*. *Or Yaqar* explains that it derives from קטה (*qth*), “curtain.” See *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. קטה (*qth*).

On *Binah* wrapped around *Hokhmah*, cf. *Zohar* 1:15a.

“Suspended” renders תלי לה (*talei lah*), but an alternative version reads הלילה (*haleilah*), “singing,” referring to *Binah*’s adoration of *Hokhmah*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. “One of its sides” renders סטרא חד (*sitra ḥad*), but V20 and *Or Yaqar* read: ברא חד (*bera ḥad*), “one son,” apparently referring to *Tif’eret*, who stands for the body of *sefirot* below. On the “son,” see Idel, *Ben*, especially 377–506.

69. Four... darkness of the moon... *Hesed* emanates from the “great abyss,” symbolizing *Binah*, ultimate source of *Gevurah*, and it then extends a measuring instrument that culminates with the dark moon, signifying *Malkhut*. “Four-headed” signifies the four central *sefirot*—*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Malkhut*. The “great abyss” sinks (or imprints) the potential for the moon into *Hesed*, the “fourth book.”

“Darkness (or eclipse, plumb-line) of the moon” renders קרדנותא דסיהרא (*qardinuta de-sihara*). The word *qardinuta* recalls a phrase in BT *Pesahim* 7a: חיטי קורדניתא (*hittei qurdanaita*), “wheat from Kurdistan,” which, according to Rashi, is very hard. Cf. above, [pp. 401-2](#), [n. 131](#).

The full verse in Psalms reads: *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; Your judgments, the great abyss; human and beast You deliver, O YHVH.*

70. Five... dividing lower and upper realms... *Gevurah* is the fifth *sefirah* and fifth book; it is the manifestation of Judgment in the world and epitomizes division. Elsewhere in the *Zohar* it is identified with the second day of creation, in which is created the firmament that divides the upper waters from the lower waters, as well as the institution of disputation. Once Judgment becomes manifest in the world, it extends across all realms, traditionally exemplified by inscription of merits and transgressions in a book. “Five letters... inscribed through two” may signify the five letters of the five books, expressed in two groupings: three from the upper realm of *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah*, over two from the lower realm, *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. “Five within five” probably refers to the tracing of the upper five *sefirot* in the five yet to be emanated. Alternatively, it might refer to the potential of the remaining five *sefirot* (*Netsah* through *Malkhut*) that are latent within the upper five. See *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

In the Torah’s account of Creation, the statement *God saw that it was good* (or a variant) is included in the description of each of the six days except for the second.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 4:6: “Why is *that it was good* not written concerning the second day? Rabbi Yoḥanan said..., ‘Because on that day Hell was created...’ Rabbi Ḥanina said, ‘Because on that day conflict was created: *and let it divide water from water* (Genesis 1:6).’”

On the nature of the second day, see BT *Pesaḥim* 54a; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 4; *Midrash Kohen* (*Beit ha-Midrash*, 2:25); Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 506; *Zohar* 1:17a–18a, 33a, 46a, 257a; 2:144b, 149b; 3:44b; *ZH* 9a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 41 (49).

71. Emanating with fiery sparks... *Tif’eret* emerges from *Gevurah*, which accounts for the “fiery sparks,” but receives influx from both *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, or alternatively, from *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*. גבורין (*Gevuran*), “Powers,” inhere from *Gevurah* on the left, while “spirit of wisdom” derives from *Ḥesed* on the right. *Tif’eret* bears three qualities within (*Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*), and presides over three *sefirot* (*Netsaḥ*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*), while the four below (including *Malkhut*) are traced within four above (*Binah* to *Tif’eret*, or *Ḥokhmah* to *Gevurah*). Alternatively, the four letters of the tetragrammaton—*YHVH*, representing *Tif’eret*—are traced in the four letters *ADNY* that are associated with *Malkhut* below. ם (Vav) is the third letter of the tetragrammaton and normally symbolizes *Tif’eret* (and the five *sefirot* surrounding it); it is preceded by the two letters ך ם (yod he), which represent respectively *Keter* and the pair *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah*.

On *gevuran*, see *Zohar* 2:83a; 3:21b, 31b, 38a, 48b, 60a, 137b, 138b, 141a, 142a (last four *IR*), 296a (*IZ*); *ZH* 3b (*SO*).

72. Seven... Traditional commentaries have construed this passage as an explanation of either *Malkhut* or of *Netsaḥ*. According to *Or Yaqar* (and *Matoq mi-Devash*), the seventh *sefirah* here is *Malkhut*, in whom all is found—light of the *Ein Sof* (“utter nothingness”), demonic forces (“potent chosen ones, whirlwind of centurions, baguettes”), and *sefirot* (“cached ones”). All the *sefirot* conduct (or lead) the world through

Malkhut without actually traveling (or moving) within Her; they travel within Her without actually proceeding beyond; their effects proceed beyond without actually subsisting within Her; they subsist within Her but are not manifest as if they were created; they are manifest as if created, but without transience. The rhythmic series of advancing verbs in the middle of the paragraph is marked by paradox, suggesting the tension of opposing forces—the contrary impulses of revealing and concealing, mobile and stationary, apprehensible and inapprehensible. “Three ride, four traced” may refer to *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret* who oversee *Malkhut*, and the *sefirot Netsah*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, and *Malkhut* who are not yet fully expressed within Her. Ultimately, She is restored to oneness with *Tif’eret* through the single conveyance of *Yesod*. The letter ד (*dalet*) generally signifies *Malkhut* because it begins the word דל (*dal*), “lowly.”

“Potent chosen ones” renders הורמני דבריירי (*hormanei de-biryarei*). See above, [note 19](#).

“Whirlwind of festooned centurions” renders קוזמיטין עילעולא דקונאריתא (*il’ola de-qonarita qozmitin*). Various demonic forces are adorned with קוזמיטין (*qozmitin*), “baguettes (or ostentatious adornments; baubles),” worn by fools.

On *il’ola*, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:4, in the name of Rabbi Levi: “There is no עלעול (*il’ol*), whirlwind, so destructive as that which rises up from the north and blanches the faces of the inhabitants of the South. Who is this? Nebuchadnezzar, who rose up from the north and destroyed the Temple, which was situated in the south.” On *qonarita*, see above, [note 58](#).

“*Qozmitin*” is similar to rabbinic loanwords deriving from Greek *kosmion* or *kosmarion*, “adornment.” Cf. the basic forms *kosmeo*, “to order, arrange, rule, adorn,” and *kosmos*, “order, ornament, ruler, universe.” See JT *Yevamot* 13:2, 13c; *Nedarim* 4:1, 38c; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:10: “קוזמירין (*qozmirin*) [or: קוזמידין (*qozmidin*)], ornaments [or: jewels]” and Theodor’s note; *Pesikta Rabbati* 12, 50b;

Tanḥuma (Buber), *Mi-Qets* 9; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 13: “קוזמין (*qozmin*), ornaments, of the king” (and Luria’s note); *Devarim Rabbah* (ed. Lieberman), p. 69 (and Lieberman’s note): “קוזמירון (*qozmiron*), ornament.” See *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. *qzm*, *qozmarya*; Jastrow, s.v. *qozmidya*, *qozmin*. In the *Zohar*, *qozmitin* can mean “ornaments; rulers; angelic or demonic entities.” See 2:5a (*MhN*), 37b, 56b; Luria, *Va-Ye’esof David*; s.v. *qozmita*; Freedman, “Astral and Other Neologisms,” 132–38.

“Cached ones” renders בלימין (*belimin*), literally “entities without substance,” deriving from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:7: “מלדבר בלום פין (*belom pikha mi-ledabber*), restrain your mouth from speaking.”

For various explanations of this paragraph, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Freedman, “Astral,” 137–38.

73. Eight... Following *Or Yaqar*, the eighth *sefirah* here designates *Netsaḥ*. An emanation is emitted upon the metaphysical source of *Netsaḥ*, probably signifying *Ḥesed*, which stands above *Netsaḥ* on the right axis of *sefirot*. “One star” alludes to *Tif’eret*, based on Numbers 24:17: *A star marches [or prevails] from Jacob*. “Standing upon four” may signify the four letters of the name אדני (*ADNY*), the divine name associated with *Malkhut*, and “four upon it” may signify the four letters of the tetragrammaton—יהוה (*YHVH*), associated with *Tif’eret*, immediately above *Netsaḥ*, with *YHVH* overseeing *ADNY*. The divine male lover *Tif’eret* runs toward *Malkhut*, based on the kabbalistic interpretation of Psalms 19:6: *Rejoicing like a mighty one to run his course*, while *Malkhut* waits for Him. *Malkhut* receives divine seed from above, cast into Her by *Tif’eret*. After mystical union, *Tif’eret* ascends to receive from above, and *Malkhut* descends to bestow blessing upon the world. The lower seven *sefirot* depend upon *Tif’eret*, while the world below is created from *Malkhut*. The ד (*dalet*) associated with *Malkhut* is transformed

into ה (*he*)—receiving a ך (*yod*) within—after unification. See below, [note 75](#).

“Races” renders רהיט (*rahit*), following *Or Yaqar* and possibly V20. The printed versions read קאימ (*qa'eim*), “stands.” On the verse from Numbers (often interpreted with a Messianic valence), see Vol. 4, p. 26, n. 105. For various interpretations of this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

[74. 248 worlds...](#) The ninth *sefirah*, following the interpretation of *Or Yaqar*, is *Hod*. The “248 worlds” correspond to the traditional enumeration of positive commandments. *Hod* is sometimes associated with *Hesed*—symbolized by Abraham, who observed all the commandments and whose name has the numerical value of 248—possibly based on a creative interpretation of Psalms 106:1: הודו (*Hodu*), *Praise, YHVH, for He is good, for* חסדו (*hasdo*), *His loving-kindness, is forever*. The term *hodu* meaning “praise (or thanks)” is unrelated to the word *hod*, “glory,” except for their homonymous similarity. Thus the “five” traced within *Hod* are either *Binah* through *Netsah*, or *Hesed* through *Hod* itself. The “five” below may represent the last letter ה (*he*) of the tetragrammaton, signifying *Malkhut*.

On the association of *Hod* and *Hesed*, see *Zohar* 2:186b; *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

[75. eighteen thousand...](#) The tenth *sefirah* is *Yesod*, sometimes called חי העולמים (*Hei ha-Olamim*), “Life of the Worlds,” alluding to the numerical value of *Hei*, which is eighteen. The number ten is denoted by the letter ך (*yod*), symbolically inscribed upon the penis at circumcision, and thus associated with the *sefirah* *Yesod*, which is symbolized by the phallus. Joseph is the biblical figure who represents *Yesod*, manifesting his righteousness through sexual restraint (i.e., fidelity to and affirmation of the covenant of circumcision). “Signet of signets” indicates the ultimate divine seal, referring to *yod*, first letter of the

tetragrammaton. The ten *sefirot* each contain ten *sefirot* (“ten within ten”), culminating in *Malkhut*. “Governing” also alludes to Joseph and *Yesod* on account of Genesis 42:6: *Joseph was the governor over the land*. Ultimately, *Yesod* is the bridge through which divine mystical unity is attained with *Malkhut*, “His Wife.” Cf. above, [note 73](#).

The number “eighteen thousand” also derives from the description of the idealized Jerusalem in Ezekiel 48:35: *The circumference [shall be] 18,000 [cubits]; and the name of the city from that day on shall be YHVH is there*. See BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b, in the name of Rabbi Aḥa: “What does [God] do at night? ... He rides his light cherub and sails through 18,000 worlds.” On the eighteen thousand worlds, see *Zohar* 1:4b; 3:295b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 49b, 55c.

On various senses of the title *Hei ha-Olamim*, “Life of the Worlds,” see Daniel 12:7; *Mekhilta, Pisha* 16; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:5; *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:9; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §275; *Bahir* 123 (180); *Zohar* 1:4b, 132a, 135b, 164a, 167b, 193b, 207b, 211b; 2:138a, 245b (*Heikh*); 3:247a–b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 123; idem, *Sefer Maskiyyot Kesef*, 21; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 49 (60), 55–56 (68), 58 (71); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 381; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 62, 65, 67, 91, 93; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 60b.

76. ten sefirot split off... This concluding paragraph serves as a summary for the entire passage, and it also explains the significance of the ten *sefirot*. They correspond to ten letters of the divine name—possibly via *milu’l alfin*, the practice of spelling out individual letters of the tetragrammaton using the letter א (alef): יוד הוה אהו (yod he vav he). They also correspond to ten forces with which God created the world, manifest as ten utterances. The enigmatic expressions “Ten over five, five over ten. Six over five, five over six” explain the internal dynamics of the divine name. “Ten” signifies the numerical value of י (yod), symbolizing *Keter* and *Hokhmah*, prevailing over “five,” which

signifies ה (he), the second letter of the tetragrammaton, symbolizing *Binah*. After dispersing divine blessing below, *Binah* returns to *Hokhmah*, expressed as “five over ten.” “Six” signifies the numerical value of ו (vav), third letter of the tetragrammaton, symbolizing the middle six *sefirot* who prevail over “five,” which signifies ה (he), the fourth letter of the tetragrammaton, symbolizing *Malkhut*. After distributing blessing below, *Malkhut* returns above, expressed as “five over six.” Alternatively, the ascendance of the two feminine *sefirot* may be the theosophic realization of Proverbs 12:4: *A woman of valor is a crown for her husband.*

On the ten utterances with which God created the world, see M *Avot* 5:1: “The world was created with ten מאמרות (*ma’amarot*), utterances.” A teaching in the name of Rav in BT *Hagigah* 12a provides a link between the “utterances” of the Mishnah and the *sefirot* of medieval Kabbalah: “By ten things [or: words] was the world created: by wisdom, by understanding, by knowledge, by power, by rebuke, by might, by righteousness, by justice, by loving-kindness, and by compassion.” See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 31; B, 36; *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:1; BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 32a, *Megillah* 21b; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3 (and Luria’s n. 73); *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 108a-b (and Ish Shalom’s n. 138); 40, 169a; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 506; *Zohar* 1:16b, 30a; 2:14b (*MhN*), 34b, 67a, 75b, 156b, 169b, 178b (*SdT*s), 200a; 3:11b-12a, 73a. Cf. BT *Hagigah* 12a; *Sefer ha-Bahir* 96 (141-46). On possible ancient Christian and Gnostic links, see Idel, *New Perspectives*, 112-22.

The concluding sentence is a variant of the Aramaic translation of Psalms 89:53, often used at the end of sections of the *Zohar*. The commentary in *Or Yaqar* concludes: “I remain unsatisfied with my explanation of this *mishnah*—its mysteries are very, very deep waters.”

77. Openings were opened... These openings would lead to the Garden of Eden. All souls want to enter there,

but access is limited to the most righteous among them, “mighty nobles.” The “pillar” represents *Yesod*, and its three colors signify *Gevurah*, *Ḥesed*, and *Tif’eret*, respectively. The “governor” refers to *Shekhinah*. “All engravings of the world” could refer to human souls before they descend into bodies in this world. This entire enigmatic passage, treating the Garden of Eden, emanation of the *sefirot*, the sin of Adam, and the creation of Hell, does not clarify whether this is the upper or lower Garden of Eden.

On the Garden as primordial, see BT *Pesaḥim* 54a: “Seven things were created before the world was created: Torah, *teshuvah*, the Garden of Eden, Hell, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah.”

On the restricted entry and exit, see BT *Shabbat* 17a. On the souls of the living in the Garden of Eden, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 121–29. On souls in the Garden before coming into this world, see *Zohar* 2:13a–b; 3:303b (*Hash*).

78. two brothers embedded... Symbolizing the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which in turn signify *Tif’eret* and *Malkhut*. Although they are intertwined, eating from one brings life, while eating from the other brings death. “Implanted lovers” apparently signifies other trees in the Garden of Eden.

“Grasping” renders אַחֲדָא (ahida’an); alternatively, “holding, embracing.” This echoes Genesis 25:26 regarding Jacob and Esau: *In the womb he grasped [or seized] his brother...* Here, Jacob represents the Tree of Life, and Esau signifies the Tree of Death; the juxtaposition of these two frequently serves as anti-Christian polemic since Esau is treated as a symbol for Rome and Christianity.

“Speculum” renders the Aramaic word הַיְזוּ (ḥeizu), “vision, appearance,” but in the *Zohar* also “mirror (or speculum, looking-glass, lens).” This added sense may derive by analogy from the Hebrew word מַרְאֵה (mar’ah), which can mean either “vision” or “mirror.” Thus, each of

the garden's two main trees is conceived of as an instrument for mystical vision and experience. On the phrase "desirable to behold," cf. the descriptions of the trees in the Garden of Eden: *desirable to look at* (Genesis 2:9, describing all the trees). On the symbolism of holy and demonic tables, see M *Avot* 3:3; *Zohar* 2:153b-154a.

79. blind one... Representing Adam, who was interested only in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. "His companion," the good impulse, encouraged him to prevail over temptation, without success.

The expression *ba'al nefesh* in Proverbs is usually translated as *glutton* (or *voracious man*, having a *large appetite*), but Targum translates it as מרא דנפשך (*mara de-nafshakh*), *master of your soul*, and it is rendered in rabbinic sources as "pious person." See BT *Pesahim* 40a (and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ba'al nefesh*); *Niddah* 16b, 65b; Ibn Ezra, ad loc.; Ramban, "Ma'amar Penimiyyut ha-Torah," 468.

80. sweet one gushed forth... See Genesis 2:10: *A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four riverheads*. In Kabbalah, this river symbolizes the flow of emanation issuing from *Hokhmah*, conveyed by *Binah* through *Yesod*, entering the garden of *Shekhinah*. Once that river flows, the brothers, the two trees, and all polarities are reconciled. The image of the two brothers alludes as well to the two cherubim that rest upon the Ark of the Covenant, who are seen embracing when affairs in the world are harmonious.

On the river from Eden, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 229-51.

81. two young children... Continuing the procession of heavenly entities, these two are Metatron and Sandalfon, the two senior angels. With the advent of the angels, the creation of the celestial world is deemed complete. The one "who will neither eat nor drink" is a reference to Moses, who is given access to the heavens—the only human being granted that privilege.

The association of cherubim and youths derives from BT *Sukkah* 5b: “What is כְּרוּב (*keruv*), cherub? Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘כְּרַבִּיא (*Ke-ravya*), Like a child—for in Babylon they call a child רַבִּיא (*ravya*).’” On childlike cherubim, see BT *Hagigah* 13b; *Zohar* 1:1b, 18b, 172a, 228b; 2:176a, 278a; 3:60b, 217b, 274a; *ZH* 43c, 86a (*MhN, Rut*), 92c (*MhN, Eikhah*). The plump childlike angels of Christian art conceivably derive from the Talmudic tradition, but more likely from the Greco-Roman *Erotes*, “Loves,” winged boys in the company of Aphrodite. In Zoharic literature, “the youth” is often construed as a reference to Metatron; see above, [pp. 326-27](#), [n. 65](#). The angel Sandalfon is implicitly identified with Metatron in *Zohar* 1:21a; see Vol. 1, p. 160, and n. 416 there.

[82. shreds plunge to Egypt...](#) After the emanation of the side of holiness, the demonic left side emerges. The demonic realm is often described as slag or scoria that remains from the purification of the right side. Egypt signifies the demonic realm; here it is identified with Hell.

See BT *Qiddushin* 49b: “Ten *kavs* [measures] of sorcery descended to the world; nine were taken by Egypt [and one by the rest of the world].”

“Epoch of epochs” renders עֶדֶן עֶדְנִין (*idan idanin*), referring to an era of Messianic redemption. Alternatively, it could be translated as “time of times,” signifying the various terms of punishment for the wicked.

[83. These are the right and left...](#) Offering a partial summary of the preceding passage. The divine and angelic realms appear before the creation of the world, and then come the four corners of the earth.

[84. the enlightened will shine...](#) In the book of Daniel *the enlightened* apparently designates the community of those who shared the prophet’s vision. In medieval literature it can refer to either philosophers or, as here, to kabbalists, whose mystical visions encompass all of time and space, signified by the four seasons, and the four winds

(or directions). They alone, in contrast to “the knowers,” probably a polemical jab against philosophers, fathom the mysteries of the Divine Being and the esoteric secrets of the Torah. Ultimately, all those who did not recognize the superiority of kabbalistic understanding will be ashamed in the face of the latter’s brilliance.

The verse in Daniel reads in full: *The enlightened will shine like the radiance of the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.* In certain sections of the *Zohar*, this verse serves performative and experiential functions, inviting the reader to imagine him or herself as *the enlightened who will shine like the radiance of the sky.*

On the performative uses of biblical verses, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 229–51. On the verse, see *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 4; Ibn Ezra on Exodus 34:29; *Zohar* 1:15a–16a, 100a (ST); 2:2a, 23a; ZH 58c (QhM), 93d–94b (Tiq), 103b–105a (Tiq), 105c–106c (Tiq); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 216; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 224; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 379, 383–84; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 73–76; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 75–80, 237–38; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 65–67.

On the superiority of kabbalistic interpretation of the Torah, see *Or Yaqar*: “Since [the kabbalists] interpret according to the actions of the *sefirot*, they will enter and be illuminated like the glow of the *sefirot*, actually!” On the polemic against Jewish philosophical rationalism, see Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 391–92; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 121–22; *Or Yaqar*; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 203; 397–98, n. 154; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:950–52, 1167; Matt, “The Mystic and the *Mizwot*,” 372–76. On the contrast between kabbalistic apprehension and other knowing, cf. Isaac the Blind, “Peirush Sefer Yetsirah,” 1.

The phrase “emerge and enter” derives from the famous story of four rabbis who “entered the orchard,” that is, who engaged in mystical contemplation. Only Rabbi Akiva “entered in peace and emerged in peace.” In the *Zohar*, “entering and emerging” refers to a kabbalist who has entered the realm of mystery and emerged unscathed, one who has plumbed the secrets and discovered how to endure and apply them in his life. They stand in direct contrast to those who are prevented easy access to the Garden of Eden (see above, [note 77](#)).

See JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4 (and cf. *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:4; BT *Hagigah* 15b); *Targum Yerushalmi*, Deuteronomy 33:21; *Zohar* 1:44a (*Heikh*), 112a (*MhN*); 2:176a, 179a (*SdT*s), 213b; 3:127b, 141a, 144a-b (last three *IR*), 290a, 292a (last two *IZ*), 297a; *ZH* 2c, 6c (last two *SO*), 19a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 345; Liebes, “Ha-Mashiah shel ha-Zohar,” 153–56, and nn. 240–41; idem, *Studies in the Zohar*, 35, 97, 130–31; 178, nn. 110–11; Wolfson, “Forms of Visionary Ascent,” 211–14; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 63–67.

85. many, but not all... The phrase from Daniel 12:2 is usually understood to mean *the dust of the earth*, but it is interpreted here hyperliterally: *ground of dust*. All lands are called ground, but only the land of Israel is called *ground of dust*, signifying *ground* under the aegis of *Shekhinah*, symbolized by *dust*. The *mishnah* asserts that only the Jewish people in the land of Israel will be resurrected, not the “sinners,” referring to Gentiles buried there. Alternatively, the land of Israel also represents *Shekhinah*, and it is Jewish people everywhere who will enjoy resurrection and eternity in the world that is coming. “Sun” signifies *Tif’eret*, but He is perceived only through *Shekhinah*.

On resurrection in the land of Israel only, see BT *Ketubbot* 111a, in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “The dead outside the Land [of Israel] will not be resurrected; as is said: *I will set glory in the land of the living* (Ezekiel 26:20)

—the dead of the land in which I delight will be resurrected, but the dead [of the land] in which I do not delight will not be resurrected.”

See M *Sanhedrin* 10:1: “All of Israel have a share in the world to come, as is said: *Your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the land forever—sprout of My planting, work of My hands, that I may be glorified* (Isaiah 60:21).” According to rabbinic tradition, those who will not attain life in the world to come include the generation of the flood; generation of the Tower of Babel; the people of Sodom; the spies; the generation who died in the desert; and Korah’s band. See M *Sanhedrin* 10:3; *Zohar* 1:108a.

According to a midrashic tradition (in the name of Rabbi Naḥman), “even the globe of the sun” was created from the earth. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:11; *Qohelet Rabbah* and *Qohelet Zuta* on 3:20; *Zohar* 1:170a; 3:34b, 125a, 181a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 171; idem, *Shushan Edut*, 344.

In *Shemot Rabbah* 13:1, Joseph the Builder explains how God created the earth: “The blessed Holy One took dust from beneath the Throne of Glory and scattered it upon the waters, and the earth was formed, and little pebbles in the dust became mountains and hills.” Cf. *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3.

On *Shekhinah* as dust, see *Zohar* 1:49a, 170a, 249b–250a; 2:23b–24b, 105b; 3:34b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 171; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 57–58 (70–71), 62 (77–78); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 344–45.

On sinners being “shaken free from the dust,” see BT *Sotah* 5a, in the name of Rabbi El’azar: “Whoever is haughty, his dust will not be disturbed [during the resurrection of the dead], as is said: *Awake and shout for joy, O dwellers, of the dust!* (Isaiah 26:19). It does not say שכבי (*shokhvei*), *that lie, in the dust*, but rather שכני (*shokhnei*), *dwellers, of the dust*—one who during his lifetime made

himself שכן (*shakhen*), a neighbor, to the dust [by his humility].” Cf. *Zohar* 1:127b, 140a (both *MhN*).

The full verse in Daniel reads: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake—these to eternal life, those to shame and eternal contempt.*

86. Torah from the Hidden Point... In its most recondite form, Torah originates in *Hokhmah*, known as “Hidden Point.” Torah consists of Written Torah and Oral Torah, wherein the Written Torah signifies *Tif’eret*, who comprises not only the Pentateuch but also both *Nevi’im* (Prophets), which signifies *Netsah* and *Hod*, and *Ketuvim* (Hagiographa), which signifies *Shekhinah*; Oral Torah likewise signifies *Shekhinah*. Thus, even the masses of the people of Israel who do not attain the same level of wisdom as *the enlightened*, still inherit the totality of Torah.

See BT *Ta’anit* 9a, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “Is there anything written in the Writings to which allusion cannot be found in the Torah?”

On the nature of Torah in kabbalah, see Scholem, “The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism,” 32–86; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1077–1121 (especially 1088–89); Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*. On the spiritual rank of the books in the Writings, see BT *Megillah* 7a; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:45; *TZ* 21, 49a.

87. stars are seen in the east... Three stars glisten from each of *Tif’eret*, *Gevurah*, and *Hesed*, symbolized by east, north, and south, respectively, as well as from *Netsah* and *Hod*. The gleams from these *sefirot* can be compared to “panniers” bearing “rods” within. The “radiant, concealed star” signifies *Yesod* who pours His light into *Shekhinah*, signified by the “bosom of a wagon.” Ultimately, there is an overflow of whiteness, signifying *Hesed*, from the right side, and another of redness, signifying *Gevurah*, on the left side, both expressed within *Shekhinah*.

“Panniers” renders *qiston*, deriving from Latin *cista*, “chest, box,” and Greek *kistē*, “basket, hamper.” See M

Kelim 15:1; *Arukh ha-Shalem*, s.v. *qst*.

“Rods” (or clubs, lances) renders קולפון (*qulpon*), likely intended as (or a corruption of) *qulpin*. The singular form קולפא (*qulpa*) derives from the Persian *kūpāl*, “club, lance.” Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, *qista* often means “a measure, jug,” deriving from Greek *xestes*, a measure about the size of a pint. See BT *Berakhot* 58a, *Shabbat* 63a, *Sotah* 13a; Targum on Leviticus 20:15; *Otsar ha-Geonim* on *Shabbat* 63a (where it is described as a rod with a thickened end with nails projecting); *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a, 32a, 57b, 61b, 117b, 232a (*Tos*); 2:30a; 3:15b; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, s.v. *qulpa*. Alternatively, it can mean “blow.” See BT *Arakhin* 22a.

“Clustered” renders קיטפא (*qitpa*), which might also mean “resinous.” See Onkelos and *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 37:25, 43:11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:11; BT *Avodah Zarah* 35b, *Ketubbot* 112a, *Niddah* 8a-b.

There is considerable wordplay in this paragraph. See BT *Ketubbot* 112a: “Rabbi Yehoshua son of Levi once visited Gabla, where he saw vines laden with clusters of ripe grapes standing up [to all appearances] like עיגלי (*iglei*), calves. ‘Calves among the vines!’ he remarked. ‘These,’ they told him, ‘are קטופי (*qetufei*), clusters of ripe grapes.’” See also BT *Avodah Zarah* 34b, where immediately following a reference to a קיסתא (*qista*), “flask,” of wine, we read in the name of Resh Lakish: “Why did they forbid Bithynian cheese? Since the majority of עגלים (*agalim*), calves, of that place are slaughtered [as sacrifices] to idols [and the rennet of these calves is used in preparing the cheese].”

Or *Yaqar* interprets תוקפוי דעגלה (*tuqpoi de-iglah*) as a reference to the severity of judgments that reside within “the calf,” signifying *Shekhinah*, within whom judgments reside. See *Matoq mi-Devash*.

88. diminished decade... After *Yesod* comes *Shekhinah*, who has no light of Her own, merely reflecting the *sefirot*

above. Whereas within *Binah*, letters are large, within *Shekhinah*, called here “palace of diminutive letters,” they materialize in diminished form. Seven cantillation notes, deriving from *sefirot* above, provide the soul to the body of those letters. Those seven, in turn, evolve from thirteen notes above, apparently residing within *Keter* (and linked to the thirteen attributes of mercy associated with it). The seven cantillation notes for Torah then divide up into thirteen notes that are housed within the seven palaces of *Shekhinah*.

In the biblical text, cantillation marks serve three different functions simultaneously: musical, instructing the reader in a ritual context regarding the customary chant; phonetic, indicating which syllable is accented; and punctuative-prosodic, indicating the phrasing within the verse. The notion that the vowels are the “soul” of the consonants is common in medieval philosophical and mystical sources. The notion here of division of notes into groups of seven and thirteen, as well as the idea of distinctive notes for *Ketuvim* (other than Psalms, Proverbs, and Job) are obscure.

“Diminished decade” renders קיטטא דקינטא (*qiteta de-qinta*). *Qinta* may reflect קונטא (*qunta*), based on Greek *konta*, “a multiple of ten.” Alternatively, *qinta* may derive from קינטרא (*qintera*), based on Latin *centenarius*, “a measure entailing one hundred,” in which case the phrase here could be rendered “a curtailed hundred.” See *Zohar* 2:56a; 3:39a.

On the small and large letters, see *Zohar* 1:3b, 159b; 2:132a, 174a, 180b, 205b, 228b; 3:2a, 165a, 220a; *ZH* 66c, 74c-d (last two *ShS*). Cf. *ZH* 60c-d (*MhN*, *ShS*). On the relationship of vowels to letters, see above, [pp. 404–5](#), [n. 135](#). On the primordial origins of the vocalization points and cantillation notes, see above, [note 2](#).

89. inhere within *Ketuvim*... The enumerations here are obscure. When the melodies from the seven *sefirot* above are disseminated within the seven palaces of *Shekhinah*, they

correspond to all ten *sefirot* above. On account of this consummation with the fullness of ten *sefirot* inhering within *Shekhinah*, *Ketuvim* is called “Book of the Faithful.” Ultimately, everything within *Ketuvim* and within *Shekhinah* reflect the structure of Divinity within the Written Torah, signifying *Tif’eret*, above.

90. Lamp of Adamantine Darkness... This renders בוציצא דקרדינותא (*botsitsa de-qardinuta*), or Hard Spark, Spark of Darkness; it radiates from “the mystery of *Ein Sof*” and delimits the stages of emanation. This *botsitsa* (often interchangeable with *botsina*) is also known as קו המדה (*Qav ha-Middah*), “Line of Measure,” which gauges the flow of emanation, giving shape or measure to the *sefirot*. The Lamp strikes the ether emerging from *Ein Sof*, signifying *Keter*; then strikes within *moḥa* (brain), signifying *Ḥokhmah*; and finally strikes the “throat,” representing *Binah*. These three ethers suffuse the triad below of *Ḥokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Tif’eret* (including the five *sefirot* of *Ḥesed* through *Yesod* surrounding it).

The word *qardinuta* recalls a phrase in BT *Pesaḥim* 7a: קורדניתא חיטי (*ḥittei qurdanaita*), “wheat from Kurdistan,” which, according to Rashi, is very hard. In the *Zohar* the hardness of the lamp (or spark) may allude to its phallic quality. In *Zohar* 1:15a, several witnesses record the variants קרדינותא (*qadrinuta*) or קדרוניתא (*qadrunita*), “darkness.” See *ZH* 2a (*Mat*), where קרדנותא דסיהרא (*qardenuta de-sihara*) means “darkness of the moon,” corresponding to Hebrew קדרות הירח (*qadrut ha-yare’ah*), “darkening of the moon.” Alternatively, “plumb-line of the moon,” an instrument measuring the span from *Ḥesed* to *Malkhut*.

The “Spark of Darkness” or “Dark Light” is so potently brilliant that it overwhelms comprehension. Many mystics record similar paradoxical images: “a ray of divine darkness” (Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1:1); “the luminous darkness” (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2:163); “the black light” (Iranian Sufism; see Corbin, *The*

Man of Light in Iranian Sufism, 99–120). Prior to the *Zohar*, Azriel of Gerona and the author of *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah* mention “the light darkened from shining.” See Azriel ben Menahem of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Tefillah*, 197; *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah*, 77–80; Scholem, “Te'udah Ḥadashah,” 29–30; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 336; Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 59–61, 158–59. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:59: “We are dazzled by His beauty, and He is hidden from us because of the intensity with which He becomes manifest, just as the sun is hidden to eyes too weak to apprehend it.”

On *botsina* (or *botsitsa*) *de-qardinuta*, see *Zohar* 1:15a, 18b, 86b, 172a; 2:133b, 177a (*SdTs*), 233a, 254b, 260a (last two *Heikh*); 3:48b–49a, 135b, 139a (last two *IR*), 292b, 295a–b (last two *IZ*); *ZH* 57a–58d (*QhM*); Liebes, *Peraqim*, 145–51; Vol. 1, pp. 107–8, n. 4; Vol. 5, pp. 560–61, n. 35. On the phallic quality of the hard lamp, see Wolfson, “Woman—the Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah,” 178–82; idem, *Circle in the Square*, 60–62, and index, s.v. “hardened spark”; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 73–80. On the *botsina de-qardinuta* as a contemplative instrument for the kabbalist to measure the divine form, see Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 117; cf. Liebes, *Peraqim*, 146–47; idem, “Messiah,” 199–200.

The *Zohar* refers to two measuring tools: קו המדה (*qav ha-middah*), *the measuring line*, appearing in Jeremiah 31:39, in a description of the future rebuilding of Jerusalem; and *the measuring reed*, appearing in Ezekiel 40:3, used to measure the Temple.

On *the measuring line*, see *Zohar* 2:233a–234a, 258a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 31c, 33a–d, 56d–58d (the section called *Qav ha-Middah*), 86a (*MhN, Rut*); *TZ* 18, 37b. In *Qav ha-Middah* 57a, 58b, and *TZ* 18, 37b, *the measuring line* is identified with the Lamp (or Spark) of Adamantine Darkness. On the distinction between *the measuring reed* and *the measuring*

line, see Vol. 6, p. 341, n. 235. For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; Elijah of Vilna; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

91. twenty-two supernal keys... After the generation of the three ethers, emanation proceeds through a series of steps of concretization: first, in the form of twenty-two keys that precede the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This expansion occurs in space, that is, in the four dimensions of the *sefirot*. The triplets of ethers and clusters express the unity that is uttered in the daily recital of the *Shema*, which includes the three names *YHVH Eloheinu YHVH*. Language, space, and divine names are all metrics used in the measurement of the *sefirot*.

These three divine names, in the middle of the opening line of the *Shema*, symbolize the range of *sefirot* from *Hokhmah* through *Yesod*. The first occurrence of the name יהוה (*YHVH*) represents the primordial point of *Hokhmah*. The name אלהינו (*Eloheinu*), *our God*, alludes to *Binah*, who is the source of Judgment, which is associated with the name *Elohim*. The final one of these three names, the second יהוה (*YHVH*), represents the emanation of *Tif'eret* (along with the other five *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*). This is the divine unity revealed to Moses at Sinai.

Medieval Christian polemicists asserted that these three divine names in the opening line of the *Shema* signify the Trinity. Here, instead, the *Zohar* presents a kabbalistic trinity, insisting that “these three are one.” See *Zohar* 1:15b, 18b; 2:43b (*Piq*), 160b, 162a; 3:162a, 203b-204a, 263a; *ZH* 56d-57a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 82 (104), 103-6 (131-35); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 24; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amey ha-Mizwoth*, 9; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:972-74; Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 18-19; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 140-45.

92. Once they have been uttered... *Or Yaqar* explains that precisely as a result of the mystic’s contemplative recital of the three names in the first line of the *Shema*, a corresponding outflow proceeds above from the Lamp of

Adamantine Darkness. The “mystery” (or primordial essence) of the names longs to attain permanence through alignment with *Ein Sof*, and this is achieved through the surveying of the Line of Measure through six dimensions. Vowel points and cantillation notes facilitate this process, in which the recital of divine unity below facilitates full union with the higher unity above. It is only the kabbalists, and perhaps only the most adept among them, who can attain this lofty achievement.

On the circle and square, see *Bahir* 83 (114-116): “A circle inside a square can run. A square inside a square cannot run. What things are circular? Vowel points in the Torah of Moses, for they are all round. They are to the letters like the soul, which lives in the body of man.... Every vowel point is round, and the countenance of every letter is square. The vowel points sustain the letters, and are their life.... This is as is written: *Hear O Israel, YHVH, our God, YHVH is One* (Deuteronomy 6:4).” Cf. *Zohar* 1:5b; 2:127a, 180a.

93. א (aleph), uttered hastily... See BT *Berakhot* 13b: “Sumakhos said, ‘One who extends [his utterance] of אהד (eḥad), *One*, his days and years are extended.’ Rav Aḥa son of Jacob said, ‘[This is true only if he extends] the ד (dalet).’ Rav Ashi said, ‘Only so long as one does not hurry the ה (het).’ Rabbi Yirmeyah was seated before Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba. He saw that he was greatly extending his pronunciation of eḥad. He said to him, ‘Once you have made him sovereign above and below, and in the four corners of the heavens, more is unnecessary.’” The early thirteenth-century rabbi Judah Sirleon (originally from Northern France) says, “The same holds true that one should not extend the א (alef), because that would sound like אהד א (ei ḥad), meaning *there is no One*.”

See *Tosafot Rabbenu Yehudah Sirleon* and *Rosh* (Asher ben Yehiel), ad loc.; Abraham ben David on *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Qeri’at Shema* 2:9; Jonah Gerondi, *Sefer ha-Yir’ah*,

8b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 76–77 (and Wolfson’s notes ad loc.); *Tur, Oraḥ Hayyim* 61.

94. generated the extension... The “Line of Measure” proceeds with its surveying, extending the line of emanation from *Ein Sof* through *Tif’eret*, signified by “Torah,” and then on to the books of the “Prophets,” signifying *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*. These all rely on the “concealed pillar,” representing *Yesod*, who conveys the divine overflow down to *Malkhut*, symbolized by *Ketuvim*.

95. Clusters of nodes... This series of grand honorifics refers to the mystics who can perceive mysteries of Divinity with greater clarity than the rest of humanity. The anonymous call is also an invitation to the reader to alter and perfect one’s consciousness in order to become open-eyed and perceive hidden depths of Divinity. The august style of this oracle’s proclamation is typical in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*. These adepts can perceive the rotating sphere, apparently referring to the entire bundle of *sefirot* in all their manifestations. “Three sparks” and three “voices” apparently refer to *Keter*, *Ḥokmah*, *Binah*. Alternatively, they signify *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, who emerge from *Binah*, known as Pleasant One—although She is also the source of Judgment. When the world is being judged, fiery punishment rains down.

“Crevice-masters” (or “Masters of the lattice”) renders מַאֲרֵי דְחַרְיִכִּין (*marei de-ḥarikhin*), which derives from Song of Songs 2:9: *My love is a gazelle, a wild stag. There he stands on the other side of our wall, peering through the windows, gazing through the crevices [or: lattices].* According to midrashic tradition, this verse is spoken by Israel about the blessed Holy One, who comes to gaze upon His people. Here the Zoharic Mishnah interprets it as the mystics viewing the blessed Holy One. See *Sifrei*, Numbers 115; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:9; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 5:8; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 15, 71b–72a; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 11:2.

On sparks issuing from foreheads, see BT *Ta'anit* 25a. On this passage of *Matnitin*, see Scholem.

96. When the Lamp spreads out... On account of the extension of the Line of Measure, an overflow of ether emerges, suffusing the sphere—apparently *Binah* (or *Tif'eret*)—below. She ascends to invoke blessing, then descends to proffer it to the *sefirot* below. Receiving influx from above, *Binah* “coos sweetly,” generating the Masoretic notes that document the correct spelling of the text. Not only was the Torah primordial—its letters revealed in the highest levels of divine emanation—but also all the minute details of the text (including its Masoretic notes) were part of that primordial revelation.

See BT *Megillah* 3a, in the name of Rav: “What is the meaning of the verse *They read from the scroll of the Torah of God, explaining it and giving the sense, so that they understood the reading* (Nehemiah 8:8)? *They read from the scroll of the Torah of God*—the text. *Explaining it*—the [Aramaic] translation. *And giving the sense*—the verse divisions. *So that they understood the reading*—the (sub) divisions indicated by the cantillation marks, or as some say, the *Masoret* (the Masorah or Masoretic notes).”

“Clubs” (or lances, rods) renders קולפין (*qulpin*). See above, [note 87](#). “Ether” renders אַוירָא (*avira*), which is a Hebraization of the Greek primal element *aèr*. On the “pure ether,” see *Zohar* 2:50a (*Mat*); 3:135b (*IR*), 292b (*IZ*); *ZH* 70a, 73b, 74b (all *ShS*); Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 33; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 31-47; Verman, *The Circle of Contemplation*, 153-56. On the sexualized relationship of the “Spark of Darkness” and the “pure ether,” see Wolfson, “Erasing the Erasure,” 62-70.

The medieval Masoretic tradition transmitted detailed notes regarding the spelling (and occasionally other features) of the biblical text. Two related collections of these notes emerged: the Small Masorah (in Latin, *Masora Parva*) and the Large Masorah (*Masora Magna*), with the

former being highly abbreviated and written in small letters in the side margins, while the latter would appear in the upper or lower margins and be continued as endnotes. The rarefied letters apparently signify what is conventionally called Small Masorah, though this *mishnah* refers to them below as the Large Masorah. On the divine origins of the Masoretic notes, see above, [note 2](#). On the collections of Masoretic notes, see Dotan, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. *Masorah*, vol. 13, 603–20 (especially 614–20); next note.

97. Small Masoret... The two spheres apparently represent *Binah* (or *Tif'eret*) and *Shekhinah*. Each one is signified by a set of Masoretic notes, as collected in the Large *Masoret* and Small *Masoret*, respectively. Here, the Mishnah indicates that these collections emerged at different stages of divine emanation in ethereal form for Moses' mystical contemplation, later materializing upon the two stone tablets that he brought down from Mount Sinai.

On Moses as "Faithful Shepherd," see *Mekhilta, Beshallah* 6; *Sifrei Zuta* 27; *Eikhah Rabbah, Petihta* 24; *Ester Rabbah* 7:13; *Rut Rabbah, Petihta* 5. Cf. Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 1:60–62; *Tanhumah, Shemot* 7; *Shemot Rabbah* 2:2–3. "Faithful Shepherd (*Raya Mehemna*)" is also the title of one of the later strata of Zoharic literature.

98. Yofi'el, Master of Wisdom... Yofi'el is the one who actually engraves the letters of the Masoretic notes around the letters of the stone tablets brought down by Moses.

The full verse reads: *YHVH said to Moses, 'Go up to Me to the mountain and be there, that I may give you the stone tablets, and the teaching and the commandments, that I have written to instruct them.'* See BT *Berakhot* 5a, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Lakish: "What is the meaning of the verse *that I may give you the stone tablets and the teaching and the commandments, that I have written to instruct them?* *Stone tablets*—these are the ten commandments; *the teaching*—this is the Written Torah;

the commandments—this is the Mishnah; *that I have written*—these are the Prophets and the Writings; *to instruct them*—this is the Gemara. It teaches that all these things were given to Moses on Sinai.” Whereas the Talmudic passage reveals the verse’s exoteric meaning, this Mishnah reveals its esoteric meaning.

Yofi’el is an angel appointed over secrets of Torah and wisdom. See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 34:6; *Zohar* 2:206b, 247b (*Heikh*); 3:154a, 197b; *ZH* 36b (*RR*), 61c (*MhN, ShS*), 64a (*ShS*), 90c (*MhN, Rut*); Margaliot, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 65–67; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§302, 313, 397, 560, 628. Cf. *Zohar* 3:2b (standard editions).

99. Our Mishnah The following passage is a particularly densely woven brocade of Zoharic themes, possibly suggesting a late date of composition. Cremona and *Ketem Paz* locate this passage in the *Zohar’s* commentary on *Parashat Bereshit*. On the entire passage, see *Or Yaqar*, published in Sack, *Be-Sha’arei ha-Qabbalah shel Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, 325–53; Lavi, *Ketem Paz*, 1:298b–303b; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 169, n. 40; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

100. It graved nine glyphs... This *mishnah* describes the emanation of the nine *sefirot* from *Ein Sof*, extending from *Hokhmah* to *Shekhinah*. *Keter* remains too recondite to portray. These emanations occur בטְהִירוּ (*be-tehiru*), “in pristine brilliance”—in the context of the infinite splendor of *Ein Sof*, and are performed by בּוֹצִינָא דְקַרְדִּינוּתָא (*Botsina de-qardinuta*), “Lamp of Adamantine Darkness,” or קוֹ הַמְדָּה (*qav ha-middah*), “Line of Measure.”

“Dazzling” renders טְהִירִין (*tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning “brightness, noon.” See Vol. 6, 113, n. 18.

“At the onset of the Will of the King” renders דְּמַלְכָּא בְּרִישׁ הוֹרְמֵנוּתָא (*be-reish hormenuta de-malka*), which echoes the opening of the *Zohar* on 1:15a; it may also mean “at the head of potency of the King” or “when the King began to ordain.” The phrase הַרְמָנָא דְּמַלְכָּא (*harmana de-malka*), “authority

(or “decree”) of the king,” appears in BT *Berakhot* 58a, *Gittin* 57b, *Bava Metsi’a* 83b–84a, *Hullin* 57b. The word *harmana* is similar to the Middle Parthian *hramān* and is related in origin to the Middle Persian *framān*, meaning command. On the term הורמנותא (*hormenuta*), cf. *Zohar* 1:15a, 76b, 97a (last two *ST*), 107b (*Tos*), 108a, 109b (last two *ST*), 147a (*Tos*), 251a–b (*Hash, Mat*); 2:123a. On the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness, see above, [note 90](#). On the status of *Keter* in relation to the other *sefirot*, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:269–81.

101. struck inside one lamp... The Line of Measure strikes within *Keter*, causing the emanation of *Hokhmah*, adherent of *Keter*, signified by “governor” (or “authority”) and “concealed in its concealment.” *Hokhmah* is paradoxically known as distant cause of lower *sefirot*, but beyond comprehension in terms of its essence. *Hokhmah* is represented by the smallest letter *yod* and called a tiny point, obscuring perception. In the *Zohar*, “eyes” are organs of apprehension, but here they are “unopened,” insofar as they cannot be seen. They number thirty-two, corresponding to the thirty-two paths of wisdom, as described in *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1.

“Striking” is the term commonly used to describe the force of illumination from the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness as it measures out each *sefirah*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 10:6, in the name of Rabbi Simon: “You cannot find a single blade of grass below that does not have a constellation [or: planet] in the sky, striking it and telling it: ‘Grow!’”

On the concealment of *Hokhmah*, see Job 28:20–21: *But Hokhmah comes from Ayin... It is hidden from the eye of all living, from the birds of heaven, concealed.* The plain meaning of this verse reads: *As for wisdom, where is it found?* On the wise turning around with understanding confounded, see Isaiah 44:25: *Who turns sages back and makes nonsense of their knowledge;* and Ecclesiastes 7:25:

I turned round in my heart to know and to inquire and seek wisdom. On “unopened eyes,” cf. *Zohar* 2:95a, 99a.

On gathering in and casting out, see BT *Berakhot* 63a, in the name of Hillel the Elder: “At the time of gathering [i.e., when few are learning Torah], disseminate. At the time of dissemination [i.e., Torah study is abundant], gather [i.e., let others disseminate]. And if you see a generation for whom Torah is beloved, disseminate, as is said: *There is one who scatters yet gains more* (Proverbs 11:24). But, if you see a generation for whom Torah is not beloved, gather; as is stated: *Time to act for YHVH—they have violated Your Torah* (Psalms 119:126).” Here, the Mishnah instructs that esoteric lore should be taught, but only to those worthy of it. For alternative, sefirotic explanations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. See also Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 183.

102. second one... Namely, *Binah*. *Qav ha-Middah* measures out *Binah* (emerging from the ether called *Hokhmah*), signified first as a tower flying in the air, and then expanded as a palace. The essences (or forms) of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*—signified respectively by silver, gold, and bronze—are infused into *Binah*, to be actualized below.

On the tower that flies in the air, see BT *Hagigah* 15b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *be-migdal ha-porei'ah be-avir*; *Sanhedrin* 106b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *be-migdal ha-porei'ah be-avir*; Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush al ha-Otiyyot*, 213; *Zohar* 1:6a; 2:91a; 3:164b, 209a; *ZH* 58a (*QhM*), 66b, 70a (last two *ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 89–90 (113–14); *Arukh*, s.v. *migdal*.

103. advances, hidden away... The rest of the *sefirot* emerge from *Binah*, with Her presence concealed within them. Thus, though Her voice is not actually heard, its influence extends through the full extent of the *sefirot*—*Hesed* to *Malkhut*.

For biblical sources referring to the belly or intestines that also use terms associated with *Binah*, see Jeremiah

31:19; Job 38:29.

104. arrives at the table to eat In the world that is coming, the experience of bliss is construed as mystical nourishment from the “table,” signifying *Shekhinah*. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Teshuvah* 8:2, 4: “In the world to come... the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the splendor of *Shekhinah*.... The phrase ‘their crowns on their heads’ [is a metaphor, implying] that they will possess the knowledge that they grasped that allowed them to merit the life of the world to come remains with them.... The sages referred metaphorically to this good, which is prepared for the righteous, as a banquet.”

See BT *Hagigah* 12b; *Mekhilta, Vayassa* 4; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 16:25; *Zohar* 1:135b (*MhN*); Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 60; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:77; Vol. 10, pp. 405–7, nn. 13–15. Cf. M *Avot* 3:16; BT *Pesahim* 119b; *Zohar* 2:63b. On the significance of the “table,” see BT *Sanhedrin* 92a; Ramban on Exodus 25:24; *Zohar* 1:88a–b, 240a, 250a; 2:87b–88a, 152b–155b, 157b; 3:34a, 189b; Moses de León, *Sefer Ha-Rimmon*, 270; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta’amey ha-Mizwoth*, 114–16; Baḥya ben Asher, *Shulḥan shel arba*, 505–6; Joseph Caro, *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 180:2; Abraham Gombiner, *Magen Avraham*, ad loc.; Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Qadmon*, 267–70; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 117–21.

105. cloaked in the ephod... *Qav ha-Middah* strikes the form of *Ḥesed* within *Binah*, causing *Ḥesed* to emerge, symbolized by the High Priest; thus, its essential energy is embedded within the priest’s ritual garments. The light of *Ḥesed* was created on the first day of creation, but because God saw that it would be misused, He hid it away for the righteous. Once *Tif’eret* emerges, signified by Torah and by the letter ם (*vav*), the light of *Ḥesed* can reappear as a thread of light extending to the righteous during the day, since

they study Torah at night. Studying Torah at night (particularly from midnight to dawn) is highly praised in the *Zohar*; it is viewed as ideal behavior for the Companions.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 11:7, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon: “With the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, one could gaze and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One foresaw the corruption of the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, He hid it away from them, as is written: *The light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). Where did He hide it? In the Garden of Eden. *Light is sown for the righteous, joy for the upright in heart* (Psalms 97:11).” See above, [p. 409](#), [n. 145](#).

The ephod was apparently a multi-colored apron worn by Aaron the high priest. Its two shoulder straps bore two precious stones, each engraved with the names of six of the twelve tribes. Fastened to the ephod was a breastpiece made of the same multicolored fabric, to which were affixed twelve other gemstones, each engraved with one of the names of the tribes. On the ephod, breastpiece, and the decorated band, see Onkelos, Rashi, Rashbam, and Sarna on Exodus 28:4; *Zohar* 2:15a-b (*MhN*), 229b-230a, 231b; 3:250a.

On the thread (or filament) of love (or grace), see BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, in the name of Resh Lakish: “To one who engages in Torah by night, the blessed Holy One extends a thread of grace by day, as is said: *By day YHVH ordains* וְסֶדֶק (*ḥasdo*), *His love* (Psalms 42:9). Why? Because *in the night His song is with me* (ibid.).” *His song* is the song of Torah. The *Zohar* interprets וְסֶדֶק (*ḥasdo*), as וְסֶדֶק (*ḥesed vav*), that is, the love that derives from *vav*, signifying Torah. On the value of studying Torah at night, see above, [p. 53](#), [n. 76](#). On the combination of these two motifs, see *Zohar* 2:148b-149a.

On the density of Zoharic themes expressed regarding the emergence of this *sefirah* here, see Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 165–67.

106. establishing the world... If the world had been built based on the attribute of justice, it would not have endured, so God built it with *Ḥesed*, Love. *Ḥesed*, which is associated with the south side, draws on the efflux from *Binah*—the inner palaces where the forms of the other *sefirot* are inscribed. Thus, *Ḥesed* infuses the six *sefirot*—*Ḥesed* through *Yesod*—that are signified by “sixty myriad worlds,” providing sustenance to all. “Spade” here signifies *Shekhinah*.

The term “spade” refers to the most basic agricultural tool. In the *Zohar*, it commonly designates angels—which are handled by *Shekhinah*—but here it refers to *Shekhinah* Herself. See above, [note 4](#); below, [p. 615](#), [n. 38](#).

Psalms 89:3 reads עולם חסד יבנה (olam ḥesed yibbaneh), which is normally understood to mean *Forever will love be established* but is construed midrashically as *The world is built by love*. See *Mekhilta*, *Shirta* 9; *Sifra*, *Qedoshim* 10:11, 92d; JT *Yevamot* 11:1, 11d; *Sanhedrin* 5:1, 22c; 9:1, 26d; BT *Sanhedrin* 58b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 4; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 21; *Midrash Tehillim* 89:2; *Zohar* 2:79a, 166b; 3:77a, 145b, 259b. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:4; *Zohar* 1:230b.

107. dazzling glyph of pure noontime... *Gevurah* is associated with the harsh noontime sun and is, simultaneously, a manifestation of startling darkness. The image of darkness (*Gevurah*) issuing from light (*Ḥesed*) is the precise inverse of creation of light on the first day, emerging from nothingness. The appearance of *Gevurah* marks the introduction of a clear dialectic between light and darkness, love and judgment. *Ketem Paz* explains that *Gevurah* serves as a veil, darkening the light of *Ḥesed* so that it can be perceived, since revelation occurs only through concealment.

The image derives from Job 12:22: *Revealing depths out of darkness, bringing to light pitch-blackness*. The “scepter of life and death” interprets Esther 4:12 (*Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live*), in which “golden” alludes to *Gevurah*, and thus death.

On טיהרא (*tihara*), “noontime,” see above, [notes 50, 100](#). “Darkness of 200,000 worlds” renders בחשכא דמאתן אלף עלמין (*be-ḥashkha de-ma’atan elef almin*), following an alternate reading in *Or Yaqar*. N27, V7, S, V, and *Or Yaqar* have a variation that reads בחשבונא דמאתן אלף עלמין (*be-ḥeshbona de-ma’atan elef almin*), yielding “worlds numbering 200,000.” On the figure 200,000, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 8:12 (*The one thousand is yours, Solomon, and two hundred for those who guard its fruit*) and Luria’s comments, ad loc.

“Stripped” renders ערטירא (*artira*), a Zoharic variation on ערטילא (*artila*); it may also mean “naked.” See *Zohar* 3:168b, 170a, 172b, 217a; *ZH* 53b, 55b-c; *Ketem Paz*, 1:300c; Scholem Index Card Collection. Cf. *Or Yaqar* and *Salonika*. On the verse from Job, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 167; *Zohar* 1:30b, 32a; 3:140a.

See BT *Sotah* 47a, in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of El’azar: “Regarding the [sexual] impulse, a child, or a woman, the left should push away, but the right draws close.” The image of “one מחי (*maḥei*), rejects, the other heals,” derives from Deuteronomy 32:39: *I put to death and I bring to life, מחצתי (*maḥatsti*), I wounded, and I will heal: None can deliver from My hand*.

For other versions and interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

108. trained warriors... Forces of judgment—holy and demonic—issue from *Gevurah* to punish sinners. “Hordes” of demonic beings emerge from the whirling sword. The number four hundred alludes to the four hundred men—construed in rabbinic literature as armed men—that accompanied Esau on their way to meet Jacob. See Genesis 33:1.

The image of the whirling sword derives from Genesis 3:24: *He drove out the human and placed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.* According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 21:9, *whirling* means “turning” from one aspect into another: “*Whirling*—changing: sometimes male, sometimes female; sometimes spirits, sometimes angels.” The unstable gendering amplifies the horror of these ominous beings.

“Hostelries” renders אַוּוּיָן (*avnin*), which can also be translated as “inns”; it refers to a place in which forces of judgment are lodged. See Rashi on BT *Bava Metsi’a* 79b, s.v. *me-avna le-avna*; *Arukh*. Others explain the term as signifying deputies (or angelic beings) who guard these inns. See BT *Nazir* 7a; *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 173; *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the “whirling sword,” see *Zohar* 1:44a (*Heikh*), 53b, 165a (*ST*), 232a, 237a, 240b; 2:253a–b (*Heikh*); 3:12b, 19b; *ZH* 91c–d, 93c (last two *MhN*, *Eikhah*); below, [p. 704](#), [n. 207](#). Sometimes the “whirling sword” symbolizes *Shekhinah* when She is filled from the side of *Gevurah*. See *Zohar* 1:66b, 238b; 2:26a, 28b, 54a, 61a, 66a; 3:30b, 52b, 73b–74a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 69, 213.

[109. smelting of the blazing fire...](#) Samael, archangel of Esau, the Angel of Death, and other demonic forces are identified with the slag that occurs as a byproduct of the seething within *Gevurah*. Thus evil is the residue of the refining process of emanation—or that which derives from *Din*. Samael appears hirsute and reddish like Esau as in Genesis 25:25 (*The first one came out ruddy like a hairy mantle all over*), but hairy also like Samael’s consort Lilith and the demons who dwell in the “mountains of gloom.” Here the sword is clutched by the terrifying Samael, who appears on Rosh ha-Shanah to claim the lives of those who do not receive divine clemency.

On the alchemical symbolism of smelting, see Scholem, *Alchemy and Kabbalah*, 38–40. On bears, see BT *Megillah* 11a. On Lilith’s hairiness, see BT *Eruvin* 100b. On the mountains of gloom, see *Zohar* 3:233a. On Samael’s terrifying attributes, see Daniel 7:7. On the evaluation of humanity on Rosh ha-Shanah, see M *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:2.

110. stands amid the pillars of the world... *Qav ha-Middah* measures out the fifth *sefirah*, *Tif’eret*, called here “shining mountains.” *Hesed* and *Gevurah* precede it, but it is like the heart of the body, standing in the midst of the central six *sefirot*, represented as “pillars.” *Tif’eret* serves as the mediator between *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized by water and fire, respectively.

The phrase “like a king among his legions” derives from Job 29:25 and *Targum*, ad loc. Cf. *Zohar* 3:132b.

111. closes and opens... Here, the Mishnah heaps praises upon *Tif’eret*, as the central figure among the *sefirot*. Signified by the sun, He opens and closes the windows through which light shines below. Represented by Jacob, progenitor of the children of Israel, “60,000 myriads” alludes to the sixty myriad battle-ready Israelite males in the desert; as a multiple of six, corresponds to the six *sefirot*—*Hesed* through *Yesod*—that He represents; lastly, it also alludes to the *sixty warriors* surrounding King Solomon’s bed (Song of Songs 3:7). *Or Yaqar* interprets the “supernal concealed ones” as a reference to *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, whose lights dwell within *Tif’eret*. The “seal” symbolizes *Yesod*, represented as the divine phallus, imprinted with the letter *yod* of God’s name. The number 300,000 apparently derives from *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, which flow into *Tif’eret*—a manifestation of three.

In the Sabbath Morning service, the liturgy praises “the God who daily opens the doors of the gates of the East and cleaves the windows of the sky, who brings out the sun from its place and the moon from its abode.” See *ZH* 76c (*MhN, Rut*). On the divine armpits, see *Ketem Paz*.

112. His height... *Tif'eret* spans the *sefirot* from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*—that is, from one end of the divine realm to the other. Divine oneness will be clearly attested at the end of time: *YHVH will be one and His name one* (Zechariah 14:9).

See Psalms 19:7: *From the end of the heavens his going forth, and his circuit to their end.* On the height of God and throne imagery, see *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§688–704, 939–53; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of God*, 15–55; Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 306–15. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 14:1; and BT *Ḥagigah* 12a, in the name of Rav: “Adam extended from one end of the universe to the other.”

The throne imagery derives from Daniel 7:9: *As I watched, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat—His garment like white snow, the hair of His head like clean fleece, His throne flames of fire, its wheels blazing fire.*

113. uniting millstones... *Qav ha-Middah* strikes the form of *Netsah*, causing the latter’s emanation. *Netsah* and *Hod* together are called “millstones” who grind manna for the righteous, prepare the flow of emanation (symbolized by manna), and convey it to *Yesod*, known as צדיק (tsaddiq), “Righteous One.” *Yesod* then transmits it to *Shekhinah*, known as צדק (tsedeq), *righteousness*. Together, *Yesod* and *Shekhinah* are צדיקים (tsaddiqim), “the righteous,” for whom the manna is intended. The fragrance of their rays—divine seminal fluid—is prepared but does not proceed below until *Yesod* and *Shekhinah* unite. The “five ingredients” apparently refers to the five *sefirot* that, beginning with *Ḥesed*, culminate in the blending of *Netsah* and *Yesod*.

According to BT *Ḥagigah* 12b (in the name of Resh Lakish), *sheḥaqim* refers to the third heaven (counting from below), “in which millstones stand, grinding manna for the righteous, as is said: *He commanded sheḥaqim, the skies, above, and the doors of heaven He opened, and He rained on them manna to eat...* (Psalms 78:23–24).” (The word

sheḥaqim is here associated with the root *shḥq*, “to crumble, pound, grind.”) See *Zohar* 3:26a, 128b (*IR*), 292b (*IZ*); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 35a.

114. Preparing for sexual relations... *Netsaḥ* is the first of the two millstones. “Five hundred” derives from the five *sefirot* (*Ḥesed* through *Hod*) that surge into *Yesod* before its union with *Malkhut*, and also from the Tree of Life, signifying *Tif’eret*, which stands at a height of five hundred years. *Netsaḥ* is also one of the two legs that provide support for the divine body. “Faithful ones” designates the prophets, so called because of God’s description of Moses in Numbers 12:7: *My servant Moses, in all My house he is trusted*. In Kabbalah, prophecy derives from *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*, the two legs that operate in harmony together.

On the height of the Tree of Life, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:6, in the name of Rabbi Ila’i: “The Tree of Life extends over a journey of five hundred years, and all the waters of Creation branch off beneath it.” See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 2:9; *Zohar* 1:18a, 35a, 76b, 78b (last two *ST*); 2:2a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 44. On *Netsaḥ* and *Hod* as the sources of prophecy, see above, [note 24](#).

115. Executing all of his companion’s artistry... *Hod* is the seventh *sefirah* measured out by *Qav ha-Middah*. Subordinate to *Netsaḥ*, the two rely on each other, prepared to infuse *Malkhut*, symbolized by “House of David,” with the overflow of “goodness (or loving-kindness),” signifying *Yesod*. This formulation derives from Isaiah 55:3: *faithful acts of love for David*.

Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, these *faithful acts of love* are related explicitly to *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*. See *Zohar* 1:8a, 219a; 2:169a; 3:40b, 262b; *ZḤ* 4b (*SO*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 48 (59). *Yesod* is often called *good*, based on Isaiah 3:10: *Say of the righteous one that he is good*. See BT *Yoma* 38b, *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Zohar* 1:30b, 33a, 60a, 82b;

2:11b, 128b, 176b (*SdT*s); 3:110b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 104-5.

116. Beloved Abraham relies... Abraham represents *Hesed*, which is positioned on the right side above the right leg, *Netsah*. Isaac represents *Gevurah*, which is positioned on the left side above the left leg, *Hod*. Jacob signifies *Tif'eret*, the torso, and depends upon both legs. *Netsah* and *Hod* are both closed up, unable to convey divine blessing directly to *Malkhut*, nor are the prophets associated with them able to perceive the highest level of prophecy like Moses. Thus, they are similar to *Malkhut*, represented by the “crystal,” who has no light of its own.

Abraham is called “beloved,” based on Isaiah 41:8. On Isaac as “perfect offering,” see *Bereshit Rabbah* 64c; *Zohar* 1:39a (*Heikh*), 60a. Jacob is called “consummate,” based on Genesis 25:27. “Crystal” renders אַשְׁשִׁיטָא (*ashashita*), “glass; glass lantern.” On the *ashashita*, see Targum to Song of Songs 5:14; *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12 (and Theodor’s note); *Tanhuma*, *Va’era* 14; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:33b and *Derekh Emet*; 2:23a, 82a, 130b, 186b, 221a; *ZH* 41c, 63b (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 97 (124); Ben-Yehuda, *Dictionary*, s.v. אַשְׁשִׁיטָא (*ashashit*); Vol. 4, p. 80, n. 36.

117. beloved by all... *Yesod* is the eighth *sefirah*, counting from *Hokhmah*. Often represented by Joseph the Righteous, many of the descriptions apparently derive from associations with Joseph. On being beloved, Genesis 37:3 reads: *Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons*. On being trustworthy, Genesis 39:8 reads: *all that he [Potiphar] has he has placed in my [Joseph’s] hands*. On bearing food, Genesis 42:6 reads: *Joseph... was the provider to all the people of the land*. According to rabbinic legend, Joseph’s face was identical to Jacob’s, described as “consummate.” On Joseph’s beauty, Genesis 39:6 reads: *Joseph was well-built and handsome*. The span of *Yesod* extends from the

“ground,” signifying *Malkhut*, to the “heavens,” representing *Tif’eret*.

On Joseph’s and Jacob’s faces, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:8; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayeshev* 5; *Zohar* 1:85a, 176b, 180a, 182b, 222a; 2:242a. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 84:6; *Zohar* 1:21b; 2:145a. On the tree imagery, see Targum on Song of Songs on 1:16, 2:12.

N27, V7, and *Ketem Paz* read “ninth in the count,” to indicate that although this is the eighth *sefirah* to be described beginning from *Hokhmah*, counting from *Keter* it is the ninth; regardless, the numbering is obscure.

118. a creature is shaded... *Malkhut* abides in the shelter of *Yesod*, from whom She receives divine blessing, accumulated from the five *sefirot* above (*Hesed* through *Hod*), which are signified here by “five hundred worlds.” “Birds of the heavens” may be a reference to the souls of the righteous. *Yesod* collects charity for *Malkhut*, called “poor,” often signified by the letter ט (dalet), which Kabbalah associates with the word דל (dal), “poor.” When *Yesod*, representing the divine phallus, is united with the feminine *Malkhut*, the male organ is unseen; and similarly as charity collector He does His work modestly.

See BT *Shabbat* 118b, in the name of Rabbi Yose: “May my portion be among the collectors of charity and not the distributors of charity.” Cf. *Midrash Mishlei* on 11:4; *Pesiqta Zutarta* on Ecclesiastes 7:20.

See also BT *Bava Batra* 8b: “*The enlightened will shine like the radiance of the sky* (Daniel 12:3)—this refers to a judge who gives a true verdict on true evidence and to the collectors for charity.” The image of the tree (providing for creatures below) derives from Daniel 4:8–9 (quoted above, [note 59](#)).

119. one end of the world to the other... The light created on the first day is hidden away for the righteous, named after *Yesod*, who is called Righteous One. Other names, emphasizing life, include חי העולמים (*Hei ha-Olamim*),

“Life of the Worlds,” and אל חי (*El Hai*), “Living God.” According to a midrashic tradition, King David (symbolizing *Malkhut* in Kabbalah) was destined to die at childbirth, but Adam offered him 70 of his own 1000 allotted years, so David lived for 70 years and Adam for 930. *Yesod* derives divine overflow in an upward trajectory: first, from the “five hundred worlds,” signifying the five *sefirot* *Hesed* through *Hod*; then from “fifty years,” an allusion to *Binah*, who is associated with the Jubilee year—which occurs every fifty years. Finally, it absorbs from “Father and Mother,” signifying *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. Subsequently it delivers to *Malkhut*, who contains seventy angels (corresponding to the 70 years bequeathed to David, and the seventy members of Jacob’s family who descended to Egypt), and twelve camps—corresponding to the tribes of Israel. The phrase “twelve boundaries,” referring to what defines the parameters of *Malkhut*, recalls the twelve גבולי אלכסון (*gevulei alakhsan*), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), that are mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1. It refers to the twelve boundaries deployed to establish the twelve constellations and the twelve primary organs of the human body, which are associated with the twelve simple letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

On *Binah* and the number fifty, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b (*Nedarim* 38a) in the name of Rav and Shemu’el: “Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world—all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).”

On *Hei ha-Olamim*, see above, [note 75](#). On *El Hai*, see Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 17b–18a, 27a, 32b, 68a, 87a.

On Adam’s donating seventy years to David, see above, [p. 84](#), [n. 161](#). On the twelve borders, see *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:2. On the “twelve boundaries,” see *Bahir* 64 (95); Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 33:6; idem, *Derashah le-Hatunah* in *Kitvei Ramban* 1:135; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 511–12; *Zohar* 1:76b (*ST*), 159b, 199a, 241a; 2:2a, 58b,

62b, 64b, 66b, 104b-105a, 229b; 3:78a, 96b, 118b, 134b, 138a (last two *IR*), 148b, 209a; *ZH* 2b (*SO*), 55a, 62a, 63d (last two *ShS*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:917, n. 56.

The “seventy date palms and twelve flowing springs” recalls the scene at Elim as described in Exodus 15:27. *Yesod* is associated with the date palm based on Psalms 92:13: *The righteous one flourishes like a palm tree. On Yesod’s providing food for the entire world, see Genesis 41:49, 57: Joseph piled up grain like the sand of the sea, very much, until he ceased counting, for it was beyond count.... All the earth came to Egypt, to Joseph, to get provisions.*

120. impregnable fierce one... *Qav ha-Middah* measured out all the *sefirot* through striking their forms, which reside in *Binah*. Since *Binah* is the source of Judgment in the world, receiving its final manifestation in *Malkhut*, its severity is emphasized. She is called “ninth bone (or essence),” alluding to Adam’s description of Eve as *bone of my bones* (Genesis 2:19). *Malkhut* ascends during the day to receive overflow from above, and descends at night to provide for dwellers in the world, as in Proverbs 31:15: *She rises while it is night and provides food for her household and a portion for her maidens. Ketem Paz* explains that She is veiled during the 365 days of the solar year like a candle during daytime. Alternatively, according to *Or Yaqar* and *Matoq mi-Devash*, She is concealed within the 365 negative commandments associated with *Malkhut*. As the number 365 denotes the number of days in a year, that number of visages also signifies the totality of time expressed in the multiplicity of faces. Further, Enoch is an example of a consummate human, and he lived for 365 years (Genesis 5:23). Ultimately, *Malkhut* and Her Husband are embraced between the right and left arms, signifying *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. Both the signet and the scepter with its seal represent *Yesod*, marked in circumcision with God’s name, and thus signifying the union of masculine and feminine. *Malkhut* stands guarding the path toward the Tree of Life (as in

Genesis 3:24), symbolizing *Tif'eret*, and She obstructs access to the unworthy; alternatively, She protects the ways of the righteous (as in Genesis 28:20). *Malkhut* is often symbolized as a judicial court, ruling on the fate of humanity, particularly on Rosh ha-Shanah—when the books of the righteous, wicked, and intermediate are open before God. At that time all appear before Her, and She rules based on the prevailing influences from above. Much of this section uses masculine pronouns to refer to *Malkhut*, but this translation has adhered to the feminine for the sake of clarity and consistency.

On the moon's being concealed during the day, see above, [pp. 455–56](#), [n. 275](#). On 365 negative commandments associated with *Malkhut*, see above, [p. 191](#), [n. 471](#). The embrace of “two arms” derives from the kabbalistic interpretation of Song of Songs 2:6: *His left hand beneath my head, his right hand embracing me*. On circumcision, see above, [p. 497](#), [n. 411](#). “Messenger” renders the word פרוונקא (*parvvanka*), deriving from the Middle Iranian *parwānak*; alternatively, “guide.” On the open books on Rosh ha-Shanah, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b.

The version in *Or Yaqar* reads: “tenth is engraved in a ring,” with the “tenth” signifying Metatron, who rules the world during the week. Cordovero interprets the remainder of this *mishnah* as a description of Metatron, rather than *Malkhut*.

[121](#). head beneath Her feet... Samael, or his female consort, is nourished from the forces of judgment that nourish from beneath the feet of *Malkhut*. Upon the serpent's raising its head to accuse, demonic forces—lodged in the tail—strike. Whoever strays toward sinfulness risks being cast into the pit of Hell. *Malkhut* keeps Her feet prepared to trample the serpent lying in wait at Her heels.

On the proximity of the serpent and *Malkhut*, see Genesis 3:15: *Enmity I will set between you and the woman,*

between your seed and hers. He will strike you on the head, and you will strike him in the heel.

122. Sea splits the ether... After consummation, “Sea,” signifying *Malkhut*, ascends upward to “ether that touches but does not touch,” signifying *Hokhmah*, the “ether that can be grasped,” which approaches *Keter*, the “ether that cannot be grasped.” *Malkhut*, like the woman of valor in Proverbs 31:15, *rises while it is night and provides food for her household and a portion for her maidens*. Here, the “wealthy” probably refers to the souls of the righteous, and “household” signifies the rest of the Jewish people. Alternatively, the pair represent the Jewish people and the rest of creation. The “248 faces” signify the 248 positive commandments, representing *Malkhut*’s lover, *Tif’eret*. In their mystical union, the feminine *Malkhut* is contained within the masculine *Tif’eret*. These commandments constitute Her embellishments. As part of their loving, He fashions the ark that holds the Torah, representing *Malkhut* and *Tif’eret*, respectively.

The ark is constructed of six boards—four on its four sides, plus top and bottom—symbolizing six aspects or powers of *Malkhut*. These six conceal Written Torah, which also consists of six aspects, namely all six *sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod*.

On the ethers, see above, [p. 466](#), [n. 309](#). On the association of 248 positive commandments with *Tif’eret*, see references cited above, [p. 191](#), [n. 471](#). On the feminine contained within the masculine, see above, [p. 390](#), [n. 103](#). On the ark, see Joshua 3:11: *See, ark of the covenant, Lord of all the earth*, frequently interpreted to refer to *Malkhut*, housing *Yesod*, represented by *covenant*, and the Torah, symbolizing *Tif’eret*. On *Malkhut* as the “ark,” see *Zohar* 1:2a, 33b, 50b, 59b, 228b, 251a; 2:13a, 214a-b, 235b, 259a-b (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 75 (95). For other interpretations here, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

123. Waging battle against His enemies... After mystical union above, and caring for Her loved ones, the ark, signifying *Malkhut*, turns against Israel's enemies, as indicated in Numbers 10:35: *As the ark journeyed, Moses would say, "Arise, O YHVH! May Your enemies be scattered, and Your foes flee before You!"*

On the sword, see Leviticus 26:25: *A sword avenging with vengeance of the covenant.* On *Malkhut* as "sword," see *Zohar* 1:66b, 165a (*ST*), 238b; 2:26a, 28b, 54a, 61a, 66a; 3:19b, 30b, 52b, 73b-74a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 69, 213.

124. Sparkling lamp hovering... Continuing its list of attributes, this *mishnah* indicates that *Malkhut* shines above the heads of the righteous. The Sea of Galilee is also known as the Sea of Ginnosar (Gennesaret), for Ginnosar is the name of a plain along its western shore, north of Tiberias. *Malkhut's* span reaches to the four angels, called "kings"—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael—through whom She manages the world's affairs. In the Holy of Holies, two cherubim were braced over the ark, their wings touching; in the *Zohar*, these two represent the two chief angels Metatron and Sandalfon.

On light shining above the heads of the righteous, see BT *Shabbat* 56b; Rashi on BT *Sanhedrin* 31b, s.v. *le-de-ziv lei ke-bar bityah*.

On the plain at the Sea of Ginnosar, see Josephus, *War of the Jews*, III, 10:8: "Its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty; its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it, and the inhabitants accordingly plant all sorts of trees there; for the temper of the air is so well mixed, that it agrees very well with those several sorts, particularly walnuts, which require the coldest air, flourish there in vast plenty; there are palm trees also, which grow best in hot air; fig trees also and olives grow near them, which yet require an air that is more temperate.... It supplies men with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually

during ten months of the year and the rest of the fruits as they become ripe together through the whole year; for besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertile fountain." See *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 355; *Bereshit Rabbah* 99:12; BT *Berakhot* 44a.

On the two cherubim, see *Zohar* 1:156a (ST); 228b-229a; 3:162a.

125. Blessed is He forever A concluding blessing, in appreciation of the mysterious entirety of Divinity.

126. masters of eyes of understanding... Usually, the expression "masters of eyes" refers to angelic beings, surveying human behavior below, but here it refers to those who are proficient in mystical lore. The heavenly voice beckons them to listen to its message.

On the "masters of eyes," see above, [note 26](#). "Rulers over empty ones" renders הורמני דבורי (*hormanei de-buryarei*). See above, [note 19](#). One "who ascends and descends" is a classic reference to the mystical adept, modeled after Rabbi Akiva. See *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:3-4; BT *Hagigah* 15b.

127. impulse arose in the will of White Head... In the *Idra* sections of the *Zohar*, "White Head" signifies several depictions of the highest reaches of Divinity: אנפין אריך (*Arikh Anpin*), "Long Face," an alternate term for *Keter*, also called עתיק יומין (*Atiq Yomin*), "Ancient of Days" (see Daniel 7:9); the three different aspects of the divine head; and the active dimension of *Keter*. Here, the kabbalists yearn to see how the White Head generates the *sefirot*. "Lamp of Adamantine Darkness" (or Hard Spark, Spark of Darkness) renders בוצינא דקרדינותא (*botsina de-qardinuta*), the divine instrument that delineates the stages of emanation. The burning spark and the "mighty, powerful one" signify the root of Judgment emerging at the earliest rungs of emanation. This energy is directed toward 270 worlds, a number corresponding to the *gimatriyyah* of the word רע (*ra*), "evil," which derives from Judgment.

“Blew” renders נשב (nashav). Although both manuscripts read ושב (ve-shav), “returned,” the text is emended here in accordance with a similar passage in *Matnitin* that has identical phrasing. See *Zohar* 1:251a (*Hash, Mat*).

On the “White Head,” see above, [note 20](#). On the “Lamp of Adamantine Darkness,” see above, [note 90](#). On the 270 worlds, see *Zohar* 1:218b; 3:129a, 135b, 139a, 141a (all *IR*); Vol. 8, 384–85, n. 226. This highly enigmatic section of *Matnitin* appears to draw on several other Zoharic passages. See *Zohar* 2:83b; 3:135b (*IR*).

[128.](#) לַא (EI)... **glyph of those two letters...** The next spark animates the letters of the divine name EI, root of *Hesed*. The number 300 may refer to the three highest *sefirot*, with the number 70 signifying the seven lower *sefirot*. The number 370 is also the equivalent in *gimatriyyah* of the word שְׁלֵם (shalem), “complete.”

On the number 370, see *Zohar* 1:4b; 2:14a–b (*MhN*); 3:133b–134a, 135b (last two *IR*); *ZH* 88a (*MhN, Rut*). Cf. *Zohar* 3:154a.

[129.](#) **little one of Rabbi El’azar...** This cryptic passage may be drawing on *Zohar* 3:41a, in which Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai’s son El’azar proclaims of Rabbi Yeisa—the so-called Hammerhead, known for “shattering rocks and shooting sparks in every direction”—*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you* (Jeremiah 1:4).

The numerical elements “two” and “eighty” may refer to two upper *sefirot* and eight lower *sefirot*, yielding multiples that add up to one thousand. Alternatively, the text reads “becoming א (alef), the letter that instigates the light of learning. The trope of “fifty gates of Understanding” is based on a statement attributed to Rav and Shemu’el (BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, *Nedarim* 38a): “Fifty gates of *binah* (understanding) were created in the world, and all were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).”

The teaching of the “tender ones” derives from BT *Shabbat* 104a: “The sages said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, “Tender ones (or young students) came to the study hall and said things that were not said in the days of Joshua bin Nun. א ב (Alef bet)—*elaf*, learn, *binah*, wisdom (or understanding) [of the Torah].”

On the image of a hammer yielding sparks, see Vol. 7, p. 250, n. 141.

130. י מ (Yod mem), engraved in א ל (El)... A possible explanation is that when the Lamp of Adamantine Darkness struck *Binah* (who contains Her own light as well as that of *Keter* and *Hokhmah*), the contours of *Malkhut*, called “Great Sea,” and “Sea of Wisdom,” are fashioned. The letters of the word מ י (mi)—which is the inverse of י מ (yod mem), yielding מ י (yam), “Sea,” and thus forming a term associated with *Binah*—are implanted within *Hesed*, signified by *El*. Their interleaved letters result in the artificial (or deliberately misspelled) word מ א י ל (eilim). This may be a play on words, deriving from א י ל (ayil), “ram,” or signifying “strong ones.” Here, these mighty myriads are angelic forces, overseen by either *Gevurah* or *Malkhut*. Further, the letters *yod* and *mem* have a total numerical value of fifty, associated with the fifty gates of understanding, that are associated with *Binah* (see previous note).

“Keys” renders קלדיטין (*qalditin*), based on the rabbinic term אקלידא (*aqlida*), which derives from the Greek *kleida*, “key.” See *Zohar* 2:5a-b, 14a (both *MhN*), 66b; 3:15b; *ZH* 12b (*MhN*). Cf. Freedman, “Astral and Other Neologisms,” 138-48.

On *Malkhut* as Sea of Wisdom or Great Sea, see *Bahir* 65 (96); *Zohar* 1:29a-b; 2:19b (*MhN*), 31a-b, 54b, 56b, 220a; 3:58a, 60b, 137b (*IR*); *ZH* 8b. The name “sons of *eilim*” derives from Psalms 29:1: *Ascribe to YHVH*, בני אלים (*benei elim*), *O sons of God* (or *divine beings*). Cf. Exodus 16:1; *Zohar* 3:235b; *ZH* 5d-6b (*MhN*).

131. supernal crown shining... At the conclusion of the process of emanation, divine light flows from *Malkhut* onto the 270 worlds, manifesting Judgment. The number 270 is the numerical equivalent of the word רע (*ra*), “evil.”

“Streaming” renders בוֹצֵצִין (*botsetsin*). See JT *Pesaḥim* 7:1, 34a; *Mo’ed Qatan* 1:1, 80b.

132. tsits appeared... crowning אֵילִם (*eilim*)... The צִיִּט (*tsits*), *medallion* [or: *plate, rosette*], was a gold plate that the high priest wore on his forehead, over his turban, bearing the inscription קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה (*qodesh la-YHVH*), *Holy to YHVH*. Here, the crown signifies the consummation of ה (*he*), the last letter of the tetragrammaton, representing *Malkhut*. The letter *he* is affixed to אֵילִם (*eilim*), yielding אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), one of the names symbolizing *Malkhut*, and this completes the emanation of the *sefirot*.

According to a midrashic tradition in JT *Hagigah* 2:1 (77c) in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, the word in Genesis בְּהִבָּרְאִם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created*, can be construed as an anagram בְּהִ בְּרָאִם (*be-he bera’am*), “by [the letter] *he* He created them.” Yet another anagram, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Korḥah (*Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9), reads בְּהִבָּרְאִם (*be-hibbare’am*), *when they were created* as בְּאַבְרָהָם (*be-Avraham*), *by Abraham*. The latter indicates that *heaven and earth* were created for Abraham’s sake. Here, the two anagrams are conflated to teach that the sefirotic realm begins its process of consummation with *Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham and the divine name *Ei*, and that the worlds below are sustained by *Malkhut*, represented by the letter *he*.

On the *medallion*, see Exodus 28:36–38.

On these midrashic anagrams, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:10; BT *Menahot* 29b; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 16; *Lekh Lekha* 4; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 2:12; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 109b; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva* (*Battei Midrashot*, 2:363); *Midrash Tehillim* 62:1; 114:3; *Zohar* 1:3b, 46b, 86b, 91b, 93a, 105b, 128b, 154b, 230b, 247a; 2:31a, 48b, 79a, 220b;

3:34b, 38a, 43a, 298a; ZH 1d, 17a, 26a (last two *MhN*). Cf. Vol. 7, pp. 178–79, n. 33.

The full verse in Exodus actually reads: *They made the medallion of the holy diadem of pure gold, and wrote upon it an inscription of seal-engravings: "Holy to YHVH."* On discrepancies between MT and Zoharic citations of Scripture, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

133. arousing holy spirit for the true prophets... In this unconventional sequence of sefirotic emanation, *Netsah* and *Hod* succeed the union of *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*, and they are the divine sources for human prophecy, positioned on the right and left, respectively.

For other instances of unusual sequencing of *sefirot*, see *Zohar* 1:101a (*Mat*); ZH 2a (*Mat*). On *Netsah* and *Hod* as the sources of prophecy, see above, [note 24](#).

134. hand of YHVH... word of YHVH... Two different phrases representing the prophetic experience. All other prophets receive prophecy from *YHVH*, representing *Tif'eret*, in mediated form, either as "hand of *YHVH*" or "word of *YHVH*"; but Moses is distinct, receiving prophecy from *YHVH* directly.

135. One who sees, sees... The heavenly oracle returns to the original exhortation, encouraging listeners to yearn for this mystical knowledge and vision. See BT *Berakhot* 33b, in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai: "The blessed Holy One has nothing in his treasure-chamber other than a treasure of fear of heaven, as is said: *the fear of YHVH is his treasure.*" According to the simple meaning of the verse, one attains eternal life in the world that is coming through *fear of YHVH*; but in the divine realm, *fear of YHVH* signifies *Malkhut*—and it is through Her that one truly attains eternal life.

"Glow of ten flowing streams" renders עשרא דאפקותא קוזטיפא דהרדינא (*qoztifa de-ha-redina asara de-afquta*). The neologism *qoztifa* apparently implies projection or flow. See the expression קסטופא דשמשא (*qastifa de-shimsha*), "ray of the sun" (*Zohar* 3:283b, and *Derekh Emet*, ad loc., who explains it as

the spark of radiance associated with Moses); and the Arabic root *qdf*, “to throw.” See the similar forms קוזפי (*quzpei*), קוטפיזא (*qotpiza*), and קיזפא (*qizpa*) in *Zohar* 1:53b, 1:252a (*Hash*), and 2:175b, respectively. See *Zohar* 1:167a; 2:14a-b (*MhN*); *ZH* 14b, 59c (both *MhN*); *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 189; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 213. Cf. *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 186; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 345-48.

The word רדינא (*redina*), or perhaps הרדינא (*hardina*), is utterly cryptic and probably a corruption, but it may derive from the root רדי (*rdy*), “flow, liquefy.” This text follows T1, whereas V5 reads הרדיכא (*hardikha* or *ha-redikha*), which is equally opaque.

In rabbinic tradition the verse from Isaiah is interpreted as an allusion to Torah study. Here, it refers to kabbalistic knowledge specifically. See BT *Shabbat* 31a; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13, p. 216; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 15, p. 70; *Shemot Rabbah* 30:14; *Zohar* 1:127b (*MhN*); 2:223a.

“Gist of the matter” renders סתמא דמלה (*setama de-millah*). In rabbinic usage, סתמא דמילתא (*setama de-milta*)—literally “a matter without qualification”—means “the usual practice, as a general rule.” In the *Zohar*, *setama de-millah* (or *de-millin*) can mean “unspecified wording” or “gist of the matter (or word).” See *Zohar* 1:30b, 50a; 2:37b; cf. 2:38a.

On “meaning... before the King,” see Daniel 2:16, 24-25, 30; 5:8, 17.

1. Illustrious clusters!... The oracular voice of the *Tosefta* erupts in grand praise of the kabbalists. “Illustrious clusters” renders קטורי רמאי (*qeturei rama’ei*), “exalted bonds,” referring to the kabbalists, who tie the *sefirot* together—or alternatively, whose souls link up with Divinity. The kabbalists sit in rapt attention to the powerful voice.

The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* sections frequently feature heavenly voices, speaking in proclamatory tones. In rabbinic literature, the *bat qol* (heavenly, or divine voice) stands in a metaphysically intermediate zone, between the divine and human realms, inferior to prophecy. See BT *Yoma* 9b: “After the last prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Divine Spirit of prophetic revelation departed from the Jewish people, but they were still utilizing a Divine Voice.” In the *Zohar*, these poetic and oracular voices offer both rebuke to the slumbering sinners and promises of reward to the righteous. The chastisement resembles what is frequently offered by Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai and his companions in the main body of the *Zohar*.

“Quaestors of quaestory! Impregnable castles!” renders קסטורי דקוסטרי (*qastorei de-qusterei*). The root *qstr* appears in two senses in the *Zohar*: one deriving from Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), “castle, fortress” (as in *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a); the other from Latin *quaestor*, a Roman official (JT *Eruvin* 6:2, 23b; *Zohar* 1:19b, 53b; 2:19b, 58b, 208b; 3:13a). Either sense applies here to the kabbalists—impregnable in their faith, appointed from above.

On *qeturei rama’ei*, see *Zohar* 1:107b (ST), 251a; *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Derekh Emet*.

On the oracular voice, see *Zohar* 1:4a, 77a, 161b (*Mat*); 2:81a; above, [p. 538](#), [n. 5](#). On this passage, see Vol. 1, pp. 358–61 (and Matt’s notes there); Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 214–15; Cole, *The Poetry of Kabbalah*, 105–6. P4 and Cremona read: *Matnitin... Tosefta*; *Ketem Paz* reads: *Matnitin*.

The editors of the *Zohar* apportioned the passages of *Matnitin* and of *Tosefta* to particular *parashot* (divisions of the Torah according to the annual reading cycle), based on their assumption that the *Zohar* functioned primarily as a commentary on the Torah. In this passage, as elsewhere, there is no scriptural connection to the *parashah*, but there is a thematic similarity to the Zoharic discussion where it is placed, suggesting that the authors of one of these two passages had the other one before him.

2. who see without seeing... The vast majority of humanity, even among the learned in Israel, is oblivious to the true splendor of Divinity, the mysteries of Torah, and the nature of their own souls. The “one encompassed by two [dwelling] within them,” refers to the tripartite soul, as understood in medieval Jewish thought. *Neshamah* (highest soul) is clothed in *ruah* (spirit), which is itself clothed in *nefesh* (soul). Here, the *neshamah* is rejected by the spiritually obtuse through their conduct. They desire only to stay alive through the power of the lower aspects of the soul, *nefesh* and *ruah*, making no effort to attain the deeper spirituality of *neshamah*, who consequently flees from them.

See BT *Ḥagigah* 12b, in the name of Rabbi Yose: “Woe to creatures, for they see but do not know what they see, they stand but do not know on what they stand.” This style of rebuke is a common feature in *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*. Cf. *Zohar* 1:4a. See also *Zohar* 3:127b, where these critiques are voiced by Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai.

On the soul in the *Zohar*, see Tishby, *Wisdom*, 677–722; above, [p. 277](#), [n. 734](#). On the interrelationship of these parts of the soul, see *Zohar* 1:62a (which stands in direct relation to this passage).

The *neshamah* is “artisan of artisans,” the source of creativity, emanating from *Shekhinah*, who is called “Artisan of the world” (*Zohar* 1:47b) and derives from *Binah*, also called Artisan (2:167b; 3:219b). Cf. *Zohar* 2:161a–b.

“The Books of Remembrance” refers to the celestial books (or book) in which all human actions are recorded. The phrase derives from Malachi 3:16. Elsewhere in the *Zohar* a Book of Remembrance is identified with *Yesod*. See Ezra 4:15; Targum to Esther 6:1; *Zohar* 1:8a-b; 2:70a, 200a, 217a, 246a (*Heikh*).

3. Woe to them... Dire suffering awaits these base individuals, but they receive relief from their punishment on New Moons and the Sabbath. In the Bible “Dumah,” literally “silence,” is a name for the netherworld. In rabbinic literature Dumah is the angel in charge of souls of the dead. In the *Zohar* he retains this role but also oversees Hell. The “herald in the North” is associated with the left side and characterized by harsh judgment. Once the Sabbath ends, the sinners return to their hell-fire.

According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 11:5, one of the dwellers in Hell reports: “Whoever does not observe the Sabbath willingly in your world observes it here against his will.... All week long we are punished and on the Sabbath we are allowed to rest.”

On relief in Hell, see BT *Sanhedrin* 65b; *Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa* 33; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 23; *Zohar* 1:14b, 17b, 41a (*Heikh*), 48a, 62b, 197b, 237b; 2:31b, 88b, 100a, 136a, 150b-151a, 203b, 207a; 3:94b, 288b (*IZ*); *ZḤ* 17a-b (*MhN*); Weiss, *Kol Yoredei Dumah*, 33-45. The notion that the suffering of the wicked in Hell also abates on New Moons derives from Ashkenazic sources. See Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 40.

On “Dumah,” see Psalms 94:17: *Unless YHVH had been my help, my soul would have nearly dwelt in dumah*. Cf. Psalms 115:17; BT *Berakhot* 18b (and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *dilma Dumah*), *Shabbat* 152b, *Sanhedrin* 94a; *Zohar* 1:8a-b, 62b, 94a, 102a (*MhN*), 121a, 123b-124a (*MhN*), 130b, 134b (*MhN*), 218b, 237b; 2:18a (*MhN*), 150b, 207a, 263a, 264b (last two *Heikh*); 3:53a, 126b; *ZḤ* 17a-b, 79b, 90b (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 99;

Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 225-29; Weiss, *Kol Yoredei Dumah*, 18-22, 46-66.

“Ravaging gangs” renders חבילי טריקין (*ḥavilei teriqin*). The first word derives from חבל (*ḥevel*), “band, group,” and/or the root חבל (*ḥvl*), “to injure, destroy.” The second word derives from the root טרק (*trq*), “to sting, bite.” See *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 130a, 237b, 243b; 3:52b, 62b, 181a, 291b (*IZ*); Weiss, *Kol Yoredei Dumah*, 26-31. Cf. *Zohar* 3:80a-b.

The name *Gei ben hinnom* derives from גיא בן-הנום (*gei ven-hinnom*), “the Valley of Benhinnom [the son of Hinnom],” south of Jerusalem, where child sacrifices were supposedly offered to Molech. This valley also served for the incineration of the city’s refuse and the dumping of animal carcasses and the bodies of criminals. Jeremiah prophesied that the valley would become *the Valley of Slaughter* and a burial place (Jeremiah 7:32), and see Rashi, ad loc. See 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31, 19:2-6. In post-biblical literature it assumed the connotation of Hell, where the wicked are punished.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *From new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to bow down before Me, says YHVH.*

4. ‘Amen! May His great name be blessed!’... The response of the congregation in the middle of the *Qaddish* prayer, which is recited during the three daily services, and upon completing a session of Torah study, when the prayer is also recited. See BT *Shabbat* 119b, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi: “Whoever responds with all his strength: ‘Amen! May His great name be blessed!’ his decreed sentence is torn up.”

On God’s remembering His children as a result of this response, see BT *Berakhot* 3a (per Munich MS 95), in the name of Rabbi Yose (quoting a teaching he heard from the prophet Elijah): “When Israel enters the synagogues and houses of study and responds: ‘May His great name be blessed,’ the blessed Holy One nods His head and says,

‘Happy is the king who is praised thus in his house! Woe to the father who has exiled his children, and woe to the children who have been banished from their father’s table!’”

On the *Qaddish* prayer, see BT *Berakhot* 3a and *Tosafot*, s.v. *ve-onin yehei shemeih ha-gadol mevorakh*; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva*, Version 1 (*Battei Midrashot* 2:368); *Sefer Abudarham*, 67; El’azar of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah le-Roqeah*, 247; *Tosafot* on BT *Shabbat* 119b, s.v. *kol ha-oneh amen*; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, 172; *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 62b; 2:129b, 165b–166a; 3:220a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 69–71 (and Wolfson’s notes); [idem?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 133; Todros Halevi Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, on *Shabbat* 119b (12a); Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 80–84.

Similar relief is offered for other prayers. See *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 17 (22–23); Nissim of Kairouan, *Ḥibbur Yafeh me-ha-Yeshu’ah*, 104–5; *Maḥazor Vitri* 144 (112–13); *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*); 3:285b; *ZḤ* 49a–b, 84c (*MhN*, *Rut*); Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Qadmon*, 299–302. Cf. above, [p. 182](#), [n. 442](#).

The angel Samri’el is so called based on the word סמר (*samar*), “to bristle,” in Psalm 119:120: *My flesh bristles in fear of You*. See *Midrash Tehillim*, ad loc.: “*My flesh bristles in fear of You—in fear of Geihinnom*.” For attempts to explain the hour-and-a-half time period, see *Or Yaḳar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Zohar* 3:167a, where a person is punished in Hell for an hour-and-a-half, and *Nitsotsei Zohar*, ad loc., n. 2.

On the three gates, see BT *Eruvin* 19a, in the name of Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El’azar: “*Geihinnom* has three gates: one in the wilderness, one in the ocean, and one in Jerusalem.” On the desert as the abode of demonic powers, see *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 32:10; Naḥmanides on Leviticus 17:7; *Zohar* 1:14b, 126a, 169b,

178b, 228a; 2:21a (*MhN*), 60a, 183b-184a, 236b-237a; 3:63b.

5. in every direction Even to Hell—where it brings relief to the wicked. This verse frequently serves as a coda at the end of homilies, underscoring the impact of the kabbalists' mystical practice and study, in realms above and below.

See *Zohar* 1:29b, 59a, 62b, 84a, 142a, 179a; 2:50a, 114a, 215a; 3:47a, 52a, 88a, 129a, 154a; *ZH* 77d (*MhN, Rut*); Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 119-20, 202.

6. Illustrious clusters... The oracular voice of the *Tosefta* erupts in grand praise of the kabbalists. “Illustrious clusters” renders קטורי רמאי (*qeturei rama’ei*), “exalted bonds,” referring to the kabbalists, who tie the *sefirot* together—or alternatively, whose souls link up with Divinity. “Potentates of pedagogy” renders הורמני דבדורי (*hormanei de-badurei*), following M, signifying teachers of powerful lore.

O2, I33, N44 read הורמני דבורייני (*hormanei de-buryanei*), “rulers over outlaws,” while V16 and M2 read הורמני דבורייא (*hormanei de-buryya*), and N36 reads הורמני דבוריידי (*hormanei de-buryyarei*), “rulers over empty ones [or: boors].” These latter readings suggest that the kabbalists prevail over decadent forces in society, either through their moral teachings or through pietistic enforcement. Cf. *Zohar* 1:203b; *ZH* 2a (*Mat*); *Or Yaqar*. Cf. below, [note 24](#). On the strange language, see Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 161.

On “illustrious clusters,” see *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*), 251a (*Hash, Mat*). On *bedurei*, see JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14d, in the name of Hillel the Elder: “בשעה דמבדרין (*be-sha’ah de-mevadrin*), When others cloister [i.e., refrain from teaching Torah]—disseminate [Torah]. When others disseminate [Torah]—cloister [yourselves].”

The following passage of *Tosefta* is labeled as such in N36, O2, V16, M2, L33, N23, CT1, and Mantua, but it is not

found in the manuscripts' sections specifically designated for *Tosefta*.

7. White Head prepares the throne... “The White Head” signifies אַרִיךְ אַנְפִּין (*Arikh Anpin*), “Long Face,” an alternate term for *Keter*, also called עֲתִיק יוֹמִין (*Atiq Yomin*), “Ancient of Days” (see Daniel 7:9). This name also means “slow to anger, long-suffering, forbearing,” indicating the compassionate nature of this primordial realm, exemplified by His whiteness. The term also means “taking a long time for one’s nostrils to flare” (deriving from Exodus 34:6). Here, the kabbalists yearn to see how the White Head establishes His throne (signifying *Binah*) upon the precious stone columns (signifying the lower *sefirot*). The “one gem” refers to *Shekhinah*, who bears seventy celestial forces within Her—a Sanhedrin of colors (the ancient Jewish court was comprised of seventy judges). These seventy colors emerge from white, red, and green, which signify *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, respectively.

On אַרִיךְ אַנְפִּין (*ariikh anpin*), see Ibn Ezra (short), ad loc.; *Zohar* 3:129a-b (*IR*); Vol. 8, pp. 323–24, n. 14; 330, n. 27; 385, n. 230; 399–400, n. 280.

The terms *Arikh Anpin* and *Ze’eir Anpin* are sometimes understood respectively as “the Large (or Vast) Countenance” and “the Small Countenance.” Cf. the Talmudic description of two of the faces of the creatures seen by Ezekiel: “a large face and a small face,” referring respectively to *the face of a human* and *the face of a cherub* (Ezekiel 10:14). See BT *Sukkah* 5b, *Hagigah* 13b; *TZ* 70, 129b; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 170, n. 65; Vol. 7, 393, n. 110.

On *Arikh Anpin* and *Ze’eir Anpin*, see also Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:245–46, 426–27; Idel, *Ben*, 417–25. On the “White Head,” see above, [p. 544](#), [n. 20](#). On this paragraph, see *Or ha-Hammah*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

“Coffer of clusters” renders קוֹמְטְרָא דְקִיטְרָא (*qumtera de-qitra*), in which the first word might also be rendered as

“chest; wardrobe; book cabinet; armoire.” Alternatively, *qumtera* might be a typically Zoharic expansion of *qumta*, based on the root קמט (*qmt*), “to bind, tie” (as in Targum on Proverbs 5:22), yielding “a clutch [or: assembly, bevy] of clusters.” Instead of *de-qitra*, M reads דקנטרא (*de-qantara*), and in medieval Castilian, “*cántara*” is a jug used for storing wine. Since the numerical value of ך׳ (*yayin*), “wine,” is seventy, and is associated with judgment, this other reading is distinctly possible. See Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española*, s.v. *cántaro*.

On *qumtera*, see M *Kelim* 16:7 and *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ad loc., s.v. *kisu’i qamtera* who identifies this chest as a קאפפער (*qoffer*); *Zohar* 1:74b (*ST*); *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*. In the Mishnah, the term refers to a crypt in the form of a chest, making the Zoharic usage as a reference to *Shekhinah* extremely ironic. On *qumta*, see *Zohar* 3:18a, 88a; *ZH* 84b (*MhN, Rut*); *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 187; Luria, *Va-Ye’esof David*.

On the number of Sanhedrin members, see *Zohar* 2:251a; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; above, [p. 348](#), [n. 5](#). On the three colors, see *Zohar* 1:97a–b, 99b–100a (both *ST*).

8. harsh spark from the left side... The harshest judgment comes from *Gevurah*, adjoined to *Tif’eret* (signified by “the Heavens”). When the blaze from *Gevurah* is bonded with the flames from *Shekhinah* (“quaestor fire”) and the seventy angelic powers (“colors”) below Her—ten for each of the seven *sefirot* above Her—none can withstand the judgment.

“Quaestor” renders קוזטרא (*quztera*), probably deriving from קוסטרא (*qustera*). The root *qstr* appears in two senses in the *Zohar*: one deriving from Latin *castrum* (pl. *castra*), “castle, fortress” (as in *Zohar* 1:29a, 30a); the other from Latin *quaestor*, a Roman official (JT *Eruvin* 6:2, 23b; *Zohar* 1:19b, 53b; 2:19b, 58b, 208b; 3:13a). Either sense applies here to the harsh fire of *Shekhinah*, sometimes symbolized as a fortress, sometimes as an agent of judgment.

On shooting sparks as an expression of judgment, see *Zohar* 1:251a (*Hash, Mat*); 2:34b, 254b (*Heikh*); 3:292b (*IZ*); V5, 330a (*Mat*); Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 179–81.

The entire context in Daniel 7:9–10 reads: *As I watched, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat—His garment like white snow, the hair of His head like clean fleece, His throne flames of fire, its wheels blazing fire. A river of fire was flowing and gushing from His presence, a thousand thousands serving Him, a myriad of myriads attending Him. Judgment [or: the judicial assembly] sat [or: was seated], and books were opened.*

9. Eyes flashing... In the Bible, Zechariah 4:10 and 2 Chronicles 16:9 describe God's eyes roaming the earth, examining the deeds of humankind. The *Zohar* reads these expressions hyperliterally, as angelic powers of judgment; here, the arch-demon Samael, or the Angel of Death, descends among these forces of judgment. Once authorized to kill, he does so indiscriminately, with his sword that varies in appearance and punishment. Defending the monotheistic basis of this image, it is explained that Samael's vigor ultimately derives from Divinity itself—and Samael is simply a harsh refraction of those divine energies.

On the exalted starling, see BT *Berakhot* 6b: "Once a person becomes dependent upon others, his face changes like a *kerum*, as is said: "*When vileness [kerum] is exalted among the sons of men.*" What is *kerum*? When Rav Dimi came [to Babylonia from the land of Israel] he said: There is a bird in the cities by the sea called *kerum*—and when the sun rises, it changes several colors." See Steinsaltz Talmud, ad loc., s.v. *kerum*: "Some identify the *kerum* as the shining starling, *Lamprocolius splendidus*, which is indigenous to the area ranging from western equatorial Africa to the Sudan. This starling, as well as another, *Spreo superbus*, indigenous to eastern Africa and banks of the Red Sea, have characteristics similar to the bird described by the

sages. The color of these birds' feathers is not the result of a pigment in the feathers themselves, but from the unique configuration of the feathers and the way the sun reflects off of them." Cf. *Or Yaqar*.

On God's angelic eyes, see *Zohar* 1:241a; 2:38b, 107a; 3:76a; *ZH* 86a (*MhN, Rut*). "Writ" renders פִּטְקָא (*pitqa*), "memorandum; name slip carried by the Angel of Death" (derived from Greek *pittakion*). See *Qohelet Rabbah* on 3:2; *Zohar* 3:156b. In its simple meaning, Psalms 12:9 reads: *All around, the wicked roam when vileness is exalted among humanity.*

10. seething water and deliquescent fire
Destructive forces emerging from *Hesed* and *Gevurah* respectively, blended together by "the heavens," signifying *Tif'eret*. It is very unusual in the *Zohar* for forces of destruction to derive from *Hesed*; such a depiction is a distinctive feature of *Sitrei Torah* and of *Tosefta*. See Meroz, "R. Ya'aqov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar," 258.

On dishonoring God, see M Hagigah 2:1: "Anyone who has no concern for the honor of his Maker, deserves to have never come into the world."

11. Ten names engraved... This refers to the ten *sefirot* that emanate from the Infinite One. Their qualities are expressed through the actions of seventy angels below. The *Tosefta* passage may end here. See Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 168.

12. Mikha'el, Gavri'el, Refa'el... Presented as a list of the seventy angels who execute divine judgment on earth.

The sixteenth-century kabbalistic master Hayyim Vital writes of Isaac Luria: "My teacher, may his memory be counted for life in the world that is coming, used to warn against verbally uttering any of the holy names, or those of the angels, even if they have been written in books. He would not mention them in the course of a lesson other than as follows: when he referred to Metatron he would say *mem tet*; and when he referred to Samael, he would say *samekh mem*." Presumably this type of pious vigilance

contributed to the loss of a tradition of proper vocalization of these names. See Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Mitsvot*, 26b.

Some of these angel names are familiar, others are plausibly transliterated based on Hebrew roots with the suffix “*el*,” and others are obscure, possibly corrupted. See Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the name *Staturyah*, see *Or Yaqar*, 11:251. The list here actually contains only sixty-seven names. See Mopsik.

13. When they are all joined together... *Shekhinah* rules over the seventy angels below, but when they are all united under Her, and She is joined together with the blessed Holy One, then the divine array is called וַיְהוָה (*va-YHVH*), and *YHVH*. Consequently, the verse *And YHVH rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire* indicates the vast coalition assembled to execute judgment. The apparently redundant phrase “מֵאֵת יְהוָה (*me-et YHVH*), from *YHVH*, out of heaven” demonstrates that there are seventy other names—divine names—that are engraved by *YHVH*, and that emerge from *Heaven*, signifying *Tif'eret*.

On the significance of וַיְהוָה (*va-YHVH*), “*and YHVH*,” see *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:2, in the name of Rabbi El'azar: “Wherever it is said *and YHVH*, this implies: He and His court.” In the *Zohar* generally, references to such a “court” symbolize *Shekhinah*, who derives from *Din* (Judgment) and pronounces the divine decree. Thus the phrase *and YHVH* encompasses “He [the divine male, known as *YHVH*] and His court [*Shekhinah*].” Here, the phrase also includes the seventy angels under the aegis of *Shekhinah*.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 24:2; JT *Berakhot* 9:5, 14b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:9; *Tanḥuma, Va'era* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Va'era* 21; *Shemot Rabbah* 12:4; Rashi on Exodus 12:29, s.v. *va-YHVH*; *Zohar* 1:15b, 64b, 105a, 107b, 159b, 192b, 198a, 240a; 2:37b, 46a, 149a, 227b; 3:9b, 149a. The hermeneutical significance of *va* (*and*) was championed by Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir. See BT *Yoma* 45a, *Sanhedrin* 51b.

Genesis 19:24 reads in full: *And YHVH rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from YHVH out of heaven.*

14. והו ילו סיט ... These seventy-two names comprise the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God, a complex divine name derived from the description of the splitting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-21). Each of these three verses contains seventy-two letters. The name is composed of seventy-two triads (“words”), according to the following pattern: the first letter of the first verse, the last letter of the second verse, the first letter of the third verse (forming the first triad—והו, *vav, he, vav*); the second letter of the first verse, the penultimate letter of the second verse, the second letter of the third verse (the second triad—לו, *yod, lamed, vav*); etc.

On this name of seventy-two triads, see above, [p. 43](#), [n. 44](#).

In his commentary on similar listings of angel names juxtaposed with the Seventy-Two Letter Name, Cordovero divides up the angels according to their corresponding triplets. See *Or Yaqar* on ZH 68d (*ShS*). Traditional commentators offer various resolutions to the discrepancy between the claim for seventy names and the presentation of the seventy-two names.

15. mystery of and YHVH... The analysis here moves progressively through the verse in Genesis, prompted by the repeated references to the source of the fire and brimstone that rains down upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The seventy names themselves signify the divine name YHVH, which is also symbolized by *Heaven*. When joined together with the letter ו (*vav*), *and*, the reference is to the names and the powers over which they rule below. There are seven different firmaments that comprise heaven, and together they oversee seventy celestial powers of judgment. The verse from Genesis indicates how the entire

divine and angelic realms converged to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

On the seven firmaments, see BT *Hagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘There are two רקיעים (*requ'im*), firmaments [or: expanses, heavens]...’ Resh Lakish said, ‘Seven, namely וילון (*Vilon*), Curtain; רקיע (*Raqi'a*), Expanse; שחקים (*Sheḥaqim*), Heaven; זבול (*Zevul*), Loft; מעון (*Ma'on*), Dwelling; מכון (*Makhon*), Site [or: Foundation]; ערבות (*Aravot*), Clouds.’”

16. two hundred and forty-eight... *Heaven* and *YHVH* are the source of the figure called *Adam*, literally “human,” who sits upon the throne in Ezekiel’s vision. This claim is proven by adding the number of letters in the Name of Seventy-Two Letters, 216, to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten utterances of creation (according to rabbinic enumeration) that constitute the essence of the Torah. Together these numbers yield a sum of 248, corresponding to the number of limbs in the human body, and the number of words in the *Shema* (according to rabbinic tradition). The references to *Adam*, understood here as Man, emphasize the centrality of the male body as a key symbol for knowing God and His unity. Once again, Genesis 19:24 is perceived as a key demonstration of the comprehensive unity of the blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah*, the Name of Seventy-Two Letters, and the angelic retinue. The elaborate emphasis on divine unity appears to prove that even the horrific judgment meted against Sodom derives from the full unity of Divinity.

For different opinions on the precise identity of *Adam*, see Galante; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the Seventy-Two-Letter Name of God, see above, [note 14](#). On the thirty-two paths comprised of twenty-two letters and ten utterances, see *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:2. The phrase “one secret—transmitted to the wise of heart” and similar formulations are characteristic of *Sitrei Torah*. See *Zohar* 1:81a, 162a (both *ST*).

17. judgment came from Heaven... According to rabbinic tradition, Sodom forbade the practice of charity. Since they transgressed against Charity, which along with Heaven symbolizes *Tif'eret*, logic dictates that their punishment should emerge from that same divine place. They had attempted to prevent the bonding of upper and lower worlds, and so that bonding serves as their refutation.

The full verse in Ezekiel reads: *Only this was the sin of your sister Sodom: arrogance! She and her daughters had plenty of bread and untroubled tranquility; yet she did not support the poor and the needy.*

18. Judgment against Israel... Since Israel's transgression was similar to Sodom's, their punishments came from the same source; however, whereas Sodom remains ruined forever, Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

According to Ezekiel 16:55, Sodom will return to her former state. See *Shemot Rabbah* 15:21. The full verse in Lamentations reads: *The guilt of the daughter of my people exceeded the iniquity of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, without a hand striking it.*

On determining the end of this passage of *Tosefta*, see Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 168, n. 36.

19. Sarah's life endured The full verse reads: *Sarah's life endured one hundred years and twenty years and seven years* (Genesis 23:1). The traditional interpretation of the verse emphasizes that Sarah's years are enumerated at length in order to highlight the consistent quality of the lives of the righteous.

20. Essence of our mishnah... The expression מתניחא (*matnita*), "our mishnah," here could refer to a secret, mystical Mishnah often cited in the *Zohar* and apparently known only to its own circle, and as such it would be distinct from the passages of the *Zohar* known as *Matnitin*.

"We were close by" alludes to the geographic or spiritual proximity of the mystics to the source of the voice.

“Concatenating” renders מתהפך (*mit’hapekh*); alternatively, “tumbling” or “whirling.” In the sense of “whirling” it may be an echo of the whirling sword appointed outside the Garden of Eden, and serving throughout the *Zohar* as a symbol of menacing and confounding judgment. “Thorn-prick to slumberers” signifies the intent of the divine voice—to rouse the spiritually languorous to repent from their sloth and return to pious righteousness, just like an actual thorn might be used to wake one sleeping.

On the celestial voices and their rebuke, see *Avot* 6:2, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Levi, “Every single day, an echo resounds from Mount Horeb [Sinai], proclaiming: ‘Woe to creatures for the humiliation of Torah!’” See *Zohar* 1:4a, 62a–b (*Tos*), 161b (*Mat*), 227a; 2:99a; 3:13a, 57b–58a, 127b (*IR*); above, [note 1](#). Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 3:4.

On “Essence of our mishnah,” see *Nitsotsei Orot; Liebes, Peraqim*, 231. Here it says “we were close by” but often it says “come close and listen,” drawing on Isaiah 51:1 (*Listen to Me, you who pursue justice, you who seek YHVH...*). See 1:147a (*Tos*), 251a (*Hash, Mat*); 2:12b (*Mat*), 48a; 3:57b–58a; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 209–17.

On the phrase “our mishnah,” see *Zohar* 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 91b, 93a, 95b, 96a, 165a (*Mat*), 223b–224a, 252a (*Hash*); 2:5a (*MhN*), 123b; 3:57b, 61b, 75b, 77a, 78a, 284b, 285a, 292b, 293b, 295a (last three all *IZ*); *ZH* 15b, 16a (last two *MhN*); Matt, “Matnita di-Lan.”

The phrase “smashing mountains, shattering mighty rocks” derives from 1 Kings 19:11. “Whirlwinds” renders עלעולין (*il’ulin*). See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:4: “Like the gales that race through the Negeb (Isaiah 21:1). Rabbi Levi said, ‘There is no whirlwind so destructive as that which comes from the north, rising up and blanching the faces of the inhabitants of the South.’” On this passage, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 213–14.

21. The King speaks... Even though the voice is from a celestial herald, the message comes from God. “Gatekeepers” (or “guards of the gates”) probably alludes to the angels who stand at the gates of heaven, prepared to eject those unworthy of entry. The “ruler of numerous troops” signifies Metatron, the supreme angel who, according to rabbinic tradition, records the merits and transgressions of Israel.

22. All are insensate... The world’s inhabitants are unaware of the consequences of their actions and that they will be punished for their sinfulness. The angel Dumah presides over the underworld and is poised to take their souls when they die. “Dust-dwellers” signifies those already dead, longing to be settled in the ground rather than slated for repeated reincarnation—“the wheel of convolution.” Even in reincarnation they fail to accrue merit, ultimately given over to utter extinction and denied resurrection—“blotted out from Dumah’s book.”

On “Dumah,” see above, [note 3](#). On eternal doom without Dumah’s watch, see Rashi on BT *Ḥagigah* 5a, s.v. *de-ra’ina le-hu*; *Zohar* 1:123b–124a (*MhN*). On “dust-dwellers,” see Isaiah 26:19. On this passage, see Galante; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

23. Parashah of Jacob departed In L33, O2, P3, R1, and *Or Yaqar*, this passage is not labeled *Tosefta*; but in the early printed editions it is labeled *Sitrei Torah* and has the distinctive style of *Tosefta*, and so it is included here.

24. White Head lifts up three letters... This passage explains the stages of emergence of Divinity from within divine nothingness. In the *Idra* sections of the *Zohar*, the “White Head” signifies אריך אנפין (*Arikh Anpin*), “Long Face,” an alternate term for *Keter*, also called עתיק יומין (*Atiq Yomin*), “Ancient of Days” (see Daniel 7:9); to the three different aspects of the divine head; and to the active dimension of *Keter*. Here, the White Head takes the three letters that together comprise the sefirotic realm: א (*alef*), signifying

Keter; ך (yod), representing *Hokhmah*; ך (final nun), symbolizing the unity of male and female within *Binah*—both in Her union with *Hokhmah* and prefiguring that unity in the lower seven *sefirot*. Through engraving, the letters attain full realization as ךך (*Ayin*), “Nothing,” which signifies *Keter* in Zoharic Kabbalah, here including the other two recondite *sefirot* of the Upper World, *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. Alternatively, and there may be a blending of two different conceptions here, Supreme Head and White Head may signify two of three different regions within *Keter*.

The engraving of the thirty-two paths amid precious jewels—signifying the rest of the *sefirot*—consummates the emanation of the divine realm. When male and female divine potencies are united, the divine name *YHVH* is complete: the tip of ך (yod), representing *Keter*; the yod itself, representing *Hokhmah*; ך (he), representing *Binah*; ך (vav), alluding to the six *sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Yesod*; and final he, symbolizing *Malkhut*. Then all lower realms are sustained.

According to *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1-2, God created the world by means of “thirty-two wondrous paths of חכמה (*hokhmah*), wisdom,” namely the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and ten “*sefirot*.” See *Bahir* 75 (106).

Usually, the moniker “masters of eyes” refers to angelic beings who survey human behavior below, but here, “master of eyes of understanding” refers to the mystics who contemplate their Creator. See *Zohar* 1:232a, 234a (last two both *Tos*); 2:4a, 50a (*Mat*), 50b, 68b (*Tos*), 74a, 202a (*Mat*), 245b, 251b (last two *Heikh*); 3:90b; *ZH* 32b, 62b (*ShS*), 105b (*Mat*); V5, 330b (*Mat*); Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 384-85 and n. 210.

On the “White Head,” see *Zohar* 1:107b (*Tos*); 2:74a (*Mat*); 3:129b, 135a-b, 137b, 155a-b (all *IR*), 270b (*Mat*), 292b (*IZ*); V5, 330 (*Mat*); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 104b-105a; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 174-75.

On “Supreme Head” and the three heads, see *Zohar* 3:288a-b (*IR*). On the name *ayin*, see *Zohar* 2:64b; 3:129a

(*IR*), 158b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 19–20 (23–24); Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 93b, 103a; Baḥya ben Asher on Exodus 17:7; Matt, “*Ayin*.” On the letters *alef* and *yod* representing *Keter*, see Asher ben David, “*Sefer ha-Yiḥud*,” 104–5; *Zohar* 1:122b (*Tos*, standard edition); 3:162a (*Tos*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 87–88 (111); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 77 (and Wolfson’s note). Cf. *Bahir* 48 (70). On final *nun*, see *Bahir* 56 (83); *Zohar* 1:18b–19a, 147a (*Tos*), 149b (*ST*); 3:66b, 155a, 156b, 285b; *ZḤ* 70a (*ShS*). Cf. *ZḤ* 38c and *Nitsotsei Zohar*, ad loc., n. 3. On “bent” נ (nun) as a symbol of *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 2:91a, 139a, 215a, 235b; 3:66b, 155a; *ZḤ* 41c, 70a (*ShS*).

“Elite potentates” renders הורמני דבורידי (*hormanei de-buryyarei*). *Or Yaqar* and *Or ha-Ḥammah* interpret the phrase as “leaders of bandits,” based on an alternate reading of *hormanei de-buryyanei*. See above, [p. 544](#), [n. 19](#). On this paragraph, see *Or Yaqar*; Mopsik.

25. Will emanates paths... Describing the full sequence of emanation from *Keter*, signified here by רעותא (*re’uta*), “will” (or “desire”), fashioning the thirty-two paths inhering in *Hokhmah*. The overflow proceeds between “two spirits,” *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, to fashion the mediating *sefirah Tif’eret*. Through that conduit, “north” (representing *Gevurah*) and “south” (representing *Hesed*) can both unite with *Shekhinah* below individually; and then *Tif’eret* unites together with *Shekhinah*, as well. Once She has received divine blessing from seven *sefirot* above (*Binah* through *Yesod*), She quenches the angels below—and Jacob is spiritually empowered to travel to the demonic climes of Haran.

The name חרן (*haran*), “Haran,” is frequently associated with חרון (*haron*), “wrath.” See *Zohar* 1:79a (*ST*), 147a, 148a (*ST*).

26. from Beer-Sheba above... In this different interpretation of the verse, Beer-Sheba alludes to *Binah*, from whom emanate the seven *sefirot* below. *Tif’eret*, represented by Jacob, descends to provide divine overflow

to *Shekhinah* below. Until She receives that emanation from *Tif'eret*, She is dominated by wrathful forces; hence She is called names to emphasize that influence. Their impact is poignantly expressed by the verse from Psalms, recalling the destruction of the Temple.

This verse introduces a note of historical pathos, reflecting the yearning of the Spanish kabbalists to be redeemed from exile.

The verse from Psalms 79 reads in full: *God, nations have come into Your estate, they have defiled Your holy temple. They have turned Jerusalem to ruins. They have given Your servants' corpses as food to the fowl of the heavens, the flesh of Your faithful to the beasts of the earth.*

27. He looked... The full verse reads: *He looked, and here: a well in the field, and there were three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for from that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the mouth of the well was large.* On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:151b, 151b (ST).

28. pursuers of justice... These are the kabbalists who seek *Shekhinah*, symbolized by צדק (*tsedeq*), "Justice."

This entire passage appears with some variation in *Zohar* 2:12b-13a as *Matnitin*. See Vol. 4, pp. 61-63 (and notes there). The full verse in Isaiah reads: *Listen to Me, pursuers of justice, you who seek YHVH. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were dug.*

29. When two ascend... A veiled description of the sefirotic process. One interpretation would be: when *Hokhmah* and *Binah* ascend toward their unified source in *Keter*, they receive its emanation between their two arms, *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. Then this sefirotic pair flows down, generating *Tif'eret*, who mediates between them. *Netsah* and *Hod* emerge as the sources of prophecy. *Yesod* not only mediates between *Netsah* and *Hod*, but also absorbs the entire flow of emanation, conveying it to *Shekhinah*.

On *Netsah* and *Hod* as the sources of prophecy, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 49, 78; *Zohar* 1:21b, 151b (*Tos*); 2:12b (*Mat*), 111b, 170a, 2:257b, 261b (last two *Heikh*); 3:35a, 36a, 61a, 90b, 91b; *ZH* 4b (*SO*), 27d, 45b-c; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 337; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 47-48 (57-59); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 378-79. Cf. Ibn Ezra on Isaiah 50:4. For various interpretations, see *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

30. holy well... Field of Holy Apples... These terms refer to *Shekhinah*, who is situated beneath *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, as She receives the divine flow. She is filled with apple trees, namely the *sefirot* above. Creatures of the angelic and chariot worlds are all saturated by *Shekhinah*.

Her name Field of Holy Apples derives from BT *Ta'anit* 29b, in the name of Rav: "He [Isaac] said, 'See, the fragrance of my son [Jacob] is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH' (Genesis 27:27)... like the fragrance of a field of apple trees."

See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35-37; *Zohar* 1:85a-b, 142b, 143b, 151b (*ST*), 224b, 249b; 2:61b, 84b, 88a-b; 3:13a (*Mat*), 74a, 84a, 133b, 135b (last two *IR*), 286b-287a, 288a (*IZ*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365. Cf. *Tosafot* on *Shabbat* 88a, s.v. *piryo qodem le-alav*.

31. Three pillars... Namely, *Netsah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, who channel the flow of blessing to the well of *Shekhinah*, who is called אדוני (*Adonai*), "My Lord." As the last *sefirah*, *Shekhinah* is Lord, ruling over *all the earth*. She is also pictured as the *ark* housing *Yesod*, symbolized by *the covenant* and "holy spring," called יהוה צבאות (*YHVH Tseva'ot*), "Lord of Hosts," who is constantly flowing into Her. Reference to the destroyed *sanctuary* indicates the ultimate hope: that divine overflow will gush toward *Shekhinah*, manifest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The verse in Deuteronomy reads in full: *My Lord, YHVH, You Yourself have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand.* The verse's opening

phrase is customarily vocalized and pronounced as *Adonai Elohim*, and translated as *My Lord God*, in order to avoid the confusing duplication *Adonai Adonai*. The full verse in Daniel reads: *Now hear, O our God, the prayer of Your servant and his pleas, and let Your face shine upon Your desolate sanctuary, for the sake of Adonai, My Lord*. See *Zohar* 3:21b. On *Shekhinah* as ark, see *Zohar* 1:2a, 33b, 50b, 59b, 228b, 251a; 2:235b; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 75 (95).

32. Caliginous pure cluster... This renders דקוטר דכיא קטורא (*qeturah de-qutra dakhya*). A smoky wreath oozes out during the purification of *Gevurah*, signified by Isaac. On account of its source in Divinity, it seeks a resting place above; yet because it is entirely refuse, it is shunned there. It is personified by *Avadon* (Oblivion or Perdition) and *Mavet* (Death), who correspond to the arch-demon Samael and his female consort Lilith. It is very rare in the *Zohar* for the two extremes to be juxtaposed in this fashion. This enigmatic passage refers to entities that arise in the upper reaches of the *sefirot* but cannot endure.

On “a place [that] is no place,” see *Zohar* 2:176b (*SdT*s); Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 178–79. The image of the demonic Samael as slag from the smelting of Isaac is similar to the common image of impurity identified with the refuse of gold. See *Zohar* 1:118b, 148a (*ST*), 153a, 228a; 2:203a, 224b, 236b; 3:51a, 56a, 84b; *ZH* 122a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sod Eser Sefirot*, 384; Scholem, *Alchemy and Kabbalah*, 38–40; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 336–38; Vol. 8, p. 28, n. 80.

On *Avadon* (Oblivion or Perdition), see Proverbs 15:11; Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; and Revelation 9:11, where *Avadon* is the name of *the angel of the bottomless pit*; *Zohar* 1:62b (*Tos*); 3:54b.

On this passage, see Solomon ha-Kohen, *She’at Ratson; Matoq mi-Devash*. Other commentaries interpret *qeturah de-qutra dakhya* (“caliginous pure cluster” or “cluster of pure vapor”) as a reference to Jacob, representing the group of

sefirot surrounding *Tif'eret*. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; Mopsik. Cf. *Nitsotsei Orot*. On this passage, see Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 178–79.

33. Avadon and Mavet—heard... Even in their depravity, *Avadon* and *Mavet* heard of God's power—His holiness obliterating them as well as any who sought salvation in them. They stand in exact opposition to the side of holiness, bringing annihilation, whereas God brings life.

On *Avadon* and *Mavet* as hearing from above, see Job 28:20–22: *But ḥokhmah (wisdom)—from where does it come, and where is the place of binah (understanding)? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, from the fowl of the heavens, concealed. Avadon and Mavet have said, "With our own ears we heard its rumor."* On smoke as an impediment to vision, see *Tanḥuma*, *Toledot* 8. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:10; BT *Megillah* 28a.

Only N23 and O2 include the material from "One who is drawn..." until "Supreme, Concealed One," in the next paragraph.

34. consummate man like Jacob... Jacob entered Laban's world of deceit and corruption—but emerged spiritually intact. He attains *devequt*, mystical union, with *Tif'eret*, signified by Truth.

On Jacob's distinctiveness, see above, [p. 540](#), [n. 9](#). On truth as "seal of the Holy King," see BT *Shabbat* 55a.

35. Utterly Supreme, Concealed One... This epithet refers to *Keter*, whose own origins are mysterious. All of the *sefirot* emerge, manifesting as the four letters of the tetragrammaton. ך (Yod), signifying *Ḥokhmah*, is symbolized by the "supernal point," and emits the rest of the *sefirot*. First is *Binah*, signified by ך (he), and then the six lower *sefirot*, *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*. The two arms, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*, reach out to embrace *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the second ך (he) and by "Tabernacle." Once all of the *sefirot* have emerged, Divinity is truly one, because the thirteen attributes of mercy that reside in *Keter* can be fully expressed, signified by

“whiteness,” supreme above all other colors and *sefirot*. This unity of the thirteen attributes is emphasized through the repetition of the word “one”—whose Hebrew spelling, אֶחָד (*eḥad*), has the numerical value in *gimatriyyah* of thirteen. This unity, protection, and guidance is highlighted in the verses from Psalms 23.

On the kabbalistic notion that the letters of the tetragrammaton symbolize all the *sefirot*, see Asher ben David, “Peirush Shem ha-Meforash,” 112; *Zohar* 2:123b, 126b-127a; 3:10b, 65b, 267b; *ZH* 1c (*SO*); Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 44a-45b. On this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*. The simple meaning of the phrase in Psalms 23:3 is *My life He brings back*. See Alter.

36. Supernal beloved ones... Similar wording appears in *Zohar* 1:147a; 2:68b, 235b (all *Tos*); 3:270b (*Mat*). “Nail-studded clubs” renders קולפי דסיכתא (*qulfei de-sikketa*); the adjective could also be rendered as “flanged” or “spiked.” Conceivably, this cryptic phrase alludes to cracking the shells, mentioned below.

The singular form קולפא (*qulpa*), “club,” derives from the Persian *kūpāl*, “club, lance.” See above, [pp. 574-75](#), [n. 87](#). סיכתא (*Sikketa*) means “peg, nail.” See BT *Eruvin* 53a; *Zohar* 2:92a (*RM*). For other interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Derekh Emet*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 213. On this passage, see Vol. 3, pp. 403-5 (and notes there).

37. When it arose in the Will... When the impulse arose within *Keter* (known as Will) to emanate the *sefirot*. Out of *Keter* emerges the primordial point (*Hokhmah*), which expands into *Binah*. She generates three primary *sefirot*: *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, symbolized respectively by the colors white, red, and green. Within *Binah*, these three are still one; once they emerge, they flow into one another.

38. spade below... *Shekhinah* is depicted as a spade or shovel, gathering the higher colors that have emanated to form Her. She also resembles a crystal, which—though

having no color of its own—reflects (actually, refracts) light shining into it. Thus She appears to take on whichever color shines into Her at any given moment.

In the *Zohar* a מגרופיא (*magrofiyya*), “spade,” usually refers to angelic powers executing the divine will, but here it refers to *Shekhinah* Herself. At yet other times, the term can refer to other *sefirot*. A spade was one of the most common and basic agricultural tools, used for digging and for turning the earth in preparation for planting. See Sweeney, *Agriculture in the Middle Ages*, index, s.v. “spades.” In medieval artistic renderings it could signify the potential for food production or part of the curse of hard labor laid upon Adam (see Genesis 3:17–19). See M *Tamid* 2:1; *Zohar* 1:62b (*Tos*), 154b (*Mat*), 233b–234a (*Tos*); 3:60a–b, 135a (*IR*), 270b (*Mat*); *ZH* 122a (*Mat*); Kaniel and Felix, “Asha de-savil asha,” 163. Cf. below, [note 44](#).

The Aramaic word חִיזוּ (*ḥeizu*) means “vision, appearance,” but in the *Zohar* also “looking-glass” (or “speculum, mirror, lens”). This added sense may derive from the Hebrew word מראה (*mar’ah*), which means both “vision” and “mirror.”

The Aramaic word בדולחא (*bedulḥa*) derives from Hebrew בדולה (*bedolah*), “bdellium,” a word that appears only twice in the Bible, once in the context of the geographical setting of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:12) and once describing the color of the manna (Numbers 11:7)—which is also linked with dew (*ibid.*, 9; Exodus 16:14). *Bedolah* is apparently an aromatic yellowish transparent resin of trees, though a number of ancient and medieval sources identify it as a precious stone. Rashi on Numbers 11:7 describes it as “crystal,” and in medieval Hebrew *bedolah* means “pearl” and “crystal.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 16:2; *Zohar* 2:136b, 176b (*SdT*s); 3:49a, 128b (*IR*), 155b; *ZH* 38d, 48c.

39. three colors surround Her... The colors of the sefirotic triad (*Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*) surround *Shekhinah*, each one moving within Her at the appropriate moment.

They raise Her to unite above by day, escorting Her below to rule by night. Her nighttime brilliance is not recognized by day. (See BT *Hullin* 60b: “What good is a lamp at noon?”)

The numbers 248 and 365 correspond to the 248 limbs of the body and 365 sinews (or 365 days of the solar year), as well as to the 248 positive and 365 negative commandments. Here, 248 corresponds to *Tif'eret* (associated with the positive commandments), and 365 corresponds to *Shekhinah* (associated with the negative commandments). Her splendor is concealed within the 248 commandments (that is, *Tif'eret*) above, and drawn down into the 365 negative commandments within Her below.

On the 248 limbs (actually joints or bones covered with flesh and sinews), see M *Oholot* 1:8. On the significance of the numbers 248 and 365, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:1; BT *Nedarim* 32b, *Makkot* 23b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 12:1; El'azar of Worms, *Peirushei Siddur ha-Tefillah la-Roqeah*, 679; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 132, 262. For various interpretations of the passage here, see *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Derekh Emet*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

“Lusters” renders קסטורין (*qastorin*)—a Zoharic neologism—apparently derived from קסיטרא (*qasitra*) and Greek *kassiteros*, “tin.” See *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Numbers 31:22; *Tanḥuma*, *Shofetim* 14; *Zohar* 1:62a (*Tos*), 125a, 128a, 151a, 157a, 168a; 2:24b; *Bei'ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 186, 188; Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 213.

40. Whoever probes... Whoever seeks to enter the realm of *Shekhinah* must first break through demonic forces blocking Her gates. For most prophets, only a mediated vision of divine reality is possible, but Moses saw God face-to-face and eye-to-eye, attaining awareness of the highest sefirotic realms.

See BT *Yevamot* 49b: “All the prophets gazed through אספקלריא שאינה מאירה (*ispaqlarya she-einah me’irah*), an opaque glass [or: mirror, speculum], while Moses our teacher gazed through אספקלריא המאירה (*ispaqlarya ha-me’irah*), a translucent glass.” In the main body of the *Zohar*, *Shekhinah* is the *ispaqlarya* that does not shine on its own, but rather reflects and transmits the other *sefirot*. She is the medium through which prophets normally perceive a sefirotic vision. Moses, in contrast, attains the rung of *Tif’eret*, corresponding to the *ispaqlarya* that shines.

The word *ispaqlarya* derives from Greek *speklon*, “mirror, window-pane,” and Latin *speculum*, “mirror.” Cf. Maimonides, Commentary to M *Kelim* 30:2, who provides a fanciful etymology: “*Speqlarya*—a screen [or: curtain] that is fashioned so that forms may be seen from behind it. According to my understanding, this is a compound word: ספק לראיה (*safeq le-re’iyah*), indeterminate vision, since one who looks through a screen made of glass or crystal, or any other transparent material, does not see the object in its true place, as is clarified in optics, nor is it seen according to its proper dimensions. And the sages call a very transparent screen that does not conceal anything behind it a ‘speculum that shines.’ By way of example they said regarding the apprehension of our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, of divine entities, that he perceived the Creator at the pinnacle of a person’s capability, one whose intellect is tied to materiality.”

“Scrapings” renders גדפין (*gadfin*), usually meaning “wings, feathers, limbs, rims, borders,” but here likely deriving from the root גדפ (*gdp*), to “cut, scrape, hollow out,” also “to blaspheme.”

On the quality of Moses’ prophecy, see Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10; BT *Sanhedrin* 97b; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 1:14; Maimonides, Commentary to M *Sanhedrin* 10:1, *ha-yesod ha-shevi’i*; idem, *Shemoneh Peraqim*, 7; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 33–34 (95–96); Nahmanides

on Exodus 6:2; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, 408; *Zohar* 1:33b, 120a, 170b-171a, 183a, 232b (*Tos*); 2:23b, 69a-b, 82a-b, 130b, 213a, 221a; 3:174b, 268b; *ZH* 15c (*MhN*), 39d; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 58; idem, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 69; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:44-45, n. 242; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, index, s.v. “speculum”; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 17-21. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face.”

41. dazzling demons... This term renders טהירין (*Tehirin*), from the Aramaic root meaning “brightness, noon.” In rabbinic literature, one class of demons is named טהרי (*tiharei*), “noonday demons.”

See Psalms 91:6 and Rashi, ad loc.; *Targum*, Song of Songs 4:6; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 6:24; Deuteronomy 32:24; *Zohar* 1:94a, 125a-b, 130b, 198b, 200a, 237b; 2:130a-b, 195b, 205a, 207a. The Hebrew root טהר (*thr*), “pure,” lends this demonic name a euphemistic tone.

The full verse in Numbers reads: *They shall not come in to see the sanctuary [or: sacred objects] for even a moment and die.* In its original context, this verse applies to the Kohathites, a Levitical clan that was assigned to carry the sacred objects of the Tabernacle (such as the ark, table, candelabra, and altars), once these had been safely wrapped by the priests. The Kohathites were forbidden to even see the exposed sacred objects within the Tent of Meeting. See Milgrom, *Numbers*, ad loc. Here, remarkably, the reference is transferred from the Levites to the wicked, who are deprived of gazing at the divine splendor.

42. souls of holy righteous ones were gazing... Returning to the original theme of the three colors associated with *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*, Rabbi Yehudah explains that the souls of the righteous can adhere to *Shekhinah*—consequently, they align and unify those colors and the *sefirot* that they represent.

No other passage of *Matnitin* or *Tosefta* includes the remarks of members of Rabbi Shim'on's cohort, and so this one (or the insertion of Rabbi Yehudah's name) would seem to be a later addition. This passage appears with these remarks, however, in M7, MD2, Mantua, Cr, and *Or Yaqar*.

43. Sound of a sphere... Corresponding to the celestial sphere of medieval Ptolemaic astronomy, which moves all of the other heavenly spheres. Here this sphere is linked with *Shekhinah* and revolved by various sefirotic potencies.

The "sweet sound" corresponds to the ancient philosophical notion of the music of the spheres. See Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 2:9; BT *Yoma* 20b; *Tanḥuma, Aḥarei Mot* 9; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 3:9; *Zohar* 1:41b (*Heikh*), 161b (*Mat*); 2:93a, 196a, 211a; 3:165a, 209a; Moses de León [?], "Seder Gan Eden" (in *Bet ha-Midrash* 3:132). The shofar often symbolizes *Binah*, and here the image may imply that Her power turns the sphere through the extension of the other *sefirot*, represented by "depths of rungs."

"Braided" renders טורקהא (*turqaha*), apparently deriving from Latin *torqueo*, "to twist." See Rashi on Genesis 19:28; cf. *Tosafot, Nedarim* 41b, s.v. *ki hizra*. For other readings and interpretations of this word (and for various interpretations of the entire cryptic passage), see *Or Yaqar; Ketem Paz; Sullam; Matoq mi-Devash; Pedaya, Ha-Mar'eh ve-ha-Dibbur*, 129-33; Vol. 3, pp. 415-16.

44. Two hydraulica... "Hydraulica" renders מגרופין (*magrofyān*; singular, *magrefah*); alternatively, "spades, shovels, ladles." The hydraulicon (Greek *hydraulos* [ὕδρανλός], "water pipe") is a pipe organ—believed to have been invented in the ancient Greek world—that was capable of producing very loud music. It bore this name because it produced sound by compressing air with a water-pressure mechanism, appearing in illustrations with a shovel-shaped reservoir. In the early medieval period, a bellows (also

possibly shovel-shaped) was used to compress the air. Here, the *Tosefta* apparently conceives of it, following rabbinic tradition, as a ten-fluted musical instrument with each pipe bearing ten holes. These instruments contribute to the music described above as well as conveying the fluid colors that reflect the influence of *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*: white on the right, and red on the left. The dominant color indicates whether *Shekhinah* rules with loving-kindness, from the side of *Ḥesed*, or with judgment, from the side of *Gevurah*. They convey the totality of the divine influence through the ten apertures.

See BT *Arakhin* 10b-11a, in the name of Shmu'el: "There was a *magrefah* in the Sanctuary; it had ten holes, each and every one producing ten different kinds of sounds, with the result that the whole amounted to one hundred kinds of sounds. A Tanna taught: It was one cubit long and one cubit high; from it projected a handle, which had ten holes. Each of them produced one hundred kinds of sounds, amounting for the whole to one thousand kinds of sounds."

On *magrofyān*, see M *Tamid* 3:8; 5:6 (where the term refers to a shovel-shaped tympanum); JT *Sukkah* 5:5, 55d; Bayer, "Organ"; above, [note 38](#). On the constant motion of the sphere, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1:5, 7; *Zohar* 1:109b-110a; 2:95b-96b (Vol. 5, pp. 7-8, n. 22), 220b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 299-300, 327-31.

45. Two birds ascend... These "birds" are apparently angels—one ascending toward the south (symbolizing *Ḥesed*) and one toward the north (symbolizing *Gevurah*). When unified song rises from the angels and *Shekhinah* below, Scripture responds with *a song for the Sabbath day*, the time of fulfillment and union, and symbol of *Shekhinah*. The flow of emanation, conceived in terms of music, and now as liquids, descends to *Shekhinah*, source of blessing for the worlds below.

On the two birds, see *Zohar* 1:162b–163a, 172a, 217b; 2:179a (*SdT*s). On birds in the *Zohar*, see Bar-Asher, “Tsippor ha-Nefesh.” For different interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

46. Radiance of radiancies... This enigmatic passage may be explained as follows: the hydraulicon on the right, signifying *Hesed*, calls to *Shekhinah*—and it invokes blessing from “two thousand worlds,” both right and left sides. Then, *Tif’eret*, “middle world,” is called upon to issue radiance from the Master, probably *Binah*, above.

47. All masters of eyes ... This phrase renders דעיינין כל אינון מארי (*kol inun marei de-aynin*). It initiates a call of arousal to humanity to be aware of the immanence of Divinity in the world. Alternatively, the phrase could be rendered as “All those Masters of Eyes,” referring specifically to kabbalists—urging them to seek out the esoteric meanings of Torah. See above, [note 24](#).

48. If one is worthy... Human behavior affects the motion of the sphere, generating either rich blessing or harsh judgment.

Cf. *Zohar* 1:109b–110a; 2:95b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 327–31. The full verse in Isaiah reads: *YHVH will guide you always; He will slake נפשך (nafshekha), your thirst [or: soul] בצחצחות (be-tsaḥtsaḥot), in parched regions, and invigorate your bones. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail.* Here, נפשך (*nafshekha*) is read literally as *your soul*, and the rare word בצחצחות (*be-tsaḥtsaḥot*), *in parched regions*, is understood as “with radiancies,” based on the root צחק (*tshḥ*), “to gleam.”

See *Zohar* 1:113b–114a (*MhN*), 141a, 224b; 2:97a, 142b, 209a, 210b. Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 34:15.

49. Tosefta On a possible connection of this passage and the Zoharic one surrounding it, see below, near the end of [note 53](#). On this passage, see Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, 182–83; Vol. 2, pp. 381–82 (and notes there).

50. Within concealment of the concealed... Within the most concealed realm (*Keter*), the primordial point of *Hokhmah* was engraved, symbolized by the smallest letter, ם (*yod*)—inscribed so subtly that it “was inscribed and not inscribed.” Abiding within *Keter* (also known as Will), this point sustains all, conveying some of what it receives from *Ein Sof* (which cannot be depicted at all and transcends Will). Even great kabbalists can neither view nor comprehend this mystery. In contrast to the utter ineffability of *Keter*, called “concealment of the concealed,” *Hokhmah* is described paradoxically as “inscribed and not inscribed,” to depict the mystery of *Hokhmah*’s existence—perceived from above, inapprehensible below.

On the transcendence of *Keter* and *Hokhmah*, see *Zohar* 1:15a; 2:126b. “Sustenance of all” renders קיומא דכלא (*qiyyuma de-kola*); alternatively, “foundation of all; vitality of all.” See Liebes, *Peraqim*, 369–70.

51. engraving desired to cover itself... The primordial point of *Hokhmah* expanded into the circle (or palace) of *Binah*, containing fifty gates. It expands in all directions, anticipating the emanation of six *sefirot* below (*Hesed* through *Yesod*).

The image of *Binah*’s “fifty gates” derives from BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b, where Rav and Shemu’el teach: “Fifty gates of בינה (*binah*), understanding, were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as is said: *You made him little less than God* (Psalms 8:6).”

On the concealment or covering of *Hokhmah* within *Binah*, see *Zohar* 1:15a, 20a; 2:126b, 226a. On the image of the glory of the palace, see Psalms 29:9: *His entire palace bespeaks glory* [or: *In His palace all says glory*].

52. Deep, deep within Within the palace of *Binah*, the primordial point was hidden, filling the palace with light. Paradoxically, concealment yields radiance. Throughout the *Zohar*, in order to reveal, one must conceal; and to reveal, conceal.

53. six curtains, which are five... *Binah* is adorned with six *sefirot* (*Hesed* through *Yesod*), generated from Her. “Those six curtains are five” apparently refers to the fact that the first of these six, *Hesed*, is not to be counted together with the others, since it remains joined to *Binah* and conveys Her emanation to the other five. (Alternatively, *Tif’eret* and *Yesod* constitute a single unit, turning “six” into “five.”) The “one embroidery” is apparently *Hesed*, which cloaks *Binah* and through which She compassionately monitors all below.

Binah—called here סכלתנו (*sukhletanu*), “Understanding”—conceals the primordial point of *Hokhmah* (Wisdom) and conveys the totally hidden energy of Will of Wills (apparently *Keter* or its initial impulse), which is so concealed that it is described as “existing and not existing.” “Blessed be He” may refer to *Binah* (containing the point of *Hokhmah*), who is blessed from the realm of *Keter* (“concealment of concealment”).

The description of *Binah*—“gazes and sees all... gazing constantly, to illumine below”—matches Rabbi Abba’s description in the adjacent Zoharic text in the printed editions: “gazing to illumine them and watch over them.” On Her never sleeping, cf. Psalms 121:4. On the constantly open divine eye, cf. *Zohar* 3:129b-130a (*IR*). On “six curtains” and “five curtains,” see Exodus 36:16.

54. Among supernal mysteries... This very cryptic passage, its opening replete with Zoharic neologisms, describes interrelationships among the *sefirot*. Within *Keter* are the fonts of the *sefirot*, yet to emerge, barely perceptible on account of their subtlety. Once the *sefirot* have emanated, now called “rotating wheels,” they ascend and descend, drawing overflow from above and conveying it to lower realms, while their precursors remain stable within *Keter*. The emanated *sefirot* attain their full existence when *Malkhut*, symbolized by “argil” (or “glebe, dust, soil, earth”). Through the rotation of the world by the *sefirot*, the world’s

guidance by the sefirotic roots above (“clutch of marshals”) becomes manifest.

“Constricted caissons” renders טסקורי קמיטין (*tasquirei qemitin*); alternatively, “furrowed forms” or “tautened templates.” The strange word *tasquirei* appears nowhere else in the *Zohar*, or classical or medieval rabbinic literature. The author may have in mind the other Zoharic neologism טסקוסאי (*tasqosa’ei*) on *Zohar* 2:234b (printed edition; perhaps not coincidentally on the previous page). There, טסקוסאי (*tasqosa’ei*) is linked with *Targum Yonatan*, Ezekiel 43:10: טקוסיה (*tiqquseih*), “its pattern” (recorded in *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot* as טסקוסטיה [*tisqusteih*]), deriving from Greek *taxis*, “arrangement, order.” See *Bei’ur ha-Millim ha-Zarot*, 180; Scholem, 2:234b.

“Clutch of marshals” renders טיפסרא דקולטא (*tifsera de-qulta*). In the *Zohar*, the neologism *tifsera* can mean “form, mold, configuration,” based on טופסא (*tufsa*), derived from Greek *tupos*, but here it takes on the meaning of military or administrative official based on the rare biblical noun טפסר (*tifsar*). See Jeremiah 51:27; Nahum 3:17. Cf. Scholem. The root קלט (*qlt*) can mean “receive; retain; snatch; clutch tightly.”

On *tifsera*, see above, [p. 561](#), [n. 62](#). On *qulta*, see *Zohar* 1:30b; 3:59b.

For other interpretations of this passage, see *Or ha-Hammah*; *Miqdash Melekh*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

55. this wheel, rotating and not rotating... The reference is to *Tif’eret*. Like the other *sefirot*, *Tif’eret* is also involved in the maintenance of the world, although it is a stable central axis in relation to those other *sefirot*. Meanwhile, *Tif’eret* rises up to the highest rungs and draws down blessing to convey to *Yesod* and *Malkhut*.

“Twelve thousand worlds” probably refers to the twelve גבולי אלכסון (*gevulei alakhson*), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1. In that context, the number “twelve” signifies the parameters of space, the

simple consonants of the Hebrew language, the twelve constellations, primary human activities, and the twelve primary organs of the human body. Alluding to that figure here indicates the centrality of *Tif'eret* to all dimensions of reality.

On the twelve “diagonal borders,” see above, [p. 354](#), [n. 17](#).

56. one column, implanted... The reference is to *Yesod*, who is tightly connected to *Tif'eret* above and *Malkhut* below, conveying divine overflow, signified by “boulders,” downward to lower realms. “Two hundred and twenty other wheels” presumably refers to the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, each comprising ten components, indicating linguistic consummation. Like *Tif'eret* above it, *Yesod* also has aspects of both movement and stasis (see previous note).

On the image of inserting a column into the great depth (or sea), cf. the rabbinic tradition of Gabriel’s inserting a reed into the sea. See JT *Avodah Zarah* 1:3, 39c; BT *Shabbat* 56b, *Sanhedrin* 21b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:6; *Zohar* 2:50b (*Mat*).

57. revolves within Dwelling... *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*, signified by “Dwelling,” united in loving embrace.

58. herald proclaiming... A heavenly voice emerges to admonish those who swerve from pious behavior, and to encourage those who contemplate the kabbalistic secrets of Divinity. The “heavenly words” are the mysteries of the unification of Divinity, all revealed in concealment in *Malkhut* as a result of Her erotic union with *Tif'eret*. The plural *Your courts* signifies *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*, as do *goodness* and *Your house*, respectively. This passage of *Tosefta* deals largely with sefirotic geography, but the conclusion indicates that its patterns are mirrored within the human heart.

The “rotating wheel” signifies the wheel of personal fortune, which is treated with love or judgment. See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 34:3, 9; BT *Shabbat* 151b; *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:4; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhoh Yesodei ha-Torah*

1:5, 7; *Zohar* 1:109a-110b; 2:95b-96b (Vol. 5, pp. 7-8, n. 22), 220b; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 299-300, 327-31.

On Psalms 65:5, see *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 8; *Zohar* 1:90a (*ST*), 94b, 129a-130a; 2:57a, 79b; *ZH* 21d-22a (*MhN*).

1. *Sitrei Torah...* *Sitrei Torah*, “Secrets of Torah,” is a stratum of Zoharic literature with a distinctive literary style, offering commentary on short passages in the Torah (from five *parashot*: *Noah*, *Lekh Lekha*, *Vayera*, *Vayetse*, and *Terumah*) in the main printed volumes of the *Zohar*. These passages sometimes function as elaborations or explanations of sections of *Matnitin* and *Tosefta*, but that sequencing is not definitive. Characteristically they discuss the soul, the mysteries of the *sefirot* and their emanation, and the powers of the Other Side. The homilies are generally delivered anonymously, without reference to the group of mystics surrounding Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai (as featured in the *Zohar* proper).

See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216–17; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:2–3; 2:710–12, 721, n. 196; Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar,” especially 256–69.

This section (through 254a) is printed both among the *Hashmatot* (passages omitted from the first Mantua printing) and in *Zohar Ḥadash* 8c–9c, where it is erroneously titled *Sitrei Otiyyot*. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:5, 106, n. 30.

2. **in his likeness...** See BT *Eruvin* 18b, in the name of Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El’azar: “During all those [130] years that Adam was under the ban [for having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge], he engendered spirits, demons, and female demons, as is said: *Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and he engendered in his likeness, according to his image* (Genesis 5:3), from which it follows that until that time he did not engender after his own image.” *Likeness* here is identified with the corporeal body and its spiritual correlate in the lowest of the three levels of soul.

See *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 22; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:7; *Zohar* 1:55a; 2:167b–168a, 231b; *ZḤ* 8c–9b, 63c (*ShS*), 79d, 89b (last two *MhN*, *Rut*). On this section, see Scholem.

3. serpent infused Eve with scum... According to rabbinic tradition, the serpent's temptation of Eve had an overt sexual component. Before the sin, human perfection was expressed through the sequentially appropriate linguistic configuration of the letters within Adam. Completion was attained upon arriving at the letter פ (pe), representing פנים (*panim*), "face," at which point Adam and Eve were no longer positioned back-to-back, but rather were conjoined in love, face-to-face. This divine balance incited the fury of the Other Side, personified by Samael, who then launched his attack.

See BT *Shabbat* 145b-146a, in the name of Rav Yosef: "When the serpent copulated with Eve, he injected her with זוהמא (*zohama*), filth [or: slime, lust]." Rashi (ad loc., s.v. *ke-she-ba nahash al havah*) explains: "When he counseled her to eat from the tree, he had sexual relations with her, as is written: *The serpent* הַשִּׂיאֲנִי (*hissi'ani*), *betrothed me* (Genesis 3:13), deriving from נִשּׂוּאִין (*nissu'in*), marriage." See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 21 (according to David Luria's emendation, based on *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Genesis 35): "The serpent-rider [Samael] copulated with her and she conceived Cain. Afterward her husband, Adam, copulated with her and she conceived Abel." Here, the serpent's infusion into Eve was insufficient for conceiving a human; but once Adam sinned, he inseminated Eve—providing the physical substrate for the demonic seed. For sources, see above, [p. 374](#), [n. 62](#).

On the separation and re-joining of Adam and Eve, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 14:1; BT *Berakhot* 61a, *Eruvin* 18a; *Tanḥuma, Tazri'a* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tazri'a* 2; *Midrash Tehillim* 139:5; Abraham ben David on Genesis 1:26-27, as cited in Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 217; idem, *Sefer Ba'alei ha-Nefesh* (ed. Kafih), introduction, 14; *Zohar* 1:2b, 13b, 34b, 47a; 2:55a, 176b, 178b (last two *SdT*s); 3:10b, 19a, 44b, 83b, 117a, 292b (*IZ*); *ZH* 72b (*ShS*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod* on *Berakhot* 61a (9a); Solomon ibn Adret, *Responsa*, 1:60; Baḥya ben

Asher on Genesis 2:18; Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 42-46; Wolfson, "Woman—The Feminine as Other"; Giller, *Shalom Sharabi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 131-46; Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul*, 28-38, 75-114; Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 53-103; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 167-76. Cf. Plato, *Symposium*, 189d-91d.

4. letters jumbled... The jumbling here refers to the moral content of the letters, rather than their sequence. In the Hebrew alphabet, after פ (*pe*) comes צ (*tsadi*), which when spelled out reads צדי, often interpreted as a reference to צדיק (*tsaddiq*), "righteous one." Changing the order of the letters yields ציד (*tsadi yod dalet*), "hunter." Then come the letters ק (*qof*) and ר (*resh*), bearing other forms of malevolence. The name ק (*qof*) also means "monkey," and this letter is deployed sometimes in Zoharic literature to refer to Samael, perhaps because it begins the words קליפה (*qelippah*), "husk," קללה (*qelalah*), "curse," as well as קוף (*qof*), "monkey"—or conceivably because its numerical value (one hundred) is equivalent to ס"מ (*samekh, mem*), an abbreviation of סמאל (*Samma'el*)—another name for Satan. The monkey has some similarities to a human but is vastly inferior—literally it "has no legs before him." Further, the orthography of ק (*qof*) can be viewed as unstable, for if it were a material object, it would have neither base nor stem to stand upon.

On the letters *qof* and *resh*, see Jacob ha-Kohen, *Peirush ha-Otiyyot*, 218-19: "I will inform you of a great secret regarding the letters *qof* and *resh*, by which you can discern whether a fetus will emerge holy and pure—or wicked, disgusting, and foul.... They come to teach us how a person should conduct himself with his wife when she is menstrually impure, when she is distanced from her husband. If a person turns his face away from his wife, like a monkey, when he knows that she is menstruating, and does not gaze upon her—for the *resh* is like a woman.... Thus if he contorts himself, turning his face away from her... distancing his sexual organ so that he will not breach a

fence (see Ecclesiastes 10:8), and his wife similarly, turning her face like a *resh*, avoiding gazing at her husband during her menstrual impurity, so that she does not become excited—know with certainty that since the two of them are safeguarded, taking precautions.... When they do have sexual relations together during the days of purity, the child born to them will be holy and pure.”

See *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, 2:398; *Zohar* 1:2b; 2:148b, 152a, 167b, 180b; 3:251b-252a; *ZH* 8c, 67a, 88c (last two *ShS*); Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, “Peirush Alef-Bet le-R. Ashkenazi,” 28.

5. From that filth... Cain was born... Since God spoke the world into being, the linguistic order is fundamental to the state of existence. The sequencing of the letters is interrupted when the letters are corrupted, as they are here by the serpent’s insemination of Eve and the subsequent birth of the demonic Cain.

On the serpent’s copulation with Eve and its role in engendering Cain, see above, [p. 374](#), [n. 62](#).

6. When Adam repented... After a 130-year hiatus from relations with his wife, during which he engendered demonic spirits, Adam returns to Eve and Seth is born, replicating Adam’s primal, holy image. The name שֵׁט (shin tav), “Seth,” is composed of the final two letters of the alphabet in proper sequence, signaling the perfection of the divine linguistic order. The simple meaning of the verse from Ecclesiastes reads: *There is הֶבֶל (hevel), futility, that occurs on earth*, but the author reads *hevel* as *Abel*, yielding *There is Abel fashioned upon the earth*—intimating esoterically that Abel has been reincarnated as Seth.

On Adam’s repentance, see BT *Eruvin* 18b, in the name of Rabbi Meir: “Primal Adam was very pious. When he saw that death was imposed as a punishment because of him, he observed a fast for a hundred and thirty years, and he separated from his wife for a hundred and thirty years, and wore belts of fig [leaves] on his body [as his only garment]

for a hundred and thirty years.” See also *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 20: “On the first day of the week, Adam entered the waters of the upper Gihon until the waters reached his neck, and he fasted seven weeks until his body became like a sieve.” See BT *Avodah Zarah* 8a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 22:13; *Zohar* 1:55b.

The tale of Adam’s siring demonic progeny reflects the motives of the Jewish communal reforms instituted in Toledo in the 1280s, responding in part to the prevalence of Jewish men having sexual relations with Muslim concubines. See the comments of Todros Abulafia, “Regarding the Muslim women with whom Jews are accustomed to behave licentiously, this too is forbidden.... Jews, who are a holy people, must not profane their seed in the womb of a Gentile woman, thereby gathering offspring for idolatry.” Abulafia’s sermon can be found in Judah ben Asher, *Zikhron Yehudah*, 43a-45b.

On Seth as a renewal of the human in the divine image, see *Zohar* 1:55a; *ZH* 63c (*ShS*). On the verse from Ecclesiastes, see BT *Horayot* 10b; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 8:14; *Tanḥuma*, *Huqqat* 10; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:11; *Zohar* 1:56b; 2:10b-11a. On this passage, see *Or Yaqar* (2:70).

The full verse in Ecclesiastes reads according to its simple meaning: *There is futility that occurs on earth: there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I say that this too is futility.* The full verse in Genesis reads: *Adam knew his wife again and she bore a son and called his name שֵׁט (Shet), Seth, as to say, ‘God שָׁט (shat), has provided, me with another seed in place of Abel, for Cain had killed him.’*

7. Kenan... letters added... After the alphabet was completed with Seth, new people were born with the rectified letters. קֵינָן (*Qeinan*), “Kenan,” was given a name like קַיִן (*qayin*), “Cain,” but with an extra letter נֹ (*nun*) to mark the correction. The name מַהֲלַלֵּל (*Mahalalel*) begins with the last

letter of the name אדם (*Adam*), takes two of the letters of the name הבל (*Hevel*), “Abel,” and drops the letter ב (*bet*) while taking the letter א (*alef*). These permutations of the names Cain and Abel effect a restoration of the alphabet.

See *Zohar* 2:168a; *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

8. seven, spherical clusters... This phrase apparently refers to the seven descendants of Adam: Cain, Abel, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, and Jared; or alternatively to the seven generations from Kenan to Noah, whereupon the world becomes corrupted again. They are linked to the seven earths (or zones), also known as the “seven climates,” which are the seven inhabitable regions recognized in Ptolemaic and medieval geography, and recorded in *Vayiqra Rabbah* 29:11. Though these terms are synonyms for earth or other topographical features, they are interpreted hyperliterally as proper nouns referring to different zones in the world. *Arqa* is simply the Aramaic term for “earth.” The zones range hierarchically according to the quantity of light and agricultural potential.

On the seven generations, see *Ketem Paz*. On the seven earths, see Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, 50; above, [p. 116](#), [n. 249](#). On the seven “firmaments” (or “expanses, heavens”), see BT *Hagigah* 12b: “Rabbi Yehudah said, ‘There are two רקיעים (*raqi'im*), firmaments....’ Resh Lakish said, ‘Seven—namely וילון (*Vilon*), Curtain; רקיע (*Raqi'a*), Expanse; שחקים (*Sheḥaqim*), Heaven; זבול (*Zevul*), Loft; מעון (*Ma'on*), Dwelling; מכון (*Makhon*), Site [or: Foundation]; ערבות (*Aravot*), Clouds.’” See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 18; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 3:2; *Zohar* 1:32b, 85b; 2:10b, 30b, 56b, 164b–165a; 3:9b, 239b, 287a; *ZH* 12a (*MhN*), 76b (*MhN, Rut*). On the choice of this verse, see *Ketem Paz*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The following passage is greatly elaborated in *ZH* 79d (*MhN, Rut*).

9. zone called *Adamah*... In its simple sense, the full verse reads: *YHVH Elohim sent him away from the Garden of Eden to till האדמה (ha-adamah), the ground, from which he had been taken.*

10. A light glows here... In the zone called *Adamah* there is some light, but these mighty men are ethereal phantoms, engendered during Adam's years of infidelity with spirits. In their misery, they pray for release but are doomed to remain in a place with meager rations. They cannot grow food, but rather simply grind seeds for nourishment.

Implicit in this passage is a warning against "spilling seed" outside a marital context. See Pachter, "Het she-ein alav teshuvah." Traditional commentaries identify the "mighty, supernal men" with the obscure reference to *sons of God* in Genesis 6:2. See *Ketem Paz; Matoq mi-Devash*. On people who are perpetually joyless, see *ZH 37a (RR)*.

11. from the face of האדמה (ha-adamah)... Cain is lowered to *Arets*, one level below *Adamah*.

12. Arqa... After Cain's *teshuvah*, he is raised to *Arqa*, one level higher. In the *Zohar*, the *Sitra Ahra* has no portion in proper grain or bread, and bread can be produced only in the zone of *Tevel*.

On the constraints to growing grain below *Tevel*, see *Zohar 1:157a-b; 3:189a*.

In referring to "those seven species of grain," *Sitrei Torah* has apparently conflated biblical and rabbinic teachings. Deuteronomy 8:8 (quoted below, [note 15](#)) lists seven types of produce in the land of Israel, including two types of grain: wheat and barley. For its part, rabbinic literature specifies five types of grain from which bread is normally produced: wheat, barley, oats, spelt, and rye. On the five grains, see *M Pesahim 2:5; Mekhilta, Pisha 8; BT Berakhot 35b; Zohar 1:157a*.

13. two-headed... Even in *Arqa*, the conditions for normal human existence are strange. According to some

medieval traditions, the descendants of Cain have two heads.

See BT *Hagigah* 16a, in the name of the Rabbis: “Six things are said concerning demons. In regard to three, they are like the ministering angels; and in regard to three, like human beings. In regard to three they are like the ministering angels: they have wings like the ministering angels; and they fly from one end of the world to the other like the ministering angels; and they know what will happen like the ministering angels... And in regard to three, they are like human beings: they eat and drink like human beings; they propagate like human beings; and they die like human beings.”

On Cain’s two-headed descendants, see “Meshalim shel Shlomo ha-Melekh” (in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 4:151–52); Judah ben Barzillai, *Peirush Sefer Yetsirah*, 173; *Tosafot* on *Menahot* 37a, s.v. *o qum gelei*; *Zohar* 1:9b, 157a; *TZ* 64, 96a; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:143, n. 34; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 125, n. 84.

On the people’s intellectual deficiencies, see BT *Berakhot* 40a, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: “A baby does not know how to call out “Daddy!” or “Mommy!” until he has tasted grain.” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:7.

14. *Gei, Neshiyah, and Tsiyyah...* These are the three levels that Adam skipped over after his *teshuvah*. The Tower of Babel so enraged God that its builders were sent off to these horrific regions, and the tower itself was dispatched to flames.

The name *Tsiyyah* derives from Psalms 63:2: *God, you are my God; I will search for You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a land, תַּצִּי (tsiyyah), parched, and weary, with no water.*

15. *Neshiyah...* This name derives from the root נָשַׁח (*nshy*), “to forget,” and so could be rendered as Oblivion. It may also bear an echo of the meaning “to dislocate.”

According to Deuteronomy 8:8, the land of Israel is blessed with seven species: *a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil olives and honey.*

The name *Gei ben hinnom* derives from גֵּיא בֶן הַחִנּוֹם (*gei ven-hinnom*), “the Valley of Benhinnom [the son of Hinnom],” south of Jerusalem, where child sacrifices were supposedly offered to Molech. This valley also served for the incineration of the city’s refuse and the dumping of animal carcasses and the bodies of criminals. Jeremiah prophesied that the valley would become *the Valley of Slaughter* and a burial place (Jeremiah 7:32 and Rashi, ad loc.). In postbiblical literature it assumed the connotation of Hell, where the wicked are punished. See Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 116.

16. bears all these names... All the names of the different “earths” are synonyms for earth, reinterpreted as proper nouns, naming different regions (see above, [note 8](#)). Despite occupying different places, their names and environments are all found in *Tevel*, the highest of these zones—our world. This accounts for the varied climates and topographies of this world, containing aspects of each of these lower zones.

17. clutch of officers speaking in the holy tongue... By speaking their shared language of the holy tongue—Hebrew—an assembly of officials were united and empowered to build the Tower of Babel. Through magical practices (apparently astral magic) the rebellious builders could adjure angels to do their bidding. They could have used other languages and coerced the demons, but the effects would have been fleeting and illusory.

On the angels’ ignorance of Aramaic, see BT *Shabbat* 12b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: “If one petitions for his needs in Aramaic, the ministering angels do not attend to him, for they do not know Aramaic.” See BT *Sotah* 33a; Rashi, *Sefer ha-Pardes*, 326; *Zohar* 1:9b, 88b-89a (*ST*);

2:129a–b. On astral magic, see Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*.

“Clutch” renders קומטרא (*qumtera*), an obscure Aramaic term that usually means “box or chest”; alternatively, “cluster.” See M *Kelim* 16:7; *Oholot* 9:15 and Bertinoro, ad loc., s.v. *ha-asuyah ke-min qamtera*; Targum Yonatan on 2 Kings 10:22 and Ezekiel 2:24; BT *Berakhot* 26a and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *aqqamtera*; *Megillah* 26b; *Zohar* 1:107b (ST); 3:18a; ZH 84b, 88c (both *MhN*, *Rut*); *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; Scholem, “Card Catalogue”; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; above, [p. 246](#), [n. 638](#).

This part of the story of the Tower of Babel is also treated in *Zohar* 1:74b–75a, in the columns facing the *Sitrei Torah* version in the printed editions.

18. Unique words... This renders *devarim aḥadim*, which is usually translated as *one set of words* or *identical words*, conveying the unity of purpose that is possible through a shared language. Here, the author interprets the term אַחַדִּים (*aḥadim*), the plural of אַחַד (*eḥad*), *one*, as a reference to the precision of their magical use of language, using exactly the right term for each desired outcome. The word הָבֵה (*havah*), *come*, signals an invitation to the higher demonic powers to extend their influence into the structures of *city* and *tower*.

On the term *havah*, see Rashi on Genesis 11:3, 38:16; Exodus 1:10; *Zohar* 1:75a; 2:18a (*MhN*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:78. On *devarim aḥadim*, see *Nitsotsei Orot*.

The full verse in Genesis reads: *They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered over all the earth”* (Genesis 11:4).

19. harsh decrees descend from there to the world... To avoid punishment, these wicked ones sought to pacify the source of evil decrees by displacing the side of holiness. See *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

20. A city and a tower... These two terms usually signify *Shekhinah* and *Yesod* respectively; and when these two *sefirot* are united, the Divine Name is manifest on earth. The wicked builders knew the secret that a city and a tower—horizontal and vertical structures, feminine and masculine—were required to fashion the demonic correlates to the two holy rungs, imitating that unit to create a demonic simulacrum.

21. the Other has a name above... This passage is obscure. It appears to mean that since אַהֲרָא (*aḥra*), “the Other”—signifying Samael, personification of the Other Side—is conceived as having a presence in the supernal realm, the wicked want to mirror his presence on the earth below. Alternatively—and this reading may hinge on the alternative version that reads אַהֲיָדָא (*aḥida*), the One—it means that since God has a name above, they should be entitled to having a name below. The first reading is found in P3, M7, N36, L33, R1, V5, and *Or Yaqar*, whereas the second reading is found only in Mantua and Margalioth—and explained accordingly by *Sullam* and *Matoq mi-Devash*. According to both readings, the builders understood the earthly requirements for supernatural effects, so they chose to build a city and tower. They employed esoteric lore to unify “city” and “tower” in order to prevent themselves from being spread out like the seventy angels whose sovereignty was spread out across the land. See *Or Yaqar*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

22. power of the filth of Hard Judgment... Evil is a debased derivative of the side of Judgment within Divinity. The author interprets the words בְּנֵי הָאָדָם (*benei ha-adam*), *humans* (or *people*), hyperliterally as *descendants of Adam*, referring to the spiritual descendants of Adam. Just as Adam had sinned and strengthened the masculine and feminine sides of the demonic realm, so too did the builders of the Tower of Babel.

See *Zohar* 1:60b; Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 11:4. The simple sense of the verse is *YHVH came down to see the city and the tower that the people [or: humans] had built*.

23. Holy Name descended... The descent of *YHVH*, normally signifying the transcendent *sefirah Tif'eret*, initiated a scrambling of the known order of *sefirot* and angelic beings. The magical knowledge of the builders depended upon the precise hierarchies that existed previously, so God's action disrupted their abilities to manipulate the material world.

Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer 24 infers from the plural formulation in Genesis 11:7 that not only God descends but also the angels above: *Come, let us go down and baffle their language there so that they will not understand each other's language*.

On the disruption of the normal hierarchies, see *Zohar* 1:149b; 2:6a-b.

24. One archon in the heavens... This archon is Metatron, often called "Prince of the World." Metatron is the supreme angel in the celestial hierarchy, overseeing all other angels and their activities in the world. The evil-doing builders were able to control his acts only as long as they were master linguists; once language failed them, they lost their power. See *Derekh Emet*, Vital; Galante. Cf. *Or Yaqar*, who identifies the archon as the *sekhel ha-po'el*, Active Intellect.

On Metatron as the master of keys, see *Zohar* 1:181b; 3:171b; *ZH* 39d. On Metatron in general, see 3 Enoch 4; BT *Hagigah* 15a, *Yevamot* 16b and *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *pasuq zeh*; *Sanhedrin* 38b, *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Zohar* 1:21a, 37b, 95b, 126a-b (*MhN*), 143a, 162a; 2:65b-66b; 2:131a; 3:217a-b; *ZH* 8d, 9d-10a, 10b, 12b, 24a, 25d-26a (all *MhN*), 42d, 69b (*ShS*); Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 377-81; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:626-32; Margaliot, *Mal'akhei Elyon*, 73-108; Lieberman, "Metatron, the meaning of his name and his functions"; Abrams, "Boundaries of Divine Ontology"; Wolfson, "Metatron and *Shi'ur Qomah* in the

Writings of Hasidei Ashkenaz”; Wolski, “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night”; above, [pp. 453-54](#), [nn. 269-70](#).

25. until the arrival of forces and troops...

According to rabbinic tradition, the Ephraimites miscalculated the divinely decreed length of the Egyptian bondage and made a premature exodus, for which they were punished—nearly all of them being killed by the Philistines. Eventually their dry bones were resurrected by Ezekiel. Here, it is explained that since they did not want to leave Egypt at the right time (“at the end of the right”), they were doomed to perish at the end of days. Their end occurs in a בקעה (*biq’ah*), *valley*, which is construed here according to its root, בקע (*bq’*), “to cleave, split.”

On the premature exodus of the Ephraimites, see *Mekhilta, Beshallah, Petihta*; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 13:17; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Exodus 13:17; BT *Sanhedrin* 92b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 11:10; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 2:7; *Shemot Rabbah* 20:11; *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 48; Rashi on Ezekiel 37:1; Naḥmanides on Exodus 12:42; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:2-3, n. 10. The identification of the Ephraimites with those who were resurrected by Ezekiel is found in BT *Sanhedrin* and *Targum Yerushalmi*.

The two different “ends” contrast a phrase from Genesis 4:3 that ends with ימים (*yamim*), “days,” with a similar phrase in Daniel 12:13 that ends with ימין (*yamin*). In the latter verse, *yamin* is an aramaized form of the Hebrew ימים (*yamim*), “days,” but it is interpreted here as the Hebrew ימין (*yamin*), “right,” thus distinguishing between קץ ימים (*qets yamim*), *end of days*, and קץ הימין (*qets ha-yamin*), *end of the right*. Usually in the *Zohar*, *qets ha-yamin* alludes to *Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut*, who is the consummation of the divine flow, characterized by the grace of *Hesed* on the right (as opposed to the Other Side, which derives from the left). She will eventually bring redemption, reigning as the Kingdom of Heaven throughout all the worlds. *Qets yamim*, “End of days,”

refers to the Other Side, who appears as the Angel of Death and ends all human life.

The full verse in Daniel reads: *As for you, go on till the end; you will rest, and arise for your share* לקץ הימין (*le-qets ha-yamin*), *at the end of days*. On *qets ha-yamin*, see *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:6; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 17:5; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:7; *Zohar* 1:54a-b, 62b-63a, 75a (ST), 210b, 233b, 234b-235a; 2:33a-34a, 181b; 3:142b (IR); ZH 63c (*ShS*), 83b, 88b (last two *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 73-75, 368-71; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 80-81 (102-3); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 158.

26. idol erected by Nebuchadnezzar... The Other Side received additional reinforcement from Nebuchadnezzar's idol, which was set up in the valley of Dura, which in turn is now associated with the valley where the Tower of Babel had been built. But when the bones rose up, the pagan statue was destroyed.

See BT *Sanhedrin* 92b: "Six miracles were performed on that day, namely: the furnace floated upward; its walls [partly] fell in; its foundations crumbled [with the heat]; the image [which Nebuchadnezzar had set up to be worshipped] was overthrown upon its face; four royal suites [associated with the attempted murder of the three heroes] were burned; Ezekiel resurrected the dead in the valley of Dura."

See Daniel 3:1: *King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of god whose height was sixty cubits high and whose width was six cubits. He set it up* בבקעה (*be-viq'at*), *in the valley of Dura in the province of Babylon*.

On the verse in Isaiah, see Rashi. The next verse in Isaiah reads: *And the confused shall acquire insight and grumblers accept instruction*.

27. force of the potency of the King... This passage describes the emergence of the soul from the realm of the *sefirot*, its descent into the world, and its mission there. As a prelude it briefly describes the emanation of the *sefirot*,

beginning with the “King” who signifies *Ein Sof*. The enormous tree signifies *Tif’eret*, planted in the ground of *Malkhut*, who is surrounded by “twelve boundaries,” the dimensions of the supernal realm. The other “trees” or “plantings” signify the five *sefirot* that surround *Tif’eret*, namely *Ḥesed* through *Yesod*, which are symbolized also by the five hundred parasangs. The “four sides of the world” may correspond to the sefirotic quartet of *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif’eret*, and *Shekhinah*. “All desires” are contained within *Tif’eret*, a sign of the unity of the divine will within the multiplicity of *sefirot*.

“Potency of the king” renders הרמנו דמלכא (*harmanu de-malka*), “authority (or decree) of the king.” This expression is a common feature in *Sitrei Torah*. The almost identical phrase הרמנא דמלכא (*harmana de-malka*), “authority (or decree) of the king,” appears in BT *Berakhot* 58a, *Gittin* 57b, *Bava Metsi’a* 83b–84a, *Hullin* 57b. The word *harmana* is similar to the Middle Parthian *hramān* and is related in origin to the Middle Persian *framān*, “command.” On the similar term הורמנותא (*hormenuta*), cf. *Zohar* 1:15a, 97a, 108a, 109b (last three all *ST*); 107b, 147a (both *Tos*), 251a–b (*Hash, Mat*); 2:123a; *ZḤ* 121d (*Mat*). On stylistic features of *Sitrei Torah*, see Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar,” 263–65.

“Boundaries” renders תחומין (*teḥumin*); alternatively, “limits, dominions.” The phrase here recalls the twelve גבולי אלכסון (*gevulei alakhsan*), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1. See *Bahir* 64 (95); Naḥmanides on Deuteronomy 33:6; idem, *Derashah le-Ḥatunah* in *Kitvei Ramban* 1:135; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 511–12; *Zohar* 1:35a, 156a (*ST*), 159b, 199a, 241a; 2:2a, 58b, 62b, 64b, 66b, 104b–105a, 229b; 3:78a, 96b, 118b, 134b, 138a (last two *IR*), 148b, 209a; *ZḤ* 2b (*SO*), 55a, 62a, 63d (last two *ShS*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:917, n. 56.

On the five hundred parasangs of the tree, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 15:6: “Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Ila’i said, ‘The Tree of Life extends over a journey of five hundred years, and all the waters of Creation branch off beneath it.’” (The Greek parasang equals about 3.5 modern miles). See *Zohar* 1:18a, 78b (*ST*); 2:2a; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 56 (69).

For various interpretations of this passage, see Galante; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

T1, V7, M2, Mantua, and Cr for *Lekh Lekha* contain passages (some lengthy) that are apparently additions by a later hand, and are often called marginal notes by commentators. These passages have been omitted from the translation. See Galante; Azulai, *Or ha-Levanah*; Jozefow; Margalio; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik; Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar,” 266–69. As a group, many of these passages show the influence of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam al Rut*. Moreover, *Sitrei Torah* does not appear in *Or Yaqar* for the section of *Lekh Lekha*.

On the history of the editing of the *Zohar* in general, see Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, 224–64, 360–428; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 84–139; Meroz, “Zoharic Narratives and Their Adaptations.”

28. filling the sea... All divine overflow from *Tif’eret* reflects a united will—spilling into *Shekhinah*, signified by “sea.” This tree, the Tree of Life, metamorphoses into a river, source for all overflow in the upper world, and source of human souls as well.

On the tree as the site of origin of human souls, see *Bahir* 67 (98); *Zohar* 1:13a–b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:679–80.

29. seven blessings... Abram (later Abraham) is the father of the Jewish people and also symbolizes the highest aspect of soul, the *neshamah*. Before a human soul leaves the Garden of Eden, signifying *Shekhinah*, it receives the overflow of seven *sefirot*, in the form of seven blessings. The stature of

the *neshamah* is inferred using the technique of *notariqon*, in which a word is split into parts to evince another meaning. Here, the name אַבְרָם (*Avram*) yields *av* (or *abba*, as here), “progenitor,” and *ram*, “superior,” which together indicate the relationship of *neshamah* to spirit and to body. (The redundancy and obscurity in this paragraph is found in the earliest manuscripts and first printings.)

Seven blessings are educed from Genesis 12:1–3, where they are promised to Abram, that is, the *neshamah*. On Abram as an aspect of soul, see *Zohar* 1:79b (*ST*, printed editions); cf. *ZH* 24a–b (*MhN*), 75c (*MhN*, *Rut*). On the seven blessings, see *Zohar* 1:78a (*ST*); *ZH* 24a–b (*MhN*), 75c (*MhN*, *Rut*).

30. one hundred keys... Rabbinic law enjoins each person to recite one hundred blessings daily, which is understood by the kabbalists as a means to perfect the ten rungs within each of the ten *sefirot*. God’s first words to Abram, that is, the *neshamah*, are לך לך (*lekh lekha*), *Go for yourself*, demonstrating that the first commandment that a soul receives before entering this world is the requirement to recite one hundred blessings. These blessings and commandments are given to the soul so that it can perform enhancements upon the Garden, signifying *Shekhinah*.

לך (*Lekh*) means “go.” The following word, לך (*lekha*), means literally “to you, for you,” though idiomatically it lends the verb the sense of “separating, taking leave of.” Here, the author interprets these words as instructions for self-perfection. See Exodus 18:27; Joshua 22:4; Sarna, *Genesis*, ad loc.

On the adjuration of the soul, see BT *Niddah* 30b; “Seder Yetsirat ha-Vlad,” 157; *Zohar* 1:233b; 2:161b; 3:13a, 43a; *ZH* 47a (*MhN*, *Rut*). On the sense of *for yourself*, see Rashi and Nahmanides on the verse; *Zohar* 1:77b–78a. On the sense of *to you*, see Vol. 7, p. 107, n. 326.

31. From your land... Each part of the verse in Genesis is parsed to reveal the soul’s point of origin within

Divinity before it enters this world. “Garden of Eden” signifies the celestial garden, the last station before the soul’s entry. “Tree of Life” signifies *Tif’eret*. The term “house” is commonly used in rabbinic literature to signify a man’s wife. The allegorical style of interpretation allows the author to interpret *to the land that I will show you*—whose simple sense signifies the Promised Land, the land of Israel—as a reference to “this world,” which in this context has a more negative connotation.

On “house” as signifying “wife,” see, e.g., M *Yoma* 1:1, in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: “*He will atone for himself and for ביתו (beito), his household (Leviticus 16:6)—his household means his wife.*”

The verse from Proverbs reads in its entirety: *He who robs his father and mother and says, ‘It is no crime,’ is partner to a destroyer.* This interpretation of *father and mother* as divine parents derives from BT *Berakhot* 35b: “Rabbi Ḥanina son of Papa said, ‘Whoever enjoys this world without reciting a blessing—it is as if he robs the blessed Holy One and Assembly of Israel, as is said: *He who robs his father and mother and says, ‘It is no crime,’ is partner to a destroyer—father is none other than the blessed Holy One... and mother is none other than Assembly of Israel.*”

32. one blessing... The verse elucidates seven blessings that were given to Abram, who signifies the soul that is being prepared for descent into this world.

On the seven blessings, and on Abram as a symbol of the soul, see above, [note 29](#).

The full context of Genesis 12:2–3 reads: *I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse. Through you all families of the earth will be blessed.*

33. לוט (lut), curse, went with him... Lot represents the serpent (associated with the evil impulse) by virtue of the presumed derivation of the name *Lot* from the Aramaic

root *lty*, “to curse.” According to rabbinic tradition, the evil impulse attempts to seduce a person from the moment of birth, whereas the good impulse enters only at age thirteen. Further, it is at the age of thirteen (for a boy) that one is obligated to perform commandments; in the *Zohar* it also marks a developmental stage in the maturation of the soul. In rabbinic literature, already from the age of twelve and one day, a boy’s vows are binding upon confirmation that he understands that they were made in God’s honor. Here, the *neshamah* (highest level of soul) is latent within the child, emerging upon maturity. In T1, V7, Mantua, and Cremona the paragraph concludes: “and two supernal ones above them, yielding fourteen.”

On evil crouching, see Genesis 4:7: *At the opening crouches sin, and for you is its desire, but you will rule over it.*

On Lot as the evil impulse, see *Zohar* 1:79a (ST), 109a-110b, 111a (ST), 128b, 137a-b (last two *MhN*); *ZH* 24b-25a (*MhN*). On the evil impulse during youth, see Genesis 8:21; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 16; *Qohelet Rabbah* on 4:13; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:5; *Zohar* 1:78a-79a (ST), 110b (*MhN*), 179a-b; 2:33b, 72b (RR), 101a, 113a; *ZH* 10c-d (*MhN*). On the *neshamah* entering at age thirteen, see *Zohar* 1:78a-79a (ST), 2:98a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:762-63. On the significance of the age thirteen, see *Zohar* 1:179a-b; 2:248b (*Heikh*); *ZH* 15d (*MhN*). On age twelve and onward, see M *Niddah* 5:6; BT *Niddah* 45b.

On the serpent as the evil impulse, see BT *Bava Batra* 16a, in the name of Resh Lakish: “Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same.’ See *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 13; *Zohar* 1:35b, 52a, 198b, 202a; 2:262b-263a (*Heikh*); 3:101b; *ZH* 18c (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 394-95. Cf. BT *Sukkah* 52b as quoted below, [note 37](#).

V5, P1, M2, T1, V7, Mantua, and Cremona all read that one must complete fourteen years before attaining spiritual

maturity, but this age is not explicitly attested to elsewhere in rabbinic or Zoharic literature. However, the *Zohar* (and Zacuto, *Peirush ha-Remez* 3:412) does reference thirteen years and onward (2:97b–98a), whereas Abraham Abulafia (Spanish kabbalist of mid-thirteenth century Spain) adds an additional day: “[the rabbis] were precise regarding the word וְיָשָׁר (ish), man, saying ‘until he becomes a man,’ that is, *bar mitsvah*, thirteen full years and one day into the fourteenth year.” See Abulafia, *Maftē’ah ha-Tokhaḥot*, 88. This definition is adopted as the generic marker of maturity in Lurianic Kabbalah. See, e.g., Vital, *Sefer Ets Hayyim*, 25:3, 6; 28:2; 29:3, 9; 41:2; idem, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot, Drushei Yom ha-Kippurim* 5; idem, *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamot* 5, 7.

The full verse in Genesis reads: *Abram went as YHVH told him and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.*

34. parasangs of the Tree of Life... Why was Abram’s age broken down into units of tens and ones? “Five” signifies the five hundred parasangs of the Tree of Life, and is associated with *Tif’eret*, the fifth *sefirah* counting from *Malkhut* upward. “Seventy” symbolizes *Malkhut*, which is derived from its position as the seventh of the lower *sefirot*. Thus at the age of twelve and the infusion of the soul, one begins to participate in the unification of masculine and feminine potencies of Divinity. Alternatively, the designation “seventy” also applies to *Tif’eret*, because of the two additional patriarchal *sefirot* (*Hesed* and *Gevurah*), who complete Him—or because *Tif’eret* is crowned by *Binah*, who is “the seventh” *sefirah* above *Shekhinah*.

On the five hundred parasangs of the Tree of Life, see above, [note 27](#). For different interpretations, see *Zohar* 3:102b; Galante; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

35. when he left Haran... Symbolizing the soul’s maturation and purification, Abram leaves חָרָן (*Haran*), “Haran,” which is associated here with חָרוֹן (*haron*), “wrath,”

and with demonic forces. See *Zohar* 1:147a, 147b (*Tos*), 148a (*ST*).

36. foreskin rules for three years... Foreskin is the paradigmatic symbol of impurity and demonic forces that block holiness. Generally, the term ערלה (*orlah*), “foreskin,” is applied ritually to fruit and to the human penis, and metaphorically to lips, ears, and heart. In this allegorical interpretation, after the age of thirteen (referring to a boy), the soul dominates the body, as represented by Abram’s taking Sarai as a wife; meanwhile, the evil impulse, symbolized by Lot, is suppressed. The evil impulse’s control is not entirely vanquished because of its close ties to the body, as suggested by the verse’s reference to Lot being *son of his brother* [or: *his nephew*].

According to Leviticus 19:23, a tree’s fruit must not be eaten during the first three years of growth: *When you come to the land and plant any fruit-bearing tree, you shall treat its foreskin with its fruit as foreskin* [or: *you shall leave its fruit uncircumcised*]. *Three years it shall be foreskin* [or: *uncircumcised, forbidden*] *to you; it shall not be eaten*. In this verse, *foreskin* refers to the fruit enclosed in its bud; the closed bud is to be plucked before its fruit emerges, leaving the fruit “uncircumcised.”

On foreskin as the paradigmatic sign of Gentiles, see Isaiah 52:1: *For the uncircumcised and the impure will enter you no more*. See Exodus 6:12; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; 2 Samuel 1:20; Jeremiah 6:10; 9:25; Ezekiel 44:9; M *Nedarim* 3:11; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 29; El’azar of Worms, *Sodei Razayya*, 145; *Zohar* 1:13a, 47a, 95a-b, 98b (*ST*), 103b, 172b; 2:244b, 255b (*Heikh*); 3:72b-73a; *ZH* 66b, 67a, 69d, 72a, 72d (all *ShS*), 79b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *She’elot u-Teshuvot*, 45-46; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67-68); idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 131-32; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 33-34, 57, 109; Gikatilla, *Sha’arei Orah*, 50b-51a; Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 17:1; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1678-80; Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women*

Circumcised?, 94–98; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, index s.v. “foreskin.”

On Sarai/Sarah as the body, see *Zohar* 1:113b, 115a, 122b 124b (all *MhN*). Cf. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 2:4: “Whereas the body is from the female, it is the soul that is from the male, for the soul is the substance of a particular body.” In the *Zohar’s* day, allegorical interpretations of Scripture that would read Abraham as form and Sarah as matter were subject to harsh critique. See Abba Mari, *Minḥat Qena’ot*, 316, 345–46, 413. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:763. On the following teachings, cf. *ZH* 24b (*MhN*).

The simple meaning of the verse in Genesis reads: *Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew and all the goods they had gotten and the persons they had engaged in Haran, and they set out on the way to the land of Canaan.*

37. *And the soul they had made...* For the first thirteen years of a boy’s life, he is dominated by the evil impulse that partners with the lowest aspect of soul, נפש (*nefesh*). Subsequently, the highest aspect of soul—נשמה (*neshamah*), or its Aramaic cognate, נשמתא (*nishmeta*)—teams with the body to perfect the *nefesh*. Dragging the evil impulse to study Torah is a well-attested tactic in rabbinic literature.

According to the simple sense of this verse, נפש (*nefesh*) means *persons*, and עשו (*asu*) means *engaged*, referring to the retainers that Abram and Sarai had acquired—a positive interpretation of the verb. Rabbinic and Zoharic literature frequently explain the phrase as a reference to Abram and Sarai’s achievements in prompting others to convert to their faith. Here, it is explained that the *nefesh* is originally formed in חרן (*Ḥaran*), which is associated with חרון (*ḥaron*), “wrath”—inverting the verse’s usual meaning.

Generally in the *Zohar*, the soul has three rungs: נפש (*nefesh*), “soul”; רוח (*ru’ah*), “spirit”; and נשמה (*neshamah*), “holy soul” (or “breath”)—or נשמתא (*nishmeta*), the Aramaic

cognate. *Nefesh*, lowest of the three, vitalizes and animates the body through the performance of commandments. *Ru'ah* is the intermediate aspect, arousing the person through study of Torah and providing moral guidance. If a person is sufficiently animated through commandments and Torah, he will merit a higher soul—*neshamah*—overflowing from above.

On Torah study as a method for disciplining the evil impulse, see BT *Sukkah* 52b: “A scholar from the school of Rabbi Yishma’el taught, ‘If this repulsive one [i.e., the evil impulse] attacks you, drag him to the house of study. If he is of stone, he will dissolve; if of iron, he will shatter.’”

On *the persons they had acquired*, see *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 32; *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:14; BT *Sanhedrin* 99b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:3; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 12; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 12; B 26; Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Genesis 12:5; *Zohar* 1:130a (*MhN*); 2:147b, 198a; 3:168a; *ZH* 25a (*MhN*). On *Haran*, see *Zohar* 1:78b–79a (*ST*), 1:147a, 147b (*Tos*), 148a (*ST*).

On the three aspects of soul, see *Hagigah* 12b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ve-ruḥot u-nshamot*; *Sefer ha-Bahir* 35 (53); Maimonides, *Shemoneh Peraqim*, 1; Radak, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, s.v. *yhd*; *Zohar* 1:62a, 79b–81a (*ST*), 83a–b, 109a–b (*MhN*), 205b–206a, 224b–225a; 2:74a (*Mat*), 94b (*TZ*), 95a–b, 141b–142b, 182a; 3:16a, 24b–25a, 70b–71b, 91b; *ZH* 6d, 9a, 14b (last three *MhN*), 75a–c, 78d, 82c, 83a, 91a (last five all *MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 38–47; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 305; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 28–30 (33–36); *Nitsotsei Zohar*. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:9; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 32:2; *Devarim Rabbah* 2:37; Rashi and Naḥmanides on Genesis 2:7. For an extensive discussion of the three aspects of the soul, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:684–722, 761–64.

On Torah study as a method for disciplining the evil impulse, see *Sifrei Devarim* 43, 45; *Bereshit Rabbah* 70:8; BT *Berakhot* 5a, *Qiddushin* 30b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A 16;

Satlow, “And on the Ground You Shall Sleep”; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 20–25.

At this point in T1, V7, and the standard editions (79b–80a), there is a short passage incorporating material regarding various parts of the soul, similar in content to material found in *MhN*, *Rut*, but it is apparently a late addition to the text.

38. *Shechem*... In apportioning the land of Israel, Jacob confers a double portion to Joseph: *I assign to you* על אחד שכחם אחד (*shekhem aḥad al*), *one portion more than, to your brothers*. The interpretation here follows medieval biblical commentators who associate the word *shekhem* (portion) with the town bearing the word as a name. Joseph, symbolizing צדיק (*tsaddiq*), Righteous One, or *Yesod*, merits to be joined with *Shekhinah*, represented by צדק (*tsedeq*), Justice. Abram’s travels take him to the juncture of these two, marked by the *terebinth of Moreh*, interpreted as מורה (*moreh*), *teaching*.

The simple meaning of Genesis 48:22 reads *I have given you with single intent over your brothers what I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow*. See *Targum Onqelos*; *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.), Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Radak, Sarna, Alter, ad loc.; BT *Bava Batra* 123a. For other interpretations, see Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

39. evil impulse becomes fragrant... Torah study sweetens the evil impulse against its will. Above, this impulse is called לוט (*Lut*), “curse,” whereas here it is called Canaanite—because it manifests differently under varying conditions. Here it is subjugated to the purified body, symbolized by *land*. The evil impulse is not fully extinguished, though, in order to retain the human desire to procreate and to engage in other world-sustaining activities.

On the multiple names of the evil impulse, see BT *Sukkah* 52a: “The evil impulse has seven names. The

blessed Holy One called it Evil... Moses called it Uncircumcised... David called it Impure... Solomon called it Enemy... Isaiah called it Stumbling-Block... Ezekiel called it Stone... Joel called it Hidden One.” See *Zohar* 1:18a; 2:262b–263a (*Heikh*); 3:101b.

On the necessity of the evil impulse, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:7, in the name of Rabbi Shemu’el: “Behold, it was very good—this is the good impulse; And behold, it was very good (Genesis 1:31)—this is the evil impulse. Is the evil impulse very good? How astonishing! Yet were it not for the evil impulse, no man would ever build a house, marry a woman, or engender children.” Cf. BT *Yoma* 69b.

40. Why is it called Canaanite ... In Hebrew, the word כְּנֻעִי (*Kna’ani*), “Canaanite,” also means “merchant, trader.” Here it is associated with the term סוֹחֵר (*soher*), “merchant,” and reinterpreted as סְחוֹר (*sehōr*), “surrounding,” in reference to the way that a merchant surrounds a prospective customer with wares. See, for example, Isaiah 23:8; Ezekiel 16:29, 17:4; Hosea 12:8; Zechariah 14:21; Proverbs 31:24; Job 40:30; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 306; Galante; Zacuto; *Sullam*; Scholem; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

41. place from which she emerged... *Altar* and *his tent* both signify *Shekhinah*, where souls originate, ultimately emerging from the Garden of Eden. If a person behaves piously in this world, the soul will return to the Garden of Eden and *Shekhinah*. Before final judgment, the soul lies between אֵי (*Ai*), “Ai”—a place name, though the Hebrew word אֵי (*ai*) also means “destruction and ruin” (see, for example Psalms 79:1)—and Bethel (literally House of God), signifying the celestial realm.

The *qerei* (vocalized form) of אֹהֶלָה (*oholoh*) means *his tent*, but normally the masculine pronominal suffix would be indicated by the letter *vav*. In this case it is indicated by the letter הֶ (*he*), which is normally a feminine marker. In Kabbalah, *he* is also a symbol of *Shekhinah*, being the last

letter of the tetragrammaton. Here, it is construed as signifying *her tent*, i.e., the soul's tent—or perhaps the tent of *Shekhinah*, the source of the soul. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:4, 39:15 (and Theodor's note); Rashi on Genesis 12:8; *Zohar* 1:73a, 83a, 84a; *Minḥat Shai* on Genesis 12:8.

According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8, Adam was formed from the dirt beneath the Temple altar. On the soul's return to Eden, see *Zohar* 1:81a (*ST*), 125b (*MhN*). The simple meaning of Genesis 13:4 reads: *to the place of the altar he had built there at first, and Abram invoked there the name YHVH.*

42. He built this Altar... upon twelve stones... The blessed Holy One fashioned *Shekhinah* upon the twelve celestial powers that are signified by the twelve stones of the altar.

After Jacob wrestled with the angel, he was renamed Israel, a name that comes to signify the entire nation that descended from his twelve sons. See Genesis 32:29; 35:10. On the altar of twelve stones, see 1 Kings 18:31–32. See *Zohar* 1:66b, 149a–b (*ST*), 241a.

43. Michael the high priest... Even though *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the heavenly altar, is last of the *sefirot*, She was conceived at the beginning of God's emanations. When a worthy soul ascends heavenward, the angel Michael serves as high priest, delivering the soul to God as a sacrifice on the celestial altar. When such a soul, signified here by *Abram*, is placed upon the altar it invokes the name *YHVH* and is absorbed into *Shekhinah*, called the "bundle of life."

According to rabbinic tradition, Michael offers sacrifices on the heavenly altar. See *Tosafot Menaḥot* 110a, s.v. *u-mikha'el sar ha-gadol*, which notes that according to some passages, these offerings are comprised of the souls of the righteous. See BT *Hagigah* 12b, *Zevahim* 62a, *Menaḥot* 110a; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:12; *Zohar* 1:81a (*ST*); 2:159a

(standard editions); ZH 21a, 24b, 25a (last three *MhN*); [Moses de León?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 137. Cf. *Zohar* 3:53a.

Shekhinah is often called “bundle of life,” a phrase deriving from 1 Samuel 25:29: *The soul of my lord will be bound in the bundle of life with YHVH your God*. See *Zohar* 1:65b, 205b, 209a, 224b, 236b; 2:11a, 36b, 54a, 59a, 142b, 200b; 3:24b-25a, 70b, 71b, 90b, 92a, 139a (*IR*), 142a, 156a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 123; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 57; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 60-61 (75-76); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 349.

44. to refine the body fittingly... Spiritual life is a constant struggle and the body is its battlefield, with the aim of the soul to subjugate the evil impulse and wrest the body free from its control. Abram and Lot represent the two antagonists, with their respective herdsmen signifying the celestial and demonic forces that the two sides bring to bear.

See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 761-70; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 57-67, 75-76, 84-95, 106-8, 168-69, 179-82.

45. close to one another... The individual subject is constituted through daily conflict. See BT *Berakhot* 61a: “Rav Naḥman son of Rav Ḥisda expounded, ‘Why is it written וַיִּצֶר (Va-yiytser), *And He formed, the human being...*, spelled with two *yods*? Because the blessed Holy One created two impulses, one good and the other evil.’ ... Rabbi Shim’on son of Pazzi said, ‘Woe is me from יוצרי (yotsri), my Creator; woe is me from יצרי (yitsri), my evil impulse!’... The sages taught, ‘A person has two kidneys; one advises him to do good and one advises him to do evil. And it stands to reason that good is to his right and evil is to his left...’”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:4; *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 2:7; *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva (Battei Midrashot)*, 2:412; *Zohar* 1:49a; 3:46b; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 57, 74-86, 129-30.

46. to dupe them and ruin them... On account of the behavior of Lot, representing the evil impulse, the people of Sodom became corrupted. Both *land* and *tent* are frequent ciphers for a feminine, supernal entity—Abraham affiliates with *Shekhinah*, whereas Lot aligns with Her feminine counterpart.

On Lot's choosing the cities of the plain and Sodom after separating from Abram, see *Zohar* 1:106b (*MhN*); *ZH* 24c-d (*MhN*).

47. blessed Holy One dwelt within him See *Tanḥuma, Vayetse* 10: "You should realize that as long as Abraham cleaved to Lot, the blessed Holy One was not revealed to him. As soon as he parted from him, He was revealed to him. How do we know? Rabbi El'azar son of Pedat said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Zimra, 'As is said: *YHVH said to Abram. When? After Lot had parted from him.*'"

48. evil impulse taken hostage... The evil impulse was so ensconced among those wicked ones, it was as if kidnapped. *His initiates* renders *חניכיו* (*ḥanikhav*), a term that appears in the Bible only in this verse. Here it is construed as if equivalent to *מחונכיו* (*mehunnakhav*), "his initiates," with regard to Torah study. Abram brought along the scholars whom he had trained to rescue sinners.

In its simple sense, the verse from Genesis reads: *When Abram heard that his kinsman had been captured, he marshaled his retainers, natives of his household, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan.* On *חניכיו* (*ḥanikhav*), see Rashi, ad loc.; *ZH* 24d (*MhN*).

49. limbs of the body... In the purified body, the limbs are eager to join in holy action.

50. pursued as far as דן (dan), Dan... In the biblical story of the battle of the five kings and four kings, Abram brings his own army up to the tribal areas of Dan. Here the name *Dan* is reinterpreted as a reference to *דינא* (*dina*), "judgment," namely the moral caution that Abram

articulates to the wicked. Abram's success in recovering *all the possessions* signifies that he successfully encouraged the sinners to full *teshuvah*. Abram's pursuit of Lot is an allegory for the righteous person's relentless attempts to rescue the wicked. The righteous do not abandon the wicked, but rather actively seek to save them from impending doom.

51. castigating them... regarding their sin... On the role of rebuke, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1424-25; Hecker, "The Face of Shame."

The clause "let us return to the earlier matters" seems out of place, since the text does not in fact go back to earlier issues in the *parashah*. For similar expressions, see *Zohar* 1:203b; 3:205b; *ZH* 65b (*ShS*).

52. watchmen patrolling the city... On this verse, see *ZH* 21a (*MhN*).

53. Jerusalem above corresponding to Jerusalem below... The walls are celestial regions around *Shekhinah*, depicted as heavenly Jerusalem. Upon these walls are stationed guardian angels. See *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 1: "There is a Jerusalem above aligned with Jerusalem below. Out of His love for the one below, He fashioned another above, as is said: *See, on the palms of My hands I have engraved you, your walls are ever before Me* (Isaiah 49:16)... He has sworn that His Presence will not enter the heavenly one until the lower one is rebuilt."

On Jerusalem above, see Psalms 122:3 and Targum, Rashi, ad loc.; Revelation 21:2; JT *Berakhot* 4:5, 8c; BT *Ta'anit* 5a, and Rashi, ad loc.; *Zohar* 1:1b, 122a (*MhN*), 128b, 183b, 231a; 2:51a; 3:15b, 68b, 147b; *ZH* 24b, 25a, 25d, 26b, 28c-d (all *MhN*), 71a (*ShS*). On the angels, see *Zohar* 2:89b, 212a; *ZH* 93c (*MhN, Eikhah*). On the archangel Michael as high priest, see above, [note 43](#).

Numerous elements of the following unit appear in Hebrew in the Zoharic stratum *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*,

whereas the unit here is entirely in Aramaic. See *ZH* 20d-21a (*MhN*).

On ontic parallelism, see *Tabula Smaragdina*, attributed to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus, “What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.” See Newton, *The Chymistry of Isaac Newton*, 2r; Read, *Prelude to Chemistry*, 54.

54. Cave of Machpelah... This cave is first mentioned in Genesis 23 when Abraham purchases it as a burial site for Sarah. Eventually all the matriarchs (excluding Rachel) and patriarchs were buried there. According to rabbinic tradition, Adam and Eve were buried in this cave in addition to the patriarchs and matriarchs. Based on this tradition, the *Zohar* teaches that the Cave of Machpelah leads to the Garden of Eden. After the worthy soul is welcomed by these righteous ones, she is clothed in an ethereal body that resembles the physical body she inhabited on earth.

On the Cave of Machpelah, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 58:4, 8; *BT Eruvin* 53a; *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 20, 36; *Midrash ha-Gadol*, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra on Genesis 23:9; *Zohar* 1:38b (*Heikh*), 57b, 127a-128b, 219a, 248b, 250b; 2:151b; *ZH* 21a (*MhN*), 79d (*MhN, Rut*). On seeing Primal Adam at the time of death, see *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:18; *Tanḥuma, Huqqat* 16.

On the ethereal body, see above, [pp. 158-59](#), [n. 373](#).

55. nefesh, ru’ah, and neshamah... Rabbinic literature identifies five names for the soul, which medieval thought turns into a hierarchy of different parts of the soul. Most common in medieval philosophy and Kabbalah is a tripartite understanding of soul. The *nefesh* is the animalistic aspect of soul, responsible for all primary human drives and basic existence. Here, the father’s *nefesh* conducts the new *nefesh* downward into his semen, and then through sexual intercourse in concert with desire, into his wife.

Celestial energy, elicited from heavenly beings called *ishim*, is also infused there.

On the tripartite soul, see above, [note 37](#).

“Mystery of mysteries (or secret of secrets), transmitted to the wise of heart,” is a characteristic formulation of *Sitrei Torah*. See *Zohar* 1:108b-109a (*Tos*), 162a (*ST*). On *ishim* as a class of angel, see Maimonides, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:7; 4:6; 7:1; *Zohar* 2:43a (*RM*); *ZH* 6a (*MhN*), 33b, 81b (*MhN, Rut*); Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod, Rosh ha-Shanah* 24b, p. 17a. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:761. There is a twofold biblical basis for this usage of *ishim*. First, Proverbs 8:4 (spoken by Wisdom) lends itself to construing *ishim* as referring to non-human beings. Second, the divine messengers who communicate with human beings—which is Maimonides’ definition of *ishim*—are as individuals frequently designated in the Tanakh as *ish* (e.g., Ezekiel 9:2; 10:2-3, 6; Zechariah 1:10-11; 5:9; Daniel 9:21).

[56.](#) given to those rungs called *ishim*... *If a nefesh sins* (Leviticus 5:21), an offering is given to atone for that *nefesh*. Since it had derived in part from the angelic beings called *ishim*, their contribution has been impugned, and so they must be compensated with a sacrificial offering. Thus the verse from Numbers is interpreted to mean that the sacrifice is given to *ishim*, rather than (according to the simple meaning) as *fire offerings*.

On angels deriving benefit from the sacrifices, see *Zohar* 1:164b, 239b, 248a; 2:238b-239a. The verse in Numbers reads in full: *My offering, My bread, for My fire offerings, My pleasing aroma, you shall take care to offer to Me at its fixed time.*

[57.](#) *nefesh* never abandons the grave... See BT *Shabbat* 152b-153a: “For all twelve months [after death], one’s body endures and his soul ascends and descends; after twelve months, the body ceases to exist and the soul ascends and never again descends.”

On the soul's maintaining contact with the corpse, see JT *Yevamot* 16:3, 15c; *Bereshit Rabbah* 100:7; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 18:1; *Zohar* 1:225a. Cf. *Zohar* 2:199b. On the dead conversing, see BT *Berakhot* 18b.

58. Ru'ah sustains nefesh... As the middle entity of the tripartite human soul, *ru'ah* serves as its bridging aspect. Here, by extension, *ru'ah* also designates *Shekhinah's* desire for Her partner *Tif'eret*, because Her desire leads to His bestowal of *ru'ah* downward. *Ru'ah will return to Elohim who gave it* is interpreted to mean that after death, a person's *ru'ah* returns to *Shekhinah*, signified by *Elohim*. The movement is formulated as *return* because the dynamic began with Her initial expression of desire. The emphasis on yearning is part of what distinguishes the *Zohar's* description of the structure of the human soul from comparable medieval philosophical descriptions.

Many of the ancients (e.g., Galen) believed that both the female and the male generate seed, both forms of which unite to produce the fetus. See Leviticus 12:2 (*When a woman yields seed*); BT *Berakhot* 60a, *Niddah* 25b, 28a, 31a; *Tanḥuma, Tazri'a* 3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tazri'a* 4; Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, 48–50. Cf. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 14:8. On *ru'ah* and female desire, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 29–30 (35). On this passage, see *Sullam*.

59. garbed in the ether of the Garden... The transition from the material realm to the spiritual necessitates a translation from the mundane to the ethereal, and this occurs in the earthly Garden of Eden, which mediates between upper and lower realms. When רוחות (*ruhot*), “spirits,” ascend to the Garden of Eden they adopt spiritual forms that resemble their physical bodies in this world. Similarly, in order for angels (or other ethereal entities) to descend into this world, they must take on aspects of the material world as garments. On Sabbaths and New Moons, the righteous ascend to the heavenly

Garden of Eden, where God delights in their souls. The simple meaning of the phrase from Psalms is *He makes winds His messengers*, but the terms are read midrashically to indicate the transformation of angelic energy into human spirit.

On the garments, or incarnation, of spiritual entities, see Nahmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar* 1:34a-b, 38b (*Heikh*), 58a, 90b, 98b (*ST*), 101a, 144a, 219a; 2:197a, 229b, 231a; 3:126b, 152a, 155b, 208a; *ZH* 48c (*MhN*), 81b (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 316-17; idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 38; [idem?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 133,137; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 27 (32), 61 (75); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 13, 94. Cf. *Zohar* 2:61b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 395. Cf. Philo, *On Abraham*, 22:113. On the Sabbath and festival ascents, see *Zohar* 2:141b-142a, 212a; 3:70b, 144b-145a (*IR*), 159b, 168a; *ZH* 82d (*MhN, Rut*); [Moses de León?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 138-39.

60. In the middle of the garden... Genesis 2:9 describes the Tree of Life as being *in the midst of the garden*, recast here as a multi-colored woven column through which spirits can ascend to the Upper Garden of Eden, symbolizing *Shekhinah*, signified by *Elohim*. From there spirits are raised up as fragrant offerings to God.

On the column in the Garden of Eden, see *Zohar* 1:39a-b (*Heikh*), 219a; 2:130b, 184b, 210a, 211a; 3:185b; [Moses de León?], *Seder Gan Eden*, 132-35, 139-40; idem, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 149-50; Idel, *Ascensions on High*, 101-42. Cf. *Midrash Kohen (Beit ha-Midrash)*, 2:28).

On the verse from Isaiah, see BT *Berakhot* 34b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "All the prophets prophesied only concerning the days of the Messiah, but as for the world that is coming, *No eye has seen, O God, but You, [what You will do for one who awaits You].*" On the archangel Michael as high priest, see above, [note 43](#).

61. soars upward... *Neshamah* originates in *Tif'eret*, signified by the Tree of Life. In contrast to *ru'ah*, *neshamah* is not detained by an interlude in the Garden of Eden.

62. tablet of designation... In another rendering of *ru'ah's* journey to the heavenly realm, *Sitrei Torah* explains that *ru'ah* is evaluated for entry based on the contents of the tablet of designation.

“Tablet of designation” renders פנקס סימנא (*pinqas simana*); alternatively, “account book.” *Pinqas* derives from the Greek *pinax*, and refers to a wax-covered writing tablet or book that records accounts. *Simana* (“sign” or “token”) here refers to this tablet’s use as a ledger recording the merits or failings of a *ru'ah* (spirit) seeking entry to the divine realm.

See M *Avot* 3:16; Targum on Ezekiel 9:2; BT *Shabbat* 156a, *Nedarim* 22a, *Bava Qamma* 99b, *Sanhedrin* 106b, *Menahot* 70a; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 21:7; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayishlah* 8; Jastrow; Sokoloff. On signs or tokens to pass through the various levels of the celestial realm, see *Zohar* 1:21a, 123b (last two *MhN*); 3:162a. Cf. *Zohar* 1:124b, 126b (both *MhN*).

63. As long as she remains there... If the *ru'ah* is denied entry, she is detained in the terrestrial Garden for a prescribed time. During that period, she attempts to ascend to the upper Garden of Eden on New Moons and Sabbaths, but she is assessed each time. Here the tablet (represented as a *shawl*) is like a passport (or token of admission) that can be confiscated from undeserving souls.

Only now is the significance of the verse quoted at the beginning of this homily (on 80b) made apparent. The watchmen of the city from the Song of Songs (5:7) are in fact the ministering angels guarding celestial Jerusalem, and the shawl taken from the young woman in the Song is the token of admission to the upper reaches of the heavenly realm. See *ZḤ* 21a (*MhN*).

On not being able to pass the gates of celestial Jerusalem, see also *ZḤ* 21a, 25d (both *MhN*). The repetition

of the motif of the soul appearing with a spiritual book of accounts is typical of the *Zohar's* style, reflecting earlier rabbinic precedents in midrashic collections.

64. greetings of peace... The act of Torah study confers peace (or wholeness) and divine protection.

On Torah as protection, see BT *Ḥagigah* 27a, in the name of Rabbi El'azar: "The fire of Hell has no dominion over scholars." See *Avot* 6:9; *Sifra, Aḥarei Mot* 13:11, 86b; BT *Berakhot* 5a, *Sotah* 21a and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *hi tesihkha*; *Devarim Rabbah* (Lieberman) on 6:9; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 1; *Midrash Mishlei* 10; *Aggadat Bereshit* 46; *Zohar* 1:132a, 175b, 185a; 2:123b; 3:144a (*IR*), 196b; *ZH* 2c (*SO*), 8d (*MhN*), 70d (*ShS*). Cf. *Zohar* 1:4a; 2:134b; 3:205b.

The verse in Deuteronomy (following the ten commandments) reads: *These words YHVH spoke to your whole assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the dense fog—a mighty voice, adding no more.*

65. legacy of World that is Coming... The feminine figure in the verse from Proverbs is Wisdom, which in rabbinic literature is equated with Torah. According to the rabbinic reading of this verse, one who studies Torah for its own sake will receive the ultimate reward of length of days in the world to come, whereas one who studies Torah for ulterior motives finds reward only in this world. Thirteen rivers of pure balsam await the righteous in the world to come. In the *Zohar*, these rivers often represent the fragrant flow of emanation from *Binah* (represented by the word *yesh*) to *Shekhinah*, and here they emerge from *Ayin*, signifying *Keter*, abode of the thirteen attributes of mercy.

See BT *Shabbat* 63a: "What is the meaning of that which is written: *Length of days in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor* (Proverbs 3:16)? In her right there is length of days, but not riches and honor? Rather, those who relate to it with the [skilled] right hand, [i.e., who study Torah for its own sake and with proper intentions,]—length

of days and all the more so riches and honor. Whereas those who relate to it with the [unskilled] left hand—riches and honor, but not length of days.” See *Avot* 6:7; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 48; *Bereshit Rabbah* 59:2; *Zohar* 1:184b–185a, 190a; 2:171b; 3:189b–190a; *ZH* 64a (*ShS*).

The verse in Proverbs is spoken by Wisdom. According to a midrashic interpretation, the phrase *to endow those who love me with* *שׁוֹ* (*yesh*), *substance*, alludes to 310 worlds that God will eventually bequeath to every righteous person, since this is the numerical value of *yesh*.

See M *Avot* 5:19; *Uqtsin* 3:12; BT *Sanhedrin* 100a; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, add. 1, 451; *Zohar* 1:4b, 156b (*ST*), 158a, 206a, 242b; 2:166b.

On the thirteen rivers of pure balsam, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 62:2; JT *Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42c; BT *Ta’anit* 25a; *Mishnat Rabbi Eli’ezer* 12, p. 238; *Tanḥuma*, *Bereshit* 1; *Zohar* 1:4b, 7a, 88a (*ST*), 176a; 2:127a–b, 146b, 177a (*SdTs*); 3:181a; *ZH* 39d, 49d (printed editions; Vol. 8, p. 221), 70d (*ShS*), 76c (*MhN*, *Rut*); cf. *Zohar* 2:27b; 3:91a, 131a, 139a, 144b (last three *IR*), 289a–b (*IZ*).

66. came from there... As in the Jerusalem Talmud, “there” refers to Babylonia. Studying Torah in the land of Israel is more enlightening than anywhere else. The following narrative bears the literary style of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam*, although it does not appear in the *Midrash ha-Ne’lam* manuscripts at this point in *parashat Lekh Lekha*. They do contain a similar version of this story (corresponding to *ZH* 24a in the printed editions), in which the proclamation is instead posed as a question—a test to determine which of the two options a person desires.

According to the Venice edition of *Zohar Ḥadash* 24a, the narrative found here belongs there, although the manuscripts have a different version of the story, as noted. Apparently this section was labeled as *Sitrei Torah* at an early stage of redaction. Narratives are not normally found in *Sitrei Torah*, leading Meroz to conclude that it belongs to

Midrash ha-Ne'lam. See Scholem; Meroz, "Zoharic Narratives," 22; idem, "R. Ya'akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar," 265, 268–69.

Rabbinic sources refer to a number of rabbis named Abba who emigrated (or returned) from Babylonia to the land of Israel. One of them is the son of Rav Kahana who is the protagonist of the version of the tale in *ZH* 24a (*MhN*). On the choice of riches and honor in this world versus life in the world to come, see BT *Shabbat* 30b.

On this narrative and its parallel in *Midrash ha-Ne'lam*, see Meroz, "Zoharic Narratives," 17–34, 48–54; Vol. 10, pp. 275–78 and notes there. See also *Zohar* 1:189b–190a, which shares numerous motifs with this story.

67. A certain youth "Youth" renders רױק (*ravvaq*), which can also mean "bachelor." Here it is also probably playing upon the related term ריק (*reiq*), "empty," alluding to his apparent spiritual shallowness, but in the *Zohar* one who is perceived at first as empty often turns out not to be so. See BT *Berakhot* 57a: "Like a slice of pomegranate is רקתך (*raqatekh*), your forehead (Song of Songs 4:3)... Even ריקנין (*reiqanin*), the empty ones, among you [i.e., among Israel] are as full of *mitsvot* as a pomegranate [is full of seeds]."

See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 4:3; *Zohar* 2:95a. Cf. *Zohar* 3:157b; Moses de León, *Orḥot Hayyim*, 20.

68. Certainly... This reply is in keeping with the principle of M *Avot* 4:9 that "One who fulfills the Torah in poverty will in the end fulfill it in wealth."

69. they should call him... It is difficult to ascertain Rabbi Abba's tone here: encouraging, prophetic, ironic, or intentionally inscrutable.

70. He entered his chamber... Rabbi Abba is disappointed to discover that his student has not progressed spiritually and is still motivated by material reward. He slips into a secluded room—in which he hopes to gain insight as to how to proceed—and hears (or overhears) a heavenly voice assuring him that his student

will indeed develop prodigiously. The celestial voice sounds the *Zohar's* characteristically optimistic note—standing in tension with its countervailing impulse for moral censure.

“His chamber” renders אדריה (*idrei*), often referring (in Zoharic literature) to a room in which esoteric teachings are exchanged; alternatively, “his threshing room.” Galante offers an explanation for Rabbi Abba’s entry to his chamber: “Apparently his intention was to pray, or להתבודד (*le-hitboded*), to meditate [or: contemplate], or to prostrate himself [literally ‘to fall on his face’] to bring about the student’s death, since he had not been toiling [in Torah] for the sake of heaven.”

See BT *Pesahim* 50b, in the name of Rav: “A person should always engage in Torah and commandments even if not for their own sake, because by doing them not for their own sake, he eventually does them for their own sake.” See also *Avot* 6:1; BT *Berakhot* 17a; *Sukkah* 49b; *Ta’anit* 7a; *Sanhedrin* 99b.

In the parallel version in the manuscripts at *ZH* 24a, it says that the master “bent down,” apparently an alternate technique for gaining information about the future, possibly indicating that he communed with the souls of the departed righteous. On “the chamber,” see Liebes, *Peraqim*, 93–105. On this paragraph, cf. Mopsik.

71. toil in Torah on my behalf... The stranger presents himself as the opposite of Rabbi Yose, preferring Torah to riches—though also perhaps as superficial, thinking that money can buy eternal reward.

On sons’ benefitting the father, see BT *Sanhedrin* 104a: “A son confers benefit onto his father.” Cf. *ZH* 84c (*MhN, Rut*). On the offer of precious vessels in exchange for Torah learning, see *ZH* 90 (*MhN, Rut*). On the image of light filling the house, see BT *Berakhot* 5b.

O2, M7, N36, Mantua, and Cr read “thirteen” rather than “twelve” goblets.

72. *nor can it be exchanged for כלי פז (keli phaz), golden vessels...* Rabbi Abba cites the verse from Job as a subtle rebuke to Rabbi Yose, informing him that one cannot truly exchange Torah for monetary gain.

The verse in Job speaks of Wisdom. See *Zohar* 3:40a-b; *ZH* 24a (*MhN*).

73. *I have squandered life of the world to come...* Rabbi Yose has come to the realization that he had made a fool's bargain.

74. *this is Rabbi Yose son of Pazzi...* This story serves an etiological function, as this rabbi becomes the eponymous ancestor who gives the family of distinguished scholars its name. This family included sages such as Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon, his son, Rabbi Shim'on, and his son's son, Rabbi Yehudah. In returning the riches that he received, Rabbi Yose's spiritual development is complete, having recognized that true wealth lies in Torah and its promise of eternity in the world to come. The *Zohar* thus idealizes the eschewal of worldly riches, even if derived from Torah study.

In rabbinic literature, there is only one extant teaching from Yose son of Pazzi, and that is from a late midrash, commenting on Ruth 4:12 (*May your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah—through the offspring that YHVH will give you by this young woman*): “Rabbi Tanḥuma said in the name of Rabbi Yose son of Pazzi, *so that we may keep alive seed from our father* (Genesis 19:32)—that seed which comes from another place, King Messiah.” In earlier midrashic collections, Rabbi Tanḥuma ascribes this teaching to Rabbi Shemu'el. (In the Jerusalem Talmud, a Rabbi Yehudah son of Pazzi frequently ascribes teachings to a Rabbi Yose son of Hanina. A conflated allusion may be intended here, as well.) See *Midrash Zuta, Rut* 4, and Buber's note, ad loc.

Presumably an early redactor inserted this narrative at this point in a *Sitrei Torah* manuscript as an illustration of

God's promise to Abraham cited above: *your reward is very great* (Genesis 15:1), in compensation for not having taken the spoils of war. See *ibid.* 14:21–24; Sarna.

On Yose son of Pazzi in Zoharic literature, see ZH 11b–c (*MhN*). On the polemical social context of this story, see Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:261–66.

75. במחזה (*ba-maḥazeh*), **in a vision ...** The name *Shaddai* here is associated with *Shekhinah* (though usually with *Yesod*), the lowest rung through which one can apprehend all other *sefirot*. In the context of Exodus 6, God tells Moses that the patriarchs had a lower form of revelation than that which he is receiving. Balaam, too, receives revelation only in this limited capacity.

The Aramaic word חִיזוּ (*ḥeizu*) means “vision, appearance” but in the *Zohar* also “mirror (or speculum, looking-glass, lens).” This added sense may derive from the Hebrew word מראה (*mar’ah*), which can mean either “vision” or “mirror.” Here the mirror (or looking-glass) is *Shekhinah*, who reflects the images of the higher *sefirot*. It is apparently because of that pair (and the fact that many forms deriving from the same root are Aramaic) that the author here deems the word *maḥazeh* as Aramaic.

The translation *through El Shaddai* reflects the Zoharic understanding of the phrase in Exodus באל שדי (*be-El Shaddai*), usually translated *as El Shaddai*. The Hebrew preposition ב (*be*) corresponds roughly to the English “in, as, through, with.” Stating that a name of God is a lens through which one perceives revelatory images expands the meaning of a name by turning it into an instrument for mystical vision; it also limits the name by implying that each name communicates a limited range of knowledge about God. See Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah”; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:292–95; Idel, “Kabbalah of the Divine Names.”

“Language of תרגום (*targum*), translation,” refers to an Aramaic translation of the Bible. Some have argued that by

referring to Aramaic as *targum*, the *Zohar* betrays the fact that its author(s) lived at a time when Aramaic was no longer spoken. See *Zohar* 1:9a-b; 2:129b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:75. Cf., however, M *Yadayim* 4:5; BT *Shabbat* 115a-b.

On “mirror” as a term for *Shekhinah*, see 1:88b, 91a, 149b, 183a, 203a, 211a; 2:23a, 267a (*Heikh*). On *mar’ah* and *maḥazeh*, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 28.

The full verse in Exodus reads: *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by My name YHVH I was not known to them.*

76. This language is concealed from the celestial angels... Rabbi Yose offers a justification for the ancient translation of the Bible into Aramaic, based on the assertion that there are already copious Aramaic words in the Hebrew Bible. Aramaic was used here to check the angels’ possible complaint that someone uncircumcised (a sign of rank impurity)—Abraham—was receiving prophecy. At this stage in Abraham’s story he was not yet circumcised. The angels serve as a mouthpiece for the concern about how, when, and to whom mystical lore and experience can be revealed.

Instances of Aramaic in the Bible include Genesis 31:47; Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. On the angels’ ignorance of Aramaic, see above, [note 17](#).

From biblical texts onward, Jewish literature has associated foreskin with impurity, and metonymically as a sign of the non-Jew. See above, [note 36](#).

77. Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages... See BT *Sotah* 36b: “Gabriel came and taught [Joseph] the seventy languages, but he could not learn them. [Gabriel] added to his name a letter from the name of the blessed Holy One, and he learned [the languages], as is said: *A testimony He ordained it in* [or: *for*] יהוסף (*Yehosef*), *Joseph* [spelled with an extra syllable], *when he went out forth*

against the land of Egypt, [I [namely Joseph] heard [or: learned] a language that I knew not] (Psalms 81:6)."

On Aramaic as abhorrent, see *Tosafot* on *Shabbat* 12b, s.v. *she'ein mal'akhei ha-sharet makirin bi-lshon arami*; Rosh on BT *Berakhot* 13a, n. 2; *Ma'adanei Yom Tov*, ad loc., n. 7. Cf. BT *Hullin* 24a where it is described as an easy language to learn.

78. Onkelos... Yonatan son of Uzi'el... According to rabbinic tradition, these two translated the Torah and the Prophets, respectively. The problem regarding the angels' access to Aramaic is resolved by saying that the angels themselves find the language disgusting, rather than this being an objective assessment of the language. Consequently, it is not actively concealed from them, only *de facto* is it beyond their purview.

See BT *Megillah* 3a, in the name of Rabbi Jeremiah, or according to some Rabbi Ḥiyya son of Abba: "The Targum of the Torah was composed by Onkelos the proselyte, who learned it from Rabbi El'azar and Rabbi Joshua. The Targum of the Prophets was composed by Yonatan son of Uzi'el, who learned it from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; and the land of Israel [thereupon] quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs by four hundred parasangs. A heavenly voice came forth and exclaimed, 'Who is this that has revealed My secrets to humankind?' Yonatan son of Uzi'el thereupon arose and said, 'I am the one who revealed Your secrets to humankind. It is revealed and known to You that I have not done this for my own honor nor for the honor of my father's house, but for Your honor I have done it, that dissension may not increase in Israel.' He further sought to reveal a translation of the Hagiographa, but a heavenly voice went forth and said, 'Enough from you!' What was the reason? Because the date of the Messiah is foretold in it."

On Onkelos, see *Zohar* 3:73a, which says that his teachers did not teach him a word until he was

circumcised. On the angels' jealousy, see *Tosafot* on *Berakhot* 3a, s.v. *yehei shemei ha-gadol mevorakh*: "This is why we recite Kaddish in Aramaic, so that the angels will not understand and be jealous of us." See *Zohar* 1:9b.

79. in full view of the celestial angels... After circumcision, Abraham received a higher level of prophecy, one that could be viewed by the angels as well. In Genesis 15:1 it is recorded: *The word of YHVH came to Abram in מַחֲזֵה (maḥazeh), a vision*, whereas once God commands him regarding circumcision it says *Elohim spoke with him*, without qualifying the experience as *the word of YHVH*, or as only *a vision*. Usually the *Zohar* characterizes these two stages by saying that before Abraham was circumcised, God spoke with him only on the rung of *Shekhinah*—without connection to the higher *sefirot*; whereas after his circumcision, *Yesod* participated as well.

See *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20: "Abram fell on his face [and God spoke with him] (Genesis 17:3). Until he was circumcised, whenever *Shekhinah* spoke with him, he fell down. Once he was circumcised, He spoke with him while he was standing, as is said: *Abraham remained standing in the presence of YHVH* (ibid. 18:22). Further, He revealed Himself to him even while he was sitting, as is said: *YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre [as he was sitting at the opening of the tent]* (ibid., 1)."

Medieval religious thinkers constructed hierarchies of prophecy, with stages ranging from the inferior form of the dream, to the most exalted revelation received by Moses. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:41-45; Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1; *Zohar* 1:88b-89a, 95a-b, 98a, 149a-b; 2:248a (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 6-7.

On the link between circumcision and divine vision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Zohar* 1:88b-89a (*ST*), 91a-b, 94a, 97b-98b (*ST*); *ZH* 72d (*ShS*);

Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 29-48.

80. Saying, proclaiming... Why does the Torah choose this term in reference to God's speech? To indicate that this communication was universally accessible.

81. letter ה (he) was not given to him... Through the act of circumcision, the patriarch attained intimacy with *Shekhinah*, who is symbolized by the second ה (he) of the divine name יהוה (YHVH) and by the mark of circumcision. Then the letter *he* was added to his name, transforming אַבְרָם (*Avram*), "Abram," into אַבְרָהָם (*Avraham*), "Abraham."

On the mark of circumcision and *Shekhinah*, see *Zohar* 1:13a, 21a, 32a-b (*Tos*), 47b, 71b, 72b, 93a, 93b, 96b, 98a, 98b (*ST*), 103a-b, 117a; 2:3b, 36a, 40a, 57b, 60b, 66b-67a, 125b, 237b; 3:14a, 71b, 91b, 95b, 163a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 133; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 55 (67); Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 35-41. Cf. above, [pp. 413-14](#), [n. 158](#).

Sitrei Torah on *Lekh Lekha* ends here in the Cremona printing.

82. This path... Walking on the way is a frequent setting for the Zoharic kabbalists to exchange their mystical homilies.

Sitrei Torah does not usually have narratives relating the dialogues and interactions of the figures from Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai's cohort, so this section is either an exception to the rule or an instance of the title *Sitrei Torah* being applied to a lone text at a later stage of redaction.

On walking as part of the practice of the mystical fraternity, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 111-20; Greenstein, *Roads to Utopia*.

Rabbi El'azar son of Arakh was a student of Rabbi Yoḥanan son of Zakkai, and a mystical adept. See JT *Hagigah* 2:1, 77a; BT *Hagigah* 14b. On El'azar son of Arakh, see ZH 27d-28a (*MhN*).

See *Zohar Ḥadash* 25c, which shares the narrative frame of this section with minor variations. The opening of this story (extending until “You are more worthy than I to go and behold the Countenance of Days!”) is cited in Isaac ben Solomon ibn Sahula, “Peirush Shir ha-Shirim,” 439–40. See also Scholem, “Qabbalat Rabbi Yitshak ben Shlomo ben Avi Sahula ve-Sefer ha-Zohar,” 112–16. On this story, see Wolski, “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night in *Midrash ha-Ne’lam*.”

83. Countenance of Days Though one might expect such a lofty epithet to signify God, here the referent is Rabbi El’azar son of Arakh, presumably because he is the repository of supernal secrets. The title derives from Daniel 7:9: *As I watched, thrones were placed, ועתיק יומין (ve-attiq yomin), and the Ancient of Days, sat—His garment like white snow, the hair of His head like clean fleece, His throne flames of fire, its wheels blazing fire.*

“To behold the Countenance of Days” renders אפי יומין לסבר (le-meḥmei le-savar apei yomin), literally “To behold the countenance of the face of days.”

See BT *Pesaḥim* 119a: “What is the meaning of the phrase *who abide before YHVH* (Isaiah 23:18)?... Some say that Rabbi El’azar said, ‘This is one who greets his fellow in the yeshiva.’ What is the meaning of למכסה עתיק (li-mkhasēh atiq), *clothe themselves elegantly* (ibid.)? This is one who מכסה (mekhasēh), conceals, matters that עתיק יומין (atiq yomin), Ancient of Days, concealed. What are these? Secrets of Torah.”

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 35:2; *Zohar* 1:83a, 130a, 188a; 3:132b (*IR*), 201a; *ZḤ* 19a, 25c (both *MhN*).

84. derive deductively... This renders למסבר סברא (le-misbar sevara), punning on לסבר אפי (le-saber apei), “countenance,” above. It reflects the assessment of Rabbi Ḥaggai in JT *Qiddushin* 3:2 (63d), where he is described as “a man of סבורא (sevara), reasoning (or deduction, inference).” Here, Rabbi Ḥiyya wants to know whether

Ḥaggai can innovate mystical lore from that which he already knows, or whether he can only repeat secrets that he has been told. The entire forthcoming story entails a series of tests to verify the worthiness of Rabbi Ḥaggai, and then of Rabbi Ḥiyya to hear esoteric lore.

On *le-misbar sevara*, see BT *Sotah* 20a and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ve-hadar ata le-qameih de-Rabbi Aqiva le-misbar sevara*; *Horayot* 2b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ve-savir*; *Zohar* 1:89b–90a (ST).

On the tension between conservative and creative approaches in kabbalistic interpretation, see Idel, “We Have No Kabbalistic Tradition on This”; Wolfson, “Beyond the Spoken Word”; Dauber, *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah*, 27–60.

85. I was able to grasp them Elsewhere, Rabbi Ḥaggai is noted for his modesty. See *Zohar* 3:158a. Cf. BT *Hagigah* 14b.

86. to atone for flesh In this ethical interpretation of ritual sacrifice, an animal’s flesh atones for a person’s flesh, and its blood for a person’s blood. Butchering the body and sprinkling the blood are two essential parts of the sacrificial rite.

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 142; Rashi and Ramban on Numbers 28:2.

87. what sin did the animal commit... The question is sharpened by a hyperliteral reading of the verse. Whereas the simple meaning reads *When a person from among you brings an offering to YHVH*, Rabbi Ḥaggai interprets it to mean *When a person brings an offering מכם (mi-kem), of [or: from] yourselves, to YHVH*—which implies that the sacrifice should come from the person’s own self, not from an animal. He concludes, based on the verse in Ecclesiastes, that after the sacrifice has been offered, each spirit goes to its appropriate place: the human spirit rising, and the animal spirit descending. Dispatching the animal’s spirit to its proper place is deemed a benefit for the creature. Alternatively, Rabbi Ḥaggai explains that the

spirits of humans and animals diverge, so the animal's spiritual fate is not ultimately determined by human sin.

The word "offering" is based on the root קרב (*qrv*), "to draw near." On the mystical meaning of *qorban* in general, see *Bahir* 78 (109); *Zohar* 1:239b, 248a; 2:86a, 108a; 3:4b-5b, 8a-b; *ZH* 64c (*ShS*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:878-90. Cf. Naḥmanides on Leviticus 1:9.

This question derives from M *Sanhedrin* 7:4, regarding the punishment meted out to an animal that has been used sexually by a human being. Cf. *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14. On this question, see *Zohar* 3:240b.

On the verse from Leviticus, see *Tanḥuma, Vayiqra* 8; *Bereshit Rabbati* 28:20 (138); *Zohar* 1:64b, 239b; 2:86a, 108a, 178a (*SdTs*), 239a-b; 3:4b-5a, 48a; *ZH* 3d (*MhN*); Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, "Peirush Sefer Yetsirah" 4:3; Baḥya ben Asher; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, nn. 51, 55. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Beḥuqqotai* 5.

The full verse in Leviticus reads: *Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, When a person from among you brings an offering to YHVH, of [or: from] animals [or: beasts], from herd and from flock you shall bring your offering.* The verse can also be construed: *When a person from among you brings an offering of animals [or: beasts] to YHVH, from herd and from flock you shall bring your offering.* See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:145-46.

88. nothing more... The first humans were commanded to observe a vegetarian diet and, while they brought animal sacrifices, they were not permitted to eat them. Humanity's wicked behavior led to God's sending the deluge to destroy them.

89. let him eat meat The blessed Holy One understood that humanity would continue to sin, so He allowed them to eat meat. This would procure forgiveness for them by encouraging them to bring animal sacrifices, which give Him pleasure in turn. There is an underlying assumption that carnivorousness contributes to sin, but

since the evil impulse was so thoroughly imbued within the human constitution, forbidding it further seemed pointless. This is another resolution to the problem that Rabbi Ḥaggai posed above: animal flesh causes human sin and thus is the appropriate vehicle for human atonement.

On carnivorousness after the flood, see BT *Sanhedrin* 59b; Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Genesis 1:29.

On Adam's sacrifice, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 22:8; 34:9; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 2:7, 10; BT *Shabbat* 28b, *Avodah Zarah* 8a, *Hullin* 60a; *Midrash Tehillim* 39:3; *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 8:20; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 1; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 31; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 4:8. Cf. *Tosefta Hullin* 3:20.

Genesis 9:3 reads in full: *and YHVH smelled the pleasing aroma and YHVH said in His heart, "I will not again curse the ground on humankind's account, since the devisings of the human heart are evil from youth, and I will not again strike down all living things as I have done."*

90. His body swells... Rabbi Ḥaggai explains the causal relationship of carnivorousness and sin, and the physiological processes that cause growth and the production of blood. Since meat-eating directly increases one's bodily flesh, which in turn leads to sin, one sacrifices animal flesh and drains its blood for absolution. The *nefesh* of the sacrificed animal, contained within its blood, expiates the sin caused by the increased flesh and blood of the transgressing carnivore.

On the physiology of eating meat, see Naḥmanides on 1:29. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:888. The full verse in Leviticus reads: *For the נפש (nefesh), soul [or: life], of the flesh is in the blood. And I have assigned it to you on the altar to atone for נפשתיכם (nafshoteikhem), your souls [or: your lives], for it is the blood בנפש (ba-nefesh), by means of the soul [or: life], that atones.* On this verse, Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2:1472-79. On flesh and the demonic, cf. *Zohar* 2:269a (*Heikh*); Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 79.

91. my offering... your offering... Rabbi Ḥaggai returns to the two verses with which he began his discourse above. The two different possessive pronouns identify two different kinds of sacrifices. The first is typically the burnt offering (which is offered exclusively to God) but also applies to the peace offering (which anyone can eat). The group called *your offering* signifies those that primarily benefit the sinner whose transgression is being expiated. “Bread and wine” apparently refer to the grain offerings and wine libations in the Temple. Rabbi Ḥaggai has demonstrated how the verse symbolizes all the main components and actors of the Temple rite.

On the aims of the sacrifices, see M *Zevaḥim* 4:6: “The sacrifice is slaughtered for the sake of six things: for the sake of the sacrifice, for the sake of the sacrificer, for the sake of the [divine] name, for the sake of fire offerings, for the sake of aroma, for the sake of pleasing, and a sin offering and a guilt offering for the sake of sin.” Cf. *Sifrei*, Numbers 142; *Sifrei Zuta*, Rashi, and Ramban on Numbers 28:2.

On the שלמים (*shelamim*), “peace offerings” (or “offerings of well-being”), see Levine, *Leviticus*, 15; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:204, 217–25. On *shelamim* and *shalom*, see *Tosefta Zevaḥim* 11:1; *Sifra*, *Nedavah* 16:1, 13a; *ḥovah* 4:2, 18c; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 9:9; *Tanḥuma*, *Toledot* 1, *Tsav* 4, 7; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Tsav* 10; *Zohar* 2:267b (*Heikh*). On sin (or purification, offense) offerings, see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:253–92. On guilt (or reparation) offerings, see *ibid.* 1:339–78.

92. morning and night... Exodus 29:39 specifies *The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight*. Rabbi Ḥaggai wonders what extra designation is provided by *fixed time*. רצון (*Ratson*), “Favor,” signifies the top *sefirah*, *Keter*. The ideal time for a sacrifice is determined not by ordinary time, but rather by

when *Keter* shines down upon *Shekhinah*, which is referred to here as “that well-known rung.”

In this explanation, the esoteric meaning—regarding *Keter* shining upon *Shekhinah*—confirms the exoteric meaning of the normative times for the daily offerings. On the esoteric elucidating the simple meaning in Zoharic interpretation, see Wolfson, *Luminal Darkness*, 56–110.

93. all take their share... When a sacrifice is offered, all aspects of reality are sated and in balance. As a consequence, even the shells become benign and disperse. Male and female potencies are bonded in love, while the other *sefirot*—signified by “lamps”—are all illuminated.

Sefer ha-Bahir 78 (109) first states the principle of divine unity resulting from a sacrificial offering through its interpretation of the word קרבן (*qorban*), “sacrifice”: “Why is it called *qorban*? Because the word implies that it הקדושות מקרב הכחות (*meqarev ha-koḥot ha-qedoshot*), draws the holy powers together, as is written: וקרב אותם (*ve-qarav otam*), *Bring them close, to each other* (Ezekiel 37:17).” The following account by Rabbi Azriel of Gerona appear to have influenced the author of the *Zohar*: “It is called *qorban* because it draws the powers together through ascent, and it blesses them with an addition of spirit.” Oxford MS 2456 (Christ Church, 198), 12b, as cited in Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:881.

On sacrifices as the union of all *sefirot*, see Naḥmanides on Leviticus 1:9; *Zohar* 1:65a; 3:4b–5a, 5b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:881–83.

94. kissed him... When they first set out, Rabbi Ḥiyya doubted Rabbi Ḥaggai’s kabbalistic expertise, but Ḥaggai dispelled those doubts.

On kissing as a sign of approbation after the delivery of kabbalistic homilies, see Hecker, “Kissing Kabbalists,” 182–86.

95. Go, say to them... After Rabbi Ḥiyya was tested by Rabbi Ḥaggai, the two of them are examined by Rabbi El’azar.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 47:6, in the name of Resh Lakish: “The patriarchs themselves constitute the [Divine] Chariot.” In Kabbalah the three patriarchs (Abraham on the right, Isaac on the left, and Jacob between them) symbolize the sefirotic triad of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif’eret*, which serves as a chariot for the three highest *sefirot*. Rabbi El’azar asks how the divine throne could stand with only three legs; he also inquires about the absence of King David—signifying *Malkhut*, who is the fourth, stabilizing leg of the divine throne.

On the three patriarchs comprising the chariot, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:6; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 396; *Zohar* 1:60b, 99a, 150a, 154b, 173b, 222b, 223b–224a, 248b; 2:23b, 31b, 144a; 3:17b, 38a, 71b, 87b, 99a, 146a, 182a, 262b; *ZH* 37c; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 239–40; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 45 (55); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 334; Todros Abulafia, *Sefer Sha’ar ha-Razim*, 153; Chaze, “De l’identification des patriarches au char divin.”

On King David as the fourth leg of the throne, see Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 57; *Zohar* 1:5b, 20a, 60b, 82a, 99a, 154b, 186a, 197b, 248b; 2:144a; 3:142b, 146a; *ZH* 37c. Cf. *Zohar* 1:156a, 237a; *ZH* 26c.

On the relation between David and the patriarchs, see Acts 2:29; *Mekhilta, Pisha* 1; BT *Pesaḥim* 117b, *Mo’ed Qatan* 16b, *Sanhedrin* 107a; *Midrash Tehillim* 18:8, 25; Jacob ben Sheshet, *Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon*, 396; Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 45 (54); Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 32:10; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:265, n. 94. Cf. Vol. 2, p. 23, n. 64.

96. A stone that the builders rejected... According to rabbinic tradition, King David authored the book of Psalms—and in this verse was referring to himself. He is youngest of Jesse’s sons, rejected by his brothers, and relegated to tending the flock. In the *Zohar*, though less

explicit in *Sitrei Torah*, the “rejection” of a *stone* alludes to the diminishment of the light of *Shekhinah* (symbolized by David). At times, due to human misconduct, She receives less illumination from the *sefirot* above Her (*the builders*). The image of *the cornerstone* represents *Shekhinah’s* vital role in the sefirotic structure and process.

See 1 Samuel 16:11; BT *Pesaḥim* 119a; *Midrash Shemu’el* 19:7; *Yalqut ha-Makhiri*, Psalms 118:22, par. 28; *Bahir* 61 (91), 131 (190); *Zohar* 1:20a-b, 72a, 197b, 231a, 246b; 2:232b; 3:142b (*IR*), 152b, 182a.

97. his brothers thrust him away See 1 Samuel 17:28, in which David’s eldest brother Eliab rebukes him for inquiring about fighting Goliath: *Why have you come down here.... I’m the one who knows your impudence and your wicked impulses, for it’s to see the battle that you’ve come.* In the printed text the words בני אמי נהרו (*benei immi niḥaru*), *my mother’s sons were incensed*, are specially marked to indicate that the first letters of the three words can be rearranged to spell אבן (*even*), “stone,” demonstrating the verse’s designation of David. Rabbinic tradition ascribes Song of Songs to King Solomon, but Rabbi Ḥaggai specifies that this particular verse was spoken by King David.

On the first letters in Song of Songs 1:6, see *Nitsotsei Orot*.

98. bestow the monarchy upon Judah... On his deathbed, Jacob had prophesied that his son Judah would achieve the status of monarch (Genesis 49:10), which came to pass via his descendant David. Yet David was the youngest of eight brothers, and Judah was the fourth son born to Leah, leading Rabbi Ḥaggai to ask about the transmission of monarchy—which is usually to the firstborn. The Hebrew spelling of the name יהודה (*Yehudah*), “Judah,” contains the four letters of the tetragrammaton (plus the letter ד, *dalet*). On account of this identity (and

presumably merit), God chose to endow Judah and his descendants with the monarchy.

On the name *Yehudah*, cf. *Zohar* 2:104a.

99. David is tied to His name The letter \daleth (*dalet*) that is present in Judah's name but not in *YHVH*'s, alludes to the first letter of King David's name, \daleth (*David*). This intimate connection between God and David is confirmed in the verse from Hosea, asserting that in the end of days, the Jewish people will return to God and to David.

The verse in Hosea concludes: *and shall come trembling to YHVH and to His bounty in the end of days.*

100. he is the knot of tefillin... The knot at the back of the tefillin is tied in the shape of the letter \daleth (*dalet*), alluding to *Shekhinah*. Moreover, *dalet* is the fourth letter of the alphabet, signifying the number four, and there are four passages of Scripture contained within the tefillin. Each of these symbolic meanings of the *dalet* strengthens the link between David and God.

See BT *Berakhot* 7a: *"I will take away My palm and you will see My back* (Exodus 33:23). Rav Hana son of Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on the Ḥasid, "This teaches us that the blessed Holy One showed Moses the knot of tefillin [at the back of God's head]." The tefillin themselves symbolize *Tif'eret*, who is known by the Holy Name, *YHVH*, while the knot of tefillin symbolizes *Shekhinah*. In seeing the knot of tefillin, Moses saw King David, signifying *Shekhinah*.

On God's tefillin, see BT *Berakhot* 6a. On Moses seeing the knot of God's tefillin, see *Zohar* 2:43b (*Piq*); 3:263a.

101. He went into his chamber... In the *Zohar*, some of the kabbalistic masters are depicted as having a private chamber for meditation or inquiring of oracular heavenly voices. See above, [note 70](#).

102. He gazed into Thought... Rabbi El'azar expounds upon the rabbinic tradition that in order to create the world, God first looked into the Torah, which served as His blueprint. "Thought" here signifies *Ḥokhmah*, and the

blessed Holy One traced tracings there, which would become discrete letters of the Hebrew alphabet in *Binah*, symbolized by “*Teshuvah*.” From those letters the whole world was created. Until the letters were actually infused into *Binah*, the world was *silent*, not even latent. Normally, the verb is construed as an imperative, *Be silent*, but here it functions descriptively rather than prescriptively.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1, in the name of Rabbi Osha’ya: “I was by Him as אָמוֹן (*amon*), a nursing.... אָמוֹן (*amon*)—אֹמָן (*umman*), an artisan. Torah says, ‘I was the artistic tool of the blessed Holy One.’ According to the custom of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace he does not build it by his own skill but rather by the skill of an architect. And the architect does not build it out of his own knowledge, but rather he has parchments and tablets [with plans and diagrams] to know how to make the rooms and doors. Similarly, the blessed Holy One gazed into Torah and created the world.”

Without the opportunity of *teshuvah*, humanity would be subject to strict Judgment and the world would be doomed, so its creation preceded the world.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 3: “Before the world was created, the blessed Holy One and His name alone existed, and the thought arose to create the world. He began to trace the foundations of the world, but it could not stand. They told a parable: ‘To what can this be compared? To a king who wishes to build his palace. If he has not hewn out its foundations in the earth, its exits and its entrances, he does not begin to build. Likewise, the blessed Holy One traced out the plans of the world, but it could not endure until He created *teshuvah*.’” See BT *Pesahim* 54a.

On God’s consulting the Torah before creating the world, see M *Avot* 3:14; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 29, p. 160; *Tanḥuma, Bereshit* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 5; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 5:11; *Bereshit Zuta* 1:1; *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1-2; *Zohar* 1:5a, 47a, 134a-b; 2:161a-b, 200a, 221a;

3:35b, 61b, 152a, 178a; ZH 88c (*MhN, Rut*); Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:242-45, 266-74.

On the creation of *teshuvah* before the rest of the world, see BT *Nedarim* 39b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4; *Tanḥuma, Naso* 11; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 19; *Midrash Tehillim* 72:6; 90:12; *Midrash Mishlei* 8:9; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 2-3, 96, 98-99, 102-3, 116; Jacob ben Sheshet, "Ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon," 410; *Zohar* 1:134b; 3:34b, 69b; ZH 5a (*MhN*), 85a (*MhN, Rut*); Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1499-1502. Cf. *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* 31, p. 160; *Midrash Tehillim* 93:3; *Zohar* 1:113a (*MhN*). On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:568-69.

103. enwrapping Himself in it... Rabbi El'azar describes creation as a series of divine gazes, each one producing another stage of the divine realm. Here, *Binah* cloaks Herself in the primordial light of *Hesed*, in order to produce *Tif'eret* (and the surrounding *sefirot*), signified by "heavens."

On God's wrapping Himself in primordial light, see *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayaqhel* 7: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Rabbi Yehotsadak asked Rabbi Shemu'el son of Naḥman, 'Since you are a master of *aggadah*, tell me how the blessed Holy One created the world.' He replied, 'When the blessed Holy One wished to create the world, He enwrapped Himself in light and created the world, as is said: *Wrapped in light as in a garment*, and afterward *spreading the heavens like a curtain*.'"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:4 (and Theodor, ad loc.); *Vayiqra Rabbah* 31:7; *Midrash Tehillim* 104:4; *Shemot Rabbah* 50:1; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 3; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:26; Ezra of Gerona, *Peirush le-Shir ha-Shirim*, 493-94; Ezra's letter, ed. Scholem, "Te'udah Ḥadashah," 157-58; Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 172-73; *Zohar* 1:2a, 15b, 29a, 245a; 2:164b; ZH 76a (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 13.

104. YHVH in His holy palace... Divinity is fully realized when the upper male *sefirot*, signified by the name YHVH, are located in the lower palace, symbolizing *Shekhinah*. The word הֵיכָל (*heikhal*), *palace*, as well as the word הָס (*has*), *be silent*, both have the numerical value in *gimatriyyah* of sixty-five, corresponding to the value of אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), a cognomen for *Shekhinah*. Being silent before God refers to the reverent stance of the pious—those who can witness and delight in the rapturous union of Divinity above.

See Gikatilla, *Ginnat Egoz*, 26, 92; TZ 18 (33b).

105. countenance of the Holy Youth... Signifying the chief archangel, Metatron. Ancient Jewish traditions consider the biblical figure Enoch's mysterious disappearance (as reported in Genesis 5:24) as an event of his being translated into the chief archangel Metatron. Rabbis and kabbalists interpreted Proverbs 22:6: הַנוֹךְ לְנוֹעַר (*Hanokh la-na'ar*), *Train the youth, according to his way*, as a statement about Enoch, meaning *Enoch into Youth according to his way*. The verse concludes: *even when he is old he will not swerve from it*, which was understood (in conjunction with Psalms 37:25, *I have been a נֹעַר (na'ar), Youth, I have also been old*) to mean that Metatron ages yet is continually rejuvenated—and so he has two visages, one youthful and one old. Here, Rabbi El'azar is granted the keys bequeathed to Metatron, and he in turn is told that he can share them with his visitors.

See BT *Yevamot* 16b, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: "This verse was uttered by the Prince of the World: *I have been a youth, I have also been old* (Psalms 37:25). Who said it? If you suggest that it was the blessed Holy One, does old age pertain to Him? So David must have said it. But was he so old? Rather you must conclude that the Prince of the World uttered it."

See *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Aqiva A (Battei Midrashot, 2:354); Bemidbar Rabbah 12:12; Tosafot, Yevamot 16b, s.v. pasuq zeh; Zohar 1:95b, 124b-125a, 126a-b (MhN), 143a,*

162a, 179b, 181b, 223b; 2:66a, 143a, 164a, 169b; ZH 69b (ShS), 85c (MhN, Rut); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 42–43 (51); Idel, *Ben*, 130–33, 135–36, 147.

On the fire blazing around Rabbi El'azar, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:10, in which there is an assumption that if one is learning mystical lore, fire will dance around. On Enoch and his transformation into Metatron, see above, pp. 199–200, nn. 494, 498. On Metatron in general, see above, note 24. On the visages of Metatron, cf. *Sullam*. On possessing keys as a feature of mediating between God and the world, see Matthew 16:19, in which Jesus says to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” See BT *Ta'anit* 23a; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayetse* 16; *Midrash Tehillim* 78:5; *Eliyahu Zuta* 8; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §72; *Zohar* 1:37b, 181b, 223b; 2:110b, 201b; 3:60a, 171b, 191b; ZH 39d–40a.

106. But they stayed there all day... Rabbis Ḥiyya and Ḥaggai are riveted to the place with both terror and fascination, replaying in miniature the scene in Deuteronomy 5:19–30, in which the Israelites at Mount Sinai heard the voice of God from within the fire then beg Moses to let them leave, such that he alone will receive the remainder of the message. The story there concludes with God's praise for the Israelites' reverence. Rabbi Ḥiyya's celebration of Israel's worthiness is somewhat ironic after the validation given to him and Rabbi Ḥaggai by the heavenly voice. Alternatively, it is a dramatic expression of his teaching's emphasis on reverence preceding understanding.

At Mount Sinai, Israel demonstrated true faith by declaring נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (*na'aseh ve-nishma*), *we will fulfill and we will listen* [literally *heed*]*—thereby committing themselves to fulfill and enact God's word even before hearing the details. This pure act made them equivalent to the angels,*

who fulfill [or: do, perform] His word even before listening to it.

The verse in Exodus reads: *All that YHVH has spoken* נְעָשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (*na'aseh ve-nishma*), *we will do and we will heed* [or: listen]. On the significance of this declaration, see *Mekhilta, Neziqin* 13; *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, Exodus 24:7; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 320; *Tosefta Bava Qamma* 7:9; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 2:4; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:5, 12; 2:1-3; 3:9; 4:9; 5:2; 6:5; *Tanḥuma, Vayishlah* 2; *Vayiqra* 1; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayiqra* 1; *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 4, p. 179.

See BT *Shabbat* 88a, in the name of Rabbi Simai: “When Israel accorded precedence to *We will do* over *We will listen*, 600,000 ministering angels came to each and every Israelite, setting two crowns upon him, one for *We will do*, and one for *We will listen*. As soon as Israel sinned [by worshipping the Golden Calf], 1,200,000 angels of destruction descended and removed them.”

107. partners with you... Israel is raised to the level of angels on account of their prioritizing obedience over understanding the commandments, like angels who only obey. God instructs the angels that they may not recite the ritual sanctification that is recited as a highlight of the daily statutory prayers.

See BT *Hullin* 91b: “The ministering angels do not utter song above until Israel sings below.” See *Sifra*, Deuteronomy 306; *Zohar* 1:40a (*Heikh*), 231a; 2:129b, 164b; 3:66a, 190b; *ZḤ* 76d (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 91; cf. *ZḤ* 12b (*MhN*). On the significance of the threefold sanctification formula, see above, [p. 275](#), [n. 728](#).

108. like a great warrior... Interpreting *mighty in strength* in an ethical vein, here it is the righteous who are agents of Divinity. See *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 23: “To the one who subdues his evil impulse, it is accounted as though he had conquered a city full of mighty men, as is said: *A wise man went up to the city of the mighty, [and brought*

down the strength of its trust] (Proverbs 21:22). And *the mighty* are none other than those strong in Torah, as is said: *mighty in strength, who fulfill His word, [heeding the voice of His word]* (Psalms 103:20). And some say, this refers to the ministering angels, as is said: *O His angels, mighty in strength* (ibid.).”

See M *Avot* 4:1, in the name of Ben Zoma: “Who is mighty? One who subdues his impulse.” Cf. BT *Avodah Zarah* 19a; *Zohar* 1:106b (*MhN*); *Zohar* 2:128a.

109. who can stand among... holy ones... Signifying the most enlightened of the mystics, Rabbi Ḥiyya revels in his acquaintance with kabbalistic heroes like Rabbi El’azar and Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai. He concludes strikingly, inverting the homily’s primary conventional message that affirms pious obedience over understanding, saying here that the distinguishing feature of the most exalted kabbalists is that they can hear the divine voice when they seek it. The whole story had begun with an actual journey; now it concludes that the mystical journey, as undertaken by those who follow the *highways in their heart*, is the most elevated—thus fusing worldly journeys and inner journeys.

On Psalms 65:5, cf. *Tanḥuma*, *Tsav* 8; *Zohar* 1:94b, 129a-b; 2:79b, 235b (*Tos*); *ZH* 21d-22a (*MhN*); above, [p. 622](#), [n. 58](#). On inner and outer journeys, see *Zohar* 1:84a (on Proverbs 4:18).

110. Potency of the king... The blessed Holy One's potency can be perceived through three *sefirot*, signified in this teaching by three colors (white, red, and green as below), each one barely apprehended by physical vision. As one sometimes squints to view distant objects clearly, so too is this first color almost imperceptible. *From afar* alludes to *Hokhmah*, the remote sefirotic realm from which *YHVH* appeared to Jeremiah. Even though the divine name *YHVH* usually signifies *Tif'eret*, here the verse in Jeremiah apparently alludes to *Hesed*, signified by the color white, who emanated *from afar*. Because of the brilliance of the radiance, one can view it only through squinting.

"Potency of the king" renders הורמנותא דמלכא (*hormanuta demalka*); alternatively, "authority (or decree) of the king." See above, [note 27](#). On *Hokhmah* as *afar*, see *Zohar* 1:6a, 107a; 2:50b; 3:20b, 35b, 60a, 90a.

The verse in Jeremiah reads in full: *YHVH revealed Himself to me of old. Eternal love I conceived for you then; therefore I continue My חסד (hesed), grace, to you.* This echoes the first verse of the *parashah* under discussion: *YHVH appeared to him* (Genesis 18:1). Some Bible editions label this verse as 31:2. (Jeremiah's chapter divisions, which date from the Middle Ages, were not universally agreed upon.) On this verse, see Rashi; *Zohar* 1:5b-6a, 120a. Cf. *Zohar* 2:23a-b. Traditional commentaries indicate that "eye" signifies *Shekhinah*. See *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

111. visible to the eye when sealed... The second color is red, signifying *Gevurah*. This light is too harsh to view directly, so the eyes of the prophet or mystic must first be closed. Opening them afterward allows for a partial viewing. Still, interpretation is required because of the vision's murkiness. See *Bahir* 109 (162); cf. *Nitsotsei Orot*.

The scriptural proof-text conflates a fragment of a verse from Ezekiel, followed by the verse from Jeremiah. The verse in Ezekiel reads in full: *I looked and, behold! a*

stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud and flashing fire, and a radiance surrounding it; and from within it, like the color of amber, from within the fire. The context in Jeremiah (1:13-14) reads: *And the word of YHVH came to me a second time, 'What do you see?' And I answered, 'I see a seething pot, its face facing north.'* And YHVH said to me, *'From the north evil opens on all the inhabitants of the land.'* Even after Jeremiah has seen the vision, he depends upon God to interpret it for him.

The verse fragment from Ezekiel differs from MT. On discrepancies between Zoharic citations of Scripture and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

112. Third color... Signifying *Tif'eret*, called "the speculum that shines." This radiance can be seen only through this particular technique: by closing one's eyes and pressing a finger on the eyeball until it moves, colors of the spectrum appear, corresponding to the concealed sefirotic colors. This vision is mediated through the physical eyeball, signifying *Shekhinah*, also symbolized by the *hand of YHVH*. In contrast to the other prophets, Moses ("heavenly shepherd") could see *Tif'eret* directly.

See BT *Yevamot* 49b: "All the prophets gazed through an opaque glass [or: mirror, speculum], whereas Moses our teacher gazed through a translucent glass." The phrase "an opaque glass" renders אספקלריא שאינה מאירה (*ispaqlarya she-einah me'irah*), "an *ispaqlarya* that does not shine." The phrase "a translucent glass" renders אספקלריא המאירה (*ispaqlarya ha-me'irah*), "an *ispaqlarya* that shines." The word *ispaqlarya* derives from Greek *speklon*, "mirror, window-pane," and Latin *speculum*, "mirror."

On the technique of gaining mystical vision through rolling one's eyeball, see *Zohar* 1:18b, 42a, 43a (last two *Heikh*); 2:23b, 43b (*Piq*), 69a, 247a (*Heikh*); *ZH* 62a (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 96-97 (123-24); idem, *Peirush al ha-Merkavah*, 67; Scholem, "Colours and Their Symbolism," 66-67; Liebes, *Peraqim*, 291-93; Idel, "Le-

gilguleiha shel tekniqah qedumah”; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 380–83; Mopsik, *Le Side de Sanctuaire*, 275, n. 973. Traditional commentaries explain that closing one’s eyes precludes external distractions, facilitating prophetic vision. See *Derekh Emet*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*. On the contrast between the prophecy of Moses and that of other prophets, see above, [p. 59](#), [n. 88](#).

Maimonides construes the expression *hand of YHWH* as indicating a lower form of prophetic vision. See *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:41. The verse in Numbers reads in full: *Not so my servant Moses, in all My house He is trusted*.

[113.](#) amid those rungs bonded to Her sides... *Shekhinah* appears to Abraham after his circumcision, and She arrives surrounded by the four archangels. Circumcision signifies the joining of upper and lower realms—“mystery of faith”—and was publicized to prevent angelic murmuring about the unworthiness of a human being to receive prophecy. The emphasis in the epiphany has shifted, as Abraham’s new form is an epiphany for the angels, rather than primarily an occasion for Abraham’s vision of God.

On the significance of circumcision, see BT *Shabbat* 137b: “Were it not for the blood of the covenant [of circumcision], heaven and earth would not endure, as is said: *Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth* (Jeremiah 33:25).” Cf. M *Nedarim* 3:11.

On the arrangement of the archangels, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:3; Targum on Job 25:2; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 46, 188a–b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 2:10; *Midrash Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bereshit* 1; *Bahir* 9 (11); *Zohar* 3:118b; bedtime *Shema* liturgy. On the public nature of the revelation, see Mopsik; above, [note 76](#). Cf. *ZH* 1c (SO).

The full verse in Genesis 18 reads: *YHWH appeared to him in the terebinths of Mamre, as he was sitting at the*

opening of the tent in the heat of the day. On the opening of the tent, see Zohar 1:21a, 98a-b, 103a-b; 2:36a; 3:71b.

114. opening of the tent... When Abraham was circumcised, an opening was created within his body, corresponding to *Shekhinah*. She is the “holy marking” and the feminine entry point to the divine realm—and thus symbolized by *opening of the tent*. By identifying *the tent* with the Dwelling (or Tabernacle), the author imagines Abraham post-circumcision as a priest prepared for the sacrificial rite.

On Abraham’s newly acquired status after circumcision, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:2; *Tanḥuma, Lekh Lekha* 20; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:8; *Pirḳei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 29; *Zohar* 1:21a, 89a, 91a-b, 98a-b, 103b; 2:36a; *ZH* 72c-d (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 131-32; Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 31-41; above, [p. 497](#), [n. 411](#). On the opening of the tent, see *Zohar* 1:21a, 103a; 2:36a; 3:14a, 71b.

115. potency of the right side... Through circumcision, Abraham consummates his association with *Hesed*, the *sefirah* with which he is identified. This fulfillment is signified by the words *in the heat of the day*. Through leaving the demonic domain of foreskin, Abraham establishes erotic intimacy with *Shekhinah*, called here “Gate of Righteousness.” Indeed, anyone who is circumcised attains the rung of *Yesod*, signified by “Righteous One,” and thus enacts the union of *Yesod* and *Shekhinah*. Thus he unifies the masculine and feminine above, and restores the feminine within himself as well. Entering “into the existence of” two rungs alludes to the two components of ritual circumcision—*milah* and *peri’ah*—and it is this distinctive form of the rite that constitutes the “mystery of faith” and renders the individual Jewish male perfect.

In the ritual of circumcision, first the foreskin is cut and removed (*milah*), disclosing a mucous membrane, which is then torn down the center and pulled back, revealing the

corona. The act of tearing and pulling back the membrane is called פְּרִיעָה (*peri'ah*), “uncovering [the corona].” See M *Shabbat* 19:6: “If one circumcises but does not uncover the circumcision, it is as if he has not circumcised.”

See above, [pp. 413-14](#), [n. 158](#). On the mystical meanings of circumcision, see idem, *Circle in the Square*, 29-48, 140-55. On foreskin as a symbol of impurity, see above, [note 36](#).

116. garbed in the atmosphere... The angels are called *men* because they adopted human form when they descended into this world. The transition from heavenly realms to the mundane necessitates a translation from the spiritual to the material. In order for angels (or other ethereal entities) to descend into this world, they must take on aspects of the material world as garments, becoming incarnate. The rainbow is one of the visible forms that *Shekhinah* adopts, refracting the colors of *sefirot* above—in this case, white, red, and green, corresponding to *Ḥesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*. The angels manifest those potencies in their visit to Abraham.

See BT *Bava Qamma* 86b: “Rabbi Tanḥum son of Ḥanilai said, ‘One should never deviate from custom—for look, Moses ascended on high and ate no bread, while the ministering angels [who appeared to Abraham] descended below and ate bread!’” See *Bereshit Rabbah* 48:14; *Zohar* 1:102a.

On the materialization of spiritual entities, see above, [note 59](#). On these three angels, see BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 42:8; Rashi on Genesis 18:2.

On the colors of the rainbow, see *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki, par. 1445 (ed. Margalot, par. 484): “When Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai and his son Rabbi El'azar left the cave, one would curse and the other would bless what the first one had cursed, for it would not be right that master and student should be angry—one supplicates and appeases. Likewise, when the blessed Holy One is angry

the angels of mercy supplicate. This is the case with the rainbow—red and green cleave together while yellow (*yeraqon*) mediates between the attribute of judgment and the attribute of mercy.”

See Moses of Burgos, *Peirush al ha-Merkavah*, 183; *Zohar* 1:18b, 71b, 136b; 3:215a; Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 9:13; Scholem, “Colours and Their Symbolism,” 68–71. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:642–43.

The full verse in Genesis reads: *He raised his eyes and saw: look, three men standing over him. He saw and ran to meet them from the opening of the tent and he bowed to the ground [or: earth].*

117. Raphael, master of remedies... Each angel has its own distinct task. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2: “One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission, yet the verse reads: *two [angels came to Sodom]!* However, Michael delivered his tidings [of the birth of Isaac] and departed, Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom, and Raphael to deliver Lot.”

On the distinct tasks of angels, see *Zohar* 1:106b–107a. On Raphael as the angel of healing, see BT *Bava Metsi’a* 86b. On Gabriel as the overseer of judgments, see BT *Sanhedrin* 21b, 95b; *Yoma* 77a; *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:3; Margalioth, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 24–31. The traditional commentaries emphasize that Gabriel charges the Angel of Death to perform the executions rather than enact them himself. See *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

118. Angel Gabriel... As noted above, Gabriel is the angelic overseer of divine judgments, who deputizes the Angel of Death (his name euphemistically omitted) with the gory details. At the moment of death, Gabriel extracts the upper, or holy, soul (*nishmeta*), while the Angel of Death snatches that aspect of soul (*nafsha*) that is associated with the evil impulse and its transgressions.

According to rabbinic tradition, three angelic messengers come to a person who is about to die, and he attains a unique vision. See BT *Ketubbot* 104a; *Sifrei Zuta* 6:26; *Hibbut ha-Qever*, ed. Higger, 257–58; “Gan Eden ve-Geihinnom” (in *Bet ha-Midrash*, 5:48–49); *Kallah Rabbati* 3:1; *Zohar* 1:79a, 98a (*MhN*); 2:199a; 3:88a, 126b.

On seeing *Shekhinah* at the moment of death, see *Sifra, Vayiqra, dibbura dindava* 2:12, 4a, in the name of Rabbi Dosa: “Scripture states: *No human can see Me and live* (Exodus 33:20). In their lifetime they do not see, but in their death they do!”

See *Sifrei*, Numbers 103; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 357; *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 34; *Tanḥuma, Huqqat* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Huqqat* 39; *Midrash Tehillim* 22:32; 103:3; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:22; 19:18; *Zohar* 1:65b, 79a, 98a (*MhN*), 218b, 226a; 3:88a, 126b, 147a; *ZḤ* 10a (*MhN*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 392–93; idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 40–41. Cf. *Tanḥuma, Bemidbar* 17; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Bemidbar* 20; *Midrash Tehillim* 17:13; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51; *ZḤ* 25d (*MhN*).

119. he saw *Shekhinah* in Her hues... The three angels that visited Abraham manifest the colors of *Shekhinah*; thus his prostration was to *Shekhinah*, called *ground*, and not to the angels. Generally in the ancient world, too, bowing to an emissary was construed as in effect bowing to the principal. Thus if it was known that a slave was traveling on behalf of a monarch, one would bow to that slave. Similarly, when Jacob bowed down at the head of his deathbed, he was bowing to *Shekhinah*, not to Joseph who was standing there.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 96; *Tanḥuma, Vayḥi* 3; *Targum Yerushalmi, Leqaḥ Tov, Midrash Aggadah*, Rashi, and Radak on Genesis 47:31; *Zohar* 1:171b, 225b.

120. he uttered the name אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), *My Lord*... Looking at the three angels, Abraham says, “אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), *My Lord* [or: *Lords*], *if I have found favor in your eyes, please*

do not go on past your servant,” addressing them in the singular, although as he continues to speak (verses 4-5), he uses plural verb forms and pronouns. To account for the sometime-plural form *Adonai* (*My Lord*), the *Zohar* explains that Abraham was first addressing *Shekhinah*, as manifest in the three angels. The singular form *Adon* (*Lord*) is reserved for *Shekhinah* when She is bonded to, and illuminated by, *Yesod*. The verse in Joshua reads: *See, ark of the covenant, אֲדֹנָי (Adon), Lord of, all the earth.* When She is pictured as *ark of the covenant*—housing *Yesod*, the divine phallus, receiving influx from the *sefirot* above—She is called *Adon*. At that point, *Shekhinah* is perfected above and rules below.

Commentators differ on whether Abraham is addressing the angels or God. See BT *Shevu'ot* 35b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *huts mizeh*; *Targum Onqelos*, *Targum Yerushalmi*, and Rashi, ad loc.; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhoh Yesodei ha-Torah* 6:9; Nahmanides, Baḥya ben Asher, and *Minḥat Shai*, ad loc.

On *Adonai* as the divine abode, see *Zohar* 3:21b; *ZH* 34a, 63b (*ShS*). On *Adonai* and *Adon*, see *Zohar* 1:33b-34a; 2:235b. On *Shekhinah* as *ark of the covenant*, see *Zohar* 1:2a, 33b, 50b, 59b, 228b, 251a; 2:13a, 214a, 235b, 259a-b (*Heikh*); 3:199a; *ZH* 56d (*QhM*), 122b (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 75 (95). On *Adonai* as designating *Shekhinah*, and the angels below her in the form of three colors, see *Zohar* 1:91a, 101a. On *Lord of all the earth*, cf. Genesis 45:8-9.

121. Mirror below draws emanation... The three colors (white, red, and green) originally derive from *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*, respectively—and then “Mirror,” signifying *Shekhinah*, manifests those colors in the angels below. When *Shekhinah* evokes these hues, *Adonai* becomes the exoteric mode of pronouncing the ineffable tetragrammaton, *YHVH*, which represents those higher potencies.

The author’s word-play relates אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), “my Lord,” to אֲדָנָי (*adnei*), “bases” (or “foundations, sockets”) of the

Tabernacle (singular form: עֵדֶן (*eden*). In the construction of the Tabernacle, Scripture gives detailed attention to the silver sockets that support the structure. Here, those supports are associated with the upper *sefirot* who sustain *Shekhinah* or, alternatively, they represent the angels who serve as Her underpinnings below. See *Or Yaqar; Or ha-Hammah; Matoq mi-Devash*.

On the three colors blending in *Tif'eret*, see Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 43 (51); idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*, 378.

122. holy seed... Once Abraham was fit, the name *Adonai*—signifying *Shekhinah* in Her colorful raiment endowed by the *sefirot* above—could be revealed below. The result is holy sperm that impregnates Sarah and gestates as Isaac. The name *Adonai*, “my Lord”—in the first-person possessive—indicates that once circumcised, Abraham has an intimate relationship with *Shekhinah*.

On holy seed, see *Zohar* 1:103b.

123. The enlightened will shine... In the book of Daniel, *the enlightened* apparently designates the community of those who shared the prophet’s vision. In medieval literature, it can refer to either philosophers or, as here, to kabbalists.

The verse in Daniel reads in full: *The enlightened will shine like the radiance of the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever*. In certain sections of the *Zohar*, this verse serves performative and experiential functions, inviting the reader to imagine him or herself as *the enlightened* who *will shine like the radiance of the sky*. On these uses of biblical verses, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 229–51.

On the verse, see *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* 4; Ibn Ezra on Exodus 34:29; *Zohar* 1:15a–16a; 2:2a, 23a; *ZH* 5b (*SO*), 58c (*QhM*), 93d–94b, 103b–105a (last two *Tiq*), 105a (*Mat*), 105c–106c (*Tiq*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 216; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 224; Wolfson, *Through a*

Speculum That Shines, 379, 383–84; Liebes, “Zohar ve-Eros,” 73–76; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 75–80, 237–38; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 65–67.

124. Zohar, Radiance—radiance of radiances... The term *zohar* has a multitude of referents in Zoharic Kabbalah: divine or human creativity; individual *sefirot*; the melody of the cantillation notes; light that illuminates the kabbalists and illuminates the Torah; and the gush of divine potency as exemplified in *Yesod*. It is also used rhetorically, like a mantra, to arouse the reader. The rhythmic pulsing here of the term *zohar*—signifying repeated pulses of light—characterizes the emanation of the radiances, and emulates the visionary mystical experience of the kabbalists who view them.

Here begins a mysterious and enigmatic listing of ten radiances, often interpreted as signifying particular *sefirot*. This first light, which illuminates all others, apparently signifies *Keter*.

See *Ma’yan ha-Hokhmah* (in *Kitvei ha-Iyyun*), §49, p. 76: “These ten colors flow from the darkness.... First: Wondrous Light—light from light. Second: Hidden Light—*zohar* from *zohar*. Third: Sparkling Light—luster from luster. Fourth: Pure Light—*zohar* from light. Fifth: Polished Light—light from *zohar*. Sixth: Shining Light—luster from light. Seventh: Refined Light—light from luster. Eighth: Pure and Polished Light—luster from *zohar*. Ninth: Clear Light—*zohar* from luster. Tenth: Splendorous Light—flaming fire from flaming fire.”

On the term *zohar*, see Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 59; *Zohar* 1:97a, 147a–b (both *ST*); 2:2a; *ZH* 61d–62a (*ShS*), 104d (*Tiq*), 121d–122b (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 96–97 (123); idem, *Shushan Edut*, 330; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 58; *Or Yaqar*; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, 21–32; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 261–65; Vol. 4, p. 80, n. 35; Huss, *Ke-Zohar ha-Raqi’a*, 21, 57–59. Cf. sources in previous note.

See the parallel passage in *ZH* 104b-c (*Tiq*). Cf. *Zohar* 1:15a-b; 2:2a.

For various interpretations of these radiances, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Hammah*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

125. shining and illuminating... Signifying *Hokhmah*, which kindles *Binah* and from there spreads splendor to the rest of the *sefirot*.

126. rising and falling *Binah* ascends to *Hokhmah* to receive divine influx, before it descends, disseminating light.

127. sparkling on every side Signifying *Hesed*. Dispersing radiance to six sides surrounding it.

128. gushing, flowing forth Signifying *Gevurah*. See Daniel 7:10: *A river of fire was flowing and gushing from before Him*. The word נגיד (*nageid*) may have been taken to connote “against,” conforming to the conception of *Gevurah* as the source of division and contention.

129. never ceasing Signifying *Tif'eret*.

130. issuing progeny Signifying *Yesod*, which is the phallus of the divine form, and which is responsible for generating the continuity of Divinity within *Shekhinah* and the mundane world below. *Yesod* derives its light from *Netsah* and *Hod*, which are not alluded to in this terse listing.

131. Edge of an ax... This phrase connotes the glimmer of the blade of Judgment as manifest on the left side in *Hod*, while “well-spring” alludes to the fecundity on the right side in *Netsah*, both of which flow into *Yesod*. This cluster of radiances delight in the righteous ones at midnight in the Garden of Eden.

“Edge of an ax” renders ספתא בסיקורא (*sifta be-siqora*), following T1, V5, and V16. The printed text reads ספרא דא (*sifra da*), “this book,” while the manuscripts have a variety of difficult readings, including ספרא בסיקורא (*sifra be-siqora*), which could mean “book within an ax.” The parallel version in *Zohar Hadash* 104b reads סיפתא בעיקורא (*sifta be-iquora*), which might be translated as “frayed hem.” *Sifta* likely

derives from ספח (*sft*), “to cut, chip, slice.” See *Tosefta Shabbat* 15:2; BT *Shabbat* 124b; *Arukh*; Jastrow. *Siqora* derives from the Latin *securis*. See *Targum Yerushalmi* on Deuteronomy 19:5; Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*. See *Or ha-Hammah*; Scholem.

On study at midnight, see above, [p. 53](#), [n. 76](#), and [p. 216](#), [n. 546](#). On *Malkhut* as “gushing during the day, hidden at night,” see *ZH* 2a (*Mat*).

132. shining for all... Signifying *Malkhut*, who distributes all the lights and colors below, after receiving them from above. She is represented by the Oral Torah, the overt expression of the entirety of Torah, and is called *Adonai*. The three colors that were manifest in the three angels on earth below, derive from their source above in *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*.

For different sefirotic associations for the three colors, see *Zohar* 3:215a.

133. mystery of the holy name... When *Shekhinah* (Lower Radiance) is bonded to *Tif'eret* (Upper Radiance), She is called *Adonai*, the ritualized mode of pronouncing the ineffable name *YHVH*. This union, and the entire polychromatic complex, constitutes the very essence of the mystery of the Infinite, *Ein Sof*. Through this joining, the prophets could view the concealed aspects of Divinity through the prism of *Shekhinah*—a joining that is graphically represented through interleaving the letters of the two divine names. Today, this hybrid name is commonly found in kabbalistic prayer-books, as well as those of communities from Arabic-speaking lands.

The “twelve sparks” recall the twelve גבולי אלכסון (*gevulei alakhson*), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1, that constitute the parameters of the divine realm. Those twelve are thirteen—alluding to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, contained within *Keter*—when including the mystery of divine unity.

On the twelve borders, see above, [note 27](#). On the name יאהדונהי (YAHDVNHY), see *Zohar* 2:235b (Vol. 6, p. 357, n. 279); *ZH* 34a. For various interpretations of this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Hammah*; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

The verse in Ezekiel reads in full: *I looked, and here, a stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud and flashing fire, and a radiance surrounding it; and from within it, like the color of amber, from within the fire.* In Zoharic Kabbalah, this verse is often interpreted as a reference to the interaction of the demonic and holy realms, and often in relation to circumcision. See *Zohar* 2:69a, 78a-b, 81b-82a, 91a, 131a, 203a-b; *ZH* 38b-c, 41a-b, 55b; Moses de León, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 59-61; Gikatilla, *Peirush ha-Merkavah*, 49-52; idem, *Sha'arei Orah*, 31b, 82a, 105b; Vol. 4, p. 421, n. 188.

[134.](#) **MATNITIN** Literally, “Our Mishnah.” The *Matnitin* and *Tosefta* of the *Zohar* consist mostly of anonymous enigmatic revelations. The terseness of these passages recalls the style of the Mishnah, and their oracular, grandiose style distinguishes them from that of the *Zohar’s* running commentary on the Torah. The primary areas of interest are: the process of emanation; the development of the soul; and the role of the forces of judgment and evil.

See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah*, 163-214; Pedaya, *Ha-Mar’eh ve-ha-Dibbur*, 120-33; above, [pages xiii-xiv](#).

This short passage of *Matnitin*—rendered here in two paragraphs—is embedded within the *Sitrei Torah* sections of the manuscripts, and it is commented upon by the upcoming passage of *Sitrei Torah*, hence its inclusion here. The precise borders of the two different sections are difficult to discern. See Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah*, 168.

[135.](#) **Celestial ones fly off from the right...** From the emphasis on the visionary mystical experience in the previous passage of *Sitrei Torah*, the transition to *Matnitin*

is marked by a sharp shift to the linguistic and vocal. This enigmatic passage describes the relationship of the unwritten cantillation marks and vowels to the letters of the Torah scroll: it is like the relationship of the soul to the human body. “Celestial ones” signifies the letters and vocalization points who originate in *Ḥokhmah* on the right. There are nine vowel points without which the consonants could not be pronounced: *qamats*, *pataḥ*, *tseire*, *segol*, *ḥiriq*, *shuruq* (in two forms), *ḥolam*, and *sheva*. Just as the vocalization points carry the consonants, so do the cantillation notes, originating in *Ein Sof*, carry the vowels. Only consonants are revealed in the Torah scroll, but their vowels and cantillation notes are not visible. Alternatively, since the letters originate within *Ḥokhmah* and the nine points above them, these nine may originate within *Keter* and correspond to a higher order of *sefirot*.

In the biblical text, cantillation marks serve three different functions simultaneously: musical, instructing the reader in a ritual context regarding the customary chant; phonetic, indicating which syllable is accented; and punctuative-prosodic, indicating the phrasing within the verse.

On the relationship of cantillation notes, vowels, and letters, see above, [pp. 535–36](#), [n. 2](#).

For various interpretations, see *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Both Mantua and Cr read עלאין טבין דימינא (*ila'in tavin de-yemina*), “lofty upright ones from the right side,” referring to the righteous kabbalists who can interpret mystical lore, rather than “Celestial ones fly off from the right.”

136. Nine names, engraved in ten... Ten divine names represent the ten *sefirot*, which are all comprised within the tetragrammaton, which is spelled out here. *Ehyeh* signifies *Keter*; at this point, the Hidden God is saying, as it were, *Ehyeh, I am, or I will be*. אֲשֶׁר (*Asher*), *That*, is an anagram of ראש (*rosh*), “head” (or “beginning”)—symbolizing

Hokhmah, the first of the *sefirot* that can be comprehended. The second *Ehyeh* signifies *Binah*, when She is conjoined with *Hokhmah*. *YHVH*, when vocalized as *Elohim*, represents *Binah* as the aspect of Divinity from which the rest of the *sefirot* emerge. *El*, *Elohim*, *YHVH*, *Tseva'ot*, *Adonai*, *Shaddai* represent *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tif'eret*, *Netsah* and *Hod* (the pair are often represented by the one name), *Shekhinah*, and *Yesod*, respectively. No explanation is offered for the reversal of the last two, or how this list demonstrates a significant containing of ten names in nine.

On lists of God's names and their sefirotic significance, see above, [p. 537](#), [n. 3](#). Rabbinic tradition enumerates certain especially holy divine names "that cannot be erased." For various lists of these, see JT *Megillah* 1:8, 71d; BT *Shevu'ot* 35a-b, *Soferim* 4:1-2, *Sefer Torah* 4:1-2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 6:1-2. Cf. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, 34; Moses de León, "She'elot u-Tshuvot," 58 (numbered incorrectly in edition).

The manuscripts and printed editions give a range of listings of these names, and it appears that the list was corrupted at an early stage of transmission. The translation here follows V7 and T1. At this point, T1, V7, Mantua and Cr include a passage (clearly interpolated at a later stage of redaction) treating the 27 letters of the first line of the *Shema*, the number of words in the different paragraphs of the *Shema*, and the correspondence of the number of words in the *Shema* to the limbs of the body. See *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Nitsotsei Orot*; Scholem; Mopsik. According to stylistic criteria, it appears that the *Matnitin* passage ends here.

[137](#). entering into one—ark of the covenant... All of the *sefirot*, which are represented by the various divine names listed above, flow into *Shekhinah*, which is called *ark of the covenant*. This name is revealed to Abraham upon his circumcision.

On *Shekhinah* as ark of the covenant, see above, [note 120](#). See Scholem.

138. Michael—name of the right... Michael is associated with the divine name *El*, signifying *Hesed*. After delivering the news that Sarah would conceive, Michael leaves, which indicates that *Shekhinah* has also left.

See *Shemot Rabbah* 2:5, in the name of Rabbi Yose: “Wherever Michael appears, there is the glory of *Shekhinah*.”

139. Eating, actually... Genesis 18 first states that three angelic emissaries arrived, and though they are composed of fire, they have adopted forms suitable for this world. Their conformity to worldly norms extends to eating the food that Abraham and Sarah have prepared. This pleases Abraham, who symbolizes *Hesed*, which is the source of angels’ nourishment. The verb אכל (*akhl*), “eat” (or “consume”), is used to signify both a person consuming food and fire consuming an object. The bivalent meaning of the term energizes the symbolism of the fiery angels’ “eating.”

On the angels’ eating, see BT *Yoma* 21b; *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, 6:1; *Tanḥuma, Pinḥas* 12, in the name of Rabbi Yitshak: angels “are nourished from the splendor of *Shekhinah*.” On the angels as fire, see Psalms 104:4: *He makes winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers*.

The version in *Or Yaqar* ends after “pleasing Abraham.”

140. Three written at first, now two Genesis 18:2 refers to *three men*, but Genesis 19:1 refers to *two angels*. To resolve the apparent discrepancy, the author expands upon rabbinic legend to explain here that when *Shekhinah* (signified by “*Elohim*”) alighted from Abraham, Michael left as well.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 50:2: “One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels perform one mission, yet the verse reads: *Two [angels came to Sodom]!* However [of the three angels who originally appeared to Abraham], Michael delivered his tidings [of the birth of Isaac] and departed, Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom, and Raphael to deliver Lot, so *The two angels came....*” See

BT *Bava Metsi'a* 86b; *Tanḥuma, Vayera* 8; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Vayera* 20; Rashi; *Zohar* 1:106a-b; Todros Abulafia, *Sha'ar ha-Razim*, 98. Cf. Philo, *On Abraham*, 28:145.

141. Uriel... In Kabbalah, the divine chariot is often borne by four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. Since Uriel—whose name derives from אור (*ur*), “fire”—was apparently absent in the visitation to Abraham, he appears later to Manoah from the tribe of Dan, likewise to herald the forthcoming birth of a male child. Abraham is superior to Manoah on two counts: the angels ate Abraham’s meal, whereas Manoah’s angel refuses to eat his; and the *Shekhinah* appears to Abraham, rather than just an angel, as with Manoah.

For the story of Manoah, see Judges 13. On the four archangels, see above, [note 113](#).

142. By the merit of Abraham... Abraham’s hospitality toward the three angels gained him merit, and that merit procured Lot’s rescue.

See *Midrash Tanna'im*, Deuteronomy 23:5: “I sent Lot, their [the Moabites’] ancestor *out of the midst of the upheaval* only on account of Abraham’s merit, as is said: *So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out [of the midst of the upheaval].*” Cf. *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:38; *Tanḥuma, Balaq* 12; *Bereshit Rabbah* 40 (41) :3; 50:11 (Vilna).

On the identity of the remaining angel, see Naḥmanides on Genesis 18:1 and Baḥya ben Asher on Genesis 18:2.

143. his two daughters together with him... This begins the etiological tale of origins of the nations of Ammon and Moab, who were conceived in the drunken, incestuous relations between Lot and his daughters.

The full verse reads: *Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the mountains, his two daughters together with him, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelled in a certain cave, he and his two daughters.*

144. scoria split off... Refuse from the right side of holiness is cast off during purification. In the upper realm, this slag from the right side (signifying *Hesed*) connects with that from the side of *Gevurah*—forming a demonic tree that is parallel to the tree of holiness, which in turn signifies the *sefirot*.

“A knot engraved” renders קטורא דגולפא (*qetura de-gulfa*). Traditional and modern commentaries follow *Arukh*, who explains *qetura* as “form,” and they interpret *gulfa* as “clay pot.” This yields an image of a vessel engraved with impure images or script. See *Or ha-Ḥammah*; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

145. Isaac... strengthened himself... This section describes the development of the side of impurity into an independent arboreal simulacrum of the sefirotic tree. In order to enact judgment, Isaac, representing *Gevurah*, barred the angels for the evil nations from protecting Sodom. Then Abraham, signifying *Hesed*, separated this tree (associated with his nephew Lot) from the essence of impurity.

This representation of evil as originating from the right side is distinctive in Zoharic theology, where the demonic usually appears as aberrance from the left. The exegetical impetus is the ambivalent status of Lot: he chose to go to the depraved city of Sodom, yet he was also sufficiently righteous (or able to rely upon his uncle Abraham’s merit) to be saved from the city’s destruction.

146. Primordial serpent steeped in the fruit... The serpent infiltrated the demonic tree from whose fruit Lot drank, and as a consequence two wicked nations emerged—Ammon and Moab. Scripture identifies their gods as Milcom and Peor, respectively. The very meaning of “Peor” is “to open,” which connotes “to uncover, reveal.” Demonic forces, signified by the nations, surround *Shekhinah* and populate their own realms.

On the exhibitionistic nature of worshiping Peor, see Rashi on Numbers 25:3: “So called because one exposes

one's anus before him and defecates—this is its form of worship.” See Numbers 25:3; M *Avodah Zarah* 7:6; BT *Sanhedrin* 60b, 106a; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 3:5. On Milcom, see 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13. Cf. 1 Kings 11:7. On the revealed and concealed natures of these two, see next note.

147. Similarly below... The slag and trees from the supernal realm are now explained as manifest in the human narratives below. Lot's diverging from his uncle Abraham signifies the refuse that is discarded from the right side, *Hesed*, above; and he dwells among the Sodomites, who represent the demonic scoria from the left side above. When he imbibes the wine proffered by his daughters— influence of the Primordial Serpent—two wicked nations are conceived in the incestuous unions. One is “revealed,” in that his mother flagrantly named him מואב (*Mo'av*), *from father*. The other is “concealed,” for his mother named him more discreetly, בן עמי (*ben ammi*), *son of my nation*.

On the daughters' naming of their children, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 51:11; BT *Nazir* 23b; Rashi on Genesis 19:37; Radak on 19:38; *Zohar* 3:188a. On the Bible's folk etymology of מאב (*me'av*), *from father*, see Sarna on Genesis 19:37. On Ammon and Moab, see *Zohar* 1:13a, 110a-b.

148. King David united with these two... David derived benefit from each of these unsavory nations. He was a direct descendant of Ruth (Ruth 4:21-22), and he took the Ammonite royal crown as plunder. The word *malkam* in this verse means either “their king” or, as suggested here, “Milcom,” god of the Ammonites—described in 1 Kings 11:5 by the dysphemism “abomination of the Ammonites.” This diadem was reputedly so heavy (*a talent of gold, with precious stones*—a talent weighing roughly 57 lb or more than 25 kg) that divine providence would enable only David and his descendants to wear it.

On the weight of the crown, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 44a: “If the weight [of the crown] was a talent of gold, how

could [David] have put it on? Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, '[The meaning is] that it was fitting to rest upon David's head.' Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Hanina said, 'There was a lodestone in it that raised it up.' Rabbi El'azar said, '[The meaning is] that there was a precious stone in it worth a talent of gold.'"

On the miraculous nature of the crown, see *Tosafot*, ad loc., s.v. *she-hayah maniḥah*. See Rashi on BT *Sanhedrin* 21b, s.v. *she-biqesh le-holmo ve-lo holamto*: "There was a golden rod within the hollow of the crown, from side to side, and it would not rest upon the head of anyone that did not have a groove in his head. This authenticated [members of] the House of David because it would fit whoever was suited for sovereignty, but whoever was not suited it would not fit."

On *malkam*, see Septuagint on 1 Kings 11:5, which reads *Milkom* (the Ammonite deity), instead of *malkam*, *their king*. See *Zohar* 1:173a. Cf. Mopsik.

The verse in 2 Samuel begins: *He took the crown of מלכּם (malkam), their king, from his head—its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones—and it was set on David's head.*

149. power of his monarchy... King David manifests *Malkhut* in this world, and the only way for *Malkhut* to rule is through the incorporation and purification of demonic forces.

See M *Avodah Zarah* 4:4, and BT *Avodah Zarah* 44a: "*He took the crown of Milcom from his head...* But is that permitted? It entails forbidden benefit [from idolatry]! Rav Naḥman explained, 'Ittai the Gittite came and annulled it.'"

150. two daughters of the evil impulse... Lot's two daughters represent allegorically two different aspects of soul, while Lot signifies the evil impulse itself. The two "daughters" stimulate men's lusts, thereby maintaining the evil impulse's domination, which leads ultimately to one's demise.

The full verse in Proverbs reads: *The leech has two daughters—‘Give!’ and ‘Give!’* The saying is apparently a retort to someone who constantly begs favors, or perhaps a warning that a greedy parent engenders greedy children. In rabbinic literature it is associated with Hell. See BT *Avodah Zarah* 17a; *Shemot Rabbah* 7:4; *Midrash Mishlei* (Buber) 17:1; 30:15 (in the name of Rabbi Shim’on son of Yoḥai).

On Lot’s daughters, see *Zohar* 1:109b-111b (*MhN*). On Lot as the evil impulse, see *Zohar* 1:78a, 79a (both *ST*), 109a-110b, 128b, 137a-137b (last three *MhN*); *ZH* 24b-25a (*MhN*). On the image of the temptress, see *Zohar* 1:148a-b (*ST*).

Galante and *Derekh Emet* suggest, based on the change in style, that this last section of *Sitrei Torah* is actually part of *Midrash ha-Ne’lam*. All the manuscripts and printed editions examined, however, include this section here as part of *Sitrei Torah*. See Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar, *Sitrei Torah*,” 267.

151. Like bandits... This fragmentary parable receives expanded treatment in *Zohar* 1:111b-112a (*MhN*). There, the eloquent leader persuades people to come back to the bandits’ lair, where he takes the lead in murdering them. This is the method of the evil impulse, tricking people and leading them to their fates.

152. seven breaths... Signifying the seven *sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Malkhut*, which are referred to as “breaths” because they cannot be seen. *Breaths* renders הבלים (*havalim*), which is a recurring term in Ecclesiastes; it is usually rendered as *vanities* or *futilities*. Here the deeper meaning of the term ironically reveals that the very opposite is true—that the world depends upon Divinity itself!

Each mention of *breath* is counted as one breath, and *breaths* is counted as two. See *Qohelet Rabbah* on 1:2, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshu’a son of Korḥah: “It may be likened to a man who sets [on the fire] seven pots one on

top of the other, and the steam from the topmost one has no substance in it, [and such is man].”

Rabbinic tradition holds that King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, Targum, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam on Song of Songs 1:1. *Or Yaqar* does not label this first homily of Rabbi El’azar as part of *Sitrei Torah*, and Scholem also discounts it since one of the characteristic features of *Sitrei Torah* is the lack of reference to the companions. See Scholem; Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar, *Sitrei Torah*,” 268. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:482–83.

“Alternatively” is the reading found in M7, V16, P3, M2, T1, and R1, but does not appear in *Or Yaqar* and in the printed versions. Presumably, this opening is responding to an earlier passage of *Sitrei Torah* that has been lost, or perhaps to the opening passage of *Zohar* on this *parashah*. The full verse in Ecclesiastes reads: *The sun rises and the sun sets, and to its place it strives, where it rises* (Ecclesiastes 1:5).

153. putrid breaths... How can “breaths” represent the *sefirot* when they are also associated in Ecclesiastes with various spiritual afflictions? As there are seven *sefirot*, so too there are seven demonic forces on the Other Side. These forces are not autonomous; rather, they serve the holy task of redirecting sinners toward the blessed Holy One.

See Lavi, *Ketem Paz* (300): “*One against the other God has set* (Ecclesiastes 7:14) in the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. All of it sustains the world, for just as the good is necessary for the world, so too is evil necessary for the world... because from the perspective of truth, death should not be called evil, since it proves the good. And if not for the lash that flogs the wicked, good could not be distinguished from evil.”

Instead of “good ones,” M7, V16, P3, V7, Mantua, Cr, and the printed edition read “wondrous jewels.” The

translation follows V5, M2, T1, and *Or Yaqar*. On demonic forces, cf. *Zohar* 1:167a; 2:30b; 3:41b, 70a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:450–58. On *Malkhut* as being contained within *Tif'eret*, see Wolfson, “Woman—the Feminine as Other.”

Ecclesiastes 6:2 reads in full: *A man whom God gives wealth, property, and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all his appetite may crave, and God does not grant him the power to enjoy it—instead a stranger will enjoy it. This is mere breath [or: futility, vanity] and an evil sickness.* Ecclesiastes 4:4 reads in full: *I saw all the toil and all the skilled deeds—come from a man’s envy of his fellow. This, too, is mere breath and רעות רוח (re’ut ru’ah), vexatious spirit [or: herding the wind].*

154. mystery of the sun... Signifying *Tif'eret*, the central *sefirah* that maintains the world. Any entity *under the sun* is demonic and should be avoided. While the moon, representing *Malkhut*, is beneath the sun, *Tif'eret* encompasses *Malkhut* inseparably—so that the latter cannot be thought of independently.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 reads in full: *And I turned about in all my deeds that my hands had done and in the toil that I had toiled to do, and look, all was mere breath and herding the wind, and there was no gain under the sun.* Ecclesiastes 9:3 reads in full: *This is the evil in all that is done under the sun, for all have a single fate, and also the heart of the sons of man is full of evil, and mad revelry in their heart while they live, and afterward—off to the dead.* Ecclesiastes 1:14 reads in full: *I have seen all the deeds that were done under the sun, and look, all is mere breath, ורעות רוח (u-r’ut ru’ah), and herding the wind.*

155. Jacob departed... On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:146b–147a, 147b (*Tos*), 148a (*ST*), 148b, 153a.

156. the hidden nexus... Signifying the ten *sefirot*. The radiance that flashes forth from the “sealed secret”—comprising the most recondite *sefirot*, *Keter*, as well as *Hokhmah* and *Binah*—is *Tif'eret*. *Tif'eret* embraces and harmonizes white

and red, symbolizing *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. *Tif'eret* is called “shining speculum”; it is symbolized by the royal color purple but encompasses all colors within.

The phrase “shining speculum” renders אספקלריאה דנהרא (*ispaqlarya de-nahara*), “translucent glass.” The word *ispaqlarya* derives from Greek *speklon*, “mirror, window-pane,” and Latin *speculum*, “mirror.”

On the inclusive quality of purple, see *Zohar* 2:135a; 3:141b (*IR*). “To and fro” renders רצוא ושוב (*ratso va-shov*), which refers to the act of racing back and forth. The phrase first occurs in Ezekiel 1:14, describing the prophet’s vision of the heavenly creatures. Kabbalistic literature applies the image to mystical vision. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:6, 8; *ZH* 39d, 62a (*ShS*); Moses de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 89–90 (113); idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 9, 23, 191, 204. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Introduction. On this passage (until 148b), see Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*, 75–79, 226–29.

157. Within that *zohar*, radiance... Signifying *Tif'eret*, in whom dwells *Keter* (or perhaps also *Hokhmah* and *Binah*), called Concealed One—as well as “faith of all,” encompassing all the *sefirot*. *Tif'eret* is also symbolized by the tetragrammaton, *YHVH*. *Tif'eret* is called both “Voice” and “Jacob.” He mediates the ineffable essence of Divinity into voice, becoming speech only through *Shekhinah*. Jacob symbolizes *Tif'eret*, who harmonizes and completes the polar opposites *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, symbolized respectively by Abraham and Isaac. Through *Voice of Jacob* (*Tif'eret*), the most recondite aspects of Divinity are “seen.”

Matt suggests that *zohar*, “radiance,” as the “name for the Concealed One” may be Moses de León’s oblique self-reference to himself and his pseudepigraphic work, the *Zohar*. See Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*, 226.

On Jacob’s status among the patriarchs, see *Bereshit Rabbah* 76:1, in the name of Rabbi Re’uven: “The chosen of

the patriarchs is Jacob, as is said: *For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself, [Israel as His own treasure]* (Psalms 135:4)."

See *Zohar* 1:119b, 133a, 144b, 149b-150a, 152a (ST), 163b, 171b, 172b, 173b, 180a, 207a; 2:23a, 26a, 48b. On Jacob's being complete, see *Sifra, Beḥuqqotai* 8:7, 112c; *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 31, 312; *Targum Onqelos*, Genesis 25:27; *Vayiqra Rabbah* 36:5; BT *Pesaḥim* 56a.

158. selected name... After wrestling with the angel, Jacob is given the name Israel (Genesis 32:25-29). In his mystical journey, he begins with the name Jacob, cleaving to *Malkhut*; ultimately, he bonds with *Tif'eret*, at which point he acquires the name Israel.

On the development from Jacob to Israel, see *Zohar* 1:174a, 177b, 210b; 3:210b.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *You, Israel, My servant; Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham My lover.*

159. End of Thought, Elucidation of Written Torah... Signifying *Shekhinah*, who stands at the end of the process of emanation. The Written Torah, represented by *Tif'eret*, cannot be understood without the interpretation provided by Oral Torah. The word באר (*be'er*) can mean either "expound, explain, elucidate" or "well." Thus באר שבע (*be'er sheva*) refers to *Shekhinah*, who is both the "Well of Seven" and the "Elucidation of Seven"—receptacle for the divine flow from *Binah* into the seven *sefirot* below. *Binah* is called Great Voice, as She is the source of "Voice of Jacob," representing *Tif'eret*, mentioned above. Through the identification of Written Torah and Oral Torah with *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah* respectively, the Torah becomes the embodiment or incarnation of Divinity itself.

Binah is called "seven years" because She includes and generates all seven lower *sefirot*. The simple meaning of the verse in Kings, describing Solomon's building of the Temple, is *He built it in seven years*. However, the Hebrew wording does not include the expected preposition ב (*be*), "in." The author treats this lack as significant, which yields

the teaching that *Binah* was *built* or fashioned to be *seven years*—that is, to include the sefirotic septet. The text is also playing on the apparent similarity of בינה (*binah*), “understanding,” and ויבנהו (*va-yivnehu*), *he built it*.

On Written Torah and Oral Torah, see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 47–50. On the Torah as embodiment of Divinity, see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 190–260. On the verse in Kings, see *Zohar* 1:247a; 2:9b, 31a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 8; idem, *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, 72. On “Great Voice,” see Deuteronomy 5:19; Ezekiel 3:12; *Zohar* 1:50b, 237a; 2:81a–b, 226b; 3:6b, 261a; *ZH* 5b (*SO*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 353; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 89 (113).

160. inception of faith... Jacob commences his mystical journey in Beersheba, signifying *Shekhinah*. However, he must confront and withstand demonic forces just as Abraham and Isaac did. Yet Adam had failed—having been seduced by Lilith, feminine consort of Samael, who appeared in the form of the serpent. Noah, too, was enticed by her, in the form of intoxicating wine. Both Abraham and Isaac “entered and emerged” in peace, an expression deriving from the famous account of the four rabbis who engaged in mystical search, with only Rabbi Akiva emerging successfully.

On “entering in peace and emerging in peace,” see JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77b: “Four entered פַּרְדֵּס (*pardes*), ‘an orchard’ [whence, “paradise”]... Ben Azzai gazed and went mad... Ben Zoma gazed and died... Aḥer [Elisha son of Avuyah] gazed and cut the shoots... Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and emerged in peace.” See *Tosefta Ḥagigah* 2:3; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4. The expression is applied to Abraham in *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:3.

See JT *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 1:4 (cf. *Tosefta Ḥagigah* 2:4; BT *Ḥagigah* 14b); *Zohar* 1:44a (*Heikh*), 112a (*MhN*); 2:176a, 179a (last two *SdTs*), 213b; 3:127b, 141a, 144a (last three *IR*), 290a, 292a (last two *IZ*),

297a; *ZH* 2c, 6c (last two *SO*), 19a (*MhN*), 105a (*Mat*); Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 345; Liebes, “Ha-Mashiah shel ha-Zohar,” 153–56, and nn. 240–41; idem, *Studies in the Zohar*, 35, 97, 130–31, 178, nn. 110–11; Wolfson, “Forms of Visionary Ascent,” 211–14; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, 63–67.

According to *Alfa Beita de-Ven Sira*, Lilith was Adam’s first wife, created from the earth. Insisting on her equality, she refused to lie beneath Adam; rather, uttering the name *YHVH*, she flew away.

In the reference to Noah in his tent, the final letter of the Hebrew word אהלה (*oholah*), *his tent*, is a ה (*he*), rather than the normal masculine possessive suffix ו (*vav*). The suffix ה (*he*) usually denotes the feminine possessive, *her*. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 36:4, in the name of Rabbi Shemu’el son of Rav Yitshak: “It is spelled אהלה (*oholah*), *her tent*: inside the tent of his wife.” In other words, Noah shamed himself in his wife’s tent. See Theodor’s note, *ad loc.* Here, the author reads the word as *oholah*, *her tent*, but he takes this to mean “the tent of *Shekhinah*,” which was the site of Noah’s sin.

On failures and triumphs of these patriarchs, see *Zohar* 1:53b (Vol. 1, p. 298, n. 1438), 73a–b, 83a, 140b; 2:245a (*Heikh*). On Lilith, see *Sippurei Ben Sira*, ed. Yassif, 231–32, 234; *Zohar* 1:19b, 34b, 122a–b, 131b, 190b, 204a; 2:60b–61a, 96a–b, 231b, 242b–244a, 267b (*Heikh*); 3:19a, 69a, 76b–77a, 224a–b, 231b, 266a; *ZH* 16c (*MhN*); Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 36–37; Margalio, *Mal’akhei Elyon*, 235–41; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:464–65, 531; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 221–54; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 356–61; Hutter, “Lilith”; Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 120–22.

Isaac went up from there is a conflation of Genesis 26:23 (*From there he went up to Beer Sheva*) and Genesis 26:17 (*So Isaac departed from there*). On discrepancies

between MT and Zoharic citations from the Bible, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

161. Haran, side of the woman of whoredom... Jacob leaves the side of holiness to be tested on the Other Side. The author associates the town of חָרָן (*Haran*), “Haran,” with חָרוֹן (*haron*), “wrath.” For other explanations, see *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

162. scorching noon of Isaac... Isaac signifies *Gevurah*, exercising judgment in the world. When its fire rages out of control, the Other Side is aroused from the refuse (“dregs”) of the side of holiness, wreaking fury. Samael’s female consort is Lilith, but here *Sitrei Torah* avoids mentioning her name. The entire passage is a parable describing the wiles of temptation.

The phrase “Woman of Whoredom” is from Hosea 1:2. “End of All Flesh” and “End of Days” are hyperliteral personifications of biblical phrases. On “End of All Flesh,” see Genesis 6:13. On “End of Days,” see Genesis 4:3; 2 Samuel 14:26; 1 Kings 17:7; Jeremiah 13:6; Nehemiah 13:6. Cf. *Zohar* 1:35b, 54a-b, 58a, 75a (*ST*), 152b; 62b-63a; 2:33a, 134a-b; *ZH* 63c (*ShS*), 83b (*MhN*, *Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 75, 315; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 80-81 (102-3); idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 134; Todros Abulafia, *Otsar ha-Kavod*, *Pesaḥim* 56a (14a).

“Cramped” renders נְעִיצוֹ (*ne’itsu*), deriving from נָעַץ (*na’its*), “wedge-like ditch”; נָעַץ (*na’ats*), “to prick, perforate, stick”; or נְעִיצוּת (*na’atsuts*), “thorn” or “wicked person.”

On this parable of the “woman of whoredom,” who signifies temptation, cf. *Zohar* 3:231b; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 48-49. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:538-39. Cf. Scholem.

163. She bedecks herself with all sorts of jewelry... At first, sin entices with various lures, but ultimately those charms fall away.

On the whore’s dupe as a “fool,” see BT *Sotah* 3a, in the name of Resh Lakish: “A person does not commit a

transgression unless a spirit of folly enters into him.” This depiction of the whore’s advances derives from Proverbs 7:13. On the venom of vipers, see Job 20:14.

164. Her adornments... On the “[bed covered] with Egyptian linen,” see Proverbs 7:16. “Forty adornments minus one” corresponds to the number of lashes administered by the court for certain violations. Ultimately, her embellishments turn into punishments.

On the number of lashes, see M *Makkot* 3:10. On these adornments, see *Or Yaqar*; *Ketem Paz*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

165. fierce warrior... Lilith reveals that she and her stint as a harlot were a guise adopted by Samael—who is her inner essence, and who is represented here as the Angel of Death. She leaves the sinner while he is sleeping, without an opportunity to repent.

On Lilith’s betrayal of the fool, see the description of Satan’s activity in BT *Bava Batra* 16a: “He descends and leads astray, ascends and arouses wrath, obtains authorization and seizes the soul.” See *Zohar* 2:33b, 268b (*Heikh*).

On the arrival of the Angel of Death, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 20b: “It has been said of the Angel of Death that he is completely full of eyes. When a sick person is about to die, he stands above the head of the bed. In his hand is a drawn sword with a bitter drop suspended. When the sick person sees him, he is terrified and opens his mouth. The angel flings the drop inside. From this drop he dies; from this drop he turns putrid; from this drop his face turns green.”

On the Angel of Death’s fire, see BT *Mo’ed Qatan* 28a. On seeing his drawn sword, see *Hibbut ha-Qever* (in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:150, 152; ed. Higger, 258–61); *Kallah Rabbati* 3:1; *Zohar* 3:126b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 393. Cf. idem, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 52.

On the Angel of Death (or other celestial or demonic entities) as being “full of eyes,” see Ezekiel 1:18; 10:12;

Eikhah Rabbah 1:29; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§29, 33, 40–41, 596, 873; *Hibbut ha-Qever*, ed. Higger, 258; *Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:150, 152; *Kallah Rabbati* 3:1; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:3; *Zohar* 2:202a; 3:126b; *Matoq mi-Devash*. Cf. *Zohar* 2:98b.

Concerning the bitter drops on the sword of the Angel of Death, see *Zohar* 2:264a, 267a (both *Heikh*). Cf. *Zohar* 3:231b. On this passage, see *Or Yaqar*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

166. Jacob descended to her... Jacob exposes himself to demonic and sexual temptation as part of his spiritual transformation, as alluded to in the biblical verse: *Jacob departed from Beer-Sheba and went* חרנה (*Ḥaranah*), *to Haran* (Genesis 28:10). Samael fails to defeat him and, on account of this triumph, Jacob's name is changed to Israel, and he ascends from the rung of *Malkhut* to the rung of *Tif'eret*.

The Hebrew word חרנה (*Ḥaranah*), *to Haran*, is here linked either with the Aramaic חרנה (*ḥaranah*), an alternative form of אחריןא (*aḥarina*), "other," or with the Hebrew חרון (*ḥaron*), "wrath." The point is that the realm outside of Israel is dominated by harsh demonic forces.

On exposure to temptation, cf. *Zohar* 2:163. On *Haran*, see [notes 35](#), [37](#), [161](#). On Jacob's wrestling partner, see Genesis 32:29; *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Tanḥuma*, *Vayishlah* 8; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:6; *Zohar* 1:35b, 144a, 146a, 163b, 166a, 170a–171b, 179b; 2:105a, 163b; 3:45a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 316. On the development from Jacob to Israel, see above, [note 159](#).

167. He dreamed The verse reads in full: *He dreamed: Here, a ladder [or: stairway, ramp] set on earth, its head reaching to heaven; and here, angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

168. Dreams are from the sixth rung... Prophecy derives from the divine realm, specifically from the *sefirot* *Netsaḥ* and *Hod*. Dreams, on the other hand, derive from a lower source, namely the archangel Gabriel. From the

source of prophecy to this angelic prince of dreams there are six stages: the *sefirot Netsah, Hod, Yesod, and Shekhinah*, and the first two archangels: Michael and Gabriel. Here, these six stages are correlated with a Talmudic saying (BT *Berakhot* 57b): “A dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy,” relying on the assumption that each rung contains ten rungs within it. The implication is that all human beings experience a fraction of the prophetic encounter.

See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2:36; *Zohar* 1:149a-b, 183a, 191b, 196a, 238a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 369; idem, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 126. In the book of Daniel (8:16; 9:21-22), Gabriel interprets revelations. On dreams as a lower form of divine communication, see BT *Hagigah* 5b. On the quality of dreams, see *Zohar* 1:130a-b, 150b, 183a, 199b-200a, 238a; 2:264a (*Heikh*); 3:25a; Moses de León, *Sefer Mishkan ha-Edut*, 6; Wolfson, *A Dream*, 162-69, 256-57; Yisraeli, *Pithei Heikhal*, 247-55.

169. A ladder—this is Sinai... Jacob has a double epiphany, seeing both his ladder and a vision of the future revelation at Sinai. His mystical vision includes both theophany and historical prophecy, removing veils of space and time.

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12: “He dreamed: Here, a ladder—alluding to Sinai. Set on earth—as is said: They stationed themselves at the bottom of the mountain (Exodus 19:17). Its top reaching the heavens—The mountain was ablaze with flames to the heart of heaven (Deuteronomy 4:11)... Behold! YHVH was standing upon it (Genesis 28:13)—YHVH came down upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:20).

The printed version refers to an alternate reading (not found in any of the manuscripts consulted or first printings) that notes that the *gimatriyyah* of סלם (*sullam*), “ladder, stairway, ramp,” equals that of סיני (*Sinai*)—130. See Theodor-Albeck’s note on *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12; Galante.

170. He saw Metatron... Metatron is the chief angel, variously designated as the Prince of the World, Prince of the Countenance (or of the Presence), celestial scribe, and יהוה קטן (*YHVH Qatan*), “Lesser *YHVH*” (3 Enoch 12:5, based on Exodus 23:21). In Heikhalot literature, Metatron is also identified with Enoch, who ascended to heaven (based on Genesis 5:24). Here, he rules over our world, empowered by *Shaddai*, representing *Malkhut*, above. Jacob’s vision of the ladder is the prophetic manifestation of Metatron. When Jacob attains a higher degree and his name is changed to Israel, Metatron ascends to *Tif’eret*. Metatron is now aligned with *YHVH*, Jacob’s rung. The essence of the name שדי, *Shaddai*, is the letter ך, *yod*, deriving from the first letter of the tetragrammaton. Thus Metatron is called by two names, *Shaddai* and *YHVH*, depending upon the level of unity being emphasized.

According to Exodus 23:21, the angel charged with leading the Israelites in the desert comprises the name of God: *My Name is within him*. According to BT *Sanhedrin* 38b, that angel is Metatron. See also Rashi on Exodus 23:21: “His name is like his Master’s—Metatron has the numerical value of *Shaddai* [314].”

On “elder of his household, ruling over all that is His,” see Genesis 24:2, which begins: *Abraham said to his servant, elder of his household who ruled over all that was his*. On Metatron and the divine name, see Rashi on Exodus 23:21; Nahmanides on Exodus 23:20 and 24:1; *Zohar* 1:127b (*MhN*); *ZH* 12b (*MhN*), 39d; Moses de León, *Sefer Or Zaru’a*, 259–260; Galante. Cf. Ibn Ezra (short) on Exodus 23:21. On Metatron as servant, see *Zohar* 1:126a–b, 128a (both *MhN*), 181b; 2:131b. On Metatron in general, see above, [note 24](#).

171. בו (bo), on him... Usually rendered *on it*, referring to the ladder (or stairway, ramp) in Jacob’s dream. The pronominal suffix ם (*vav*) can mean either “it” or “him.” Here, the “him” upon whom the angels ascend and descend

is Metatron. The angels ascend and depend upon him only because he is invested with and connected to the Divine: *YHVH standing upon him*. Holy angels ascend, while angels associated with the *Sitra Aħra* descend.

Cf. John 1:50–51: “Jesus answered him, ‘Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’” On Metatron and the ladder, see above, [p. 557](#), [n. 53](#).

[172.](#) **Angels of God—twelve jewels...** On the twelve precious stones, see *Zohar* 1:147b. On this list of angels, see Scholem.

[173.](#) **שׁוֹאֵן (*shin’an*), thousands...** This word, of uncertain origin and meaning (usually construed in terms of doubling), is interpreted here as a *notariqon* (acronym) that alludes to the four faces of the creatures who bear the divine chariot: שׁוֹר (*shor*), *ox*; נֶשֶׁר (*neshar*), *eagle*; אַרְיֵה (*aryeh*), *lion*; and finally אָדָם (*adam*), *human*, symbolized by the last letter, ך (final *nun*), whose extended length implies the fullness of male and female.

On the term *shin’an*, see BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b; *Zohar* 1:18b–19a. On the final *nun*, see *Bahir* 56 (83); *Zohar* 1:18b–19a, 147a (*Tos*); 3:66b, 155a, 156b, 285b; *ZH* 38c, 70a (*ShS*).

The verse in Psalms reads in full: *The chariots of God, myriads upon myriads, thousands of thousands. The Master among them—O, Sinai in holiness!*

[174.](#) **YHVH rules over all...** Ultimately, even though Metatron rules over this lower world, he remains under the sovereignty of *YHVH*.

On the meaning of עָלָיו (*alav*), whose simple sense is *beside it* or *beside him* (though interpreted here as “upon or over it [or: him],” namely the ladder), see *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:3; Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House*, 112–20.

On Metatron as the conduit between the upper and lower worlds, see *ZH* 10b, 24a, 25d-26a (all *MhN*); Scholem, "Parashah Ḥadashah," 437 (Volume 10, p. 555); Wolski, "Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night."

175. House of God—actually... According to rabbinic tradition, the site of Jacob's dream (in Genesis 28) is identified as the future site of the Temple. Jacob is astonished at his vision of Metatron (represented by the *ladder*), through whom he glimpses both *Shekhinah* (represented by *House of Elohim* and *gate of heaven*) and *YHVH* (signified by *heaven*). This homily demonstrates the tight continuity between the human, angelic, super-angelic, and divine realms—and shows how each stratum is a portal to the one above.

On the identification of the site of Jacob's dream as the Temple, see *Targum Yerushalmi*, Genesis 28:11; *Bereshit Rabbah* 69:7; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 39; *Midrash Tehillim* 81:2. On *Shekhinah* as *gate*, see *Zohar* 1:7b, 11b; 2:51a; 3:95a; Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah*, 4b. Some commentaries identify *House of God* and *gate of heaven* with Metatron. For different explanations, see *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Sullam*; *Matoq mi-Devash*; Mopsik.

176. He looked The full verse reads: *He looked, and here: a well in the field, and there were three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for from that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the mouth of the well was large.*

177. A well ...In the field... Divine overflow proceeds from the *sefirot Netsah, Hod, and Yesod*, signified by the *three flocks*, to *Malkhut*, represented by *well* and *field*. Once *Malkhut* is filled, divine bounty continues down to angels and righteous souls, symbolized by *the flocks*.

On this verse, see *Zohar* 1:151b-152a; *ibid.* (*Tos*); 3:62a. Cf. *Zohar* 3:270a. On this passage, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:392-93.

178. stone upon which people stumble... This stone represents *Sitra Aḥra* and its forces, who heed *Malkhut's* rulings

that regulate the flow of blessing to the world. In the *Zohar*, the Other Side often acts independently, oppressing *Malkhut*; but here, *Malkhut* manifests judgment in the world and employs those harsh forces as Her agents. The well is envisioned as opening downward even as the stone rests on top of it.

On this stone, cf. *Zohar* 1:193a (printed editions).

179. all the flocks... Why does the verse specify *all the flocks*? To indicate that both angels above and Israel below are needed to perform their spiritual worship to remove judgment above. Then, *Malkhut* is freed from the burden of judgment, which in turn enables all below to receive celestial bounty. The immediacy expressed in the repeated formula “at once” emphasizes how the verses of the Torah are direct literary responses to events in the celestial realm.

The full verse in Genesis reads: *When all the flocks were gathered there, they would roll the stone off the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.*

180. to invoke judgment in the world... After satiating the angels and Israel, *Malkhut* calls for the restoration of judgment, without which the world would be destroyed by human sinfulness.

See *M Avot* 1:18, in the name of Rabban Shim'on son of Gamliel: “The world stands on three things: on justice, on truth, and on peace.”

181. he needed no extra help... Jacob attained personal consummation upon seeing Rachel, which gave him the strength to remove the stone independently. The initiation of their future union signifies the bonding of *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut* above, which leads to the removal of judgment from the world, and to the free flow of divine bounty. Whereas in Genesis 29:3 a number of shepherds were required to budge the heavy stone, Jacob pries it from the well on his own.

The verse reads in full: *When Jacob saw Rachel, daughter of his uncle Laban, and the sheep of his uncle Laban, he approached and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of his uncle Laban. The verse in Exodus concludes: and watered their flock.*

182. [He] rolled... not he removed... The Bible more commonly uses the verb סור (*sur*) to indicate “removal”—the question arises as to why the Torah uses the verb גלל (*galal*), *roll*. The rolling of a rock, symbolizing *Sitra Aħra* or Samael, suggests a dizzying experience, sufficient to disorient Satan and impede his prosecution.

On confounding Satan, see BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16a-b and Rashi, ad loc., Rabbenu Ḥananel, and *Tosafot*, s.v. *kedei le-arbev*; *Arukh*, s.v. *arev*; *Zohar* 1:114b; 2:184a-b, 237b-238a; 3:99b (*Piq*).

183. able to defeat Esau... Through two concrete actions, Jacob demonstrated his ability to overcome adversity. He rolled the rock (symbol of forces of judgment in this world) off the well by himself, and then, following rabbinic tradition, fought against Esau’s archangel Samael, in his grappling with *a man* all night. Alternatively, his “defeat” of Esau alludes to his ruse in Genesis 27, in which he steals the blessing intended for Esau.

On Jacob as the superior patriarch, see above, [note 157](#). On the formulation “Jacob—alone,” see Genesis 32:25: *And Jacob was left alone—and a man wrestled with him until the rising of dawn.* On Jacob wrestling with Esau’s heavenly prince, see *Tanħuma*, *Vayishlah* 8; *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:6; *Zohar* 1:144a, 146a, 166a, 170a-171b, 179b; 2:105a, 111b (SA), 163b; 3:45a. Cf. Rashi on *Sukkah* 29a, s.v. *eloheha*.

184. two worlds... Jacob’s two principal wives, Leah and Rachel, signify *Binah*, concealed world, and *Malkhut*, revealed world. He signifies *Tif’eret*, the bridge between them. Rachel had two sons, symbolizing Metatron and Sandalfon (who derive from *Malkhut*), while Leah had six

sons, representing the six *sefirot* of *Hesed* through *Yesod*. The replication is evident further in the seven years that Jacob first worked for Laban, ostensibly for Rachel, but ultimately, secretly, for Leah, the seventh *sefirah* counting from the bottom. The second seven years of labor were clearly designated for Rachel.

See *Zohar* 1:153b-154b, 158a-b, 223a; 2:29b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 97-98; idem, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, 66 (83); idem, *She'elot u-Tshuvot*, 41, 45.

185. Reuben went out... The full verse in Genesis reads: *Reuben went out during the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to Leah his mother. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."* Leah proceeds to give Rachel the mandrakes in exchange for being allowed to sleep with Jacob that night—as a result of which she conceives and gives birth to Issachar.

186. Cup of Blessing... Namely, the cup of wine that is held during the recital of Grace after Meals. Here the cup symbolizes *Shekhinah*, and it receives blessing only from *Hesed*, on the right side; consequently, the cup must be held only by the right hand, representing *Hesed*, without any aid from the left, representing *Gevurah*.

See BT *Berakhot* 51a: "One takes [the cup] with both his hands and places it in the right hand." As to whether the left hand should support the right, the Talmudic conclusion is that it should not (*ibid.*, 51a-b), and here *Sitrei Torah* follows that stance. Cf. *Zohar* 2:138b, which follows the thirteenth-century Ashkenazi author Zedekiah Anav (in his *Shibbolei ha-Leqet*, 156), stating that while the left hand cannot hold the cup entirely, it may be placed beneath the right hand.

On the cup of blessing and how it should be held, see *Zohar* 1:1a, 233b-234a, 240a, 250a-b; 2:104a, 143b, 157b, 168b; 3:245a-b (*RM*); *ZH* 87c (*MhN, Rut*); Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 105; idem, *Sod Eser Sefirot Belimah*,

383; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 183:4; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar*, 38–39; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, index, s.v. “cup of blessing.”

“Word” renders מלה (*millah*), following many of the manuscripts and early printings. The version in Margalioth reads עילה (*illah*), “cause [or: reason, purpose],” indicating that *Ḥesed* needed to find some justification for providing divine overflow to the cup.

187. Reuben—south side... Reuben signifies *Ḥesed*, and he is identified with the south side—as delineated in the biblical arrangement of the tribes in the desert: *The banner of the camp of Reuben to the south* (Numbers 2:10). As the eldest, he leads the twelve tribes, represented by the twelve boundaries of the camp. Reuben’s seeking out mandrakes symbolizes *Ḥesed*’s desire to find some merit in the lower realm, to justify conveying blessing below. The דודאים (*duda'im*), *mandrakes*, also symbolize the two cherubim, sometimes called דודים (*dodim*), “companions” (or “lovers”). Possibly to be identified with the archangels Metatron and Sandalfon, they reside beneath *Shekhinah* and are represented by the cherubim, which are often represented as lovers, hovering over the ark in the Temple. They are essential transmitters of merit from the realm below to Divinity above.

“Boundaries” renders תחומין (*teḥumin*); alternatively, “limits, dominions.” The phrase here recalls the twelve גבולי אלכסון (*gevulei alakhsan*), “diagonal borders” (edges of a cube), mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* 5:1. See above, [note 27](#).

On Song of Songs 7:14, see *Zohar* 1:134a (*MhN*), 156b, 242b–243a; *ZḤ* 22a (*MhN*). The verse from Song of Songs reads in full: *The mandrakes give forth fragrance, at our doors all delicacies; new as well as old, my love, I have hidden away for you.*

On the two cherubim, see *Zohar* 1:228b–229a; 3:162a; *Or Yaqar*; Galante; *Sullam*; Mopsik; *Matoq mi-Devash*. The

entire following passage is very similar to Moses de León, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 15-19.

188. when does He arouse toward Her... When *Shekhinah* sees “Her legions” (signifying the angels) and the “reapers of the field” (representing the righteous, Torah scholars, or kabbalists), She pours forth divine overflow to them; and in response, *Hesed* sends blessing to Her. A cycle of blessing occurs, beginning with pious behavior below, arousing “hidden world” above (alluding to Leah and symbolizing *Binah*), culminating in blessing being sent to *Shekhinah*. *Or Yaqar* explains: “Like the woman nursing who has milk only when the infant suckles from her breasts, so, too, there is overflow for *Malkhut* only when She distributes to lower ones.”

On mandrakes and their fragrance as signifying the righteous and their deeds, see BT *Eruvin* 21b; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 7:14; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* on 7:14.

The image of *Shekhinah* allocating “shares of fortune” derives from Proverbs 31:11: *The heart of her husband trusts in her, and no fortune [or: prize, booty] will he lack.*

189. south side absorbs it... In this alternative explanation, the mandrakes waft toward *Hesed*.

190. Lower World arouses to petition... The biblical story of the mandrakes continues to reveal the esoteric drama in which *Shekhinah* (represented by Rachel) requests divine overflow from Upper World above (symbolized by Leah). In the biblical story, Rachel is childless and yearns for the benefits that mandrakes confer. This is paralleled above, as *Shekhinah* longs for the flow of blessing that is moving from the angelic realm up to *Binah*.

191. Husband of Upper World... After Rachel asks Leah to give her some of the mandrakes found by Reuben, Leah responds, “*Is your taking my husband a small thing, that you would take my son’s mandrakes too?*” Here, Leah’s complaint is turned into playful banter. However, when Leah (symbolizing Upper World, Mother, and *Binah*)

mentions her *husband*, she is referring not to Jacob (symbolizing *Tif'eret*) but rather to her supernal husband (Father, *Hokhmah*). *Hokhmah* is the progenitor of six masculine *sefirot* (*Hesed* through *Yesod*) and one daughter, *Shekhinah*, for whom He maintains special affection, though She has no content of Her own.

On the divine Father-Daughter relationship, see next note.

192. He calls Her 'Daughter'... *Hokhmah's* love for *Shekhinah* leads Him to call Her by names associated with incrementally higher *sefirot*: "Sister" in relationship to *Tif'eret*; "Mother" in relationship to *Binah*; and "His Name," *Hokhmah*, in relation to Himself. In Kabbalah, *Shekhinah* is often called Lower (or Small) *Hokhmah*. *Hokhmah* calls *Shekhinah* by His own name, but it is actually *Hokhmah*—and ultimately *Keter*, signified here by *Ayin*—that is the source of blessing for *Shekhinah*.

On God's calling *Shekhinah* by progressively more intimate terms, see *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 3:11: "Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai asked Rabbi El'azar son of Rabbi Yose, 'Perhaps you have heard from your father the meaning of *upon the crown with which his mother crowned him* (Song of Songs 3:11)?' He replied, 'Yes.' He asked him, 'How [did he explain it]?' He replied, 'Like a king who had an only daughter whom he loved lavishly, calling her "my daughter." He went on loving her until he called her "my sister." He went on loving her until he called her "my mother." ...Rabbi Shim'on son of Yoḥai stood and kissed him on his head, saying, 'If I have come just to hear this interpretation from your mouth, it is enough for me!'"

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:3; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Pegudei* 8; *Shemot Rabbah* 52:5; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:4, 8; *Bahir* 36, 43, 44, 90 (54, 63, 65, 130-33); Ramban on Genesis 24:1; *Zohar* 2:100b; 3:262a; Scholem, "Shekhinah," 162-72.

The simple meaning of the verse in Job is *But Wisdom, where is it found*, but *Sitrei Torah* interprets the words sefirotically, to indicate that the *sefirah* of *Ḥokhmah* derives from *Ayin*, a cognomen for *Keter*, the uppermost *sefirah*.

On *Shekhinah* as Lower *Ḥokhmah*, see *Bahir* 43, 44 (63, 65); *Zohar* 1:141b; 2:235b; 3:61a, 290a, 296a (last two *Idra Zuta*).

193. *Lakhen* always indicates an oath See *Devarim Rabbah* 3:2, in the name of Rabbi Aḥa: “The blessed Holy One swore an oath that He would never abandon Israel. From where do we know this? As is said: לֶכֶן (*Lakhen*), *Assuredly, thus shall I do to you, O Israel* (Amos 4:12)—*lakhen* always implies an oath, as is said: *Ve-lakhen, And assuredly, I have sworn concerning the house of Eli* (1 Samuel 3:14).”

See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 18a; *Tanḥuma, Va’era* 2; *Shofetim* 1; *Shemot Rabbah* 6:4.

194. what is the meaning of *yishkav*... Why is this specific term used to indicate their union? The verb “שָׁכַב” (*yishkav*) is treated as if it consisted of the particle that expresses existence—יָשׁ (*yesh*), *substance*—plus the letters כ and ב, whose combined numerical value is twenty-two, the number of letters in the alphabet. *Yesh* alludes to *Binah*, signified by “Upper World” and “World that is Coming.” “Hidden Point” signifies *Ḥokhmah*, from which the twenty-two letters emerge, in *Ḥokhmah*’s union with *Binah*.

According to a midrashic interpretation, the phrase *to endow those who love me with יָשׁ* (*yesh*), *substance*, alludes to 310 worlds that God will eventually bequeath to every righteous person, since this is the numerical value of *yesh*. See above, [note 65](#). On *Ḥokhmah* inseminating *Binah* with the twenty-two letters, see *Zohar* 1:15b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:311.

195. *he may lie with you*... Jacob’s name is omitted in the biblical story to teach that the coupling occurs between *Ḥokhmah*, “Hidden One,” and *Binah*, signified by Leah.

Reuben's mandrakes are now seen as the key to the union of the highest pair of *sefirot*. *Sitrei Torah* reinterprets Leah and Rachel's exchange, indicating that it contains no jealousy—only love on all levels.

On the underlying sisterly love, see BT *Megillah* 13b, *Bava Batra* 123a.

196. in the evening... According to rabbinic teaching, each of the patriarchs established one of the three daily prayer-times, and Isaac is the one who went out to pray before nightfall. Here, Jacob leaves the field in the evening, since that is his father's designated time. The *field* designates *Shekhinah*, with whom each patriarch bonds at the appropriate time. It is the same *field* whose fragrance Isaac detected when Jacob approached to receive his father's blessings.

See *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 16: "Isaac went out to say the afternoon prayer, as is said: *Isaac went out* לְשׁוֹחַ (la-su'ah), *to meditate, in the field*. שִׁיחָה (Siḥah), Meditation, always means prayer, as is said: *A prayer of a poor person when he is faint and pours out* שִׁיחָו (siḥo), *his plea, before YHVH* (Psalms 102:1). See *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Yerushalmi* on Genesis 24:63; JT *Berakhot* 4:1, 7a-b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:9; BT *Berakhot* 26b; *Zohar* 1:132a.

On the *field blessed by YHVH*, see BT *Ta'anit* 29b, in the name of Rav: "He said, 'See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH'... Like the fragrance of a field of apple trees." See Azriel of Gerona, *Peirush ha-Aggadot*, 35-37; *Zohar* 1:36a, 122a, 128b-129a, 139a, 142b-143a, 224b; 2:39a-b; 3:84a; Moses de León, *Shushan Edut*, 365.

The full verse in Genesis 30:16 reads: *When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, 'You are to come to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes.' And he lay with her that night.*

197. Supernal Mother... This epithet alludes to *Binah*, who is quoted as speaking here to *Tif'eret*. She encourages Him to receive divine overflow from the highest sources, before Judgment is brought to the world at nighttime by the side of Isaac, representing *Gevurah*.

198. he lay with her in the night, הוא (hu), he... This description of Jacob's union with Leah is usually understood to mean *He lay with her that night*. However the wording בלילה הוא (*ba-lailah hu*), *that night*, is strange; one would expect בלילה ההוא (*ba-lailah ha-hu*). *Sitrei Torah* reads the phrase hyperliterally: *in the night*—הוא (hu), *he*. This yields an otherwise unspecified pronoun—which alludes to *Hokhmah*, “Hidden Point,” indicating that after *Binah* conveys blessings to *Tif'eret*, She unites intimately with *hu*, the one who is “concealed from all.” Before that, She does not receive divine overflow from above. Indeed, the whole process is engineered by Reuben's bringing the mandrakes, alluding to the role of either pious behavior below or to the activities of the cherubim.

See BT *Niddah* 31a; Rashi on Genesis 30:16; *Zohar* 1:154b; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 98; Kasher, *Torah Shelemah*, Genesis 30:16, n. 60. Cf. Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 43–46.

199. The blessed Holy One designates names... The function of these lines here is obscure. They could refer to God's role in inspiring the union of Jacob and Leah, leading to conception.

On the determinativeness of a person's name, see BT *Berakhot* 7b: “How do we know that a name determines destiny? Rabbi El'azar said, ‘For Scripture states: *Go, gaze upon the acts of YHVH, who has brought שְׁמוֹת (shammot), desolation, on earth* (Psalms 46:9). Do not read שְׁמוֹת (*shammot*), *desolation*, but rather שְׁמוֹת (*shemot*), *names*.’” See *Midrash Tanḥuma*, *Ha'azinu* 7; *Zohar* 1:6a, 58b, 60a; 2:5a (*MhN*), 103a, 104a, 179b, 223a, 230a; 3:25a, 72a, 75b,

199b; ZH 72c, 73a (both *ShS*); Margaliot on *Sefer Hasidim*, par. 244; idem, *Sha'arei Zohar* on *Berakhot* 7b.

The verse actually reads: *Go, gaze upon the acts of YHVH, who has brought שְׁמוֹת (shammot), desolation, on earth* (Psalms 46:9). On discrepancies between scriptural citations and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

200. Jacob took for himself.. Jacob chose *poplar*, which renders לבנה (*livneh*), though *Sitrei Torah* reads it as *levanah*, “white,” and associates it with water. Both of those aspects indicate that *poplar* symbolizes *Hesed*, which is located on the right side. The *almond* tree signifies *Gevurah*, most likely because of its pink flowers. The mature bark of the *plane* tree peels off easily in irregularly shaped patches, producing a dappled appearance. That hybrid appearance suggests the combined identity of *Tif'eret*, which blends *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. In Jacob's peeling of the rods, the white is revealed, emphasizing the predominance of *Hesed*. Jacob, symbolizing the middle axis *Tif'eret*, is called אִישׁ תָּם (*ish tam*), *a simple man* (Genesis 25:27), translated by Onkelos as *gevar shelim*, “a perfect (or complete, consummate) man.”

The popular associations of the poplar probably derive from the white undersides of its leaves, and the fact that it thrives near water. *Almond* renders לוז (*luz*), which is the Aramaic term for almond. It is identified here with the color red, most likely on account of its flowers, which range in color from white to pink. However, the term itself can also connote “to turn, bend, twist,” or “to be perverse,” referring to the darker aspects of judgment. Of the two strains of the almond species that grows in the land of Israel, one (*Amygdalus communis* var. *amara*) produces bitter fruit and contains a poisonous alkaloid that is destroyed only with roasting, providing another association with *Gevurah*. *Plane* renders ערמון (*ermon*), following RSV, NJPS, and Alter. *Targum Yerushalmi* identifies it as *Nerium oleander*.

On the poplar, see *Targum Yerushalmi*. On the almond, see M *Kil'ayim* 9:8; BT *Hullin* 25b; EJ. On the plane tree, cf. *Targum Yerushalmi*. On Jacob as a consummate man, see *Zohar* 1:146a, 167b, 173b, 222a; 2:78b, 175b; 3:12b, 163a-b.

The full verse reads: *Jacob took rods of fresh poplar, almond, and plane, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white of the rods.*

201. these inward, those outward... There is a hierarchy among the angels—with the higher, more inward ones linking the blessed Holy One and the Jewish people. The root קשר (*qshr*) usually refers to tying or bonding; here it is related to the description of the vigorous (or sturdy) flocks that Jacob selected—הצאן המקושרות (*ha-tson ha-mqusharot*), *vigorous of the flocks*.

On the formulation “mystery of mysteries transmitted to the wise of heart,” see above, [note 55](#). Genesis 30:41 reads in full (according to MT): *So when the vigorous animals went into heat, Jacob would place the rods in the channels, in full view of the animals, so that they mated by the rods.* The divergence here represents a slight conflation of Genesis 30:41 and 31:10. On discrepancies between the *Zohar's* citation of Scripture and MT, see above, [p. 5](#), [n. 6](#).

202. tefillin of the head... Both Jacob and the *tefillin* of the head symbolize *Tif'eret*. When the highest angels long for supernal illumination, Jacob inserts *tefillin* in the upper *sefirot*, drawing radiance below. Once the angels have imbibed divine overflow, they convey it downward.

203. separated upper rungs from other rungs... Jacob differentiated the highest angelic beings as the ones from whom he and Israel would receive divine bounty, dissociating from the other angels and their lot.

204. marked by the King's signet... As male Jews are distinguished from the men of the other nations by the mark of circumcision, so are the angels who are designated for Israel visibly marked with an inscription from the

blessed Holy One. Since Jacob chose to distinguish himself with holiness, so did God leave His impress upon Jacob.

205. When radiance of the flame is revealed... The manifestation of supernal light in *Shekhinah* below then divides the holy angels above from those associated with the other nations—leaving the latter disgraced. This segregation is confirmed by the description of the animals that Jacob rejects—הַעֲטוּפִים (*ha-atufim*), *the feeble ones*—who signify the angels of the other nations, who in turn מתעטפי (*mit'atefei*), “shroud,” themselves. The figure of Jacob, both human and as symbol of *Tif'eret*, is a crucial link in the chain of blessings that lead from Divinity to the angels and Israel.

Sitrei Torah ends here in T1 and M2.

206. Our Mishnah... This renders the term מתניתין (*matnitin*), which refers to a secret, mystical Mishnah often cited in the *Zohar* and apparently known only to its own circle.

See *Zohar* 1:37b, 55b, 74a, 91b, 93a, 95b, 96a, 223b-224a, 252a (*Hash*); 2:5a (*MhN*), 123b; 3:57b, 61b, 75b, 77a, 78a, 284b, 285a, 292b, 293b, 295a (last three *IZ*); *ZH* 15b, 16a (last two *MhN*); Matt, “Matnita di-Lan.” What is termed *matnitin* here is distinct from the passages of the *Zohar* known as *Matnitin*, on which see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216; Gottlieb, *Meḥqarim*, 163-214; above, [note 134](#), and [p. 535, n. 1](#).

In M7, P3, and P5, *Sitrei Torah* ends here after the word “potency,” and both Tishby and Meroz exclude the following section from their lists of *Sitrei Torah* passages. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:106, n. 13; Meroz, “R. Ya’akov Shatz ve-Shutefav li-Ytsirat Zohar, *Sitrei Torah*,” 256, n. 9.

207. celestial deputies... These forces of judgment are presided over by the “whirling sword,” which symbolizes *Shekhinah* when She is filled from the side of *Gevurah*. The unstable gendering amplifies the horror of these ominous beings.

The image of the whirling sword derives from Genesis 3:24: *He drove out the human and placed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.* According to *Bereshit Rabbah* 21:9, *whirling* means “turning” from one aspect into another: “*Whirling*—changing: sometimes male, sometimes female; sometimes spirits, sometimes angels.”

Sometimes the terrifying sword represents demonic forces ruled by the feminine consort of Samael. On the “whirling sword,” see above, [p. 585](#), [n. 108](#). On the *Shekhinah* as “sword,” see same note.

The full verse in Isaiah reads: *YHVH has a sword, full of blood, gorged with fat—with the blood of lambs and goats, with the kidney fat of rams. For YHVH has a slaughter in Bozrah, a great butchery in the land of Edom.*

[208. those who unite...](#) In contrast to the angelic forces of judgment, these angels derive from *Tif'eret* (symbolized here by “Tree of Life”)—and they are always united and serve as the support for *Shekhinah* (who is designated by “Name of God” and “Throne”). They are nourished by *dew of heaven* and are themselves manifestations of *the fat of the earth*. The cluster of angels are קשורין (*qeshurin*), “tied”—an allusion to הצאן המקושרות (*ha-tson ha-mqusharot*), *the vigorous of the flocks*.

“Sockets” renders שיפין (*shaifin*). In the *Zohar* the word signifies “limb,” perhaps based on the Talmudic expression על איבריה לשפא (*al eivreiha le-shafa*), “each limb entered its socket [from which it “slips”]” (BT *Sotah* 7b). See above, [p. 447](#), [n. 256](#).

For expanded interpretations of these angels and precious stones, see *Or Yaqar*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

[209. four sides...](#) The angels that Jacob encounters represent the four supports (or legs) of the throne; they appear to be the conduit of protection from “Upper Tree,” symbolizing *Tif'eret* (which is manifested on earth by Jacob), to “Lower Tree,” signifying Jacob below. *Twin Camps* is the

site where the parallelism of divine realm and human realm is revealed. *Or Yaqar* and Mopsik explain that the two camps refer to the angels of holiness and angels from the side of the *Sitra Aħra*, drawing on the imagery of the whirling sword.

In rabbinic literature, Jacob's parallel presence above and below is rendered as his image being engraved upon the heavenly throne. See *Pirgei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 35: "The ministering angels were ascending and descending [upon the ladder], and they beheld the face of Jacob. They exclaimed, "This is the face like the face of the creature that is on the Throne of Glory!"

See *Bereshit Rabbah* 68:12; 82:2; *Eikhah Rabbah* 2:2; *Targum Yerushalmi* and *Targum Yerushalmi* (frag.) on Genesis 28:12; BT *Hullin* 91b and Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *bi-dyoqno*; *Alfa Beita de-Rabbi Akiva B (Battei Midrashot*, 2:415); *Zohar* 1:72a, 168a, 222a; 2:241a; Moses de León, "Commentary on the Ten *Sefirot*," 338b; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, 1-62.

On the word *מחנות* (*Maħanayim*), *Twin Camps*, see Alter.

210. Have them take Me an offering The full verse reads: *Speak to the Children of Israel and have them take Me an offering; from every man whose heart impels him, you shall take My offering.* These offerings are donations of material for the construction of the Dwelling (or Tabernacle).

211. fashion Glory for His glorification... When "Mystery of All Mysteries" (representing *Keter*) yearned to reside in this world, He emanated "a wind" (or "spirit") from "Supernal Point" (signifying *Hokhmah*) in order to construct a vessel to receive divine overflow. This vessel is "Glory" (symbolizing *Malkhut*). On this passage, see Har-Shefi, *Malkin Qadma'in*, 220-21.

212. no worldly vessel... A frequent refrain in the *Zohar* is "blessing does not rest on an empty place," meaning that some kind of vessel is required to serve as a

receptacle for divine overflow. Once *Malkhut* is fashioned, it receives arousal from this world through the performance of pious activities by Israel. At that point it receives emanation from above and extends that gushing to this world and to the angelic realm.

See Nahmanides on Exodus 25:24; *Zohar* 1:88a-b, 155b (*Mat*), 240a, 250a; 2:63b, 67a, 87b-88a, 153b-155a, 157b; 3:34a; Moses de León, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, 270; Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Ta'amey ha-Mizwoth*, 114-16; idem, *Sefer Tashaq*, 188; Bahya ben Asher on Exodus 25:23; idem, *Shulhan shel Arba*, 477; Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals*, 144-54, 158-62.

213. perfected by the spirits of the righteous... The career of *Malkhut* in this world, called Spirit here, is determined by the presence of righteous ones on earth. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:7, in the name of Rabbi Abba son of Kahana: “The root [or: essence] of *Shekhinah* was in the world below. Once Adam sinned, She withdrew to the first heaven. Cain sinned; She ascended to the second heaven. The generation of Enosh sinned; She ascended to the third. The generation of the Flood sinned—to the fourth.

The generation of the Dispersion—to the fifth. The Sodomites—to the sixth. The Egyptians in the days of Abraham—to the seventh. Opposite these, seven righteous ones arose—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses—and brought Her down to earth. Abraham, from the seventh to the sixth; Isaac brought [Her] down from the sixth to the fifth; Jacob brought [Her] down from the fifth to the fourth; Levi brought [Her] down from the fourth to the third; Kohath brought [Her] down from the third to the second; Amram brought [Her] down from the second to the first; Moses brought Her down below.”

Traditional commentaries try to explain how the preponderance of sinners overwhelms the righteousness of the named figures who were living contemporaneously. See *Or Yaqar*; *Or ha-Hamah*; *Matoq mi-Devash*.

See *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 1:1; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 5, 18b; *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* on 5:1; *Tanḥuma, Pequdei* 6, *Naso* 16; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Naso* 24; *Pirḡei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* 14; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A 34; *Zohar* 2:145a, 146a. In *Sha'arei Orah*, 8a-9a, Gikatilla extends this midrashic theme to David and Solomon, explaining that only with Solomon's Temple did *Shekhinah* finally find a permanent dwelling place on earth.

214. reverted to Egyptian practices... During their sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites regressed to the depravity of forty-nine levels of impurity. This engendered a blemish within the Spirit that was not finally rectified until the building of the Dwelling (or Tabernacle). See *ZH* 31a.

215. perfect My Spirit... Building the Dwelling (or Tabernacle) represents the perfection of the blessed Holy One's "Spirit," *Malkhut*. The blessed Holy One desires to be received by the people of Israel, saying "*Have them take Me,*" understanding *Me* as the direct object. This "taking" is achieved through the commandment of תרומה (*terumah*), *an offering*, symbolizing *Malkhut*. The word *terumah* derives from the root רום (*rum*), "to rise," and can be rendered as "raised contribution; offering; donation; gift." The juxtaposition of the words לִי תְרוּמָה (*li terumah*), *Me, an offering*, indicates the intimacy of *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*. It also signals that the people's investment in the *offering* is needed to facilitate the blessed Holy One's descent.

See *Vayiqra Rabbah* 30:13, in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of Pazzi: "As if it were possible, the blessed Holy One said, 'Take Me and I will dwell among you.' It is not written here *Have them take an offering*, but rather *Have them take Me [as] an offering*—'It is Me you are taking!'"

See *Tanḥuma, Emor* 17; *Tanḥuma* (Buber), *Emor* 24; *Shemot Rabbah* 33:6. Cf. *Bahir* 66 (97). On *Shekhinah* as *terumah, an offering*, see *Zohar* 2:127a, 134b-135a, 138b, 140b.

[216.](#) **Who can take Her ...** In effect, Moses exclaims: “This is beyond any individual’s ability!”

[217.](#) **from their yearning and their spirit...** *Malkhut* is perfected by the spiritual longings of Her devotees.

[218.](#) **mirror of Upper World...** Solomon’s age is considered a period of perfect consummation, both above and below. Through his building of the Temple and his composition of Song of Songs, he completed the perfection of Lower World (signifying *Malkhut* and *Tif’eret*) and aligned Upper World (symbolizing *Binah*).

The word אֲשֶׁר (*asher*), of [or: *that*], signifies *Binah*, while the name שלמה (*shelomo*), “Solomon,” derives from the root שלם (*shlm*), “complete, consummate, perfect.”

On the era of Solomon, see above, [p. 346](#), [n. 2](#).