

TE'UDA

XXI-XXII

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ZOHAR STUDIES

TE'UDA

THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL
OF JEWISH STUDIES RESEARCH SERIES

XXI–XXII

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ZOHAR STUDIES

Editor

RONIT MEROZ


TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY • 2007

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RESEARCH SERIES

PUBLISHED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE MOSHE DORF FOUNDATION



Moshe Dorf

(June 2, 1907 — October 3, 1987)

Moshe Dorf was born in Poland and emigrated to Belgium at an early age. Together with his brother, he founded a diamond processing enterprise. The personality of Moshe Dorf reflects the embodiment of initiative and action which received their concrete expression in the industrial enterprise that he established and continued to cultivate throughout his life. Concurrently, he possessed an intense spiritual wealth as well as an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and wisdom from the rich sources of the Jewish heritage. He was an active participant in various study groups and conferences devoted to Jewish Studies, especially in the field of biblical research, and an avid member of the Israeli Society for Biblical Research as well as the World Jewish Society for the Study of Bible.

Moshe Dorf will be remembered by friends and relations for his congeniality and amiability, his unstinted devotion to his family, and his munificent philanthropy to numerous cultural and charitable institutions in the State of Israel.

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Foreword

This edition of TE'UDA (appearing as vol. 21–22) continues the tradition of former years, the essence of which is the elaboration of one major theme. The present volume is based on a conference that took place at Tel Aviv University in December 2003, celebrating the publication of the late Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb's new book on the Hebrew writings of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Mehemna*, one of the later strata of Zoharic literature. It was published by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, with an introduction by Moshe Idel. Prof. Gottlieb taught at Tel Aviv University from 1963 until his untimely death in 1973, and was a beloved teacher and admired scholar.

The Zohar constitutes the central text of Jewish Kabbalist literature, and as such continues to intrigue and attract generations of researchers and scholars as well as wider circles of the general public, thirsty for knowledge. This trend has been on the rise, with interest in Kabbalah in general and the Zohar in particular, increasing in recent years. Various groups and institutes in Israel and worldwide sponsor lectures, conferences and meetings where a number of approaches are discussed.

The present volume of TE'UDA has an important role to play in this context, furnishing our readership with an impressive array of studies authored by well-known scholars presenting the most recent developments and interpretations. The result is an up-to-date academic work based on years of intensive study that offers a variety of well-documented essays covering a broad range of issues. This volume will undoubtedly serve as a guide to those attempting to navigate the wealth of interpretations and approaches, bringing a much appreciated contribution to the field of Zohar studies.

In conclusion, our well-deserved thanks to the editor and originator of

Foreword

this volume, Dr. Ronit Meroz, whose diligence and devotion made this volume possible.

Prof. Dina Porat, Head, The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies

Tel-Aviv, November 2006

Preface

The present volume grew out of a conference held at Tel Aviv University in late December 2003 on the subject of new developments in the study of the Zohar.¹ The incentive for convening the conference was twofold: to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb, who taught at Tel Aviv University from 1963 until his untimely passing in 1973; and to celebrate the publication of his book *The Hebrew Writings of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar and Ra'aya Mehemna* (edited by Moshe Idel and published by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities). The occasion was marked by a special session at the conference dedicated to the writings of the major Kabbalist of the book's title, and to a commemoration of Prof. Gottlieb's life and work. Prof. Gottlieb is also remembered in this volume in a eulogy written by his onetime doctoral student, Amos Goldreich.² An outstanding researcher and beloved teacher, Prof. Gottlieb left an indelible imprint on students and colleagues alike.

Laymen as well as scholars flocked to the conference lectures, with 100 to 200 people in attendance at every session. This is just one minor aspect of the dramatically increased interest in the Zohar in recent years, as felt in three different yet complementary areas.

One such area that will not be dealt with in this book is the widespread engagement with Kabbalah, primarily in Israel and the United States (and to a minor degree, in places such as Britain as well). The most prominent groups in this category (in terms of numbers) are the various followers of R. Ashlag, although they are far from the only ones. Some of these groups attempt to cultivate various forms of religious expression in the lives of

1 All articles have been peer-reviewed for publication.

2 See also the article by Yehuda Liebes in this volume.

their adherents, while others tend to focus on more magical features such as amulets; on a deeper understanding of the Zohar; or on various spiritual exercises.

The present volume is an example of the rising interest in the Zohar in the second area, namely, the academic sphere. It joins a rich array of books focused solely on this topic that have recently been, or are about to be, published (including the aforementioned work by Gottlieb). Among the authors of these works are: Amos Goldreich, Pinchas Giller, Arthur Green, Joel Hecker, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Boaz Huss, Oded Yisraeli, Elliot Wolfson and the editor of this book, to name but a few. Two major research projects are now being conducted on the Zohar: one in London (coordinated by Prof. Ada Rapoport-Albert), focusing on its linguistic aspects; and another in Tel Aviv (headed by this book's editor), involving the study of Zohar manuscripts and the preparation of a critical edition. Another major undertaking is Daniel Matt's new translation of the Zohar into English. Although this project had its origins in academia, it is addressed to laymen as well, and as such is a conspicuous example of the interconnection between the first two areas.

The third field is that of the various art forms associated with the Zohar or with Kabbalah in general. One famous example is Mordechai Ardon's stained-glass window at the National Library in Jerusalem, which was influenced by the graphic depiction of the Sefirot printed in Tishby's and Lachower's *Mishnat ha-Zohar*. Another is the poetry of Asi Farber or Haviva Pedaya. And yet another case in point is the music written and performed by the Israeli rock group Shotei Hanevua with words taken from the Zohar (included in their album issued by Helicon Records, 2004).

Our generation, unlike earlier ones, is paying growing attention to the intersection of arts and the Zohar, which is particularly appropriate given the spirit of the work. In spite of its overt contempt for poetics per se (see for example, Zohar III 149b or 152a), it does employ poetic artistry. To mention just a few examples, the Zohar makes use of euphony when seeking to convey experiences of the numinous (see especially the Zoharic

unit called *Matnitin*). It also recognizes the poetic value of symbols: Zoharic symbols do not serve the sole purpose of knowledge of God but take on their own rich poetic life when utilized to describe spectacular visions (see for example, Zohar I 223 a-b, for the visually poetic depiction of the Shekhinah). Likewise, the authors use symbols to reveal, and at the same time conceal, their secrets by deliberately employing a strategy of “gaps.” Thus poetic techniques become a substitute for the rabbinic technique of revealing only the merest “hints” (*rashei prakim*) to the wise, who are considered capable of deciphering them on their own (as alluded to in BT Hagigah 13a).

The **introductory section** of the volume touches upon this vast field. Here we find a poem by Asi Farber, who offers a glimpse into the dim abyss behind the curtain of the holy texts, from which their sublime creativity springs. Her poem illuminates the (imagined) figure of R. Moshe de Leon with both irony and criticism. Michal Govrin, an author, poet and stage director, shares with us her thoughts about the impact of the Zohar on her own literary writing and goes on to discuss other matters such as the delicate line that separates (and unites) the scholarly world and the poetic one.

The remainder of the volume, consisting of three parts, is devoted to scholarly research:

Part I centers around the publication of the first two volumes of Daniel Matt’s translation of the Zohar (by now, the third volume has appeared). Matt discusses his methodology in creating the Aramaic critical text as well as his approach to its translation into English. Melila Hellner-Eshed describes the superb nature of the translation, while Boaz Huss uses the opportunity to present the history and cultural significance of Zohar translations.

Part II focuses on specific issues in the conceptual world of Zoharic literature. Two of the articles deal with the so-called “main corpus” of the Zohar (Michal Oron’s paper as well as part of Ron Margolin’s), while others pertain to its later strata, namely *Sabba de-Mishpatim*, *Tiqqunei Zohar* and the writings of R. Joseph Angelet (the articles by Ron Margolin,

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Oded Yisraeli, Yehuda Liebes and myself). Several of the contributions relate to the ongoing debate as to whether the Zohar was composed by a single hand or by multiple authors, bringing arguments in favor of the second option. Moshe Idel discusses the surprisingly innovative approach of 19th- and early 20th-century scholar Moses Gaster, one of the first to support the multi-author thesis. In this section, we also find some examples of literary analysis of the Zohar, namely, Oded Yisraeli's article and, in particular, Michal Oron's paper on the *Yanuqa* stories of the Zohar.

Part III draws our attention to the echoes of this literature in ensuing generations. Melila Hellner-Eshed describes the results of the collaborative efforts of a group of women scholars studying a newly discovered text by Moshe Cordovero. This text, which is a commentary on the Zohar, deals with the feminine aspect of divinity, the Shekhinah. Two additional articles, written by Moshe Hallamish and Raphael Shuchat, address the Zohar's influence in the area of halakhah.

Despite its importance, there have been few collected papers devoted to the field of Zohar research. In fact, there is only one precedent: the eighth volume of *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, edited by Joseph Dan and published in 1989. With the intention of providing a useful tool for scholars of the Zohar, we have provided all bibliographical sources at the end of each article and added several indices at the end of the book.

The Zohar is a voluminous work, and the literature associated with it is also very extensive. Yet in spite of the thousands of pages that have been written about it, many of its riddles remain unsolved. For example, what is the exact historical context in which this literature was created? What is the full scope of its sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish? How can we explain its unusual creativity and audacity? In short, much research still awaits us. May this book be only one of many to come.

Ronit Meroz, Editor

ABSTRACTS

Michal Govrin

Literary Reverberations of the Zohar

Unusually for me, I have endeavored to reveal the impact of the Zohar on my literary writing as a way of sparking debate about the literary reverberations of the Zohar. In a “zoharic manner,” I start by recounting incidents of transmission, when some of the secrets and principles of the composition of mystical writing were disclosed to me. This did not take place while wandering from Tiberias to Zippori, nor in the shtiebls of Mea Shearim, but mainly in the Jerusalem living rooms of the late Professors Gershom Scholem, Shlomo Pines and Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer, and in the continuous process of learning and debate with Professor Yehuda Liebes. The ongoing question and focal point in these exchanges was, implicitly or explicitly, the question of revelation in language, and its poetic modes.

Through a reading of two of G. Scholem’s poems, found in his estate, I open up the question of the concealed continuity between the analytical and the experiential-esthetic diction of the scholar. This is further echoed in Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer’s poetic readings, in Shlomo Pines’s qualities as a literary connoisseur, and in Yehuda Liebes’s approach to the personal context of the writing of both mystical texts and his own, albeit scarce, poetic work.

Finally, I turn to two examples from my own poetry and fiction, conversing directly with the Zohar. In both of these, the status of revelation is at stake, as well as the power of language to become the vessel that contains, but no less perpetuates, the ongoing revelation and creation — both in the human psyche and in the world. Whether formulated in poetry or in prose, this quest fluctuates between close and distant points of view. While poetry creates a direct authoritative voice (as in Ibn Gabirol’s “Keter Malkhut,” for example), the use of prose narrative (as found in the literary framings of the Zohar) creates an indirect transmission, through the distance of a (fictional) world

and characters who relate their mystical insights in a multiplicity of voices and points of view, usually more rare in poetry.

In writing a scene for the novel *Hashem* (The name) that takes place on Shavuot eve at the yeshiva of the ecstatic Rabbi Avuya Aseraf, I openly incorporated an image from the *Idra Rabba*. The Rabbi, who sees himself as the hidden Messiah, reenacts with his students the gathering of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai and his disciples in the *Idra Rabba*, while adding his own ritual and mystical processes and meaning to it. Yet the internal narrator, the penitent Amalia, offers, along with her depiction of the scene, her own distance and even irony in the face of the mystical authority of Rabbi Avuya. This leads her to shift abruptly to another, private and iconoclastic, experience of revelation — one that gives form to the trauma of the Holocaust, the legacy she carries as a child of survivors. I have been sensitized to the power of the *Idra Rabba* scene mainly through Liebes's work "The Messiah of the Zohar," a reading that deepened through our conversations and correspondence.

My poem, "Pi ha-Safah" (Mouth of the tongue), echoes the rhetoric of mystical authority characteristic of the Zohar, making use of the analogous device of self-awareness and complimentary, or even celebratory, self-reference as a mode of enhancing the voice's authority. The same inherent authority of language constitutes both the performative and the esthetic power of poetry as speech-act. Thus the poem stresses the erotic energy present in language during an instance of creation.

Daniel C. Matt

The Zohar: Pritzker Edition

This new English translation of the Zohar reflects a reconstructed Aramaic text based on original manuscripts. In many cases, I believe that I have discovered superior readings in the manuscripts that had been rejected or revised by the editors of the first printed editions. Further, within the manuscripts themselves are signs of an editorial process: revision, reformulation, and emendation. I concluded that certain manuscripts of older lineage reflect an earlier version of the Zohar, which was then reworked in manuscripts of later lineage.

I realized that in composing a translation, I could not rely on the printed versions of the Zohar, since these obscured earlier versions. So I began

to reconstruct a “new-ancient” version of the Aramaic text based on the manuscripts, which serves as the foundation for this translation. This Aramaic text is a critical text, drawing on variants from different manuscripts. My methodology is described in the paper. The Aramaic text can be downloaded from the website of Stanford University Press: www.sup.org/zohar.

I do not claim to be fully restoring “*the original text of the Zohar.*” In fact, such a thing may never have existed, since the text probably emerged over decades. However, through analysis of the variants, I am able to scrape away some 700 years of accretion and corruption, and at least approach that elusive, hypothetical original. The paper also describes my approach to translating the Zohar’s unique Aramaic and the nature of my commentary. I close with some reflections on how to read the Zohar.

Melila Hellner-Eshed

Oh, The Fragrance of Words!

Some Notes on the Newly Published First Two Volumes of Daniel Matt’s English Translation of the Zohar

Daniel C. Matt. *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vols. 1 and 2. Stanford, CA.

The Zohar is the crown jewel of Jewish mystical literature. As a scholar and teacher of Zohar both at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and in North America, I extend my appreciation for this new, outstanding and exquisite translation of the Zohar into English. The present article describes problems having to do with translation in general and with the vastly complicated task of translating the cryptic language and dense symbolic style of the Zohar in particular. Matt’s translation has managed not only to find a way of rendering the Zohar in the English language, but also of capturing the unique, mystical, poetic, playful and multivalent spirit of the Zohar.

Daniel Matt’s work presents us not only with the most outstandingly accurate and beautiful translation of the Zoharic text into English, but also with an extensive and most welcome array of notes and commentary on the Zohar. These include cross-references within Zoharic literature as well as a wide range of earlier sources that illuminate and help decipher the Zoharic text, among them the rabbinic literature of the Talmud; the Midrash; the

mystical literature of late antiquity (the *Heikhalot* literature); *Sefer ha-Bahir*; Nahmanides; and the Hebrew works of Moshe de Leon. To these are added references to classical Zohar commentaries and modern scholarly studies of the Zohar both in English and in Hebrew. This extensive body of notes and references can undoubtedly be considered the best and most up-to-date tool available for teachers of Zohar worldwide.

The article presents several difficult Zoharic terms and phrases and examines the way in which Matt chose to translate them, demonstrating his keen ear for the complex imagery of the Zohar and his choice of the English wording that best captures the original, both explicitly and implicitly. In doing so, I compare Matt's choices with previous translations of the Zohar into English, including that of Gershom Scholem, the Soncino translation, Goldstein's English rendering of Isaiah Tishby's Hebrew translation, and even previous translations of Daniel Matt himself.

Boaz Huss

Zohar Translations

Over the centuries, the Zohar has been translated from very different hermeneutical and ideological perspectives. Zohar translations, mostly into Hebrew, were produced by the various Jewish Kabbalistic schools, while Christian Kabbalists produced translations into Latin as well as other European languages. Modern and academic approaches yielded their own Zohar translations, into Hebrew, English, French, German, Dutch and Spanish.

Translation is, first and foremost, an act of dissemination, of opening up a text to a new and larger readership. Thus, a translation is an expression of both the importance assigned to a text — its canonical or privileged status — and of an ideology that justifies and encourages its dissemination to a larger public.

These two attitudes — the importance ascribed to a text, and the wish to disseminate it — often stand in conflict. In pre-modern culture (but also, in a different guise, in our own period), important, privileged knowledge was commonly perceived, and constructed, as esoteric knowledge.

Different ideologies justified, and shaped, the different Zohar translations through the ages. Zohar translations produced by one ideological group very often inspired the creation of other translations — into the same language —

by other groups, as an ideological response to them. Thus, translations of the Zohar often reflect explicit and implicit cultural competition between various ideologies or schools of thought.

This article delineates the history of Zohar translations, examines the different ideologies that fostered the production of such translations, and investigates the cultural significance of translating the Zohar in both past and present.

Moshe Idel

Moses Gaster on Jewish Mysticism and the Zohar

This article draws attention to the views of Moses Gaster on the origins of Jewish mysticism in Europe as part of the gradual “streaming of traditions” from the Near East of late antiquity to eastern Europe, and subsequently, to other parts of the continent. The emergence of the Zohar has also been understood against the backdrop of this move. Gaster argued that some parts of the work were written in late antiquity in the Galilee and reached Spain in the Middle Ages while others reflect the impact of Manichean views. In any case, Gaster categorically denies the primary role attributed to Moses de Leon as author of the Zohar in the work of Adolph Jellinek and Heinrich Graetz, which remains a cornerstone of modern scholarship. Gaster’s views, expressed consistently for over forty years, have been neglected in the recent discussions of the emergence of the Zohar.

Michal Oron

The Motif of the *Yanuqa* (“The Child”) in the Zohar

The present article examines the motif of the *Yanuqa* (“the Child”), which appears in various parts of the Zohar. The exploration of this recurring figure sheds light on the way the Zohar was produced. It is my contention that the motif of the *Yanuqa* illustrates and strengthens the assumption that the Zohar was composed by a number of authors, who differ from one another in their style of writing; their individual spiritual worlds; their depiction of the *Yanuqa*; and their perception of his role, his status, and his mission.

The differences between the various authors are especially conspicuous in

their use of ancient sources as the basis of their newly constructed stories. In addition to the sources found in rabbinic literature, the article addresses five central sources (all of which contain the motif of the Yanuqa) that influenced the stories recounted in the Zohar. In accordance with these sources, the article arranges the various stories into four patterns, which differ from one another in the way the personality of the Yanuqa is portrayed.

The different patterns of the Yanuqa stories, when they are compared and their sources presented, further support the theory of multiple authorship of the Zohar. By means of this comparison, the personality of the author, his cultural world, and his “library” are illuminated. In constructing their image of the Yanuqa, different authors presented their individual ideas and objectives:

1. *Aims of commentary and interpretation:*

The Yanuqa serves as a catalytic factor shedding light on some of the secrets of Kabbalah (the secret purpose of the various commandments as well as a mystical explanation of the phenomenon of the death of newborns and babies).

2. *Didactic and educational aims:*

The Yanuqa and his fate serve to personify the talmudic warning against delving into mystical activities.

3. *Religio-national aims:*

The Yanuqa, endowed with the power of prophecy, brings to his generation — then under the yoke of religious persecution and the temporal power of the Nations — the tidings of revenge on the Gentiles.

4. *Messianic eschatological aims:*

The Yanuqa heralds the Last Days, the Coming of the Messiah, the Redemption in days to come.

In addition to the above, the article treats in detail the longest and most fully developed pattern of the Yanuqa stories (Zohar, III 186a–192b), which exists in the Zohar literature as a separate unit. It is presented here as a means of demonstrating that a connection exists between the literary, epic and interpretive elements throughout the Zohar. The analysis of this last story contrasts it with the other narratives presented in the article in terms of literary construction and style of writing.

Oded Yisraeli

**The Suppressed Cry of Esau:
From Early Midrash to Late Zoharic Literature**

The basic premise of this article is that the Zohar is, on the one hand, the epitome of kabbalistic literature and, on the other, the latest stratum of midrashic literature. This article examines and investigates the Zohar as a midrashic composition through a discussion of the biblical story of Jacob and Esau.

In the first section, the article discusses the demonic image of Esau in talmudic and early midrashic sources. Contrary to conventional assumptions, my claim is that we should understand this portrayal not as a reaction to the historical struggle of the Jewish people against Rome and the Christian Church but rather as an attempt to solve the moral problem of rabbinic literature when faced with the embarrassing biblical scene in which Esau's blessings are stolen by his brother, Jacob. That is to say, the midrashic tradition attributes to Esau a wicked character in order to justify Jacob's deeds and preserve his honesty. According to the Talmud and the Midrash, Esau was not only a liar but a cruel murderer, an adulterer, and a pagan. Hence, it is not surprising that this image was associated with the "wicked enemies" — Rome and the Christian Church — and that these enemies were identified with Esau, as his descendants.

In medieval commentaries and other medieval sources, it becomes apparent that the aforementioned explanation of Jacob's deeds is no longer satisfactory, although Esau is still considered evil. This image has not only left its imprint on Zoharic literature but is in fact even more conspicuous there. Furthermore, the Zohar uses Esau and Edom as a symbol of Satan itself — the *Sitra Ahra*. Thus, the midrashic trend of blackening Esau's character has reached its ultimate expression.

But, surprisingly, in the later parts of the Zohar we discover an opposing emotional attitude. The second part of the article deals with a fascinating reaction to that midrashic tradition in one of the important Zoharic units, called *Sabba de-Mishpatim*. Among other theological issues, this composition discusses the question of suffering, i.e., the inexplicable absence of justice in the human condition. In expanding the scope of this issue, this Zoharic

unit also touches upon the suffering of Esau. Here it takes up not only the stolen blessings, but also the deeper suffering — the preexistential oppression from which Esau suffers because he is identified symbolically as the *Sitra Ahra*. Hence, the Satan takes revenge in various ways and the mythological oppression leaves its imprint even on Jewish history. In other words, these are the mythological roots of the historical manifestation of antisemitism.

The variations that we have designated in this article, between the ancient midrash and the medieval Zoharic midrash, reflect to a certain extent the spiritual differences between rabbinic and kabbalistic thought; but beyond that they mark the Zoharic homily as a developed phase of the classical midrashic spirit.

Ron Margolin

**Physiognomy and Chiromancy: From Prediction and
Diagnosis to Healing and Human Correction
(Zohar 2, 70a–78a; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 70)**

This article considers the innovative aspects of the discussions of physiognomy and chiromancy in the Zohar as compared with earlier texts on the subject, especially those described by Scholem and others. The Zohar assumes that the human dimension, as distinct from the externally visible physical body, is a reflection of the spiritual. This premise has parallels in the sefirotic idea of the *Ein Sof* as the essence and the sefirot as vessels, but does not reflect a radical dualism between spirit and body in life. The spiritual dimension records its impressions on the physical plane, and these can be identified and analyzed by someone proficient in their study.

Although the Zoharic doctrine is fairly similar to those of the Greco-Roman world and the Judean Desert sect and Merkavah circles, it embraces a new therapeutic element that sets it apart from all ancient and medieval astrological treatises on physiognomy and chiromancy. The Zohar uses the predictive aspect of character analysis not only to determine membership in esoteric groups but to correct human failings and heal the soul. This therapeutic approach was later developed by Moses Cordovero, Lurianic Kabbalah, and Hasidism.

The *Tikkunei Zohar*, Tikkun 70 combines the doctrine of physiognomy

with that of *Shiur Komah*, the divine image. The divine or spiritual within human beings is imprinted on the face and the palm of hand as the image of God is imprinted on this world. The dominant trait of any personality is one of ten aspects of *Adam Qadmon*, the tree of sefirot. One who embodies a given aspect has the power to “heal” it in the world, meaning that people of wisdom repair “wisdom,” people of benevolence repair *hesed*, etc.

Tiqqun 70 reinforces the magical connection between human life and the divine cosmos. To develop the positive aspects of the divine imprinted on the world, one must prevent and destroy impressions of the negative aspects. By identifying physical features with positive or negative characteristics, kabbalistic doctrines of physiognomy and chiromancy serve as magical, diagnostic tools to help human beings improve themselves. The idea that the color of the hair or its shape and location can draw down various divine powers is a typical example of magical thinking, whereby healing or removing the external sign of a specific attribute can either reinforce or diminish it.

The Zoharic doctrines of physiognomy and chiromancy analyzed in this article reflect a synthesis of various elements — mythical, mystical, magical and rational — in a single corpus.

Yehuda Liebes

Zohar and Tiqqunei Zohar: From Renaissance to Revolution

The starting point of this article is the new book by the late Ephraim Gottlieb, in which Hebrew writings from the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature are identified and published for the first time. These writings are of the utmost significance, enabling us to reach a better understanding of this body of literature. Their importance is demonstrated in the present article, the first part of which is dedicated to reviewing Prof. Gottlieb’s book and recounting its history.

The present article seeks to delineate the spirituality of the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature as compared to that of the Zohar proper. The comparison relates to both the actual practice of the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and to his self-awareness and explicit attitude towards the Zoharic literature as a whole and the Zohar proper in particular, referring to it as “the former composition” (*hibbura qadma’a*). At first glance, this attitude is one of full identification, but upon closer examination this is not quite so. The author’s true attitude comes

to the fore when comparing the figure of Moses (who represents the author of the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature as a reincarnation of the biblical Moses) with that of R. Shimon Bar Yoḥai (= Rashbi), the protagonist and representative of the Zohar proper. Whereas in the Zohar proper, Rashbi is preferred to Moses, in the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature this evaluation is reversed.

The *Tiqqunei Zohar* looks upon itself as an emendation (= *tiqqun*) of both the Zohar proper and of Jewish religion as a whole. Moses, in his numerous reincarnations, is held responsible for the faults of all former Judaism, and also of Zoharic literature, which constitutes its peak. Thus understood, the famous hostility of the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature towards halakhah is somewhat mitigated since Moses, the autobiographical hero of the *Tiqqunei Zohar*, is viewed as encompassing all the sages in his personality; all their faults are actually his and are emended in his final reincarnation.

The *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature does not really distinguish between halakhah and Kabbalah, and both are emended in Zoharic literature, whose pinnacle is personified in the Moses figure of the *Tiqqunei Zohar*. Zoharic literature is also embodied in the fantastic figure of R. Hamnuna Sabba, whose Zoharic myth is further developed in the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature. R. Hamnuna Sabba is reincarnated through the ages alongside Moses, and guides his hand through advice or punishment. Thus R. Hamnuna is the one who punishes Moses for the sin of striking the rock instead of talking to it. This sin is construed as a betrayal of the correct mystical path, which is characterized in accordance with the actual practice in the *Tiqqunei Zohar*, namely passive mysticism relying on associative flow.

This approach is represented here in contradistinction to the hated method of halakhic argument, and is even in variance with the hermeneutic style of the Zohar proper, which is dominated by the commentator's creative ego. Both mystical approaches are demonstrated in the article via examples taken from the attitudes of the Zoharic Moses and Rashbi towards physiognomy. Rashbi's mystical approach is, for the *Tiqqunei Zohar*, the main flaw of the Zohar proper. The *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature disagrees with the Zohar proper also on the latter's compliant attitude towards traditional Judaism. While the spirit of the Zohar proper may be designated as that of Jewish renaissance (by virtue of its revival of talmudic literature), the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature takes the opposing stance, namely that revolution should build on the destruction of the old world. To be sure, this is more true of its rhetoric than of its theoretical

content. In fact, as in most revolutions, the *Tiqqunei Zohar* literature is better at destruction than at construction.

Ronit Meroz

R. Joseph Angelet and his “Zoharic Writings”

The impetus for this article was a lengthy unknown text that I discovered while scrutinizing the different manuscripts of the Zohar (only a few paragraphs from it are found in the printed editions). Initially, I had planned to publish it under the title “An Unknown Zoharic Text,” and indeed its Aramaic language is “Zoharic,” as are most of its concepts. However, upon deeper study it became clear that this text was in fact written by R. Joseph Angelet. Further research has located many other such texts (most of the biblical commentaries incorporated in the volume known as *Zohar Hadash* are his). The simple conclusion of these findings is that many of R. Joseph Angelet’s writings were incorporated in the Zoharic manuscripts as well as the printed editions.

Thus we have discovered another historical figure, in addition to R. Moshe de Leon, who was associated with the writing of this voluminous work. R. de Leon was active at the end of the 13th century, while R. Angelet was active in the first 30 years of the 14th century. Moreover, like his contemporary, the anonymous author of the *Ra’aya Mehemna*, R. Joseph Angelet may be considered both a co-author of the Zohar and one of its commentators (since both wrote commentaries on the earlier strata of the Zohar). The phenomenon of internal commentaries is found in other parts of the Zohar as well (for example, *Sitrei Torah* is a commentary on the *Matnitin*). Many of its later strata are by way of commentaries on its earlier ones, leading us to conclude that the structure of the Zohar is a multi-layered one.

An analysis of the contents of R. Joseph Angelet’s writings (in particular this newly discovered text) reveals his interest in the figure of Joseph, who represents a certain aspect of the Divinity as well as an array of human leaders beginning with the biblical Joseph (and perhaps extending to R. Joseph Angelet himself). The ability to nourish, either with seed (similarly to the biblical Joseph who fed his people during the famine in Egypt) or symbolically, with cosmic semen, defines this prototype of Joseph as a messianic figure.

Interestingly enough, similar ideas concerning a messianic figure (as well as a variety of other issues) can be found in the writings of his aforementioned contemporary, the author of *Ra'aya Mehemna*. It is one of the claims of this article that these two authors knew and influenced each other, and may even have been part of the same mystical group (*havura*). They apparently also competed with one another over their own messianic role. Since R. Joseph Angelet lived in Aragon for at least part of his life, the same might be true of *Ra'aya Mehemna's* author as well. In other words, not all the authors of the Zohar flourished in Castile, as is generally assumed! This article also notes a further similarity between the messianic references of R. Joseph Angelet and those of the Joachimist, Arnold de Vilanova, who was active in Aragon until his death in 1311.

The newly discovered text is presented to the reader in a critical edition. Unlike earlier research, the analysis of this text depicts R. Joseph Angelet as a prolific and important kabbalist.

Moshe Hallamish

The Acceptance of the Zohar into the Realm of Halakhah during the Middle Ages

It emerges from various studies that many *poskim* (halakhic decisors) accept the Zohar's rulings in halakhic matters, or at least concede that they are as worthy of consideration as those originating from the decisors themselves. Typically, the main questions asked in this context concern the halakhic authority of the Zohar: What is the nature and source of this authority? To what extent is the Zohar's ruling legitimate? To this, one might add the following question: Let us suppose that the author of the Zohar is a competent decisor. Still, in essence and character, this work is not a code of law, nor does its style fit that category. What, then, is the language used by the author whenever he pronounces his ruling or provides a certain instruction?

The fact that this book was not written as a normative work has led to the publication of a massive compendium (extending to 30 volumes!) entitled *Shulhan Arukh ha-Zohar* (the Zohar Code). Perhaps what accounts for the authoritativeness of the Zohar is the widespread belief that it is a sacred book, authored by the tanna R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, coupled with the veneration of

the Safed Kabbalists of the sixteenth century. At that time, various rabbinic scholars wrote of the supremacy of the Zohar in cases of lacunae, where the Talmud provides no answers for a specific question.

After discussing the general halakhic standing of the Zohar, the paper examines the extent to which its specific rulings had an impact in various countries during the Middle Ages (Spain; Byzantium; Italy; Ashkenaz, i.e., the Germanic lands; and North Africa). As the processes operative in the modern age are different from their medieval counterparts, this paper does not deal with that period.

Melila Hellner-Eshed

**Domestic Trouble:
Family Myths in Moshe Cordovero's Book *Elima***

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero was one of the pillars of the sixteenth-century Kabbalist community in Safed in the Galilee. He is most famous for his voluminous commentary on the Zohar, *Or Yakar*, and for his popular kabbalistic moral-ethical work, *Tomer Devorah*. In the final years of his life (he died in 1570 at the age of 48), Cordovero embarked on a far-reaching intellectual project aimed at describing the structure of the major aspects of the divine and of reality. He called his book *Elima*, after one of the stations of the Israelites in their wanderings in the desert. Cordovero did not complete the work, and some chapters are only partially written, albeit with perfectly organized notes and titles of what he intended to write. Some parts of *Elima* were printed and some are extant in manuscript only.

This year (2006), a group of women scholars of Kabbalah led by Prof. Bracha Sack has been studying *Ein Yaakov*, a hitherto unpublished section of *Elima* that is extant in two manuscripts. It is devoted to the feminine aspect of divinity, the Shekhinah, or the sefirah *Malkhut* (kingdom). *Ein Yaakov* offers a description of the divine body of the Shekhinah in the style of the *Idrot* strata of the Zohar. These Zoharic mystical gatherings (*idrot*) are given over to a description of the divine faces (*partzufim*), and the alignment of the face of the Ancient Holy One (*Atika Kadisha* or *Arikh Anpin*) — that is, divinity as a unified source — with that of *Zeir Anpin*, the dynamic and differentiated divinity depicted as a masculine, regal, commanding aspect

of God. *Ein Yaakov* is an attempt to redress the conscious or unconscious absence of a detailed account of the full stature (*komah*) of the Shekhinah in the *Idrot*.

The present article describes the way in which Cordovero reinvents, in a neo-Zoharic style, an image of the divine feminine body based on commentaries to many Zoharic passages dealing with the Shekhinah and innovative interpretations of biblical passages, especially from the Song of Songs, describing the body of the Beloved. Every so often, Cordovero's writing reveals original and daring myths, born of a creative melding of commentary and homily. This article describes and analyzes three such myths, all of them dealing with the sometimes unbearable tension within the female archetype between her roles as mother and as an erotic being and partner. As the matrix of the created world, the Shekhinah is torn between her responsibility to endlessly administer justice and order in the world of her children, i.e., human beings, and her desire to be in an intimate loving union with her husband and lover, God in his male aspect.

The myths discussed in this article comprise a remarkable interplay between theology, intensely vivid mythopoesis regarding the feminine aspect, and an exquisite homiletic gift of daring and unique readings of the verses of Song of Songs. Theologically, these myths try to explain our human experience of the absence of God (the Mother) in our world, or our experience of Her divine presence in the world as wrathful beyond understanding. Cordovero, counterintuitively, identifies not with mankind — the children — nor with the male aspect of God, but rather with the Shekhinah, to which he extends endless empathy regarding her tenuous roles in the world. Cordovero's myths have a distinctly domestic flavor, describing the divine-human interrelationship in terms reminiscent of family dynamics. This essay explores two aspects of Cordovero: Cordovero the commentator, who develops his ideas through his thorough reading of Zoharic materials, and Cordovero the mystic and myth-creator, who creatively uses Zoharic symbolism and language and creates from them old-new kabbalistic myths.

Raphael Shuchat

When Parallel Lines Meet: Halakhah and Kabbalah in the Writings of the Vilna Gaon and R. Hayyim of Volozhin

Over the past twenty years, researchers have struggled to understand the intricate relationship that developed between halakhah and Kabbalah, especially between the Zohar and halakhah. Jacob Katz was the pioneer in this field, bringing it to the forefront of academic awareness. His research analyzed the delicate relationship between halakhah and Kabbalah in Provence and Gerona, and the Zohar's influence on halakhic decisions. Meir Benayahu followed, discussing the influence of the Zohar on *poskim* (halakhic authorities) in Spain and Italy and attempting to understand the rules governing that influence. Jacob Elboim explored the impact of Kabbalah on Ashkenazic authorities, and David Tamar addressed the rules guiding the *posek* interested in the halakhic opinions of the Zohar. Israel Ta-Shma discussed the broad impact of the Zohar on the writings of R. Joseph Caro, the author of the *Shulhan Arukh* (Code of Jewish Law) as well as the influence of Ashkenazic customs on the Zohar itself. This last issue created an interesting controversy between Ta-Shma and Yehuda Liebes on the question of the author or authors of the Zohar. Moshe Hallamish has written extensively on the subjects of R. Joseph Caro as a *posek* influenced by Kabbalah; R. Isaac Luria of Safed as a *posek*; the question of donning tefillin in a seated position, and the impact of the Zohar in this regard; and the halakhic authority of the Zohar in general. It is not my desire to recapitulate what has already been researched, but to present the unique position of the Vilna Gaon and of R. Hayyim of Volozhin on this subject while reexamining some of the main issues.

Moshe Idel and Yehudah Leibes have already demonstrated that the Kabbalah emerged from early normative rabbinic thought, and later carried over into the study halls of the Rabad of Posquières and Nahmanides of Gerona. Until the publication of the Zohar, kabbalists tended to stress the importance of every legal detail, thus strengthening the halakhic position. Around the time of the publication of the Zohar in the late 13th century, we find attempts to use its content in legal discussions. By the 15th century, noted legalists like Jacob b. Judah Landau in his *Agur* bring the Zoharic halakhah

into their legal discussions. However, it was R. Joseph Caro who was the first major *posek* to introduce kabbalistic *minhag* en bloc into the halakhic arena. What was it that gave the Zohar this almost canonic position that obliged the halakhists to weigh its every legalistic statement? After all, even if we take the traditionalist approach that the Zohar was written by R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, in halakhic disputes in the Talmud between R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and R. Judah, the halakhah follows R. Judah! Thus the Ashkenazi talmudic authority, the Maharshah, stated that: “Even if R. Shimon bar Yoḥai were to stand here and scream to change the custom kept by the early generations, we would not pay attention, for in most matters, the halakhah does not follow his opinion.” So why is the Zohar taken so seriously by the *poskim*? If it is due to its status as an esoteric work that deals with the secrets of Torah, we have already learned in the Talmud that even though R. Shimon bar Yoḥai discusses the rationale of the verses [*ta’ama de-gra*], this does not cause the law to follow him. If then we were to argue that the *poskim* wanted to follow the Zohar since it was written in “the holy spirit” (*ruah ha-kodesh*), the Talmud has already set down the principle that “one does not heed a heavenly voice” (*bat kol*), based on the biblical verse: “It [the Torah, i.e., halakhic authority] is not in heaven” (Deut. 30:12).

This brings us back to the question: Why did the *poskim* take the legalistic issues of the Zohar into account? In answer to this query, I reopen the entire question of the relationship of revelation to halakhic decision-making, with the aim of demonstrating that the talmudic dictum of “one does not heed a heavenly voice” was not always honored. In this paper, I wish to continue this area of research by examining the unique position of the Vilna Gaon and of his student R. Hayyim of Volozhin in this matter — an approach that seeks a synthesis between normative halakhic decision-making and the kabbalistic sources. I further demonstrate how this issue was a bone of contention between the mitnagdim and the hasidim, as shown in the works of R. Hayyim of Volozhin.