

I CAME THIS DAY TO THE SPRING

Attributed to Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz (1695?-1764)

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Table of Contents

Prologue (fol. 1a)

Chapter I: The Creation of God (fols. 1a-5a)

1. In the beginning was the Will
2. Next: the Spot
3. The Contraction and the Shape
4. The Mother of God
5. The unlimited vs. the limited; “Mindless” vs. “Mindful” Light; “colors” vs. “substrate”

Chapter II: The Anatomy of God (fols. 5a-7b)

1. The tripartite Shape
2. Androgyny divine
3. The Female emerges
4. An alternative anatomy: if Ein Sof could be part ...
5. Grace, Judgment, and the secret of Esau

Chapter III: The Gestation of God (fols. 7b-12a)

1. Another Contraction: the Self-folding
2. *Tehiru* and “Insolent Waters”

Chapter IV: The Shattering of God (fols. 12a-16a)

Chapter V: The Restoration of God (fols. 16a-22b)

Chapter VI: The Symbolisms of God (fols. 22b-26b)

Chapter VII: The Geography of God (fols. 26b-27a)

Chapter VIII: The Virgin of God (fols. 27a-33b)

Chapter IX: The Salvation of God (fols. 33b-35a)

Prologue

[Fol. 1a] For the sake of the unification of the Blessed Holy One and His Shechinah:

*I came this day to the spring¹ of wisdom; and to begin: It is written in the Zohar to the Torah portion *Shemot*, fol. 9a: “He also arose and said: *YHVH our God, lords other than You have mastered us; but only in You shall we make mention of Your name*”² up to the words “and now in exile the Other Side rules over them,” and so forth; consult the text.*

To understand what is meant by “Mystery of Faith” and “beginning of mysteries” and so forth,³ one must first consider a passage in the Zohar to the Torah portion *Va-yehi*, fol. 245a: “Come and see: There are three souls” as far as the words “like the body, which is an instrument by which the soul performs its working,” and so forth.⁴ Consult that text at length.

And now I shall enlighten you with words of understanding.

¹ Genesis 24:42.

² Isaiah 26:13, quoted in Zohar II, 9a. See the Appendix for the full translation (by Daniel Matt) of the Zoharic passage abridged here.

³ From the portion of the Zoharic passage omitted by the author; see Appendix.

⁴ Zohar I, 245a; see Appendix.

Chapter I: The Creation of God

1. In the beginning was the Will

Know that before any existence, before the Emanation, there was only HIM: the solitary Infinite, Ein Sof, without any end or beginning whatsoever. He existed before any existent thing, and had no inception or end whatever.

But why is he called *Ein Sof*, “the one without end,” and not *Ein Reshit*, “the one without beginning”?—for whatever has no end will obviously have no beginning. The reason is that we stand in this lowly world and lift up our eyes to grasp and understand the abilities of the Lord our God from our vantage point here in the World of *Asiyah*,⁵ going as far as the end of all the rungs, this being the Measure of the [Divine] Stature. (So it is written: *Lift up your eyes to the heights*, and so forth.⁶) We start out the project of comprehending, of discoursing, from the World of *Asiyah*, which from our perspective is the first rung although in terms of its quality it is the last of them all. Then the World of *Yezirah*, then *Beriyah*, then to the World of Emanation, and thus we proceed from level to level until we reach Ein Sof, at which point we find ourselves incapable of comprehending him to his end, for he has none. That is why he is called Ein Sof.⁷ We shall presently have more to say on this subject.⁸

⁵ The Kabbalists envisioned a sequence of four “worlds,” descending from the highest “World of Emanation” (*azilut*) through the worlds of “Creation” (*beriyah*), “Fashioning” (*yezirah*), and “Making” (*asiyyah*). The last of these is sometimes, as here, equated with our physical world, sometimes treated as a realm above it.

⁶ Isaiah 40:26. The verse continues: ... *and see who created these*. The author alludes to the exposition of this passage in the Zohar, I, 1b-2b, which he will revisit near the end of chapter I (section 5).

⁷ The same question is raised Eibeschuetz’s *Shem Olam*, in passages written a few years after *Va-avo ha-Yom*, but there it is given a very different answer: Ein Sof is not called *ein reshit* because in fact he does have a beginning, namely the “First Cause” (*sibbah rishonah*) out of which he has emerged. In *Shem Olam*, the ultimate primordial entity is the First Cause, not Ein Sof as here. (The First Cause is not even mentioned in *Va-avo ha-Yom*, although it is perhaps implied by the remark on fol. 2a that Ein Sof is “the Cause of all effects,” *illah le-khol ha-alulim*.) Ein Sof in *Shem Olam* is the first “effect” (*alul*) of that First Cause, equated furthermore with the “God of Israel,” the “Blessed Holy One,” and the “image of the ten *sefirot*.” It would appear that the First Cause in *Shem Olam* corresponds more or less to Ein Sof in *Va-avo ha-Yom*, while Ein Sof in *Shem Olam* corresponds in part to the Will in *Va-avo ha-Yom*, in part to the entity that will come to be known as “Emanation-Human.” It is very curious that these two texts ask the same

Now, when Rabbi Isaac Luria began to discourse on the thought of Ein Sof, he chose to start with the words: “When it arose in his undifferentiated Will to create the worlds,” and so forth. (See the holy book *Tree of Life*.⁹) The expression “undifferentiated Will” [*rezono ha-pashut*] conveys two aspects: first, that this Will extended itself [*nitpashet*] to the highest degree of extension through the whole space of Ein Sof, whose will, unlike a human being’s, cannot be located in any single one of his intellectual organs. Rather, just as Ein Sof is inconceivably extended, so also his Will extends itself into every place, and he and his Will are one.¹⁰ Second, he experiences no alteration of will, such that we might speak of something arising in his Will that had not previously been inscribed in his thought. Rather, it had already been in his undifferentiated Will, without any alteration. Thus is his Will most supremely undifferentiated.¹¹

[Fol. 1b] On the surface, [Luria’s] words seem to contradict themselves. He says, “When it arose,” implying an alteration of will, for otherwise how could it have “arisen”? How would it be possible, for instance, to say that any given object or person “arose” to a certain place unless it had earlier been in a lower place? This is quite impossible. Rather, when we say that “he arose to a certain place,” our intent is that he had not previously been there but rather in a lower position, and now has “arisen.” The same applies to the Will. When we say “it arose,” we must intend an alteration of will. And then [Luria] goes on to speak of “his undifferentiated Will,” indicating the highest degree of unalterability!

question about two distinct entities, and accordingly give two different answers. /*Check over this note, and give reference in *Shem Olam*./

⁸ In section 5 of this chapter, where a more profound explanation will be offered for Ein Sof’s name.

⁹ *Ez Hayyim*, the compendium of Lurianic teaching written by Luria’s disciple Hayyim Vital. The passage quoted is from part 1, section 2; *Kol Kitvei Ha-Ari, Ez Hayyim*, vol. 1, p. 27.

¹⁰ Perlmutter, *Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz*, pp. 283-284, calls this interpretation of *pashut* “strange,” and finds a parallel to it in *Shem Olam*, p. 60.

¹¹ That is, it is absolutely uniform both spatially—the first “aspect” of the word *pashut*, “undifferentiated”—and temporally.

But understand: inasmuch as it is true that [Ein Sof's] Will is undifferentiated in the same way as [Ein Sof] himself, it follows that just as he has neither end nor beginning, so this Will has neither end nor beginning; and this Will to create worlds was always present with him. For one cannot possibly say of the Primordial Ein Sof, which serves as vehicle to nothing else,¹² that his thought, his will was not from the beginning to create worlds in this place, but only afterwards did he make the decision to create. Even apart from Luria's word choice—"his undifferentiated Will," which indicates the highest degree of unalterability—such a notion cannot even be entertained.

Such a thing may indeed be said of a human being, who has a cause superior to himself that grants him knowledge. But who is there to give Ein Sof a thought he did not have before? Are not he and his Will one and the same? He is not like a human being, whose will is distinct from himself; he and his Will, rather, are one. So how can one say such a thing? *God is not a man*, says the Bible—specifically designating him as *El*, "God," which is Ein Sof as I shall explain below¹³—*that He should change His mind*,¹⁴ i.e., turn from one thought to another. Rather, his thought at any given time is identical to what it was before, as long as he has existed.

Now, the world is governed through ten *sefirot*, five Graces and five Judgments, which constitute the image [*ziyyur*] of Ein Sof's Will.¹⁵ By means of them is the divine governance complete, lacking nothing; everything great or small happens just as it should, as the Kabbalists have expounded at length. This being so, it is a necessary postulate that his Will is unalterable and all was known to him from the beginning. For

¹² As the lower entities, subsequently brought into existence, will serve as vehicles for the higher. The language is taken from the late Zoharic strata *Tikkunei Zohar* (*tikkun* 70, p. 135b) and *Ra'ya Mehemna* (Zohar III, 230b). The point, as the next paragraph makes clear, is that one's intentions can change only under the influence of some superior entity.

¹³ /*Give cross-ref./

¹⁴ Free quotation of Numbers 23:19.

¹⁵ Perlmutter, pp. 280-281, compares the usage in *Shem Olam*, where the first "effect" of the First Cause is called, among other names, *ziyyur eser ha-sefirot*, "the image of the ten *sefirot*," i.e., the archetype after which they were patterned. Here the usage is reversed: the *sefirot* are the "image" of their archetype in the Will.

this governance through attributes and *sefirot*—five Graces, five Judgments—was part of the Primordial Will, and all of them were included in this Will.¹⁶

Say, for example, that an individual intends to do something, whatever it may be. This is generally called “thought” or “will.” Yet the content of the thought may be to do good to one person, ill to another, and consequently this “will” or “thought” contains within itself two aspects, the good and the bad. *From my flesh do I perceive God*;¹⁷ and thus in the same way the overall aim of the undifferentiated Will is to create worlds, yet it incorporates the ten aspects, five Graces and five Judgments. These are primordial as Ein Sof himself, extending themselves to the fullest throughout Ein Sof, as has already been said of the Will.

This is what Luria said in *Entering the Gates*, and in the interpretation of Luria in the book *Moses Assembled*:¹⁸ the ten *sefirot* existed in potential within Ein Sof. After what we have said, the sense of this is perfectly clear. They always existed with him as aspects, and were the potential for all the worlds.

This also: inasmuch as his Will is not susceptible to alteration, [fol. 2a] it follows that the worlds stood in their present place even before their creation.¹⁹

2. Next: the Spot

¹⁶ Cf. Perlmutter, pp. 280-281, 302-303. I am not as sure as Perlmutter that the “Primordial Will” (*ha-razon ha-kadmon*) and the “Will” containing Graces and Judgments are distinct entities. This seems to me an artificial attempt on Perlmutter’s part to harmonize the cognate but conflicting Kabbalistic systems of *Va-avo ha-Yom* and *Shem Olam*.

¹⁷ Job 19:26. The Kabbalists regularly used this verse to argue that, since humans are made in God’s image, the processes within divinity can be inferred from those of the human body and psyche. Here, the “good” implications of a human thought are comparable to the five Graces, the “bad” implications of that same thought to the five Judgments.

¹⁸ *Va-yak ’hel Mosheh*, a Kabbalistic work first published in 1699 by Moses ben Menahem Graf (Praeger). Eibeschutz alludes frequently to this book in *Shem Olam*, e.g., pp. 113, 129, 197. I do not know what specific passages of *Va-yak ’hel Mosheh* or Vital’s *Mevo She’arim* (“Entering the Gates”) the author has in mind.

¹⁹ The apparent self-contradiction of Luria’s language is left unresolved. It will remain so until near the end of this chapter (section 5), when the author will take it up again.

Prior to the Contraction,²⁰ the light of Ein Sof was everything. Yet, inasmuch as all was known to him from the beginning, he set aside a certain place within his being where presently, when it should be his Will, the worlds would all be created. It was toward this place that his thought, and his undifferentiated Will in its ten aspects, were directed. He prepared this place as an integral part of himself,²¹ for the worlds to exist.

In this place were gathered the totality of the Will and its infinitely extended aspects. All their longing and desire was directed toward it,²² for there the light of the thought was to dwell. As if one were to point a finger to indicate the object of one's will and all its aspects, just so—even though all remained an integral part of [Ein Sof], and no action could be said to have occurred—still we may think of this spot as having been singled out over against Ein Sof's extension, more than any other place.

You may easily see that when a person bearing some poison looks into a mirror, he makes a mark on it with his gaze. This is common knowledge with regard to a menstruating woman's staining a mirror,²³ and the natural philosophers²⁴ have provided many other examples. Thought will similarly carve its mark, which is why we are forbidden to entertain any thought of sin or the like. It goes without saying, then, that the exalted Ein Sof—of whom we are forbidden to use any descriptive term, even in his

²⁰ *Zimzum*, a term in the Lurianic Kabbalah for Ein Sof's self-“contraction” of his light so as to provide a free space in which to create things other than himself. Uses of the term in *Shem Olam* suggest that Eibeschuetz may have envisioned the *zimzum* as the cosmic equivalent of an orgasmic contraction /*Give references/, and something of the sort may underlie the account of the *zimzum* in the next section.

²¹ *Mineh u-veh*. Later in the text the phrase seems to have autoerotic undertones, but these are not yet present.

²² Using the language of Genesis 3:16, 4:7.

²³ This notion, that “if a woman looks into a highly polished mirror during the menstrual period, the surface of the mirror becomes clouded with a blood-red color,” goes back to a passage in Aristotle's *On Dreams*. It entered the mainstream of Jewish thought via Nachmanides's Torah commentary (on Leviticus 18:19); see Sharon Faye Koren, “Kabbalistic Physiology: Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, and Moses de Leon on Menstruation,” *AJS Review* 28 (2004), pp. 317-339. It occurs in *Shem Olam*, p. 114. There Eibeschuetz declares, with a hauteur worthy of Lucy Van Pelt, that if his correspondent and occasional critic Shimon Buchhalter had any knowledge of “the science of optics” (חכמת אפטיקי), he would know that “when a menstruating woman looks at a mirror she leaves a stain on it ... and if the eye's gaze has no substance, how could that stain on the mirror have been formed?”

²⁴ *Hakhmei mehkar ve-teva* (ms Oxford 955; minor variations in the other mss).

praise, on account of the sheer magnitude of his greatness—will by his gaze and his thought make an instantaneous mark.

Within Ein Sof, though all of him was his essence,²⁵ there was nevertheless a certain Spot [*nekudah*] within that essence. This Spot originated from him, yet was eternally co-existent with him in time, sharing his undifferentiated quality. Yet inasmuch as it was his unaltered²⁶ Will that all the worlds be created at that very time in which they were created—

(And one cannot ask why they happened to be created at that time and not earlier. This is no question at all. In order that all his creations know and recognize that it was he who emanated the worlds and brought them into existence, and that he is the Cause of all effects, he intentionally did not allow other beings to exist in time with him from the beginning, but rather to come into existence after some long interval. And since his existence is entirely timeless, it is not a problem why these came into existence at the time they did and not earlier. The question would be endless, for if creation had indeed taken place earlier, one could then ask why it had not taken place before *that*, given the timelessness of his existence.)²⁷

—inasmuch as that was his unaltered Will for that [appointed] time, that designated place or Spot grew more intensely charged each moment with the action that was to transpire there. You may observe that, when a person conceives the intention to perform a certain deed one month from now, with each passing day [fol. 2b] his intention grows stronger within him in intensity and power until the day fixed for its execution

²⁵ *Azmut*, later normally to be translated “substrate.”

²⁶ *Pashut*, here stressing the temporal aspect of the Will’s uniformity.

²⁷ This side remark is an old chestnut in the Sabbatian literature. Cardozo quotes Nathan of Gaza as having heard from Sabbatai Zevi “a most excellent reply” to the question of why the world was not created earlier than it was, namely “that this question has no end. Had the world been created one thousand or two thousand years earlier than it was, the same question could still be asked, inasmuch as the world has to have had some beginning. But the Creator has it within His power to create it at whatever time is appropriate for its creation” (translated in Halperin, *Abraham Miguel Cardozo: Selected Writings*, p. 295; cf. Nissim Yosha, “Ha-beri’ah ve-ha-zeman: vikkuah te’ologi-filosofi shel Kardoza im Natan he-Azati,” in *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-mahshevet Yisra’el* 12 (1996), pp. 275-284. /Ck. other sources, *Sefer ha-Beri’ah*.)

arrives, at which point the intention is at its maximum strength. So it was with this Spot. Indeed it was engraved within him from the beginning. Yet, as the time of the intention's fulfillment grew progressively nearer, the intended action grew ever stronger and more distinct. At last it was at the height of its power vis-à-vis the Spot, and in it were contained in potential all the worlds from the first to the last, the ten Graces and Judgments.

True enough: the Graces and Judgments were extended to the fullest, as has been indicated. Yet their longing was directed toward that Spot; thither they were to go and that Spot to gather up within itself all the encampments of the Holy; and because it was more highly actualized than those aspects, it was called "Female." It was not a distinct entity, for all remained integral [to Ein Sof]. Yet by extension it might be called "his Female," for it is common knowledge that potentiality is male in its quality, actuality female.²⁸ Most particularly, since everything set its course into that Spot and there would arrive, it became, qua female, a receiver of effluence.

This is why [that Spot] is symbolically represented by the "Foundation Stone" and "Zion Spot," female in quality, from which the world was founded.²⁹ It refers to that Spot, which is truly a part of Ein Sof's essence, and yet by comparison with the above-mentioned aspects is a female; and from it the world was founded. This was what Luria had in mind when he said that all the worlds were built within the *Malkhut* of Ein Sof, as

²⁸ *Ha-koah hu be-sod dukhra ve-ha-po'al be-sod nukba*, literally, "potentiality is in the mystery [*sod*] of the male and actuality in the mystery of the female." This is the first occurrence of *sod*, "secret" or "mystery," which will later appear in nearly every sentence of the text. I find it unhelpful to translate the word literally, but render it in accord with its context, usually as conveying some idea of "quality" (as here) or "symbol" (as in the first sentence of the next paragraph), or the "inner meaning" of a Biblical passage.

²⁹ The "Foundation Stone," *even shetiyyah*, appears in rabbinic tradition as the rock that took the place of the Ark in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, given its name because "from it the world was founded": Mishnah Yoma 5:2, Tosefta Kippurim 2:12, Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 54b. (This is presumably the *sakhrah* around which the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock.) The phrase "Zion Spot," *nekudat ziyyon*, though perhaps hinted at in the Talmudic reference to the Foundation Stone, is drawn from the Zohar, I, 186a, 226a, cf. III, 296a (*Idra Zuta*). The author's point is that the Foundation Stone/Zion Spot is a hint, embedded within the physical world as depicted by Jewish tradition, at the super-sensible realities after which that world is patterned. This passage is a turning point in the treatise, in that it is here that the abstract processes so far described first become concretized.

suggested by the verse *Your Malkhut is the Malkhut of all the worlds*, referring to the above-mentioned [Spot] and its female quality.³⁰ This is why the Bible specifies *Your Malkhut*: though it is male vis-à-vis the the construction of the worlds, in relation to the above-mentioned aspects it is a *Malkhut*.³¹

So the spot has a female quality in relation to the aspects, these having the quality of male. It is known, moreover, that the male is called *hu*, “he,” for the letters *hei-vav-aleph*³² represent all the sefirotic ranks, moving from lowest to highest. *Hei* is the Female, who is part of [the male] in her capacity as “corona”,³³ *vav* is *Tiferet*;³⁴ while *aleph* is *Keter-Hokhmah-Binah*.³⁵ This much is common knowledge, and it is the reason why the male is called *hu* and the female called *shem*, “name,” as is well known. Thus, “before the world was created, he existed”—i.e., the aspects—“with his name,” the Spot, “concealed within him”—within the Ein Sof, as part of his essence.³⁶

This Spot is like a stone within an abyss, the location to which all the waters are gathered, *the place to which they go and return*,³⁷ alluding to this Spot. Scripture says of it that *I was made in secret; I was given my features in the depths of the earth*³⁸—alluding to this Spot and therefore using the verb *usseti*, “I was made.” This language indicates the Female, who, as is well known, has the quality of “making” and is the potentiality for

³⁰ Psalm 145:13. *Malkhut* is the tenth, lowest *sefirah*, female in its character. The “*Malkhut* of Ein Sof” would thus be Ein Sof’s female aspect; the author has explained in the preceding paragraph how the undifferentiated, genderless Ein Sof could have such a thing as a female aspect. Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah*, pp. 308-309, confesses himself unable to identify the Lurianic passage referred to here, and I can do no better.

³¹ And therefore female. *Your Malkhut* is understood as “that which is female in respect to you,” the Ein Sof, but not to anything else.

³² Spelling the Hebrew masculine singular pronoun *hu*.

³³ That is, the female element of the sefirotic system, represented by *Malkhut* (above, n. 28). In the ideal fusion of the male and female elements of the system, the Female is incorporated into the Male as the corona of his penis (*atarah*), as indicated in the Biblical verse, *A virtuous woman is the crown [ateret, corona] of her husband* (Proverbs 12:4).

³⁴ The primary masculine *sefirah*. *Tiferet* is the Male of the sefirotic system, while the entire system is collectively the super-sefirotic “male” within Ein Sof.

³⁵ The three highest *sefirot*.

³⁶ Zohar, I, 29a, the opening words paraphrased.

³⁷ Ecclesiastes 1:7.

³⁸ Psalm 139:15.

the whole earth.³⁹ This is the meaning of, *I was given my features in the depths of the earth*. Cf. below.

3. The Contraction and the Shape

The Will comprising ten aspects (to resume our discussion) was extended through the full extension of Ein Sof. *From my flesh do I perceive God;*⁴⁰ and we see that when a person intends to do a certain thing and thinks about it day after day, the power of his intention growing ever stronger within him, then all his senses [fol. 3a]—that is, the perceptual senses of the human psyche, parts of one’s human faculty—cease to function, all of them subordinated to this intention. When one’s mind is on that intention one hears nothing, does not even feel a needle pricking his living flesh, so intensely absorbed is he in the intention. All his senses abandon him, subsumed under that intention, without awareness of anything else. That intention and the bringing of it to fruition are the sole focus of his faculties.

Thus a natural philosopher has said that “there is no power like that of an ingrained love, all one’s senses marshalled toward its fulfillment.”⁴¹ When a man loves something and can achieve it, even through great effort, you will find that he perceives it as done with ease. (So Scripture says, *He thought them but a few days, such was his love for her.*⁴²) We find, too, that a single man can perform an action that in terms of physical strength could hardly be done by ten; yet all that man’s strength is like raw material given shape by his intention, and the act is easily accomplished. So says the Gemara: *He lifted the ladder and ran ... “Fire in Amram’s house!”* and so forth, as you may see for yourself.⁴³ The reverse is also true: when a person does not act with his ingrained

³⁹ This seems to contradict what has been said above, that potentiality is male and actualization female.

⁴⁰ Job 19:26; see above, n. 16.

⁴¹ I do not know the source of this.

⁴² Genesis 29:20.

⁴³ Alluding to the Talmudic story in Kiddushin 81a: When Rav Amram the Pious caught a glimpse of a woman lodged in his upper chamber, he was so energized by lust that he “lifted a ladder that ten men could not carry, carried it by himself [and set it in place], and began to climb it. Halfway up he got hold of

thought, his strength is enfeebled. The Bible says this explicitly: *I am sick with love, and, my strength has faded away in calamity.*⁴⁴

It follows that all a man's senses, all his human faculties, are subordinated and in thrall to thought. Great is the power of thought, which draws everything after it—so great, that it can be perceived only potentially and not in actuality. For whatever is hardly perceptible has great force, whereas the perceptible is subject to negations of all sorts.⁴⁵

Thus it was with Ein Sof. His Will was in a state of extension, comprised of the ten aspects mentioned earlier. It grew ever stronger and more powerful up to the time of the worlds' creation. Accordingly, all Ein Sof's power was contained within that Will (or intention), in a state of preparedness for carrying out its plan. I shall say no more on this topic out of respect for its august greatness. From our simile, however, you may infer on your own all the aspects and details of the reality toward which it points.

To sum up, the power of Ein Sof is contained in his overall Will, composed of the ten aspects that are five Graces and five Judgments. You must also recognize the well-known fact that a man's facial appearance changes with his thoughts. *A man's wisdom brightens his face*, says the Bible; and *edema is a marker of sin*,⁴⁶ and there are many other examples. In consequence, those aspects of which the Will is comprised brought it about that the Ein Sof, though undifferentiated to the highest degree and entirely without color, took on through his own internal processes colors corresponding to the ten aspects,

himself and cried out, 'Fire in Amram's house!'"—his aim being to bring out a crowd whose presence would restrain him from going any further.

⁴⁴ Song of Songs 2:5, Psalm 31:11.

⁴⁵ This is evidently a philosophical principle of some kind. But I do not know its source or what it means.

⁴⁶ Ecclesiastes 8:1; Talmud, Shabbat 33a and Yevamot 60b, referring to the *hydrops* ("dropsy") of the Greek physicians, presumably understood as facial edema. See Julius Preuss, *Biblich-talmudische Medizin* (1911; reprinted New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), pp. 190-191.

in the place of the Will and the aspects. These are the root of the four colors spoken of in the Zohar.⁴⁷

Imagine wine spilled into water, distributing itself throughout the water so that neither its color nor its taste is at all detectable. Yet the individual wine droplets do not cease to be wine, and they maintain their essential “wine” quality.⁴⁸ So it was with the Will and the aspects.⁴⁹ When the time arrived for actualizing Ein Sof’s intention, the day targeted through his undifferentiated Will for the creating of worlds, he planned for a process of Contraction to take place⁵⁰—namely, that [fol. 3b] all those extended aspects should concentrate themselves in one place, the place of that Spot, which would be a kind of root and a location for the event to take place, like a sponge soaking up water into itself.

Such was the power of that Spot in the generation of worlds. As long as all remained thoroughly extended, that very extension precluded the creation of worlds. The quality of Judgment, delimiting and granting regularity, was required. The infinite extension of the Graces left no place for the design necessary to all worlds; design is through measurement and rule, all of which belongs to the quality of Judgment.⁵¹

⁴⁷ E.g., Zohar, I, 15a, where the colors are enumerated as white, black, red and green, symbolizing the *sefirot Hesed, Malkhut, Gevurah* and *Tiferet* respectively. The “colors” (*sefirot*) do not yet exist at this stage, but only their prototypical “root” (*shoresh*) within Ein Sof.

⁴⁸ Even though they are microscopic, perceptible to neither eye nor tongue. The author imagines the “Contraction” to be a reversal of the natural chemical process, wine becoming “un-dissolved” from the water that contains it.

⁴⁹ The “colorless” Ein Sof is equivalent to the water, the aspects (“colors”) to the wine.

⁵⁰ In Lurianic Kabbalah, “contraction” (*zimzum*) is the process by which the infinite Ein Sof withdraws a portion of himself so as to create a space in which worlds external to him can emerge. Our author, by contrast, treats it as the concentration of the imperceptible potentialities within Ein Sof into a single Spot where those potentialities can take on concrete reality, like wine “un-dissolving” from water.

⁵¹ The anti-structural character of Grace is a fundamental principle of this treatise, drawn from the earlier Kabbalah. Herbert Weiner offers a striking image to illustrate it: “I thought of those ice-cream machines which poured their contents on to the cone below, the shape being only able to form when the machine stopped. What would happen if there were no stopping? Why, there would be no shaped ice-cream cone, only an ever-changing blob” (*9½ Mystics: The Kabbala Today* [2nd edition; New York: Collier Books: 1992], pp. 33-34). Judgment is the quality that does the “stopping,” as indicated in the Biblical and Talmudic quotations at the end of the next paragraph.

So the extended lights had to be contracted into a single place, the essence of Contraction being Judgment as we well know. Only thus could a place be prepared for the event of world-building. Returning to our image, the wine has no color or recognizable feature when distributed throughout the water. But now suppose the water were possessed of a will, that all the wine droplets be concentrated in a single place, recognizable there as wine by its quality and color, intact and ready for any use to which it might be put. That was the essence of the Contraction: the concentration of all the aspects that had stretched out every which way into the place of the Spot, a complete and well balanced concentration enacted through the Contraction, through that quality of Judgment that can grant rule and regularity to all the worlds. *Thus far shall they come, and he says to his world, Enough.*⁵²

A key principle: **whatever is done to build worlds, is done only through male and female.** This applies particularly to the Contraction, which essentially derives from coupling with the female in a state of arousal, happening through the force of Judgment and *love compressing the flesh*;⁵³ understand. Here also, inasmuch as [Ein Sof] was comprised of ten aspects, some male and some female, inherent within his Will, this took place in the quality of an autoerotic male-female coupling.

For intelligibility's sake we may allow ourselves to go into the details, inappropriate as they may be to this lofty and fearful place. Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai has warned us that *cursed is the man who makes a graven or molten image*,⁵⁴ and we are prohibited from entertaining thoughts of sex between man and wife because such thinking begets arousal. Yet the very things prohibited in these lower regions, where we

⁵² Free quotations of Job 38:11 and the Talmud, Hagigah 12a. Both passages illustrate the restrictive, defining function of Judgment.

⁵³ The Talmud, Bava Mezia 84a, offers "love compresses the flesh" as a retort to a "noble lady's" gibe that two obese rabbis cannot be the fathers of the children attributed to them, since their genitals could not connect with their wives'.

⁵⁴ Deut. 27:15, quoted by Shimon ben Yohai at the beginning of the Zohar's *Idra Rabbah* as a warning against taking the stunningly anthropomorphic images that follow as literal descriptors of the Deity.

are engaged in constant combat and the demonic holds sway, are [allowed] in the upper regions where the demonic has no power, where all is unified and constructed solidly.

From this you may grasp that, having willed this, he underwent an autoerotic act of coupling and arousal, and the Contraction was done, as though ejaculating his seed and expelling drop after drop. All the aspects that once had been diffused came together in one place, the place of that Spot which received the aspects and they were made into a single place: the aspects of a complete Shape, as is well known; for any set of ten aspects has the quality of a Shape.⁵⁵

Yet all was still inherent within [Ein Sof], and so these had the quality just of aspects and not *sefirot*, yet now in the quality of a human being. All this was in the place marked out for the worlds, where the aspects were joined and made into a Shape incorporating the Will and power of Ein Sof. This was the “place of the world.”⁵⁶

4. The Mother of God

In their pre-Contraction state, extended and mingled together, these aspects bore the name *karmela*, akin to the rabbinic term *karmelit* for the mingling of private and public domains.⁵⁷ It is a composite word, *kar* + *mal*, [the *sefirah*] *Malkhut* being a *kar*, “pillow,” for her husband, and *kar* also being an anagram for *rakh*, which refers to *Malkhut*, “kingship.”⁵⁸ (Thus one speaks of “*rekha* son of *rekha*,” and our ancient sages demonstrate that *rekha* is a term for kingship.)⁵⁹ *Mal* is masculine: the mark of

⁵⁵ *Parzuf*, often translated “configuration” or “person,” one of the five humanoid shapes (Long-face, Father, Mother, Little-face and His Female) into which the Lurianic system, following the Zohar’s *Idra Rabbah* and *Idra Zuta*, organizes the ten *sefirot*.

⁵⁶ In rabbinic usage, God is regularly called “the Place,” *ha-makom*. The midrash, *Genesis Rabbah* 68:9, explains this idiom as conveying that God “is the place of the world, not the world his place.”

⁵⁷ The Talmudic theory of “domains,” important for the laws governing the carrying of objects on Sabbath, recognizes beside public and private domains a category called *karmelit*, “neutral ground, localities which show characteristics both of public and of private territory, for which reason intercourse between them and those territories is forbidden” (Hermann L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1931], p. 34).

⁵⁸ The male *sefirah Tiferet* is “husband” to the female *Malkhut*, whose name literally means “kingship.”

⁵⁹ Talmud, Bava Batra 4a, from which Rashi reasonably deduces that *rekha bar rekha* means “a king, son of a king.”

circumcision.⁶⁰ Hence the place where the aspects are intermingled is called *karmela*, as hinted in the verse, *Your head is like karmel*⁶¹—above, in the place [fol. 4a] of that “head” to be discussed presently, Graces and Judgments cannot in practice be distinguished. Graces and Judgments, male and female elements,⁶² are mingled; and this is *karmel*, the intermingling of the aspects.

In accord with what we have said so far, the essence of the Contraction—by which was constructed the esoteric Human⁶³ who is “Cause of All Causes,” for he is truly the essence of Ein Sof and all Ein Sof’s power is contained within him—was enacted by means of the female aspects. This is why the Blessed Holy One, who in essence is that Human, calls the Shechinah “my Mother,” for when the limbs of his body came together he was born through her and from her aspect.⁶⁴

So you are to understand the Biblical verse, *He called her name Havvah* [“Eve”], *for she was the mother of all living* [*em kol hai*].⁶⁵ The passage is problematic; what sort of explanation is this? By this logic she should have been called *Hayyah*.⁶⁶ Furthermore, how was she the *mother of all living*? Was the Human⁶⁷ a child of death, and not the inception of all life? The reply, that her name *Havvah* encapsulates the whole [sefirotic] structure contained within [the Human]—the letter *het* indicating [the *sefirah*] *Hokhmah*, *vav* indicating *Tif’eret*, *hei* indicating the Female⁶⁸—raises the fresh problem of why she

⁶⁰ The verb *mal* means “circumcise”; this is the second syllable of *karmel*, while the first syllable has just been shown, through its association with *Malkhut*, to be feminine.

⁶¹ Song of Songs 7:6.

⁶² Somewhat counter-intuitively, the Kabbalah perceives the “gracious” aspects of divinity as male, its “judgmental” aspects as female.

⁶³ *Raza de-adam*, literally “mystery of a human being,” the “Shape” spoken of earlier. *Adam* can mean both “human being” and “Adam”; hence the ambiguity of the next paragraph.

⁶⁴ The female “Spot” yields the “Shape,” which brings to actuality the potential within the undifferentiated “aspects” of Ein Sof. “Blessed Holy One,” the standard rabbinic designation for God (Hebrew *ha-kadosh barukh hu*, Aramaic *kudsha berikh hu*), functions in Kabbalah as the male aspect of deity, “Shechinah” as the female aspect. Here “Shechinah” is the primordial Spot; we will presently see the term used also for inferior and derivative female entities. I do not know the source of the Blessed Holy One’s calling the Shechinah “my Mother.”

⁶⁵ Genesis 3:20, with Adam as the subject.

⁶⁶ The name that would naturally be formed from *hai*, “living.”

⁶⁷ Or, “Adam.”

⁶⁸ The letters *het-vav-hei* spell the name *Havvah*.

should be named for *Hokhmah* and *Tif'eret*. Is she not the Female⁶⁹ and no more? This is why the Bible tells us that *she was the mother of all living*, meaning that the Human was himself her offspring (as has been said), and she was therefore named *Havvah* after the totality of [his] structure.

From this you may understand how it was that David and Bathsheba, both symbolic of the Shechinah,⁷⁰ gave birth to Solomon, who symbolizes the God of Israel as we will later see.⁷¹ For in accord with what I have said it makes perfect sense that she was *the mother of all living*, being the instrument by which the Contraction took place, without whom those aspects of which the worlds are constructed would have remained infinitely extended.⁷² She it was who granted them limitation, and the Shechinah is thus the “*Shaddai*” who said to the world, “*Dai! Enough!*”⁷³ Understand.

5. The unlimited vs. the limited; “Mindless” vs. “Mindful” Light; “colors” vs. “substrate”

And so, through the process of Contraction, that Spot was made into a complete Shape. Know that the Will of Ein Sof had been extended to the ultimate, comprised of ten aspects, whose whole yearning, goal, intentionality and thought were concentrated on that Spot. The nature of the Contraction, therefore, was such that it would partake of the quality of Judgment, the place of that Spot becoming distinguishable in actuality, as

⁶⁹ *Malkhut*, the Shechinah, whom our author regularly understands to be symbolized by the Biblical Eve. We will hear a great deal more of this below.

⁷⁰ It seems paradoxical that the hyper-masculine King David is understood, no less than his paramour Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12), as a symbolic representation of the female Shechinah. Yet this equation has deep roots in the Kabbalah, is taken for granted by Sabbatian writers, and has important implications for the feminization of the Davidic Messiah Sabbatai Zevi. More on it below.

⁷¹ This use of “the God of Israel” as equivalent to the “Shape” emerging from the “Spot” is in accord with the Kabbalistic doctrine of Eibeschutz’s *Shem Olam*, where the “God of Israel” (a.k.a. “Blessed Holy One”) is the first “effect” of the First Cause. (See above, n. 7.) Later in this text, however, the “God of Israel” is redefined as a more limited, less exalted entity with a more distinct personality, of whose specific existence *Shem Olam* gives no hint.

⁷² And therefore useless for world-building.

⁷³ Drawing on the Talmud, Hagigah 12a, where the Biblical divine name *Shaddai*—usually but dubiously translated “the Almighty”—is explained through God’s having said to his chaotically expanding creation, “*Dai! Enough!*”

though a boundary defined it and turned it into a Shape. Without the Contraction, there would have been only extension, without any sort of design or form of a Shape that could be recognized. Thanks to Contraction and Judgment, however, this Spot and the Shape's design became recognizable in actuality over against the infinite extension. By contrast, the ten aspects of the Will in its extension, though possessing colors,⁷⁴ were prevented by their inconceivable extension from taking on human form.

They remained in this state even after the Contraction. It was only the ultimate fruit of their essence that came to the place of the Spot and was transformed through the Contraction into something like a Shape, while the Will in its aspects remained as it had been, inconceivably extended. You surely know the saying that *the Shechinah does not budge from its place without leaving a mark*,⁷⁵ and it applies all the more strongly to this case, in which their extension remained precisely where it had always been.⁷⁶

You may think of the rock and the fire-producing flint.⁷⁷ The fire-potential is in each and every part of the rock; yet crumble that rock to the finest dust and you find in it no [fol. 4b] fire whatever. For throughout its parts the fire exists only in potential, and it is when you strike it to the point of heat that its parts draw near one another and the fire

⁷⁴ See above, n. 45. The opposition of the “colored” aspects of the Ein Sof's Will to its colorless “substrate” will be developed later in this section.

⁷⁵ I do not know the source of this “saying,” which will be quoted repeatedly in the course of the treatise. The opening words, *the Shechinah does not budge* (from the Temple, or from the Western Wall) are taken from the midrash, *Exodus Rabbah* 2:2, but the “leaving of the mark” does not seem to appear in any rabbinic source. Maciejko cites a parallel from Menachem Azariah of Fano, *Yonat Elem* (Amsterdam, 1648), ch. 1, p. 2a, which quotes only the opening words but seems to imply the rest. “Shechinah” is used as in the rabbinic literature to indicate the divine presence, without the Kabbalistic refinement of applying it specifically to God's female aspect.

⁷⁶ Perlmutter, pp. 284-285, compares the doctrine of *Shem Olam* that the “design of the ten *sefirot*” (which *Shem Olam* seems to equate with the “God of Israel”) remained as it had been even after the *sefirot* themselves came into being, just as the blueprint for a house does not cease to exist after the house has been built. The Kabbalistic systems of the two texts are not quite consistent, but plainly related.

⁷⁷ Here the “rock” and the “flint” appear to be two distinct objects, struck against each other. Later they seem to be two names for the same thing. In *Shem Olam*, pp. 106-107, Eibeschutz quotes this same spark-from-the-rock simile from Moses Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim*, part 5 (*Seder ha-Azilut*), ch. 4 (via Isaiah Horowitz's *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*): “We may aptly compare this to a flint rock from which fire is produced by the striking of iron ... that fire is latent within the rock, united with it so truly and powerfully that there is no distinction at all between the rock and the fire inside it. Similarly ... the *sefirot* were united with the [divine] essence, bound to it so powerfully that one could hardly speak of the *sefirot* existing at all, but only of true unity.”

emerges from the potential into the actual.⁷⁸ If it were possible to fasten onto the flint the spark leaping from it, then it would be one with the flint and especially with its roots, the components of fire within the rock. And though it would cling to the rock, one with it and dwelling inside it, three dimensions⁷⁹ would seem to be involved—

[1] the dimension of the spark, as it exists in actuality;

[2] the dimension of the fire-components mingled within the rock, permanent and limitless (for no matter how long you were to strike it, they would never be lacking);

[3] and the rock itself a third element—

even though it is one,⁸⁰ unified in the highest degree.

Such is the case with Ein Sof. It contains [3] the Mindless Light, analogous to the rock's essence; [2] the Mindful Light, analogous to the fire-components distributed everywhere throughout the rock;⁸¹ and [1] the God of Israel, like the spark, clinging perpetually to [Ein Sof] and sharing its essence,⁸² yet in actuality more perceptible, as though marked off [from it] by a boundary.

⁷⁸ Two manuscripts (Oxford 976, Cincinnati) add here: “So it is in the present case. Through the process of Contraction and autoerotic arousal, its parts draw near one another until it emerges from the potential to the actual.” The same word, *himmum*, is used for heat and for sexual arousal.

⁷⁹ *Gevulim*, the word whose singular is translated “boundary” in the first paragraph of this section. On the philosophical use of *gevulim* for the three dimensions of the physical world, see the entry in Jacob Klatzkin, *Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae Hebraicae et Veteris et Recentioris* (Berlin: Eschkol, 1928), vol. 1, p. 98.

⁸⁰ The spark, the fire-components, and the rock's essence (or “substrate”; see below) are all one.

⁸¹ This is the first occurrence of the terms “Mindless Light” (or *she-ein bo mahshavah*) and “Mindful Light” (or *she-yesh bo mahshavah*). The author's employment of them is a mark of his Sabbatian pedigree, for the antithesis between these two species of light—the Mindful Light that “seeks after building,” the Mindless Light that “seeks after destruction”—was a creation of Nathan of Gaza, pivotal to his Kabbalistic system. See Chaim Wirszubski, “Ha-Te'ologiyah ha-Shabbeta'it shel Natan ha-Azati,” *Keneset* 8 (1944), 210-246, reprinted in *Between the Lines* (Hebrew; ed. Moshe Idel; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), pp. 152-188. The suggestion that follows, however, that the Mindless Light is not really “mindless” but occupied with higher things than the paltry business of creation, is an innovation of our author's.

⁸² Combining the readings of the different manuscripts, which diverge considerably at this point. The God of Israel is mentioned only in ms. Oxford 955, yet seems essential for the point the author is making.

Know also that the two kinds of light may be compared to a king. Would we say of him, wishing to praise him to the utmost, that all day and all night he gives his thought to the care of his fields, how they may be cultivated and preserved? Would it not rather be to his discredit, indeed contempt, that so great and mighty a king should squander his valuable time on the rustic concerns of the field? But if we were to go so far as to say that “so tremendous and exalted are his thought processes that, amid his great and weighty concerns, he manages to think *even of peasants’ labor*”—is this not much to his credit? And should some peasant wish to discuss his work with [the king], he must pick a time when [the king’s] thoughts are on this work and not other, loftier matters.

Similarly, if we were to say of a man that he possessed none of the senses other than smell, this would be to his discredit. Yet if we were to say that he possessed all the senses, it would certainly be to his disadvantage if he did not have this one as well. If he were brought something to smell, one would not be told to bring it to the sense of speech that this might smell it, or to the sense of voice or the like, but to the sense of smell only. Thus it is with Ein Sof, exalted above all praise. How might it be conceived that all his thought is devoted to the creation of worlds so lowly by comparison with him? One must rather say that he encompasses many thoughts, deep and lofty, that have nothing to do with creating worlds, and that “Light” that is “Mindful” of the creation of worlds is but one among them.

Of the Mindless Light, surpassingly lofty though it is, we have no way to speak. From our perspective it is “darkness,” *hoshekh*, from the verb *hasakh*, “to withhold,” meaning that it is beyond our comprehension.⁸³ It is the Light “Mindful” of the creation of worlds that is crucial for us, and toward which our attention is directed.

⁸³ As Perlmutter points out (pp. 289-290), this is a drastic reversal of Nathan’s disparagement of the Mindless Light as “utter darkness.” It only seems dark to us, the author says, because it is entirely beyond our ability to grasp.

So if you are troubled by Luria's having indeed used the language of "arising in his Will," implying alteration of will, do not allow yourself to say that his godlike words were in error.⁸⁴ His point was that, when a person plans to accomplish something on a given day and on that day his intent is fulfilled, one says that he planned to do such-and-such and it "arose in his hand."⁸⁵ So here: the intent to create the worlds at a given time was part of his very existence, [fol. 5a] and when that time arrived and this construction was completed, this was called "arising"—"it arose in his Will," meaning that the Will was achieved and became something real.

Thus it happened in the process of Contraction and autoerotic arousal. His parts⁸⁶ drew near to each other until [his intent] emerged from potentiality into actuality. Everything—all Ein Sof's power—was contained in the parts of the undifferentiated Will; and the intentionality of all those parts, the ultimate fruit of their essence, was in the place of the Spot. When a man continually thinks about something, when he never turns his musings or his attention to anything else, all his strength and all his thought are in that one thing. Just so, the undifferentiated Will comprised of ten aspects had its eyes and mind, as it were, continually fixed on this one place, where the ultimate fruit of their intention became actualized. With each passing day they etched themselves deeper, in actuality, upon that Spot; and the Spot, like a sponge, drew into itself the power and fruit of all their essence.

Know and understand from this: **the place of that Spot contained all the will and power of Ein Sof.**⁸⁷ In it the purpose of the action was accomplished; and to the extent that a man's will is enacted in a given place, to that extent his power will be contained within that place. Thus it was with that Spot. Inasmuch as there the aspects

⁸⁴ The author now resolves the problem he raised near the beginning of the treatise (above, section 1).

⁸⁵ *Aletah be-yado*, idiomatic for "he succeeded." Perlmutter (pp. 296-297) points out that precisely the same (highly eccentric) interpretation of "arising in his Will" occurs in *Shem Olam*, p. 60, and there is no way this parallel can be a coincidence.

⁸⁶ Corresponding to the fire-components in the rock.

⁸⁷ And thus the "God of Israel," as described in the next chapter, has come into being.

became actualized, more of Ein Sof's power was contained there than where the aspects were extended. Outside this spot, the Ein Sof was—I beg his forgiveness! but this is Torah and I need to learn⁸⁸—in the quality of “place of colors,” namely the extension of the aspects throughout his essence. What was not the “place of colors” is called “substrate⁸⁹ of Ein Sof.”

Now the “place of colors,” inasmuch as that Spot was the goal and fruit of their actions, has the quality of *Abba*, “Father” and is therefore called *Mi*, “Who.”⁹⁰ The remaining substrate of Ein Sof has the quality of Female, inasmuch as that Spot was an integral part of it as if conceived in its womb. It is called *Elleh*, “These”; it is symbolized by Leah;⁹¹ it is implied by the phrase *she is grown weak as a female*,⁹² for all strength resides in the aspects and the colors. For this reason the Will does not adhere to it,⁹³ yet it also is called Ein Sof. *Ein*, “Nothingness”: Ein Sof's substrate, without colors, it is called “Nothingness” because it is beyond all ability to grasp. *Sof*, “End”: represented by *Mi*, “end of all rungs,”⁹⁴ the extension of the colors. Remember this: the colors are represented by *Mi*, the uncolored by *Elleh*.

⁸⁸ The two Jerusalem manuscripts omit this exclamation.

⁸⁹ *Azmut*, the word translated “essence” in the previous sentence. I shift to “substrate” here and in what follows, better to bring out the contrast between the active “colors” and the passive “substrate,” developed in the next paragraph.

⁹⁰ The subtext for what follows is a passage near the beginning of the Zohar (I, 1b-2b), where the words of Isaiah 40:26, *who created these*, are taken hyperliterally as “‘Who’ created ‘These’”: the *sefirah Binah*, the supernal Mother, for whom *Mi* (“Who”) is a standard code term, created “These” (*Elleh*, the lower *sefirot*). From the combining of *Mi* and *Elleh*, *Elohim* (“God”) was formed, both graphically (מי+אלה=אלהים) and in actuality. The author reworks his source with his usual bold creativity. *Mi* is no longer the Mother (*Imma*) but the male potency of “Father” (*Abba*), who impregnates the Spot within the passive womb of the strengthless *Elleh*; the action is shifted from the sefirotic to the super-sefirotic realm; and the Zohar's assertion that *Mi* created *Elleh* is left problematic, since “colors” and “substrate” are coeval elements of Ein Sof.

⁹¹ Whose name, in Hebrew, is an anagram for *elleh*. The Zohar understands the Biblical Leah as a representation of the *sefirah Binah*. I know of no other source that connects her with Ein Sof or any of its elements.

⁹² Talmud, Berakhot 32a, which represents this as a taunt of the Gentiles against the Jewish God. The author quotes it with a significant alteration, from *he is grown weak* to *she is grown weak*.

⁹³ Language drawn from Zohar, I, 99b, but with a fresh significance which does not square very well with the author's stress on the unity of the Ein Sof and his Will.

⁹⁴ *Sofa de-khol dargin*, commonly used in the Zohar for the *sefirah Malkhut*, so called because she is the lowest of the *sefirot* (e.g., I, 106a, 163a, following Matt's translation). But the “end of rungs” can be the highest of entities rather than the lowest, depending on one's perspective, as the author observes at the

And so the totality of Ein Sof is called “God,” *Elohim* = *Elleh* + *Mi*. That *Elleh* is also called “darkness,” *hoshekh*, from the verb *hasakh*, “to withhold,” meaning that it is by its nature incomprehensible.⁹⁵ Its quality is that of the female, of the moon that has nothing of its own,⁹⁶ of the Beautiful Girl Who Has No Eyes.⁹⁷

beginning of section 1; and the Zohar’s exposition of Isaiah 40:26, which has plainly inspired that passage, seems so to understand it. (“Once a human being questions and searches, contemplating and knowing rung after rung to the very last rung ...”; I, 1b, tr. Matt.) This is a new explanation of the name *Ein Sof*, deeper than the one proposed at the beginning of the treatise: it is formed from *Ein* + *Sof*, the names of its two components, just as it is called God, *Elohim*, from *Mi* + *Elleh* (below).

⁹⁵ Said earlier of the Mindless Light, which the author identifies with the *Elleh* component (“substrate”) of Ein Sof.

⁹⁶ *Malkhut*, the Shechinah, is regularly symbolized in the Zohar by the moon, which has nothing (i.e., no light) of its own, other than that poured into it by the sun (= *Tiferet*).

⁹⁷ The subject of the last of the three cryptic riddles posed by the *Sava de-Mishpatim*, the mysterious “old man” who dominates the Zohar to the Torah portion *Mishpatim*. “Who is a serpent that flies in the air, moving in separation, while an ant lies comfortably between its teeth? ... Who is an eagle that nests in a tree that never was—its young plundered, though not by created creatures? ... Who is a beautiful maiden without eyes, her body hidden and revealed? She emerges in the morning and is concealed by day, adorning herself with adornments that are not” (Zohar, II, 95a; tr. Matt).

Chapter II: The Anatomy of God

1. The tripartite Shape

Turning our attention back to that Spot, we may say that it consists of an end, a middle, and a beginning.⁹⁸ The “beginning” corresponds to the organism’s⁹⁹ head, its characteristics wholly unknowable in spite of its being the soul’s abode. The “middle” corresponds to the heart, the organ that clarifies and reveals those characteristics, purifying the entirety, apportioning life to every living being and giving measure and tempo and nurturance to the whole organism, as those conversant with natural philosophy well know. So it is here: the “middle,” functioning as heart, actualizes all characteristics, clarifies them, regulates their comings and goings, and apportions life to the entire living being.¹⁰⁰ The “end” corresponds to *Yesod*, the sex organ.¹⁰¹

So it is with this Spot [fol. 5b]. Through the process of Contraction it was made into the image of a human Shape, with all its characteristics. The head, on account of its proximity to its root,¹⁰² had as yet no perceptible Graces and Judgments, all having the quality of an extension of Mercies. It is called “Ancient One, holiest of all the holy, most concealed of all the concealed,”¹⁰³ the reason for which appellation will be elucidated below. The heart is designated “God of Israel,”¹⁰⁴ and it is this that distributes and

⁹⁸ *Sof tokh rosh*, the initial letters of which spell out *seter*, “secret.”

⁹⁹ *Parzuf*, the word that I normally translate “Shape.” But here the author seems to be talking about living organisms in general, to which the Shape is then compared.

¹⁰⁰ *Kol hai*, perhaps alluding back to the Biblical description of Eve (=the Spot) as *em kol hai*, “mother of all living,” i.e., the “living” Shape (above, I, 4).

¹⁰¹ The *sefirah Yesod*, the divine phallus, sometimes referred to in the Zohar as *siyyuma de-gufa*, “the end of the body.”

¹⁰² That is, the Will that pervades the entirety of Ein Sof, its distinctive “colors” as yet present only in potential. Later the author will shift into speaking of this as “the Root” and giving it anthropomorphic features.

¹⁰³ *Attika kaddisha de-khol kaddishin setima de-khol setimin*, normally abbreviated *attika kaddisha*, “Holy Ancient One.”

¹⁰⁴ Earlier, the entire Shape had been called “God of Israel,” a usage more or less in accord with Eibeschuetz’s in *Shem Olam*. This narrower usage, for a segment of the Shape that will presently take on its own distinctive human-like characteristics, is to predominate in this treatise.

actualizes Graces and Judgments, combining them and imposing orderly measure upon them. This appellation, too, will be elucidated.

The “end” corresponds to *Yesod*, the sex organ, with *Malkhut*, the Female, still incorporated within him.

This is the inner meaning of the name YHVH.¹⁰⁵ The Ancient One, as is well known, contains the name *Yah* (YH),¹⁰⁶ which is [the sefirotic triad] *Keter-Hokhmah-Binah*. The God of Israel, corresponding to the heart, is the V, *vav* formed out of *yod* by extending it.¹⁰⁷ The Female incorporated within him, eventually to be made into a Shape unto herself, is the final H.

A key principle: at the higher level, before the line¹⁰⁸ had been extended down to the God of Israel, the *vav* was as yet unknown and therefore in a state of concealment in all words. *Kadosh*, “holy,” for example, applies to the God of Israel, whereas above him the word is *kodesh*, “holiness.”¹⁰⁹ So with all words; which is why, at the higher level that has the quality of “head,” the Father is called *Mi*, “Who,”¹¹⁰ while the God of Israel receives an added *vav* and is called *Yom*, “Day.”¹¹¹ It is why the head is called *Attika*, from ‘*Attik Yomin*, meaning that he is superior to and “removed,” *ne’etak*, from the “Days,” *yomin*.¹¹² (On the term *ne’etak*, cf. below.)

¹⁰⁵ The Tetragrammaton, *yod-hei-vav-hei*, used throughout the Hebrew Bible as God’s name.

¹⁰⁶ As in *hallelu-Yah*, “praise Yah.”

¹⁰⁷ The lower appendage of the letter *yod* (י), extended downward, makes it into a *vav* (ו). For the author, this graphic feature symbolizes the divinity’s becoming increasingly manifest in its devolution from its lofty origins.

¹⁰⁸ Of the *yod*; see the preceding note.

¹⁰⁹ One may speak of the God of Israel as “holy” (*kadosh*, written with a *vav*, קדוּשׁ), whereas at higher levels of divinity one speaks only of “holiness” (קדוּשׁ, without the *vav*). Like so much in this treatise, and in Kabbalah in general, this passage conceives linguistic and cosmological realities as interlocking and reflecting one another.

¹¹⁰ Above, n. 90.

¹¹¹ If one reverses the order of the two Hebrew letters of *Mi* (מי) and adds a *vav* between them, one gets *Yom* (יוּם).

¹¹² Eschewing the obvious explanation of *Attika* as “Ancient One,” from the “Ancient of Days” (*attik yomin*) of Daniel 7:9, for an extremely strained etymology based on another meaning of the same root, which underscores the Ancient One’s lofty superiority over the God of Israel. This superiority will take on a new dimension when we come to realize that, for our author, the Ancient One is specifically associated with Christianity.

2. Androgyny divine

We have already said that the Spot had the quality of female vis-à-vis the extension of the ten [aspects],¹¹³ inasmuch as it was a receiver of effluence and was, moreover, more highly actualized than they.¹¹⁴ At the highest level, therefore, the Spot couples with the Will and the Root,¹¹⁵ that is, when the Will and the aspects increase and intensify their concentration upon it. This qualifies as copulation because the measure of effluence is increased, and it takes place wherever the aspects' extension comes with full force to encounter the Spot. It is no less copulation for not being in the area of the womb, for every place where the Spot is encountered is equivalent to any other.

This implied by the verse, *What are these wounds between your hands? ... which my lover did to me.*¹¹⁶ It is why one must take care not to touch even a woman's little finger,¹¹⁷ for at the higher level, in this august realm, that is a complete sex act; understand. It is the reason for Eve's addition when she said, *Nor shall you touch it, lest you die.*¹¹⁸ The command,¹¹⁹ as we know and as I shall discuss below, essentially concerned the sex act, and Eve assumed that the norms of this august realm were applicable. She therefore said that touching was forbidden here as well, for it is the sex act as we know. Understand.

¹¹³ Of Ein Sof's Will.

¹¹⁴ Since potentiality is male, actuality female.

¹¹⁵ The language is slightly misleading, since "Will" and "Root" are two names for the same entity. The distinction is one of perspective: what from the Ein Sof's viewpoint is its "Will," is for the lower realms emerging from it their "Root." This will explain why, as our perspective shifts downward, the use of "Will" is eclipsed by that of "Root," which takes on a strongly anthropomorphic quality.

¹¹⁶ Free quotation of Zechariah 13:6: *When one says to him, What are these wounds between your hands? he will reply, Where I was struck in the house of my lovers.* The point is that sex can take place, not only at the genitalia, but at other parts of the body such as "between the hands." We will presently hear more of these erotic "wounds."

¹¹⁷ Combining Talmud, Shabbat 13b with Berakhot 24a and Shabbat 64b, where a woman's little finger is put on par with her genital. The hyper-sexuality of divinity, mirrored in the human body, calls for hyper-vigilant avoidance.

¹¹⁸ Genesis 3:3. Eve, speaking to the serpent, quotes God inaccurately as having prohibited, not only eating from the Tree of Knowledge, but also touching it; cf. *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 19:3.

¹¹⁹ Not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

Keep this principle in mind: that **this Shape is female vis-à-vis the Root.**¹²⁰ This is the inner meaning of *YHVH is Elohim*,¹²¹ meaning that he is female vis-à-vis the Root. Know also that when their coupling takes place the Shape is in a state of “deep sleep” or “entrancement,”¹²² a dream-state. It is just as when the spirit of prophecy comes upon a man; he loses his senses and becomes as though sleeping, dreaming; thus it is when the Shape experiences coupling and excess effluence from the Root. He is then a dreamer also through his female status, as we know, for everything female is in a state of sleep. Because the coupling has at times the quality of “touching yet not touching,” “sleeping yet not sleeping,” and “racing back and forth,” it remains unstable.¹²³

Know that, when we call [the Shape] *Elohim*,¹²⁴ we do so vis-à-vis the Will that is called *Mi*.¹²⁵ Yet vis-à-vis the substrate of Ein Sof, called *Elleh*, he is perpetually male, this *Elleh* being female with respect to him. This is the inner meaning of the verse, *Ein* (that is, the *Elleh*) *is Elohim with me*,¹²⁶ i.e., female with respect to me.

Now you must grasp an important distinction. Male lust is directed toward the female; so says the Zohar to the Torah portion *Va-yehi*, quoted [fol. 6a] above. “Come and see: Everywhere male pursues female and arouses love toward her.”¹²⁷ Therefore,

¹²⁰ What has been said of the Spot is now applied to the Shape (“God of Israel”) that emerged from it.

¹²¹ E.g., 1 Kings 18:39, *the Lord he is God*. The four-letter name YHVH denotes the Shape (above, section 1), while *Elohim* (“God”) is understood, following the Kabbalistic tendency to apply the name specifically to the Shechinah (= *sefirah Malkhut*), as a marker of the female. See below, n. 124.

¹²² “Deep sleep” (*tardemah*) is the Biblical term for the mysterious condition that Adam entered when Eve was created out of him (Genesis 2:21); while *dormita*, apparently from Latin *dormitio*, is a Zoharic term that glosses *tardemah* (III, 142b, *Idra Rabbah*) and, in I, 207b, is linked to death. (Matt’s translation: “From there below are sixty other breaths, all from the side of death, the rung of death above them; they are called *dormita*, wakeless sleep, all tasting of death.” See his note *ad loc.*) My translation “entrancement” is based on the use of the term in *Va-avo ha-Yom*.

¹²³ “Touching yet not touching” is the language of the Zohar, e.g., I, 16b. “Sleeping yet not sleeping” is from the Talmudic definition of a “doze,” e.g., Pesahim 120b. “Racing back and forth” is from Ezekiel 1:14, describing the “living creatures” of the *merkavah*. I am not sure of the precise point the author is making in this sentence.

¹²⁴ That is, female; see above, n. 121. The copyist of ms. Jerusalem 2491 wrote *Elohim* in the text, along with the other manuscripts, but crossed it out and wrote *nukba*, “female.”

¹²⁵ Above, chapter I, section 5.

¹²⁶ Deuteronomy 32:39, usually translated *there is no other God with me*. *Ein*, “Nothingness,” was defined in chapter I, section 5 as the substrate of *Ein Sof*, the *Ein* as opposed to the *Sof*.

¹²⁷ Zohar, I, 245a, slightly adapting Matt’s translation. This is not actually part of the second Zohar passage quoted in the Prologue, but occurs just a few lines before it.

when the Root (called *Mi*) arouses love toward [the Shape], he descends and encounters him in a state of “deep sleep,” “entrancement,” dreaming. This is a sexual act, for the Spot remains in her place and he reveals himself to her by coupling with her.¹²⁸

But sometimes [the Root] does not come to him. Rather the Spot, the Shape, bestirs itself to rise to the Root, to the place of extension, as the Scripture says, *I will go to my place*.¹²⁹ He is then in a state of burial—and the discerning reader must understand on his own, for this cannot be put in writing.

For that extension is concealed within its substrate, which is called “darkness”;¹³⁰ and the spirit of the God of Israel (the Holy Ancient One included)¹³¹ rises from him, up to the place of extension where it must extend itself through the darkness. This is called “burial,” as in the verse, *Man knows not his burial*,¹³² for it is in a place of concealment,¹³³ and also the words *knows not* negate sexual coupling (*know* used as in *the man knew*).¹³⁴ Similarly, *Love is strong like death*:¹³⁵ when the Shechinah arouses love and pursues her husband until her spirit beats for him and she yearns to leave her place and pursue him, this is indeed *like death*.¹³⁶ By contrast, when the Root pursues the God of Israel,¹³⁷ lusting for him, this is an act of coupling, since [the Shape] remains in his place.

¹²⁸ The Spot and the Shape that emerged from her are treated as equivalent. See the next sentence.

¹²⁹ Free quotation of Hosea 5:15.

¹³⁰ Above, chapter I, section 5.

¹³¹ That is, “God of Israel” is used in its broad sense to indicate the entire Shape, and not just the Shape’s middle section or “heart” (above, section 1).

¹³² Deuteronomy 34:6, referring to Moses.

¹³³ *Itkasya*; allusion to Sabbatai Zevi, who was said by his believers to be “concealed” after his death?

¹³⁴ Genesis 4:1, referring to Adam’s having sex with Eve.

¹³⁵ Song of Songs 8:6.

¹³⁶ I.e., she/he enters into a deathlike, sexless state. “Shechinah” has earlier been used for the Spot (chapter I, section 4), which can be equated with the Shape, and that is apparently the intention here. (“Her husband” = the Root.) Still, the sexualized language is surprising, given we are told in the same breath that there is no sex. I suspect the influence of the prior context in Zohar, I, 245a, where Song of Songs 8:6 is quoted and expounded.

¹³⁷ That is, the Shape.

This is the inner meaning of *Every berekh shall bend to you*.¹³⁸ *Berekh* is the Root, for whereas in the God of Israel everything involves the letter *vav* and he is therefore *barukh*, “blessed,” at the higher level the proper term is *berekh*;¹³⁹ while “bending” is known to be the male’s copulating with the female (as in the 31st chapter of Job, *Let others bend upon her*).¹⁴⁰ Thus *every berekh*—i.e., the Root, named for the supernal pool¹⁴¹—*shall bend to you*, have sex with you, “bend” with you, come to you.¹⁴²

This is implied by the verse, *The Elohim seeks out the pursued*.¹⁴³ Consider well the Zoharic dictum that “everywhere male pursues female,” suggesting that the one who lusts is a “pursuer,” chasing after another in his love, and the beloved is consequently the “pursued.” So when the Root lusts for [the Shape], he meets him in [the latter’s] place, and hence *the Elohim*, namely the Ein Sof,¹⁴⁴ *seeks out the pursued*, namely the God of Israel, “pursued” by him in his love.

You might object that this implies alteration in the Will, in that it sometimes arouses love and at other times hatred. You need not concern yourself. It was all part of Ein Sof’s undifferentiated Will to respond thus to humans’ actions at any given time, always in accord with their conduct. When they comport themselves rightly they stir up desire, and also conversely. This was all the undifferentiated Will, to alter itself in accord with human action so that all might recognize it as a righteous judge and adjudicator,

¹³⁸ Isaiah 45:23, as paraphrased in the Jewish liturgy. *Berekh* is normally translated “knee.”

¹³⁹ See above, section 1, for the idea that the letter *vav* is a distinctive property of the God of Israel. When this letter is subtracted from *barukh* ברוך, “blessed” (a habitual designation for the God of Israel), the word becomes *berekh* ברך, understood now to designate a higher level of divinity where the *vav* is not yet operative.

¹⁴⁰ Job 31:10, where the sexual meaning is very clear.

¹⁴¹ *Berekhah*, from the same Hebrew root as *berekh*.

¹⁴² Perlmutter, p. 301, cites a parallel from *Shem Olam* (pp. 240-241) that expresses basically the same thought but without the heavily sexual imagery. In that passage, Eibeschutz notes that what the Kabbalists call “complete unification and coupling” is called by the philosophers “contemplative awareness [by the lower entity] of its cause and occasion [the higher entity]”—that is, the same process of fusion, expressed in either sexual or intellectual language.

¹⁴³ Ecclesiastes 3:15.

¹⁴⁴ Strictly speaking, only the active “Will” component of Ein Sof. At the end of chapter I, however, the entirety of Ein Sof is called *Elohim* (combined of *Elleh* + *Mi*), and the author follows that usage here. After his earlier use of *Elohim* for the distinctively female (above, nn. 121, 124) this feels inconsistent and confusing.

untainted by corruption, acting not with indulgence but only strict justice. So it is written, *None can rescue from my hand*,¹⁴⁵ and *anyone who speaks of God's "laxity," may his guts turn lax!*¹⁴⁶ For in attributing laxity to him one wreaks havoc, leaving the problem¹⁴⁷ without resolution. This will be elucidated, God willing, more fully in what follows.

3. The Female emerges

Up to this point—resuming our exposition—that Spot or Shape still had its Female incorporated within it. Now, the building of worlds can in no way be properly effected other than through the female; without the Female it has the quality of uncontained ejaculate,¹⁴⁸ requiring her for its full shaping and for its regularity and measure. (Thus she is called “measuring line” [fol. 6b], as we shall see presently.) Therefore the Root, i.e. the Will in its ten aspects, said that *it is not good for Adam to be alone*.¹⁴⁹

What did [the Root] do? He came to him and coupled with him in a state of “deep sleep, casting “deep sleep” upon the human¹⁵⁰ at the start of his copulation. He had sex with him in a condition of “deep sleep” on account of the intense illumination that flowed into him, as we have said.¹⁵¹ This is the meaning of *the Lord God cast deep sleep upon the human*¹⁵² and performed a full sex act with him. The sex completed, [the Shape] gave birth, sprouting and producing and bringing forth fruit. The Female, once concealed

¹⁴⁵ Isaiah 43:13.

¹⁴⁶ *Genesis Rabbah* 67:4; cf. the Talmud, Bava Kamma 50a.

¹⁴⁷ Of capricious alteration of the Will.

¹⁴⁸ *Zera le-vattalah*, literally “wasted seed,” a rabbinic expression for semen ejaculated other than into its appropriate receptacle inside a woman. The author’s concern throughout this treatise, however, is not with the “waste” of the semen but with its chaotic and dangerous potency, which it is the female’s function to contain, restrain, keep within appropriate bounds.

¹⁴⁹ Genesis 2:18. Adam (“human”) is understood as symbolizing the Shape, while the “God” of the Genesis story is the Will/Root. The author will develop this symbolism below, chapter *, section *.

¹⁵⁰ That is, the Shape.

¹⁵¹ Above, section 2.

¹⁵² Genesis 2:21.

within his power and contained inside him, emerged to actual discrete existence and became his Female. So the Bible says, *He took one of his ribs*, and so forth; and the female aspect became a distinct entity, a female shape unto itself, with whom a male king might engage in sex.¹⁵³

This is the process by which the Shechinah emerged from the God of Israel, through sex with the Root which is *Mi*, the Father.¹⁵⁴ It is the meaning of what the Zohar says in several places, that “the Father established the Daughter”¹⁵⁵; the discerning reader must understand on his own. It is the meaning of the verse, *Indeed she is my sister, daughter of my Father yet not of my mother*.¹⁵⁶ Understand.

Thus it is that all the kings of the Davidic line, who symbolize the Shechinah, have their origin from Moab, whose name hints at *me-av*, “from a Father”:¹⁵⁷ she was in fact born of her Father.¹⁵⁸ This is why a Moabite woman is permitted in marriage in accord with the supernal structure, the Shechinah having been born from him; while the Male was not thus begotten and [Moabite] males are therefore forbidden, as contrary to the supernal structure.¹⁵⁹

This [newly emerged] Shape constitutes the Higher Shechinah, for she is superior to all, all worlds being constructed from her; she is the *mother of all living*, sometimes

¹⁵³ Possibly alluding to Zohar III, 66a, which speaks of sexual pleasure between the “king” and the “noble lady,” the male and female aspects of divinity.

¹⁵⁴ Above, chapter I, section 5.

¹⁵⁵ Zohar III, 258a (*Ra'ya Mehemna*), *Tiqqunei Zohar* 21 (61b), 69 (106b), expounding Proverbs 3:19.

¹⁵⁶ Genesis 20:12, spoken by Abraham of Sarah. The author takes it to mean that “Father” (the Root) has begotten the Female, not of any “mother” but of the very same Shape who is the Female’s consort. See below, *.

¹⁵⁷ Genesis 19:37 traces the Moabite people to incestuous sex between Lot and his daughter; King David was descended from Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:17-22).

¹⁵⁸ Some mss. have “his Father,” presumably referring to the Shape. The language is a bit confusing but the thought is clear: the Shechinah was born of a sex act between the “Father” and the Shape, which was itself the Father’s offspring. The act of incest, discreditable in Genesis 19, turns out to be a symbolic representation of divine necessity.

¹⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 23:4, forbidding intermarriage with Moabites, is interpreted in rabbinic sources as referring only to Moabite males, Moabite women (like Ruth) being entirely acceptable upon conversion to Judaism. See Mishnah, Yevamot 8:3; Talmud, Yevamot 76b-77a.

the Bible says that *the Lord's path is to the End is through the hair*,¹⁶⁶ meaning that his path takes him to the “end of the ranks,” which the Bible calls “End,” and that these [ranks] are represented as “hair.” It is also the sense of *the Ancients grasped the hair*.¹⁶⁷ For these “Ancients” are the Ancient One and the God of Israel, and they “grasp” and are grasped within this hair, the “hairs” that are not revealed even to the smallest extent, *hidden among the ranks*.¹⁶⁸

4. An alternative anatomy: if Ein Sof could be part ...

But suppose we were to speak of Ein Sof as though (*per impossibile*)¹⁶⁹ it had bodily form, starting out by treating this Root as a shape. The Root would then function as “head,” the “Head That Is Unknown,”¹⁷⁰ consisting of *Keter-Hokhmah-Binah*¹⁷¹ and represented as YH, *yod-hei*. The Bible hints at this when it says that *the Lord shaped the worlds through yod-hei*.¹⁷² there all the worlds were given shape, for [the Root] is the Will’s extension in its ten aspects, containing all the worlds in potential. The Holy Ancient One functions as *Tiferet*¹⁷³ in relation to it, while the God of Israel serves as Ein Sof’s *Yesod*, its genital organ. This is why all the effluence comes forth from him.

The Shechinah receives from him. All worlds are nourished by him, for he is the one who “allots grain”¹⁷⁴ to them all. There is no need to expand on this, for the power

¹⁶⁶ Nahum 1:3, the words *sufah* and *se'arah*—in their Biblical context certainly referring to the “storm-wind”—taken as *sof*, “end,” and *se'ar*, “hair.” On *sof* as “end of the ranks” (or “rungs”), see above, n. 94.

¹⁶⁷ Job 18:20.

¹⁶⁸ Song of Songs 2:14.

¹⁶⁹ *Ki-ve-yakhol*, literally “as though it were possible,” a rabbinic phrase sprinkled throughout this treatise to soften the blow of particularly shocking ideas. Normally I understand it as homage to conventional piety and leave it untranslated. But here the author seems really to mean it. Ein Sof *cannot* be thought of as partaking of bodily form; yet suppose we imagine that it *might*; what would the consequences be?

¹⁷⁰ *Resha de-la ityeda*, used in the Zohar’s *Idra Zuta* (III, 289a-b) to designate the head of the Ancient One. /CHECK!/
¹⁷¹ The triad of highest *sefirot*.

¹⁷² Isaiah 26:4, following the midrashic tradition of reading *zur* (“rock”) as though it were *zar* (“he shaped”); *Genesis Rabbah* 12:10.

¹⁷³ The *sefirah* marking the trunk of the divine body, which would normally be connected with the God of Israel.

¹⁷⁴ Alluding to Genesis 42:6, which speaks of Joseph, the Biblical representation of the *sefirah Yesod*.

of *Yesod*, the genital, is familiar throughout the Zohar. It gives life to everything; it is called “vitality of the worlds.”¹⁷⁵ It purifies Graces and Judgments by means of the two apertures [fol. 7a] of the penis, for urine and semen. This is why [the God of Israel] is called *bara*:¹⁷⁶—apart from his being revealed (as in *go out and teach bara, outdoors*),¹⁷⁷ *bara* is also an anagram for *ever*, “membrum,” alluding to *Yesod*.

This is why the Zohar says several times, “We treat the body and the sex organ as one,”¹⁷⁸ inasmuch as within the bodily form of Ein Sof, [the God of Israel] is the body for the sexual organ and also, as the letter *vav*, the organ itself.¹⁷⁹ Hence the majority of *Tiferet*’s appellations are applied also to *Yesod*, for, if Ein Sof is granted a bodily form, he will be that form’s *Yesod*. Thus the Bible says, *The Lord is Righteous*,¹⁸⁰ giving “the Lord,” which designates the God of Israel, the title *Zaddik*, “Righteous,” whereas *Zaddik is the world’s Yesod*.¹⁸¹

But the Shechinah remains in the position of *Malkhut*, the final *hei* [of YHVH].¹⁸² *I am the Lord, I do not change*, says the Bible,¹⁸³ meaning that she is ever the Female, her rank immutable, perpetual sex partner for the God of Israel and his *Yesod*. These are the two “Righteous Ones”: the God of Israel, the higher “Righteous,” vis-à-vis the bodily form of Ein Sof; and *Yesod*, the lower “Righteous,” vis-à-vis the bodily form of the God

¹⁷⁵ I am indebted to Daniel Matt for this translation of *hei ha-olamim*.

¹⁷⁶ *Bara* (“Son”) and *bara kaddisha* (“Holy Son”) are Zoharic appellations for *Tiferet*. The author gives the word *bara* two entirely different etymologies, connecting it not with *Tiferet* but *Yesod*.

¹⁷⁷ A Talmudic phrase (e.g., Shabbat 106a) which our author uses as lexical support for connecting *bara* with the “revealed,” exoteric character of the God of Israel, as opposed to the “concealed” Holy Ancient One.

¹⁷⁸ E.g., III, 283a (*Raya Mehemna*).

¹⁷⁹ If the Ancient One is the “head,” as above, the God of Israel is the “body.” If the Root is the “head,” as here, the God of Israel is the sexual organ. The author emphasizes the phallic shape of the letter *vav* (ו), with which the God of Israel is associated.

¹⁸⁰ Psalm 11:7.

¹⁸¹ Proverbs 10:25, normally understood as “the righteous is an everlasting foundation.” This is a standard Kabbalistic proof-text for the use of *Zaddik*, “Righteous,” as an epithet for the *sefirah Yesod*. The author’s point is that the God of Israel = *Zaddik* = *Yesod*; therefore the God of Israel can, as in this “alternative anatomy,” function as *Yesod*.

¹⁸² Although in this “alternative anatomy” the Ancient One has become *Tiferet* and the God of Israel demoted from *Tiferet* to *Yesod*, the Shechinah remains exactly as she was in section 3.

¹⁸³ Malachi 3:6. *Ani*, “I,” is understood in the Zohar to refer specifically to the Shechinah, and the author draws the inspiration for his exegesis from Zohar, III, 281a (*Raya Mehemna*).

of Israel.¹⁸⁴ When the Bible says, *The Righteous Ones shall inherit the Land*, and the Zohar explains this to mean “two Righteous Ones, the higher ‘Righteous’ and the lower ‘Righteous,’ ”¹⁸⁵ the intention is as I have said. Understand.

5. Grace, Judgment, and the secret of Esau

Once the shape and “tool” that is the Female had emerged, [the Shape] could be called a complete Human. He is known to represent the Name of Forty-five,¹⁸⁶ being “of-the-Path-of-Emanation” as we shall presently see.¹⁸⁷ Therefore he is called “Human,” a name with the numerical value of 45: “YHVH” is 26, the Shechinah is symbolized by “Eve” who is 19, adding up to 45, “Human.”¹⁸⁸

He¹⁸⁹ occupies the entire place of the Spot, “the place of the world.” This was the intent of the undifferentiated Will, since a world could not have been constructed in that place¹⁹⁰ on account of the intensity of its light and the unlimited extension of its Graces. In relation to the Root it [the Spot] was Judgment and Contraction, yet in relation to the worlds it was still an extension of of the Mercies, without any space suitable for world-building or any design. This was particularly so, in that within the form of that Spot the Graces and Judgments were not yet recognizable, persisting in a state of admixture.

Know that when Graces and Judgments are mixed, upon extending themselves downward the Judgments are bound to gain the upper hand. The reason is that, as they

¹⁸⁴ “God of Israel” used in its more inclusive sense to designate the Shape,

¹⁸⁵ Psalm 37:29; Zohar, I, 153b. “Land” is a common Kabbalistic designation for the Shechinah.

¹⁸⁶ One of the four *millu'im* of the name YHVH, a *millui* being a numerical computation based on the full spelling of all the letters of the word in question. The letters of YHVH are *yod-hei-vav-hei*, which can be spelled in such a way (יוד הֵא וַאֵו הֵא) that the grand total of the values of the letter-names comes to 45. (Computed without *millu'im*, the numerical value of YHVH is 26, as the author will soon note.) In the Lurianic Kabbalah the “Name of Forty-five” is associated with the divine aspect called “Little-Face” (*Ze'ir Anpin*), more or less equivalent to the *sefirah Tiferet* of the older Kabbalah and the “God of Israel” of our author’s system. *Adam*, “human,” also has the numerical value of 45.

¹⁸⁷ “Human of the Path of Emanation,” more concisely referred to as “Emanation-Human,” will become an important figure later in the treatise. Here he is identified as the Shape.

¹⁸⁸ The female (19, the numerical value of the name “Eve”) now stands side by side with YHVH (26), now understood specifically as the male component of the Shape. The two together are the “Human” (45).

¹⁸⁹ The Shape, now differentiated like the once-androgynous Adam into male and female.

¹⁹⁰ The Spot as it was originally, prior to the operations described in this chapter.

descend, they emerge increasingly from potentiality into actuality, and by its nature actuality partakes of Judgment when set against potentiality. So all through that process of descent the Judgments grow ever stronger and more powerful, while Mercies steadily diminish. The Judgments were thus bound to triumph over the Graces, had the Balance not been fashioned to keep Judgment by itself and Grace by itself, each in its own vessel, with a “center-bar” and a single channel effecting their mixture.¹⁹¹

This is the significance of *the Noble cannot be recognized in the presence of the Poor*.¹⁹² *Shoa*, “the Noble,” is Mercy (as in *the base shall not be called noble*,¹⁹³ for “noble” means “generous,” which is a quality of Abraham and of pure Mercy, as our sages interpret *generous man’s daughter* as “daughter of Father Abraham”¹⁹⁴). *Dal*, “the Poor,” is Judgment (as in “those poor [*dallat*] in silver”¹⁹⁵).

So in that Root comprising ten aspects, where no solid structure¹⁹⁶ or balance has been enacted, Graces and Judgments are commingled. This is hinted at in the words, *the dallat of your head—dallat meaning the tips of the hairs, with overtones of dal, Judgment—is like purple*,¹⁹⁷ combining the qualities of Judgment and Mercy; for *purple*

¹⁹¹ The “Balance” (*matkela*) appears in the Zohar’s cryptic (and appropriately titled) *Book of Concealment*: “... until there was a balance, they did not gaze face-to-face, and the primordial kings died. ... This balance hangs in a place that is not; weighed upon it were those who did not exist. The balance stands on its own, ungrasped and unseen. Upon it rose and upon it rise those who were not, and who were, and who will be” (Zohar, II, 176b, tr. Matt; we shall presently hear much more about the death of the “primordial kings”). In the Zohar the “balancing” seems to be of male and female; our author understands it as Judgment and Grace. “Center-bar,” from Exodus 26:28, 36:33, is used in the Zohar of the *sefirah Tiferet*, which mediates between and synthesizes the opposing attributes of Grace (the *sefirah Hesed*) and Judgment (the *sefirah Gevurah*); e.g., I, 148b (*Sitrei Torah*).

¹⁹² Job 34:19.

¹⁹³ Isaiah 32:5.

¹⁹⁴ Song of Songs 7:2, so interpreted in the Talmud, Sukkah 49b. In the Kabbalah, Abraham is the embodiment of the *sefirah Hesed*, the divine Grace. So “noble” = “generous” = Abraham = the divine attribute of Mercy.

¹⁹⁵ The phrase *dallat ha-kesef* occurs nowhere in the Bible; perhaps the author is thinking of *dallat (am) ha-arez*, “the poor of (the people of) the land,” 2 Kings 24:14, 25:12. He presumably intends the Kabbalistic symbolism of silver = Grace; “those poor in silver” are the Judgments, lacking in Grace.

¹⁹⁶ *Tikkun*, a pivotal and multivalent term whose basic meaning is “mending” or “repair.” I translate each occurrence according to context.

¹⁹⁷ Song of Songs 7:6, the preceding words of which (*your head is like karmel*) were interpreted in chapter I, section 4, to speak of the mingling of Graces and Judgments. Now the author expands his understanding of the verse in accord with his new insight into the meaning of *dal(lat)*.

represents *Tiferet*, composed of Judgment and Grace.¹⁹⁸ While they were in the higher realm, the place of the Root, they were still Mercy. But as they stretch downward and become manifest, Judgments predominate.

For this reason the Zohar warns that hair must be concealed and not exposed, and in this is a profound mystery. The “head” is still part of the “concealed,” as stated above and in accord with the *Idra* in the Zohar, where one uses the pronoun “he” in the place of concealment to designate the Ancient One,¹⁹⁹ who is still part of Ein Sof. His hairs are still in a state of admixture; yet they grant proper warmth to that “head,” essential for the Shape’s maintenance, as the natural philosophers are well aware.

The hairs of the body, by contrast, are exposed. Therefore the Judgments are bound to dominate and cause destruction and shattering—as happened during the Shattering of the Vessels,²⁰⁰ when there was no Balance as we shall later see. [Fol. 7b] *The Noble cannot be recognized in the presence of the Poor*, as we have said; and wherever these hairs proceed downward Judgments predominate, becoming increasingly exposed and destructive. (Exceptions: the beard and pubic hairs, which have the character of adornments generated by the “heart.”²⁰¹) This is why demons are hairy in the legs, where Judgments are most predominant.

From this you may grasp the nature of Esau.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Cf. above, n. 191. The “purple” = *Tiferet* equation comes from the Zohar.

¹⁹⁹ Zohar, III, 290a (*Idra Zuta*): “The Holy Ancient One, who is concealed, is called ‘he.’” The language suggests the influence also of Zohar, I, 154b: “higher world, Jubilee, we call הוּא (*Hu*), He, since all its matters are concealed.” (Tr. Matt, who comments: “The third-person pronoun indicates *Binah*, who, being concealed, can be referred to only indirectly.”) The author’s reason for making this point is not yet apparent. It will become dramatically clear at the end of this section.

²⁰⁰ The primordial catastrophe in Lurianic Kabbalah, hinted at in the Zoharic references to the “death of the kings” (above, n. 191). The author normally attributes the “Shattering” to the unrestrained potency of Grace, not of Judgment. He courts this inconsistency in the interest of what he wants to say here about the nature of “Esau.”

²⁰¹ I am not sure of the meaning of this sentence.

²⁰² The Biblical name “Esau” (or “Edom”) is used in medieval and early modern Jewish writing to represent Christianity and Christendom, and what the author is about to say about “the nature of Esau” (*sod esav*, literally “the secret of Esau”) is an overture to his esoteric theology of Christianity, one of the core themes of his treatise. In what follows, he distinguishes between the visible (“exposed”) Christianity—historical Christianity, experienced as harshly judgmental—and an invisible (“concealed”) Christianity, a

If his hair had been on his head alone, he would have been within Holiness. But inasmuch as his hair covered his entire body, the Judgments were predominant, thirsting entirely for destruction and shattering. So the Bible says: *He came out all as a mantle of hair, ruddy-colored,*²⁰³ meaning that Judgment and Mercy were mixed together without any Balance. That was why he was called “Esau,” an anagram for *shoa*, “Noble”; and, as a form of “returning light,” every anagram is Judgment.²⁰⁴

Isaac’s whole purpose was for Mercy to master Judgment, and he therefore tried to bless [Esau] *to be lord over your brothers,*²⁰⁵ meaning that the Mercies should dominate. *May your mother’s sons bow down to you*—meaning the Judgments, whose nature is that of the female from whom all Judgments are aroused.²⁰⁶ But the truth is that Isaac himself partook of the nature of Judgment,²⁰⁷ and therefore lacked the ability to empower the Graces. Hence Jacob’s need for trickery.

Jacob was *a smooth man,*²⁰⁸ yet he did have hair on his head, for there it was in a state of concealment as has been said. That was why Esau’s head was in Holiness and why Isaac *ate of his game,*²⁰⁹ for he sensed holiness in that head. Luria tells us, accordingly, that Esau’s head was buried with Jacob in the Cave of Machpelah, for that head was in Holiness.²¹⁰

metaphysical entity of pure Grace, associated with the Holy Ancient One and thus not only cognate to Judaism but actually superior. This extraordinary theory will unfold as we proceed.

²⁰³ Genesis 25:25, with some change in the word order.

²⁰⁴ That is, his name was composed of the letters for “Mercy”—the anagram of *shoa* and “Esau” works in Hebrew script, though not in transliteration—yet their being scrambled polluted them with Judgment.

/Need to explain *or hozer*./

²⁰⁵ Genesis 27:29, which Isaac spoke to Jacob presuming him to be Esau. The fact that Esau had only one brother encourages an understanding of *your brothers ... your mother’s sons* as allegorical.

²⁰⁶ This “female nature” being *your mother*. Somewhat surprisingly, the Kabbalah takes Grace to be an essentially male trait, Judgment essentially female.

²⁰⁷ In Kabbalah, Isaac is the embodiment of *Gevurah*, the *sefirah* of strict Judgment.

²⁰⁸ Genesis 27:11.

²⁰⁹ Genesis 25:27.

²¹⁰ /Need to find the source for this. Maciejko cites “Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 50:13.” Ginzberg, II, 154 paraphrases a similar aggadah from Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer ch. 39./

It has already been explained that “head” is a representation of the Ancient One and is called “he.”²¹¹ This is the meaning of the verse, *You must not loathe an Edomite for he is your brother.*²¹² “He” is used deliberately, precisely: *there* he is your brother, not in the rest of his body.²¹³ We know that when the Judgments prevail over Mercies, there are two drops of Judgment and one of Mercy; therefore *their third generation may enter into the congregation of the Lord.* For this same reason the Levites, representing Judgment, are required to shave their heads.²¹⁴ Understand.

²¹¹ Above, n. 199. The use of “head” in this passage will be reprised in the very last paragraph of the treatise, where the full mystery of Sabbatai Zevi’s apostasy will be unveiled.

²¹² Deuteronomy 23:8.

²¹³ In its invisible yet essential character, as opposed to its unattractive historical manifestation, Christianity is Judaism’s “brother.” The pronoun “he,” as observed in n. 199, conveys the “concealment” of this Christianity. The quote from Deuteronomy 23:9 that follows is a first hint at the universality of the author’s Grace-based faith.

²¹⁴ At the inauguration of the Levitic order in the wilderness (Numbers 8:7, Mishnah, Nega’im 14:4). The association of the Levites with Judgment (the *sefirah Gevurah*) is standard Kabbalistic doctrine. The incongruous use of the present tense, however, may suggest a covert allusion to Catholic monks, called in Hebrew *gallahim*, “shaven-headed ones.”

Appendix: Zoharic Passages Quoted and Interpreted in *Va-avo ha-Yom*

(tr. Daniel C. Matt, *The Pritzker Zohar*)

1. Zohar II, 9a (to the Torah portion *Shemot*):

He too [Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai] rose and said, “*O YHVH our God! Lords other than You possessed us, but only by You will we utter Your name* (Isaiah 26:13). This verse has been established, but this verse contains a supernal mystery within faith. יהוה אלהינו (*YHVH Eloheinu*), *YHVH our God*—beginning of supernal mysteries, source of all radiance of lamps, all kindling. Upon there depends the whole mystery of faith; this name reigns over all.

“*Lords other than You possessed us. For no one but this supernal name rules over the people of Israel, yet now in exile another²¹⁵ rules over them.*”

2. Zohar I, 245a (to the Torah portion *Va-yehi*):

“Come and see: There are three souls, ascending by certain rungs, and as for their being three, they are four. One: transcendent soul that cannot be grasped. The supreme royal treasurer is unaware of it, let alone the lower one. This is soul of all souls, concealed, eternally unrevealed, unknowable—and all of them depend upon it.

“This envelops itself in a wrapping of crystal radiance within radiancy, and drips pearls, drop by drop, all linking as one, like the joints of the limbs of one body—one. It enters into them, displaying through them its activity; this and they are one, inseparable. This supernal soul is hidden to all.

“Another soul: female concealing herself within her forces. She is their soul, and out of them a body is woven, to display activity through them to the whole world—like the body, which is an instrument for the soul to convey action.”

²¹⁵ The text translated by Matt reads *ahra*, “another.” The Mantua edition gives *sitra ahra*, “the Other Side,” and this is the text followed by our author.